



LOVED HIM TO DEATH

By Natasha Gerson

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1.

LOVED HIM TO DEATH.

CHARACTERS:

MRS. SHEEHY:

A BRITISH LADY OF POSSIBLY CONSIDERABLE BUT APPARENTLY INDETERMINATE AGE.

WILLIAM MCKENNA:

A SOMEWHAT SHABBY SCOTTISH EXPAT. NEWSPAPER HACK , IN HIS FIFTIES. DESPERATE FOR A SCOOP, HE REEKS OF FAILURE.

SETTING:

A MODEST FLAT IN NEW YORK'S BRONX.

THE YEAR IS 1927.

2.

MRS. SHEEHY is sitting in the main room of her small apartment. It is afternoon. She's wearing an elegant lounging garment and sipping sherry from one of two delicate glasses. she's reading something, a letter or document, and singing softly to herself.

MRS. SHEEHY:

'Only a rose, I give you,  
Only a song dying away,  
Only a smile to keep in memory,  
Until we meet another day.'

(There is a knock at the door. Mrs. Sheehy tucks the letter out of sight).

MRS SHEEHY:

Come in. Door's unlocked

(MR MCKENNA enters. He removes his hat and all but tugs his forelock).

MRS SHEEHY:

Sit down young man. I'm not royalty, you know. Would you care for a sherry?

MR MCKENNA:

I...er took the liberty of bringing this, Madam, since we're both of the...er...Scotch persuasion

(MR MCKENNA produces a bottle of whisky and two little glasses from the pocket of his shabby coat).

MRS SHEEHY:

Is that a rather clumsy pun, Mister Mckenna, or have you simply lived here in America for too long? Perhaps it's a simple insult to the sobriety of our countrymen. Shut your mouth, sir, or you'll catch flies. I'm a Scot, sir and so are you I believe. What you have in that bottle is whisky, rather inferior whisky, but whisky all the same. Sit yourself down and pour us both a nip.

(MR MCKENNA OBEYS)

MRS SHEEHY:

Cheers! Now, which minor New York rag do you claim to work for?

MR MCKENNA:

Er...The Ram, Ma'am.

MRS SHEEHY:

You don't say! How...impressive. So what is it you want of me?

3.

MR MCKENNA;

Just your story, Mrs Sheehy. I understand it's a bit of a love story, when all's said and done?

MRS SHEEHY:

When all's said and done indeed! What's in it for me, Mr McKenna?

MR MCKENNA:

My paper is humble, Mrs Sheehy, but it will pay a reasonable remuneration if you tell me the whole story.

MRS SHEEHY:

Away with you, young man! I don't need your dollars! Where do you want me to start?

MR MCKENNA;

From the beginning, Ma'am, right from the beginning, if you'd be so kind?

MRS SHEEHY:

That'll take quite a while. (She fondles the whisky bottle), Do you have another one of these?

(MR MCKENNA produces another bottle from his voluminous old coat).

MRS SHEEHY:

That's a good boy. (She indicates that he should pour. He does so).

MRS SHEEHY:

All right then, I shall begin....I was born Madeleine Hamilton Smith in Glasgow....

MR MCKENNA:

Just what year was that, Ma-am?

MRS SHEEHY:

A true gentleman never asks a lady's age, sir!

(MR MCKENNA SHRUGS).

MR MCKENNA:

Come on now, Ma'am, when my story breaks, everyone will be sure to guess your true age.

4.

MRS SHEEHY:

Nevertheless, Mr McKenna, if MY story breaks, as you so charmingly put it, there will be no such date in its contents. Are we agreed?

MR MCKENNA:

If you say so lady. Let's get to the meaty stuff!

MRS SHEEHY:

Oh, dear. I do hope your writing is more subtle than your speech! Now, where was I?

MR MCKENNA:

You were born?

MRS SHEEHY:

I was indeed, Mr McKenna. I was the firstborn daughter of a distinguished Glasgow architect. Despite the fact I was only a girl, I was quite the most interesting of his rather dull brood. You see, Papa Smith was quite terrifyingly respectable!

MR MCKENNA:

Quite as it should be, in a family like yours.

MRS SHEEHY:

It was dull, sir, boring! Oh, I admit I was lucky in my security. I wanted for nothing material. But I was bored, downright bored!

MR MCKENNA:

So what happened then, Mrs Sheehy...Lena....May I call you Lena?

MRS SHEEHY:

No you may not. They sent me away to school, in Clapton. It was hardly the fleshpots of the capital, but a little more interesting than Glasgow, I thought....

MR MCKENNA:

And then?

MRS SHEEHY:

And then they brought me back to Glasgow. What did you expect, sir?