

CHEF'S SPECIALS

by

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CHEF'S SPECIALS

Characters

MELISSA, 30s, urban professional.

PETER, 30s, urban professional.

MAÎTRE D', 40s, old school and formal.

MATTHEW, 20s, cool and cocky.

Time

Now.

Setting

A fancy French restaurant, with one table and two chairs center stage and one table and no chairs to one side.

CHEF'S SPECIALS

The MAÎTRE D' leads PETER and MELISSA to their table, ad libbing standard seating pleasantries with a heavy French accent. He carries their drinks on a tray and places them before them when they've been seated. MELISSA is giddy with anticipation. PETER is more restrained, but clearly looking forward to dinner.

MAÎTRE D'

Your server will tell you about the specials of the day, the masterwork of our famed Chef Claude Oulud under the direction of owner Maurice Bocuse himself. Please enjoy.

PETER

Thank you.

MAÎTRE D' exits. MELISSA leans in excitedly.

MELISSA

Oh, Peter, isn't this magnificent? Did you see the Viard wall sconces? And look at the artwork. That piece behind you might be a Delacroix, I swear.

PETER is already perusing his menu.

PETER

Prices are pretty fancy too.

MELISSA

I've wanted to come here for ages. Joan says they have a *cassoulet* that's to die for.

PETER

I'm more interested in hearing about the chef's specials. That's where the value is.

Opening her menu, MELISSA responds good-naturedly...

MELISSA

Not everything is about money, Peter.

PETER

Of course not, I was referring to the likelihood that the chef would reserve the finest ingredients for his showcase dishes.

MELISSA

I'm sure we'll have lots of wonderful choices. Oh, look, *escargot*. That's a good sign of authenticity...

MATTHEW enters and takes a position at their table.

MATTHEW

Good evening, *mademoiselle, monsieur*. My name is Matthew and I'll be attending you this evening. I see that you already have drinks, so I will tell you about the chef's specials, if I may.

PETER

Yes, please.

MATTHEW

First, we have a traditional *coulibiac*, what you might call a "fish pie." Salmon cuddled within a brioche with spinach, rice, mushrooms, and hard-boiled eggs of quail.

MELISSA

Oh, that sounds lovely. Doesn't that sound lovely, Peter?

PETER

Lovely.

The MAÎTRE D' enters and mimes seating another couple at the second table. Throughout the following, the MAÎTRE D' will move in and out of apparent earshot, miming various duties, which allows MATTHEW to speak freely--or not--as the action demands.

MATTHEW

Next we have a *canard à la presse*, which is duck melded with calves' livers in a sauce of cognac, port, currant jelly, and the noble bird's own juices.

MELISSA

Umm, delicious, I bet. Peter, don't you agree?

PETER

Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW

Finally our chef will prepare for you a *chateaubriand*, a choice tenderloin steak cloaked in an essence of cabbage, pork fat, shallots, and capon cheeks.

MELISSA

Oooh, that's what I'm having.

PETER

Well, I need more information. Like where the salmon comes from.

MATTHEW

It is local, the freshest possible fish, sir.

PETER

That's not what I'm asking. Is the salmon wild or not?

MATTHEW mimes driving a tractor.

MELISSA

What? Peter, what's he doing?

PETER

I don't know. Looks like he's driving a car.

MATTHEW mimes using a fishing pole, but negates that image by crossing his hands back and forth. Then he repeats the driving action, exaggerates the motion of his hands on a large steering wheel and the bounciness of the ride.

PETER (CONT'D)

He's not fishing. He's driving, but it's not a car. I get it-- a tractor.

MELISSA

Why?

PETER

(Confiding.)

He can't say anything negative so he's hinting that some farmer raised their salmon on kibble, like a dog.

MATTHEW

The gentleman is most discriminating.

MELISSA

Well, that's not right. The price implies wild fish.

PETER

What about the duck?

MATTHEW flutters his hands in the air about his head, making soft cooing noises and wiping imaginary crap from his shoulders.

PETER (CONT'D)

What's that? Not duck.

MELISSA

It's...it's pigeon, right?

MATTHEW

What you say "cage-free," *madame*, the product of the busiest thoroughfares in the city.

MELISSA

Oh, my God. A dirty pigeon. That's disgusting.

PETER

And the tenderloin?

MATTHEW mimes holding the reins of a trotting animal, as he whinnies softly.

PETER (CONT'D)

Horse meat?!

MELISSA

No!

MATTHEW

Fresh, of course. And local, from paddock to table at a full gallop.

PETER

That's it. Melissa, come on. We're out of here!

PETER and MELISSA stand abruptly and prepare to depart.

MATTHEW

Mademoiselle, monsieur, what is the matter? Where are you going?

PETER

False advertising. Not to mention fraud.

MELISSA

You should be ashamed of yourself. You can be sure all our friends will hear about this.

PETER

As well as the appropriate authorities.

PETER and MELISSA exit in a huff. MATTHEW watches them go. MATTHEW joins the MAÎTRE D' at his station.

MAÎTRE D'

What just transpired?

MATTHEW

Peasants who don't understand the meaning of quality. They are not worthy of this establishment's cuisine.

MAÎTRE D'

Still, an unfortunate incident. The owner must not hear of this.

MATTHEW

By the way, is Maurice in tonight?

MAÎTRE D'

No, not for the rest of the week.

MATTHEW

Any chance he will reconsider the changes he's made to our schedules and our tip percentages?

MAÎTRE D'

You can forget that. He's hard one.

The MAÎTRE D' heads off on some hosting duty.

MATTHEW

Too bad. You never know what effect the rash and arrogant decisions of management will have on business.

Fade to black.

THE END