

DOUBLE-BLIND TASTE TEST

by

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Characters

CLAIRE, female, 20s-30s, single, sexy, and very particular.

BERTRAND, male, slightly older, a handsome academic.

PORTER, male, slightly younger, a handsome entrepreneur.

WAITER, male, same age, a handsome standby.

Time

Present.

Setting

An outdoor cafe, tables and chairs.

DOUBLE-BLIND TASTE TEST

A couple of tables and a few chairs in an outdoor café. A WAITER tidies up listlessly.

After a moment, BERTRAND enters SR, dressed casually but with a jacket, patches on the elbows if you dare. BERTRAND looks around, clearly expecting to meet someone. He stands and waits, checking his wristwatch from time to time.

After a moment, PORTER enters SL, also dressed casually, shirt unbuttoned to the sternum but without a jacket. PORTER looks around, clearly expecting to meet someone. He checks the time on his cell, then crosses to a table CS and takes a seat.

After a few moments, CLAIRE enters SL. She notes PORTER immediately and crosses to him. PORTER looks up and half-rises to take her hand.

PORTER

Claire?

CLAIRE

(Warmly.)

Yes. Oh, you must be Porter.

PORTER

(Eager now that he's seen her.)

That's me. In the flesh.

CLAIRE assesses him, likes what she sees. Takes his hand.

CLAIRE

Yes, so I see.

CLAIRE and PORTER lock eyes as they shake hands. Abruptly CLAIRE breaks contact to look over at BERTRAND.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

And you must be Bertrand.

PORTER and BERTRAND are both taken aback. CLAIRE moves toward BERTRAND.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I'm Claire. The one you're looking for.

CLAIRE looks BERTRAND over appreciatively, then looks back at PORTER.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Well, perhaps. We'll have to find out, won't we?

CLAIRE takes the confused BERTRAND's arm and leads him to the table where the confused PORTER sits.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Come, Bertrand, join us.

PORTER

I don't get it. Me and you have a blind date. Don't we? What's he doing here?

BERTRAND

I might ask the same thing about you.

CLAIRE

You're both invited. It's a double-blind date. Porter, meet Bertrand. Bertrand, Porter.

PORTER

You didn't say anything about another guy.

BERTRAND

Certainly not.

CLAIRE

I wanted to meet you both. This seemed the best way.

PORTER

Hey, wait a minute. I'm not interested in a three-way. Uh-uh, no way.

BERTRAND

Nor I. Excuse me, please, I'm afraid I must be leaving.

CLAIRE pulls BERTRAND and PORTER to the table.

CLAIRE

Oh, stop, you two. That's not what I have in mind. I need to compare you on equal terms, face to face. Sit, and I'll explain. Sit...sit.

BERTRAND and PORTER eye each other warily, then sit.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
It's so good of you to come.

WAITER approaches.

WAITER
(With a studied accent.)
Welcome to *Café Rencontrer*.

CLAIRE
Just drinks, please.

WAITER
Assurément. And what may I bring for you?

CLAIRE
Do you have a nice domestic Riesling?

WAITER
Bien sûr. I recommend the Kendall Oaks.

CLAIRE
That's what I'll have.
(To the men.)
Boys?

BERTRAND
Something drier. A Chablis. The Coppola, if you have it.

WAITER
Yes. Very good. And you, sir?

PORTER
Red Bull and rye. Any kind.

WAITER completes his notes and exits.

BERTRAND
So. Claire. What is your intention here?

PORTER
Yeah, I don't like being blind-sided.

CLAIRE beams, confident that she's got their interest.

CLAIRE
Oh, you know how difficult dating is these days. With everything online, expectations are so high. Unfortunately data accuracy is a serious issue. You never know what's exaggeration and what is not. I couldn't decide between the two of you online, so I thought we should have a simultaneous sit-down in person.

PORTER

A face-off?

BERTRAND

That's absurd. Who'd stand for that? It's demeaning.

CLAIRE smiles cleavagely.

PORTER

All right. How's this going to work?

BERTRAND

(To PORTER.)

You can't be serious. You're actually going to play along with this...cheap contest?

CLAIRE

My, my, one ravishingly reckless, one intriguingly indignant. I like how this is going already.

WAITER returns and serves the drinks, while CLAIRE enjoys the sight of the two men glaring at each other. WAITER exits...

PORTER

(To BERTRAND.)

Maybe you think this is such a bad idea, you should leave.

BERTRAND

I'll finish my drink first.

CLAIRE takes a small notebook and pen from her purse.

CLAIRE

Let's play a getting-to-know-each-other-better game. I'll say a word, and each of you says the first thing that comes into your mind.

BERTRAND

(To PORTER.)

If that's possible.

PORTER

Bring it, old man.

CLAIRE

Ready? Career.

BERTRAND

Ph.D. in European literature, holder of an endowed chair at a prestigious Ivy League university. Lifetime tenure as well, needless to say.

PORTER

Co-founder and CEO of an Internet company that *Wired* magazine rated "Best New Startup" last year. Fully capitalized, needless to say.

CLAIRE

(As she writes.)

Oooh. Fascinating.

PORTER

So you're an egghead.

BERTRAND

So you're a computer geek.

PORTER

You don't hear too much about the future of literature these days.

BERTRAND

No, the news is all about the latest busted dot.com.

PORTER

I'll put my business savvy up against your boring old fairy tales any day.

BERTRAND

A matchup that would expose your intellectual shortcomings, I'm afraid.

PORTER

Yeah, I can see you're afraid.

CLAIRE

(Brightly taking charge.)

That's the spirit. Next topic: Leisure.

PORTER

Dune buggies in Baja. Tilapia on the beach. Love under the stars.

BERTRAND

A private boat for an evening cruise on the Seine, right through the heart of Paris. Followed by your favorite *haute cuisine* in a Michelin three-star restaurant on the *Champs-Élysées*. Then love under silk *charmeuse* satin.

CLAIRE squirms with delight.

CLAIRE

Double oooh. So titillating.

PORTER

That's the word for what I had in mind.

BERTRAND

Oh, come on, be honest--you're a basement-dwelling, day-old-pizza scarfing, porn-surfing loser.

PORTER

And you're a pinkie-waving, tea-sipping, bindery glue-sniffing thumb-sucker and bed-wetter.

BERTRAND

Tell us, what does all that caffeine do to your libido?

PORTER

Keeps me up all night. What does all that parchment dust do for your swordsmanship?

CLAIRE

This is so exciting! Last word: Income.

Pause, as BERTRAND stares at PORTER...

PORTER

You first...

BERTRAND

No. After you...

CLAIRE

Boys, let's not quibble.

PORTER

I'm having second thoughts.

BERTRAND

You don't say.

CLAIRE

Let's do rock-paper-scissors.

BERTRAND

I don't think so.

(To PORTER.)

Do you see a pattern here?

PORTER

Disturbing pattern.

CLAIRE

It's just a game.

PORTER

More like a bidding war.

CLAIRE

No. Fellas. We're just exploring our options.

BERTRAND

I think I've had enough.

PORTER

Me too.

PORTER and BERTRAND get up.

PORTER (CONT'D)

You follow sports, Bertrand?

BERTRAND

Yankees and Dodgers take the field at nine.

PORTER

I know a bar with an 80-inch screen and craft beers on tap.

BERTRAND

"Lay on, Macduff, and damned be him who first cries 'Hold! Enough!'"

The boys turn away without good-byes.

PORTER

Say, what can you tell me about Anaïs Nin? She a sex addict, or what?

The two men exit. CLAIRE shrugs and tosses off the last of her wine. A few moments later, WAITER approaches.

WAITER

May I replenish your drink, mademoiselle?

CLAIRE

(Smiling brilliantly.)

Only if you join me.

WAITER

(Beat, dropping all French pretension.)

My shift ends in ten minutes. This job's a real ball-breaker. I could use your help to unwind.

CLAIRE

Perfect. Just perfect.

Fade to black.

THE END