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Norman Maine Publishing

TME IS THE SEASON
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TIME IS THE SEASON

HOLIDAY COMEDY. A successful businessman goes to the same restaurant and orders the same thing every day—a steak sandwich. But on this day, the man’s normal routine is upset by an appalling reality—absolutely everything in the restaurant has changed. After enduring atrocious service and a horrible meal, the man gets up to leave but finds that the door to the restaurant has disappeared. Trapped in a restaurant from hell, this modern-day Scrooge is confronted by an unruly host of “angels” who give him a holiday gift he’ll never forget!

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

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CHARACTERS

(1 M, 5 flexible)

MAN: Businessman.

GREETER: Flexible.

HOSTESS/HOST: Flexible.

WAITRESS/WAITER: Flexible.

COOK: Flexible.

MANAGER: Flexible.

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SETTING

Larry's Restaurant, Monday, noon. There is a single restaurant table CS with a light hanging over it. There is a podium near the "door" to the restaurant. The restaurant is decorated with appropriate holiday decorations.

PROPS

Podium	Pen
Watch, for Man	Soup bowl
Small dining table	Plate
Chair	Watch, for Hostess
Smoking sign	Pin
Non-smoking sign	Overhead light
Menu	Cash
Order pad	Wallet
Cup of coffee	Cell phone
Small envelope	Watch, for Manager
White powder (sugar)	

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"YOU'VE BEEN KILLING TIME,
AND IT'S BEEN KILLING YOU."

—COOK

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(AT RISE: Larry's Restaurant, Monday, noon. Man enters the restaurant and approaches a podium. He looks around, shocked.)

MAN: What the—? What is going on? This is completely bizarre. Am I in the right place? *(Greeter enters and walks by.)* Excuse me. Is this Larry's Restaurant? *(Looks around again. To himself.)* What did they do to this place? Larry never said anything about renovations. *(Greeter comes by again and waits at the podium. To Greeter.)* Ahem. *(Pause.)* Ahhhem. *(Pause.)* Ah, excuse me, ma'am?

(Greeter looks at him.)

GREETER: Yes, I'll be with you shortly.

(Greeter stands still and looks straight ahead. Man stares in disbelief and checks his watch.)

MAN: Excuse me again, but I'm sort of in a hurry, so if—

GREETER: *(Politely.)* Sir, you'll have to be patient. I will be with you momentarily. *(Pauses for 10 seconds, then approaches Man.)* Good afternoon, sir. Table for one?

MAN: Yes, one, thank you. What happened to this place?

GREETER: No booths are available, so would you mind a table?

MAN: *(Trying to rush her.)* Yeah, yeah, sure. Table is fine.

Where's Cindy? She's always on lunch hour.

GREETER: Please follow me. *(They go to the one and only table at CS.)* Smoking or non-smoking?

MAN: Non-smoking.

(Greeter takes the smoking sign off the table and tosses it toward the wall and replaces it with a non-smoking sign.)

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GREETER: There. This table is now non-smoking.

(Man seats himself.)

MAN: Thank you. I'll just have —

GREETER: The hostess will be here to look after you shortly.

(Greeter leaves abruptly. Man sits impatiently, looking around, observing the bare area and looking for an employee. Hostess appears.)

MAN: Excuse me, ma'am, are you the hostess?

HOSTESS: *(Passing right by him.)* I'll be with you shortly, sir.

MAN: Well, please don't be long, I've — *(To himself.)* Larry must be away. They're never this slow.

(Hostess returns to his table carrying a menu.)

HOSTESS: Here's a menu. *(Hands it to him.)*

MAN: Thanks. Look, is Larry around? I'd like to —

HOSTESS: Larry? Who's Larry?

MAN: The owner of this place. Don't you even know who you work for?

HOSTESS: You must be mistaken. There's no Larry here.

MAN: Don't tell me he went out of business over the weekend? There's no possible way. So, who owns this place now? What's it called?

HOSTESS: The special today is hot roast beef.

MAN: Oh, well, actually, I'll just have the regular.

HOSTESS: Regular what?

MAN: What I always...oh, of course, this is a different place. Steak sandwich with double onions, mustard, and horseradish. Three dill pickles and a garlic roll.

HOSTESS: That's not on the menu.

MAN: Let me see this thing. *(Grabs the menu and looks through it.)* What the—? There's only two items on this whole thing. What kind of—?

HOSTESS: And besides, I'm just the hostess. The waitress will be along shortly to take your order. *(Hostess exits.)*

MAN: What? Where are you going? Come back here so I can— *(To himself.)* This place is— I should just get up and leave...but I don't have time to go somewhere else now. I'll just have to persevere and make this short. I can't believe Larry has gone out of business...and without any notice.

(Waitress approaches the table with an order pad in hand.)

WAITRESS: Are you ready to order now, sir, or would you like me to come back?

MAN: Yes, I'm ready to order. I was ready the minute I came in the door.

WAITRESS: Yeah, well, whatever. So, are you having the special of the day?

MAN: No, actually, I think I'll have dinner number two.

WAITRESS: Dinner number two isn't available today.

MAN: Good grief, then. Okay...I suppose I'm going to have to have dinner number one.

WAITRESS: I'm sorry, sir, dinner number one is not available.

MAN: But that's the only dinners I see here.

WAITRESS: There's also the special of the day.

MAN: Well, is there any way I can substitute items on the special?

WAITRESS: Uhm, no. So can I put you down for the special?

MAN: Do I have a choice?

(Waitress looks at him.)

WAITRESS: *(Writes down on her pad.)* One special of the day. Okay. Will that be potato or fries?

MAN: Fries.

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WAITRESS: Fries aren't available on Mondays.
MAN: (*Agitated.*) Then why did you ask? Never mind.
Potato would be fine. Thank you. Will it take long to—?
WAITRESS: How would you like your potato?
MAN: Pardon?
WAITRESS: Your potato, sir. How would you like it?
MAN: (*Confused.*) Cooked, preferably.
WAITRESS: No, sir. Baked, mashed, sliced, fried—
MAN: Baked will be fine.
WAITRESS: All righty then. P-E-I or Idaho?
MAN: What do you mean?
WAITRESS: P-E-I potato or Idaho potato?
MAN: You have both?
WAITRESS: Would I ask you if we didn't?
MAN: I'm not sure how to respond to that. Idaho. Idaho is
fine.
WAITRESS: What kind of dressing on the salad?
MAN: Is this necessary?
WAITRESS: Would I be asking you if it wasn't?
MAN: I really just want a simple meal for lunch so I can get
back to work...today! Don't you sense that I'm in a hurry? I
don't have time for this.

(*Pause.*)

WAITRESS: Dressing, sir. What kind?
MAN: Italian.
WAITRESS: Sorry, haven't got that kind.
MAN: For crying out—! Okay. What kinds do you have?
WAITRESS: French, ranch, house, Caesar, blue cheese,
Thousand Island—
MAN: French. French is fine.
WAITRESS: All righty then. Putting you down for the good
ol' French dressing. European French or Canadian French?
MAN: Are you for real? What difference does it make?

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WAITRESS: I think the French would be somewhat offended by that kind of comment, sir. There is quite a difference.

MAN: Canadian French then. Okay? Or you want to ask me which dialect? Or maybe, you want to ask me if I mean Acadian-style potatoes instead? Is that the next question?

WAITRESS: Excuse me. I'm sensing a little bit of hostility in your voice.

MAN: Good for you! Finally.

WAITRESS: There's no need to complicate this order process. Okay. I think that about covers everything.

MAN: Wonderful!

WAITRESS: Now let me just recap your order to make sure it's correct.

MAN: Lady!

WAITRESS: Sir, please. You're causing an unnecessary scene.

MAN: With whom? There's nobody in this place.

WAITRESS: You're here. I'm here. *(Pause.)* Good grief. Look, why don't I just go get your order?

(Waitress exits. Man puts his elbows on the table and his head in his hands.)

MAN: *(Fading.)* Great...idea.

(Hostess enters and brings Man a cup of coffee.)

HOSTESS: Here, sir.

MAN: Thank you.

(Man begins to pick up the cup of coffee. Hostess stops him.)

HOSTESS: Oh, wait. Here. *(Hostess looks around and then pulls out a little envelope of white powder and sprinkles it into the coffee.)*

MAN: Hey! Stop! What are you putting in that? I don't want—

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(Hostess stirs the coffee with a pen.)

HOSTESS: It's okay, sir. It adds to the flavor.

MAN: I don't want to add anything. I'm not drinking that. I want a new fresh cup with no junk in it, or your filthy pen.

HOSTESS: Oh. I'm sorry. That was really rude of me. *(Begins to pick up the coffee cup.)* That was the last of that pot. We'll have to put more on. It will be about 20 minutes.

MAN: Twenty minutes?! *(Grabs the coffee cup.)* Forget it then. I'll just take this. *(Begins to drink but stops.)* Is there something else you needed?

HOSTESS: Just making sure the coffee is all right.

(Man takes a sip.)

MAN: It's fine, thank you.

(Hostess smiles, waits a moment, and then exits. A minute later, Greeter, Hostess, and Waitress arrive with his meal.)

GREETER: Here you go, sir.

MAN: Finally speeding up the service. Soup? I didn't order any soup.

HOSTESS: Oh, we felt we needed to help make your experience here even better. Soup is on the house.

MAN: What is it?

GREETER: It's bean soup.

WAITRESS: He didn't ask what it's been...he wants to know what it is now.

GREETER: It's bean soup.

WAITRESS: Yes, but he didn't ask what it's been...he wants to know what it is now.

GREETER: It's bean soup.

WAITRESS: We know that, but he didn't ask—

MAN: Will you two knock it off! Forget it, all right?

HOSTESS: Oh, and by the way, be careful you don't get the vinegar in your ear.

GREETER: Otherwise you'll suffer from pickled *hearing*.

(Greeter and Waitress laugh.)

MAN: Do you mind if I eat alone?

GREETER: Not at all. In fact, we're not allowed to eat with the customers.

WAITRESS: So, go right ahead without us, but thanks for asking.

MAN: You call this a salad? There's hardly anything on the plate.

WAITRESS: Well, of course. That's because it's half-eaten. You ordered the chef's salad, and since he couldn't finish it—

MAN: You know what? This is ridiculous. The quality of this meal is far from acceptable. It's garbage. Get the manager.

GREETER: It's no use, sir. He won't eat it, either.

MAN: You people think this is funny? You know what? I've had enough. This place is a pathetic joke.

GREETER: *(Straight-faced.)* Excuse me, sir. We take our business very seriously and don't care for that tone of cynicism. If you have a complaint, just say so.

MAN: Look, I've tolerated this kind of treatment long enough. I'm leaving. *(Stands up. With one hand, Waitress inconspicuously spins him a half turn in one direction and he starts to stumble from feeling slightly dizzy.)* Whoaaa.

GREETER: *(Grabs his arm.)* Careful, sir.

MAN: Keep your hands off me. *(Man pulls his arm back.)* What did you just do to me?

GREETER: I didn't do anything. You're just feeling a little dizzy is all.

MAN: Baloney. I'm perfectly —

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(Greeter gives him a little push and he gets tipsy. He tries holding himself up with the support of the chair. Greeter and Waitress keep Man facing in the opposite direction of the door.)

HOSTESS: Wow. Maybe you didn't take too well to that stuff I put in your coffee.

MAN: What? What was that stuff? *(Man starts breathing a bit heavier and deeper.)*

HOSTESS: Ahh, nothing. Don't you let that *white* stuff get you all worried or uptight now.

GREETER: Yes, we don't need you getting all stirred up in a panic.

MAN: *(Man's breathing gets shorter and panicked.)* I need...air. Where's...where's the door?

WAITRESS: Door?

MAN: Yes. Where's the door that I came in?

GREETER: There is no door, sir.

MAN: Give me a break. I came in one, and I'm going out one.

HOSTESS: Sorry. Take a look. *(Points in the opposite direction of the door.)* There is no door.

MAN: Please open the window.

GREETER: No windows. Sorry.

MAN: What's going on here? That's it. I want to see the manager...now!

(Manager enters.)

MANAGER: Can I help you, sir?

MAN: I refuse to stay here any longer. Your staff has treated me poorly, the food is terrible, they're wasting valuable time with their nonsense, and now they won't tell me how to get out of here. They've put some kind of strange substance in my coffee. This place used to be a fine restaurant...efficient...friendly— Wow, I don't feel too well. Why is it so hot in here?

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(Greeter, Hostess, Manager, and Waitress form a half-circle around the Man.)

HOSTESS: I think you're just a little worked up, sir.

MAN: Baloney!

MANAGER: Just relax a moment.

MAN: I am relaxed!

WAITRESS: Have a seat. *(Shoves Man down onto the chair.)*

MAN: Hey! Careful. *(Hostess pokes his other arm. To Hostess.)*

Ouch! You're hurting my arm.

GREETER: We're not touching your arm.

MAN: What...what is going on here? You people have...have—. I'm sweating like crazy here.

HOSTESS: You're perspiring.

WAITRESS: *(To Man.)* Don't say "sweat." We'll think you're talking about the soup.

MAN: *(Breathing very heavily.)* What's happening to me?

MANAGER: Slow down.

GREETER: Breathe deeply.

MAN: I *am* breathing deeply. That's the problem. Am I having a heart attack?

MANAGER: No.

MAN: I'm having a heart attack.

GREETER: No you aren't...it's just an anxiety attack.

MAN: Don't just stand there. Call 9-1-1.

GREETER: *(To Manager.)* What do ya think? Anxiety?

MANAGER: Yeah, must be.

HOSTESS: Yep. That's what it is.

MAN: I'm having a heart attack, and you're just standing there.

HOSTESS: *(Looks at watch. Continues to countdown while others speak.)* Ten...nine...

WAITRESS: Anxiety, sir. Quite a difference.

GREETER: You'll be all right in a moment.

HOSTESS: ...six...five...

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MAN: Oh, I think this is it. Oh, please...help me. Don't let me die.

HOSTESS: ...three, two, one...

(Hostess sticks a pin into Man's lower back. Man straightens up.)

MAN: Yow! What's going on? *(Wipes his forehead.)* Have I been food poisoned?

(Cook arrives and joins the half circle.)

COOK: Hey, hey...heyyyy! Did I hear someone make a snide remark about my cooking?

MAN: Are you guys trying to kill me, or what?

COOK: That's impossible.

MANAGER: You can't die twice.

MAN: Don't get smart.

MANAGER: *(Looking at others.)* It's time.

MAN: Time for what?

HOSTESS: Time you should know.

MANAGER: *(To Cook.)* You better tell him.

MAN: Tell me what?

COOK: You're the manager, you tell him.

MAN: Knock it off and tell me. What is going on here?

MANAGER: Do you remember anything bizarre occurring when you came here?

MAN: Do I remember anything bizarre? What hasn't been bizarre? From the minute I walked into this place, it's been a complete nightmare.

MANAGER: No. I mean, do you remember anything happening to you on the way in here?

MAN: What are you talking about?

MANAGER: What if I were to tell you that you died when you entered this restaurant?

MAN: I could have told you that. I feel like absolute crap...no thanks to your –

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MANAGER: Shut up and listen.

COOK: No, really...you're dead.

MAN: Why do you insist on jerking me around here?

COOK: You're dead. You've ceased to exist. You have expired from life.

MAN: Yeah, right. I wish.

WAITRESS: He's taking it harder than I thought.

GREETER: It's true.

HOSTESS: End of the road, pal.

WAITRESS: No exit.

COOK: *Dead end.*

MAN: (*Looking at them in fear.*) What...do you mean?

(*Greeter grabs the overhead light and points it into Man's face.*)

GREETER: Let's just say, you've hit the light at the end of the tunnel.

MAN: (*More frightened.*) Jeesh. I always expected something bigger than a 60-watt bulb.

WAITRESS: We'd have better...but we're trying to conserve energy.

MAN: (*Getting control of himself.*) This is all a crock... (*Becomes unsure.*) ...isn't it?

MANAGER: What do we have to do to prove it to you?

MAN: But...I don't feel dead.

WAITRESS: Have you ever been dead?

MAN: No.

HOSTESS: Then how would you know what it feels like?

MAN: So what you're trying to tell me is that I'm...in heaven? (*Everyone starts to laugh.*) What?

WAITRESS: Boy, talk about high hopes.

MANAGER: Is this what you think heaven is like?

HOSTESS: What do we look like, angels?

[END OF FREEVIEW]