

# MARKO'S

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LAST (!!!!!)

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DAY (so long, marko...) (see you, marko.....)

By Steve Patterson

**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes... Marko's Last Day is an edgy short play that seems like a comedy until you realize it's veering into the horrific. Some of you will get a precursory feeling about this one because of your own PTSD from working in restaurants, and, no, that's not meant to be a trigger warning, although it's remarkable how many triggers this twisted little gem has in store for us in just a few pages of text. So you've never worked in the food service industry? Fuck off. Kidding. Just read the damn play and look at the experiences that these waiters describe as the scathingly accurate societal paradigms that they are. Here's a taste (as recounted by DAVE):*

"...Fortune cookies. Goddamn fortune cookies. All his friends are reading fortunes, giving cookies to him. He's eating one after another. Six fortune cookies, and brack! Half-inch river of puke floods the table. And it's like a chain reaction, his buddies, other diners. Fucking sea of Szechuan puke."

*And that's not even the extent of it. Then there's MELANIE's tribulations with a handsy customer who goes way over the line - and under her skirt in an icky and disturbing assault, and KEN's story, the topper, where we find out what really happened on Marko's Last Night. Yep, it's a hard job, but somebody's gotta do it. Surely, you've eaten in a restaurant and noticed that the servers who bring you your food are actual human beings, right? Right? TIP THEM WELL. (Spacing is playwright's own.)*

## **MARKO'S LAST DAY**

### TIME

Now

### PLACE

A Restaurant

### CHARACTERS

DAVE – A Young Waiter

MELANIE – A Slightly Older Waitress

KEN – An Older Head Waiter

Lights up on three tired waiters, two men and a woman, relaxing after a long day. Having a drink on the house.

DAVE

Businessmen or teenagers?

KEN/MELANIE

Businessmen.

DAVE

I don't know. My single worst waiting experience was with a teenager.

MELANIE

Go ahead.

DAVE

That? I haven't told that? Shit. Well, working this big old Chinese restaurant. Saturday night. Completely full. These six guys come in, maybe 18 with the wind behind them. All hooting drunk. We got one table left, and it's right in the center. They're jerks to begin with, typical, but this one kid, not looking too good. Green. Nodding out. His buddies naturally shoving food at him. Our head's tsk-tsking. "He's gonna' blow." I'm like, c'mon kid. You can make it. They're getting like great service 'cause I'm trying to hustle them out. I think I'm home free, bringing them change. Fortune cookies. Goddamn fortune cookies. All his friends are reading fortunes, giving cookies to him.

He's eating one after another. Six fortune cookies, and brack! Half-inch river of puke floods the table. And it's like a chain reaction, his buddies, other diners. Fucking sea of Szechuan puke.

MELANIE  
Glad I asked.

DAVE  
Oh, oh! But then I go to help the guy out, hustle him to the men's room. And guess what? He's shit himself. Christ. Teenagers.

Pause.

MELANIE  
They tip?

DAVE  
Hell no. Tell me businessmen are that bad.

MELANIE  
Oh, I don't know. Probably not to you. You're a guy. You get these jerks in from out of town, they're like...unleashed, you know? Wearing their mysterious cloak of anonymity. Feel like they can do anything. Well. I'm working this steakhouse. Not Hooters, but, you know, they want you in skirts.

KEN  
Tight white shirt, short black skirt.

MELANIE  
Exactly. It does up the tip factor. Anyhow, I'm getting a bad feeling off these guys. Like...mischief. But they're spending, so. The owner, he was of these customer service gurus. The customer is king! He's out, chatting 'em up. Oh yeah, best in town. Come back, try our.... And I'm kind of, oh, on probation, you know. 'Cause I don't know if you know, but I get tired, the attitude kind of comes out.

KEN  
No!

DAVE  
No!

MELANIE  
Fuck you. So I been warned. He's talking to them. All laughs and stuff. I'm bringing probably their fourth, fifth round, leaning, you know, putting out the drinks. And this bastard...bastard! He puts his hand up.... Puts it all the way up. And leaves it there! I'm like, tray full of dirty dishes. I can't move. From where I'm standing, no one can see from behind, from in front. All laughs, ha ha, everyone's jolly, and I'm just...blushing, can't help it. Face burning up. He probably thinks I'm digging it. In this little strangled

voice, I say, can I, uh, get you gentlemen anything else? They're all ordering something different, I'm trying to remember despite this...thing. And then this guy—this guy!—he starts, “Uh, yeah, I'd like.... No wait. I'm thinking of.... What do you guys call it? That drink we had in blah-blah-blah? How do you make it again? I think it was pineapple.” Then...his fingers started wiggling. Oh. It was so gross! Swear to God, I was eyeing his steak knife. Just slip it off the table and, chunk, between the ribs. “Is there something wrong, sir? You don't look well.”

DAVE

So what'd you do?

MELANIE

Do? Well, what I did was, I said, hey, fellas, I'd really like to bring you another round, but right now your friend has his hand up my twat.

KEN

You didn't either.

MELANIE

No. Actually, I just kind of, uh, squeezed away, excuse, excuse, another table's calling, and got the hell outta there. Then charged 'em double for their drinks.

KEN

They tip?

MELANIE

No. Fuckers.

KEN

Figures.

DAVE

So how about you?

KEN

Me?

DAVE

Your worst night. I mean, you been doing this forever. You must have.

KEN

Well.... You don't want to hear this.

MELANIE

Come on.

KEN

No, really.

DAVE

How bad can it be?

Pause.

KEN

Wasn't teenagers or businessmen. Was a family. Regular family. Nice place. Not a four-star, but aspirations. Good chef. Good staff. Except Marko. Oh, Marko was a nice guy. Sweet really. But just dumb as a brick. And big. I think one of those guys, played hard sports but couldn't snag the scholarship. Just trained him. Etiquette, leading the customer, nicey-nice tricks. And, of course, first aid. Emergencies.

MELANIE

Oh no.

KEN

So we're full up to the doors. Marko's got the nuclear family. And the dad, he snags a chicken bone. Classic. Can't talk. Hands to his throat, eyes bugging. Marko leaps into action. Heimlich. Boom. Nothing. Does it again. Boom. Nothing. Maybe he panicked, maybe he thought he was doing the right thing. But he does the guy again. Does him hard. I swear, you could hear the crunch across the room. Like...biting celery. With your molars. That does it. Out comes the chicken bone. And about a rock's glass worth's of blood behind it.

MELANIE

Eww.

DAVE

Rad.

KEN

Spattered across his family. Like a paint can exploded in the centerpiece. Marko's freaked. He lets go of the guy. Who just, flap, folds. Head smacks the table. Thud, crack. He's on the floor, all crazy directions, blood out his mouth, nose. And his wife...just...goes...off. Never heard a scream like that. Throws up her hands. (Pause.) You sure?

MELANIE/DAVE

Yes, yes!

KEN

Her hands go up. In one hand, she's got a fork. And this fork—I saw this—this fork makes this perfect parabola. Like a guided missile. Up, up, all the way across the restaurant, and, thwack, into this kid's eye.

Pause.

MELANIE

Little boy or girl?

KEN

Come on. Little girl, of course. Only about this big. Cute. Except right now, she's screaming her lungs up. Our man, Marko, he leaps into action. We're all going, no, no! But he's burnin' instinct, man. That fork's hurting that kid, so, yank, that fork's gotta go.

MELANIE

No.

DAVE

No.

KEN

Whoop. Splash. Right in a martini glass. Hi-ball. And that was the end of Marko's food service career. For months, we called it: "The Attack of the Poached Capon with Hollandaise, Shittake, and Diced Artichoke Hearts."

MELANIE

Why did you tell us that?

KEN

You asked.

MELANIE

You could have warned us!

KEN

I did.

Pause.

DAVE

They tip?

Beat. Blackout. End.

**THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:** *For a number of years, I belonged to PlayGroup, Portland Center Stage's in-house playwriting unit, which was administered by the theatre's literary manager, Mead Hunter. About 10 professional playwrights made up the group, and we would periodically write anthology shows that consisted of short plays arranged around a theme. For this show, we combined horror and food, with each play corresponding to part of a multicourse meal. I don't recall which dish "Marko" paired up with, but it wasn't dessert.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** Steve Patterson's plays have been staged in Portland, Los Angeles, Chicago, Tampa, and other U.S. cities as well as in Canada and New Zealand. His full-length works include two war plays: *Waiting on Sean Flynn* and *Liberation* (Original

Works Publishing). In 2008, his play *Lost Wavelengths* won the Oregon Book Award, and his plays *Immaterial Matters*, *Altered States of America*, and *Bombardment* have been Oregon Book Award finalists. Mr. Patterson is a founding member of two theatre companies: Pavement Productions and Playwrights West, and he has served as the Dramatists Guild of America's Regional Co-Representative for Oregon.