

MISTER LITERAL

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by

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“MISTER LITERAL”

CHARACTERS

CINDY (F), 25-40  
GERALD (M), 25-45  
HOSTESS (F), 25-45

TIME

The present, evening

SETTING

A nice restaurant

*LIGHTS UP on a nice restaurant. CINDY and GERALD are sitting at a table, waiting for a waitress to attend to them. Although it's a first date, Cindy is wearing a wedding ring.*

CINDY

I'm sorry, Gerald...I'm rattling on...it's the first five minutes of our first date and I haven't let you say a thing! I mean, c'mon, Cindy, let the guy say something, right? It's just that I'm nervous. I told you I separated from my husband, so I'm just looking to see what else is out there. I mean, Brian, he's a nice guy, but...he's just kind of boring, you know? I just don't want to end up looking back and thinking I could've had more excitement in my life! I did have a few dates with this one guy with a Harley, Marco, but he turned out to be a jerk. I know Claire's been wanting to set us up, but since she was the one who set me up with Marco, I was hesitant, you know? I mean, she's my best friend and I love her, but sometimes with Claire, it's like the lights are on but nobody's home!

GERALD

Really? Claire should follow energy-saving guidelines and turn off her lights before she leaves the house!

CINDY

(Laughs)

So, sorry for the delay in meeting for our first date. I just had cold feet.

GERALD

My feet are always cold too! So I wear really thick socks.

CINDY

(Chuckles, then gets lost in thought)

Yeah, Marco, he was something, that guy. He was really exciting, which I liked, but he was always messing with my head, you know?

GERALD

Oh, like...tussling your hair?

CINDY

No, like always finding ways to push my buttons.

GERALD

He hogged the remote?

CINDY

No, he was just always messing with me, trying to get my goat.

GERALD

Did he steal your goat? Animal theft is a crime!

CINDY

No, no, I meant—

GERALD

Claire didn't tell me you had a goat!

CINDY

No, I just have a dog.

GERALD

So Marco *did* get your goat?

CINDY

No, no he didn't—. Well, apparently he did steal, and spent some time in prison, which I didn't know before our first date. Wait...you've...never been to jail, have you?

GERALD

Actually, I did spend time in jail. But it was just bad luck.

CINDY

Gerald, landing in jail is never just "bad luck"!

GERALD

It was luck of the draw! One of those cards that says "Go Directly to Jail". I couldn't even collect my two hundred dollars!

HOSTESS

(Enters)

Hi, folks! I'm Suzi, the hostess. Are you expecting anyone else in your party?

GERALD

Oh, we're not having a party, we're just here for dinner.

HOSTESS

Sorry for the delay, we're a little busy. Your waitress Carol will be joining you shortly.

GERALD

Carol wants to eat with us? We'd rather be alone, we're on a first date.

HOSTESS

No, I mean Carol's the one who'll be taking care of you tonight.

GERALD

(Chuckling)

Suzi, how old do I look? I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself!

HOSTESS

(To Cindy, rolling her eyes)

Ookaaaayy! Good luck!

*Hostess exits.*

CINDY

So...what can I learn about Gerald? What's your biggest pet peeve about dating?

GERALD

When her dogs shed fur on my clothes. And sniff my crotch.

CINDY

No, by "*pet* peeve", I meant—. Never mind. So, are you a cat person? I'm a dog person.

GERALD

No, I'm a *human* person! I'm not sure this is gonna work out...I thought I was on a date with someone of my own species!

CINDY

Wait, you're not...messing with me, are you? I can't deal with that again!

(A beat as she studies his face to see if he's joking)

No, never mind! I think you just have a very... different sense of humor. But...whatever floats your boat!

GERALD

I don't have a—! Do I look like I'm rich enough to own a boat?!

CINDY

Now hold your horses, I didn't—

GERALD

My *horses*?! You think I own horses too? Did you agree to this date because you thought I'm wealthy!?

CINDY

Gerald, seriously!?...I'm a gold-digger now?!

GERALD

You're a what? I thought you were a realtor! You dig for gold? Like...some kind of old-time prospector?

CINDY

Are you sure you're not messing with—?

(She stops, laughs)

I'm sorry...I'm so jaded after this guy Marco, I assumed you were trying to mess with me, when clearly you're just joking around! Look, I'm going to go freshen up in the ladies room, and when I get back, let's start over and pretend we just sat down, okay?

GERALD

Okay.

*Cindy gets up from the table and looks around for the ladies room. The hostess spots her.*

HOSTESS  
(Pointing)

The ladies room is over there.

CINDY

Oh, I don't actually need it. I'm just trying to...reset things a bit.

HOSTESS

First date off to a rocky start?

CINDY

Maybe he's nervous. Either that, or he's got the weirdest sense of humor in the world.

HOSTESS

Let me guess...your best friend fixed you up?

CINDY

How'd you know?

HOSTESS

C'mon, we always give the guy a lot more leeway when the best friend plays Cupid.

CINDY

Claire didn't mention he was so literal, but she did tell me that he's really exciting! She said he loves to go to clubs dancing, and jet off on vacations on the spur of the moment! I love that!

HOSTESS  
(Pointing to her wedding ring)

Has he noticed *that*? You're not fooling around on hubby, are you?

CINDY

No! Brian and I are separated...he's a good guy, but I want someone exciting, you know?

HOSTESS

Like, exciting in what way?

CINDY

I don't know, just not boring. Like, Brian doesn't want to do anything exciting! One night, I wanted to watch The Bachelor with him, and he said he was busy finishing some work that he needed to get done for the next day. I mean, this was the *finale* of The Bachelor, you know? What could be more exciting than that? Didn't he care who got the final rose? What kind of person is that?

HOSTESS

Yeah, that's a regular Al Capone.

CINDY

On the one hand, he's kind, and loving, and everything...but, then...look at all those guys on The Bachelorette, you know? They're all hot, and exciting, and love to travel!

HOSTESS

Can I give you some advice? Woman to woman?...Excitement isn't all it's cracked up to be. You got kids?

CINDY

A girl and a boy. Seven and five.

HOSTESS

And this hubby Brian...he's a good dad?

CINDY

Oh, yeah! Of course.

HOSTESS

But he just isn't...exciting? Is that all?

CINDY

(Peeved)

Well, don't I have the right to be with someone exciting?! I mean, it's my life, isn't it?!

(Beat)

Sorry, I'm just nervous. This may be my last chance at...I don't know...finding someone who's a better...fit? Well, I need to get back to Gerald...

HOSTESS

Hey...I hope everything works out for you.

*Cindy heads back to the table and sits.*

CINDY

So...Cindy and Gerald, "Take two!"

GERALD

Take two...what, aspirin? You got a headache?

CINDY

No, I meant, like a movie director, where they...well, this is like a second take for us! You know, to kind of start over. So, let's like...I don't know...talk about our day.

GERALD

Okay, so...how was yours?

CINDY

I spent all afternoon trying to cheer up my friend Joan. She lost her baby a few weeks ago.

GERALD

Well, that's irresponsible. I lose my keys all the time, but I am pretty sure I'd never lose a baby!

CINDY

No, not that kind of lose! You know, she "*lost her baby*"...?

GERALD

GAMBLING?! She lost her child in a poker game?! Did the other players bet with *their* infants too? And how does the winner of the pot take care of all those babies?

CINDY

Gerald, it isn't funny joking about children! You're...okay with *my* having two kids? You don't have to meet them right away. Tonight I got a sitter, but I didn't want her to have to deal with their bedtime routine, so I just put the kids down before I left.

GERALD

*YOU...YOU PUT YOUR KIDS DOWN?* Like you'd do with a sick dog?! Just so you could go on a date? What, did you have a vet come and do the deed?

CINDY

No, I meant I put them to bed! What kind of monster do you think I am?

GERALD

Wait, you're a *monster*?! Claire never told me that! And you want me to guess which *kind* of monster you are? Why don't you just *tell* me which kind?!

CINDY

Now, see, I can't tell if you're joking right now, or—

GERALD

Are you the Bride of Frankenstein? And if so, why are you on a date with me if you're already married? Did you get separated from him too?

CINDY

Gerald, relax! I'm not *any* kind of monster! Keep your shirt on!

GERALD

Why would I take my shirt off?! The sign at the front says, "no shirt, no service"!

CINDY

Okay, now see!? You're—! I know what you're doing...you're messing with me! Do you think I was born yesterday?

GERALD

I don't know, but you better tell me! I can't date you if you're underage!

CINDY

This is just like Marco! You're playing some kind of game with me...“Let's toy with Cindy's affections”!

GERALD

I don't know how to play that game, but if you teach me, we can play it after dinner.

CINDY

This is a cruel prank, admit it! Some kind of sick gas-lighting! Don't pee on my leg and tell me it's raining!

GERALD

Why would I urinate on you, and give a weather forecast?! I don't even know what you're talking about!

CINDY

I'm talking about you blowing smoke up my butt!

GERALD

Whoa, now that's a pretty kinky fetish. I don't know if I'd be into that.

CINDY

(Grabbing her purse)

Okay, I think I can see the handwriting on the wall here.

GERALD

Yeah, there was a lot of graffiti in the men's room too.

CINDY

(Standing to leave)

That's it! I'm fed up, Gerald!

GERALD

Fed up? We haven't even ordered our food yet!

CINDY

You are not playing with a full deck!

GERALD

What do you mean!?! We're having dinner, not playing cards!

CINDY

Goodbye, Gerald! Take a long walk off a short pier!

*Cindy exits.*

GERALD

(Calling after her)

WAIT, IF I DID THAT, I'D JUST GET WET!

(Takes out his cell phone and dials. Into phone:)

Hey, Claire, it's me. Mission accomplished. I think I pushed her back into Brian's arms...No, don't feel guilty, Claire. She wants to leave her husband cause he won't watch *The Bachelor* with her? Besides, it's still her own decision...Oh, you're welcome. You're a good friend, too.

*He hangs up, gets up from the table, and walks toward the exit.  
Hostess enters and goes up to him.*

HOSTESS

How'd it go?

GERALD

Well, you saw her walk out, right? I hope this Brian really is a good guy.

HOSTESS

He is. Claire and I have known him since first grade. He's literally one of the nicest guys on the planet.

GERALD

(Chuckling)

"Literally," huh?

HOSTESS

(Laughs)

Sorry! Oh, and here's your wedding ring.

(Hands him a ring, which he puts on. Kisses him)

See you at home, honey.

GERALD

Do me a favor...don't ever leave me for someone more "exciting"!

HOSTESS

Most women have that one moment when they freak out and think they're going to be stuck in a boring marriage for life.

GERALD

Yeah, why *is* that?

HOSTESS

It's the female version of the guy buying a convertible and dating younger women. Just a temporary freak-out.

GERALD

You've never had that freak-out?

(She shakes her head "no")

Why you think that is?

HOSTESS

Because Brian may be *one* of the nicest guys on the planet, but you're actually *the* nicest guy on the planet!

GERALD

Literally?

HOSTESS

Literally!

*BLACKOUT*