

Kitchen Catastrophes!

By Katie B. Oberlander

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Kitchen Catastrophes!

- 2 -

DEDICATION

To Eric, Thomas, and James, my favorite food critics.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Mayhem is on the menu when celebrity Chef Guy Stagsly and his outrageous reality show *Kitchen Catastrophes!* visit French restaurant Chez Jacques. While Guy and his crew bring in cockroaches and rats, conduct building renovations, and stage a rigged cooking competition, the employees strive to carry on. There's Julie, the level-headed restaurant manager; Jacques, the temperamental chef; and Mickey, the loyal and ambitious dishwasher. Not to be forgotten, there's also Olive, a shy trainee who needs a lot of supervision. They're not only struggling to impress roving food critics, but the stoic health inspector who has dropped in unexpectedly as well! Enjoy a palatable plateful of laughter and surprises with this delightfully delicious production! This one-act comedy runs about an hour.

PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

Harborlight-Stoneridge Montessori School in Beverly, MA, November 21 - 22, 2014 with the following cast and crew: Andrew Chapman, Ava Dickman, Ingrid O'Dell, Matthew Pitkin, Alex Brissette, Caitlin Robinson, Natalie Kalman, Otto Luf, Cecilia McAlpine, Esteban Galindo-Carvajal, Sasha Milendorf, Matthew Cusolito, Zachery Herron, Athena Spaulding, Omar Chaghouri, Emily Wheelwright, Linus Luf, Sadie Richardson, Toby Frankenstein, Niko Kessler, Thomas Oberlander, and James Oberlander. Directed by Katie B. Oberlander

Kitchen Catastrophes!

- 3 -

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 5 w, 5 flexible, plus extras)

JULIE HALL (f): Efficient manager of Chez Jacques, a fine dining establishment.

CHEF JACQUES (m): Temperamental French chef.

MICKEY (flex): Dishwasher with dreams of becoming a chef.

ALICE/ALEXANDER (flex): Head server.

OLIVE (f): A nervous waitress with a big appetite.

MRS. PATRICIA FULLSOME (f): A snobby customer.

MR. JOSEPH FULLSOME (m): Dignified husband to Patricia.

INSPECTOR GREY (flex): Restaurant health inspector.

CYNTHIA/CYRIL (flex): Producer of *Kitchen Catastrophes!*

GUY STAGSLY (m): English Celebrity Chef of *Kitchen Catastrophes!*

PETE (m): Contractor for *Kitchen Catastrophes!*

NATALIA (f): Designer for *Kitchen Catastrophes!*

LARRY/LAVERNE (flex): Restaurant deliveryman.

SUSIE (f): Production Assistant for *Kitchen Catastrophes!*

SAM (m): Production Assistant for *Kitchen Catastrophes!*

EXTRAS: Any number of *Kitchen Catastrophes!* crew members.

Kitchen Catastrophes!

- 4 -

SETTING

The outer kitchen of Chez Jacques restaurant. Upstage left is a screen door marked EXIT that leads outside. Upstage right there is a tall, stainless steel counter which extends offstage to the inner kitchen. The counter has an opening where the chef passes the food for the servers to bring out. Shelves are above with white plates and bowls stacked high. There is a bell on the counter. Downstage right are two swinging doors to the dining room marked "In" and "Out." Up center is a stainless steel prep table for serving staff to pick up trays, fill glasses with water, fold napkins, etc. Behind the table is a painting or framed photograph of Jacques. There is a dishwashing cart downstage left, just outside the door to the dishwashing room. On the cart is a bin of water, a stack of dirty dishes and a dishcloth beside them.

KITCHEN CATASTROPHES!

(AT RISE: MICKEY is behind the counter putting tons of whipped cream onto a slice of cake. He puts the dessert up on the counter and rings the bell repeatedly.)

MICKEY: *(In a snooty voice.)* Service! Service, please! *(Waits a moment; no one is coming. Calls louder, ringing the bell.)* Service! Service, I say! *(Comes out from behind the counter.)* Where are the waiters? This is utterly unacceptable! How am I to craft quality cuisine with no support staff to deliver my culinary creations? This delectable dessert is just deteriorating before my very eyes! It is a waste, an utter waste of my considerable talents. A masterpiece confection, heaven on a plate, ruined by the ineptitude of some lowly waiter! And I... I am powerless, left here in utter desperation, only able to rely now on my feeble voice, hoarse from calling out into the vast emptiness of the kitchen! *(HIS voice gets quieter and quieter.)* Service... service... service... *(Suddenly yells.)* I've had enough! I cannot work under these dreadful conditions any longer! Shut down the restaurant! Shut it down!

(ALICE enters from the door to the dining room marked OUT.)

ALICE: Shut what down? We're not even open! What are you doing, Mickey? You know Chef Jacques won't tolerate you messing around in his kitchen.

MICKEY: I'm not messing around, Alice. I'm training for my future career as a master chef.

ALICE: Maybe you should concentrate on your current career as a master dishwasher.

MICKEY: *(Begins to eat the dessert he prepared.)* Nah, this is much more fun. Instead of laboring over a soapy sink, I get to make awesome food. Besides, I'm only working as a dishwasher until Chef Jacques and Ms. Hall see my true potential in the kitchen and promote me.

Kitchen Catastrophes!

- 6 -

ALICE: To what? Busboy?

MICKEY: *(With genuine excitement.)* You think they'd make me a busboy?

ALICE: You've got something on your face.

MICKEY: Where?

ALICE: Right here.

(SHE grabs the plate and smears it in HIS face.)

MICKEY: Hey!

(JULIE HALL enters from the outside door carrying a box.)

JULIE: What's going on? Alice, are the napkins folded? Mickey, don't you have work to do?

ALICE: Sorry, Julie.

MICKEY: Yes, ma'am. *(HE goes over to the dishwashing station and starts drying a plate.)* By the way, Ms. Hall, do you have my paycheck? My car's in the shop. I gotta bail her out.

JULIE: *(Reaching into the box and handing him several bills.)* Here you go, Mickey. I'm paying you in cash, but I had to deduct \$10 for all those broken dishes last week.

MICKEY: What broken dishes? *(HE puts the money in the front pocket of his apron, but then drops the plate he was drying and it breaks in half.)* Whoops! My bad!

(SHE takes out a dollar from MICKEY'S pocket. He continues drying dishes.)

JULIE: Alice, I got the new menu from the printer. Want to take a look?

(SHE pulls out a menu and she and ALICE look at the cover. It says "Chez Jacques" in big curly letters.)

ALICE: Hopefully Jacques won't feel that his name is too small this time.

Kitchen Catastrophes!

- 7 -

JULIE: I think the font matches his ego now. *(THEY laugh.)*
Well, he is the best chef in the city. I was lucky he agreed to open this restaurant with me. Now, if only we could turn a profit.

(SHE puts the menu back in the box. ALICE crosses to the prep table and begins to fold napkins.)

ALICE: It'll come, Julie. We've only been open a few months. We just need to get the word out. Once people experience Jacques' wonderful food, your awesome management, and my amazing waitressing skills, this place will be packed every night.

MICKEY: Hey, what about my dishwashing technique? I'm a legend in the industry, you know.

JULIE: Oh, I know. But until business picks up, we need to pay the bills. I've written letters to local investors, but no one wants to put money into a restaurant they've never heard of. Meanwhile, a certain chef has very expensive tastes...

(JACQUES enters from the outside door, wearing a beret, an expensive looking scarf and coat. He is holding a basket of mushrooms and a bottle of Evian water.)

JACQUES: Mushrooms. Wash zem in Evian.

(HE hands the basket to ALICE, who hurries behind the counter offstage right.)

JULIE: Jacques, I'm so glad you're here. I wanted to talk with you about our finances.

JACQUES: Non. *(Pulls a pocket watch from coat pocket.)* It is nearly...three hours till the service of dinner. I must speak only to my mushrooms.

JULIE: But, Jacques—

JACQUES: My mushrooms. *(Exits behind the counter stage right.)*

JULIE: *(Exasperated.)* Frenchmen!

End of Freeview

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