

“Why do you think my family doesn’t like you, Jerry? They couldn’t be sweeter to you. Honestly. Even Nana’s come around.”

“No-no-no-no-no, I’m not saying they don’t like me. Just a minute, let me order.” To the waiter, “Two Manny’s Pale Ale and an order of Gorgonzola fries, for now.”

“What do you mean, ‘no’, Jerry. You said straight out, ‘I don’t think your family likes me.’ There’s no other way to take it.”

“I misspoke, okay?. What I meant to say was, I’m uncomfortable around your family and I sense that they sense that.”

“Why are you uncomfortable? My mother hugs you, my father always asks why you don’t come over more often.”

“Okay, let’s just say, for instance, someday we have children, a daughter, and I call her Princess like your dad calls you.”

“Okay.”

“And she grows up and starts seeing a guy and we know she’s having sex with him. So how can we like the guy knowing . . . knowing he’s doing . . . whatever he’s doing, with our daughter. Our Princess. This guy already pisses me off. I don’t have to know anything about him. It’s natural. It’s human nature. No parent is going to like a guy who’s banging their daughter.”

“Banging? Banging?! Is that how you think of it?”

“No! Of course not! I love you. What we have is . . . precious. Special. It’s almost sacred, Amy. I’m just trying to look at this from your parents’ perspective.”

“They don’t know we’re having sex.”

“Of course they do.”

“Why? Do I look different from when we met?”

“Yes. You’re more beautiful.”

“Oh please. Give me some credit, Jerry.”

“Okay, they know because . . .”

The waiter returned with beer and a plate of waffle fries. Amy stared stiffly toward the bar till he left, then whipped her head back to him.

“Because why?”

“Your hand.”

Her brows quirked, her eyes narrowed. “What do you mean?”

"The first time I met your parents, we were sitting on the couch talking about stuff, you put your hand on my thigh."

"So?"

"If we weren't having sex yet, you would have put your hand on my knee. People only put their hands on the thighs of people they've had sex with."

"That's not true. You put your hand on my thigh on our second date."

"That's different. I was testing your thigh."

"What?"

"To get a reaction. To see if you'd move it away or leave it there."

"And I moved away."

"Yes. You were not ready to think about sex with me yet. On the fourth date when I very carefully and respectfully put my hand on your thigh, you kept talking and left it there. You read my signal and I read yours. Body language."

"Which you speak very well, apparently." She sipped her beer, her eyes angry.

"No. Not at all." He placed his hand over hers. "I'm just trying to show you that I'm sensitive and attentive to what you want, not what I want, even if I want it really bad."

She didn't answer for a minute. "So, you're saying you think my parents saw my hand on your thigh and read the body language."

"Briefly, yes. For just an instant, your father shot a look at your mother and I just happened to catch it. Unfortunately."

"How far up your thigh was my hand?"

"Half-way."

"More toward the crotch or the knee?"

"Crotch."

"Oh my god!" She covered her face. "They know we're having sex!"

"Amy, come on. I'm sorry I said anything. It's not like you're sixteen. You're thirty-one years old. The Statue of Liberty had sex when she was twenty-three."

"For god's sake, Jerry, I had sex before I was twenty-three." She sniffed several times.

"You did?" He stuffed a clean tissue underneath her cupped hands. This was not a good time to fish for more information.

"Of course. I know that they assume I'm not a virgin anymore, but I would never tell them. They would never, ever ask! It's just a polite thing we don't talk about it. Oh my god, there might just as well have been a big red neon arrow pointing down to my hand on your crotch.

"Not on. Close, but no cigar, so to speak."

"And I was right. It embarrassed them. You caught the look."

"Yes, but that's just the way it is. Even when the kids are married. Grandchildren are produced from fa-la-la. It is as repulsive picturing your children having sex as it is imagining your parents."

She held up a hand. "Not going there."

"So, to end this whole conversation, yes, I feel uncomfortable around your parents and your father will always want to play golf with my balls. Hopefully, very soon, when they look at me or think of us together, their minds will pan out a window to pounding ocean waves and romantic music. They won't think about me nailing you."

She punched his arm. "You are just terrible! Take your hand off my thigh!" But she didn't move away.

Amy bit into a waffle fry drizzled in creamy gorgonzola cheese sauce, closed her eyes and groaned. "Oh my god, these are so good. Oh. Um-m-m. Wait till you taste these, Jerry. This is the best batch ever." She took another bite, savoring every morsel.

Jerry sat watching her. "Do you know that every time you eat something you love, you groan like you're having sex?"

"I thought we were done talking about sex."

"We are. This is just an observation."

"I can't help it. This is . . .oh . . . this is so-o good I can hardly stand it." She moaned softly, smacking her lips.

He glanced around uneasily. No one was paying attention to them. "It's kind of embarrassing," he said anyway.

"I don't care. I enjoy food. I enjoy life. When something goes into my body that's this good, I groan, Jerry."

Which was true. He felt very manly in bed.

"Here," she said. "Take a bite."

"M-m-m-m." he said, chewing. "Yeah. It's tasty."

"You are such a fake," she scowled. "That's okay. Never mind. I'll enjoy it enough for both of us." She took another crunchy bite and rolled it over her tongue, exposing the flavors to all her taste buds like a wine connoisseur. "Not too starchy, light weight, crisp texture with a hint of russet and . . . canola."

She pursed her lips like she was about to whistle, breathed through her mouth and exhaled through her nose.

"What are you doing?"

"Liberating the aromas. Oh. There's a wave of sea salt, Mediterranean . . . from the Guérande region of France."

"Okay, okay." He smirked and sipped his beer. "I was just saying, I can enjoy food as much as the next person without sounding like I'm close to an orgasm."

"Really, Jerry?" She stopped eating and dabbed her mouth with a napkin. "Really?" Her left eyebrow arched. "Actually, Jerry, sometimes I don't think you enjoy an orgasm when you're having one. I think you're thinking about something else. I think you're always thinking about something else."

"What do you mean? That's . . . it's not humanly possible to think about something else when your brain is exploding. It takes me five minutes to peel it off the ceiling. Trust me, Amy, there's no way I'm going anywhere else when I'm coming. Why would you even say something like that?"

She shrugged. "You just always seem preoccupied."

"With what?"

"How should I know? Your health. Other stuff. You worry a lot. You're a worry wart, Jerry."

I wouldn't call it worry. I'm concerned, I pay attention. I think about other stuff when I can't find my glasses."

"You don't wear glasses."

"I would if I could find them. What is astigmatism anyway? Does it mean I have a stigma?"

"It means your eye is shaped like a football instead of a basketball. Don't worry about it. Yours are shaped like aspirin."

"You think so? That's good. This morning I thought they looked like acetaminophen caplets. Which reminds me, would you like to go over to Vancouver Island for your birthday?"

“How do acetaminophen caplets remind you Vancouver Island?”

“I don’t know. They’re both oblong.”

She stared at him. “You sneaky smartass. You changed the subject.”

“No I didn’t. I don’t even remember what we were talking about.”

“We were talking about your preoccupation with everything else except us.”

“We were? Was I here?”

“Probably not.”

He picked up a waffle fry and popped it into his mouth. “Ohmygod, you’re right. This is amazing. Oh yeah, baby. I gotta have more like this. That one right there. Yeah. That’s it. Oh man. I love you, Amy. I love you.”

“Shut up.” But she laughed and dropped the subject.