

INT. ENTRANCE - RESTAURANT

The Maitre d' is standing by a little table, checking reservations in a book. The door opens behind him, and John and Cindy enter the lobby of the restaurant. They are a young, attractive, well-dressed couple, yet they don't seem totally at ease in the elegant surroundings. The Maitre d' turns and greets them.

MAITRE D'

Good evening, monsieur, madam. Have you a reservation?

JOHN

Yes. My name is John McNair. I have a reservation for the best table in the house.

The Maitre d' checks the reservation book.

MAITRE D'

McNair. Ah, yes. Right this way, s'il vous plait.

John looks at Cindy eagerly, with the spirit of adventure upon him. The Maitre d' leads them to an empty spot right next to the door to the kitchen. There is a great deal of continual noise coming from behind the kitchen door.

MAITRE D' (cont'd)

Here we are, monsieur. The best table in the house.

John looks around, sees there is nothing there, but doesn't want to bring it up.

JOHN

This seems to be a little close to the kitchen.

MAITRE D'

Oui, monsieur. That is precisely why this is the best table in the house: the service is so fast here. It is a special feature of this restaurant.

JOHN

In that case ---

MAITRE D'

Tres bien. Garcon!

At this, several waiters leap to the sides of John and Cindy.

MAITRE D' (cont'd)  
May we take your coats?

JOHN  
Mai oui.

MAITRE D'  
Garcon!

The Maitre d' claps his hands, and the waiters immediately begin stripping John and Cindy. Cindy loses only her wrap, but John loses his overcoat, his jacket, and his vest before he knows it. John, nonplussed, looks around, trying to appear suave and trying to bear up as best as possible. It is his first time in this restaurant, and he wants to appear to be in control, even though he is a little overwhelmed.

MAITRE D' (cont'd)  
That's better, no? May we take your shoes and socks?

JOHN  
(slightly panicked)  
No, no. That's alright.

MAITRE D'  
Splendide. Now, what type of table would you like?

John looks at Cindy for support.

CINDY  
(tentative) How about a table for two?)

MAITRE D'  
(conspiratorially) A wise choice, madam. Garcon! A table for two!)

Two waiters immediately appear with a table. As soon as they set it down, the others apply the tablecloth, etc.

MAITRE D' (cont'd)  
Chairs, monsieur?

JOHN  
Yes, please.

MAITRE D'  
Garcon! Chairs for monsieur and  
madam.

Two waiters immediately appear with the appropriate chairs.  
John and Cindy are seated.

MAITRE D' (cont'd)  
Is everything satisfactory, monsieur?

JOHN  
Yes, thank you.

MAITRE D'  
Madam?

CINDY  
Yes, fine.

MAITRE D'  
Tres bien. Your waiter will be with  
you in just a moment.

The Maitre d' exits.

JOHN  
They certainly do have good service  
here.

CINDY  
I can't wait to taste the food. I'm  
really starving.

The Waiter appears. He is well over six feet tall, a little  
on the heavy side, slightly imposing, and looks to be a true  
connoisseur of fine foods -- or for that matter, all foods.  
The Waiter speaks with an unidentifiable accent and syntax.

WAITER  
Monsieur. Madam. I am your waiter,  
Napoleon. How are you here tonight?

JOHN  
Fine, and just a little hungry.

WAITER  
Excellent. Would you like to care for  
some small wine before your dinner is  
eaten?

JOHN  
Yes. What kind of wines do you have?

WAITER

If you will permit me -- when I saw you come in, I took the liberty of selecting a wine especially for you tonight. It's part of our service.

The Waiter turns to a nearby serving table to pick up the wine and goblets. John turns to Cindy and mugs an expression as if to say, "See what I told you?"

The Waiter turns back to the table.

WAITER (cont'd)

Here you are, sir. I think you will agree with me that this is indeed the finest wine you can appreciate.

The Waiter pours a little into the goblet for John to taste.

JOHN

How thoughtful. What is it?

WAITER

It is a very new Chateau Neon. It is grown only in the very exclusive Fluorescent district of New Jersey. I think you will find it is very light.

John again nods his agreement to Cindy.

WAITER (cont'd)

You are fortunate, monsieur. We only have a few tubes of this wine remaining in our cellar.

JOHN

Tubes? You mean bottles.

WAITER

No, I don't think so. If you would care to taste this?

The Waiter proffers the goblet to John. John sips the wine, but doesn't know why. He doesn't really like the wine, but with Cindy looking on and with the Waiter leaning over him with the bottle, ready to pour, he caves in.

JOHN

Yes -- it's very -- appropriate.

WAITER

We knew you would be perfect for it.

The Waiter pours the glasses full of wine, then holds out two menus.

WAITER (cont'd)

Here are your menus. Look them over while you are drunk the wine. I will be right back to give your orders.

The Waiter bows and exits. Cindy takes a couple of healthy swigs of wine while they look over the menus.

CINDY

This wine is already making me feel lightheaded.

John picks up the bottle and examines it.

JOHN

I know what you mean. I wish I'd had a couple bottles of this stuff during the last blackout.

John sets the bottle down and returns to the menu.

JOHN (cont'd)

What are you thinking of having tonight, my dear?

CINDY

The Coquille St. Jacques sounds good.

JOHN

Mmmm. I was thinking about the scampi, myself.

The Waiter returns.

WAITER

Excuse you, please. You are Monsieur McNair?

John glances over at Cindy.

JOHN

Yes, why?

WAITER

We just received a call from your studio. They say they need to have you at once. You are some problem there.

John mugs a very self-important look.

JOHN  
 Well, I'll just have to tell them to  
 work it out for themselves.  
 (to Cindy)  
 Tonight is our night.  
 (to Waiter)  
 Where is the telephone?

There is a pause. The Waiter smiles at John as if he didn't  
 hear the request.

JOHN (cont'd)  
 -- The telephone?

WAITER  
 For what?

JOHN  
 (confused)  
 So -- I can tell them I'm not coming.

WAITER  
 Oh, but you are. We told them you  
 would be there right away.

JOHN  
 What?

WAITER  
 It is part of our service to you. In  
 fact, I have already ordered your  
 dinner, to save time.

JOHN  
 You mean, you ordered her Coquille  
 St. Jacques and my scampi?

WAITER  
 Oh no no no no no no no no. For  
 madam, the hamburger. And for  
 monsieur, the -- how you say -- diet  
 salad.

The Waiter looks down at John's stomach meaningfully. John  
 sucks in his gut.

WAITER (cont'd)  
 If you will wait just a moment, your  
 meal will be ready.

JOHN

If I could use your telephone, I'm sure this could all be straightened out.

WAITER

That won't be necessary, monsieur. We'll have you out of here in just a few minutes. Relax, and prepare to have enjoyed your meal.

JOHN

But ...

WAITER

It is a good thing you have the best table in the house. The service is so fast here.

JOHN

That's what I hear.

The Waiter bows and leaves. John lets out his stomach. Cindy is straining to hide her annoyance. She leans over to John.

CINDY

(low, clipped)

I thought you said this would be a quiet evening just for the two of us.

JOHN

I'm sorry, babe. Look, we'll take the food and eat in my office. Candlelight, good food, just the two of us ...

CINDY

I don't want to eat at your office. Why can't one of the other assistant vice-presidents take care of whatever the problem is?

John glances around quickly to see if anyone else has heard this.

JOHN

I'll tell you what: when we finish at the studio, I'll show you the set where they used to shoot "Hello Larry."

CINDY

Again?

The Waiter returns, wiping his mouth with the back of his coat sleeve. He is carrying two doggie bags.

WAITER

Here you are, monsieur. I hope you enjoyed your meal. Please feel free to ask for me next time you come in: Napoleon.

John looks at the two doggie bags, not understanding.

JOHN

What are these?

WAITER

They are your leftovers, monsieur.

JOHN

Leftovers from what?

WAITER

Your meal. Because you are in such a hurry, I did not bother to serve you at your table. It would have taken too much time. It is part of our service.

CINDY

But we are still hungry.

WAITER

If I may suggest: you can eat your leftovers in the car. You are due at your studio any minute now.

The Waiter looks at his watch. The Waiter and claps his hands.

WAITER (cont'd)

(calling)

Bring Monsieur McNair's car around at once.

JOHN

We didn't even get to taste our food.

WAITER

Not necessary. You may take my word for it. It was very good. I ate it myself, for you. A small service.

The Waiter turns and claps his hands.

WAITER (cont'd)

Garcon!

Several waiters cluster around the table.

WAITER (cont'd)

Bring monsieur and madam's coats.

Two of the waiters sweep away the table. As soon as that is done, two more waiters start tugging gently on the chairs, to encourage John and Cindy to stand up. This they do, and the chairs are whisked away, too. The waiters with the coats come up and start dressing John and Cindy. Cindy gets her coat on okay, but the waiters only perfunctorily replace John's vest, jacket, and overcoat, without much regard for neatness or order. The Waiter holds out the bill.

WAITER (cont'd)

Your bill, monsieur.

John takes the check and does a take.

JOHN

I didn't realize I was investing in the place.

WAITER

Yes. From now on, you have only to show us this check for immediate seating and our fine service. And I certainly know for myself how good your meal was.

JOHN

Yes, I can imagine. Well, I'm not paying this. I'll give you twelve dollars for the wine, but that's it.

John begins searching through his pockets for his wallet.

JOHN (cont'd)

(to Cindy)

I can't find my money. I think my wallet has been stolen.

WAITER

Oh, no, monsieur. That is another part of our famous service. We have taken your wallet, and have already paid the bill for you. It saves time.

The Waiter hands John's empty wallet back to him. John opens the wallet and turns it upside-down.

JOHN

At least I have someplace to put all the time I've been saving. Too bad I don't have any money left for a tip.

WAITER

Not to worry. I have taken care of that, too.

John looks at the Waiter for a beat, then decides against saying anything.

JOHN

I guess that just about does it.

WAITER

You are ready to go, yes?

JOHN

Yes.

The Waiter turns and claps his hands.

WAITER

(calling)

Garcon! Call a taxi for Monsieur McNair!

JOHN

What happened to my car?

WAITER

Another small service. You are already so late that we have sent your car on ahead. It will be there when you arrive.

The Waiter starts escorting a stunned John and Cindy toward the door. They pause in the lobby.

WAITER (cont'd)

I hope you enjoyed your meal as much as I know I did. Please come back soon, and ask for me: Napoleon.

JOHN

Thank you -- Napoleon.

The Waiter bows and leaves John and Cindy standing in the lobby. John looks at the doggie bags.

JOHN (cont'd)  
That's the trouble with these French  
restaurants: half an hour after you  
eat, you're broke.

John hands his doggie bag to Cindy and attempts to  
straighten out his clothing.

JOHN (cont'd)  
Here, hold onto this for a second.

As he is rearranging his dress, the door to the restaurant  
opens and a Cabbie pokes his head in.

CABBIE  
Is there a McNair here?

JOHN  
Yes, that is I.

CABBIE  
Well, do you want a cab or not? Hurry  
up, I don't have all night.

John and Cindy hurry out the door.

**THE END**