



As A Matter Of Fact, I Am The Person You Have To Blow To Get A Table Around Here

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I am extremely glad that you asked. So often our diners, or potential diners, I should say, seem to be on the brink of asking that very question. Yet they can't bring themselves to say the magic words that would make their wish come true. Instead they just grumble and roll their eyes or spend all evening at the bar inhaling watered-down drinks and wasabi peas until they're too stuffed to have dinner.

Or the alpha male of the party gives me a fuzzy handshake with a folded twenty inside, as if that would win the great table auction. Perhaps it would...at Denny's, during drunk rush. Here he would have to put a few more of those bills together to meet the reserve price, *bien sûr*. And then I would have to tip out to everyone else—unless I want to have a garlic press applied to my most intimate parts, and I don't. Once was quite enough, even after all the tequila and Quaaludes.

Truly, I congratulate you on your willingness to simplify the process of being seated. After all, the best things in life are free—or almost free. At any rate, this will not cost you a penny, only a few minutes that you would have spent hungrily waiting anyway.

In fact, it doesn't even have to be you. Anyone in your party would be quite sufficient. You must know that, in this lighting anyway, you are a very attractive group. (I am assuming, of course, that the gentleman who appears to be your brother and his girlfriend are both eighteen years of age.)

As I am not a cruel man or a tyrant in host's clothing, I would make only two small requests. In case I have not noticed, no one with braces. For obvious reasons. And I cannot urge you strongly enough to be very sparing in your application of teeth. It is likely to be a long night.

So please, take this pager—I've discreetly set it to "vibrate"—and when you are called I will meet you in the coat check area. You are presently fourth in line.

Depending on your performance, of course, I may be able to get you a table by the kitchen next Monday.