

JAMES WOODS

A BRAINY BAD BOY FINALLY MEETS HIS MATCH: MOM



JAMES WOODS WOULD RATHER STAY AT HOME THAN go out to a restaurant, particularly if he has to endure the tedious company of young, beautiful women. "They only want to be seen in restaurants," Woods says testily. "I mean, they are not wildly interested in cooking a meal."

The point of Woods' disgruntled patter is ultimately chivalrous: No woman in Hollywood is a patch on the one he's been squiring around town of late — his mom, Martha Dixon. The two appeared together at last night's Emmy Awards, and this morning they've turned out for an early luncheon of Chinese chicken salad at the sedate and lovely Le Dome on Sunset Plaza. It's the kind of serious restaurant — all wine and waistcoats — that makes one understand the French propensity for three-hour lunches.

It's soon clear that Mrs. Dixon has no trouble holding her own against her famously loquacious son. Woods has a political-science degree from MIT, and his mom was once asked to run for lieutenant governor of Rhode Island (she turned it down to stay with her family and run a school), so conversation tends to steer toward

the political instead of Woods' recent role as Sharon Stone's pimp in Martin Scorsese's *Casino*.

Today happens to be the day after Bob Packwood's dramatic ouster from the Senate, and since Woods is fresh from playing another wayward diarist, H.R. Halde- man, in Oliver Stone's *Nixon*, one can't help but ask...

"When you have witch hunts, and I don't care whether they're Nixon going after his enemies or Barbara Boxer going after Packwood, you realize that constitutional rights are being abrogated and the whole fabric of society is being destroyed," says Woods.

"That's correct!" cries Mrs. Dixon.

"Barbara Boxer may be doing a disservice to the Constitution by expelling Packwood without the same hearing she'd want from those white European males." Woods pauses and collects himself.

He thinks even faster than he talks, and that merciless brain-lust is perhaps what makes him the pre-eminent villain of the modern screen. It also gets him into a lot of trouble.

"Now, I don't want to read: 'Oh, he's pro-Bob Packwood,'" he says into the tape recorder, perturbed but patient. As he speaks, a lady friend of his — dashing in a big hat and chunky sunglasses — descends upon the table and exclaims to Mrs. Dixon: "What I love about Jimmy is, he's an old-fashioned New England gentleman! He has impeccable table manners. He stands every time a lady leaves the table...." Woods endures the praise and does indeed stand when the woman leaves. He looks like a little boy.

"She's cute," Mrs. Dixon says. Hints have been dropped that mom is screening any prospects for wife No. 3, an area wherein advice has been sorely needed since Woods' operatic divorce from his

second wife and a strange entanglement with Sean Young.

"I've made some huge mistakes. But I was raised right. I have the best mom. I have a virtually perfect life — if I can just find a wife," he says. "Maybe Barbara Boxer's going to be available...." — HILLARY JOHNSON

CHINESE CHICKEN SALAD

By Jean-Claude Bourlier, chef at Le Dome

DRESSING

½ cup brown sugar
½ cup rice vinegar
¼ cup peanut oil
2 tbs. sesame oil
¾ tsp. garlic, chopped
2 tbs. shallots, chopped
1½ tsp. ginger, grated
½ tsp. horseradish

SALAD

1 cup poached chicken, sliced
2 cups celery, julienned
2 cups Chinese pea pods, julienned
2 cups carrots, julienned
1 bunch watercress, chopped

Mix dressing in blender. Mix salad in large bowl. Add half a cup of dressing. Serves four to six.

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and we really live life *together* — we really kind of are at one with it. I love that I feel like I have a partner in my life.

As with many other stars, it's been rumored that you're gay.

[Nods, unblinking] Mmm-hmm.

You've denied it on several occasions, but why do you think the rumors persist?

[Pause] I think that it might be an old viewpoint — that the arts are a feminine profession. An actor, painter, dancer, musician — in the old school of thinking, these things just aren't masculine. Now, I don't agree with that, but I think it's probably the reason why it's so misinterpreted. That's just my gut-level, amateur 10-cent opinion. Do you think there's anything to that?

Sure, but gay rumors about celebrities are more prevalent today than in bygone eras.

When I look at things like that, I look at the intent behind it. Is the intent to degrade, to destroy someone? If it's not, then you can have a decent conversation on the subject. But if it's actually an intent to hurt? Then it's like any other intention to hurt.

OK. Let's move on. We're trying out the new cook tonight.

I'm very happy with her.

How does one look for a cook?

[Patiently] Welllll, you get a few people lined up, a few interviews through agencies.

But where does this knowledge of a rich lifestyle come from? You grew up blue-collar.

But my mother had all the style in the world. My mother could have been invited to the White House, and you wouldn't worry about what fork or knife she'd use. And once you start succeeding in this business, you're automatically thrown into situations, not only investigating parts to play, but where you are demanded upon to keep up with the protocol. In certain situations, you want to know what to say to Princess Diana when you meet her, or the president.

Did you ever seek out somebody to teach you this stuff?

When I studied the part of *American Gigolo*, even though I didn't do the movie, I had a protocol expert. And hotels — fancy hotels for the most part — do it as well as anybody. You can learn how to run a household by watching a five-star hotel.

Your lifestyle seems very extravagant.

It is.

You seem to live like a Rockefeller.

[Laughs] Probably.

How many planes do you have?

Oh, God.

Come on, cough it up.

[Curtly] Three.

And is one of them a commercial airliner?

One of them is the size of a small commercial airliner. It's called a Gulf Stream Two.

Do you think this is an extravagant lifestyle?

I'd rather not look at it as extravagant, I'd rather look at it as...the art of living. It's just a matter of subtle choices.

Yes, but, John, to the average person, these choices are not subtle or optional.

Well, I can demonstrate how it's not, and you're going to love this. [Jumps up from the dining table and disappears into the kitchen. Cupboards can be heard opening and closing. A few minutes later, he reappears, carrying a plastic picnic plate, cup and utensils. With the enthusiasm of a thespian trying out a