

The Romantic Adventures of Jack & Dora

Robert Szeles

JACK & DORA



DO L.A.

A Fanciful Romantic Comedy

JACK & DORA DO L.A.

By Robert Szeles
(pronounced Saylesh)

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This book is dedicated to Siri Anand, who taught me what a witty, strong, intelligent and interesting female character could be.

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JACK AND DORA DO L.A.

PART I

The Gods of Los Angeles were busy this night. Well, all but two. They sat in a room with an infinite starry ceiling around something that resembled a black craps table in shape, but was actually a horizontal window showing a myriad of tiny gold, orange and other-colored lights that was the city below.

The enormous bulk of Commerce took up a large space at the table. He was busy in one of his frequent arguments with Creativity, who was doing her best to ignore him. Commerce's not-so-little brother Property was too engrossed in surveying the land to notice. Traffic, a relatively young but very busy god was there as well, though taking a slight respite after a hard day's work. Fame, Fortune and Greed had all been given their own rooms, due not only to their prodigious size, but also to the fact that the other gods couldn't bear their overblown egos. Minor deities such as Truth and Justice sat biding their time and doing what little they could with their small but devoted followings.

And in the corner, often referred to as "those two idiots", sat the twins Love and Romance. The other gods thought them, at best, a necessary evil (Lust, who, as a reflection of the current LA sexual zeitgeist, had taken to wearing a chastity belt with beautiful representations of genitalia painted on the outside for all to see, considered them merely irrelevant). They were deemed flighty, fickle, nosy, usually causing more trouble than they were worth, and in the end, accomplishing absolutely nothing.

Love and Romance sat together, but seemed oblivious of each other. Romance was tweaking his ear between forefinger and thumb, staring into space with a sour look. Love was scratching her bottom and staring with a frown. When the two got along, they got along famously. When they clashed, as they had done recently over the breakup of a high-profile marriage, it was the most annoying of spectacles. They both knew their reputations were at stake.

"Don't those two ever actually *do* anything?" said Deception smirking, seeking to deflect attention from himself.

"Those two idiots?" said Progress, not even attempting to lower his voice. "You must be joking."

Love and Romance overheard and stopped their fidgeting. They conferred in hushed tones.

"All right, enough," said Love. "They're laughing at us."

"An end to silent hostilities?" asked Romance.

"Agreed," said Love. "We've got to accomplish something that will impress, but won't fall apart in a matter of months."

"Yes. An unlikely pair, enemies if possible, but doomed for Romance."

"And for Love, that will last," said Love.

With a snap and a whistle, Romance and Love summoned Whim and Fancy, their two spritely servants who appeared as mere glints of shadow and light to mortal eyes.

Romance said to the shifting shadow, "Go below with Fancy and await my instructions, Whim. Do nothing until I direct you!"

Love likewise said to the dreamy glint of light, "Fancy, accompany Whim and prepare to do honorable mischief with exact intent, only upon my command!"

At that, Whim and Fancy disappeared.

Love and Romance ignored the disdainful glances of their reluctant associates as they squeezed their way into open slots at the table. Then they looked down upon the mortal city below seeking two players for their upcoming drama.

1

Teutonic Titillation

“Jack, dear, could you please?”

The voice came from a middle-aged blonde woman with a German accent. She wore a low-cut red blouse and black skirt that snugly hugged her large-boned, voluptuous form. She was looking up at some prints on a ledge in the back room of Schwartz Gallery in Beverly Hills, a shop bearing the name of her and her husband Gerhardt. The man who came to her aid was in his mid-thirties with thick, dark brown, lazy hair and dark brown sleepy eyes. He was dressed in a white button-down shirt and jeans.

“Sure, Greta. What do you need?” he asked.

“Those Chagall prints,” she said, pointing, and up on tiptoes as if that would help him. “You know the ones?”

“Yeah, sure,” said Jack.

“I hate getting up on the ladder. I know it’s silly, but I’m scared of heights.”

“It’s not silly. That’s what I’m here for,” said Jack. He moved the ladder over and climbed onto the ledge ten feet above her and flipped through a couple portfolios before choosing a set of prints. He held them up.

“These, right?” he asked.

“I think so,” she said. “Hold them up, would you mind?”

He climbed down a couple steps and held them towards her. She tilted her head back, which pushed out her already overly ample breasts and narrowed her eyes, cocking her head slightly to one side. Looking straight down he couldn’t help staring at the dark crevasse of the cleavage between her two enormous pink breasts. He blinked and forced himself to look up to her face. Her eyes had shifted to him and she was smiling subtly. He smiled back innocently and swallowed hard.

“Can you hand them to me so I’m sure?” she said.

“Sure,” he said, climbing down a couple more steps so he was near enough to smell her perfume. She kept the same position so that he had a clear view of her chest as she held the portfolio at arm’s length. He looked again at her cleavage. He felt his cock pushing against his pants. Was she doing this purposefully? He was never sure. His knees were now at the level of her chest. All he had to do was lean forward and fall and he’d disappear into that lovely breast canyon and probably never be heard from again. She suddenly glanced up and caught him looking again. He raised his brows, blew out his cheeks and said, “Is that them?”

“Yah. This is them,” she said in a singsong voice. She put her arms behind her back, which if possible, made her chest stick out even more and smiled up at him.

Ten minutes later, Jack was in the bathroom jacking off his swollen member; but in his mind, it was Greta jacking him off and begging him in her German accent to come all over her massive tits.

“Yah, Jack, yah! Come all over me. Please, darling boy, come all over me. Now!” He came hard and tried to stifle his involuntary cry. He pumped his glistening come over her huge pink tits. Well, actually, he came in his hand. He felt a bit guilty about it, considering Gerhardt, but it was a necessity; he honestly didn’t think he could have continued work so pent up. As he washed his hands thoroughly, he wondered how much of Greta’s behavior was real flirtation and how much was in his mind. Either way, the effect was the same.

He stepped out of the bathroom and heard Gerhardt’s voice from the front room. *Great*, thought Jack. *Gerhardt’s here*. Jack stepped out into the main room.

“Hello Jack, how are you?” said Gerhardt. He was a very tall German man in his early fifties with dark blonde hair, and eyes blue as Greta’s.

“Great, thanks,” said Jack, feeling uncomfortable as Gerhardt shook the hand he had just used to jack off. *Yeah, I’m great. I just got done coming all over your wife’s giant tits. You should have been there.*

As Jack drove home to his apartment in the southern part of West Hollywood, he reviewed past due bills in his mind and sighed. His part-time job at Schwartz gallery barely covered his basic living expenses. As the first of each month approached, he always felt like he was skating on thin ice. But there were reasons he stayed. Working a full-time job would take too much time and focus away from his primary passion: writing. He liked Gerhardt and Greta; they couldn’t be nicer. One could do worse than spend time surrounded by art for hours. When the work wasn’t interesting, it was generally peaceful. And staring at Greta’s breasts was a nice perk. But at the end of the month, the only figures that mattered were the ones in Jack’s bank account.

Like most everyone else in Los Angeles, Jack was working on a script. Unlike most, he was *not* an actor and he actually *was* a writer. He had sold several stories to various online and print publications, and the editor of one literary magazine had said Jack had “great potential” as a writer. That editor would not have approved of Jack’s decision to pursue screenwriting. But that editor wasn’t paying Jack’s rent. And the truth was, since moving to LA, Jack had genuinely become more interested in writing for the screen.

So, after five different versions of one novel in the last three years, he finally banished it to the dark depths of a file cabinet forever and changed his focus to scriptwriting. He was puttering away at a couple different script ideas, but nothing was grabbing him by the throat, shaking him senseless and slamming his head through the wall. And he knew that was what it would take for a winning script that would demand the attention of the bigwigs whose every other word was “no” and whose “maybe” meant “no” and whose exceptionally rare “yes” meant “probably not.” He had begun with movie scripts, but a few months ago, Jack had discovered and fell in love with the science fiction TV show *Nova’s Ark*. His current dream job was to be hired as one of their writers.

Until then, there were bills to pay and barely enough money to pay them. After much deliberation, Jack had decided upon three possibilities to increase his wealth:

1. Screenwriting
2. Buying and Selling Art

3. Robbing a chain of convenience stores

Number one was his goal; number two was interesting and his education at the gallery made it possible; as for the third, he wouldn't mind learning to use a gun, but he hated going into convenience stores.

So he had decided on number two. He had learned a lot at Schwartz Gallery regarding market value of art, as well as where to find the best buys and where to sell for the most. Now he scoured the papers and the Internet like a predator seeking signs of prey. He kept his ear to the ground of the collectors' scene to find the best prospects: garage sales, estate sales, liquidation sales, online vendors, etc. He knew that even one statue or print or memorabilia piece, found at the right time at the right place for the right price and sold in the same manner could alter his financial reality. He was hungry for it, and like a lion on the veldt, he wasn't going to stop until he brought something down.

2

Le Tentacle

"Daniel, are you sure you're not really straight and just pretending to be gay to get down my pants?" said Dora, running her upper teeth over the lip ring of her full lower lip. With a toss of her head she flipped strands of blonde-streaked brown hair away from her face.

"Pretty sure," said the handsome, fine-featured, blonde man. He was tan, immaculately coiffed and looked pure LA.

"How sure?" asked Dora.

"Well, let's see." He touched his finger to his chin and gazed up into the air. "I love cock."

"Well, that does kind of clinch it. But you could be bi. Why deny that possibility?"

"Because I'm not really interested in women, in general. Honeychild, I told you before, you're so sexy I can't help myself. It's like there's some invisible alien spore that floats off you like pollen."

"Actually, pollen is considered the male component of the plant reproductive cycle."

"My bad. I'm no entomologist...Oh my god, you're also as smart as a college professor. I am getting a hard-on right now."

"Daniel!" Dora laughed. "Stop. And, by the way, an entomologist studies insects."

"Oh. Well, I study you. I may not be the brightest bulb on the tree, but I know *sexy*."

"And I know *fired*. Now come on, it's a busy lunch. We have to get back down on the floor." She began tying her hair back.

"Back down? We never got a chance –"

"Don't," said Dora.

Le Tentacle was busy for a reason. In Los Angeles, a place rife with the "been there, done that" attitude, innovation was practically a prerequisite for success. Not only was Le Tentacle an unlikely fusion of French and Japanese cuisine, but also the food, with menu items like Grilled Garlic Butter Colossal Squid and Duck Foie Gras Handroll, was surprisingly good, as numerous restaurant reviews had pointed out.

The restaurant was located downtown and helped to power the upward evolution of the downtown LA scene. For Dora, it was perfect because she lived in nearby Los Feliz, only a short bus ride away, which saved her from the hassle and expense of driving and parking. The management was nice. Daniel made work go faster. The money covered her living expenses while working only four days a week, which freed her to spend time on her dream of opening a jewelry and lingerie shop. She designed both and actually made jewelry herself by hand, specializing in custom pieces meant for wear on more usual body parts (earrings, bracelets, necklaces) as well as pieces for more unusual areas, such as navel studs, ankle bracelets, lips rings and studs, various interesting pieces for the tongue that were aesthetic and practical in certain intimate situations, even genital accessories for the sexually ornamental expressionists.

As financially impractical as it may have been, she yearned for an elegant physical store space, almost as an act of rebellion against the homogenous, strip-malled LA landscape. But that would take more money than she currently could save. As independent as she was, she hoped to meet a rich man who would fund her every fantasy. She had gotten tired of struggling and felt she was making financial progress equivalent to a person trying to row a boat across the ocean. Her last boyfriend had been a writer, always struggling with money, and she swore, even though it made her feel quite shallow, that she would never date another writer again.

In her most recent setback, Dora had been denied a small business loan by the money drones at her corporate fascist bank, whereupon she had immediately asked to close her account. When the bank representative had asked her why, she was happy to explain.

“Because I no longer want to support an oppressive, unjust economic system based on a false, created idea of scarcity set up by a few elitist families to control the flow of resources for their own psychotic power obsession while the rest of the populace struggles just to survive.”

The bank representative had stared at her as if he were watching a TV broadcast of aliens landing on the White House lawn.

“Ma’am, we’re a respected financial institution that provides great service to our customers. We’re sorry you’re not happy...”

“We?” she said. “Are you speaking for the whole hive mind?”

He just stared at her, open mouthed.

“Look, MBA,” she said, leaning over the desk toward him so that her most adequate cleavage winked at him from within her white blouse. “I could waste your time suffocating you with my wits or my tits, but I’d rather just close my account and let you get on with your Kafkaesque duties.”

After that he didn’t even make eye contact with her, though his eyes did stray to the front of her blouse a couple of times. After he handed her the bank check, she said, “Thanks. Sorry for the trouble.”

“No problem,” he said.

“By the way, if you could do me one last favor. Please tell my loan representative, Roger Halbern, to kiss my ass.” Then she had strolled out and deposited her money in one of the few remaining independently-owned local banks where the owners and employees still retained some modicum of freewill and community spirit. As for the rep of her former bank that had closed her account, he watched her ass as she left the bank,

felt resentful but obsessed about her all day and then fantasized about her as he climaxed into his wife that evening. His wife commented on his amazing passion.

3

Porn Free

Jack stepped into his living room, stopped, grimaced and averted his gaze. He reluctantly turned back to the unsightly scene before him. Jack's roommate Stu was sitting in his favorite green reclining chair, completely naked, cock in hand, enjoying his favorite pastime: masturbating to pornography. Stu liked it even more than watching professional basketball; something in which Jack had even less interest.

"Hey Jack," said Stu, giving Jack a brief nod before turning his attention back to the activities on the screen. Stu noticed Jack's grimace and looked back at him again. "What?"

"Do you have to do that while I'm here?" asked Jack.

"But you weren't here."

"Well, I am now," said Jack.

"Dude, you want me to stop?" asked Stu, who actually hadn't stopped, but had unconsciously kept stroking his erect penis since Jack walked in. The moans and other sounds issuing from the speakers on either side of the large flat-screen television made it hard for Jack to concentrate on what Stu was saying. "I was right in the middle of this new DVD. Why don't you join me?"

"Stu, you know how I feel about that."

"Alright, alright, but don't deprive a man of his pleasure right in the middle of...you know, it's not good. Coitus interruptus."

"Actually, this is masturbatious interruptus."

"You know what I mean," said Stu.

"Well, could you just stop while I'm passing through? Just want to get safely to my room."

"Suit yourself," said Stu. "But you oughta check out this chick."

"I've seen enough porn. I've seen it all. Any more, I just..." Jack stopped and stared at the beautiful brunette woman on the screen who was jacking off some guy who was moaning something in Italian. She was staring at the man with half-lidded eyes and an almost indescribable look of sincere longing.

Jack said, "Who the FUCK is that?"

"That, my porn-jaded friend, is the queen of European pornography. That is one of the hottest women to ever suck cock on camera. The European porn princess (now retired) known as Monica Roccaforte."

Jack couldn't take his eyes off the screen. Despite the presence of Stu's erection, Jack found himself sitting down slowly on the couch next to Stu's chair (but on the far side from his roommate) to stare at the screen.

"She's incredible," said Jack.

"Another convert," said Stu, smiling.

"She's Italian? Is this new?"

Stu said, "She's supposed to be Hungarian, I think. She's retired from porn. This stuff is from the nineties. Amazing isn't she?"

“Yeah,” said Jack. “I’ve never seen her before. She looks like a woman from a classical painting or something. Like an incredibly hot version of the Mona Lisa. I didn’t know there was porn like this.”

“I love it all,” said Stu. “Just thought I’d do some foreign stuff for a change.”

On the screen, the man was coming. Monica Roccaforte just continued to stroke with that tender look on her face and whimper slightly as the come shot all around her half-parted, cherubic lips. Despite Stu’s presence, Jack was getting a hard-on and felt his face flush.

“Holy shit,” said Jack with a sigh and sat back into the couch.

“Oh, dude, I missed my cue,” said Stu. “Well, there’s always the rewind button.”

Jack said, “I’ve honestly never seen anything like that on film. That woman has passion painted all over her face. None of the fake screaming and fake talk and all that shit. I can’t watch that American crap with those fake-ass porn stars any more. It actually makes me go limp. It’s like bad community theater. Or professional wrestling.”

“I know, I know. You’re a snob that way,” said Stu.

“Is this yours? Or did you rent it?” asked Jack, reluctantly pulling his eyes away from the screen to glance at Stu.

“It’s mine, my friend. I just bought three DVD’s with her on it. Directed by Mario Salieri. In one, she’s a nun sucking and fucking some priest. Weird European shit.”

Jack said, “I don’t care if she plays a fucking mime. As long as it’s her. You wouldn’t mind if I…”

“Dude,” said Stu. “I told you before, my porn is your porn. I’m happy to turn you on to some new shit. Any time. You can even sit in my favorite chair, while I’m not using it, of course.”

“Uh. Huh-huh. Thanks,” said Jack. He hadn’t touched Stu’s chair since he’d found out its main purpose. In fact, it had gotten to the point where he didn’t want to invite friends or girls into the living room in fear that they might sit in it.

Stu had rewound and had commenced manipulating his member. “Won’t be long now,” said Stu.

“I’ll leave you to it,” said Jack, tearing himself away from the screen. Even the sleep-eyed actress couldn’t keep him around for Stu’s finale.

“I’ll leave the DVDs on top of the counter,” said Stu.

“Thanks man,” said Jack, making a swift exit into his room where he closed the door and turned on his stereo to mask the horrific sounds.

4

Not Exactly Sushi

Jack’s cellphone chimed and he looked at the number. It was his just recently ex-girlfriend Brenda: she of the prodigious tatas and even more prodigious needs. He grimaced and sighed. If he ignored it, she would keep calling. He did still care about her and felt he owed it to her to keep communication open. Jack braced himself for frustration, which he realized by now was the only possible outcome of their continued communications.

“You won’t even have lunch with me?” asked Brenda.

“Brenda, I care about you, but you know how it’ll end.”

“How?”

“We’ll end up in the sack.”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“If it stopped there, nothing. But then we’ll end up back where we were, at loggerheads, because we don’t want the same thing.”

“You don’t want me?”

“I don’t want *only* you. You know I can’t take your jealousy, your possessiveness.”

“Well, I wouldn’t be jealous if you didn’t give me anything to be jealous about.”

“You see, that’s just what I mean. I told you, I don’t even know if I believe in monogamy anymore.”

“What, you just want to sleep around?”

“No, not necessarily.”

“But maybe,” she said accusingly.

“Isn’t there something in-between? Maybe I’d like to be with someone that was okay with us both seeing other people.”

“That’s polygamy.”

“No, polygamy is being married to more than one person. I mean something more like what they call polyamory. I’m not saying that’s what I want. I don’t know. I don’t know that it has to be called anything. I just want someone who thinks and feels the same way as I do about this.”

“Why am I not enough for you? Sex is great. You said so yourself.”

“It’s not just about sex.”

“Then what is it about?” asked Brenda. She sounded hurt and frustrated.

“You were right,” said Jack. “I should have had lunch with you. At least then we would have had lunch, sex and then a frustrating conversation. Instead all we got was the frustrating conversation.”

“Well, forget it then. Jack, I don’t know what you want and I don’t think you do either. Good luck finding those five or six women that you want to spend the rest of your life with. If you decide you want to have a mature relationship with a real woman, then call me. Or don’t!” The line went dead.

A mature relationship, thought Jack. *Ugh*. Even her terminology rubbed him the wrong way. The only thing that didn’t rub him the wrong way was her huge breasts. And that, realized Jack, was one thing that had kept him with her this long. By god, it took courage for a man to dump a pretty woman with a large bosom!

The other reason he had possibly stayed with Brenda was a very LA reason. She worked for an entertainment company that had as one of their clients his favorite TV show, *Nova’s Ark*, the show he hoped, on one frabjous day, to be hired as a writer. Brenda said she actually knew the executive producer, Phillip Branning, and told Jack she would try to introduce him or at least get a script into Phillip’s hands. But she never did. Whenever he brought it up, she said Branning was super-busy and she didn’t see him much and the right time had never come up for her to broach the subject. Jack felt more guilty for staying with Brenda for this reason than for her tits, but his guilt was assuaged a great deal by the fact that he now believed she had been using it as leverage to keep him with her. Hell, it was possible she didn’t even know Branning.

The phone rang again. He was going to answer again. Why, for god’s sake? Obligation? Guilt? Pity?

“Yeah?”

“Sorry I got mad and yelled,” said Brenda.

“It’s okay.”

“What if it was sushi?” asked Brenda.

“Sushi?”

“Yeah, I’ll take you to a sushi place for lunch. My treat. As a peace offering.”

Jack adored sushi so much that he’d even face another unpleasant conversation with Brenda. He was kind of broke and hadn’t had sushi in two months. Maybe it was best to try to appease her. Otherwise she would probably keep calling despite her threat.

“Well. Alright.”

“Great, I’ll pick you up in half an hour.”

“Okay, see you then.”

Forty-five minutes later Jack sat in a cushioned maroon chair opposite Brenda, a chirpy blonde who, at least for Jack’s tastes, was a tad too thin for her large breasts. Overhanging lamps and sunlight from the glass wall facing the street lit up a full room of upscale, downtown lunchers. Since they entered the restaurant Jack had been a bit confused by the pleasant smell, which seemed a bit rich for a sushi place.

Brenda said, “So what do you think? Isn’t it nice? Their reviews have been great.” She gave Jack a hopeful smile. Sometimes she tried so hard that he hated himself.

“Yeah, it’s got a great atmosphere. The name’s a bit strange, but if it’s any indication, it means they might specialize in dishes starring my favorite tentacled friend.”

“I’m sure they’ve got everything,” said Brenda.

Jack picked up the menu, started scanning at the appetizers and frowned. He saw things like Anago and Shitake Mushroom Fritters, Deep Fried White Shrimp on Potato Chip and French Onion Miso Soup. He further scanned the menu.

“What the hell?” said Jack.

“What’s wrong,” said Brenda, looking worried.

“Brenda, this isn’t exactly a sushi restaurant.”

“It isn’t?” She looked around the room as if that would provide the clue.

“Sweetbreads with Teriyaki Sauce and Barbecued Duck Foie Gras on Sticky Rice aren’t exactly traditional Japanese dishes.” He looked at the front of the menu. “Ah. Le Tentacle: A Japanese-French Fusion Dining Experience.”

“Is that bad?” asked Brenda.

“It *sounds* bad,” said Jack.

Brenda frowned. “My friend Sarah told me about it. I thought she said it was a sushi place.”

“You probably weren’t listening,” said Jack.

“Oh, thanks Jack.”

“I’m just sayin — ”

“If you want, we can go somewhere else.”

“No, no, that’s fine,” said Jack. “Let’s be adventurous. I’m sure it will be interesting if nothing else. And I like interesting.”

“As opposed to me,” said Brenda. “Not interesting.”

“What?”

“You don’t think I’m interesting.”

Here we go, thought Jack. “Brenda.”

“You don’t.”

“You’re fine just the way you are,” said Jack shaking his head and staring back down at his menu.

“Then why do you want to break up?” asked Brenda.

We already did break up, thought Jack. “Brenda, can we just eat first and...” *not talk later*, thought Jack.

“Sure. Fine,” said Brenda, sounding neither sure nor fine.

What was I thinking? thought Jack. A shadow momentarily blocked the outside light and Jack looked up to see a well-groomed blonde male waiter smiling down at him.

Daniel stepped into the kitchen from the busy dining room, blinking repeatedly. A glint of reflected sunlight from outside must have caught hit him right in the eyes. He had been momentarily dazzled and a peculiar sparkling scintillation remained dancing in his vision for several moments. He was starting to wonder if someone had dropped acid in his mineral water when the light finally vanished and was replaced by an equally strange and elusive dark shadowy blotch, which danced in place of the light briefly before vanishing altogether.

Jesus, he needed to cut back on his hours. What had he just been thinking of?

“Coming through!” said Dora, swerving around Daniel. She checked a plate of food on the counter and then turned back to him. “You okay? You look like you’re suffering from head trauma.”

Daniel stared into space. There was something he was supposed to do, but couldn’t quite remember what.

Dora waved her hand in front of his face. “Are you suffering from amnesia? Let me help. You’re a waiter with full tables at lunch rush. Hello!”

Oh, yes! thought Daniel. *The handsome guy at table three.*

Daniel stared at her.

“What?” she said.

“Dora, there is a hunk of substantial man at table three.” He then blinked as if he’d just woken up and handed in an order to the cooks.

“Whatever,” said Dora, checking her tickets.

“I mean it, honeychild. Just your type.”

“No thanks. I’m done for now. Well done!”

“What?” said one of the cooks.

“Not you,” said Dora, waving her hand.

She said to Daniel, “As for my type, my type now vibrates.”

“Girl, pick yourself up, dust yourself off. At least have a look. I’m telling you, your type. Bedroom eyes, thick hair (but not long, and well cut). And, he looks *intelligent*.”

“Even worse. They can fight back,” said Dora. “Not interested.” She grabbed two plates and headed towards the dining room.

“At least have a look,” Daniel called after her. He then thought, *Why am I suddenly playing cupid for that girl?*

Five minutes later, Daniel and Dora’s paths again crossed in the kitchen. Dora’s face looked even more flushed with energy than before.

“Daniel?”

“Yeaaaaa?”

She reviewed the plates of food on the counter and said distractedly, “Can I have table three?”

“I knew it!” said Daniel smiling.

“What? I’m just curious.”

“HaHA!”

“Oh for god’s sake. Never mind,” said Dora. “He’s with that blonde bimchette anyway.”

“My radar says “uh-uh.” If she’s not his ex-girlfriend, she’s headed that way.”

“How do you know?”

“I can just tell by the way they talk and look, or don’t look, at each other. Anyway, she’s just a bleach blonde. She wouldn’t have a chance against you. Go on. Take it.” He handed her the ticket to table three. “You owe me one, girlfriend.”

“Thanks!” She grabbed Daniel by the waist and gave him a smooch on the lips.

“Sexual harassment,” said Daniel. “More later please.”

“You’re the best!” Dora said as she left the kitchen.

“I’m constantly telling you!”

Daniel thought, *Mission accomplished. Wait. What mission? What am I doing? I want to sleep with Dora!*

Jack was relieved to see a waitress approaching their table with plates of food.

“Here we are,” said the waitress. She set the Salmon Tartare down in the middle. The Chicken Katsu with Buttered Spring Vegetables was for Brenda. Jack got the Grilled Garlic Butter Colossal Squid. But it wasn’t all he got.

As the waitress bent down unnecessarily close to Jack, he got a view of the most gorgeous, sensual woman he’d ever set eyes on. What was she? Part Hispanic or Spanish? Half European? Brown hair with tasteful blonde streaks. Full lips with a lip ring, almost slightly slanted eyes, curvy body. She was like a perfect piece of fruit, ripe for plucking. Jack couldn’t take his eyes off her.

“Oh, thanks,” said Jack. He stared at her, smiling. She smiled back. Brenda was not smiling.

“I’ll be your waitress now,” said Dora. “Is there anything else you need?”

“No,” said Brenda.

“No, thanks,” said Jack. His eyes didn’t leave Dora as he said, “Looks great. Lovely. Thanks.” Dora bit her lower lip.

“Well,” said Dora, keeping her eyes on Jack, “just let me know if you need anything.” She walked away.

Jack nodded, sighed and stared at his squid with a faint smile.

“Wow,” he said.

“What?” asked Brenda.

“I said, wow. The food. The food looks great.” He looked innocently across the table.

“Yeah. Great,” said Brenda.

Jack enjoyed his Grilled Garlic Butter Colossal Squid far more than he’d expected. In fact, he could have sworn it was one of the best meals of his life. His mood had taken a sharp turn upward since the arrival of the food. He assumed his blood sugar had been low. Of course, that didn’t explain the fact that he’d felt better before taking a single bite. Brenda’s mood had gone considerably downward. Jack’s mood turned into misdirected goodwill.

“Brenda, you look really nice today. Sorry I didn’t say anything before. I was hungry and wasn’t thinking.”

“You mean it?” she asked, glancing up and brightening a bit.

“Of course.”

“You know, I don’t have to be back at work for another hour.” She smiled at him and leaned forward a bit to show her cleavage.

Oops, thought Jack. Now I’ve done it. She does look good. But why am I suddenly turned on and full of life? If I try to back out of this, she’ll feel hurt and rejected. What now?

“Well, I’d like to,” Jack half-lied. “But, we’re supposed to be...not together anymore. Like that.”

“You don’t want me right now?”

“Well, yeah, but...”

“Well then, ask for the check. I’m going to use the little girls’ room.” She got up, stopped next to Jack and gave him a brief hug, pulling his head in to her breasts. Then she walked off towards the back of the restaurant.

A moment later, Jack looked up to see Dora smiling down at him again. He immediately realized the source of his “joie de vivre.”

“How are you doing?” asked Dora.

“Fine, thanks. How are you?”

“Peachy.”

Jack laughed. “Really?”

“Yeah, why?” asked Dora.

“I thought maybe you were joking.”

“You’d know if I was joking. Can I get you anything else? Anything at all?”

“Ummmm.”

Brenda stepped into the empty bathroom and immediately noticed with approval how immaculate it was. She was heading toward the stall when she was distracted by a small shadow moving across the wall. It was most odd; she couldn’t tell its source and it didn’t seem to be connected to anything. She turned her head to follow its direction and her gaze ended up at the sink. Was it a shadow from the door closing? She took a step toward the sink. The lamp hanging over it reflected light off the silver faucet like the glitter from sun off ripples of water on the surface of a lake. The soft-focus sparkle of light seemed

less a reflection than a radiance coming from the faucet itself. She suddenly felt a strange fascination, almost like a wave of nostalgia, as she stared at her surroundings.

The silver faucet was modern in design like the rest of the room. The faucet neck went up and then curved down in a graceful sweep like the neck of a swan. It submerged in the dark water of black marble, which was thinly veined with white and gray like light reflecting the churning of its surface. The edge of the marble meeting the walls was gilt with a thin silver shoreline. An orchid reached toward the faucet on a long, graceful green neck as if to meet the swan's head in a kiss. Its face was rich, cottony white with purple speckles and an orange and purple tongue that licked out longingly toward the swan.

The maroon walls were a dark red so rich that it seemed they had many layers of depth, endless sheets of Egyptian cotton billowing in a breeze. The golden light from the glass stars overhead played upon the surfaces, creating mysterious patterns of light and shadow that seemed to weave an endless, untold story.

Brenda's eyes moved down to the softly shining tiles at her feet. She was beginning to explore the beautiful puzzle of their geometric language when the bathroom door opened and the din from the dining room leaked in. A young woman stopped and looked at Brenda as the door swung closed behind her.

"Excuse me," said the woman. Brenda was standing in front of the sink and mirror, partially blocking the woman's way.

"Oh," said Brenda. She moved back from the sink and blinked her eyes. *What am I doing?*

"Sorry," Brenda said to the woman. The woman smiled at her and continued to apply her lipstick in the mirror. Feeling a bit lost, Brenda pushed the door of the stall open and went in. *That's weird, she thought, I've never been that interested in architecture before. What a beautiful bathroom!*

"Maybe I should come back when your girlfriend returns," said Dora.

"Oh, she's not my girlfriend," said Jack.

"I just assumed."

"No."

"She's very pretty."

"Yeah. But she's just not my type."

"What is your type?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Jack looking around the room. His eyes returned to Dora. "You?"

"Me?" Dora asked. "You don't even know me. Hell, you don't even know my name. It's Dora, by the way."

"Jack," he said, holding out his hand. They shook.

Jack said, "Well, I'm just guessing. You can tell a lot from first impressions." Dora tilted her head and stared at him smiling.

Jack continued, "Like, the way a girl tilts her head." Dora's smile broadened then she bit her lower lip. "Or how a girl bites her lower lip."

"Okay, stop that," said Dora. "Listen, I have to get to some other tables."

"Sure. Can you go ahead and bring the check when you have a chance?"

“Sure. So...nothing else?”

“Well. Um...maybe...”

“Yes?”

“Um...” He scratched his chin.

“Do you mind if I come right back?” asked Dora. “Another table needs me.”

“Oh, sure. Sorry.”

“So when I come back, just tell me what you want and I’ll see what I can do.”

“Okay,” said Jack. Dora left. *Damn it!* thought Jack. *How can I be approaching forty with a ton of experience with woman and still suffer from fear of rejection? Now I’ve blown it. Brenda will be back any minute. In fact, where the hell is she?*

Brenda wiggled out of her skirt, pulled down her yellow panties and sat down on the black toilet seat. *My god,* she thought. *This place is so clean I’d be totally fine having sex here. I wonder who cleans this place? Probably some illegal immigrant.*

She decided to check her makeup while she sat, to save time. She reached down and opened her purse to grab her makeup compact. Even though light was shining down from a lamp overhead, the inside of her purse seemed engulfed in an impossible shadow. It was completely dark inside and Brenda couldn’t see her compact or her lipstick or anything. *What the hell?* thought Brenda. *The lighting in here is so weird. Beautiful, but weird.*

She reached her hand into her bag and finally found the compact by touch. As she was opening it up, the lamplight from above reflected in her eyes like the sparkling of the silver faucet earlier. Her mind began to wander and wonder about the cleanliness of the bathroom and who might be responsible for such a thorough job. An image suddenly slipped into her mind of a handsome, clean cut, black-haired Latin pop star wearing a button-down white shirt and tight black jeans, sleeves rolled up, bronze skin rippling with muscle as he pushed a soft cloth with gentle but insistent force along the shiny black toilet seat, preparing it for her bare bottom.

Then he was there, pushing the soft cloth with gentle, insistent force not upon the seat, but slowly back and forth along Brenda’s bare thighs. Brenda closed her eyes and sighed. *No,* she thought, *I can’t keep Jack waiting. And I shouldn’t be thinking of anyone but Jack anyway. I’ve got to stay positive. I know he really loves me. He just needs time to settle down. And when he does, I’ll be there.*

She reached into her purse and found the wedding band she carried with her for visualization purposes and slipped it on her finger. She imagined being in the dining room with Jack and running into some of Jack’s friends unexpectedly.

“Hey, it’s Jack Stevens,” they would say. “Jack, who is this beautiful woman on your arm?”

“Hello,” she would say with a happy smile. “I’m Jack’s wife.” Then she pictured shaking their hands with the ring on her finger. *Mrs. Brenda Stevens,* she said in her head. *Mrs. Brenda Stevens, Mrs. Brenda Stevens, Mrs. Brenda Stevens.* She tried to picture Jack’s smiling face, but she saw instead the Latin pop star.

Brenda realized that she had become so distracted she hadn’t even peed yet. She pushed and forced the golden stream into the toilet with a tinkling sound. She was still

feeling all flushed from the thought of the Latin man with the soft cloth despite her efforts to push it from her mind. The lamplight above her felt like sun on the beach, bathing her in pleasant warmth. She tore off some toilet paper and wiped. She breathed in deeply and sighed. She wiped again. Then again. She dropped the toilet paper in the toilet. *What about Jack?* she thought. *I'll be getting myself ready for him. I'll do it quickly. For Jack.*

But as her fingers ran up and down the lips of her vagina, as they pulled those lips apart and explored the wet, slippery inside walls, as they gently touched then rubbed her clitoris and as she moved closer and closer to an incredible orgasm, she wasn't thinking of Jack.

"Where's your friend?" asked Dora, removing Jack's empty plate from the table.

"Not sure," said Jack. "She went to the bathroom, but..."

"Maybe she met someone," said Dora smiling.

I wish, thought Jack.

Dora said, "So, have you thought about it?"

"Yeah. I...just feel awkward cause you're working."

"Don't worry about that."

"Your phone number?"

"Was that so hard?" asked Dora.

"For some reason, yes," said Jack, squinting.

"You're cute. I'll write it on the check."

"Okay. But please hand the check straight to me. My friend likes to tease me about this kind of stuff and it annoys me. So, do you mind waiting with the check till I'm back from the bathroom?"

"Sure. That's what I was planning on doing," said Dora. She walked to another table. He turned to watch her go.

Wow, he thought. He felt as happy as a schoolboy on the last school day before summer. He turned back to see Brenda returning to the table.

"Well, you took awhile," said Jack. "I thought maybe you met someone in there."

"Sorry. I had to do a couple things."

"You look all flushed. You okay?"

Brenda's color deepened. "Fine. Did I miss anything?"

"Nope."

"Did you ask for the check? I want to get out of here and go back to your place."

"Yeah, I did," said Jack. "I'm going to use the restroom. Be right back."

Brenda narrowed her eyes at Jack as he walked away.

"Where's the salmon for table five?" asked Daniel. He was staring at the head chef, shaking his head. The chef said something unintelligible. Daniel turned to look at Dora and rolled his eyes. Dora shrugged and reviewed the plates of food on the counter.

"Well?" said Daniel.

“Well what?”

“What happened with the cutie at table three?”

Dora tried to suppress a smile. “I’m giving him my number.”

“Ha! I knew it,” said Daniel. “Cupid strikes again!”

Dora sighed and shook her head. The chef put another plate of food up and Dora filled her hands with plates and headed for the dining room.

“It’s just a phone number!” said Dora.

“Uh-huh,” said Daniel.

As Dora walked by Jack’s table, his bleach blonde friend motioned her over.

“Yes?” asked Dora with a smile.

Brenda said, “Excuse me, I don’t mean any offense, but, was my husband just flirting with you?”

“Your husband?” asked Dora, still wearing her smile.

“Yes. He does that a lot, especially in restaurants and it kind of embarrasses me. He promised he wouldn’t do it anymore.”

Dora pressed her lips together and slowly shook her head. “No, I wouldn’t say he was flirting.”

“Were you?” said Brenda, pasting on a smile. She placed her left hand prominently on the table.

“No, ma’am. Just making small talk. It’s part of my job. Would you like the check now?” Dora glanced at Brenda’s hand and saw the ring.

“Thanks, that would be great. I’m sorry if I offended you.”

“Not at all,” said Dora with a professional smile. She walked away. She thought, *I knew something was weird. This is what you get with forced monogamy: lies and games. Fuck him! Actually, fuck her too. I feel like punching the skinny little bitch. Actually, fuck them both and their private little monogamous hell.*

Jack returned a couple minutes later. Soon after, Dora appeared with the check. She didn’t make eye contact with either Jack or Brenda as she put the leather folder on the table.

“Thank you,” she said in a monotone voice.

“Thank *you*,” said Jack.

He turned to see Brenda grab the leather check folder. He reached across and snatched it quickly from her grasp.

“Ah!” she said. “What are you doing?”

“I’ll pay.”

“Why? I said I’d take you to lunch.”

“Yeah, but...that’s okay. I want to pay.”

“Why?”

“Because...just, for you putting up with me all this time.”

Brenda frowned. “Okay. I thought you were broke.”

“Well...” He shrugged his shoulders. He opened the folder and glanced at the customer copy of the check before folding it and putting it in his pocket. Dora had written, “Changed my mind. Forget it.”

He frowned as he put his credit card in the plastic slot and placed the folder on the edge of the table. Brenda stared at him.

“You’re acting weird, Jack.”

“Am I?”

Dora walked back by and snatched up the leather folder. Brenda narrowed her eyes and stared after her. “Yeah,” said Brenda, “you are.”

Jack just shrugged his shoulders again. Dora brought the folder back and placed it on the table without a word.

What the fuck? thought Jack. *I am so sick of LA women.*

“I don’t like the service here,” said Brenda as they walked out. “I don’t think we should come back.”

Jack just grunted. Brenda’s comment made him angry. The waitress made him angry. Women in general made him angry.

Back in the car, Brenda reached over and stroked Jack’s thigh and then his groin. “Can’t wait to get back to your place.”

Jack grunted. “Me neither.”

Twenty minutes later he was fucking Brenda from behind so hard it was slamming her into the headboard of his bed. The sound of his legs hitting her ass as he rammed his cock into her was like the resounding slap of waves hitting a dock. Brenda’s butt cheeks were pink and Jack was putting all his anger and frustration into every thrust.

“Oh, god, yes! Fuck me, Jack! Ah! Ah! Oh God!” Wisely, Brenda was now holding securely onto the headboard with both arms.

“Come on, you fucking bitch!” cried Jack.

“Oh god Jack, I want you to come!”

“I’m gonna come!” said Jack.

Brenda pulled away and lay down in front of him. He straddled her chest. She grabbed his cock and started jacking it off.

“Come on me Jack! Come all over my huge tits! Come on baby!”

Jack felt a deep surge and stopped moving. He started a groan, which grew louder and louder till his come squirted out in repeated shots.

“Oh, yeah Jack! Come on my tits!” cried Brenda, moving his cock back and forth between her two breasts like a hose and rubbing the head of his cock against her nipples until her breasts were drenched in warm come.

“Mmmmm,” said Brenda. She gently sucked his cock with several strokes of her mouth.

“Ah,” said Jack and fell sideways down onto the bed with a groan. Brenda went into the bathroom to clean off. Jack lay still with his eyes closed, his passion and his anger spent.

Brenda returned and lay next to Jack with her arms over his chest.

“How was that?” asked Brenda.

“Fine.”

“Fine?”

“I don’t think we should do this anymore.”

“Why?”

“Because it doesn’t change anything. I like the sex, but you want more than that from me and you’re just not getting it right now. And that’s not fair to you.”

“So, you want to break up with me for *my* sake?”

“Kind of.”

“Not because you want to fuck other girls like that waitress at the restaurant?”

Jack sighed. "Maybe that too."

"Fuck you, Jack!" Brenda rolled off the bed. "I'm sick of you!" She grabbed her clothes and quickly dressed.

"I don't blame you," said Jack, reclining with his hands behind his head. "I'm happy to have sex with you and I want us to be friends. But that's not what you want. I tried to tell you this. I don't even know if I believe in monogamy anymore."

"Well, forget it then. Jack, I don't know what you want and I don't think you do either." Brenda stumbled as she slipped on her heels. "Good luck finding those five or six women that you want to spend the rest of your life with. If you decide you want to have a mature relationship with a real woman, then call me. Or don't!"

Brenda stomped out of the bedroom. Jack grimaced waiting for the door to slam. He flinched as it did. He lay on the bed, sighing and shaking his head. Her final words turned over in his mind. They sounded familiar. *My god, he thought, that sounds exactly like what she said when she hung up on me.*

He was right and he had been right; it ended up exactly where it did before, with sex in between. It was like an erotic version of some circle of Dante's hell. The sex they had just finished had verged on being a hate fuck. He was beginning to hate Brenda and he was beginning to hate himself for hating her. *This was the last time, thought Jack. Tits or no tits, this was the last time. Fucking women! God, to be free of this desire that causes so much misery! To hell with woman! To hell with all of them!*

He rolled out of bed, found his jacket and pulled the restaurant receipt out of the pocket and read it again.

"Changed my mind. Forget it."

Oh yeah? thought Jack. *Well, you fucked with the wrong guy, you flaky bitch. I'm a writer.*