

Chinese Food



Lingerie never drove the boys as crazy as when she ruined their art. There was Sean, who walked away from dinner after she said the movie *Magnolia* was “dense.” Or Gabriel, who barely looked her in the eye when she trashed Metallica’s *Master of Puppets* album. Terrence didn’t say anything after her long tirade about how much Quentin Tarantino hated women; he just smiled, nodded, and broke it off the next week. And when she replaced the names of the women DMX listed in his song “What These Bitches Want,” with the names of all these men, and rapped her remix aloud in the car, there was Danny, who actually called her stupid. She mailed him a copy of DMX’s album the day after their breakup. Maybe her current boyfriend should’ve gotten a copy too, she thought, instead of the lace teddy she wore, and the acoustic guitar made of mahogany she’d taped a custom letter-pressed card to, which read: *Dear Paul, Hope you’re just as crazy about this guitar as I am about you. Love, Anna.*

Anna ripped the card off the guitar’s neck and threw it on the floor. She was sprawled out on the white duvet of the small studio apartment, petting Steve, the orange-haired tabby, who purred as she glanced at her phone when the door suddenly slammed open. Paul stood there like a zombie, in a shimmering suit that fit tight around his tall, skinny body. He wobbled into the kitchen and grabbed a can of wet food from the cupboard.

“He already ate,” she said. “You can’t just leave him without food for that long.”

Meaty chunks of cat food splattered everywhere when Paul dropped the can on the floor. He stumbled over to the bed and plopped down. Steve jumped towards his second dinner. Paul put his hand around the lace of Anna’s leggings, and she gave him a curious look that turned nasty when he started to snore, prompting her to stand, unsnap her heels, and toss them at his torso.

“Happy anniversary, asshole,” she said. She grabbed a large coat from the rack and opened the door. Steve looked over, licking his lips. Anna half-smiled and said, “Bye, Steve.”

Steve meowed as she walked out.



“It’s supposed to be the best Chinese food in the country,” Johnny said, “and it’s only open twice a year.” He sounded like a little boy talking about his favorite video game, but the hair on his shirtless chest was all man. Morning light bounced off the exposed brick of his apartment onto his giddy face as he fiddled with his phone, wrapped in a fleece blanket like a burrito. “You don’t know when, but they send out an alert the morning of, and then another when the doors finally open.”

Johnny looked across the room at Holly. She stood in front of the frayed wooden mirror he got at the thrift store, in beige Louboutin heels, and slathered her lips in red.

“I finally got an alert this morning,” Johnny said. He held up his phone and a soundbite said, *It’s Britney, bitch!* Johnny laughed. Holly was unperturbed and misted her face with setting spray. “Holly!” John yelled.

“Yeah, yeah, Chinese, never open, got it,” Holly said in her stereotypical LA-Valley-Girl tone. “You know I can’t go. And that ringtone is seriously so stupid.”

“Right,” Johnny said. “The promotion.”

“Awe, you remembered!”

“You know that’s why I got you those flowers, right?” He pointed to a dozen roses on his dresser.

Holly didn’t turn, just puckered her lips and fluffed her hair. “Honestly, I don’t need flowers,” she said. “I need to keep my vibe up. And Chinese food is not the vibe. And like, that’s literally all you eat! You should try something different.”

Johnny sat up. “This *is* different!”

“Oh. My. Gawd. Listen,” Holly said, “You wanna drive up to San Francisco to go to some magical restaurant, then go! I can’t just run away with you. I’m on a juice cleanse. Plus, I have a thing—”

“You always have a thing. You’re one big walking thing.”

She turned to grab her purse from the breakfast nook table, then tapped her heels over to the bed, pinched his cheek, and said, “You’re so cute.” She kissed his forehead and walked towards the door. “Okay I’m leaving. Tell me you’re obsessed with me, it raises my vibe.”



Anna sucked Diet Coke through a straw. She tapped the phone icon on her car’s digital display and looked out at the dusty, dry landscape surrounding the 5 freeway as she drove north towards San Francisco. The phone rang once, then the car filled with a hoarse but loving voice that said, “Hey, pretty girl.”

“Pretty wouldn’t be the word,” Anna replied.

On the other end of the line was Bella, a therapist dressed more like a spiritual healer. She sat in her office, scribbling on paper notes as she spoke. “Oh no, what happened?” she asked.

“I went to surprise him, and he came back wasted and didn’t even say anything. He just...”

Anna stopped. She passed a tow truck replacing the tire of a minivan on the side of the road.

“Yeah...?” Bella said, pausing her paper shuffle.

“God, I’m so sick of these stupid drunk losers I always end up with!” Anna said. “You’re a therapist, tell me what to do.”

“Go to therapy.” Bella snickered.

“Wow.”

“You know what? Let’s not waste our energy on that twat. What are you doing right now? What have you eaten today?”

“Nothing. I’m fasting.” Bella’s sigh triggered the car speaker’s bass. “I’m fine, Bella. I’m driving up to San Francisco to go to this Chinese restaurant that’s only open a few times a year.”

“Okay, good, that’s good,” Bella said. Then there was a knock on her office door. “I’ve gotta go, I got a client. That sounds fun, honey bunny. Just lean into your feelings, ‘kay? Call me later, bye!” She hung up.

“What the fuck does ‘LEAN IN’ even mean???” Anna said.

Bella tossed the phone onto her desk and opened the office door. Holly stood in the hallway. She was crying, and the makeup she did at Johnny's house slithered down her face in dark trails.



The weathered door of Johnny's '93 BMW station wagon slammed shut. Johnny started the engine and backed out of his driveway onto the street when he noticed a limp arm dangling out from the driver's seat of a parked car. Johnny hit the brakes, then the hazards, and got out to run towards the body. When he got to the car, he saw Paul passed out, with morning crud stuck to his face, in the same suit he wore to his anniversary nap. "You okay?" Johnny asked, giving him a nudge.

Paul looked up at Johnny and let out a dry, crinkly whisper from the back of his throat. Johnny looked over at the passenger seat and saw an empty bottle of tequila.

"Hungover? Been there. Hang on a sec." Johnny ran back to the station wagon. He rifled through his center console and grabbed a bottle of water and some aspirin, then walked back over to Paul. "Aspirin. Breakfast of champions," he said, handing over the water and pills. "Feel better. And you should sit up, someone might think you're dead." He patted Paul on the shoulder and walked away. Paul just closed his eyes and fell back into a stupor.



Anna drove down California Street's steep incline, past rows of Victorian homes in San Francisco's Nob Hill. She hated how much she loved this city. A snobby utopia birthed by human greed masquerading as a catacomb for hippy culture; a perch for old-money bluebloods to tower over the peasants and call themselves cultured, which really meant "superior." Especially Nob Hill, where socialites had thumbed their noses down at the shadowy creatures of the city's depths since the late 1800s, provoking angry mobs to storm the neighborhood on more than one occasion, to give the "nobs" (short for nabobs: wealthy men who made their fortunes in the east) a piece of their minds. And when the fires from the 1906 earthquake scorched through the city below, the nobs watched from their towers as the people of lesser ilk burned to

death. “Casual human ills,” is what the *San Francisco Chronicle* referred to them as in 1877, actually. Two days later, though, the fires reached their doorsteps, and the lavish mansions that stood high above the city were incinerated, reduced to piles of expensive ash. Nob Hill was eventually rebuilt into one of the most desirable real estate markets in the world, housing some of the United States’ highest-income earners who cuddled up right next to monuments of The Big Four and other railroad tycoons, lest you forget the cool, grey city of love’s true liberal ancestry. Anna forgave all that, though, as soon as she breathed in the clean air, free of smog, and parked in Chinatown.

Winged roofs, connected by rows of red lanterns resembling restricted veins ready to burst, towered over her as she turned into an alley and walked up to a bare storefront, with Mandarin lettering next to their English translation: Golden Dragon Restaurant. Then she saw it. “You’ve gotta be kidding me,” she said. Hanging on the inside of the window was a piece of notebook paper with a Sharpie inscription that said: *CLOSED*.



Johnny had a different affinity for San Francisco. One that didn’t involve shame. So he decided to park downtown and head into Chinatown on foot, to take in the city’s ornate romanticism, almost preserved within the brick of downtown’s towering gothic edifices, built on the backs of the “forty-niners,” who rushed to California after the Mexican-American war, completely eradicating Indigenous villages along the way, in search of gold.

When he walked past the green pailou of Dragon’s Gate, he stopped. To his right was a line of golden-brown ducks hanging in the window of a steamy restaurant. An older man stretched the beige dough of handmade noodles like silk. Johnny looked into the restaurant and watched a server pass by with a tray of piping hot dumplings. His mouth started to water.



Back in LA, the summer sun turned the morning smog into a sticky dew. Droplets of sweat ran down Holly's freshly waxed legs and into her heels as she walked back up to Johnny's apartment. She unlocked the door with the key he'd just given to her the week before, and walked in to see just the usual messy bed, which she eyed with an unusual fondness. She took out her phone, dialed Johnny's number, and began to tidy up.

"Hey, John, I was... uh," Holly said when the call went to voicemail. "I came back to your apartment and I, uh... did you go to San Francisco? I was just wondering, because, well, um... I'm going to my thing tonight, and wanted to see if you were going to be around afterwards, and yeah, okay. Call me when you get this." She hung up, and shook Johnny's comforter up into the air.



Johnny put his hand up on Golden Dragon's glass window. He looked inside, then closed his eyes and shook his head melodramatically. When he opened them back up, he saw Anna in the window's reflection, sitting on a bench behind him. She licked the last lick of a self-rolled cigarette that she lit and started to puff. He turned to look at her—

"Yoooo, what's really hood, my boy?!"

Johnny jumped, startled, and saw a man covered in awful tattoos, with a baseball cap hanging sideways from his afro. "Kyle?" Johnny said. "What are you doing up here, man?!"

"My muthaaafuckin' booooyyy," Kyle said, pulling Johnny into a hug as passersby started to stare. "Johnny Tsunami, the slayer of every fine mami—you know we been in Oakland since last year."

"How would I? You always change your number!"

"Man, a nigga like me don't even trus' hisself, how I'm supposed to trus' a cell phone?"

"My favorite philosopher."

Kyle opened his mouth to speak, but stopped to look over at Golden Dragon, then back to Johnny. "Ahhh, I shoulda known you was here for the Dragon! Best muthafuckin' dumplings in this whole muthafuckin' dumpling."

“Yeah, I got the alert today—”

“Aye, yo, check it,” Kyle said. He grabbed a cell phone from his pocket that was clearly functional. “I met this old dead-head broad at a bar last night—I’m talkin’ like in her 50s.” He showed Johnny a closeup of saggy, sun-damaged pubic-region skin, which had a faded tattoo portrait of Jerry Garcia, so badly done it made Johnny gag.

“Oh my god, is that Jerry Garcia?”

“Ayyyy! We miss you, Jerry!” Kyle whooped maniacally. Johnny laughed along, then noticed a young gothy androgyne standing next to Kyle. “Oh,” Kyle said, “This my boo, Becky.”

Johnny waved. Becky smiled, but said nothing and just looked down at the ground. It was weird.

“Well, aye, we bout to be up out,” Kyle said. “If you ain’t tryna wait around for all that Golden Dragon mess, get at ya boy. We hittin’ a spot in da Tenderloin. Japanese. Konichiwa!”

“You’ll have to give me your number,” Johnny said.

“Oh yeah, huh,” Kyle said. He looked over to Becky. “Baby, what’s my number?” Becky rummaged through her purse. She pulled out a thick purple Sakura marker, shook it up, and walked over to Johnny. She grabbed his arm and wrote Kyle’s number on the top of his hand, then went back to standing behind Kyle and staring at the ground. Still very, very weird.

Kyle pulled Johnny in for one more manly shake-and-hug and said, “Hit my line.”

“Sounds good,” Johnny said, chuckling. “And very nice to meet you, Becky.” She smiled at the ground. Kyle gave Johnny a *she’s just a little shy* look. He put his arm around her shoulder and walked away. Johnny shook his head, then—

“Hey!”

Johnny swung around to see Anna, still puffing on her self-rolled cigarette. “I know I don’t know you,” Anna said, “But what the hell was that about?”

“Oh, Kyle?” Johnny said. “Yeah, he’s... a hoot.” He walked closer to the bench. “Friend from high school. Good guy, just a little off.” She blew smoke like he made a bad joke she didn’t get. “You

here for, uh, Golden Dragon?” Johnny asked.

“I suppose you could say that,” she said. “I’m Anna.”

“Johnny,” he said. “No jokes about my name.” He put his fingers up into the *Bang! Bang!* stance.

Anna looked unamused. “Hey, you, uh—”

“Listen,” Anna said, flicking her cigarette into the gutter. “You’re cute, and if you’re here for Golden Dragon, we obviously have similar interests. You wanna walk around with me until the restaurant opens?”



The place was spotless. Holly swept a pile of filth into the dust pan, emptied it into the trash. She opened her phone and dialed Johnny again, only to get his voicemail. Again. She dove onto his bed and stared at the ceiling. Johnny had always been a messy guy. It was charming in a way, but had always highlighted the glaring differences between the two of them. She liked nice things, wanted more of them, and thought she’d end up with someone similar. Johnny had a decent job teaching computer science to wealthy Chinese kids, but spent most of his free time reading and playing video games. Every now and then he’d talk about a game he was designing, and Holly’s ears would perk up. A passion project. A golden ticket. Something for him to latch onto and pull him out of his studio and closer to where she lived, near the waves of Venice Beach.

Holly sighed. She looked over at herself in the mirror on Johnny’s nightstand, next to the pile of books she’d organized, and gasped. She combed through the nightstand drawer to find the face wipes Johnny kept handy and took one out to wipe the sweat from her pores. When she bent over to toss the dirty wipe, a ripped envelope in the nightstand drawer caught her eye. She grabbed it and pulled the letter out. The words she saw almost made her choke.



“I mean, she kinda has a point,” Anna said. She led Johnny through a row of kitschy souvenirs in the packed room of a place that fancied itself an antique store. “Doesn’t constantly eating Chinese food make you worried about getting fat?”

“Not really, no,” Johnny said. Anna wasn’t looking, so he grabbed a plastic shamanic mask, snuck around the opposite end of the aisle, and jumped at her. Anna flinched, snorted, and brought her hands to her mouth, embarrassed. When they exited back out onto the busy street, Johnny stopped at a stand to examine a fresh dragon fruit.

“Do you work out?” Anna asked.

Johnny gave the fruit vendor a \$5 bill, told her to keep the change, wiped the fruit off with his shirt, and said, “If you consider sex a workout.”

“OH, GOD, PLEASE,” Anna said. “Why is it always skinny white guys who cite sex as a workout?”

Johnny chomped into the fruit and let its juices gush down his stubbly skin. Then, he held the fruit out as if to offer Anna a bite. She crossed her arms. Johnny’s smirk washed away when he looked at her chest. His eyes swelled.

“What?” Anna asked self-consciously.

“Don’t move,” Johnny said, moving closer to her.

“Oh, no, what is it?”

Johnny pointed at the skin over her breast plate and said, “Yeah, what *is* that?”

Anna looked down, then... Johnny zipped his index finger up into her nose and laughed. Anna shook her head, and returned a mocking *ha-ha*. She waited for Johnny to wipe the tears out of his eyes, then grabbed the dragon fruit and tossed it across the street. He gawked, then softened.

“Truce?” he asked, holding his hand out. She glared, then shook. Johnny twisted his hand and interlocked their fingers. He turned to lead them down the street hand in hand, and said, “Good.”



The San Francisco skyline turned a beautiful shade of violet. And all Anna could think about was Johnny's ass. He waited in line at a pastry shop, smiling at her unenthused face every time he looked back at it. When he turned away, though, she eyeballed him. She could tell by his confidence (and his bulge) he likely had no problems in the crotch department, and he was one of those chiseled bony boys with a toned body he never had to work for. But his ass was so flat. It was like a divot that bent inward. Maybe she was focusing on the most unattractive part of this very attractive man, she thought, since he was her favored skinny, charming white boy archetype.

Johnny walked back over to Anna, who stood right next to a row of red lanterns that lit up her face. He pulled out two salty mooncake pastries finished with a smooth, yolky glaze. "You know," he said, handing one of the pastries to her, "I'm Jewish."

"Mazel tov," Anna said.

"I'm just not sure if I count as a skinny white guy—"

"You do." Anna said. She pushed his hand away, rejecting the pastry.

"Worried about getting fat?" Johnny asked, taking a bite.

"NO! I'm fasting."

"Ah, so you're anorexic."

"It's called intermittent fasting. It's good for you. Look it up." Johnny went for another bite, but Anna grabbed his hand and chomped into the flaky mooncake. She licked her lips and said, "Yum."

He put his arm out for her, and she rolled her eyes. But, of course, she locked arms and let him escort her down a narrow alley. Johnny sat them down on the stairs of a closed storefront, right next to a graffiti piece of a stenciled doctor using her stethoscope to check the beat of a red heart. "Pretty sure that only works with a healthy, regimented diet," he said. "If you go all day without a meal, then stuff your face full of Chinese food, I'd say that's bingeing." He offered her the last of the mooncake, which she inhaled with one bite.

"Oh, so you're an expert?" she asked.

“My ex had an eating disorder. I have a bad habit of dating narcissists whose self-loathing expresses itself in the form of fad diets, green juice, and selfies.”

“Yeah,” Anna said, “I guess I always end up with drunk assholes who don’t know how to communicate.” She saw an older man, with wispy grey hair and an unbuttoned shirt over sweats, several feet behind Johnny shaking out a rug. He was smoking a cigarette, and a woman with a showercap on yelled at him in Cantonese as he exhaled clouds of smoke.

“Well, maybe the whole ‘closed off’ vibe attracts a certain type of guy.” Johnny said. Anna’s eyes moved back and gave him an *oh no you didn’t* look. “Shit, I can’t believe I said the word vibe,” he continued. “Look, all I’m saying is that the whole ‘assertive tough girl’ thing is obviously a cover.”

“A cover for what?” Anna asked. “You think I’m closed off? You don’t even know me, dude. I came out and told you right to your... to your stupid... dumb... right to your obnoxiously charming, dumbass face exactly what I wanted from you—”

“Yeah, because you wanted to skip having to be vulnerable—”

“Oh, well, EXCUSE ME for being a little apprehensive about being intimate with a stranger—one whose jokes are stupid and...,” Anna stuttered, “and who lets ditzy airheads walk all over them!”

Cars whisked by at the ends of the alley as they stared at one another, and then... *It’s Britney, bitch* interrupted the silence. Johnny’s face dropped, and he scrambled for his phone.

“What? What is it? What does that stupid ringtone mean?” *It’s Britney, bitch* sounded again. Johnny pulled the phone from his pocket and looked down at the alert flashing on the screen.

“Golden Dragon,” he said. “It’s open.”

“Well, go!” Anna yelled at him. “That’s why you’re here, right?”

“Hold on,” Johnny said. He stood— *It’s Britney, bitch*, fired off again. Johnny looked over to see the man shaking out his rug. His cigarette shined in the darkness as he looked straight into Johnny’s eyes and shook his head. “I shouldn’t have said that—”

It’s Britney, bitch!

“That is the dumbest fucking thing I have ever heard,” Anna said.

“Listen,” Johnny said, “I’ve wasted so much energy on fake people that when someone who’s honest and has depth shows up I don’t know how to handle it. Honestly, most dudes probably don’t. I know we just met, but I know you. I know that you settle for less because somewhere deep down, you feel like that’s what you deserve. I know that because I feel the same way. And maybe that’s why we met. I can’t be sure about that, but what I am sure about is that we probably both deserve better.”

Anna glared.

“And I’m an asshole,” he said. “And I’m sorry.” The old man behind them hung the rug on the steel gate and threw his cigarette out into the alley. He walked back inside. His wife continued to yell at him from the porch.

“Okay, well,” Anna said, “you’re not totally forgiven, but I did come here for a reason—”

“To break your fast?”

“Hey! You and that stupid ringtone shouldn’t push your luck.” Anna shook her head and walked past him towards the alley’s entrance. He turned to follow her, and she put her hand out for him to take. Inside their house, the old man fixed two drinks for himself and his wife, who was still yelling when he walked over and gave her a glass. She crossed her arms, and the man pointed at her chest. She looked down. He pulled her showercap down onto her face and laughed. Johnny saw this and giggled, as he ran up behind Anna, took her hand, and said, “You really don’t think my jokes are funny?”



Anna and Johnny walked up to Golden Dragon and saw hundreds of people lined up around the block; children with their parents, couples on dates, and gaggles of teenagers all laughed and smiled as they waited for the doors to open under the restaurant’s hagiographic glow.

“Guess we should have come the first time Britney told us to,” Anna said. Johnny grinned, but his face was colored with disappointment. He looked down the street at the line, and the yellow light seeping

out of the restaurant lit up his shaggy brown hair. She admired him for a second, then noticed another sign on the window. He looked over when she nodded to the sign which said: *CASH ONLY*.

“Fuck!” he said, patting his pockets. “Do you—”

“No.”

“I can’t believe this.”

“Hey,” Anna said. She placed her hand on his arm and walked up to him. Golden Dragon’s magical shimmer now covered them both. “What if we tried something different?” The summer breeze blew leaves along the street as the sounds of laughter echoed through Chinatown’s alleys. Johnny looked down at Anna’s lips and leaned in—

“Moiiii nigga!” Kyle ran up between them. He was drinking from a brown paper bag. Becky smiled behind him, sipping something of her own from a bag, beaming with her head held high. Everyone laughed as Kyle made mock French kisses in the air before saying, “C’mon, let’s get up out this bitch.”

They walked down Grant Avenue, past Old St. Mary’s Cathedral which survived the 1906 earthquake, but was burnt from the inside and hollowed out the next day by the fires. Under the giant clock at the front of the building read the words: Son, Observe The Time And Fly From Evil, Ecc.IV.23. Johnny put his arm around Anna’s shoulders, and she slid hers around his waist, and gave him a playful slap on his bony, flat ass.



“‘Fire has reclaimed to civilization and cleanliness in the Chinese ghetto, and no Chinatown will be allowed within the borders of the city,’ The Oakland Monthly wrote about the Chinatown section of San Francisco after it burned up in the city’s famous fires of 1906,” Holly said. She read from the note she’d found in Johnny’s drawer. “And that’s because,” she continued, “the city saw an opportunity to replace what Chinatown had become to them: a cultural eyesore.”

“When the first Chinese immigrants showed up in the city, they believed their stay to be temporary; like everyone else, they were drawn by the promise of gold and riches. But they risked

murder. A Chinese national becoming another country's citizen was treasonous, and if they did so, their family back home could be slain. That's why most turned down offers of naturalization by the Mayor John W. Geary in 1850. The Mayor invited dozens of 'China Boys,' as he called them, to honor President Taylor in a funeral procession, ending in Portsmouth Square where a justice addressed them and said, 'You stand among us in all respects as equals.' Within three years, that tune changed.

"Over 4,000 Chinese immigrants, most of them Cantonese, had relocated to San Francisco by 1853, taking menial jobs that were unwanted by white Americans. Anti-Chinese sentiment soon boiled over. Chinese people were met with violence if they dared to travel outside their designated territory, and the city legislature attempted to block them from owning real estate. In 1877, over 500 rioters rushed in to ravage Chinatown, assaulting business owners before setting their buildings on fire. And five years after the riots, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, barring Chinese immigration for years.

"Jiao-Long was born in a different era: that of today's. He lives with his grandparents in a one-bedroom shack within contemporary Chinatown, San Francisco. After being bullied by some classmates on his way home from school one day, he wanders down an alley and sneaks into a restaurant called Golden Dragon. There, he stumbles upon a gateway to the past, and is transported back to the year 1906, where post-depression tensions between Chinese immigrants and angry white San Franciscans is most high. The gateway closes behind him, and in order to get back he must navigate through the gritty underground world of early-20th-century Chinatown's brothels, opium dens, and gambling clubs.

"This video game follows Jiao-Long as he befriends aging railroad miners, evades criminals, brushes up against cruel Yankee politicians, and ultimately ends as the fires of 1906 threaten to destroy his only way back home: the Golden Dragon Gateway. Along this journey we get a glimpse of what it was like to live under the threat of anti-immigrant violence, and how generations of Chinese-Americans rose up from literal ashes to preserve the still beating heart of the oldest Chinatown enclave in the history of the United States." Holly finished, and looked up with glossy eyes.

Squeezed into a window frame in his studio apartment, Paul sat shirtless, holding the guitar Anna bought him for their anniversary.

“Sounds cool,” he said. “I’d play it.” He held the card Anna wrote him in his right hand and read it under the moonlight, setting it down to begin strumming. A lamp with no shade lit up the room as he played. Holly was lying in her underwear on the bed. She turned away from Paul and closed her eyes. Steve purred and hopped up to rub against her. She picked him up and set him on the carpet. He meowed, and crept into the kitchen. The empty can of cat food was still on the linoleum floor. Steve walked right by it, jumped up onto the table, and started to lick at a styrofoam container full of leftover Chinese food.