

On A Plate
by
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FADE IN:

1 INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - EVENING 1

Extreme C/U on restaurant owner DONNA PRIMAVERA, 35, a sassy, glamorous woman normally completely in charge of her own destiny. Now, however, her eyes betray a growing horror. A slow pull-back reveals she is staring out into the dining room from the porthole window in the kitchen door.

2 INT. RESTAURANT DINING ROOM - EVENING 2

Nervous waitress HARRIET PICKLES, 19, is in the process of collecting an empty soup bowl from GERALD PORTER, 44, a smart, business-like man in trendy spectacles seated alone at Table Eleven.

As HARRIET picks up the bowl, her sleeve snags on the spoon, catapulting it in a perfect, slow-motion arc, onto PORTER's tie.

HARRIET, an inexperienced teenager, immediately switches into panic mode and looks round for somewhere to put down the dishes she is holding. Eventually she dumps them clumsily on the edge of PORTER's table, then begins fussing over the tie with a napkin. The effect is disastrous as she spreads the splodge of soup into a larger smear.

HARRIET

Oh my... [God]!

DONNA pushes open the swing door from the kitchen and marches briskly across to Table Eleven, where she manoeuvres HARRIET smartly out of the way.

DONNA

I'm so dreadfully sorry, Mr Porter. Let me get you a damp cloth.

PORTER dabs the tie with his napkin, scowling.

PORTER

There's no need. It's only an old tie.

PORTER shakes out the napkin and replaces it on his lap. Settling down again, he reaches for his wine glass.

After a moment's hesitation, DONNA turns on her heel and heads for the kitchen.

3 INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - EVENING

3

DONNA crashes angrily through the door to find HARRIET trembling beyond.

DONNA

What in God's name do you think you're doing, girl? Did I not specifically say that Mr Porter was to be treated with extreme care?

HARRIET nods miserably.

DONNA (CONT'D)

God knows I don't like critics at the best of times, but we could really do with a good review right now, so the last thing we need is for you to start dribbling the starter all over the man from the Good Food Guide.

DONNA looks across the kitchen to the large, imposing figure of GUILLERMO ROSTI, the head chef.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Guillermo, I'm going to move Mr Porter to the private dining room - and serve him myself.

DONNA crashes back out through the kitchen door.

4 INT. RESTAURANT DINING ROOM - EVENING

4

DONNA returns to PORTER's table, where he is sipping his wine.

DONNA

Mr Porter, may I show you to our private dining room? I'm sure you'd be more comfortable there.

PORTER

I'm not sure...

Without allowing him to finish, DONNA whisks the napkin from his lap, picks up his wine glass almost from out of his hand, and makes off across the room towards a panelled door.

She slips a keyring from her waistband, selects a key and unlocks the door, stepping aside to let PORTER through.

DONNA

After you.

PORTER passes her in the doorway, giving her a bemused look over his spectacles.

5 INT. RESTAURANT PRIVATE ROOM - EVENING

5

The room is well-appointed, with thick carpet and luxurious decor. There is one table at the far side, with a single chair beyond it, by the wall. As he crosses to the table, PORTER takes off his jacket and drapes it over his arm.

DONNA watches him with interest, taking in his suave form.

PORTER goes round the table to sit on the chair and turns in time to catch DONNA appreciating his rear.

DONNA, blushing, smiles at him.

DONNA
Please, make yourself
comfortable. It's the least we
can do after...

DONNA waves vaguely in the direction of PORTER's tie.

PORTER
Yes, well, I have known less
clumsy waitresses, I must admit.

PORTER, now seated, lifts his elbows off the table and looks at Donna expectantly.

DONNA, realising she still holds his napkin and glass, hurries across the room with them. She puts the glass on the table then shakes out the napkin, draping it across PORTER's lap.

As she does so, her hand unmistakably brushes the front of his trousers. She halts in panic and waits.

PORTER very deliberately takes his glasses from his nose and lays them precisely to one side, by the wine glass.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Do you do that to all your
guests?

DONNA begins to stutter, horrified with embarrassment.

PORTER (CONT'D)
I only ask as it seems a
particularly intimate way of
getting to know your customers.

DONNA
I'm so sorry, Mr Porter. It was
quite accidental, I assure you.

PORTER

(beat)

Really? That's a shame.

DONNA

(highly embarrassed)

I'll just see how your main
course is coming along.

DONNA rushes for the door to escape.

6 INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - EVENING 6

DONNA bursts through the swing door and almost runs through the kitchen, watched by GUILLERMO and the other chefs.

At the end of the kitchen is a fire exit, through which she throws herself.

7 EXT. ALLEYWAY OUTSIDE THE RESTAURANT KITCHEN - EVENING 7

DONNA takes a few steps into the alleyway, teetering on her high heels, then stops to gulp in some cool night air.

Realising she is perspiring with the anxiety, she draws a sleeve across her forehead, then looks down at it in horror. There, smeared across her crisp, white blouse, is a streak of make-up.

DONNA

Fan-bloody-tastic!

DONNA staggers further down the alleyway, looking up at the moon framed between two buildings.

She gathers her thoughts, apparently coming up with a plan, and turns decisively back towards the fire exit.

8 INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - EVENING 8

DONNA storms in, pinpoints an alarmed-looking HARRIET, and bears down on her.

DONNA

Harriet, give me your blouse.

HARRIET looks completely nonplussed.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Don't just stand there, do it!
Come with me.

DONNA grabs HARRIET's elbow and steers her to the staff toilets.

As DONNA drags HARRIET into the ladies' with her, she is already unbuttoning her own blouse. She continues to remove the stained garment as she rails at the girl.

DONNA

Now you listen to me. Whether we like it or not, that man out there holds our future in his hands. If there's one thing I've learned in this business it's this. There are four things that make for a good restaurant review. One - the food. Guillermo's got that covered. Two - the surroundings. God knows I've spent enough on that. Three - the service. Thanks to you, we've seriously hampered our chances on that score. Which leaves four - a desire to please. Now, if pleasing Mr Porter is what it takes to get a good review, than that's what I'm bloody well going to do. Whatever he pleases. Now hand it over.

DONNA has by now removed her blouse and offers it bluntly in exchange to HARRIET.

Stunned, HARRIET swiftly decides compliance is the best course of action and silently removes her own blouse. The women trade garments and HARRIET quickly pulls hers on, leaving the ladies' as she's still doing it up.

DONNA takes stock for a moment, staring at her reflection in the large mirror above the basins. She looks at the black bra she's wearing, then down at HARRIET's blouse in her hand, a flimsy, see-through chemise. DONNA slips it on, holding it together at the front without fastening it. The black bra shows through it all too plainly.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Shit.

She takes off the blouse again, then deftly unclips the bra and slips it off.

Putting the blouse back on, she has another look at herself in the mirror and sighs.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Oh, what the hell. 'Whatever he pleases...'

She drops the black bra into a bin and heads determinedly for the door.

10 INT. RESTAURANT DINING ROOM - EVENING 10

DONNA is standing before the private dining room door with a plate of food in front of her in one hand and her keys in the other, behind her back.

She takes a long, steady breath then blows it out again slowly. With her key hand she opens the door, then enters.

11 INT. RESTAURANT PRIVATE ROOM - EVENING 11

Inside the door, DONNA leans back against it to close it and, behind her back, turns the key in the lock. She has a steely, determined look in her eye.

12 INT. RESTAURANT DINING ROOM - EVENING 12

The private dining room door opens and DONNA emerges, looking ever so slightly ruffled but with more than a hint of a smile on her lips as she closes the door behind her.

She dabs a corner of her mouth with one finger and the smile broadens as she begins to walk confidently across the restaurant to the kitchen.

13 INT. RESTAURANT LOBBY - LATER THAT EVENING 13

DONNA is at the front door waving off departing diners when PORTER appears from the restaurant, his meal now finished.

DONNA smiles and reaches behind her for his coat, hanging on a rail. Without speaking, she helps him into it, stroking the material on his shoulders.

PORTER peers over his glasses at her, as he had in the private room doorway, only this time he returns her smile.

PORTER

Thank you for that. It was truly
an experience.

DONNA holds the door open and PORTER leaves.

14 EXT. RESTAURANT ENTRANCE - EVENING 14

DONNA leans on the doorpost, watching PORTER wistfully as he strolls down the shingle pathway without looking back.

At the front gate, he steps aside to allow a little bald man, RONALD BROOKMAN, 62, to come through in the opposite direction. Then he is gone.

DONNA
(to herself)
For what he has just received,
may Mr Porter be truly thankful.

BROOKMAN reaches the front door, looks up expectantly at DONNA, and holds out his hand.

BROOKMAN
Good evening. Ronald Brookman,
The Good Food Guide.

DONNA reacts, looking in desperation down the path towards the gate, where PORTER has just disappeared, then back at the funny little man before her.

With a resigned sigh, she shakes his hand.

FADE OUT.