A Necessary Holiday

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A NECESSARY HOLIDAY

A vacation was exactly what Valentine Quintrac needed, but he didn't quite know how to explain this need. Every year he'd rummage through the dusty metal-covered trunk and attempt to collect all the necessities for his excursion.

First, he would take out the old, leather-strapped suitcase he'd purchased years before at Sletiers's Dry Goods Store. He would dust it carefully and begin to pack. For a five-day trip he'd need five pair of undergarments, three pair of socks, and, of course, some leisurely sport garments, to maintain a restful image. Next came the private and possibly most important articles in his possession, the sightseeing brochures of Japan. Everything packed away, he made one last check and sat down for the long wait.

For hours, he sat looking around the room, hoping to find something that would keep his mind off the cathedral clock on the parlor stand. He heard every tick consciously. He became more anxious to leave, but the minutes crawled slowly by. Finally, in a desperate search of the room, he saw some old maps and tour books. He'd read them so often that he'd felt as if he'd been there on other occasions. His mind raced: a wine fest in the heart of Germany; wandering for a few days in the Austrian Alps; spending an entire day on the Vatican steps.

Ah, such wonderful places, he thought.

Just then the forgotten clock chimed that it was time to dress and ready himself for the trip.

First thing to do is shave, he thought. He walked into the shabby bathroom and need to make himself presentable to the public. His rusty, but it always did the job, and although it w him a closer, cleaner shave than those new electric Got to remember to buy a new soap mug ruin a man's face.

After thoroughly lathering the brush, Valentine Quintrac looked into the mirror with a yellowish towel and began shaving.

"Well, I see you're getting ready," he said.
"'Ya, can't wait.'"
"Anxious, huh?"
"Always get anxious when I'm planning a trip"

He felt that if he were going to talk to really nervous people, he'd have to accept the "You're looking a little pale, Valentine."
"'Naw. Just that I've been cooped up here looking into the mirror, Valentine Quintrac."

Appearance. He'd put a number of years behind h tion these years had caused. Before him stood a hair and a ghostly complexion that only added to his eyes.

His flesh hung limp from the bone, and light much like the scales of a goldfish. Yes, age, but nothing was going to upset him on this long-av

Still got that twinkle in my eyes, he thought.

Leaving the bathroom, he went straight to the closet, and picked up the traveling clothes. The lady at the clothing store had purchased them a while back they were still neat, i frizzed at the depot, and I'm dressed."

"Yes! Everything's in order."

The rest of the time he spent pulling the clothes and picking up the odds and ends that had gathered. Again the silence was broken by chimes, and he i
NECESSARY HOLIDAY

Necessary holiday was what Valentine Quintrac needed, but he didn't need. Every year he'd rummage through the dusty attic to collect all the necessities for his excursion. It was the old, leather-strapped suitcase he'd purchased at Jods Store. He would dust it carefully and begin to need five pair of undergarments, three pair of socks, sport garments, to maintain a restful image. Next, most important articles in his possession, the sight-seeing packed away, he made one last check and putting around the room, hoping to find something that cathedral clock on the parlor stand. He heard every more anxious to leave, but the minutes crawled by in a space search of the room, he saw some old maps and often that he'd felt as if he'd been there on other wine fest in the heart of Germany; wandering for trips; spending an entire day on the Vatican steps. times, he thought. The clock chimed that it was time to dress and ready

First thing to do is shave, he thought. Can't let people see me unshaven. He walked into the shabby bathroom and collected all the articles he'd need to make himself presentable to the public. His straight-edge razor was a little rusty, but it always did the job, and although it was a bit outdated, he felt it gave him a closer, cleaner shave than those new electric contraptions. Got to remember to buy a new soap mug, he thought. These chips could ruin a man's face.

After thoroughly lathering the brush, Valentine made a swipe at the mirror with a yellowish towel and began shaving.

"Well, I see you're getting ready," he said.
"Ya, can't wait."
"Anxious, huh?"
"Always get anxious when I'm planning a trip."
He felt that if he were going to talk to real people, he'd better practice.
"You're looking a little pale, Valentine."
"Naw. Just that I've been cooped up here so long that I've lost my color."
Looking into the mirror, Valentine Quintrac made a quick study of his appearance. He'd put a number of years behind him and he gazed at the destruction these years had caused. Before him stood a weak old man, with uncult, grey hair and a ghostly complexion that only added to the hollowness of the sunken eyes.

His flesh hung limp from the bone, and each wrinkle reflected in the light much like the scales of a goldfish. Yes, age had taken its toll on Valentine, but nothing was going to upset him on this long-awaited day.
Still got that twinkle in my eyes, he thought. Nothing can take that away.

Leaving the bathroom, he went straight to the closet and took out his traveling clothes. The lady at the clothing store said that the chesterfield-front frock with a matching five-button, single-breasted vest were excellent for travel and he could still use them for weddings and funerals and such. Although he'd purchased them a while back they were still neat, if not stylish.

"Now, let's see, I've got my suitcase packed, I'm going to buy my ticket at the depot, and I'm dressed."
"Yep! Everything's in order."
The rest of the time he spent pulling the drapes closed, locking the doors, and picking up the odds and ends that had gathered in the turmoil of preparation. Again the silence was broken by chimes, and he now had to leave if he was going
to catch the 8:15 in Humberly. Valentine picked up the suitcase and made one last glance over the room. Finding everything in order, he turned out the lights, closed and locked the door, and walked into the cool evening.

Shaking off the chill of night, Valentine crossed the large courtyard and reached the taxi stop. He laid his leather case down and, staying in the shadows, waited for a cab.

This is going to be close, he thought, as he looked at his pocket watch. Just then a cab pulled up and Valentine, wasting no time, climbed in. "Sir, would you please take me to Humberly," he said, "I've got to catch the 8:15."

"What 8:15," said the cabbie, "and where the hell is Humberly?"

"Please drive," Valentine said, "I'll show you."

The cabbie, looking a little puzzled, started off. He drove through the countryside and was about to ask Valentine where to go when he was politely informed to make a left at a white church and drive for five miles. After he'd accomplished this, again the cabbie was told to make another left and proceed to a four-way stop, where he was to turn left and drive 15 miles.

Valentine wondered if the cabbie had picked him up before, if he was thinking how strange it was that Valentine was hiding in the shadows.

"This road has a lot of curves," Valentine said, "but it's much shorter than the old way."

"Are we almost there," said the cabbie?

"Yes, just one more turn up ahead. Here it is, make a left. Now another left, about three more miles and you can drop me off," Valentine said.

After three miles in complete silence, he addressed the cabbie again. "Ever been to Japan, young man?"

"No, can't say that I'd want to, either."

"Marvelous place, wish I had time to tell you about it. But see that light ahead? You can drop me off in the lot at the right." Following Valentine's directions, the cabbie pulled into the lot and was greeted by a nurse, who apparently had been waiting for them to arrive.

"Hello Mr. Quintracl, Did you have a nice trip?"

"Fine, thank you, but long trips are tiring, so I think I'll go lie down for a while. Don't worry, I'll tell you all about it in the morning."

Valentine paid the cabbie, took his suitcase, and walked into the building.

"There's probably a few questions you'd like answered," the nurse said. 

"Ya, quite a few," said the cabbie.

"Well, you see, you're new on this route about Mr. Quintracl. He's been in this home for packs all his belongings and takes a vacation."

"What vacation," the cabbie said, "he did."

"That's just it. To you he went in a church, needed vacation."

The cabbie, not fully understanding and remembering the last part of the nurse's sentence, took a last look over the grounds and drove away.

Sitting quietly in his room, Valentine picked up a book he had read about stopping at a sidewalk cafe in Northern France. He read about stopping at a sidewalk cafe in Northern France:

I threw you out of my life like a dead fly in my coffee.
I threw you out of my life like a fly dead in my coffee.

John Schmidt

WITH FOREFINGER AND THUMB

Ya, quite a few,” said the cabbie.
“Well, you see, you’re new on this route and must not have been informed about Mr. Quintrac. He’s been in this home for ten years now. Once a year he packs all his belongings and takes a vacation.”
“What vacation,” the cabbie said, “he didn’t go anywhere but in a circle.”
“That’s just it. To you he went in a circle, but to Mr. Quintrac it was a needed vacation.”

The cabbie, not fully understanding and ready to forget the whole incident, took a last look over the grounds and drove away.

Sitting quietly in his room, Valentine picked up another tour book and read about stopping at a sidewalk cafe in Northern France, about munching on French cheese and sipping French wine.

This is real Europe, he thought. Maybe next year I’ll go to the Riviera.

John Schmidt

Jan Spielmacher