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Club Gastro
A 10-Minute Comedy
by
Ross Peter Nelson

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Club Gastro
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CHARACTERS
2W / 2M

JULIA: Female, 30’s. The birthday girl. Inhibited.

SUZETTE: Female. 30’s. Julia’s best friend. Can be wild.


MAITRE D: Male. Late 40’s. Maître d’hôtel of the Club Gastronomique

SETTING

The Club Gastronomique is a place where people come and are presented with food that is described to them and they can see and smell but may not touch or taste: a strip club of cuisine.

TIME

Now.
**Club Gastro**

by Ross Peter Nelson

*(SUZETTE and JULIA are standing outside CLUB GASTRONIMIQUE. JULIA is blindfolded. The club has a look that is simultaneously elegant and seedy. Both the staff and the patrons are dressed to the nines. MAITRE D speaks with an exaggerated French accent.)*

JULIA

Are we there yet?

SUZETTE

Almost.

*(SUZETTE draws two tickets from her purse, while singing the music to "The Stripper." *)

SUZETTE


JULIA

What’s going on?

*(SUZETTE puts the tickets in JULIA’s hand and pulls off the blindfold.)*

SUZETTE

Happy Birthday!

JULIA

*(Looking around, grabbing the tickets, getting her bearings.)*

Omigod. Club Gastro?

SUZETTE

Yes!

*(Hugs JULIA.)*

Are you ready?

JULIA

Omigod. What if someone sees us?

SUZETTE

Don't be silly, no one comes here to look at the customers.

JULIA

Oh, I don’t know if I can do this.
SUZETTE

Julia! It's your birthday. Loosen your corset, girl.

JULIA

But still... I mean... isn't it kind of sleazy?

SUZETTE

You're only there to look. Nothing happens.

JULIA

(Pausing, then enthusiastic.)

OK. Let's go!

SUZETTE

(Hands JULIA a small wad of five-dollar bills from her purse.)

Oh, and you'll want a few of these. For tips.

(JULIA and SUZETTE enter CLUB GASTRO.)

MAITRE D

Bon soir, mademoiselles. Bienvenue à Club Gatronomique. May I see your tickets, s'il vous plaît?

(Taking tickets from SUZETTE.)

Ah, a private table. A special occasion?

SUZETTE

It's her birthday.

MAITRE D

But of course.

(He hands the women what appears to be a large menu.)

If you would select your chef for the evening, I will take you to your table.

JULIA

I can't do this, let's go home.

SUZETTE

Will you settle down? Look at the pictures.

JULIA

I can't.

SUZETTE

He's nice, and so is that one. Look at his jacket. So crisp. Pearl buttons.

JULIA

Really? Let me see. Is that his toque?
SUZETTE
Ooo, doesn't he look sassy holding that whisk.

JULIA
(Turning the page.)
They have women, too!

(JULIA and SUZETTE look at one another. A pause.)

SUZETTE / JULIA (together, giggling)
Uh-uh.

JULIA
You pick.

SUZETTE
I will not. It's your birthday.

JULIA
I can't.

SUZETTE
Come on.

JULIA
OK. That one.

SUZETTE
Him? Are you sure? How come?

JULIA
He doesn't look so perfect and posed. He looks like he's really been working in the kitchen. A spot of red wine on his cuff. A spray of veal stock on the collar. I can just see him stirring and tasting. Adding a little something. Plus he has really nice eyes.

SUZETTE
We want him.

MAITRE D
Excellent choice. I'll see that Chef Devon is with you shortly.

(The MAITRE D leads the women to a table.)

JULIA
I can't believe we're doing this.
(The MAITRE D seats them and pours a glass of wine for each of the women.)

MAITRE D
You know the rules of course, you may look but you may not touch. Enjoy your evening, mademoiselles.

SUZETTE
(Raising her glass.)
Happy birthday, Julia.

JULIA
(They toast.)
You're such a crazy person. What would I do without you?

SUZETTE
Live a more sedate life, I'm sure. I wanted you to have a private table for your birthday. The first time I was here I just watched a show on the main stage. It's not the same.

JULIA
You've been here before?

SUZETTE
Look, there's the mayor.

JULIA
Oh, no. (Takes a big gulp of wine before she'll look.)
What's she having?

SUZETTE
Looks like steak tartare. Oh my god, look what he's doing with the egg. Oh yum, look over there. A flambé. Bananas Foster.

JULIA
Should we be looking at someone else's table?

SUZETTE
Don't be such a priss. (Points.)
Skewered prawns.

JULIA
And they're just dripping butter.

SUZETTE
(Calls out.)
Woohoo! Spear one for me!
JULIA

Shhh! He's coming!

DEVON enters and sets down a small covered tray.

DEVON

Good evening. I'm Chef Devon, and I will be creating your menu this evening.

DEVON shakes hands with each of them.

SUZETTE

Hi, Devon. I'm Suzette.

DEVON

Suzette. A pleasure.

JULIA

Julia.

SUZETTE

It's her birthday.

DEVON

Julia. Enchantée. Is this your first time at Club Gastro?

JULIA nods, drinks more wine. DEVON refills the glass.

DEVON

I think you'll really enjoy what I've got cooked up for you.

DEVON uncovers the tray, and picks up the dish inside. As he describes it, he moves sensuously between the two women, holding the dish for them to see and smell.

DEVON

We'll begin this evening with an appetizer of quail salad. I start with a bed of rocket, arugula, and baby spinach. A succulent young quail from Hoffman Ranch is grilled, deboned, and gently nestled into the greens.

SUZETTE

Yeah, we like 'em young!

JULIA

Suzy!

DEVON

It's OK. I want you to tell me what gives you pleasure.
SUZETTE
It's beautiful. The meat just glistens.

DEVON
Next, a handful of ripe figs is fire-roasted until the skin is charred and caramelized sugar under the skin encases the plump warm fruit inside. The figs are split and drizzled with Spanish olive oil, and a spray of red raspberry vinegar and scarlet pomegranate seeds are scattered over the dish.

JULIA
Oh. My. God.

DEVON

(The women applaud and each stuff a bill into DEVON's pocket. He exits with the tray.)

JULIA
(Eyes closed.)
Split figs; makes me feel like Lady Chatterly.

SUZETTE
Normally after a dish like that, I’d be eating salad for a week.

JULIA
I though you were doing Atkins.

SUZETTE
That was last summer. Then I was on acai berry, but the supplements just got too expensive. I’m going back to the basics: nothing but fruit, salad, or cottage cheese.

JULIA
What about the wine?

SUZETTE
Made from grapes isn’t it? Counts as fruit for me.

(They both have more wine. DEVON enters with a larger tray which he uncovers with a flourish, and again presents the dish.)

DEVON
For the main course I have created a creamy risotto of Italian pancetta and morels from the Pacific Northwest. I’ve combined them in a rich gravy of the mushroom juices and red wine.

JULIA
(Moans.)
I am so hungry.
DEVON
While the risotto simmers with shallots, Parmesan cheese, butter, and a splash of champagne, I dice the pancetta and sauté it to bring out the flavors. The morels, sliced lengthwise, simmer gently in light cream until the sauce is infused with the earthy mushroom flavors and the morels are plump with cream.

SUZETTE
Oh, you’re such a bad boy, cream and butter in the same dish.

DEVON
All these mingle in the risotto with the wine reduction conveying the very essence of its terroir directly to the palate. On the side, beets braised in vegetable stock and dusted with toasted hazelnuts, an orange oil infusion, and sea salt.

(SUZETTE stuffs one of her fives in DEVON’s pocket.)

JULIA
If I give you a twenty can I have a taste?

(DEVON shakes his finger at her. JULIA stuffs the twenty in his belt anyway. He takes just a touch of the sauce on his finger wafts it under her nose.)

SUZETTE
That table is getting lamb chops. Look at those grill marks.

JULIA
Doesn't it make you want to eat everything in sight?

SUZETTE
Not really. I like to watch.

JULIA
Omigod, I could eat the tablecloth.

SUZETTE
Want to know a secret? I’ve lost fifteen pounds since I started coming here.

JULIA
What?

SUZETTE
I’ve been coming every week for about three months now.

JULIA
Suzy!
SUZETTE
I look at all this perfect food, and nothing else matters. I go home or even to a nice restaurant, and nothing looks this good. I don’t eat because I know nothing else would measure up, it would taste like cardboard.

JULIA
Suzy, this can't be good for you.

(DEVON returns with a dessert plate.)

DEVON
May I tempt you with a little dessert?

SUZETTE
Please.

JULIA
Maybe we should leave. I’m a little concerned about my friend.

DEVON
It would be a shame to miss my specialty, a quadruple chocolate profiterole.

SUZETTE
Show it, Devon, show it.

JULIA
Quadruple? Quadruple chocolate?

SUZETTE
Oh, we’ve found your weak spot. Now you’ll see why I keep coming back.

DEVON
(Playing this dish entirely to JULIA who moans in ecstasy once or twice during the description.)
I start with a paté à choux made from butter, flour, eggs, and dark cocoa powder, and bake it until it's airy and delicate. Then slice it open and pump it full of chocolate crème pâtissière spiked with roasted cacao nibs.

JULIA
Oh my god.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes