

First Date Jitters
by Lesley L. Smith

I couldn't believe I'd finally had the guts to ask him out. My stomach was roiling with nerves. It felt like butterflies, no eagles, no pterodactyls were flying around in my gut. I looked at my watch again, and gingerly took a sip of water. Only five minutes had passed since the last time I looked.

The perky waitress approached me again. "Are you sure you wouldn't like a drink while you wait?" What was that tone? Did she think my date wasn't coming?

She smiled. I was acting paranoid. Jake was coming. He was. "Miss?"

"Uh, okay. Please get me a glass of house white wine." Of course, if he did show up, there was no guarantee he'd hang around or that he'd go out with me again.

"Sounds good." She rushed off to the bar.

I looked at my watch and took another sip of ice water. The agitation in my stomach calmed a bit.

"Emily?" a male voice said behind me.

Startled, I jerked my arm and managed to knock over the water glass. A tsunami of water and ice streamed across the table toward my lap. I jumped up to avoid the flood and knocked over my chair.

Jake, walking to the other side of the table, looking handsome in a scruffy way with his jeans and suit jacket, stifled a laugh. "Bummer." He grabbed a napkin and handed it to me.

As I reached for it, the pterodactyls started dive-bombing one another. "Uh, thanks. Sorry, for the mess," I said, careful not to meet his warm brown eyes. They could suck me in like the La Brea Tar Pits.

He smiled, looking so warm and friendly I couldn't help smiling back.

The waitress was at my elbow with the wine. Where'd she come from? "Oh, dear. Looks like we had a little mishap here." She surveyed the situation for a moment. "Maybe you should just switch tables. This one right here is nice." She placed the wine glass on the table.

Jake shrugged. "Sounds good to me." He plopped onto a chair.

She took his order, a draft, while I sat down very carefully.

I reached for my wine and took a dainty sip, and proceeded to burp. Shoot. Could this go any worse? When the wine hit my stomach the pterodactyls started wrestling. I put my hand on my

stomach. "Excuse me. I guess I'm nervous. I never asked a guy out before. Thanks for coming, by the way."

Jake was fussing with his napkin. He put his hand up to his artful slightly messy hair, but thought better of touching it. "Thanks for asking me. I've never had a girl ask me out before. It's cool."

I wondered how my hair was holding up, and more importantly, did I dare drink more wine?

The waitress brought Jake his beer and took an enthusiastic gulp. "Go ahead," he said. "Enjoy your wine."

Hand shaking, I grasped the glass and brought it to my lips. The wine tasted smooth and dry, but when it reached my stomach, I felt a huge belch coming on. Oh no. I put my napkin in front of my mouth right before it let loose.

Jake snickered.

I started to say 'excuse me', but realized there was a small greenish-yellow creature wriggling in my napkin. "What the hell?" I dropped it on the table.

A tiny pterodactyl flew out of the napkin and perched in the centerpiece.

"Oh, my God!" Jake yelled, staring at the animal. "It's a baby pterosaur! They're supposed to be extinct. Don't let it get away!" He threw his napkin over it.

Was this really happening? I burped again and another small lizard flew out of my mouth. How embarrassing.

Jake was on his feet. "This is so cool!" He ran around to my side of the table. "Get it, get it!" He grabbed my napkin and threw it over the little lizard.

I got on my feet, staring at two squirming napkins on the table.

Jake turned to me, smiling, and pointed at my stomach. "You got any more in there?"

I just looked at him. He was gorgeous, with his face flushed and eyes shining with excitement. It was cool. He was cool.

"This is the best date ever," he said. "You rock!"

I made myself grin. "Uh, thanks." I might as well strike while the iron was hot. "So, does that mean you'll go out with me again?"

"F'in A I will!"

I burst out in a smile. "Cool."