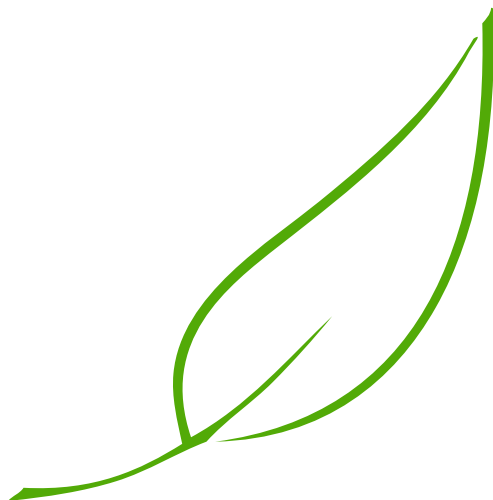


# A BANQUET OF FRIENDSHIP

by Ken Bradbury



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**JEAN** (or **GENE**): *(waiting impatiently)* Where is she (he)? She tells me to be here right at noon and it's ten after. Come on, Pat. Be on time just once.

**PAT**: *(entering)* Been waiting long?

**JEAN**: No, it was my fault. I should have known better than to be on time for you. It's a good thing we're friends or I'd have gone ahead without you. I'm starving.

**PAT**: I was just picking up a few vitamins

**JEAN**: Do you ever eat ... like, *real* food?

**PAT**: I'm meeting you for lunch, aren't I?

**JEAN**: I suppose. Come on, the line's getting shorter.

*(looking at the food display)* Oh baby, time to pig out.

**PAT**: Do you have to say it that way?

**JEAN**: What?

**PAT**: Pig out. I mean, we've got to take care of our bodies.

**JEAN**: I am. Mine's saying, "Feed me, baby! Feed me!"

**PAT**: Disgusting.

**JEAN**: *(moving down the line and filler platter)* Wow!

Would you look at all this food!

**PAT**: Fat city.

**JEAN**: Look, I've starved myself for two days to get ready for this feast. This is the best buffet in town and I'm not gonna pay this price for bean sprouts and tofu. *(continues to load food, then looking at Pat's plate)* Aren't you eating?

**PAT**: The salads are right down there.

**JEAN**: Oh, geesh. You know, it's a good thing we're best friends or we just wouldn't get along at all.

**PAT**: *(as they continue moving down the line)* Yeh. It's nice getting together every week for something.

**JEAN**: And this is the first time I've talked you into going out somewhere to eat.

**PAT**: I'm careful what all I eat.

**JEAN**: Me, too. I'm careful I eat it all. Hey, there's a table over there!

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**PAT:** Lead the way.

**JEAN:** (*as they are seated*) Only room for a few desserts on this plate. I'll go back later.

**PAT:** I'm sure you will.

**JEAN:** What's that supposed to mean?

**PAT:** I'm sure you will ... that's all.

**JEAN:** I think I'm beginning to remember why we've never eaten together.

**PAT:** Oh, don't mind me. Just enjoy your ... uh ... food.

**JEAN:** I fully intend to. (*begins eating, enjoying it greatly.*

*Pat only nibbles but stops in mid-fork to watch Jean go at it. After some time, Jean looks up*) What's matter? You OK? (*no response*) Something wrong with your carrots? (*no response. looks down*) I got something unbuttoned? What?

**PAT:** Do you know how many grams of fat are in the average salad dressing?

**JEAN:** (*dumbfounded. A silence, then*) Do I what?

**PAT:** Fat! Do you know how many grams of fat you're eating there?

**JEAN:** (*looks at forkful*) Uh ... Gee, I musta swallowed the label. Of *course* I don't know how many grams of fat are in my salad dressing! I know how many grams of *taste* and that's why I'm eating it.

**PAT:** (*rolling eyes, trying to shrug it off*) Very well.

**JEAN:** Whadda you mean, "Very well?"

**PAT:** Nothing.

**JEAN:** "Very well?" Are you trying to say something?

**PAT:** Don't mind me.

**JEAN:** Then stop minding me! Just let me eat! OK?!

**PAT:** I'm sorry I brought it up.

**JEAN:** Good! Me, too! (*begins to eat*)

**PAT:** Over 75 grams!!

**JEAN:** (*chokes on food*) Stop that!

**PAT:** But ...

**JEAN:** I told you not to mention it!

**PAT:** Look! I'm sorry, OK? It's just that I hate to see you ... (*stops*)

**JEAN:** What? See me what?

**PAT:** I hate to see you stuffing all that ... that fat into your body.

**JEAN:** It's my body! It's my fatty body! Let me stuff it and enjoy my meal! Do you mind?

**PAT:** (*looking around*) People are beginning to stare at us.

**JEAN:** It's all that fat in their system. Fat makes you stare a lot. Now would you *please* just let me eat! Geesh! We shoulda gone to a movie!

**PAT:** Okay, okay ... I'm sorry.

**JEAN:** (*a look to be sure, then*) All right. Me, too. Let's just ... just enjoy our meal ... not each *others* meal ... just enjoy our *own* meal, and then get out of here.

**PAT:** (*a bit cowed*) Fine.

**JEAN:** Great. (*begins to eat again*)

**PAT:** And it's saturated fat at that.

**JEAN:** (*choking*) What?!!!!

**PAT:** It's saturated fat ... the worst way.

**JEAN:** (*aims fork as if flipping potatoes*) I am gonna give you some mashed potatoes in the worst way if you don't stop that.

**PAT:** Look, stop making such a scene. I'm just talking science here.

**JEAN:** And I'm talking justifiable homicide! "Friend Murders Friend in Local Buffet ... stabbed to death with sharpened celery stalk as noon crowd cheers!" Geesh!

**PAT:** I can see that this upsets you.

**JEAN:** Upsets? Upsets? A day's pay for this fancy meal and now you ruin it with the National Health Report! I'm not upset. I'm ready to drown you in your lettuce soup!

**PAT:** All right. Just take it easy, OK? If I'd had any idea you'd react like this, I ...

**JEAN:** Me? Like it's my fault!

**PAT:** The manager is looking at us!

**JEAN:** The manager isn't looking at us! He's looking at *you*! You're ruining his business! A table of five just ran off to join a health club without paying for their ... *fatty food*!

**PAT:** Stop being ridiculous!

**JEAN:** And you stop being such a pain in the platter! I came here to eat and dog-gone it, despite your medical report, I am gonna eat! (*picks up fork full of food and stuffs it in mouth without eyes ever leaving Pat*)(*with delight and large mouthful*) Ummmmmm!

**PAT:** (*closing eyes and grimacing*) Oh!

**JEAN:** (*mouth completely full, mumbling*) Whaffamatta?



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