

Last word

by J Wren

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Her face was like thunder. Her familiar open smile was replaced by a thin, grim line of compressed lips and eyes which usually sparkled now flashed like lightning. Fittingly, rain and unseasonal hail bounced off the restaurant windows as she stared intently into my face. No, she stared at me with piercing blue eyes. I offered a tentative smile and shrug of shoulders. "I mean it," she said, colour rising to her cheeks. Her voice was quiet but, somehow, that tone magnified the threat, gave it increased resolution. "I told you last time," she continued, tapping a forefinger on the menu as if to



enforce her viewpoint, "I pay my way. If I don't pay half now, I will buy the next lunch. No arguments. "

I answered with a smile, amused at her steely determination and vehement expression over such a trivial matter. And yet, I had to admit, it was an issue important enough for me to insist on paying. As our meal progressed and the storm passed, we relaxed, clinked glasses, exchanged tales, laughed and occasionally held hands across the table. Too soon, we had to leave. I paid the bill and, as the sun peeped through grey clouds, we parted in the car park, hugging and kissing first. "Remember, my treat next time," she said through her open window and drove off, back to work. Hmm, I thought, we'll see. Call me old fashioned, if you like, but I buy the lady lunch. More importantly, I like treating the lady to lunch. I fished in my jacket pocket for car keys and pulled them out... accompanied by a crumpled £20 note. Damn her! How did she do that? Why does she always have the last word? Then I shook my head, grinned and chuckled: I do love that woman.