

Rosalie

Dear Rosalie,

I'm sitting here in O'Hare waiting for my connection back home. It's 10:30 in the morning on a Thursday and it's jammed. What are all these people doing? Shouldn't they be at work? And here we are in the wonders of the new millennium, sitting in a chair at an airport with a computer attached to nothing – where I can type a message and sent it out to some mysterious box, probably in the basement of a 12-year-old, which then sends it to your computer, also attached to nothing. What's next: talking movies?

We haven't talked in a while, I know. But I thought of you last night when we – that is, me and two others on this road trip – went to a Chinese buffet for dinner (by the way, have you gone to one of those Mongolian BBQ places? Do they really eat like this in Mongolia? Is this brought to us by the same people who give us Canadian bacon and prune Danishes and Philadelphia cream cheese?).

Anyway, Rosalie, back to the Chinese buffet. Very impressive for downtown Red Wing, Minnesota. Not just your boneless spare ribs (one more digression – I never understood the concept of ribs without bones), egg rolls, veggie lo mein, and mystery seafood in mystery white sauce. No sirree. They also had roast duck, dumplings that were not too doughy, and some exotic soup that I can't give you an English name for.

And then on the next aisle over, with the meat loaf, sushi, and three flavors of Jell-O, there it was: Fettuccine Alfredo. Just like me, they were thinking about you. It brought me back to the old days. I thought about our road trips, our seeming national tour of the state capitals. Albany, where we stayed at that awful place about the 24-hour laundromat, but found that diner with the enormous omelettes. The Loveless Café outside of Nashville with the heavenly biscuits and jam

as a side to the fried chicken. And one more: Austin, probably my favorite, with the fresh pecan pie. And through it all, resourceful Rosalie, you made sure that everywhere we went for dinner had one item on the menu: ole Fettuccine Alfredo. Of all the things I loved about you, I never understood how you survived – even thrived – on diet Pepsi, McDonald's, and Fettuccine Alfredo.

I look back and also wonder how I could have been so – what's the right word: stubborn? Self-absorbed? Really dumb? From Fettuccine Alfredo, I started looking for other reasons it wouldn't work. I must've come up with some, 'cause look where we are – or aren't – now. Yet for the life of me, I couldn't name one now. Yet there was so much that was right for you and me. You brightened every room you walked into. So many times we talked from early evening till past midnight and even then I wished they would never end. You always saw the best in me, and you overlooked probably so many of my quirks.

So, whaddaya think? Was this the world's only relationship doomed by pasta?

Well, Rosalie, they're about to call my row. Three-and-half hours, one more trip nearly done. Just wanted to let you know that I was thinking about you. To tell the truth, I think about you a lot. Hey: every once in a while, if you see something or hear something that reminds you of our time together, well, that'd be nice.

And this weekend, if you're going out, can I make one suggestion? Try the red sauce.

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