

"Soup's On"

by
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1 INT. DAN'S DINER - LATE EVENING

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A moderate snowstorm is falling outside. Inside the diner, some light music plays on the jukebox. At the half-dozen tables, the chairs have been upturned. SHIRLEY, the middle-aged waitress, stands behind the counter. Through the cut-out square in the far wall, we faintly see another woman, Sylvia, in the kitchen. Aside from them, the place is empty.

Through the diner's large front windows, we see a car slowly enter one of the few parking spots. The driver, EDGAR, turns off the ignition, gets out, and slams the car door shut.

SHIRLEY

(calling)

Here he comes! Get ready!

Edgar opens the door quickly and enters the diner. As the door closes behind him, he stomps the snow from his shoes and brushes it off of his sparse hair.

SHIRLEY

Welcome to Dan's Diner, mister.

EDGAR

Thanks. What a night!

(beat)

You look like you're getting ready to close.

SHIRLEY

Not for another thirty minutes. With the storm, it's been dead here. We're just getting the cleaning done early.

(beat)

My name's Shirley. Could I ask you to sit at the counter please?

EDGAR

Sure thing.

Edgar sits on one of the counter stools.

SHIRLEY

Can I get you something?

EDGAR

No thanks. I'm here to meet someone.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Here?

EDGAR

Yeah. I'm a little early.

SHIRLEY

Old friend?

EDGAR

I don't know what you'd call her.

SHIRLEY

So it's a *woman*.

EDGAR

Yeah.

SHIRLEY

You *sure* I can't get you something? It's a *cold* night out there.

EDGAR

(beat)
Come to think of it, that *might* be a good idea. What do you suggest?

SHIRLEY

We're known for our chicken gumbo.

EDGAR

That sounds good.

SHIRLEY

Oh, it *is*.

(calling)
Sylvia, one bowl of gumbo!

(beat)
That'll be just a minute.

EDGAR

No rush.

Shirley places a glass in front of Edgar and fills it with water from a pitcher. She also puts down a napkin and a spoon.

SHIRLEY

(beat)
So you're meeting a lady here tonight?

(CONTINUED)

Edgar sips the water.

EDGAR

Uh huh.

(beat)

Are you always so. . . *chatty*?

SHIRLEY

It's a bad habit of mine. There's not much to do here. You're the only customer we've had all night, and Sylvia back there in the kitchen isn't much of a talker.

(beat)

I didn't mean to upset you.

EDGAR

You didn't - not really.

(beat)

Yes, I'm meeting a lady here. She called me up out of the blue and said she *really* needed to talk with me. I don't know how she even got my phone number! She specified that she wanted to talk *here*.

SHIRLEY

What about?

EDGAR

I have no idea. I haven't even *thought* about her in years.

SHIRLEY

Oh, the gumbo's ready.

Shirley gets the gumbo and sets it down in front of Edgar.

SHIRLEY

Here you are.

Edgar sniffs the soup.

EDGAR

Smells *good*.

SHIRLEY

You'll enjoy it. It *really* warms you up on a cold night.

Edgar picks up his spoon and slurps some soup.

(CONTINUED)

EDGAR

Very tasty.

SHIRLEY

It's our own special recipe. A lot of the diners around here have tried to outdo our gumbo, but none has.

Edgar has some more gumbo.

EDGAR

That would be tough to do.

SHIRLEY

So, tell me about this lady you're gonna meet here tonight. An old girlfriend?

EDGAR

I wouldn't go *that* far.

SHIRLEY

One-nighter?

Edgar has another spoonful of gumbo.

EDGAR

More than that.

(sighs)

I'm afraid I didn't treat her very well back in the day.

SHIRLEY

What was her name?

EDGAR

Lucille.

SHIRLEY

I've always *loved* that name.

EDGAR

Yeah, me. . .

Edgar drops his spoon. It hits the counter and falls to the floor. He suddenly looks ill.

SHIRLEY

Something. . . *wrong?*

(CONTINUED)

EDGAR

I. . . I'm not sure. I'm feeling
kind of. . . *funny* all of a
sudden.

SHIRLEY

Butterflies in the stomach?

EDGAR

No, it's. . . it's more than that.

SHIRLEY

Don't you worry about it, Edgar.

EDGAR

But I. . . How did you know my
name?

SHIRLEY

Lucky guess.

EDGAR

My. . . legs feel *weird*.

SHIRLEY

They must have fallen asleep. That
happens sometimes on these old
counter stools.

(beat)

Get up and stretch them.

EDGAR

Good idea.

He stands up from the stool and collapses in a heap on
the floor. As he falls, he reaches for one of the
upturned chairs, bringing it and a table down with him.

SHIRLEY

(amused)

What are you doing down there,
Edgar?

EDGAR

There's something wrong with my
legs. I. . . I can't feel them.

SHIRLEY

The drugs are starting to work.

EDGAR

Drugs?

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

In the gumbo. It's our own
creation. First, it paralyzes the
limbs so you can't get away.

(chuckles)

Wait till you hear what it does
next!

EDGAR

But *why*? I only came here to. . .
to meet Lucille.

SHIRLEY

I am Lucille!

EDGAR

(beat)

You?

SHIRLEY

Yup. A few years gone by and a
little red hair dye. You never
even *noticed*. It shows how
important I was to you back then.

EDGAR

Lucille, I. . . My *throat*!

SHIRLEY

Part 2 is coming on: Your throat
will close up like an interstate
under construction. It won't be
long now.

EDGAR

(struggling to speak)

I didn't. . . hurt you so bad.

SHIRLEY

You'll never know how *bad* what you
did was! I had to change my name,
start a new life. Getting over it
took *years* on a shrink's couch.

EDGAR

(struggling to speak)

I came here to. . . make it up
. . . to you.

SHIRLEY

Too late, gumbo boy.

Edgar gasps for air, wheezes, and is silent.

(CONTINUED)

Shirley comes out from behind the counter. She looks down at Edgar and chuckles slightly.

SHIRLEY

Now, we're even.

(calling)

Sylvia, get the big pots out. It's time to make some more of our *special* gumbo. Your old boyfriend will be here tomorrow night, and he needs to be taught a hard lesson as well.

We hear Sylvia clanging the pots and pans together in the kitchen. Shirley looks down at Edgar's body, a smile forming on her face.

SHIRLEY

It's a good thing they all taste like *chicken*.

FADE TO BLACK.