

DINNER AT 'TUCCI'S

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[A restaurant. T has been waiting for ten minutes. S enters, walking quickly.]

T: Hey.

S: Hey. *[Takes off his sunglasses and sits across from her.]* Sorry I'm late.

T: It's okay.

S: *[Settles himself; looks at her water glass.]* Hey, I didn't get water.

T: You weren't here. *[S frowns.]* I asked the waiter.

S: I'll ask the waiter, too, then. *[Opens menu.]* Where is the waiter?

[Looks down at the menu.]

Should I get what I always get, or try something different.

T: Do what you want.

S: *[Studies the menu.]* I'll get what I always get. I'm nothing if not boring.

T: *[Arched eyebrow.]* Yes.

S: It's never bad to have a streak of... reactionary-ness? In a revolutionary?

T: What are you trying to say?

S: How do I make an adjective out of that? "Reactionary."

T: It is an adjective.

S: Reactionarity? I mean a noun, then.

T: What do you need a noun for?

S: For my sentence: "A streak of reactionary... arity."

T: You don't need a noun. It's just reactionary.

S: It doesn't work. A streak of reactionary. Doesn't work. Has to be reactionary-ness or something.

T: That's not a word.

S: It's a perfectly good word.

T: It doesn't make sense.

S: It does. I just need it to be a noun.

T: "A reactionary streak."

S: There you go. That's it.

T: It doesn't make sense.

S: It's the opposite of revolutionary. Reactionary.

T: No it's not. Reaction?

S: It means opposed to change. Like me, here. Always artichokes.

T: No it doesn't. The root's not right. It doesn't mean anything like that.

S: It does. Tenth grade history book. All about the reactionaries and the revolutionaries.

T: It doesn't. It's not a word.

S: It's a perfectly good word. Eighteenth century France. Marie Antionette and her reactionary gang.

T: "Reaction" doesn't have anything to do with that.

S: Look it up.

T: You look it up. You're the one who's wrong.

S: Hmph. *[Goes back to looking at menu. Then looks up for a waiter. Finds a waiter in the corner and stares intently.]* I'm trying to get the waiter-telepathy going here but it doesn't seem to be working.

T: That's not our waiter.

S: Then who is? Where is he? I want water.

T: Here. Have mine.

S: *[Finally catching the eye of the waiter.]* Mine's coming to me.

[The waiter arrives.]

Can I have some water?

W: Are you ready to order?

S: Sure. I'll have the rigatoni with artichokes.

[To T.] Are you ready to order?

T: Yes.

S: Okay, then.

T: I'll have a small insalata with chianti.

W: Okay.

S: Thank you very much.

[The waiter leaves.]

T: I found an apartment. *[Starts unfolding a map of Boston.]*

S: Are you still staying with, what's-their-name, foo and bar?

T: Yes. It's here. *[Points to a place on the map.]*

S: *[Looks intently.]* Yeah. I know where that is.

T: You do?

S: Yeah, sure.

T: No, you don't.

S: Sure I do. It's where they keep towing my car off to.

T: *[Looks back at map.]* Yeah. I guess it's near there.

S: Sure it is.

T: It's right across from a Star market.

S: *[Thinks.]* I don't think I know where the Star is.
[T starts refolding the map.]
On the right?

T: What.

S: The Star market's on the right, as you drive north?

T: I have to sign a lease tomorrow. It's not really an apartment, it's a townhouse.

S: White? On the left as you drive up McGrath?

T: It's white. McGrath's not anywhere near there.

S: Not McGrath. McGrath goes east-west. You turn left off McGrath onto that other thing. And the townhouses are on the left?

T: It's at the intersection of Boulder and Silverline roads.

S: I guess I don't know where it is, then.
[An awkward silence.]

T: I don't have a job yet.

S: I was going to ask about that. No luck?

T: No one wants to hire me.

S: The job market will pick up in August. When the summer hires leave.

T: Great. By then I'll owe my housemates five thousand dollars.

S: Five thousand dollars?

T: *[Running it off.]* First month's rent, last month's rent, security deposit, real estate broker's fee.

S: How much is rent?

T: It was on the market for \$1750, but we got it down to \$1600.

S: For three people? *[T nods.]* That's not bad. *[It is.]*
[The food arrives. S digs in at once.]
I knew there was a reason I always order the same thing.

T: Because you're boring?

S: Because it tastes great.

[An awkward silence. T and S eat.]

So how much do you have to put up front?

T: Sixty-four hundred dollars.

S: Wait. First month's rent, last month's rent. . .

T: Security deposit and broker's fee. Sixteen hundred times four.

S: Security deposit's another month's rent?

T: And broker's fee's just about another month's rent.

S: *[Whistles.]*

[A long silence. They eat without speaking.]

S: You look nice.

T: What?

S: You look nice.

T: Thank you.

I like your shirt. The color.

S: Thank you.

[Silence.]

[Pointing at the next table.] Do you think all four of those kids are theirs?

T: Yes.

S: The little girl has bright red hair.

T: So?

S: Must be the mailman's.

[A long silence. S pokes at his food. T glances frequently at her watch, and out the window. S studies her face as she looks out the window. She catches his looking.]

T: What.

S: *[Beat.]* You're beautiful.

T: Right.

[Another long silence, punctuated with food-prodding and watch-glancing.]

T: I need to go soon.

S: I . . .

T: What.

S: *[Very quietly.]* I wanted to say I'm sorry.

T: *[Her face changes.]* Me, too.

[She quickly looks down, trying to control herself. Her chin quivers; she fights it.]

[S slides his napkin to her across the table. She doesn't see it. She takes a deep breath, looks up; looks down.]

S: Here. *[His hand still on the napkin beside her.]*

T: Thanks. *[She takes it. Their hands do not touch.]*

[T shakes silently, but pulls herself together. Wipes her eyes with the napkin. S watches, his eyes sad. T looks up. Wipes her mouth.]

T: *[Brightly.]* How's the thesis coming?

S: All right. My advisor wants a first draft on July 8. It's not going to be easy.

T: How's it coming?

S: I've got about 40 pages of it. It's coming. But there are still some proofs to write up, and it's hard to keep writing and not coding.

[Another silence. S poking his food and looking at T.]

T: What.

S: *[Very quietly.]* You know I'm not good at talking at times like this.

T: What do you want to say.

S: *[Quiet enough to be inaudible.]* Lots of things.

T: What?

S: Lots of things. But most of them begin with “I’m sorry.”

[He takes her hand across the table.]

[T looks down again. S remains holding her hand. After a moment, she moves to wipe her eyes and so doing takes back her hand. S watches her, inscrutable, as she struggles to control herself again. Finally, she looks up.]

T: I’m sorry. I can’t deal with this now. We should talk about this, all this, some other time. I just can’t. . . I’ve got to go. *[Looks at her watch.]*

[T gets up and leaves, quickly, S watching after her. As she reaches the alcove by the door she stops, behind a low screen. S wonders if she will come back. But after a moment she finds her sunglasses and exits, putting them on. She turns right and strides rapidly past the glass window of the restaurant, her gaze never wavering from straight ahead. S follows her with his eyes in silence until she disappears from view. The baby at the next table cries.]

[S turns back to his food. Spears an artichoke and chews it, slowly, his mind far away.]

[The waiter returns and fills up T’s empty glass.]