

# The Recipe Club

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A TALE OF FOOD AND FRIENDSHIP

A NOVEL



ANDREA ISRAEL & NANCY GARFINKEL

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ANDREA ISRAEL & NANCY GARFINKEL

*Recipes in collaboration with Melissa Clark*

POLHEMUS PRESS

*The Recipe Club* is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the authors' imaginations or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Polhemus Press

[www.polhemuspress.com](http://www.polhemuspress.com)

First Edition: October 2009

ISBN 978-0-9823492-0-5

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data on file

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Design by Empire Design Studio

Printed in China

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To our mothers and fathers, who taught us  
how to cook and how to love.

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Cookie

4 pd butter  
cup Gran. Sugar  
egg (beaten)  
milk - 1 tbsp.  
1/2 cups flour }  
alt }

75 - 8 min. Bake

oven sifted with 1/4



Cookie Dress)

an

Part One: 2000

with well

my light Brown

leaves fall -



—  
m well  
add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup brown  
peped banana  
la in 1 Tablesp  
en  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups  
camp salt -

5 min.  $10'' \times 10''$  p  
cream.

**TO: LSTONE@dotnet.com**  
**FROM: VRUDMAN@webworld.com**  
**DATE: APRIL 6, 2000**  
**SUBJECT: HELLO AGAIN**

Dear Lilly,

I've started a letter just like this about a thousand times. "Dear Lilly," I'd write, as if I knew what came next. But that was as far as I got. I never knew what to say or how to say it. And I wasn't sure you'd ever want to hear my voice again.

But today I know exactly what I have to tell you, and I know you'd want this to come from me. My mother died. Last month, of cancer. Maybe your father already told you; I don't remember what he said at the funeral. It was a hard day. It's been a hard two years. And now that it's over, it feels like walking through a dream—a milky gauze of grief. And relief. And guilt at the relief.

Oh, Lilly. This is not how I hoped to find you again. But maybe it's the only way. Death always makes me want to make sense of things. I want to understand my mother's life. I want to understand my own.

Perhaps this all feels too raw, too real, too intimate. If so, I'm sorry. But I just had to take the chance that you'd still be there for me the way you once were. I can't begin to tell you how much it would mean for us to reconnect. Even after—especially after—all these many years.

Valerie

.....

**TO: VRUDMAN@webworld.com**  
**FROM: LSTONE@dotnet.com**  
**DATE: APRIL 7, 2000**  
**SUBJECT: RE: HELLO AGAIN**

Dear Val,

I honestly don't know what to say....

I'm so sorry about your mother. I hope you find some solace in the knowledge that she loved you and was proud of you. I hope you can carry that with you, along with her smile and that wonderful, raucous laugh that always surprised everyone.

Regards to you. And to your family.

Lilly

.....  
**TO: VRUDMAN@webworld.com**  
**FROM: LSTONE@dotnet.com**  
**DATE: APRIL 7, 2000**  
**SUBJECT: A THOUSAND PARDONS!**

Forgive me for that awful version of a ten-cent drugstore sympathy card and let me start all over: Val, hearing from you has shaken me to the very core. I'm reminded of all we once had and lost. Twenty-six years of silence—and then, at long last, you appear!

When I got your e-mail I cried out loud. There you were, or the essence of you, in your brief words. So very palpable. I mean, Christ! Thanks to cyberspace, you were almost here with me in these beloved mountains.

Oh, nuts. I'm not very good at this. What I'm trying to convey, in a clumsy way, is that I've spent a lot of time and energy (not to mention thousands of bucks on therapy) convincing myself that our fight was just one of life's many painful lessons. People change, they go different ways. Even the best of friends. I told myself, so be it. "Move on..." to quote

Sondheim. (The very song I once used to open my act.)

But the truth is, Val, I can't tell you how many times I've whispered to myself, tonight I'll look out into the audience and she'll be there. I can't tell you how many times I've pretended that somehow, you will just turn up. That somehow we will find a way to be friends again. Look, it's all just a long-winded way of saying: yes, Val, I'm still here for you. Honestly, sweetie, you can count on that.

I know when we last spoke, so many moons ago, the problems between us—I mean *all* of us—were insurmountable (at least they seemed that way to me). Which is why I think you'll find it amazing, if not unbelievable, that at long last my father and I are becoming close. I recently moved back home to live with him. It's temporary. And though it's been good for each of us, it's also been, as you might imagine, less than easy. In fact, right now I'm taking a break at the cabin. (Yes, the family still keeps the place, complete with outhouse and NO PHONE! Can you believe it? So, to get my e-mails I have to trek all the way to Lake Placid, almost forty-five minutes from Keene Valley, to an Internet cafe—which I thank the techno-goddesses for.)

Anyway, at your mother's funeral, you may have noticed my father is a changed man. The infamously *stony* Isaac Stone is much more vulnerable these days. Your mother's death hit him surprisingly hard. It's the first time I've seen him weep. It must have something to do with all the losses he's facing: a recent retirement. Failing eyes. A broken heart—he's unable to let go of my mother, who's no longer with us.

Which brings me back to the real question: why didn't I just reach out to you once I heard about your mother? The truth is, I got scared. I found myself hoping, with all my heart, that you would be the brave one to



break our icy silence. And I thank you for that.

I've been a coward. Maybe I just didn't know how to express the simple thing you said: I can't begin to tell you how much it would mean for us to reconnect.

I won't trouble you with the details of my life right now. In summary: deep love, despair, deeper love, deeper despair, and now...well, a sort of limbo place thanks to a lover who can't commit and my own confusion about intimacy. I'm trying to figure it all out, even though that's a bit like trying to lasso the moon.

My heart goes out to you. My thoughts are with you, and your family. Despite the sad reason for your e-mail, I am extremely happy to hear from you. (Do you remember what loyal correspondents we were when we were kids?)

Write again, if you have the time and the interest.

Much love,

Lilly

P.S. How is "Golden Boy"...Ben? Please send him my love.

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TO: **LSTONE@dotnet.com**  
FROM: **VRUDMAN@webworld.com**  
DATE: **APRIL 10, 2000**  
SUBJECT: **WHERE SHALL WE BEGIN?**

Dear Lilly,

I'm scattered and unfocused, broken. Losing my mother feels like an amputation. The psychic space within me that she still inhabits—will always inhabit?—has become a phantom pain. Excruciating, agonizing, relentless. And each time I realize she's gone forever—again and again, always as if it's the first time—I feel lightheaded and faint. Heartsick, too, as I obsessively count and recount the many years I spent pushing her away. All in a desperate attempt to “become” the person I, in fact, already was.

Strangely enough, all this makes me realize how deeply I've missed you. I hunger for our friendship. Oh God, Lilly, we were so foolish. The only way I can make sense of what happened between us is to believe that perhaps we *needed* that terrible fight. Perhaps we were so fused at the soul as children that we had to separate in order to invent our adult selves.

And perhaps we have both needed these long, dry years to heal the deep wound of rupture?

Whatever the truth may be, I am so sorry for my part in all this, sorrier than I can ever say.

Can you believe how old we are? Oh, Lillypad, let's be friends again! How are you *really*? Please write to me. Tell me everything, and then tell me more. Whatever happens next between us, speaking to you feels like a blessing. Maybe a renewed correspondence would be uplifting for both of us. Do you want to try?

Your devoted friend, forever,

Val

.....

**TO: LSTONE@dotnet.com**  
**FROM: VRUDMAN@webworld.com**  
**DATE: APRIL 10, 2000**  
**SUBJECT: WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?**

Lilly, I'm so ashamed of myself. I just reread your letter and then reread mine, and I realize that in my terrific preoccupation and self-absorption I didn't at all respond to what you wrote about your mother.

What do you mean, she "is no longer with us"? What's going on? I'm filled with dread at the thought of more grief. And I apologize for my selfish letter. Please forgive me.

Val

.....

TO: VRUDMAN@webworld.com  
FROM: LSTONE@dotnet.com  
DATE: APRIL 12, 2000  
SUBJECT: RE: WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME

No, “Katherine the Great,” as you used to call her, didn’t pass away...she *ran* away! Just one more act in the Stone family’s ongoing saga. Even after twenty-six years, I’m sure you can remember our penchant for high drama.

If I sound glib, forgive me. It was just so damn predictable. One morning, about six months ago, my mother left my father after forty-some-odd years of marriage. She just got up from breakfast with the dishes on the table and the kettle about to boil, and walked out the door. Perhaps she’d done one too many productions of *A Doll’s House*.

The sad and sorry truth: my mother never should have been married. And my father should have married someone else. She would have been much happier moving from one relationship to another. (Who does that remind you of? Yes, I am truly Katherine the Great’s daughter.) And he was always looking for someone to be in awe of him, which she was not. I know I don’t have to remind you of the blistering midnight battles that went on in my parents’ bedroom, the ones we used to hear through the wall when you slept over.

So, my mother is finally free, living on her own, downtown. I think she’s dating. Big surprise...what else is new? She doesn’t want to talk to any of us, she said. Not until she “finds the Katherine she lost.” It’s like she’s perpetually acting out her adolescence, even now, at seventy-three!

My father spends every day grieving. This whole thing has aged him. Since he’s no longer practicing, he spends a lot of time working on his orchids. His eyes always seem to have tears. He says it’s the cataracts. I think it’s his broken heart.

You know, I tell myself I don’t care about them splitting up. At age forty-seven, why should it matter? But at two in the morning last night