

It Ends With “I Love You”

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(Published on Ruthie's Club for Valentine's Day 2006)

I had Donna pinned beneath me and was doing my best to drive her nuts. Her taste was still in my mouth from having gone down on her, and now it mixed with the residual flavors of wine and lobster from dinner as our mouths locked together. My fingers probed for that little swelled spot just inside her.

Her squeal told me I'd found the button that never failed to melt her when I stroked it just right. Her hand slipped under mine, and for a moment, I thought she was going to try and slow me down. Instead, she simply wiped some of her own moisture onto her fingers and then wrapped them around my hard cock.

Donna stroked me with the same tempo that governed the gyration of her hips and the rasping sounds of our breathing. The tugging on my shaft went from sensuous to insistent to imperative in just a few moments, so I let her guide me into position between her legs. I lifted her hips and slid myself all the way in.

She arched her back and moaned as her legs wrapped around me. She grabbed one of my hands and put it over her breast. I took the hint and massaged her breast in time to our thrusting, letting my fingers play lightly over the extended nipple. Donna's eyes opened all the way and locked onto mine as she came, gasping and squealing. I held myself back as long as I could because I love watching her face during her orgasm, but it was only a moment or two later that my body responded in kind. Her legs squeezed me and offered support that I desperately needed because my body was too focused on the pulsing in my groin to worry about little things like keeping balance.

Then it was over. My body turned to mush with the passing of my orgasm, leaving me no real choice but to roll over and collapse on my side of the bed. Donna snuggled up against my chest and purred. She amused herself by playing with the curly hairs on my chest while I waited for the blood to return to my brain.

From within my pleasant haze, I heard her voice float into my ear. It was soft and sultry and breathless. “I love you, Guy.”

It was the perfect moment to say it. Valentine's Day night, our first one together, to cap off six months of fun days, romantic nights, and great sex. And I knew it was true, too—Donna and I had become so close that not being together was unthinkable for both of us.

Her finger went still on my chest. I felt the shifting as her head turned toward mine. “Guy?”

I smiled and responded with a long, soft kiss before responding. “Thank you.”

Donna pulled back and shook her head slowly. “You just can’t say it, can you?”

Busted! I tried my best to bluff my way out. “Talk is cheap, sweetie. I like to think that I say it with action.”

“That you do,” she agreed while her fingers walked down my body and toyed briefly with my damp, resting cock, “and most eloquently. But that doesn’t mean I wouldn’t like to hear the words once in a while.”

My mouth opened, but nothing came out.

A suspicious look came over Donna’s face. “There’s a story behind this, isn’t there?”

I could almost feel the hole I was in getting deeper. “It’s nothing. Don’t worry about it.”

“It is not nothing,” she insisted. “There’s something stopping you from saying it, and I want to know what it is.”

“It has nothing to do with you, I promise.”

“You fink!” She threw a leg across and climbed on top of me. “If you don’t start talking in the next ten seconds, I’m going to torture you until you spill it.”

Donna could be very creative about torture if she wanted to be, and the fierce light in her eyes told me that she might not be joking. I tried one more defense. “You said you didn’t want to hear about my ex-girlfriends.”

“Is that what this is about?” I saw the wheels turning in her mind. “Okay, I’ll bite. You tell me what it is about saying ‘I love you’ and I’ll give you a pass on the no-exes rule. Deal?”

I was beaten, and I knew it. “Deal.”

She slid back down and cuddled up against my chest. I took a deep breath and started the story.

The divorce from Pam left me emotionally drained. In the space of a year, I went from being heartsick over losing her to being heartily sick of dealing with her. By the time I was officially single, the last thing I wanted to do was date again.

Instead, I quietly withdrew into my own little domain, which was defined by the walls of the house I’d bought across town. I spent my free time working out, watching TV, or surfing the Internet. Once in a while, I’d go to a happy hour gathering with my office mates, but the only people I saw consistently outside of work were the pizza guy and the chick behind the counter at the video store. Not that I minded—my

evenings were quiet and predictable and entirely my own.

Quiet and predictable has one drawback: it's monotonous. I kept going one day at a time, one week at a time, until the sameness of each day and week made them blend together and I barely noticed that two years had gone by. Then a single email broke my routine.

Guy,

Larry was giving me a ride home the other day and we got to talking about you. I thought you'd moved across the country or something, not just across town. Why so silent?

We should get together and catch up on things. My numbers are the same, so give me a call some time.

Roberta

"Roberta?" Donna looked at me as if I'd mentioned a three-headed alien. "Larry's friend Roberta? The one who chews men up and spits them out like some kind of romantic garbage disposal?"

I had to chuckle at the colorful description. "Yes, that Roberta. Mind if I continue?"

"Please," she replied. "I can see the train wreck coming already."

I read the email over and over, half thinking it had to be a mistake, because I'd long ago written Roberta off as unavailable—out of my reach. We had been co-workers for a while on a government contract. She was a friend of Larry, I was a friend of Larry, so it was inevitable that we'd end up hanging out with him outside of work.

The first thing to strike me about Roberta back then was her energy. She laughed a lot and talked a lot, and when she talked her arms and hands waved around illustrating everything she had to say. She had long brown hair, which kept falling over her face and had to be brushed back, and sparkling green eyes. She was pretty and exciting and intensely fun to be with. For someone in the early stages of a protracted divorce, as I was, she was a constant reminder of the kind of woman I wished I'd married.

We worked at the same site but on different contracts, so we had very little business contact. We did make a habit of having lunch together, along with four or five other friends. I'd sit near her and listen to her regale the group with horror stories about the various men she'd dated. The stories were funny and engaging, not pointless male-bashing, so they were fun to listen to. Over the course of about six months, I learned everything Roberta wanted in a man—someone patient, someone she could be friends with first, someone who was interested in really being part of her life as opposed to just getting into her pants on a regular basis.

Roberta's stories often led to the related topic of dating after divorce. It was Vernon, a

guy with multiple divorces under his belt, who kept bringing it up largely to get a rise out of people. I tended to stay quiet at those times, but one day Vernon singled me out. “So, Guy, when are you getting back on the horse?”

I held out my hands and made a cross with my fingers to ward off the evil spirits. “Are you kidding? Never!”

Larry smiled at me. “Been there, felt that. But, dude, you can’t write off the whole female population because you happened to get attached to a toxic one. Sooner or later, you’ll start missing the companionship. Or the sex.”

I nodded toward Roberta. “After hearing her horror stories about life in the dating jungle? I think I’m better off celibate.”

She laughed and blushed, which was a beautiful combination. “Please don’t use me as an example,” she said. “I just attract losers, is all. You should put yourself out there. Do it for the experience, if nothing else.”

“Oh, sure. So I can have experiences like yours?”

Another laugh. “Okay, can I say something here? Not every guy I’ve dated has been a total jerk, all right? It’s just that the nice-but-no-sparks guys aren’t as funny to talk about, so they don’t get mentioned much. I think you’d be a great guy to go out with, and you should try it.”

I almost asked her out right then and there. There was only one problem—I was still legally married. A lot of people aren’t bothered by that sort of thing, but keeping my word has always been important to me and that included the marriage vows. Even though I knew Pam was violating them in just about every possible way, I wouldn’t be able to respect myself if I did the same. So I contented myself with spending lunches with Roberta and the rest of our group, enjoying her company, and leaving the rest to my imagination.

While I was still waiting for Pam and her lawyer to figure out what they wanted, Roberta met a new guy through an online dating service and seemed to be heading toward something stable. Her contract ended, and she moved on to another site. I filed her under Missed Opportunities and, aside from an occasional daydream, let her go.

“Wait a minute,” Donna interrupted. “You already knew that she didn’t tend to stay attached to anyone for long. Why didn’t you just call her when you were free?”

“I thought about it. By the time I was legally single, though, I hadn’t talked to Roberta in months. As far as I knew, she was still dating that other guy or had moved on to another one. Besides, weren’t you listening at the beginning? Getting into the dating game was the farthest thing from my mind. I was pretty roughed up already and had no desire to put myself out there to get hurt some more.”

“Okay, I get that. So you went into a sort of dating retirement.”

“Pretty much. But then she came looking for me, and that changed everything.”

The first date was innocuous enough. We met at a local barbecue place for dinner on a Wednesday night. I was so determined not to be late that I ended up getting there a half hour early. When Roberta arrived, fifteen minutes late, I hardly minded because the sight of her approaching with her hair shining in the moonlight and that warm smile on her face made it all worthwhile.

We greeted each other with a friendly hug and went inside. The conversation stayed light and general, like our lunchtime talks, but one-on-one. I found out she'd bought an old house in one of the outer suburbs and had taken in a couple of roommates because the place was just too big and empty. The roommates had enough quirks and back-stories to inspire a daytime drama series, and I spent much of that first dinner putting together the tangled relationships. I could have sworn it was only a short while later when we noticed the restaurant staff stacking chairs and mopping the floor, but my watch said it had been more like two hours.

“I had a great time tonight,” I said honestly, as I walked her to her car.

“Me, too. I missed you.”

“Want to do it again?”

She nodded. “I'd like that. Let's talk tomorrow.”

I took a deep breath and then kissed her. It was a quick, tentative kiss. She returned it, though, and was smiling when we finished. We said “Good night,” and I watched with a pleasant buzzing sensation running through my chest while she drove away.

The next day was a busy one for both of us. I called Roberta about mid-day and left a voice mail, but it wasn't until the day after that I finally reached her.

“Oh, hey, Guy!” Her voice sounded cheery and just a little frazzled. “I didn't get your message until late and I didn't want to wake you.”

“It's fine,” I told her. “Is this a bad time?”

“No! Well, maybe. I want to talk—I just only have a few minutes right now.”

“How about if I just get right to the point, then? When would you like to get together again?”

“Good question. I've got my sister coming in from out of town this weekend, so it's probably going to have to be next week. How about another Wednesday night?”

“Sure, that works. What would you like to do?”

“Hmmm... You know what? How about if you just come to the house and we’ll either hang out there or do something simple?”

“Okay. Is seven too late?”

“No, that’s probably good. I don’t usually get home until after six, so any earlier than that is risky.”

“Seven it is, then.”

“Look, Guy,” she said. “I hate to cut you off, but I really have to go. Can I call you tonight?”

“Absolutely.”

I waited for the click and then hung up, already looking forward to Wednesday.

“She didn’t call you, did she?” Donna’s face held a knowing smile.

“No, she didn’t,” I admitted.

“So you called her the next day.”

“Absolutely not.” I was emphatic about it and drew the look of surprise I wanted. Then the smile reasserted itself when I added, “I waited until Saturday.”

It felt as if a month had passed by the time Wednesday finally rolled around. Roberta and I had spoken briefly on Monday, mostly just to confirm that plans hadn’t changed and for her to apologize for not having more time to talk in between. Still, I was in high spirits as I drove up the parkway to her place. Since I didn’t know where or what we’d be eating, I picked up a bottle of Californian rosé on my way.

She greeted me at the door with a hug and a nice kiss. She took the wine bottle and set it in the kitchen, then gave me the quick tour of her house. It was a spacious five-bedroom house with a generous living room and dining room. Roberta rented out two of the upstairs bedrooms to a divorced man named Joe and the basement, which had a guest room and a sitting area, to a single woman named Maureen. Neither was home that night.

We never did go anywhere that night. I’d already been driving for an hour and she had only beaten me there by about twenty minutes, so we ordered a delivery of Chinese food and ate it with our wine. After dinner, we sat on the couch, sipped the remaining wine, and talked. As was our habit, Roberta did most of the talking and I was quite happy to listen to her and interject just enough to show that I was paying attention.

It happened almost the way it does in the movies. She was telling a story about Joe

and I slipped in a little joke. Roberta stopped and laughed and rocked against me, and then went silent. Our eyes locked together and our faces were only a few inches apart. Some magnetic force took over and pulled our mouths together. This time, it was a long, tender kiss that quickly led to another, and another. I felt arms encircling me and pulled her closer. Every so often, we'd come up for air, look into each other's eyes again, and then start over with a little purr or a soft moan.

An hour went by and then we were jarred out of the mood by the sound of the door opening. A round, friendly-looking guy in his early thirties came in, saw us on the couch, and immediately looked away. "Oops. Guess I should've been louder coming up the walk, eh? Let me know when you're decent."

Roberta threw a pillow at him and growled. "We're already decent, you jerk! Guy, this is Joe, the man-child roommate I told you about."

"Hello, Joe," I said. "Nice to meet you."

"Same here. But don't mind me, kids, I'll just go upstairs and let you two get back to whatever. Just pretend I'm not even here."

The mood was thoroughly smashed, though. It was just as well, since the living room clock said that it was nearly midnight. "I should go," I said reluctantly. "I have to get up in about five hours, and I'll spend one of them driving home."

Roberta was also surprised by the hour. "Oh, my God! How did it get so late? I have to get up early, too."

I groaned a little with regret as I rose from the couch and got my coat from the closet. At the doorway, I took both of her hands in mine and spoke softly. "I had a wonderful time tonight."

She smiled. "Me, too. Will I see you at Larry's on Sunday?"

"Larry's?" Then I remembered the email invitation. Larry was having one of his semiannual "Just For The Hell Of It" parties at his house that coming weekend. I hadn't been going to them, but he'd kept inviting me anyway. "Yes, I think I'll be there this time."

She closed the gap and kissed me again. "Then I'll see you there. Be safe driving home, okay?"

We kissed a few more times while I backed out the door, then finally separated.

It had been a very long day for me. I should have been exhausted and sleepy, but instead I was full of energy and life. The fifty-mile trip home took well under an hour, and it was nearly two in the morning before I could settle down enough to go to sleep. My body protested when the alarm went off three hours later, but my spirits were high enough to drag it along where it needed to go.

And why not? I'd dreamed, speculated, and fantasized off and on for nearly three

years about having a relationship with Roberta, and now it was actually happening. I felt like a kid who had just discovered he really was getting a pony for Christmas.

That Sunday at Larry's I couldn't wait to tell them the great news. Larry's wife Amy was slicing bread when she heard me say that Roberta and I had begun seeing each other. She dropped the knife and wheeled around to face me with a look of horror on her face. "As in *dating*?" she said. "What are you, nuts?"

This was not the reaction I had expected. "Maybe," I allowed. "Is there something I should know?"

"Amy is not a big fan of Bert's," Larry explained. "She's gone through a pretty wide assortment of men in the time I've known her. I think you two could be pretty good for each other if it works out, so I'm rooting for you."

Amy looked as though she wanted to say something, but went back to slicing bread.

Roberta arrived a short while later. She greeted me with a warm hug and a kiss, which felt great. We worked the room separately, but kept in contact. By the end of the evening, we were down to our old lunch crew, sitting in the living room and swapping stories as we had in the old days. It didn't take long for Vernon to comment on the obvious.

"So how long have you two been playing house?" he asked Roberta with a thumb jerk toward me.

She laughed and blushed a little. "We're not playing house, gutter-mind—we're dating. And we've only just started, so cut us some slack."

That got him looking at me. "As long as you've been hung up on her, and you only just did something about it?"

Roberta looked genuinely confused. "Did I miss something?"

"A pretty big something, I think," Vicky chimed in.

I took Roberta's hand in mine. "I've had a thing for you for most of the time we've known each other," I explained. "I'd have asked you out years ago but I was still technically married back then. By the time I was free, you were involved with someone else. I figured I'd missed my chance."

"Oh." It was a rare moment—Roberta seemed truly at a loss for words.

"You know," Donna pointed out, "a smart guy might have gotten Amy aside and asked a few questions. Or at least taken her reaction as a warning."

"Easy for you to say, my dear. You have the benefit of hindsight. I was already so hooked on Roberta that I told myself at the time Amy was joking. Besides, I knew

Roberta had some issues and figured we'd work around them."

"Issues?" she replied. "No, no, no. Normal people have issues. That woman has subscriptions!"

Roberta and I didn't see each other again until Sunday night of the following weekend. This time I picked her up and we went to a cozy Italian restaurant she knew. On the way back, we held hands in the car.

She had been unusually quiet, so I tried a gentle tug. "Penny for your thoughts."

There was a long pause. "I'm just trying to figure out why you want to date me."

"It's like I said at Larry's—I've always had a thing for you. I admire your energy, your warmth, the way you laugh. I used to sit at lunch and listen to you talk and just think, 'Wow, why couldn't I have married someone like that?'"

"I noticed you, too," she told me. "I remember thinking, 'What a great guy—too bad he's married.' I thought about calling you a couple of times, but I didn't want to be the first person you dated after getting divorced."

"Oops," I said with a gulp. "Sorry, hon, but you are."

"I know, and that scares me a little. I'm afraid I might scar you for life or something. Why haven't you been dating anyone?"

"I never felt the need before." I gave her hand a squeeze. "You were worth coming out of retirement for."

Joe was in the kitchen having a late snack when we got back to Roberta's house. He gulped down the meat from one more spare rib, grabbed a bottle of beer from the refrigerator and a paper towel from the counter, and winked at us. "I'll just leave you two alone for a while. Have fun."

Roberta and I sank into the couch and fell right into cuddling and kissing. Her hands roamed over my back and left my shoulders tingling at her touch. Her lips opened, and our kissing became bolder and more intense. I ran my fingers through her hair and brushed it back from her cheek so I could plant little kisses along her neck.

She placed her hand over mine and guided it down to her shoulder, then down onto her breast. I could feel the curve of her breast through the sweater she wore. My hand squeezed and caressed her and she began to make soft pleasure noises in her throat. For a moment, I lost track of her hands and then the sweater lifted up and away. My hand just naturally fell back into the same place, cupped around her right breast. I could feel through the shirt and bra that her nipple was standing up.

Our breathing was speeding up and Roberta seemed as into the erotically-charged mood as I was. I noticed that the hem of her shirt was free at the bottom, and I let my

hand slip underneath it. The warm, soft skin of her belly greeted my palm, and she leaned in toward me even more so that I barely had to lift my hand before her breast was in it again. I caressed her all around under the shirt and felt her reaching under my shirt as well. She lifted it up and put both hands inside to run them along the muscles in my back and shoulders. All the while, we kept kissing and probing with our tongues.

Roberta's bra had a front closure. No sooner had my fingers made that discovery than they had it open and hanging loose under her shirt. My palm touched a bare breast for the first time in years, and paused to celebrate the incomparable warmth and softness of it.

"Don't stop," she said between kisses.

So I didn't. I caressed her with both hands under her shirt. She leaned back and let her body rest against a cushion. I lifted her shirt some more and began kissing her exposed breasts while she ran her fingers through my hair and made purring noises. The purrs grew longer and more expressive when I shifted a little bit and slipped one hand inside the front of her jeans. My fingers massaged her through her cotton panties and her legs opened to welcome me even as her lips moved to speak.

"We should talk first," she said, though her tone of voice sounded less than committed to the words. "Are we ready to do this so soon?"

"You're right," I agreed, not stopping or even slowing down. "It's only our third date."

Roberta's hand found my zipper and pulled it down, then slipped inside my pants. "Too soon," she said, even as her hand closed around my hard-on.

My mind was reeling from the sensation of her hand squeezing me through my briefs. "Way too soon." I slipped a finger inside her panties and traced the moist outline of her slit.

Roberta gasped and squeezed me harder. "Then again, we've known each other as friends for a few years. That's got to count for something." Her hand slipped lower and I felt fingers gently fondling my balls.

"Oh, yes, that definitely counts for something," I said while I tried to think of a way I could get my mouth between her legs without putting an end to the very pleasurable action taking place between mine.

"You're not helping." Her hand found the flap in the front of my briefs and reached inside.

"You're not stopping," I noted, then slipped a second finger just inside her opening. "Do you want me to stop this?"

"I can't think straight anymore. We should at least go upstairs before someone walks in on us. If Joe sees us like this, I'll never hear the end of it."

Somehow, we managed to stop what we were doing long enough to make a quick dash to Roberta's bedroom. We stripped each other's clothes off and flung them aside with little care for where they might land. As we landed on her bed in a tangled knot of arms and legs, she looked me in the eye and said, "Please tell me you have a condom with you."

Everything stopped. "Uhhhh..."

"You *don't*?"

I couldn't do anything but shrug. "It never occurred to me that we'd be doing this," I confessed.

Roberta stretched out over me and reached for her nightstand. "Hold that thought." She opened the drawer and started rifling through it with one hand. I held her by the hips, partly to keep her from falling off the bed and partly because it felt so good to have my hands on her body. Then I noticed that with just a small movement of my neck I could get her nipple in my mouth. I sucked and licked at her breast and felt the movements of Roberta's arm get more urgent. The drawer came out and the contents landed on the floor with a crash, but all she did was set the drawer aside and start sifting through the pile. "Damn it," she groaned. "Nothing. We're going to have to get creative."

She pried herself away from me and made her way to the closet. While I admired the view, she pulled out a maroon-colored piece of silk lingerie and climbed back on the bed with it. With a wicked grin on her face, she dropped the luxurious fabric over my groin and then gathered it around my extended cock. "This ought to do the trick," she said, and she began stroking me through the layers of silk.

Every nerve in my cock and balls reacted at once. The gentle pressure of her hand combined with the smoothness and coolness of the silk teased me like nothing I'd felt before or since. I wanted to tell her to stop, that I was about to come too soon. Our eyes met and she smiled again. "It's okay," she said. "Just relax and let it happen."

She gripped me in both hands and that was all I could take. My eyes rolled up in their sockets and all I could think about was the pulsing in my groin and the feel of warm liquid running out into the silk and oozing down my skin. Roberta held the silk against me until my hips stopped flexing and then she stretched out beside me.

As soon as my limbs agreed to move again, I put her onto her back and kissed my way from her neck to her thigh. Her legs opened for me and I settled in to show my appreciation. She was well on her way before I even got started, so it was easy for me to bring her to climax. As her body relaxed at the end of her orgasm, I kissed my way back upward until our lips met again.

We lay together in happy silence for a few minutes before Roberta spoke again. "I still can't believe we did this on our third date."

"Still thinking it's too soon?"

“I don’t know anymore. Maybe it’s not, because we do know each other. It’s not as if we just met and jumped into bed.”

“Exactly.” And there it was. The mood was right, the timing seemed right. “So, is it too soon for me to say that I love you?”

Her eyes opened a little wider and stared at me. “Yes, it is!”

Something in her voice sounded a bit off. “Then it’s a good thing I asked first, isn’t it?”

For a heartbeat and a half she was silent, then she chuckled. “You still said it.”

I would have loved to spend the night with her, but I would need fresh clothes for work in the morning. She watched from the bed while I dressed, then slipped on a bathrobe and saw me to the door.

All the next day at work, I drew puzzled looks from the gang in the office. “You are way too happy to be Guy,” one of them said. He was right, in that I was sky high on the potent drug known as romantic love. I called Roberta’s cell phone at around noon and left a voice mail telling her how much I was thinking of her and suggesting Wednesday for our next date. When she hadn’t called back by the time I got home after work, I tried her again and left a shorter message.

The next morning I got an email from her. *Sorry for not calling back, it said, but yesterday was crazy and I didn’t even check the voice mail until way too late to call anyone. Wednesday sounds fine.*

I relaxed and figured she’d call me when she got a chance. When I hadn’t heard from her by Tuesday night, I did try another call and left a basic “Thinking of you, see you tomorrow” message.

On Wednesday, I left work an hour early so I could pick up some flowers and a package of condoms. I was just walking out of the florist shop when my cell phone beeped to announce a new text message. *Have to cancel, it said, working late. Will call when I get home.* I took the flowers home and put them in water. They’d be good for a few days yet.

When you get up at five to go to work, bedtime comes early. For me it’s usually before ten. That night I waited up until 1:30 for a phone call that never came. In the morning, I sleepwalked through my morning routine and made some extra strong coffee to get me through the commute. The flowers mocked me from their temporary home on the kitchen table.

I called Roberta’s phone twice that day, once in the mid morning and again after dinner. I did my best to keep it light. “Still trying to connect with you about getting together. Call me soon, please.” Again, I stayed up an extra couple of hours willing the phone to ring.

Friday was a miserable day. Not only was I carrying a crushing sleep debt, but Roberta still hadn't made any kind of contact. The weekend was here and I was holding it all open hoping to hear from someone who wasn't communicating at all.

"Hey, sweetie," I said into her voice mail on the way to work. "It's me. I'm starting to get kind of uneasy here. It's been a few days now since we've talked and I just want to hear that you're okay. Why not give me a buzz before things get nuts today so we can work out plans? Talk to you soon."

Every hour I wanted to pick up the phone and try her again, but my common sense told me it would be futile. If she wanted to call, she'd call. Since she hadn't, that had to mean something.

The afternoon passed into early evening with no word. Soon it was late enough that even an improvised Friday night date was clearly not happening. I tried one more call. "Roberta, it's Guy," I said into the now-expected voice mail. "I'm getting really confused here. You've been blowing me off for five full days now. My ex-wife treats me better than this, and she hates my guts. What's going on with us? I'm home, alone, hoping to hear from you tonight. Don't worry about it being late, I'll be up. Please do call."

I spent a disturbing portion of the night going through my backlog of recorded TV shows that I hadn't watched yet and catching up on way too many of them. At a little after two my phone beeped with a new message. *Guy, I can't deal with this level of expectation/guilt trip.*

My head reeled. What the fuck? The more I thought about it the less sense that made. Despite the hour, I dialed her number—after all, she was clearly still awake to have sent the text message. Of course my call went to voice mail. "Guy here," I recorded, doing my best to stay calm. "Are you dumping me by SMS? I don't get this. I'm not asking you to marry me or pledge your eternal devotion—I've just been trying for a week now to ask you on a date. Even if what we did last time never happens again, I'm still your friend and I deserve better than this. *You* are better than this. I'm going to bed now. We need to talk about this tomorrow."

As I was turning off the light to go to sleep, another text message came through. *You're right, it said. Let's talk tomorrow.* I went to sleep with a cautious sense of hope.

I limited myself to one phone call to Roberta's phone on Saturday. "I'm home cleaning," I said. "Whenever you want to talk, I'll be here."

The last word didn't come on the phone, though. It was an email, sent well after dark.

Guy,

At this time I think it's better to stay just friends. I never meant to disrespect your feelings and I'm sorry if I've hurt you.

Roberta

“She sent you a Dear John *email*?” Donna’s face held disbelief and outrage. “That’s just wrong.”

“It’s better than an SMS.”

“It was still a classless way to end a friendship,” Donna insisted.

“It didn’t—we’re still friends.”

“You’re kidding me!”

“Sure, I was angry for a while. But I knew going in that Roberta was a serial dater. She never gets serious with anybody. I let myself fall hard for her, and it scared her off. But I couldn’t stay mad at Roberta just for being Roberta. That’d be like blaming a cat for chasing birds.”

Donna just shook her head and chuckled. “Okay, fine. If you can be that forgiving, so can I. In a way she did us both a favor.”

“Oh?”

She grinned and winked at me. “If she hadn’t dumped you, that would be her breast in your hand right now instead of mine.”

Sure enough, I’d been absent-mindedly fondling Donna’s breast for the past twenty minutes while I told the story. “Since you put it that way...” I let my hand slide down between her legs again while I kissed my way from her collarbone up the side of her neck to her left ear. “Donna,” I whispered, “I...”

Her face whirled around and stopped me with a long, passionate kiss that put the iron back into my spike. “Talk is cheap,” she told me. “You keep right on saying it with action.”

-wg
2/14/2006

Edited by Father Ignatius