

# La Mouche

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"LA MOUCHE"  
BY STEPHEN BITTRICH

SETTING:

A French restaurant in New York.

AT RISE:

The customer sits alone at a table and makes a startling discovery.

CUSTOMER

Excuse me...garçon!

(A waiter, PIERRE, is there in a flash)

PIERRE

Oui, monsieur? Oui? How is your soup?

CUSTOMER

My soup has a fly in it.

PIERRE

No!

CUSTOMER

Yes.

PIERRE

Mon Dieu...a fly. Oooo, la, la, la, la! Yes, there he is. I see him. He is looking at me.

CUSTOMER

It's most distressing.

PIERRE

Indeed, monsieur. Indeed. I am at a loss. Who is your waiter?

CUSTOMER

I'm not certain.

PIERRE

Jacques! Jacques!

(Head waiter, JACQUES, arrives in a flash)

JACQUES  
Yes? Yes? Monsieur, how is your soup?

CUSTOMER  
Well...

PIERRE  
His soup contains a fly.

JACQUES  
No!

PIERRE  
Mais oui!

JACQUES  
Outrageous!  
(Beat, earnestly)  
Monsieur, did you ask for a fly in your soup?

PIERRE  
(as if this logical possibility  
had never occurred to him)  
Ahhh.

CUSTOMER  
No. I did not!

PIERRE  
(ever agreeable)  
No!

JACQUES  
It is not "fly soup"?

CUSTOMER  
No, it is not. Most definitely not.

JACQUES  
Who is your waiter?

CUSTOMER  
Well...

JACQUES  
I will KILL him!

PIERRE  
Oui! His waiter must die!

JACQUES  
Point him to me.

CUSTOMER

I don't remember.

JACQUES

I will tear him limb from limb!

CUSTOMER

I'd rather you didn't.

JACQUES

He will pay for this fly with his life...hmmmm? No?

CUSTOMER

Well, no. It is just a fly.

PIERRE

Certainly. Of course. Seulement une mouche.

JACQUES

Mais oui...just a fly. Today just a fly. Tomorrow a ball of...hair...a wad of chewing gum. The next day a human head!

PIERRE

The line must be drawn.

CUSTOMER

I don't want to make trouble.

PIERRE

Nonsense.

JACQUES

Absurd.

PIERRE

Monsieur, the customer is always...the customer is always...

CUSTOMER

Eh?

JACQUES

Ripe.

PIERRE

Ripe! Oui! Seulement.

JACQUES

We will simply kill your waiter. Problem solved.

CUSTOMER

Might I just have another soup?

PIERRE

Of course.

JACQUES  
The soup is not the issue!

PIERRE  
Obviously.

JACQUES  
The issue is the fly.

PIERRE  
Exactement. The fly. The fly must die as well.

JACQUES  
Pierre! Are you insane? A poor defenseless creature...  
merely trying to keep warm...and you suggest we end his  
existence?

PIERRE  
Pardon. I have missed the point.

JACQUES  
Obviously.

PIERRE  
(to the CUSTOMER)  
Can you forgive me, monsieur?

CUSTOMER  
(starting to become confused)  
Of course.

PIERRE  
(hitting himself in the head)  
Stupid! Stupid!

JACQUES  
The fly is an innocent.

PIERRE  
Obviously. A babe in the...in the...

JACQUES  
The fly has been duped.

CUSTOMER  
Duped?

JACQUES  
He is a pawn in this devilish plot!

PIERRE  
...in the woods. Oui.

CUSTOMER

Yes, yes, poor fly, poor fly...but might I just--

PIERRE

Ah, poor fly.

JACQUES

You have now a bond!

PIERRE

A kinship.

CUSTOMER

Eh?

JACQUES

With the fly...whose life you have saved.

PIERRE

Exactly. May I offer you a, a jar, monsieur? I can poke petite holes in the lid...for your fly.

CUSTOMER

I don't want this fly!

PIERRE

Of course not! Silly.

CUSTOMER

What would I do with a fly?

JACQUES

Well, you have saved his life, monsieur...in some cultures...but I overstep my bounds.

PIERRE

Always ripe...always ripe. Is that right?

JACQUES

Pardon, monsieur. We can certainly make arrangements for this fly. He needn't be your concern. Do not think again of this fly.

CUSTOMER

Thank you.

JACQUES

De rien. Be assured, this fly will live out his days in comfort.

PIERRE

The comfort of soup.

JACQUES  
(to PIERRE)

You idiot!

PIERRE

Sorry?

CUSTOMER

All I really want is another...

JACQUES

Monsieur, what have you ordered for you next course?

CUSTOMER

The soufflé.

PIERRE

Oooo, la, la, la, la! The soufflé.

JACQUES

Magnifique!

PIERRE

Absolument. Like you have died and gone to...to...

JACQUES

May I assume, monsieur, that you did not order any flies in your soufflé?

CUSTOMER

You may assume that, yes.

PIERRE

That is a "no"?

CUSTOMER

Most definitely no.

JACQUES

Pierre, s'il vous plaît, inspect monsieur's soufflé, tout de suite!

PIERRE

D'accord.

(PIERRE dashes to the kitchen)

JACQUES

This soufflé will have NO flies, monsieur!

CUSTOMER

Yes...thank you. Really, what I most desire...

JACQUES  
You have a desire, monsieur?

CUSTOMER  
Yes.

JACQUES  
You need only ask.

CUSTOMER  
A soup. A soup, please. One without the fly.

JACQUES  
Of course. You would like your soup returned to it's original fly free condition. If you will permit me, I can remove the fly...unharmd, of course...

CUSTOMER  
Why would I...eh? Are you saying...?

(PIERRE returns in a flash)

PIERRE  
This soufflé will have NO FLIES!

JACQUES  
Excellent, Pierre.

PIERRE  
I have seen to it!  
(Beat, then...)  
The chef was quite upset.

CUSTOMER  
Upset? I didn't want to upset the chef.

JACQUES  
Nonsense! It is your right to upset the chef. You have a grievance. Don't concern yourself with this chef, monsieur. He is insignificant.

PIERRE  
As insignificant as a...

JACQUES  
Perhaps I should KILL him!

PIERRE  
Insignificant as a...

CUSTOMER  
I don't wish for you to kill anybody...not the waiter, not the chef, not the fly.



PIERRE

Ahh, monsieur, you have the heart of a saint.

CUSTOMER

Thank you.

JACQUES

Why on earth would I kill the fly?

PIERRE

You forgive them all.

JACQUES

Incroyable.

PIERRE

To forgive is...is...

CUSTOMER

Yes, very well, thank you.

PIERRE

To forgive is...

JACQUES

"...is bovine."

CUSTOMER

"...is sublime."

JACQUES

Ahh oui, sublime. Merci, monsieur. How silly of me. A cow is not sublime.

PIERRE

No, I don't think that's it.

JACQUES

Pierre! You contradict the customer?

PIERRE

Not at all. It does not sound correct: "to forgive is sublime."

JACQUES

Absurd. Is it not sublime to forgive?

PIERRE

Yes, of course, but...

JACQUES

I will...KILL you!

(MORE)

JACQUES (cont'd)  
 (JACQUES starts to throttle  
 PIERRE)

CUSTOMER  
 Please! Please! Please! Garçons!

JACQUES  
 (Taking a pause)  
 Oui?

PIERRE  
 Oui, monsieur?

CUSTOMER  
 This is outrageous! Unbelievable!

JACQUES  
 (Taking his hands off PIERRE's  
 neck)  
 But of course.

CUSTOMER  
 And the fly has flown away!

PIERRE  
 What?

JACQUES  
 You...stupid! You have scared away monsieur's fly!

PIERRE  
 I am ashamed, monsieur.

CUSTOMER  
 Unless he's sunk to the bottom.

PIERRE  
 Allow me, monsieur.  
 (PIERRE fishes around in the  
 soup with his finger)  
 This fly is gone.

JACQUES  
 Of course this fly is gone...because you are too loud. You  
 are a loud, sweaty man, and this fly is gone. Of course. He  
 has flown the coup...his petite wings heavy with soup!

PIERRE  
 It's cold. My soup is cold.

JACQUES  
 Cold! Incroyable! This is not a cold soup.

PIERRE

It's shameful!

JACQUES

Monsieur, would you agree that this soup should not be cold?

CUSTOMER

Yes. No! I don't want cold soup.

JACQUES

Very well. Pierre, what are you waiting for? Rapidement! A fresh bowl of piping hot soup for the gentleman.

PIERRE

Right away!

(PIERRE starts to leave)

CUSTOMER

(Relieved)

Thank you.

JACQUES

Wait!

PIERRE

Wait!

JACQUES

Monsieur, would you like your soup...piping hot?

CUSTOMER

Piping?

JACQUES

Scalding, fiery, blistering?

CUSTOMER

Well...

JACQUES

Peut-être, lukewarm...tepid. So you don't burn your petite tongue?

CUSTOMER

I don't want to burn my tongue...but I don't want to take a bath in it.

JACQUES

As the fly has!

(JACQUES and PIERRE laugh in short staccato bursts)

Say no more, monsieur. Your soup will be perfect. Pierre, tout de suite!

Oui! PIERRE  
(PIERRE starts to leave again)

And Pierre... JACQUES

Oui? PIERRE

Sans la mouche!!! JACQUES

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF PLAY)