

The Supper

Estefanía Ferrero*

DeShawn had already ordered his meal. He knew he wasn't at a Michelin-star restaurant but still could not help having some expectations. The place was not so terrible, in fact. Lights were neither too bright nor too dim. It was small, yes, but cozy. Despite the size, everybody was entitled to their own space and tables were not too near. It provided intimacy, which he fancied. He was not keen on the idea of intrusive eyes peering at his special dish.

Clinking sounds reminded him that few minutes divorced him from the dish. He was accustomed to waiting but on this particular occasion he found himself craving too fiercely for the meal to be served at last. Perhaps a little starter would have proved useful to quench his anxiety, but no, he had decided a main course would do. Despite all, he felt privileged. He knew such a supper was quite an indulgence during the depths of a depression, times when there was almost nothing to buy and no money to buy it with.

After he examined the napkin on his table and decided he would not be caught dead wearing a skirt, the dish appeared. He attempted a smile at the server but failed to utter a proper thank you. He had always felt uncomfortable when addressing waiters. But any awkwardness vanished when he scanned his meal. The corner of his lips tugged as his eyes darted into the hypnotizing shrimp swimming in garlic sauce. He studied the succulent meal and counted thirteen golden pieces. What a treat indeed. After a careful inspection, he chose one victim from the bunch and dipped it into the sauce keenly, imagining its luscious taste already. As he brought it near his watering mouth, a pleasant smell caressed his nostrils gently. Finally, the tip of his tongue and the shrimp met. It was a meal to die for. He would not be drinking anything, he decided, in case a foreign flavour spoiled the taste.

He made a conscious effort to fight his insolent mouth from trying to break up and destroy such ambrosial food. He intended it to melt slowly. By no means could he afford a second helping, so this was all he had. He could not risk rushing it. However, it was too ambitious a task trying to defy his gastrointestinal tract. Soon, his tongue pushed the defenseless food to the back of his mouth. The bit was swallowed callously. Just like that. And now his taste buds were desperately demanding another bite.

He grabbed another volunteer and covetously drowned it into the sauce. He put it into his mouth slowly to experience, once again, glorious seconds of bliss. 'Ain't this lip-smacking,' he thought gaily. Overwhelmed with joy, he closed his eyes to concentrate solely on savouring it and was even able to appreciate a delightful crunch towards the end of the bite. He was in heaven.

He allowed some seconds to go by and then he took another innocent piece, repeating the procedure. The more he gorged, the more elated he felt and the more his troubles seemed trifles. He glanced at the plate and

* 2º premio del Concurso Literario USAL en Lengua Inglesa – Categoría cuento corto (2019).

grinned. He still had plenty of shrimp. And thus he kept having one more piece. And then one more. Though he was well aware of the finite existence of the shrimp, he dreaded running out of them. When there were only four left, he pragmatically decided he still had eight, provided they were halved. He sighed in relief. Still eight to go.

He was not governed by hunger but by pure gluttony. He was full of course but that was not the point at all. He was not willing to discipline this appetite. He took one more piece and coated it with so much sauce that on its way to his mouth it dripped staining his uniform, of which he took no notice. Not that he would have cared. He was entranced by the shrimp. He kept eating and eating and eating... until he accepted with glassy eyes there was only one half left.

He had it ceremoniously. Somehow he managed to trick the hands of time by making ten seconds last an eternity. Even his digestive tract was collaborative this time by letting him steal some extra seconds of joy. But the last shrimp was gone and now it was time to pay.

Four hours later he was executed in the electric chair.