

Excerpts from Dr. Love (a memoir)

– Chapter: The Comedy Club

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Then, one Saturday morning, I was taken aback by a surprise visitor to my shop in Lakewood. Angelina appeared through the front door looking for the magical anti-wrinkle cream. I said she didn't need it.

Initially, I thought she must've got my business address from Lola, who sent her in to check out the bizarre Dr. Love; but she said she'd heard about the magical cream from her gym buddies and wanted three pots.

I showed her around the shop and left her in awe of my products. She bought the cream, and I asked for her phone number. I didn't feel threatened by her outside of her place of work. In fact, as I was in mine, I felt much more in control.

I could see Thomas Uwin keeping an eye on us and assumed he must be wondering what the hell I was doing with a lass half my age. I shook off his contempt and called her the next day. The phone rang five times before a women's voice answered, saying, "Hello, Angelina speaking."

"Hi. Hi, it's Dr. Love."

"Who? I've never heard of him."

"How cheeky. Everyone knows the one and only. You mustn't make fun of the new age sensitive guy."

"Dr. Randy? Is that you?"

“Hahah. Yes, it’s me. I’m wondering if you’d like to have dinner with me, no strings attached, just as a friend?”

“Sure, when and where?” she asked, inquisitively.

“Six Fortune Chinese Seafood Restaurant in Chinatown, this Saturday?”

“No worries, I’ll be there. How would you like me to call you from now? Dr. Love or Dr. Randy?”

“Just call me Derek.”

“Goodnight, Derek.”

“Good night angel, I mean Angelina.” A slip of the tongue. The angel was always on my mind.

That Saturday evening, I pinned a rose to the pocket of my polo shirt and took three Valium tablets before I left Wilshire Tower, knowing I would be nervous. As it was impossible to find a park in Chinatown, I arrived late.

I found Angelina standing at the gate of Chinatown and couldn’t believe she was there. She seemed restless, looking around. I wanted to be silly and approached her from behind. “Hi, Angie!” I spoke. Startled, she turned and replied with a sexy voice. “Oh Hi! Sorry, I didn’t see you.”

“Shall we go upstairs and enjoy some fresh seafood?”

“Yes. I can smell it already.”

A few minutes later, we took our seats in the crowded restaurant and perused the menu. Sitting to her left, Angelina gave me a slightly weird look as if I was being rude. This wasn’t a good start. I explained that in Chinese culture, we only sit opposite each other if we are lovers. I didn’t tell her that I was just astonished to be even on a date with her.

“Would you like to order the food?” she asked.

“Sure,” I said, scanning the menu. I had no idea what to order but wanted to make a good impression. When the waiter arrived, I took the lead and went ahead and ordered what I thought she would like. “One steamed flounder, abalone cooked with shredded kelp, and some pipis,” I said.

“Interesting choices,” the waiter said, “do you want fried rice?”

“Good idea,” I said.

I was satisfied that I could finally show a barmaid my culinary knowledge, though honestly, I was an apprentice when it came to Chinese food. In our family outings, it was Byron or my parents who ordered the meals. So, I was a novice, and it showed.

Half an hour later, dishes of food arrived one after the other. Angelina screwed up her toned nose. The smell steaming from the whole flounder was bitter and uncharming. She seemed at a loss with the fish, pointing at its two eyes glaring from one side of its face. “How to eat this?” she murmured.

I knew the presentation wasn't great. I could've chosen any other fish. Why flounder? I started to doubt myself and my confidence began to dwindle. “I suppose you just eat it,” I said, a little nervously.

“With a pair of chopsticks?” complained Angelina.

“Sorry I forgot. Waiter, fork and knife please.”

Angelina looked displeased. “How am I supposed to eat this fish with a fork and a knife?”

The dinner wasn't proceeding well. Not only did the flounder look ugly, but it was full of bones. It was hard to cut and chew and it tasted bland. I was hopeful the abalone and pipis would

save the night. This time when the food was served, Angelina was more curious. “I’ve never eaten abalone with kelp in my life,” Angelina said, tentative.

“Neither have I. I thought we’d give it a try.”

“Mmmm ... the abalone tastes like pork, P.O.R.K – Pork,” mumbled Angelina.

“This tea tastes like Lola, L.O.L.A – Lola!”

“Are you trying to be funny?”

She was right. The abalone did taste of pork, which is great if you like that taste. Angelina didn’t. “There’s far too much kelp,” I finally said after a moment’s silence.

The final presentation was the pipis cooked with ginger and mushroom.

“I’m sure these will be delicious,” I said, nervously.

“Let’s see.”

“You first,” I said, trying to regain some confidence.

Angelina bravely slurped up a pipi and then winced. “These pipis taste foul!!”

I felt awful for traumatizing her with my poor menu choices. “I blame the chef!” I exclaimed. “I ordered live pipis, not frozen ones. And they put too much ginger in the dish.”

Angelina finally laughed, and I thought maybe I’d turned around our disastrous dinner. If I did, it didn’t take long before I blew it again with conversation. My mind started to race, and I talked fast, thrusting my hands as I spoke.

Other diners stopped eating to point at me. I was losing a spiralling game. I felt insane and started asking questions before thinking twice. I asked Angelina where she lived, what was her age, and how much she earned as a bartender. I shouldn’t have asked such personal questions, especially on a first date.

In the end, we said our goodbyes with no hugs, just dejected “see ya’s” and a limp handshake. I internalized her disappointment. It was as if she were saying, “Is that all you are, Dr. Love? I thought you were a genius, a legend, but now”

I knew then I would never dine with her again. I drove back to Wilshire Tower with my tail between my legs.

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