

STUCK

A TEN-MINUTE COMEDY DUET

by
Gary Ray Stapp



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SETTING: We are in a restaurant, the ambiance is romantic. At center is a small, intimate table for two. Two “dessert menus” and a cheese plate with a knife and an assortment of crackers rests on the downstage side of the table, opposite there stands glass of water with a straw, and a candle flickering softly beside a bottle of chilled champagne. Lying in the center of the table is a single red rose and a greeting card. Soft dinner music plays in the background.

AT RISE: Jack and Susan are seated at the table, each holding a champagne glass. They clink their glasses together in a “toast.”

JACK: To my lovely wife, Susan. May the new year bring you fortunes without number, and may your new wrinkles be few.

SUSAN: Words of a true romantic.

JACK: Well, I don’t want to over-do it. A rose and a mushy love note scribbled inside a three dollar greeting card, and a nice dinner at your favorite restaurant have had to have scored major points for me. There’s no reason to create a surplus.

SUSAN: Major points? Says who?

JACK: Says me. If there’s one thing I know, it’s my wife.

SUSAN: Okay. I’ll give you the points. But the wrinkles remark I could have done without.

JACK: You take what you can get, my dear.

SUSAN: As if I have an option.

JACK: There’s always door number two.

SUSAN: Jack, you are door number two. Bernie was my first choice, remember?

JACK: Ouch.

SUSAN: Sorry, Jack. You know I’m kidding.

JACK: Not a problem. Some guys have all the luck.

SUSAN: And by luck, I’m sure you are implying “good luck,” and you had better be referencing yourself, not Bernie.

JACK: Of course. Do I look stupid?

SUSAN: Usually. But at least you’re cute. And sweet. Jack, I do appreciate this romantic celebration.

JACK: My pleasure, Susan. And besides, I’m always sweet.

SUSAN: *(laughs)* Always?

JACK: Well, on your birthday, and Christmas, and Valentines, and our anniversary. And I’m exceptionally sweet while you are away for the entire week you spend at your mother’s every summer.

SUSAN: That’s eleven days in every year! You do know how to spoil a girl.

JACK: Like I said, you take what you can get.

SUSAN: Uh-huh, that leaves 354 days of you being annoying.

JACK: Annoying? I’m not annoying...exactly.

SUSAN: Maybe not annoying in general, but you do have those “habits” that drive me up a wall. Speaking of which, I want to thank you for keeping your promise regarding that ONE habit. I appreciate your self-control.

JACK: Well...now that you’ve brought it up, I am about—(*checks his watch*)—thirty seconds away from losing my self-control.

SUSAN: DON’T!

JACK: Susan, I’m telling you, in spite of my best efforts to subtly squish at least a dozen sips of ice water through my teeth, I have, as usual, something stuck between my upper left lateral incisor and its much too distant neighboring cuspid. Luckily the space between my upper right second bicuspid and first molar is clear...no food stuck there!

SUSAN: Your knowledge of dental anatomy is borderline weird.

JACK: Hey, it pays to know your enemy. (*moves his finger toward his mouth*)

SUSAN: Jack—Don’t!

JACK: (*pulls his hand down*) I’m not going to --- yet. (*HIS eyes dart around for anyone watching.*)

SUSAN: Don’t PEROID! Besides, you promised.

JACK: That was before . . .when I thought I could be man enough to not let my third bite of Chicken Oscar get the best of me.

SUSAN: I don’t care. Do not pick your teeth.

JACK: You know how it drives me crazy!

SUSAN: Yes, Jack, I know. And your impulsive behavior to pick your teeth at every meal drives me crazy!

JACK: Susan, I have been suffering--no, make that BRAVELY suffering for—(*checks his watch*)--36 and one half minutes with the flesh of what must have been a giant Rhode Island Red stuck miserably between my teeth, and I have been doing so in silence, just to make you happy. But, a man has his limits.

SUSAN: One meal, Jack. That’s all I ask. For one meal, you can wait until we leave the restaurant to pick your teeth!

JACK: (*With a sarcastic mimic*) One meal, Jack, that’s all I ask.

SUSAN: You’re acting like an adolescent, or a toddler.

JACK: Perhaps. But you are not the one with a piece of chicken agonizingly stuck between your teeth.

SUSAN: A piece of chicken? Jack, you make it sound like an entire body part. Like it’s a drumstick or something.

JACK: Oh, trust me, I’ve got the whole bone-in, chicken leg wedged in there, I’m sure of it. (*Suddenly covering his mouth with one hand, a finger beginning to probe inside his mouth*)

SUSAN: Jack! Do not pick your teeth with your fingernail!

JACK: Susan, no one is going to notice!

SUSAN: I will notice! And you don’t know that other people are not watching you!

JACK: Other people are not watching me, and IF they were, they wouldn’t care if I casually dislodged a chicken from between my teeth.

SUSAN: Jack, there are at least three things wrong with that sentence.

JACK: Really? Three things?

SUSAN: Number one, there's nothing casual about the way you pick your teeth. Number two, it's not a whole chicken, it's a particle of food.

JACK: Particle? Particle? Trust me, little Miss Manners, it feels like a whole chicken. When I start spitting feathers and cough up an egg, don't say I didn't warn you.

SUSAN: You so exaggerate things.

JACK: Me? Exaggerate? What about you? What happened to the third thing wrong with my sentence?

SUSAN: Ye of so little faith. Number three, someone IS watching you...and I don't particularly appreciate it.

JACK: Who?

SUSAN: It doesn't matter, but I wish she'd stop.

JACK: She? (*Immediately looks around behind him*) Where?

SUSAN: It doesn't matter who, Jack, because you are on a date with your wife. (*takes his chin in her hand and turns his face toward her*)

And it's normally customary, not to mention beneficial to a man's health, that he give his wife his undivided attention ... especially in public.

JACK: Well, you have 50% of my attention, snookems. But the other half is focused on the gnawing pressure of a piece of chicken wedged in my teeth!

SUSAN: That's half your problem, Jack—your focus. You get a tiny speck of food caught between your teeth and you are not mature enough to ignore it, and not man enough to use a toothpick like a normal human being.

JACK: Susan, that's hitting below the belt. You know how just the thought of that can make me throw up. I can't help it. I can't stand the feeling of wood in my mouth. Not toothpicks, popsicle sticks, or your meatloaf for that matter.

SUSAN: My meatloaf? Are you saying my meatloaf recipe tastes like wood?

JACK: Not wood, exactly—more like sawdust.

SUSAN: You are treading on thin ice, Mr. Greene.

JACK: Well, Mrs. Greene, I wouldn't be on the ice if you'd let me purge my pearly whites of this insanely annoying affliction that is STUCK in my teeth.

SUSAN: No.

JACK: Susan!

SUSAN: Jack, every time you eat, you get something stuck in your teeth. It's not so bad when we're at home and you can rush off to the bathroom to arm yourself with a toothbrush and dispenser of floss in order to slay your pathetic little dragon inside that immense oral cavity of yours. But, here, in a restaurant, in public---a line has to be drawn. You're simply irrational when it comes to food caught in your teeth.

JACK: I can't help it.

SUSAN: (*Sighs*) I know you can't help the issue of your teeth, but you can exercise a modicum of etiquette when dining out. Don't pick your teeth. See? It's simple, really.

JACK: Simple? I'll show you simple. (*reaches and plucks the soda straw from the glass of water*)

SUSAN: Don't—you—dare.

JACK: You are over-reacting, Susan. I've done this before.

SUSAN: I know, and I don't like it. You're not a red-neck. Only a truckdriver would use a soda straw to pick his teeth.

JACK: There's nothing red-neck about it. On the contrary, I think its quite a coup to appear to be taking a sip on one's straw while in reality one is biting the end to flatten it, while with a subtle tilt of one's head followed by the precise rotation of the straw with one's fingers, one is able to slide the cleverly created apperati between one's teeth and quickly and without perception, remove the object of one's torture. *(puts the straw in his mouth)*

SUSAN: And if ONE would do such a thing in the presence of one's wife, one will only begin to know the meaning of torture.

JACK: *(stares at her for a long moment, then plucks the straw from his mouth)* Fine! *(picks up the cheese knife from the cheese plate)* I'll use this.

SUSAN: Jack, you are not going to pick your teeth with a knife!

JACK: Who said I was going to use it on my teeth? There are other things it could take care of that are, at the moment, equally annoying.

SUSAN: Are you suggesting I'm annoying you?!

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