

The "I" Word

Elaine Kendall





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THE "I" WORD

By

Elaine Kendall

CAST

JEFF

JENNY

ALAN

SUE

Place

An upscale San Francisco trattoria.

Time

The present. In the evening.

Setting: *A table for four.*

At Rise: Jeff & Jenny sit at the table, waiting for Alan & Sue who have just returned from an exotic trip. The conversation among the four begins genially, escalating into something else entirely.

JEFF: What glorious, tortuous adventure are we going to endure tonight? Last time it was the Paleolithic caves of Azerbaijan. The time before was Burkina Faso, when we learned how shea nuts were processed. At great length.

JENNY: Just be glad they live in New York now. Sue introduced me to you, remember?

JEFF: And then *you* introduced *me* to Alan, who keeps reminding me that he retired at forty-three.

JENNY: You'll be charming for two hours, won't you? It's been three years since last time.

(Alan and Sue enter. Cheek kisses all around)

JEFF: (*a significant look from Jenny*) Sue! You look fantastic! It's been how many years? Three?

ALAN: Jenny looks quite fantastic herself. So where have you two been lately?

JENNY: We spent last month at the Villa Serbelloni, on Lake Como. Jeff had a global warming conference. I was writing and illustrating an article about the history of the villa.

ALAN: Still staying on the beaten track, I see.

JEFF: The beaten track has its charms. Jenny tells me you just flew in from Australia.

SUE: I persuaded Alan to stop in San Francisco. Twenty-two hours in the air and I'm Jello. You can't pick me up off the floor. That's not counting time on the tarmac.

ALAN: I'm good to fly straight through from Sydney to New York, but Sue can't sleep in a pod.

SUE: Airline pods make me feel like a caterpillar. I keep waking up to burst out of them.

ALAN: So what brings you to San Francisco?

JENNY: We live here.

SUE: Alan never can keep California cities straight.

ALAN: That's because they all start with San something.

JENNY: Except for the ones that start with Los or Las.

JEFF: We used to live in one that started with Los, but now that I'm teaching at Berkeley, we live in one of the Sans.

ALAN (*looking around*) Quaint little place. Like falling into a time warp. 1956. How'd you happen to choose something Italian?

SUE: Jenny's idea. After I'd told her what we've been eating, she said Georgio's would be the antidote. Alan says Italy is so *over*, but I'm nostalgic about it. I dream about giandula gelato. I've even dreamt about tortellini.

ALAN: No one goes to Italy anymore. It's become the I word. So, Jeff, where have you been lately?

JEFF: Global warming conferences tend to take place in pleasant places to attract delegates from problem areas. Should I apologize?

JENNY: Marvelous company, fabulous food, and of course, the spectacular lake. I miss it already, and we've only been home for a week.

ALAN: At least you weren't in Tuscany. Don't tell me you went to Tuscany, or even Umbria. You know what they call it. Chiantishire. Full of English lorry drivers.

JENNY: Actually, we did go there, for another look at the Bellini altarpiece in Pesaro. We didn't meet a single English lorry driver. They're all gone by September.

SUE: Then what? Somewhere wild and thrilling?

JEFF: Don't say it, Jenny. France is probably the new F word.

ALAN: The *old* F word. I hope you weren't in Provence. Provence is Disneyland now. The Anaheim of Europe.

JEFF: Our village is in the Alpes-Maritime, if that's OK. In the hills above the sea, close enough to go down for a swim at a beach club in Cannes. They're empty after August, but the weather is great.

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