

# **ANTIPASTO**

**by**

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## CHARACTERS

**THOMAS**.....a waiter, early 20s; intent on humoring and entertaining the customer, always with his eye on the ball (the tip)

**BRETT**.....mid-30s, Carolee’s husband; worldly, not particularly a social being

**CAROLEE**.....mid-30s, Brett’s wife; with an almost overwhelming sense of entitlement

### **FIGURES IN THE ALLEY**

**(FIGURES)**.....seven or more of them, in all; recognizable as human beings, but barely so – emaciated and impoverished; for want of energy they can only crawl or slither about on the ground. **(The FIGURES should simply be designated “OTHERS” in the play program.)**

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

*Antipasto* premiered at the Spokane Civic Theatre’s 25<sup>th</sup> Playwrights’ Forum Festival on June 5, 2008 in the Firth J. Chew Studio Theatre, directed by Susan Hardie.

*Antipasto* was selected for the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Samuel French Off Off Broadway Short Play Festival and performed on July 16, 2010 at the Lion Theatre, Theatre Row, New York City, directed by Harry Barandes.

**Set:**

There are two playing areas, the restaurant and the alley. If possible, the restaurant should be on a higher plane than the alley.

The restaurant area is well-lit, and consists of a table for two, suggesting an elegant and upscale eatery – white linen, crystal & silver, the whole nine yards. However, we discover this is the worst table in the house, off the kitchen, and near a door (unseen) leading to the alley out back. There is also a curtained window (unseen) next to and D.S. of the table, overlooking the alley.

The alley area is uncluttered, dark and foreboding.

**Conventions:**

The alley remains in semi-darkness throughout the play, unless light from the restaurant spills out, when the window curtain or door is open. Until the end of the play the movement of the FIGURES is slow, almost imperceptible. The ebb and flow of the FIGURES need not follow any particular pattern or rhythm, *except* the FIGURES should not in any calculated way by their movement distract from the action in the restaurant until near the end of the play.

Throughout the play there may be barely discernable ambient sounds - moans and groans from the FIGURES - underneath the restaurant noise (e.g. music and muffled noises from the nearby kitchen).

**At rise:**

No one is in the restaurant area. There may be one or more FIGURES in the alley, in various stages of starvation, moving with great effort, if at all. Near the end of the play, all FIGURES are in the alley.

THOMAS enters hurriedly with a number of items, and finishes setting the table. He checks the dishes and silverware, and fills the water glasses. He then notices the window curtain open, peers out, and takes special care to shut the curtain. On his exit, he confirms the door to the alley is shut and locked. After several beats:

THOMAS

(Off.)

They say he never calls ahead. Just shows up.

BRETT

(Off.)

He looks a lot older in person.

THOMAS

Does he?

CAROLEE

(Off.)

All I know is I have got to eat.

THOMAS

Here we are.

(THOMAS enters, followed by CAROLEE then BRETT, each with a wine glass.)

CAROLEE

I had no idea there was more seating -

BRETT

Thank you.

THOMAS

I'll be right back with menus. The wine list is -

CAROLEE

(Cutting him off.)

I'm sorry. Did you say Tom?

THOMAS

Thomas.

CAROLEE

Thomas. Thomas ... You're, you're kidding, right? This is a joke. We cant' even see -

BRETT

Carolee -

CAROLEE

No, Brett. Really, this is unacceptable. It's your birthday. It's my husband's -

THOMAS

(Overlapping.)  
Happy birthday, sir.

CAROLEE

- birthday. I made this reservation a month ago! You can't do this. I don't care who he is.  
(Kitchen noises – dishes and silverware.)  
Are there earplugs?

BRETT

(Maneuvering CAROLEE to her seat.)  
I'd like another, Thomas.

THOMAS

Done.

BRETT

We have a tab in the bar. Carolee?

CAROLEE

Please.  
(Staring THOMAS down.)

THOMAS

I'll see what I can do.

CAROLEE

Thank you.  
(THOMAS exits.)

BRETT

It's not your fault. The food will taste just as good back here.  
(Looking at CAROLEE, toasting:)  
And I like the view.

CAROLEE

(Joining the toast.)  
It's just so annoying. *Alcove*. It's a cave. Why didn't you ... You could see it happening!?

BRETT

I've done enough negotiating for the day, thank you. My birthday, remember? As grandma would say, *que sera, sera*.

CAROLEE

Go use your charm on that Maitre 'd. He looked right at us. After the guy in the Potomac suit walked off. Oh, he was sly, but he did. Right at us. Here comes the Senator, shaking hands, kissing babies. Like he owns the place.

BRETT

Maybe he does.

CAROLEE

I'll show him my reservation if he shows me his deed. Little weenie.

BRETT

He does look bigger on television.

CAROLEE

He's a tiny little -

(Louder.)

- we've never liked you.

(Calling out.)

You have our table, jackass!

BRETT

Okay, okay.

(Kitchen noises.)

CAROLEE

He couldn't hear us anyway.

BRETT

Forget about him. He seems all right. I'm sure he didn't do it to spite us. He asked for a table and they gave it to him. We got outranked, that's all. Happens all the time.

CAROLEE

(Puzzled.)

You didn't vote for him?

(A beat.)

Oh my God. You voted for him! The little runt who steals your table – on your birthday – and we end up in Siberia. Serves you right.

BRETT

Carolee.

CAROLEE

It isn't fair.

BRETT

We can wait in the bar, get something to go?

CAROLEE

No.

BRETT

Then we storm his table, kick some ass.

CAROLEE

Big talk. All right. I'd settle for ordering.

(Calling out.)

Hello?

(Louder.)

Thomas! We should take our chairs and go sit with him. Eat his food. Stick him with the bill.

BRETT

Let's see if Thomas solves this. They can't be happy about it either.

CAROLEE

Brett, all they had to say is we'll put you on the reservation list *like everybody else*, or we can seat you out back –

(Pulling back window curtain.)

- with a lovely view of the Dark Void.

(Yelling.)

T-H-O-M-A-S!!

BRETT

I'll get him.

CAROLEE

Don't you leave me here.

BRETT

I've got to hit the head. I'll find him.

(BRETT exits. CAROLEE fiddles with the wine list or checks her makeup, then pulls back the curtain and peers out. She takes a penlight from her purse, and shines it in the alley.

THOMAS enters with two wines and an antipasto plate.)

THOMAS

Here we are.

CAROLEE

(Startled.)

Oh!

THOMAS

Ah! I'm so sorry.

CAROLEE

My husband's looking for you. Maybe he's cornered the Maitre 'd.

THOMAS

I tried. These people are snobs.

CAROLEE

What's out there?

THOMAS

Nothing. Just an alley.

CAROLEE

(Indicating door.)

Is, is that door locked?

THOMAS

Oh, yes. Very.

(Setting down antipasto dish.)

Reparations, compliments of the house.

CAROLEE

Thank you. I thought I saw something move out there.

THOMAS

Really. Cat or dog.

(Closing curtains.)

I'd keep these shut.

CAROLEE

It looked almost human.

THOMAS

Oh, heavens. The night does play tricks.

(Producing small candle.)

I thought we needed something more festive. For the occasion. May I?

(THOMAS pushes the candle into a sautéed mushroom on the antipasto plate, and lights it.)

There. Would you like to know the specials?

CAROLEE

Let's wait for my husband. He seems to be lost.

(BRETT enters.)

THOMAS

Ah, found.

CAROLEE

Where have you been? All is forgiven if you slugged the Maitre 'd.

BRETT

Actually, I was chatting with the Senator. He was at the urinal next to mine. If it makes you feel any better, I think he's got a prostate problem. He was still there when I left, talking to the next guy.

THOMAS

How about those specials? The Chef's Choice – Little Smokies® on a bed of Ragu®. No, no, we're out of that. *Excuseé*. We do have a lovely penne a la puttanesca, or a baked ziti.



BRETT

(At menu.)

We could use a minute.

THOMAS

Right back.

(THOMAS exits.)

CAROLEE

*Uugh.* Brett, I am starved.

(BRETT sets the menu aside and notices the antipasto plate.)

Compliments of the house. Their way of saying sorry we've treated you like lepers. I guess you're supposed to make a wish. Something involving waterboarding.

BRETT

(Pinching the flame out.)

I've never understood antipasto. It looks like a plate of spare parts.

(Checks menu.)

Fifteen dollars. You buy a lot of air. What is that?

CAROLEE

Who knows. Maybe a grilled pepper. Or a fried worm. I give up.

(There is a lull.)

There is entertainment.

(Opening the curtain.)

Mystery guests. Look. Tell me what you see.

(BRETT joins CAROLEE, looking out the window. She hands him the penlight.)

Try this.

BRETT

Beats me. I can't see -

CAROLEE

There! Did you see that!? Were those eyes?

(BRETT shuts curtain.)

They looked like eyes.

(BRETT sits back down.)

BRETT

I think you're hallucinating now. We need food.

CAROLEE

You didn't see them? I think they're people -

BRETT

Carolee. Show's over. You'd think they'd have bread, or something.

CAROLEE

I've got a snack bar.

(She takes out the snack bar.)

For traffic.

(She breaks it in half and gives part to BRETT.)

Here.

(CAROLEE peeks out the window again.)

What are they doing?

BRETT

Will you shut that!! Now! Please.

CAROLEE

We might not be here if you'd talked to the Maitre 'd like that in the first place.

BRETT

Ah, this is my fault. You're the one who insisted we come here. I said, let's order in – remember?

CAROLEE

Oh, no you don't. We both know your "let's order in" is code for "this better be good." Maybe you should go yuk it up with the Senator. He's probably still at his post.

(THOMAS enters. BRETT and CAROLEE quickly hide what's left of the snack bar.

THOMAS picks up the wrapper off the table, and pockets it.)

THOMAS

Shall we order?

BRETT

Carolee?

CAROLEE

Do you have any horse? I'll have the shrimp scampi. House salad, raspberry vinaigrette.

THOMAS

Oh, yes.

BRETT

Linguini with white cream sauce. House Caesar.

THOMAS

Very well. Another glass?

CAROLEE

Sure.

BRETT

Could you bring some bread.

Of course.

THOMAS

Now.

BRETT

(Referring to antipasto plate.)  
Should I take this?

THOMAS

Ah - no. Leave it.

CAROLEE

We're admiring it. Does it come with a key, explaining what these things are?

BRETT

No, sir.  
(THOMAS starts to exit.)

THOMAS

Thomas, do you...is the trash out back? From the restaurant?

CAROLEE

I couldn't say.  
(THOMAS exits.)

THOMAS

Did you have to do that? He didn't do anything.

CAROLEE

I know. Better him than you.

BRETT

(Peeking through the curtain.)  
Whatever they are, there's more of them.

CAROLEE

Good for them.

BRETT

I think they're –

CAROLEE

(Overlapping.)  
Going to sing happy birthday?

BRETT

I wanted this to be perfect. I'm sorry. It's a disaster.

CAROLEE

BRETT

We'll live.

(CAROLEE picks up the antipasto plate and rises.)

CAROLEE

I'll be right back.

BRETT

Now what?

CAROLEE

(CAROLEE crosses to the door.)

I'm going to set this out there. For them. It's going to waste.

BRETT

Carolee.

CAROLEE

Just a minute.

(CAROLEE enters the alley, as the door closes behind her. During the following, THOMAS will enter with a basket of bread, leave it on the table, and exit; BRETT will butter and eat a piece of bread.)

Hello. I'm Carolee.

(CAROLEE pans the alley with the penlight; the FIGURES do not appear threatening. She steps into the alley, holding the antipasto plate out.)

I thought you might like this. It's ... food. Are you ... is everybody all right? I'll just set this down – (A FIGURE grabs CAROLEE's leg and upends her. Her scream is quickly muffled by another FIGURE, as all FIGURES descend upon her and devour her. The FIGURES peel off one or two at a time. In the end all that is left is the antipasto plate, and perhaps CAROLEE's shoes.)\*

Blackout

\*The actor playing CAROLEE will exit near the end of the play as a FIGURE. Thus, CAROLEE's costume must accommodate a rapid transformation, masked by the FIGURES surrounding her; e.g. wrap-around skirt, Velcro-secured blouse, cap, etc.

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