

The Guests

Comedy · Two-hander · 4 min · Male role · Adult · Intermediate

(A table set for twelve. Only one person has arrived.)

HÔTE

You're the first.

CONVIVE

I'm the only one.

HÔTE

No, no. The others are coming. I set twelve plates.

CONVIVE

How long have you been setting twelve plates?

HÔTE

Since 2011.

CONVIVE

And how many have come, since 2011?

HÔTE

You.

(A beat. The host refills wine in eleven empty glasses.)

CONVIVE

Why are you filling the empty glasses?

HÔTE

So they feel expected. An empty glass that's ignored is sad. An empty glass you keep refilling is hope.

CONVIVE

You talk to the glasses.

HÔTE

They answer less than people, but they cancel less, too.

CONVIVE

Have you never thought of setting a single plate?

HÔTE

I have. Once. I got so scared I put the other eleven back within the minute.

(He tastes the dish, winces, smiles anyway.)

HÔTE

The roast is perfect. That's the curse of great roasts: they wait for no one.

CONVIVE

I can stay, you know. All evening.

HÔTE

...You'd do that?

CONVIVE

On one condition. We clear ten settings. We keep yours and mine. And we refill our own glasses.

(A long beat.)

HÔTE

All right. But we keep a third. For the idea that someone, one day, will ring during dessert.

(They clink glasses. The third glass waits, full.)

What you can do with it

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