

Reservations for Two  
By Lori Goodman

JIM and ANNE are sitting at a table in a small intimate restaurant, picking at their dessert.

JIM

...so this "thing" circled around this, I don't know, long projectile coming out with Velcro or something on the end and...

ANNE

Eeuw, sounds awful.

JIM

Oh, it was. It had to be the ugliest thing I've seen him do and I've seen some ugly stuff of his.

ANNE

It must be hard to look at your friends work and not like it.

JIM

Especially when he asks your opinion.

ANNE

Oh yeah.

JIM

And this guy's sensitive, too.

ANNE

So what did you tell him?

JIM

Well, I didn't want to hurt his feelings, but I didn't want to lie either.

ANNE

So what did you say?

JIM

I told him it was great.

ANNE

You didn't.

JIM

I had to.

ANNE  
Oh.

JIM  
But he was so excited. I couldn't do it. I did tell him though that I didn't really understand it.

ANNE  
It doesn't sound like it would be possible to.

JIM  
Yeah. He liked that. Made him feel above the masses.

ANNE  
Artists.

JIM  
Yeah. I have a hard time saying negative things to people.

ANNE  
Well, it doesn't really matter.

JIM  
I don't see him that much.

ANNE  
That's good.

JIM  
Yeah. So, I had a nice time talking to you at the party last night.

ANNE  
Me too. It was a fun party.

JIM  
Yeah. I'm glad you were there.

ANNE  
I don't usually....uh, never mind.

JIM  
What?

ANNE  
This is a nice restaurant.

JIM

I've only been here a few times.

ANNE

It's really nice.

JIM

Yeah. I like it.

ANNE

You have good taste in restaurants.

JIM

Thanks. I have good taste in women, too.

ANNE

What?

JIM

You look very pretty tonight.

ANNE

Oh, oh thank you.

*(She casually tosses her hand back which sends her fork flying)*

JIM

Oops.

ANNE

Oh, no.

*(She goes to get it. Jim picks it up and goes to clean it off in his water glass but stops himself)*

JIM

Here, you can use mine.

ANNE

Oh, thank you. I was finished anyway. That was pretty silly.

JIM

You know, I wanted to call you Sunday, but I thought...

*(Anne picks at her food with her fingers)*

ANNE  
You could have.

JIM  
Well, we just met Saturday night and...

ANNE  
You're probably right. It's good you waited.

JIM  
Why?

*(Anne eats with her fingers)*

ANNE  
I don't know.

*(Jim holds out his fork to her)*

JIM  
Here, why don't you use this.

ANNE  
Oh, oh my. Thank you. I'm such a pig.

JIM  
I think you're very attractive.

ANNE  
Yeah? Huh.

JIM  
Hasn't anyone ever told you that?

ANNE  
Oh shit yeah... I mean, yes, kind of.

JIM  
Oh. Um, I uh was...

ANNE  
Did you come here from work?

JIM  
No.

ANNE

Oh I just saw your briefcase and I thought maybe...

JIM

No. I just have it.

ANNE

Oh.

*(Jim moves closer and touches her hand)*

JIM

Actually, I was hoping to go home with you tonight and I brought my briefcase in case you said yes.

ANNE

Oh my God.

*(Anne breaks her hand away and accidentally knocks over her glass of water)*

JIM

Oops.

ANNE

Oh no.

*(She tries to clean it up and knocks over another glass)*

ANNE

Oh, damn.

*(Jim tries to help)*

ANNE

Damn, Goddamnit.

JIM

Are you ok?

*(Anne has forgotten Jim's presence)*

ANNE

Shit, Jesus.

JIM

I'm sorry.

ANNE  
Shit.

JIM  
Is something wrong?

ANNE  
Look at this.

JIM  
What?

ANNE  
What?

JIM  
What?

*(Anne snaps out of it, realizes the yare standing, and self consciously goes to sit down.  
Jim follows)*

ANNE  
I don't know.

JIM  
Me neither.

ANNE  
What?

JIM  
I don't know what you don't know.

ANNE  
What don't you know?

JIM  
What you don't know.

ANNE  
I don't want to get hurt.

JIM  
Me neither.

ANNE

I shouldn't have said that.

JIM

Why?

ANNE

I shouldn't have said that either.

JIM

What are we talking about?

ANNE

I don't want to get hurt.

JIM

Neither do I.

ANNE

No?

JIM

I understand your apprehension.

ANNE

Really? I don't want to seem needy.

JIM

You don't.

ANNE

I shouldn't have said that.

JIM

It's okay. I shouldn't have said I want to go home with you.

ANNE

No, I appreciate that, really. I just don't want to misread your intentions.

JIM

But I don't have any intentions. I just want to get to know you.

ANNE

Why?

JIM

What?

ANNE

I shouldn't have said that.

JIM

What?

ANNE

What?

JIM

Let's not start that again, okay?

ANNE

I'm sorry. It's just...well, you talk more than most men I've been out with, and I guess it scares me a little.

JIM

Why?

ANNE

Because you say nice things and you don't really know me.

JIM

I know you well enough to want to get to know you better.

ANNE

Do you really think you're going to do that by sleeping with me on our first date?

JIM

Uh...

ANNE

Typical.

JIM

What?

ANNE

Nothing. I 'm sorry...I just...forget it.

JIM

Don't you like me to think we're attractive? Don't you want me to say nice things to you.

ANNE



I guess. It's just, well, I've heard them before, and well, you- I mean men-say things all the time. You do all this stuff to woo us- women.

JIM

Well, we- men- want you- women- to like us.

ANNE

We wouldn't go out with you if we didn't like you. All that other junk is fluff. Dangerous fluff.

JIM

Why?

ANNE

I mean, there's something more at work here. I, uh, we take it more seriously than you intend. If we don't like you, we worry about you getting too attached, and if we like you a lot, then it gets really dangerous because we think you like us the same, but you rarely do, and well, there has to be a reason for the wooing.

JIM

Are you saying we don't consider our actions?

ANNE

I'm sorry, but I know you don't. Not you per se...

JIM

I understand, go on.

ANNE

Where was I?

JIM

Men are incredibly inconsiderate about...

ANNE

Right, right, thanks. Yeah, you just kind of do things that feel right at the moment without thinking of the possible message you're sending or the consequence of your message.

JIM

It's interesting that you say that. I, personally, always thought of wooing as kind of a harmless thing. You know, like in the old days when they said stuff like "swell" or "Gee Mary, that would be grand" and...

ANNE

Who's Mary?

JIM

What?

ANNE

Mary. You said she was grand.

JIM

Oh. No, I meant that's the way they talk in the old movies. There's usually someone named Mary, and she's usually being wooed by someone.

ANNE

Oh.

JIM

I guess you don't see the humor in that, huh?

ANNE

Oh no... I think it's funny. Really. Poor Mary, poor, stupid Mary.

JIM

'Scuse me?

ANNE

What the hell does she get from all those guys that woo her?

JIM

I don't know. Flowers and things...

ANNE

I mean, what does she really get in the end? Do any of the guys stick around after the movie's over?

JIM

I think you're missing the point here. Once it says "The End"...

ANNE

The end for the guy maybe, but what about Mary. What's she left with other than a bunch of dead flowers and broken flowers.

JIM

Gee, I'm sorry for Mary, wherever she is. I always thought of wooing as a harmless thing.

ANNE

Oh, that's a good one.

JIM

Is something wrong?

ANNE

What? Oh, I'm sorry. I always get a little emotional when I talk about this kind of thing.

JIM

I noticed.

ANNE

I'm sorry. I don't mean to put this on you.

JIM

It's okay. I'm interested.

ANNE

You're really very nice. I should stop talking.

JIM

Not until you tell me why this upsets you so much.

ANNE

No, it's silly.

JIM

Let me be the judge of that.

ANNE

Well, it's just that you don't give a damn. Not you personally, but men in general. It's like you become infatuated, call all the time, bring little gifts, talk about going away together, etc... etc... Then we respond in the way we know how, by calling you, or bringing you gifts and whammo! You guys see the old ball and chain and pull back, waaay back..

JIM

Really?

ANNE

Yeah. It's like it's okay for you, the general you, not the, well, you know. It's okay for you to pour all kinds of gush on us, but when we do it...and even if we tell you to stop, that we don't want to get too attached, you do it anyway. It doesn't matter what we want. It's all self serving, all for you. All of it.

JIM (*chuckling*)

I don't know about that.

ANNE

Well I do, buddy. I've been on the receiving end of that crap, and it just burns my ass. You're so sweet, so Goddamn attentive. Then you just get us in bed or something, and the challenge is over.

JIM

Uh...maybe you should keep it down a little.

ANNE

Well, I'm sick of it. We're not toys, you know. We're not objects to be conquered and then thrown away like empty beer cans. You guys think this is some kind of game or something. You try to figure out what we like, what we want to hear, and then you do those things and say those things you think will work and see how long it takes to get us in bed. Then what do you do, hey, it doesn't matter who we are, does it? When you're done, you just roll over and go to sleep. All we get is this heaving lump of flesh lying next to us while we're wide awake, staring at the ceiling. And for what? I don't know, you tell me.

JIM

People are starting to stare.

ANNE

Do you know what happens as a result of your harmless wooing? We get to the point where our mood is dependent on whether you called that day or not. Do you believe it? Our whole sense of self worth is determined by someone we hardly know.

*(Jim starts to rise, but Anne holds him down with her hands wrapped around his throat)*

ANNE

Oh no you don't. Let me tell you something pal. You, and all the others like you. This is not a game. Monopoly's a game. Backgammon's a game. Women are not. Women are serious Goddamn business!

*(Jim breaks free)*

JIM

Check please!

ANNE

Oh no...ohmyGod, I did it again. I've done it again.

*(Anne tries to go over to Jim, but he jumps back and knocks over his coffee)*

JIM

Stay away from me. Oh, jees...

ANNE

Let me explain. I didn't mean...

JIM

Forget it.

*(Jim tries to clean up the mess)*

ANNE

I'm such a jerk. We were having... I'm so sorry.

JIM

It's okay. Maybe you're having a bad day. Where's the waiter?

ANNE

No, I'm a jerk, a major jerk. I always do this.

JIM

Oh God.

ANNE

I'll be sitting here, having a nice time just chatting generically with someone, and then, I don't know, something happens. Suddenly the conversation shifts to a personal level and I lose it. It's like these sensors go off. Sirens ring in my head... "Danger, danger, change of status, he wants to get physical, danger, danger, whoop, whoop..."

JIM

You're just trying to protect yourself.

ANNE

I'm out of control.

JIM

I don't blame you. Where's the damn waiter?

ANNE

I forgot where I was. You're just so easy to talk to.

JIM

Lucky me.

ANNE

What?

JIM

Look, the waiter doesn't seem to be around. Why don't we pay up front?

ANNE

I'm never going to see you again, am I?

JIM

Sure you will.

ANNE

You don't have to lie to me. I can see it in your face.

JIM

I don't know what to say to you.

ANNE

What can you say? I accused you of things you never did, so what do I expect? I thought maybe...it doesn't matter. I guess if told you I'm not really like this and I've just been burned you wouldn't believe me, would you?

JIM

Sure, yeah, we've all been burned.

ANNE

Yeah.

JIM

Look...we're two different people...and, I had a good time, sort of, but, well... neither of us really knows if...what I mean is...it was interesting...and I learned some things, but, you know, I don't...well, I'll call you.

ANNE

Sure, let's pay the check.

*(They exit)*