

# **The Man Who Can't Be Moved**

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It was December 1926 and with Christmas approaching it was the busiest time of the year for Londoners. I worked as a paper boy in the Kingsway tram subway and selling newspapers during Christmas was difficult. I was ignored by the public because they had family gatherings to attend to or had to rush to places in search of the perfect gift for their loved ones. The festival was a distraction that caused unnecessary havoc and with business not doing so well; it was obvious that this month was not going to be my favourite. However the unexpected happened that Christmas, I met her.

Her name was Ann and she stood by the platform after the Monday morning rush. She wore a lilac dress that went past her knees with matching white gloves that went just under her elbows. She was an elegant looking woman and everything from her handbag to her shoes matched. She wasn't a familiar face and her mysterious presence fascinated me even more, but within an instant she was gone.

Time soon passed by and it was Monday morning again and rush hour had just cleared up. I was already exhausted as not selling many papers gave me more to carry. I sat on a bench that was on the platform where the trams departed for Aldwych. I looked to my left and there was a group of young children scattered across the platform, I think they were on a school trip. They partnered up in a line, boy and girl as the teacher called the register. Each pair that stood was holding hands, but I remember there was a pair that didn't and were quite far apart. The boy wanted to hold the young girl's hand and tried to catch her attention in many ways. He even gave her his last chocolate coin and she did take it but looked away. No matter what he did she took no notice of him.

As I turned away and looked towards the steps coming to the platform a young woman walked down. It was here again. I wanted to approach her but my thoughts had stopped running; everything was at standstill in my mind. My fascination towards her was all I could think about. The tram had not arrived on time due to a traffic jam, so I had time to put my thoughts and myself together. I walked up to her slowly, with confidence however, a paper in one hand and the other hand in my pocket. She

saw me approaching her but she had no facial expression and as I reached her she looked away. I kindly asked her if she wanted a newspaper and she took it but still at this point she did not look at me. I felt like the young boy I had saw earlier who tried holding the little girls hand. With no reaction from her, I was eager to know who she was and her lack of politeness was much to my annoyance. I asked her if she was off shopping and she replied no. I spoke to her about Christmas and how it was an exciting time of the year and again, she replied no. Of course I was lying to her, this time of the year I dreaded, but I thought she would have had an interest in it, clearly not. Anything I said to her she did not take notice of and if she did speak it was a simple one word answer. As her tram arrived she put her newspaper in her handbag and pulled her gloves up. She took her first step but she paused and looked over her shoulder and gave me a warm smile and said thank you. She may not have said much but her smile told me everything I needed to know. As she stepped onto the tram the doors shut and she was gone again.

From then on our meetings became frequent. She was a twenty-one year old woman, two years older than me. She spoke of her grandmother whom she went to visit every Monday morning in Aldwych, which was when I used to see her. Our meetings were joyful with lots to talk about and over time we formed a bond that was beyond a friendship. We started meeting on different days and when our time was over, I would leave to go back to work or to go home – to my girlfriend. It was hard telling Ann I had a girlfriend, but I made her understand that it was her I wished to be with and that I would leave my partner. This was a constant saying to Ann before I would leave, but she understood my situation. Her knowing I was going home to another woman did hurt her, she didn't tell me and she didn't have to, you could see it in her every time I left. As for my partner I had to leave her. My lies, secret meetings and not making her happy were making the relationship miserable and dull. She was better off with someone who would appreciate her, someone who would look after her and loved her.

Time passed on and so did my lies and my confession to my partner did not happen. It was September 1927 when the unexpected happened, again. It was a Monday morning just after rush hour, when I would see Ann before she left to see her grandmother. I waited by the bench and an hour past by and she still had not

made an appearance. Gradually several hours went on by and there was still no sign of Ann.

It is now July 1953 and I lay here, outside the Kingsway tram subway where it once stood. It has been a year since it had been disbanded. I have watched days turn into nights. Weeks turn into months. Months turned into years. The loss of Ann was the day I became the man who can't be moved.