

EVERYTHING HERE IS SO DELICIOUS

a short play by David Hilder

CHARACTERS

JOCASTA, female, any ethnicity, at least 30 years old but not more than, say, 50ish

ANTOINE, male, any ethnicity, some years younger than Jocasta

WAITER, any gender, any ethnicity, appears older than both Jocasta and Antoine

(JOCASTA and ANTOINE, at a café, as is their wont. They're on the balcony.)

JOCASTA

I never stop marveling at this view.

ANTOINE

Truly. Worth the climb, every time.

JOCASTA

Every time indeed.

ANTOINE

How are your Brooke and little Adam?

JOCASTA

Wonderful! Brooke was just named captain of her sixth grade jai alai team, and little Adam has nearly learned the alphabet. Have you and Nathaniel heard from the adoption agency yet?

ANTOINE

We should hear any –

(ANTOINE's device makes a noise. He checks it. He gasps!)

It's a yes! Twins!

JOCASTA

How marvelous!

ANTOINE

Just like we wanted! Do you know how many other couples we had to beat out for this particular blend of Southeast Asian, central African, Nordic and Latinx?

JOCASTA

I can only imagine.

ANTOINE

Several. We had to beat out several other couples.

JOCASTA

My!

ANTOINE

But we WON and now we'll have PERFECT TWINS!

JOCASTA

When are they due?

ANTOINE

(checking his device) Eight p.m., Cameroon time.

JOCASTA

Then we'd better order, no?

ANTOINE

We had.

(They open their menus and peruse them for a moment. ANTOINE closes his.)

I don't know why I even look. I know this menu like the back of my hand.

JOCASTA

Yes, and yet I always have such a hard time choosing.

ANTOINE

You do. I've noticed.

JOCASTA

I'll try to be quick, I know your time is limited. While I have nothing but!

ANTOINE

It's true, you're overloaded with time!

(Their laughter sparkles like the sunlight on their crystal water goblets.)

JOCASTA

(consulting her menu) Perhaps it's because we've just been talking about your imminent new children, but my eye keeps going back to –

ANTOINE

Don't tell me! You, too?

JOCASTA

Are we going to get the same thing?

ANTOINE

I think we are! That is so us. Server!

(A WAITER – probably THEIR waiter, dedicated to their table alone – slowly makes their way over. They have clearly been hobbled; walking is painful.)

WAITER

Hello what may I bring you my only desire is that you have a “peak” experience here at Mountaintop Gar –

JOCASTA

(irritated) You do not have to say that every time you come to the table!

WAITER

Actually I do. Or I get –

ANTOINE

(pointing at his menu for the WAITER’s sake) What’s the vintage today? Of the grilled and the roasted.

WAITER

Both the roasted and the char-grilled are the same vintage. Today’s baby is an eleven-month Canadian.

JOCASTA

Urban or rural?

WAITER

From a family of bean farmers in the Saskatoon countryside.

JOCASTA

Ooh, yummy. I’ll have the roasted, he’ll have the grilled.

ANTOINE

And two bottles of oxygen.

JOCASTA

Each.

WAITER

Thank you will there be anything else.

ANTOINE

I don’t think so. Please tell the chef we’re in a hurry.

JOCASTA

(to the WAITER) He’s getting twins today!

WAITER

That is wonderful news and cause for celebration indeed I will be back shortly with your oxygen and baby.

(The WAITER shuffles away, wincing with every step. JOCASTA and ANTOINE watch them go. Then)

JOCASTA

I used to be so annoyed by how slow service is nowadays.

ANTOINE

But better that than they be able to run, right?

JOCASTA

Exactly.

(Suddenly, the entire café shakes from some natural event – intense wind, or a smallish earthquake. JOCASTA and ANTOINE grab the table, which is conveniently bolted down. The event passes.)

ANTOINE

How are you since Marcus left?

JOCASTA

Never better!

ANTOINE

Truly?

JOCASTA

Without a doubt!

ANTOINE

(he does not believe her) How splendid.

JOCASTA

It's not like I left him. That would have been a catastrophe!

ANTOINE

Oh, it would indeed.

JOCASTA

This way I get to keep all the money!

ANTOINE

Have you seen him since?

JOCASTA

(shakes her head) I don't intend to.

ANTOINE

And – You should not answer this, if it makes you uncomfortable, but, Don't you find the nights lonely?

JOCASTA

I don't.

ANTOINE

Really.

JOCASTA

No. I bought a Companion.

ANTOINE

(with some distaste) Oh?

JOCASTA

Best investment I ever made with my former husband's former money.

ANTOINE

But isn't there something ... *(he does not finish the thought)*

JOCASTA

Just say what you're thinking.

ANTOINE

Doesn't he smell?

JOCASTA

(irked) No. Of course not!

ANTOINE

It's just that everyone says they –

JOCASTA

Everyone is wrong. Everyone is being obnoxiously classist, really. Including you, if you talk like that.

ANTOINE

Jocasta –

JOCASTA

Antoine, you are among my very dear friends, but I must disabuse you of the notion that a purchased Companion would smell bad merely because he was for sale.

ANTOINE

I –

JOCASTA

Not on sale, mind you. I don't dip into the bargain bin. Certainly not when making a purchase of this type!

ANTOINE

I should hope not!

JOCASTA

Anyway. I'm still deciding what to call him. Perhaps "Brian." Or "Aloysius," when I'm in a Gothic mood.

ANTOINE

I see! Well. ... Congratulations?

JOCASTA

(not taking the bait of his tone) Thank you.

(The WAITER hobbles forward, carefully balancing four bottles on a tray. An expressionless JOCASTA and ANTOINE watch them slowly, painfully moving toward them.)

WAITER

Your oxygen madam your oxygen sir do you require any assistance opening or utilizing them.

ANTOINE

Yes, of course!

(The WAITER wrestles open a bottle and quickly inserts a plastic tube up JOCASTA's nose. She breathes deep as the WAITER does the same for ANTOINE. The WAITER bows and moves away.)

(Breathing. Deep, delicious breaths of pure oxygen.)

Oh, thank goodness. Were my lips turning blue?

JOCASTA

Just a little.

ANTOINE

The air is awfully thin up here!

JOCASTA

Isn't it just!

(They admire the view again, plastic tubes stuck up their noses. After a few moments, their bottles are empty. They remove the tubes, then throw both bottles and tubes over the edge of the balcony they're on. They do not look to watch them fall. ANTOINE's device makes a noise.)

ANTOINE

Ah! Nathaniel made it to Cameroon for the birth of our twins!

JOCASTA

He is a wonder.

ANTOINE

Isn't he. Oh, look, he's sending a video!

(They look at ANTOINE's device. We hear the audio, which is choppy at best.)

NATHANIEL'S VOICE

Darling, I'm on my way to ... Very hectic getting ... pod nearly didn't land in the ... hospital now, there are soldiers here to greet – OH GOD WHY ARE YOU POINTING THAT AT, WHAT ARE YOU, ANTOINE, I LOVE YOU, PLEASE REMEM –

(The transmission cuts off. After several uncertain moments, ANTOINE puts his device away. He takes a drink of water. JOCASTA looks everywhere but at him, not sure how to be supportive, feeling VERY awkward.)

JOCASTA

He looks well!

ANTOINE

Yes, he's very ... fit ...

JOCASTA

He is. Much like Seth. *(a distracted ANTOINE doesn't know who she means)* I have decided to call my companion Seth. A simple, yet ancient, name.

ANTOINE

I see ...

JOCASTA

Biblical. A foundational name, "Seth."

(The WAITER painstakingly makes their way to the table, pushing a cart with covered trays on it. When the WAITER arrives, they place a tray before each of the patrons.)

WAITER

Madam sir here are your babies prepared to perfection the chef hopes you will delight in every morsel.

(The WAITER removes the covers from their plates, then bows and hobbles away, pushing the cart. JOCASTA immediately starts eating – daintily, but quickly, as though manners were juuuuuust overcoming the power of the flavor. ANTOINE is still distracted.)

JOCASTA

(her mouth full, probably) Oh, it's delicious today!

(ANTOINE just sits there. He tries to get Nathaniel via his device, but the call doesn't go through. JOCASTA, having finished eating her portion of baby, eyes ANTOINE's plate.)

Um ... Are you –

(Before she can finish speaking, there is another, larger weather event that shakes the Mountaintop Gardens Bistro Café – it smacks of disaster, like, NOW. Their dishes and glassware and so on might well topple off the table. They may well have trouble staying in their chairs. At the very least, ANTOINE's plate tumbles to the floor. Eventually, the moment subsides.)

ANTOINE

Do you think –

JOCASTA

(looking at his spilled food) It doesn't look too soiled, really ...

ANTOINE

I can't tell what's –

(And then he notices JOCASTA, on the ground, on her hands and knees, taking up ANTOINE's meal, the baby he was going to eat, and eating it with her bare hands. There is less of manners now, more pure delight in the sensation of eating.)

JOCASTA

(mouth full) Oh, the GRILLED! It's WONDERFUL!

ANTOINE

(rising to his feet) Server? Server!

(The WAITER makes their way over to the table as JOCASTA continues to eat on the ground.)

WAITER
Yes sir?

ANTOINE
I! It's just, I ...

(The WAITER just looks, sympathetic, as ANTOINE struggles to find what to say. Eventually)

WAITER
Would you like your second bottle of oxygen now

ANTOINE
I ... *(he gives up the struggle, and sits)* Yes.

WAITER
(getting the plastic tubing set up) Very good idea sir *(finishing their work)* After all never know when you might be able to get the next one isn't that what they say

ANTOINE
... yes ...

(JOCASTA finishes eating. She lies on her back, sated, thrilled with the babies she just devoured, licking her fingers.)

WAITER
Madam would you like your second bottle of oxygen now

(JOCASTA nods, still delirious from the food. The WAITER brings the bottle and tubing to her, gets her set. Then they rise, bow to both ANTOINE and JOCASTA, and begin the painful process of walking away.)

JOCASTA
(to ANTOINE? to herself?) I'll tell you this, nothing Seth can do tops the sheer pleasure of eating, and eating well.

(As JOCASTA just lies there, breathing and digesting, ANTOINE grabs his bottle and walks to the edge of the balcony. He looks over. Whatever he sees is ... terrifying.)

(Blackout. The end.)