

Dinner Date

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After 21 years of marriage, I discovered a new way of keeping alive the spark of love.

A little while ago I had started to go out with another woman. It was really my wife's idea.

"I know that you love her," she said one day, taking me by surprise.

"But I love YOU," I protested.

"I know, but you also love her."

The other woman that my wife wanted me to visit was my mother, who has been a widow for 19 years, but the demands of my work and my three children had made it possible to visit her only occasionally. That night I called to invite her to go out for dinner and a movie.

"What's wrong? Are you unwell?" she asked. My mother is the type of woman who suspects that a late night call or a surprise invitation is a sign of bad news.

"I thought that it would be pleasant to pass some time with you," I responded. "Just the two of us."

She thought about it for a moment, then said, "I would like that very much."

That Friday after work, as I drove over to pick her up, I was a bit nervous. When I arrived at her house, I noticed that she, too, seemed to be nervous about our date. She waited in the door with her coat on. She had curled her hair and was wearing the dress that she had worn to celebrate her last wedding anniversary. She smiled from a face that was as radiant as an angel's.

"I told my friends that I was going to go out with my son, and they were impressed," she said as she got into the car. "They can't wait to hear about our meeting..."

We went to a restaurant that, although not elegant, was very nice and cozy. My mother

took my arm as if she were the First Lady. After we sat down, I had to read the menu. Her eyes could only read large print.

Halfway through the entrées, I lifted my eyes and saw Mom sitting there staring at me. A nostalgic smile was on her lips.

"It was I who used to have to read the menu when you were small," she said.

"Then it's time that you relax and let me return the favor," I responded. During the dinner we had an agreeable conversation—nothing extraordinary—but catching up on recent events of each other's life.

We talked so much that we missed the movie. As we arrived at her house later, she said, "I'll go out with you again, but only if you let me invite you." I agreed.

"How was your dinner date?" asked my wife when I got home.

"Very nice. Much more so than I could have imagined," I answered. A few days later my mother died of a massive heart attack. It happened so suddenly that I didn't have a chance to do anything for her.

Some time later I received an envelope with a copy of a restaurant receipt from the same place Mother and I had dined. An attached note said: "I paid this bill in advance. I was almost sure that I couldn't be there, but, nevertheless, I paid for two plates—one for you and the other for your wife. You will never know what that night meant for me. I love you."

At that moment I understood the importance of saying in time, "I love you," and of giving our loved ones the time that they deserve. Nothing in life is more important than God and your family. Give them the time they deserve, because these things cannot be put off till "some other time."