

A Table for Two

Thursday was Valentine's Day, which is all about love. One of the most remarkable love stories I have ever read was written by Kirsten Burgess, and appeared on Christianstories.com website. Its message is powerful. This posting is longer than most appearing on this site, but read it to a surprising conclusion.

– Beecher Hunter



He sits by himself at a table for two. The uniformed waiter returns to his side and asks, "Would you like to go ahead and order, sir?" The man has, after all, been waiting since 7 o'clock – almost half an hour. "No, thank you," the man smiles. "I'll wait for her a while longer. How about some more coffee?"

"Certainly, sir."

The man sits, his clear blue eyes gazing straight through the flowered centerpiece. He fingers his napkin, allowing the sounds of light chatter, tinkling silverware, and mellow music to fill his mind. He is dressed in sport coat and tie. His dark brown hair is neatly combed, but one stray lock insists on dropping to his forehead. The scent of his cologne adds to his clean-cut image. He is dressed up enough to make a companion feel important, respected, loved. Yet he is not so formal as to make one uncomfortable. It seems that he has taken every precaution to make others feel at ease with him. Still, he sits alone.

The waiter returns to fill the man's coffee cup. "Is there anything else I can get for you, sir?"

"No thank you." The waiter remains standing at the table. Something tugs at his curiosity. "I don't mean to pry, but ..." His voice trails off. This line of conversation could jeopardize his tip. "Go ahead," the man encourages. His voice is strong, yet sensitive, inviting conversation.

"Why do you bother waiting for her?" the waiter finally blurts out. This man has been at the restaurant other evenings, always patiently alone. Says the man quietly, "Because she needs me."

"Are you sure?" the waiter asks. "Yes," he replies.

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“Well, sir, no offense, but assuming that she needs you, she sure isn’t acting much like it. She’s stood you up three times just this week.” The man winces, and looks down at the table. “Yes, I know.”

“Then why do you still come here and wait?” The customer pauses, then adds, “Cassie said that she would be here.”

“She’s said that before,” the waiter protests. “I wouldn’t put up with it. Why do you?” Now the man looks up, smiles at the waiter, and says simply, “Because I love her.”

The waiter walks away, wondering how one could love a girl who stands him up three times a week. The man must be crazy, he decides. Across the room, he turns to look at the man again. The man slowly pours cream into his coffee. He twirls his spoon between his fingers a few times before stirring sweetener into his cup. After staring for a moment into the liquid, the man brings the cup to his mouth and sips, silently watching those around him. He doesn’t look crazy, the waiter admits. “Maybe the girl has qualities that I don’t know about. Or maybe the man’s love is stronger than most.” The waiter shakes himself out of his musings to take an order from a party of five.

The man watches the waiter, wonders if he’s ever been stood up. The man has, many times. But he still can’t get used to it. Each time, it hurts. He’s looked forward to this evening all day. He has many things, exciting things, to tell Cassie. But more importantly, he wants to hear Cassie’s voice. He wants her to tell him all about her day, her triumphs, her defeats ... anything, really. He has tried so many times to show Cassie how much he loves her. He’d just like to know that she cares for him, too. He sips sporadically at the coffee, and loses himself in thought, knowing that Cassie is late, but still hoping that she will arrive.

The clock says 9:30 when the waiter returns to the man’s table. “Is there anything I can get for you?” The still-empty chair stabs at the man. “No, I think that will be all for tonight. May I have the check, please?” When the waiter leaves, the man picks up the check. He pulls out his wallet and signs. He has enough money to have given Cassie a feast. But he takes out only enough to pay for his five cups of coffee and leave a generous tip. “Why do you do this?” his mind cries as he gets up from the table.

“Goodbye,” the waiter says, as the man walks toward the door. “Good night. Thank you for your service,” the customer responds. “You’re welcome, sir,” says the waiter softly, for he sees the hurt in the man’s eyes that his smile doesn’t hide. The man passes a laughing young couple on his way out, and his eyes glisten as he thinks of the good time he and Cassie could have had. He stops at the front and makes reservations for tomorrow. Maybe Cassie will be able to make it, he thinks.

“Seven o’clock tomorrow for a party of two?” the hostess confirms. “That’s right,” the man replies.

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“Do you think she’ll come?” asks the hostess. She doesn’t mean to be rude, but she has watched the man many times alone at his table for two. “Someday, yes. And I will be waiting for her.” The man buttons his overcoat and walks out of the restaurant alone. His shoulders are hunched, but through the windows the hostess can only guess whether they are hunched against the wind or against the man’s hurt.

As the man turns toward home, Cassie turns into bed. She is tired after an evening out with friends. As she reaches toward her nightstand to set the alarm, she sees the note that she scribbled to herself last night.

“Seven o’clock,” it says. “Spend some time in prayer.” Darn, she thinks. She forgot again. She feels a twinge of guilt, but quickly pushes it aside. She needed that time with her friends. And now she needs her sleep. She can pray tomorrow night. Jesus will forgive her.

And she’s sure he doesn’t mind.

