

The Breakfast Special

Matthew Calhoun

WAITRESS
CUSTOMER

In a dingy diner on the Lower East Side in New York City. Waitress has little interest in being a waitress, customer is a well-dressed young man in his late twenties.

WAITRESS. Menu, sir?

CUSTOMER. No thanks. I know just what I want.

WAITRESS. Uh huh?

CUSTOMER. A robin egg omelette topped with coriander made French style — *red* caviar in that, and a licorice liqueur, please.

WAITRESS. Huh?

CUSTOMER. Yes, all that and some Wonder Bread toast with wild gooseberry preserves. Shave the crusts, please.

WAITRESS. We don't have that . . . here.

CUSTOMER. No Wonder Bread? You should try it. That cheap, synthetic texture provides a delightful contrast to some of the more docile of the wild preserves.

WAITRESS. We don't have those.

CUSTOMER. You mentioned that. Make it wild blackberry then, and put it on Arnold brick oven white. Broil it, though, please.

WAITRESS. We don't have that stuff. We have scrambled or fired, or we could poach it for you, and it comes with home fries and coffee. Or French toast, if you want.

CUSTOMER. What?

WAITRESS. This is a diner, not a French cookbook place. We don't have robin eggs.

CUSTOMER. This is a diner, as you said. I'd like to dine. I don't understand your attitude.

WAITRESS. We don't have liqueurs. We got O.J.

CUSTOMER. This is New York City, lady. Can't I get breakfast?

WAITRESS. Pancakes? Tomato juice? Cold cereal? We got that.

CUSTOMER. Where am I, in primitive colonial New England? Don't you have *anything* here?

WAITRESS. (Shrugging) Yankee bean soup?

CUSTOMER. OK, OK, bring me a menu. (Joking) I'll eat that. I suppose next you'll be telling me I can't get a little fresh squeezed tangerine juice here.

WAITRESS. The restaurant two doors north'll give you fresh squeezed O.J. if you want.

CUSTOMER. I'm sure they could give me bubble gum freshly garnered from under their tables, too, but I don't want *that*.

WAITRESS. You are being entirely unreasonable. A small, unassuming, lower East Side diner and you come in here and expect Julia Child to cater to your every whim. You get eggs here. You get toast. You get home fries. You can have a donut if you want. Glazed or plain. That's what you get. If you don't like it, then go hire a cook and a butler and live in a mansion on a hill somewhere. OK?

CUSTOMER. (Momentarily stunned) You're right. I expect too much out of life. I always have. I'm a bit neurotic that way. I just want

things right, that's all. But I have no right to force my outlandish expectations on others. Thanks for the outburst. A fella has to be put in his place sometimes. Bring me the breakfast special. Whatever it is. Thanks.

WAITRESS. (Looks at watch) You can't have the special because it is 11:02. You can only get it before 11. You should have ordered it when you sat down.