

Our Matchmaker was an Autonomous Car

by Jonathan Ferrini

I checked in to the venerable hotel sitting atop Nob Hill in San Francisco greeting the cable car riders ascending California Street. It appeared in many well-known movies and afforded fantastic views of the Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco.

I make it a point to stay in this hotel as I've come to know the staff. The hotel has a rich history and I learn something new every visit. Because of its designation as a historical landmark preventing a major renovation, the hotel interior remains a glorious example of early twentieth century luxury.

I live in Los Angeles. I'm a single man with no children and semi-retired. I came to meet an intriguing woman I met through a dating App. She insisted upon not speaking and texting only minimally in hopes of keeping our meeting as much like a "blind date" as possible. I inferred from the writing quality of her messages she was an educated woman who enticed me with tasty tidbits about herself to encourage me to make the trip.

I'm lonely and struggling to conceive my next story. I was leaning toward a detective thriller. I took to watching Raymond Chandler's "Phillip Marlowe" and Dashiell Hammett's "Sam Spade" adapted movies for inspiration. I never thought my sojourn would inspire a romance story.

I checked into my customary one-bedroom corner suite with a view of the Golden Gate Bridge. The bellhop, Louis, arrived with my bag.

"I'm happy to see you again, Sir."

"Come join me at the window, Louis."

"What is that beautiful gated property resembling a museum across the street?"

"It's one of the most exclusive private men's clubs in the country."

"Old money, Sir."

"What is 'old money' in San Francisco, Louis?"

"Mining, railroad, and oil wealth, Sir."

"No tech dollars and no female members."

"Need I say more?"

“It sounds like a relic stuck in time, Louis.”

“With the exception of a few health and safety code improvements, this old hotel is also ‘stuck in time’.”

“I love this hotel and call her,

‘The Grande dame’.”

“Thank you for the history lesson, Louis.

“Did your granddaughter graduate from law school?”

“You have a fine memory, Sir.

“I’m proud to say she is working as an assistant city prosecutor.”

“Please accept this gratuity and my heartfelt congratulations to her and your family.”

“You’re very generous as usual, Sir.”

“Louis, a lady is expected shortly who’ll be waiting for me in the lobby.

“I haven’t met her but assume she’ll be very stylish.”

“I’ll recognize her and text you.”

“Please take her drink order and deliver it with a rose.”

“Yes, Sir.”

I unpacked my clothes and entered the vintage bathroom to freshen up. It was oversize with floors and walls covered by crisp white tiles. The plumbing fixtures had been upgraded but were retro in design to match the originals.

My cell phone alerted me to a text message.

Stunning tall platinum blond in black.

Sitting in the salon next to the grand piano.

I delivered her “Gimlet” cocktail with the rose you requested.

The beautiful lobby adorned with a massive floral display was pleasantly unhurried for a late Saturday afternoon.

The salon was just on the other side of the lobby and resembled a midcentury modern apartment replete with fireplace and grand piano.

I turned to enter and spotted her immediately. Miriam was in her sixties, slender, and taller than average for women. She wore her beautiful platinum long hair straight which fell neatly around her shoulders. She was wearing a fashionable black dress and stiletto heels perfect for an elegant evening within the “City by the Bay”.

Before I could introduce myself, she softly said,

“I’m happy you found your way to me, Nathan.”

“How do you know I’m Nathan?”

“Louis and I go very far back, darling.

“Please sit.

“If you don’t object, I ordered you a fine cognac.

“I find men who sip cognac arousing.”

“I’m impressed by your drink order, Miriam.

“Raymond Chandler described the Gimlet cocktail within his story ‘The Long Goodbye’,

‘... real Gimlet is half gin and half Rose’s lime juice and nothing else’.

“The literary reference may tip you off that I’m a writer.”

“The rose was a nice touch and suggests you may be a romance writer.

“I hope watching you sip the cognac will take my mind off your wardrobe.”

“Pardon me, Miriam?”

“Preppy casual evening wear is passé.

“You’d look delectable wearing Italian, dear.

“I adore tall and thin men like yourself dressed entirely in black with a white tuxedo shirt resembling the moon against the black sky over Milan.

“Please don’t take offense.”

The date was over before it began. I’d make small talk and suggest we weren’t a “match” and make alternative arrangements for my evening.

“May I find a copies of your writing at the bookstore?”

“You may find a published collection of my short fiction stories for sale on the internet.”

“Did your collection make it to a best seller list?”

“It’s listed on the ‘Nathan’s Best Seller List’.

“I pride myself on writing from the viewpoint of diverse protagonists inside romance, drama, and poetry.”

“Do you make your living from writing?”

“I didn’t make the trip up here to have ‘Sergeant Friday’ of ‘Dragnet’ interrogate me!”

“Please don’t be defensive, darling.”

“What makes you think I’m ‘defensive’?”

“I’m simply curious about your background, dear.”

“I sold real estate my entire career.”

“Did you enjoy it?”

“No!”

I needed another drink and motioned for the waiter. He took the drink order from Miriam as if I didn’t exit.

“Another gimlet for me and cognac with a tranquilizer chaser for the gentleman.”

“Of course, Madame.

“Your sense of humor is always appreciated.”

It was an uncomfortable silence waiting for the drinks to arrive but she motioned for me to move my chair closer and gently ran her long, delicate, French manicured fingers through my hair. It felt good and I began to relax.

“Your hair is so fine it resembles silk, Nathan.”

Miriam’s subtle and elegant perfume was intoxicating. It was likely very expensive with hints of indiscernible ingredients only a sophisticate would know. The drinks arrived.

“May I sip your cognac, Nathan?”

“Of course, Miriam.”

She palmed the snifter and graciously moved her delicate hand permitting the vintage cognac to swirl while causing the molecules to leap about in exhilaration knowing they would be consumed by this beautiful woman.

She held the snifter to her nose, then to her lips, and she sipped. It was so graceful I can only call it cinematic. Her red lipstick left a sexy imprint upon on the snifter. I became aroused.

“What do you do for a living, Miriam?”

“You might refer to me as a ‘Society Matron’.”

“I take that to signify you’re a wealthy woman with no job except to attend the opera, symphony, meaningless luncheons with society folk, indulge in spa treatments, and travel, correct?”

“Don’t judge me and I won’t judge you, Nathan.

“My family left their homestead in Colorado almost two hundred years ago.

“They traveled to California in covered wagons and made their fortune in gold mining, timber harvesting and oil.”

“What’s it like to grow up wealthy?”

“Tedious.

“I recall wearing my hair braided with ribbons and wearing frilly dresses.

“I was dressed like a doll making her way through the cigar smoke filled rooms to sit upon my daddy or granddaddy’s lap when called, speaking only when spoken to, and always displaying good breeding and manners.”

“How long were you married, Miriam?”

“Too long, Nathan.

“I was married after college in Palo Alto.”

“What did you study?”

“I enjoyed the study of philosophy and became obsessed by Nihilism which opened my eyes to the meaningless of my life.

“I dropped out of college and fell into an arranged marriage.

“We had our marriage reception and my husband’s wake inside this very room.

“How ironic an entire lifetime can fit neatly inside a single city block.”

“Would you mind elaborating, Miriam?”

“My husband died at age forty.

“He was a corporate attorney for our family’s private wealth office.

“Like my family, Norman was born to old San Francisco wealth.

“Norman wasn’t ambitious but smart enough not to squander our family fortune.

“My father and grandfather forbade me from working inside the family business empire.

“My ‘job’ of sorts, included sitting on the most prestigious philanthropic boards, maintaining our social calendar and, in return, I was kept in jewels, traveled, and Norman looked the other way knowing I kept a discrete lover.

“It was a loveless marriage.”

“Do you have children?”

“I have a daughter and granddaughter.

“They live in New York but we don’t speak.

“I disappointed my father and grandfather by not having a boy to carry on the family lineage.

“We’re playing chess, Nathan.

“I made you defensive and now, you are interrogating me.

“Let’s consider our game a ‘draw’ and discuss my plans for the evening, dear.”

Miriam was “out of my league”. I decided it was time to call it an evening.

“I’m happy to have met you but we’re not a match and should call it a night.”

She held her delicate hands to her face to conceal her tearing eyes. The diamond tennis bracelet shimmered as did the pearl earrings like beacons alerting me to a tedious emotional “scene” ready to play out.

Miriam was a spoiled, wealthy woman, who likely had her pick of trendy young studs on speed dial. I stood and turned to leave without remorse.

“Wait just one minute, Nathan!

“Come back here this instant!

“I have an apology to make to you.”

I complied. I found her directness and resolve very sexy.

“I appreciate the time and effort you have made to meet with me.

“I live in Pacific Heights which is only a short drive from here.

“I came on too strong and made you uncomfortable.

“I apologize to you and hope you’ll reconsider joining me for dinner.”

“Thank you for the apology, Miriam.

“Surely, a woman of your breeding, beauty, sophistication, and standing within society should bring many a suitor to your door.”

“I prefer the anonymity and adventure associated with a man from out of town.

“I don’t want to ‘fish’ out of the same ‘pond’.

“I thought you would bring a fresh perspective like a warm ‘Santa Ana’ wind with you from Southern California.

“Please give us another try.

“It’s only one evening, Nathan.”

“Apology accepted, Miriam.

“Tell me about your plans for the evening.”

“I’ve made dinner reservations in Napa.”

“That’s at an hour away, Miriam.

“I don’t have a car and don’t want you to stress out driving for an hour.”

“The drive is worth dining within a very exquisite French restaurant I trust you’ll enjoy, dear.

“I’ve made arrangements for a car service to provide transportation.”

“Are you referring to ‘The French Drycleaner’ which has a waiting list a yearlong?”

“I don’t know if you’re jesting or being sarcastic, Nathan.

“It’s not called the ‘French Drycleaner’ and I know the genius chef.

“I phoned him just before my arrival this evening and we’re welcome at any time.”

I’d never get another opportunity to dine at this exclusive restaurant but wasn’t prepared for the “sticker shock” when the bill arrived.

“I read ‘pensive’ on your handsome face, darling.

“I will be delighted to pay the dinner check.”

“I insist on paying half.

“I’m ready when you are, Miriam.”

I extended my arm and helped the beautiful and elegant woman to her feet. I placed her black cashmere coat over her shoulders and held her hand as we walked to the door. Heads turned as if I was accompanying a gorgeous retired ballerina or actress. From Louis, to the waiter, and the front desk staff, they exclaimed,

“Enjoy your evening, Madame.”

We waited just inside the door as it was growing chilly.

An autonomous car named “LETGO” arrived.

“Here’s our transportation for the evening, dear.”

“You have to be kidding me, Miriam.

“I might be persuaded to take a driverless car around the block but across the bridge and into Napa is too risky!”

“It’s all the rave and I crave adventure!

“Let me show you.

“I open the door with the push of the App on my phone.

“Voilà!”

We buckled our seatbelts and fear overcame me. There was no driver except for a computer screen attached to the back seat.

“Place your finger on the computer screen and select,

‘Begin Ride’.”

The car began moving and to my surprise, appeared to drive as if it had a mind of its own, stopping at crosswalks, traffic lights, and flawlessly moving in and out of lanes. I held onto my seat with both hands as if on a rollercoaster ride.

“You’re gripping the car seat in terror, dear.”

She reached for my hand. It felt good. To say the feeling was maternal was too strong, to call it loving, maybe, but to call it “just right” was perfect.

It was a short trip to a very exclusive Italian clothing store.

“Please exit the car and open my door like a gentleman, Nathan.

“Autonomous doesn’t require you to abandon chivalry.”

I exited and walked around the car, opened her door, extended my hand, and she exited. The car took off!

“What about the car?”

“It’s going to find a safe place to park until I summon it to retrieve us.”

Miriam was met by the manager.

“Miriam, darling, welcome back to our store.”

“Henri, please meet my new friend, Nathan.”

“It’s my pleasure to meet you, Sir.”

“Henri and I must attend to a special order of mine.

“You’d look fabulous in the tan full-length cashmere coat inside the men’s department.”

Henri snapped his fingers and was joined by an attractive young lady who appeared to be in her early twenties holding a sterling silver tray with two flutes of champagne. Miriam took her flute and I grabbed mine.

The store screamed “expensive” and I needed the calming influence of a jolt of champagne which I noticed was dry, tasty, and very vintage.

“Prudence will escort you to the men’s department.”

“Please follow me, Sir.”

“Please call me, Nathan, Prudence.”

“Welcome, Nathan.

“This is the beautiful coat Miriam was referring to.

“You look to be a size forty-two regular.”

She found my size and held it while I placed my arms through the sleeves. To say it felt like soft cashmere is an understatement. It felt like a fluffy cloud made in heaven.

“Please check the fit within the mirror, Nathan.”

I looked as if I stepped out of the glossy pages of an Italian fashion magazine.

“What’s the price of the coat?”

“Ten thousand dollars, Nathan.”

I carefully removed the coat not wanting to cause any harm to such an expensive garment.

“What’s the least expensive item within the store, Prudence?”

I followed her to a simple wool watch cap. I reached for the cap and the price tag barked one-thousand dollars.

Miriam was “fishing” inside my “pond” named “Off the Rack.” The classy restaurant and this exclusive store didn’t have a place inside my draft romance novel which included yellowed, stained pages, found only within a thrift store.

“I’m going to take a seat and wait for Miriam.”

“May I fill your flute?”

“Yes, thank you.”

Prudence was a shapely redhead wearing a black jacket, white blouse, and knee length black skirt accompanied by stiletto heels. She had a beautiful smile and hint of freckles. I honed in upon her perky breasts and shapely derriere covered with the sheerest of lingerie.

Prudence returned with the flute on the sterling silver tray.

“Here you are, Nathan.”

“Do you enjoy working here, Prudence?”

“Very much, Nathan.

“I studied fashion design in college.”

“Where are you from?”

“I’m was born and raised in Oakland.

“What brings you to San Francisco?”

“I’m on a first date with Miriam and she has dinner plans for us at a French restaurant in Napa.”

“That restaurant is very exclusive and you’re in for a made to order French gourmet meal fit for royalty.”

“I’m a steak and loaded baked potato type of guy.”

“You’re making me hungry, Nathan.

“It’s getting near closing time and I’m craving a cheeseburger and fries.”

“I suspect you prefer a rare cheeseburger including all the condiments consorting with the meat juices dripping down your beautiful fingers.”

“Of course, and when I’m a bad girl, I also order chili cheese fries.”

“Are you married, Prudence?”

“I’m single.”

“Are you married, Nathan?

“Single and lonely, Prudence.”

“The tan coat hung on your athletic frame beautifully.

“I’m not attempting to ‘sell’ you.”

“I was told my wardrobe is ‘passé’.”

“Italian fashion compliments you very well.”

“So, I’ve been told, already.”

“Miriam has exquisite taste and you should follow her fashion advice.”

“I may come back and do some shopping if you’d consider being my personal shopping advisor.”

“It would be my pleasure, Nathan.”

“Allow me to reach into my wallet and provide you with my business card.”

I felt a hand pull on my collar and a cold chill at my back.

“I’m going to borrow the gentlemen from you, dear.

“Walk with me, Nathan.

“Your clumsy attempt to woo the salesgirl young enough to be your granddaughter was an affront to me.

“You embarrassed me in front of Henri and he’ll have a word with the girl, I’m certain.

“Granted, we started off on the ‘wrong foot’, but you received my sincere apology because I believed you were a gentleman.

“If you prefer to try your chances with the salesgirl, I’ll leave you now like a ‘bad dream’.”

I began channeling Bogart playing Sam Spade who suggested I should walk away while exclaiming,

“Enjoy your bad dream!”

I wasn’t Sam Spade but more in keeping with one of Mister Roger’s neighbors who took the “high road” including an explanation for my rude behavior.

“I don’t get out much and find myself overstimulated in a beautiful city.

“I was smitten by a beautiful young woman.

“The overstimulation I’m experiencing is heightened by being in the presence of a beautiful and sophisticated woman of good taste like yourself.

“There is nowhere I’d rather be than with you on our way to a sumptuous dinner in Napa.

“Please accept my apology.”

“Apology accepted, you naughty boy.

“I must keep you on a tight leash!”

Miriam was one sharp lady. She was pushing my “buttons” all evening and I enjoyed it. I might attempt to find her “buttons” and see where the evening leads. My creativity began to swell.

I walked outside to find the autonomous car waiting but the door was locked.

Miriam exited the store with a small box exquisitely gift wrapped with a golden bow. She pressed a button on her phone, the doors unlocked, and we began our journey to Napa.

“You can afford a chauffeured car service, Miriam.”

“I appreciate not having to engage in small talk with a driver and smell his hideous cologne.

“Please enjoy the ride and let’s live out the adventure, together.”

The beautiful Golden Gate Bridge came into view but the car unexpectedly turned away from the bridge and drove back into town.

“This car seems to have a mind of its own, Nathan.”

“Perhaps a heart and soul, too.”

I touched the screen marked “Customer Service” who responded,

“How may I assist you?”

“We’re in San Francisco winding about city streets and missed the bridge towards our destination in Napa!”

“I see the car’s destination malfunctioned.

“I’ve sent a signal to the vehicle to drop you off shortly.

“There will be a refund for the ride.”

Miriam reached for my hand holding tightly.

“I made a terrible mistake ordering this ridiculous car.”

“I’ve come to appreciate sharing the adventure with you, Miriam.”

“Thank you for your understanding, dear.”

After several anxious minutes, the car slowed and came to a stop at the foot of Coit Tower.

“Let’s get out quickly before the car changes its mind, Miriam.”

The car sped away with a single toot of the horn as if to say,

“Goodbye”

Miriam looked about in fascination and remarked,

“I remember this neighborhood.

“I visited here many times.

“Follow me.”

“You’re wearing stiletto heels and I don’t feel like carrying you.”

She removed her shoes, stockings, and proceeded to walk barefooted. We descended down a narrow sidewalk surrounded by gardens, trees, and chirping birds.

We were inside what seemed like a secret garden with one hundred-year-old bungalows and each enjoyed a view of the bay.

We walked to the end of a tiny road.

“This bungalow was home to my Au Pair, Claudette, who was French.

“She was my savior.”

“That’s a unique term for Claudette.

“What are you implying?”

“My mother committed suicide when I was in high school.

“She cut her wrists and they found her in the bathtub.”

“I’m very sorry for you.

“Why was your mother depressed?”

“I told you earlier money doesn’t buy happiness.

“My mother lived inside a prison whose door was locked with the key to the family purse.

“She had nowhere and nobody to turn to inside an abusive marriage including physical violence, mental torture, and a family history of molestation.

“My father was a monster as was his father.

“When I confronted mom about the abuse I was suffering at the hands of my father, grandfather, and some of their old crony friends, mother explained to me that if I ever disclosed the abuse, I would be excommunicated from the family and made penniless.

“They were powerful and influential men who held sway over the criminal justice system which would turn its back to our allegations.

“Mom couldn’t live with the guilt, anger, and rage knowing her daughter also fell victim to these evil men.

“Mother was helpless and chose not to go on living if it meant being a silent witness to my abuse.

“Claudette helped me grieve.

“She was very sensitive and an artist.

“I would spend many a day with her drinking wine, speaking of life, and painting.

“This sweet little cottage was my secret hideaway.

“I would tell my husband I needed a weeks’ vacation, book the vacation replete with plane tickets, hotel itineraries, but come and stay here, instead.

“Claudette taught me about a beautiful world beyond a dysfunctional family and instilled within me a sense of adventure and independence.

“After high school, we became emotionally involved.

“We fell in love.

“I kept this secret from everybody except you, Nathan.

“She died just shy of fifty years old from pancreatic cancer.

“I had the privilege of holding her hand when she finally let go.”

“I also lost my mother, Miriam.

“I was in my teens.

“She’s was very depressed and self-medicated herself into an overdose.”

“It’s horrible for a boy to lose his mother.

“I’m certain she loved you.

“I would’ve been a loving mother to you.”

Miriam touched my heart. She placed her arm around me and brought my head to her bosom. I relished the emotional connection within a proverbial Garden of Eden. Everything I held back for decades flowed like water from a dam.

“I should have been a filmmaker.

“I was writing and shooting films as early as Junior High.

“I attended graduate film school but after unsuccessful attempts at finding employment inside the movie business, I left film and spent my life selling commercial property for the wealthy.”

“I know the pain of resorting to a life far removed from your dreams, Nathan.”

“I enjoyed it on rare occasions when I could help a client out of a financial jam or put a struggling immigrant on the path to the American dream.

“I have a handful of clients who became self-made millionaires who stay in touch.”

“That’s very admirable.

“I’m liking you more and more.

“Why didn’t you marry and have children?”

“I could never commit and relished the freedom from responsibilities of marriage and a family.”

“It’s possible you feared the emotional pain from losing your mother, dear.”

“I never made that connection, Miriam.”

“I want to help you make many more connections which will fuel your creativity.”

“Our respective journies through life led us to be together, now.”

“That’s very sweet.

“Kiss my lips softly, dear.”

We held the kiss which made me long for more.

“It’s growing dark quickly, Nathan.

“It’s time to leave.”

She wiped away a tear.

“I bought you a gift.”

It was wrapped by the expensive Italian store. Inside, I found the one-thousand-dollar navy blue watch cap.

“I don’t know whether to wear this or frame it.”

“You’ll wear it to dinner, silly.”

She pulled the soft wool cap over my head. It was warming and a heartfelt gift.

“I would have never visited this special neighborhood again but for you and LETGO.

“It’s cathartic for me.

“I’m blessed to feel vulnerable in your company.

“I trust you and shared very personal secrets.

“Something about you resonated with me in our messaging.

“You provided me the key to free myself from the shackles of childhood abuse, untimely deaths, and self-hatred stemming from a lack of purpose thrust upon me by wealth.”

“Please tell me what resonated because every time I look in the mirror, I ask,

‘Who the hell are you?’”

“You’re are a kind, loving, and forgiving man willing to take a chance on finding love.

“You’re a writer, teacher, healer, and liberator of my self-imposed exile from living life to its fullest.

“Our meeting and winding up here is kismet.

“I’m very lonely and seek a special man.

“I can’t live alone inside my grandiose home any longer.

“It’s unbearable.

“I’ll be direct with you, Nathan.

“We have so much to offer each other.

“Please allow me the opportunity to put my wealth to work permitting us the opportunity to love each other and enjoy all the beauty the world has in store for us.

“We’re both growing older and time is precious.”

“I want to love you.”

“We may be getting ahead of ourselves, Miriam.”

“I have an instinct you’re my soulmate.

“You came all this way without even a photograph on a blind date which was my test for you.

“I pushed your ‘buttons’ and you didn’t run, did you?”

“I thought about it but didn’t want to run away because I wanted to discover your ‘button’ hoping to inspire a novel.

“It was selfish and superficial but taught me an important lesson.

“Emotions aren’t ‘buttons’ like we find on an App to summon a car.

“They are hidden away and only revealed cautiously.

“You pushed your own ‘button’ and out flowed a gusher of emotions deep inside you like the dark, sticky, and pungent oil flowing from deep inside the earth.

“I’m not demeaning the source of your family’s wealth but using it as a metaphor for your emotional catharsis, Miriam.”

“You wrapped it all up so neatly like the gift box you opened.”

“Together, we’ve untied the bow and you’re free to leave the box!”

“You’re a writer, darling.

“Your wealth is a keen sense of observation and the currency is words.

“Your work will flourish if shared by an encouraging partner like myself.

“My family keeps a boat with a full-time crew.”

“You have to be kidding me.

“A yacht requires a full-time crew.”

“I’d sell it but some of the crew members have young families and I won’t disrupt their source of income.

“My father enjoyed sailing to Alaska.”

“Why not sail to Hawaii or Mexico?”

“Father was a Marlin fisherman and we sailed to Mexico, often.

“He was an impatient man and preferred to fly our jet to the Hawaiian Islands.

“The yacht is capable of going anywhere.”

“Yachts, private clubs, oil, timber, and gold aren’t my reality, Miriam.

“Why don’t you take a long cruise alone or with friends?”

“I can’t cruise alone and I don’t enjoy the company of my friends enough to invite them.

“We could take the yacht anywhere in the world, darling.”

“I’m overwhelmed and need to process your gracious invitation.

“Let’s walk to dinner and simply enjoy our first date, Miriam.”

We were startled by a woman who stood up from behind a hedge of rose bushes with pruning shears in her hands.

“Excuse, me.

“I didn’t mean to interrupt.

“Are you Nathan Brent?”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“I had the opportunity to attend a symposium at the medical school where you were the featured speaker on Autism and reading.

“I found your collection of stories written for children with learning disabilities fascinating.

“Your ingenious use of words, phrases, fonts, letters, and illustrations designed to catch and maintain the attention of children on the spectrum is very special.”

“Thank you, Ma’am.

“I’m fortunate to be joined by a team of brilliant scientists and medical doctors.”

“I want you to know my darling granddaughter was chosen to be a member of the test group to read your books.

“It warms my heart to see her eyes open wide and smile with every turn of the page.

“We have faith that she’ll begin reading very soon because of your story collection.

“Thank you for sharing your special writing talent.

“By the way, you’re a lovely couple!

“Good night.”

“Why didn’t you tell me about this beautiful writing project when I asked you what you wrote about inside the lobby?”

“It didn’t seem like the right place and right time.”

“I might have suggested we skip dinner and head straight to your room and enjoy room service after our torrid lovemaking.

“You’re a very sexy man, darling.

“I believe this is the ‘right place and right time’ to place my arm around yours and walk a few blocks into North Beach for a delicious Italian meal.

“Over dinner, I want to hear all about this writing, and afterwards, I’ll discuss some plans for us to take that boat to distant shores which will nurture your creativity and permit me to share in your writing gifts.

“I can already imagine watching you write with the sun setting behind you and my heart pounding in rhyme with every key stroke.”

“Let’s agree you’ll continue to woo me with enticing tender morsels named ‘Miriam’ just as you did before we met, and, we’ll see where that leads us, agreed?”

“I think that’s a wonderful idea, Mr. Brent.”

We walked arm in arm under the bright, colorful, and happy lights to dinner in the beautiful “City by the Bay”.

Miriam inspired a novel about two unlikely lovers which was quickly writing itself inside my head.

Dashiell Hammett provided the ending to the novel and placed the entire evening inside a giftwrapped box with words more elegant than a ten-thousand-dollar coat,

“I haven’t any sort of plans for the future but I reckon things will work out in some manner.”