

Hand-Clubbed Baby Seal

CHARACTERS.

JORDAN. A friend of the bride.

PARKER. A friend of the groom.

AVERY. A server.

TAYLOR. The bride's sibling.

Author's note: Avery should be played by a male actor. The other roles can be played any actor.

SETTING.

A big wedding reception.

RUN TIME.

Just Under Ten Minutes.

Ron Capps
47 Shore Road
Edgecomb ME 04556

+1 202 297 6965
roncapps@gmail.com

JORDAN and PARKER stand a foot or two apart, they do not know one another and both look demonstrably uncomfortable. AVERY, a server, passing through the room stops between them, they both reach for the tray at the same time.

JORDAN

Oh, excuse me, you go ahead.

PARKER

No, please.

(In turn, they each take a canapé from the tray and eat them. AVERY departs.)

JORDAN

Oh my god, this is delicious.

PARKER

It is, isn't it. I hope he comes back around. Are you bride or groom?

JORDAN

Bride. You?

PARKER

Groom.

JORDAN

Known him long?

PARKER

My whole life. How about you?

JORDAN

Oh, I've been orbiting around the sun that is Kate since before her first marriage. I missed that one. They eloped, you know.

PARKER

No, I didn't know that.

JORDAN

Quite sensible actually, given the cost of these things.

PARKER

God, the food alone. I, um, don't think I knew that she had a first marriage.

JORDAN

Oh, yes. It's not a secret. *(beat)* It was incendiary.

PARKER

Do go on.

JORDAN

Will was an odd bird. An artist with a dodgy sense of humor. Used pseudonyms. Played little tricks on his friends. I never actually met him. They lived in a bungalow up in the hills somewhere and raised bees or some such thing while he painted. The hippy lifestyle apparently didn't suit her—I mean, can you see her barefoot in gingham with a milkmaid's pail? Please.

PARKER

How long?

JORDAN

The marriage? Only a year or so. Not long after she left him, he sold a few paintings and had a New York exhibition, then London and so on. He made a real fortune and then, poof, disappeared. I read somewhere he was doing something in restaurants now. I'm sure Mark is a much better match for her.

PARKER

She was radiant at the ceremony, wasn't she?

JORDAN

Lovely. Just lovely. I wonder where she is?

PARKER

Taking photos?

(AVERY re-enters)

These canapés are wonderful. What is it?

AVERY

Hand-clubbed baby seal.

PARKER

Ha Ha... Everyone's a comedian.

AVERY

I'm a painter, actually. And you're eating hand-clubbed baby seal.

JORDAN

Well, I'll have another.

(takes a second canapé; makes happy noises)

It's marvelous, whatever it is.

AVERY

It's hand-clubbed baby seal.

PARKER

I think that's enough. What's your name? I'm going to talk to the owner.

AVERY

My name's Avery, like it says on the nametag. And I don't know what you have to complain about. You asked me a question, I answered you.

PARKER

Well, "Avery" and don't think for a minute I believe that's your real name, nobody wears their real name on nametags...

AVERY

Have it your way, but you've been eating hand-clubbed baby seal.

JORDAN

OK, I'll play along. Let's assume this restaurant actually could get its hands on some fresh, delicious, hand-clubbed baby seal. It's somewhat of a delicacy, I assume? Something to be served only to a very discriminating clientele?

AVERY

Oh, you're so right. It's exceptionally hard to find, especially fresh. But it is the season, and our chef has connections. Plus....

PARKER

(to *JORDAN*)

Wait, you don't believe this joker do you? No one would serve that. No restaurant owner in his right mind would sully a wedding reception by serving something so vile. It's obviously a bad joke and in very poor taste.

AVERY

I heard the bride chose the canapés.

JORDAN

The bride? Kate chose to serve her friends and family hand-clubbed baby seal? Well, I'll be damned. That's not the Kate I knew back home. Mark must have broken through her....

PARKER

Mark would never..... He would never, ever.... Unless Kate.... Yes. It had to be Kate.

AVERY

Well, frankly, whoever it was made a spectacular gaffe. I mean seriously, who would serve pinniped before the appetizer course?

JORDAN

I hadn't thought of it that way. It must have been Mark's choice. Kate has always been a paragon of style and good taste. I mean, just look at the flowers.

PARKER

Good taste!? Hand-clubbed baby seal is in good taste? It is inconceivable that Mark—
or God forbid Aunt Eileen—would approve of serving

AVERY

Aunt Eileen? You're a cousin?

PARKER

Yes. Mark is my first cousin.

AVERY

You must not be very close if you're so unaware of what his sensibilities and tastes are.

PARKER

I resent that. We are... were very close. We just drifted away a little after college.

(AVERY and JORDAN regard PARKER)

And don't you have other guests at this reception to serve?

AVERY

(looks around)

Well, everyone seems pretty well served, but I could always go and fetch some more
treats for you to sample. Interested?

JORDAN

Yes! What else is back there?

AVERY

Just leave it to me. I'll surprise you.

(departs)

JORDAN

Amusing.

PARKER

I suppose so. Actually had me going there for a moment.

JORDAN

You don't believe we were eating...

PARKER

Not for a minute. But he had me at first.

JORDAN

Maybe you're right. I mean would Kate be so daring, so edgy? But, if it wasn't baby seal, what was it?

(AVERY returns with another tray of canapés)

AVERY

I am so terribly sorry. I misled you about the hand-clubbed baby seal.

PARKER

(to JORDAN)

See.

(to AVERY)

No, don't worry. We knew it was a gag all along.

AVERY

A gag?

PARKER

You know, a joke.

AVERY

Oh, no gag. I was quite serious. But I was misinformed when I left the kitchen on my last trip out. I thought I had the hand-clubbed baby seal, but I actually had the carpaccio of spotted owl. This is the hand-clubbed baby seal.

(offers tray to JORDAN and PARKER)

JORDAN

And if this is half as wonderful as the ... spotted owl, you say?

(pops a canapé into his mouth... a rapturous experience)

AVERY

Yes, I don't know how I could have mistaken one for the other. The seal is served with a spray of daishimi harvested fresh just offshore from Fukushima and whisked here directly. While the carpaccio of spotted owl was served on toasts made in house with stone-ground Chernobyl wheat.

JORDAN

(reaches for another canapé)

My god, this is seal? It's wonderful. Tender, briny, with just a hint of cedar....

AVERY

I think that's from the club.

JORDAN

It's just perfection. So delicate.

PARKER

(interested and appalled simultaneously, takes a canapé from the tray and sniffs it)

This is seal?

AVERY

Yes. Hand clubbed and house cured. I think it's going to be all the rage. Your friends are on the leading edge of a major trend. Are you surprised or have they always been so daring, so edgy?

JORDAN

That's exactly how I described it, daring and edgy. Isn't it, um....

PARKER

Parker.

JORDAN

Parker?

PARKER

Parker.

AVERY

Parker and...

JORDAN

Jordan.

AVERY

Parker and Jordan.

JORDAN

Yes. But that's exactly how I described these choices, daring and edgy. I mean hand clubbed baby seal with a spray of kombu...

AVERY

Daishimi.

JORDAN

Daishimi, thank you. Do you think kombu would be significantly different, though?

AVERY

I think so. But in the end, it's the water that gives it the flavor, so maybe not.

JORDAN

Oh, I'm sure you're right. But the choices! Hand clubbed baby seal with a spray of daishimi harvested from the Fukushima shoreline, and a carpaccio of spotted owl on toast...

AVERY

...stone ground from Chernobyl wheat....

JORDAN

Stone ground, in-house, from Chernobyl wheat. It's visionary. Don't you agree, Parker?

PARKER

(glancing back and forth between the two)

Visionary. Sure. Moving on. So, Avery, you're a painter? What do you work in?

AVERY

Honestly, I prefer Benjamin Moore, but my clients are all atwitter over Farrow and Ball. Their pigments are marvelous, but you spend soooooo much time blending their dark primer or light primer... It's just too much. The juice isn't worth the squeeze, as they say.

JORDAN

Interior and exterior?

AVERY

Oh, interior exclusively.

PARKER

You're a house painter?

(she finally pops the canapé into her mouth; it is a life-altering experience)

OH. MY. GOD. That is the most incredible thing I have ever It's sinful....

AVERY

Forgive us our trespasses.

JORDAN

Indeed.

PARKER

(takes another, immediately pops it into her mouth and reaches for a third)

AVERY

(turns the tray just out of PARKER's reach)

Whoopsie, there's the bride. I must be getting along.

JORDAN

Oh, wait. One more thing. What are you recommending with the seal?

AVERY

The chef is recommending a txakoli.

JORDAN

Txakoli?

AVERY

Yes, it's from the Basque region. Chef raves about its salinity and natural effervescence. But just between us, I think that, despite a certain briny, oyster shell quality, it features a tad too much lemongrass in the nose. I much prefer the Aligoté. The flavors are rich but vibrant, with citrus and white nectarine delivered with fascinating textural tension throughout.

PARKER

You're a house painter?

(AVERY half turns toward her and she snatches a canapé from the tray)

Gotcha!

(pops the canapé into her mouth and makes happy noises.)

(AVERY departs, smiling at JORDAN and glaring at PARKER.)

JORDAN

Wow. What an amazing reception. It's just been amazing, don't you think?

PARKER

Amazing. Revelatory. Yes, revelatory. That's the right word.

(enter TAYLOR)

TAYLOR

(warmly)

Jordan, lovely to see you.

Hello, I'm Taylor. And you're?

PARKER

Parker.

TAYLOR

Parker?

PARKER

Parker.

TAYLOR

Lovely. So, we've had a bit of an issue. It seems we've had a crasher who was masquerading as a server.

(JORDAN and PARKER exchange glances)

I know, right? I mean who does that?

Anyway, have either of you seen anyone acting unusual, especially someone wearing a server's jacket?

JORDAN

Parker and I have been chatting away since we arrived. Haven't we, Parker? Nothing unusual. Nothing at all.

PARKER

Absolutely. Nothing unusual. Nothing at all.

TAYLOR

Well, fine. Just enjoy yourselves. Have a drink and eat something, for god's sake. Did you know the restaurant belongs to her ex, Will. When he found out she was getting married, he insisted she hold the reception here and wouldn't let her pay for anything. He wouldn't tell anyone what he was serving. He just said, "Leave it to me." Anyway, enjoy.

BLACKOUT