Roses Are Red

By Audrey Corn

My big cousin, Emmy, received a very nasty valentine card when she was in the sixth grade. Emmy and I grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., during the 1940s. Back then, some kids liked to send clever valentines with mildly insulting messages.

But Emmy's card wasn't *mildly* insulting. It was downright *mean*. I felt sorry for Emmy, but Emmy just laughed and said that she *liked* her card!

Emmy's family lived on the same street as mine, and after school, Emmy stopped at my house to show my sister and me her nasty valentine. The outside of Emmy's card had nothing on it except the name "EMMY" printed in ugly black letters.

"Open it! There's a poem inside," Emmy said.

My little sister, Jennie, couldn't read too well yet, so I read the poem out loud to both of us.

To Emmy:
Roses are red.
Violets are blue.
Your spelling stinks,
And so do you.
Phew – EEE!!!

The card was not signed, but Emmy told my sister and me that she knew exactly who sent it.

"George Bartow!" Emmy said. "We're in the same class. His desk is right behind mine and he hates me."

"But you like him!" Jennie said.

"I do not! George is a cheat. Every time our teacher gives us a test, George copies my answers. I try to cover my paper, but George has X-ray vision."

"Like Superman?" Jennie asked.

"Yeah, like Superman," Emmy said. "Anyhow, last week, I got even with that pesky old George!"

"How?" I asked.

Emmy was dying to tell. "We had a spelling test. I knew George was looking over my shoulder, so I moved a little to the left to give him a better view. Then I misspelled most of my words."

I couldn't believe my ears. "You *deliberately* failed a test?" I asked.

"Of course not! My teacher always gives us a minute to check over our answers. I changed a whole bunch of words real quick. Then I went up to the front of the room and handed in my paper!"

Emmy grinned. "I got 100. George got a 40!"

Emmy's story didn't change *my* mind. Or my sister's mind. I still thought Emmy's valentine was yucky. And Jennie still thought that Emmy liked George.

"Don't be a silly-billy," I told Jennie.

"We'll see who's the silly-billy," my sister said.

Six years later, George asked Emmy to their senior prom—*and Emmy accepted*. Jennie was one smart little kid back in the Good Old Days. ❖

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