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.

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.

No!

JACQUES
Mais oui!

PIERRE
Outrageous!

JACQUES
(Monsieur, did you ask for a fly in your soup?)

(Beat, earnestly)

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...hmmm? 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.

The issue is the fly.

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

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

JACQUES
Pardon. I have missed the point.

PIERRE
Obviously.

JACQUES
(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 your 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...unharmed, 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

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

PIERRE
Right away!

(CUSTOMER starts to leave)

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!
PIERRE
Oui!
(PIERRE starts to leave again)

JACQUES
And Pierre...

PIERRE
Oui?

JACQUES
Sans la mouche!!!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF PLAY)