

THE ROSE MERCHANT

by:
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THE ROSE MERCHANT

PLAYERS

JAMES, a businessman in his late forties, attired in a tuxedo and topcoat.

SUSAN, his wife. Attired in an evening gown, wrap and pearls, carrying a small clutch.

THE ROSE MERCHANT, an older man, wearing an apron and a down-filled Chicago Bears jacket.

The play takes place in Chicago on a cold Valentine's evening.

*AT RISE: The Rose Merchant is arranging roses in a plastic pail on the sidewalk
before the Lyric Opera.*

James and Susan enter from stage right.

JAMES
I'll flag a cab.

SUSAN
Okay.

MERCHANT
[*To James*] Evening. A rose for the lady?

JAMES
No. Thank you.

THE ROSE MERCHANT

SUSAN

[*Tisk-tisk*] You used to buy me roses. All the time.

MERCHANT

Twelve stems for eight-fifty.

JAMES

And a night on the town used to be a three-dollar burger at Billy Goat's.

MERCHANT

One stem: one dollar.

JAMES

I said, no. Thank you. [*Gesturing forward*] Taxi!

SUSAN

So. One rose would break the bank?

JAMES

Let it go, Susan.

MERCHANT

Make it fifty cents, mister. It's Valentine's Day.

SUSAN

It is Valentine's Day, isn't it?

JAMES

Where are all the taxis?

MERCHANT

A day for roses, wine and love.

SUSAN

You hear that, James? Love?

JAMES

[*Lurching forward*] Taxi! [*Looking away*] Ugh...

MERCHANT

You know, the roses will freeze overnight. Take the bunch. No charge.

JAMES

[*With an edge*] No.

THE ROSE MERCHANT

SUSAN
We couldn't.

MERCHANT
Why not? They'll go to waste. Please. Take them.

JAMES
No. Buzz off.

SUSAN
What my husband is trying to say is, we don't need the roses.

MERCHANT
Everybody needs roses.

SUSAN
No, once you reach a certain plateau, a certain maturity in a relationship, roses are—o, what's the word you used the other night, James? Superfluous?

JAMES
Taxi!

SUSAN
James? Superfluous?

JAMES
I said, let it go, Susan.

SUSAN
See?

MERCHANT
[*Perplexed*] Yes, I see...

Slight pause.

JAMES
O, for Christ's sake.

If you want the roses, take them. He offered. So, take the whole bunch.

The Rose Merchant holds forward a bunch of roses.

THE ROSE MERCHANT

SUSAN

No. I don't want the whole bunch. I just want one ro—

JAMES

Taxi!

MERCHANT

Common', mister. Just one. That's all she's asking for. Just one.

JAMES

[*Angered*] No. That's *not* what she's asking for.

SUSAN

It's not?

JAMES

No. [*Suddenly addressing Susan more directly than before*] You want the man who bought you roses. All the time.

SUSAN

What's wrong with that?

JAMES

[*To the Rose Merchant*] Two hundred dollars for opera tickets. I worked three hours on a Saturday for those. Those pearls: seven full weekends punching numbers.

SUSAN

[*Touching her pearls*] They were for my birthday.

JAMES

That dress—she has eight more just as nice— a summer lost.

SUSAN

You exaggerate.

JAMES

I work my fingers to the bone to keep this woman in feathers.

SUSAN

You always exaggerate—

JAMES

But, that's not good enough. Now she wants a God damned rose.

SUSAN

James!

THE ROSE MERCHANT

JAMES

Flores! Flores por los superfluous muertos!

SUSAN

[*Umph*] I can't take this anymore.

JAMES

Flores!

Neither can I, Susan. Neither. Can. I.

Pause.

SUSAN

So..?

JAMES

So, what?

SUSAN

You won't buy me a rose?

James shakes his head, no.

Fine.

Susan fishes a dollar from her clutch and hands it to the Rose Merchant.

Here. I'd like to buy a rose.

MERCHANT

Yes, miss.

SUSAN

For my husband.

The Rose Merchant takes Susan's dollar and hands her a rose.

Susan offers the rose to James.

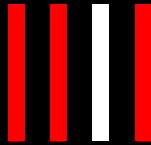
Happy Valentine's Day, James.

JAMES

[*Refusing*] Why would you think I want that?

SUSAN
Don't you?

JAMES
You just don't get it, do you?



**FIND OUT HOW
THIS PLAY ENDS.**

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