

The flat light and ambience of a restaurant.

CHARLOTTE *studies the menu.*

POLYCHRONIS *slightly, and unconsciously, adjusts two glasses on his side of the table, leaving them in a neater line. He studies the menu, blowing some dust from it.*

Wait.

CHARLOTTE. Different again.

POLYCHRONIS. Told you. Eating here is like coming to eat inside a bloody chameleon.

CHARLOTTE. Looks like they've gone French this time.

POLYCHRONIS. I mean, what was it? Spanish?

CHARLOTTE. Italian.

POLYCHRONIS. Italian the last time, and then what, Portuguese?

CHARLOTTE. Spanish.

POLYCHRONIS. Exactly, Spanish the time before that. And now it's what?

CHARLOTTE. French.

POLYCHRONIS. Yes. French, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish. I don't know why they couldn't have just left it Greek.

Beat.

CHARLOTTE. Take your jacket off before it gets too warm.

POLYCHRONIS. I'm okay.

CHARLOTTE. You'll get hot.

POLYCHRONIS. I'm alright.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, but you'll *get* hot.

POLYCHRONIS. I'm okay.

CHARLOTTE. Other people have got their jackets off.

POLYCHRONIS. I'm fine.

CHARLOTTE. But you'll get hot eventually.

POLYCHRONIS. Then I'll take it off eventually.

CHARLOTTE. Just checking.

POLYCHRONIS. I know. (*Pulling back from the edge*). Thank you.

CHARLOTTE. Pleasure.

They look at the menu.

The third thing down sounds quite nice.

POLYCHRONIS (*English pronunciation*). *Final.* What's *final*?

CHARLOTTE (*exaggerated French pronunciation*). *Final.* It's dessert.

POLYCHRONIS. Then why not just say dessert? If I wanted everything in French I could have just gone to France.

CHARLOTTE. Quite.

POLYCHRONIS. I don't know why we keep coming here, to be honest.

CHARLOTTE. I know. It's been going downhill for years.

POLYCHRONIS. And can you see the steak anywhere?

CHARLOTTE. No. Take your jacket off, will you?

POLYCHRONIS. Yes, I will.

They study the menu.

(*Incorrect pronunciation*). Escargots de Bourgogne.

CHARLOTTE (*pronounces it equally incorrectly*). Escargots de Bourgogne.

POLYCHRONIS. What's that?

CHARLOTTE. It means, er, snails of . . . er . . . the *Bor* . . . the *Borg* . . . it's a kind of French gravy, sauce.

POLYCHRONIS. And this . . . *cuisse*s . . .

CHARLOTTE. *Cuisine.*

POLYCHRONIS. *Cuisses de gren . . . gren . . . gr . . .*

CHARLOTTE (*flatly*). Frogs' legs.

They both look distinctly unappetised.

POLYCHRONIS. You know, I don't think I'll actually have a starter.

CHARLOTTE (*sotto*). Well we need to have *something*.

POLYCHRONIS (*sotto*). Why?

CHARLOTTE (*sotto*). Because we've come out now.

POLYCHRONIS (*sotto*). I know, but this is like a bloody zoo. We could end up with anything.

They each go back to their menu, desperately looking for anything they can eat in order to keep up appearances.

CHARLOTTE. Oh look – they still do the asparagus!

POLYCHRONIS. Oh, where?

CHARLOTTE. Shall we just have that, then?

POLYCHRONIS. Well, we know where we are with the asparagus, don't we?

CHARLOTTE. Yes, okay, we'll start with the asparagus. I, erm . . .

POLYCHRONIS. Have you thought about the mains yet?

CHARLOTTE. I meant to ask, by the way, are we drinking?

POLYCHRONIS. Because I was thinking about the steak . . .

CHARLOTTE. I mean, I know we're *drinking*, but are we having a *drink*?

POLYCHRONIS. Do they still even *do* the steak?

CHARLOTTE. I mean, we've come out and everything, so . . .

POLYCHRONIS. Er, yes. If you want to. I mean, there's nothing wrong with starting with a glass, is there?

CHARLOTTE. Exactly. And it's only once a year, isn't it?

POLYCHRONIS. Exactly.

Pause. They study the menu.

CHARLOTTE. Have you decided, then?

POLYCHRONIS. Yes. I'm having the steak.

CHARLOTTE. Oh *god*.

POLYCHRONIS. What? I like the steak.

CHARLOTTE. But we'll be here all night.

POLYCHRONIS. It's only once a year.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, I know it is.

POLYCHRONIS. And you're having the wine.

CHARLOTTE. So?

POLYCHRONIS. So I'm just saying, you're having the wine.

CHARLOTTE. I don't know what you mean.

POLYCHRONIS. I'm saying, it's one night a year where you say, yes, okay, certain things, to hell with it . . .

CHARLOTTE. Certain things?

POLYCHRONIS. Yes . . . *have* the wine, *have* the steak. Do you know what I mean?

During CHARLOTTE's speech, POLYCHRONIS takes his jacket off.

CHARLOTTE. Absolutely. *I'm* just saying you know they always take an *age* to do the steak, and then when you order it rare it always comes *too rare* . . .

POLYCHRONIS. I know, but I *like* it rare . . .

CHARLOTTE. And then you have to send it *back* . . .

POLYCHRONIS. That's because they always make it *blue* . . .

CHARLOTTE. So at least order it *medium* instead, then . . .

POLYCHRONIS. If I order it medium, it'll take them even *longer*, because they're (*looks around, sotto.*) absolutely bloody useless in here.

CHARLOTTE (*sotto*). Absolutely *bloody* useless.

POLYCHRONIS. Exactly. They're absolutely bloody useless. In fact, you've really hit the nail into the head there.

CHARLOTTE. *On* the head.

POLYCHRONIS. *On* the head. *On* the head. *On* the head . . .