

Horny

by John Mark Capps

Leo saw Laura wave goodbye, and he smiled. "See you at home for dinner, darling!" he said. She said she would just be gone for a few hours. This left Leo enough time to shop for a present for her, for their first wedding anniversary, that evening. The time between 2:00 and 5:00 PM was spent in a calm, purposeful and successful quest for that perfect gift. Leo felt good as he walked the several blocks home, the case with silver pendant earrings in the expensive giftwrap in his pocket.

"You got her *earrings*?" Nikolai asked him, in the lobby of their apartment building. "She's got, like, hundreds of pairs already." Nikolai was their neighbor, an old man originally from Russia. He made a modest living in second-hand clothing, and claimed to have a good eye for dresses and jewelry.

"This is a special set," Leo explained. "This replaces the silver ones, just like these, that were stolen last year."

Nikolai nodded. "That's good. She'll love that. You guys have a great anniversary dinner tonight, Leo!"

It was 9:00 PM and she still wasn't home. Leo blew out the candles, not wanting to waste them. He paced around. More than once, he took out his cell phone, started to dial, and then closed it up and put it back in his pocket. He put the veal back into the oven, where it would stay warm for a bit longer.

At 10:30, Leo got a call on the landline. He picked it up eagerly, but it was from his old college friend Susan. "Hey...Leo? Um..." she said, with something strange in her voice. "Aren't you supposed to be out with Laura, tonight?"

"No, we're going to have our dinner here at home," Leo said. "Veal scallopini with lemon, and new red potatoes. She's real late. I sure hope she's okay!"

"Well," Susan slowly said, "have you been on Facebook? She was tagged in someone else's post, a check-in. At a restaurant, Sebastiano's. You're not with her?"

"I know that place," Leo said. "Why would she be there?"

"That's what I was going to ask you. I have to tell you, the tag was in a post from Martin." This was a mutual friend, who seemingly posted his entire life on social media, from breakfast to nightclubbing. Leo liked Martin.

"Well, I think I should go and meet her there," Leo told Susan. "She's trying to surprise me, or something. I'll bring her present, too."

"I hope she is trying to surprise you," Susan said, her concern evident. "Call me when you two get back, or tomorrow, as soon as you can."

"Sure thing, Sue. Bye." He hung up and picked up his jacket. With the earrings in his pocket, he headed out the door.

"Hello! It will be about a half-hour wait for a table now," the hostess at Sebastiano's said.

"It's okay," Leo said. "I'm looking to meet someone here. Can I look around?"

"Of course."

And he saw them. Martin and Laura at a semi-private booth in the low light at the back of the restaurant. His hand was on hers, and she was smiling at him. There was something Leo saw, too, that he thought he recognized in her look. He'd seen it, often enough, and it had always made him happy. Now it did precisely the opposite. He walked up to their table, slowly, deliberately, and it seemed to him that it took an hour to walk the twenty feet that separated them.

"Laura," he said.

She looked up at him, and blanched. She glanced down at her watch and gasped. "Is it already...? Jesus, Leo, I'm so sorry, I lost track...."

Martin stammered in panic. "Ah, Leo, so good, um...."

Then Leo noticed that Laura was wearing earrings, silver ones. They looked just like the ones she said had been stolen. "I'm glad you're okay," he said. "I thought something had happened to you."

"I'm so sorry, Leo," she said. "I lost track."

"Hey, man," Martin got out, "it's not what you think it is."

"How do *you* know what I think," said Leo, not looking at him at all, but staring at Laura's earrings. "I don't even know what I think." He began to sway a little as he stood in front of them. "Happy anniversary, Laura. I got you...another pair." He put the giftwrapped package in front of her. "So it looks like you got your earrings back. They weren't ever stolen, were they?" Laura began weeping quietly, tears shining on her cheeks.

"No, they were at Martin's. I left them there on accident. Forgive me," she sobbed, while Martin shrunk back into the far corner of the booth. "I am a shit, Leo. I'm a complete shit for doing this to you."

"Oh, man, I'm sorry, too," Martin squeaked, but neither Laura nor Leo seemed to hear.

Laura was doubled over in misery, and the restaurant staff was beginning to peer over in concern. "Can you forgive me?" she asked Leo, her voice choked to a hoarse whisper.

"I accept it," Leo said in a low voice. "I accept it all. I know who I am, I know who you are, I might even know who Martin is, now. We all have to share this. I think I will forgive you, because I can't do anything else. Do you want to come home?"

"Yes!" Laura said.

"Then let's go home." They left, together. Martin watched them, wanting to say goodbye, but not knowing how.

