

"Smell"

what's
so
funny

by
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The invitation was in a stack of papers in my "IN" box. Beautifully embossed and handsomely decorated, it was delightful to look at, lovely to hold. I framed it and set it on my desk, next to the pictures of my family and stock certificates.

The occasion was a lovely black-tie affair, and all the biggest names in contemporary American society would be there. A week of eager anticipation swept all other cares away.

A clean-cut, well-dressed young man greeted me at the door, smiling a very professional smile. "I'd hire him," I thought. "He certainly looks employable."

The nice young man vigorously shook my hand. "Come on in, sir, everyone's here, and they're all waiting to meet you."

Flattered, I thanked him and went inside the beautiful, ornate mansion, and into the besplendored banquet hall. Another clean-cut young man in a dashing cut, dark blue suit glided up to me, smiled professionally and vigorously shook my hand.

"Jim Thomas, Mrs. Butterworth's. We've all been very anxious to meet you, sir."

I looked around. He was the only one standing there. "But where's Mrs. Butterworth, Jim? I've always loved her syrup, and I wanted to thank her for the many enjoyable

breakfasts I've had over the years. I've just got to find out how she makes all that wonderful syrup by herself."

Jim looked perplexed. "I am Mrs. Butterworth's."

My surprised look must have shocked him. "No, no," he stammered, "I'm Mrs. Butterworth's West Coast representative." The company sent me here.

"Why? Couldn't she make it?" I asked and then grew puzzled. "How does she find time to make all that syrup and still run companies?"

"Sir, I don't think you understand," he sputtered, but it was too late. I turned and began looking for Aunt Jemima.

Instead, I was rudely jostled by Rocky Rococo, carrying a tray full of drinks. He handed me the rest of a beer. "Sorry about that," he said. "But this Bud's for you."

"You're not Rocky Rococo at all, you imposter!" I declared. "You sound like Leon Redbone!" I cast him a suspicious look, but he grinned and handed me the beer again.

"This Bud's for you," he began to sing. I took the beer.

Thanks, Leon."

"Just call me Bud, sir. I'll be around if you need anything." I nodded and looked around the room. The employable-looking young man at the door was talking to a distinguished and important-looking older gentleman. They were both glancing in my direction. The distinguished gentleman came toward me, grabbed my hand and shook it vigorously.

"How do you do, sir? It's very good to see you here, so glad you could find time in your busy schedule to make it out this evening. There are a couple of very important clients here I'd like you to meet." He turned, and with a wave of his hand, two executives in business suits strode purposefully over. "Sir, I'd like you to meet Bartles and James."

At first I was excited! At last I would hear Ed speak! But something wasn't right. "You two don't look anything at all like you do on TV. Is it the lighting?"

The first executive shook his head and made a face. "Is just TV, those guys." The second man stepped forward. "Let me explain. My name is Julio Gallo, and this is *mio*



Brian Mary/Diversions

fratello, Ernesto. Capische?"

My confusion was increased by the Bud guy interrupting us. "Pizza, anyone?"

"Leon, er, Bud, where'd you get that?"

Leon/Bud looked at me quizzically. "I'm afraid you have me mistaken for someone else. Mr. Bud is right over there," he pointed. And indeed he was. I looked back and forth at the two of them, but couldn't tell the difference.

Ernest and Julio were trying to get my attention, but they were obviously not the Frank and Ed, the guys who really made the wine coolers, so I looked around the room again.

My gaze came to rest on a large poster across the room. "AT LAST IN AMERICA" it said. I recognized it as the slogan for that famous and important Italian designer. He had come all the way from his bustling office in Italy just to see me.

Underneath the sign was a table covered with color patches, at which sat several young women. Posters all over the wall showed the famous designer and his clothes. He was smiling, and his name was everywhere. Cinzano Gaetano, the world famous European designer.

At last in America.

One of the girls was wearing a long flowing khaki skirt and a black sweater. She looked a lot like the sullen, anti-social art students I used to hang around with in college. Back before I became a "client." She held up her newest creation. It was bright blue and had red snaps and buckles all over it. It looked like a straitjacket. And on all the straps the name Cinzano Gaetano was printed in bright red letters.

Next to her was a similarly dark and broodingly dressed girl. She had a cute girlish bony tail, kind of like the girls I went to grade school with. Except that hers stood straight up.

She smiled and held up something spelling Cinzano Gaetano in huge letters, but I didn't notice anything else because the girl next to her had fluorescent pink hair. It contrasted nicely with the sensible gray skirt suit she was wearing. She also had on a silver pin that said Zeta Alpha Pi and had little lightning bolts on either side, like quotation marks. I didn't get it.

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