The Dinner Date

“Do you have a reservation?” The host stands guard, imperious in his red dinner jacket.

“Yes, a table for two.”

He leads me to a patio table catching moonlight. The white tablecloths and romantic jazz shout triple dollar signs, blowing my budget, but it was his suggestion. Candles cast an eerie glow of flickering flames from sculptured copper holders.

After some time, I recognize him from his profile as he enters: virile features, squared jaw, and gelled black hair except for rebellious waves.

“Hello,” he says as he sits.

Can he see the excitement in my eyes as they feast on his icy blue eyes and easy smile? This is our first meeting outside of texting; he “exceeds expectations.”

“Nice to meet you in the flesh,” I say.

His natural grace and confidence speak of elite schools and a moneyed family. I hope my photo-shopped picture hit the mark.

“The virtual world does have pluses.” He cracks an impish grin. His approval of my neon pink dress—and what’s underneath—is not subtle.

“There is virtue in feeding the senses with touch and feel.” I smile as much as my botox sculptured face allows. I have jumped into the dating competition, a safari hunt where the prize lands a partner with career and means. Female eligibility demands the ideal body; I comply with Spartan discipline and punishing workouts. Body and facial beauty are currency in the dating contest. I’m all in.

We launch into conversation building a storyline about where we live and adventurous pursuits. Not much info from our silly texts. I scoured social media for breadcrumbs of scandal, lawsuits, or other skeletons but found nothing. Facebook and Instagram drew blanks; LinkedIn spewed his financial credentials, his name embossed with cryptic acronyms.

Conversation hovers on our shared interest in skiing. He spins tales of dangerous runs, near avalanche experiences, and long treks. “Tell me about your work,” he suddenly pivots after we order drinks.

LinkedIn tracks my work history, from big three tech to now a start-up. “You’ve heard of non-disclosure agreements. It’s uninteresting to non-techies.”

“But it is! How do know I’m not a nerd scouting new tech?” he asks with a lopsided grin.

“Let’s not talk shop. Try the publicly available investor pitch deck.”

We finish the triple digit bottle of wine and he excuses himself to the restroom. Before dinner is about to be served.

I Google the name of his employer—a private equity firm reconnoitering start-up targets. The aha moment is a gut punch. This is no date. It’s a businessman looking for intel.

The longer I wait for him, the madder I get. I craft a series of accusations, including throwing my dinner in his face. But the opportunity never comes. He doesn’t return. He disappears. Gone. The waiter gives me the several hundred-dollar bill. I hand over my credit card and ask for a container for two uneaten meals.

Driving home, I plot retribution, shedding the role of victim.

You wrote a creative story with a nice twist at the end. You have a great balance between the description and dialogue. Really good job.

You could add a couple of senses—taste and smell with the wine. It would be interesting if you added the retribution as it relates to her job and his.

Be careful of using too many semicolons so you add variety to the sentence structure. A new paragraph only needs one space before the next one.

Thanks for the enjoyable story.