

Joan Collins at Mortimers – true story

They especially loved my stories of the famous patrons that I served while working at Mortimers, a classic style bistro for socialites, like Brooke Astor, Gloria Vanderbilt, Bill Blass, and Barbra Walters to name a few of my regulars.

They especially loved one of my favorite stories from last year at Mortimers, the infamous Joan Collins story. One Sunday brunch was always especially heated as the "want-to-be's" hustled hard to rub up against the "We-have-what-you-can-only-dream-to-be's." Miss Collins entered the front foyer; I took her white fur coat and hung it up for her, then she floated off and came to rest at a round top of 4 men.

While aligned socially correct against the wall, their table was still shy of the Uber elite tables. I was swamped working on the floor that Sunday, arms flying about, pen at the ready. When passing by her table, one of the bunch would call out, "Waiter, please could you get me a" blah blah. I'd pause for a moment and ask if anyone else needed anything, only to get crickets.

I'd bring the bloody bull or white wine, or whatever to the table in a hustle to move on. Another gent would look up, annoyed that I couldn't read his mind, and utter an order through clenched teeth, then quickly whip his head back into the 'don't miss a thing Joan says huddle.'

Again, I'd pause appropriately to ask if anyone else needed something, only crickets. And this was about the end of my last nerve in reserve when I returned with the order. Joan looked up at me in mock desperation and said slowly, definitively, "Could you bring me a PIECE of ice."

Something snapped in me, and I decided she would get what she requested. I fetched a glass, got one cube of rarefied ice, and popped up at the table across from Joan. Then I reached my arm straight out, drink in hand, and turned the glass slowly upside down till the Piece of Ice spilled out several feet above her glass of white wine.

The ice fell in slow motion as the table looked on, incredulously horrified, till the cube landed in her glass and bobbed up and down violently. I was promptly rewarded with several audible gasps as one gentleman grabbed her arm and said breathily, 'Are you all right, darling?'

They all looked at Joan, then at me, and then each other, bewildered as to 'what just happened.' Then, they returned to brunch, and all behaved attentively from that Moment on. All was well again in blah blah land.