

Lady, Would You Sell Me a Rose?

By: Mary Bates

Last summer, upon returning home on a hot August afternoon, I noticed a large truck with a big spool of wire on a trailer at a neighbor's home. Closer observation revealed a crew of Mexican workers busily digging up my neighbor's yard. Little did I realize that before me was a chance encounter that would teach me the lesson of the rose.

"Oh no," I thought to myself. "Our garden is next." After a long and tiring day, I thought I would just wait for my husband to come home and handle the pending destruction. I knew that utility workers always repaired the work area after they completed their work, but seldom were the repairs perfect.

As luck would have it, my husband was delayed. Soon, I noticed that all the workers were in the truck, ready to leave, but the foreman was standing right beside my roses. Surely, he didn't think he was going to dig up my roses. I had called Tennessee One (1-800-351-1111) to mark the underground utilities before the bed was started. I knew that the bed was located fifteen feet from the curb, an appropriate distance out of the right-of-way required for the utility easement. In my mind, the roses were safe.

When I determinedly marched over to the foreman, he caught me a bit off guard with "Lady, would you sell me a rose?" Relieved that he wasn't declaring war on my rose bed, I smiled and responded, "I would be happy to share my roses with you." After all, I was pleased that he had noticed my roses and maybe I could bribe him by being nice.

"Which rose do you like?" I inquired. I wondered which he would choose. Would he choose the vibrant red **Veterans' Honor** or would he prefer the softer **Bride's Dream** or **Moonstone** or even the beautiful **Gemini**? Maybe he would select **Double Delight**. The fragrance was outstanding in the warm summer air. **Gold Metal** leaned forward showing off her gold and pink tones. Elizabeth Taylor demanded in an appropriate manner, "look at me." Each rose seemed to be competing. I was surprised when he pointed to the beautiful white **Crystalline**. Noticing my surprise, he replied, "You see, the rose is for my boy". He pulled his worn wallet from his pocket and opened it to a picture of what appeared to me without my glasses to be a baby lying in his baby bed. Before I could say a word he replied, "You see, my boy is in heaven now, and I want to take the rose to him tomorrow." "You see, it was an accident. I didn't mean to do it. I backed the truck over him", he continued in broken English as he pointed to the truck with the big roll of wire on the trailer behind it. "I couldn't see him. It happened two weeks ago. He was just two."

I tried to express my sorrow but I couldn't find all the right words, so we carefully clipped the beautiful **Crystallines** and arranged them in the plastic drink cup he had so carefully cut and filled with water. Although it is easy to find small imperfections on **Crystallines**, I noticed that day they were gorgeous with not a spot on them-just pure, perfect white. I wanted to say more, but he quickly turned toward the truck and the waiting workers, leaving me speechless holding my clippers. He only replied, "My boy will like the roses. Thank you."

I will never forget this day and how this chance encounter taught me a lesson of the rose that many have learned through the years. The rose has a powerful force when shared.