

LITMUS TEST

By Rod

Based on 1 John 4 vv 1-6 about 'testing the spirits'.

CAST

Gaston Waiter. French. Very smooth and ingratiating – especially towards Fiona.

Charles Customer in restaurant. Upright. Does not like Gaston, especially once he has started fawning over Fiona.

Fiona Customer. Married to Charles. Flattered by Gaston's attention.

Gaston is in restaurant. Enter Charles and Fiona.

Gaston Good evening, and welcome to L'Esprit Du Monde. Are you looking for a table for two?

Charles Yes, that is right.

Gaston Do you have any preference? Where would you like to sit?

Fiona Over by the window looks nice, Charles. We can enjoy the view.

Gaston Of course, madame, follow me. .. Or is it mademoiselle?

Charles Madame will do fine. *[Gaston leads Fiona over and helps her to be seated]*

Gaston My name is Gaston, and I shall be your waiter this evening. Here is the menu. *[Hands menus first to Fiona then Charles]*

Fiona *[Smiling at Gaston]* Thank you Gaston.

Charles Yes, thanks.

Gaston Will you be taking some wine with your meal?

Fiona Oh yes, that would be lovely; wouldn't it Charles?

Charles Yes – as long as it is not too expensive.

Gaston *[Handing wine list to Charles]* All our wines are very reasonably priced monsieur. As you will see on our wine list.

- Charles Thank you. Do you want to take a look, Fiona, as you seem so keen?
[Hands wine list to Fiona]
- Fiona Yes, thanks. *[Looks at list. Then excitedly.]* Oh look they've got a Beaujolais Nouveau, Charles!
- Charles *[Doubtfully]* I really think we should go for something cheaper..
- Fiona Oh, go on, Charles, we don't eat out very often.
- Charles Oh very well. *[To Gaston]* We'll have a bottle.
- Gaston Certainly monsieur. An excellent choice madame. I will fetch a bottle right away.
- Fiona Oh how exciting, I have never had a Beaujolais Nouveau before. I can't wait to try it.
- Charles Do you know, Fiona, I am not sure I trust this Gaston fellow. There's something fishy about him.
- Fiona Nonsense, Charles, he seems quite charming.
- Charles Rather too charming if you ask me.
- Gaston *[Returning with open bottle of red wine]* Here we are monsieur, madame – a bottle of Beaujolais Nouveau for your tasting pleasure.
[Pours wine into Charles's glass]
- Charles Don't you normally draw the cork at table when you serve a wine?
- Gaston I was simply seeking to speed up the process for you monsieur. I could see that madame was keen to taste it.
- Fiona Come on, Charles, don't be so fussy. I am sure the wine will be delicious. *[Holds up glass for Gaston to fill it]*
- Charles It had better be at this price.
- Gaston As monsieur will see it has the perfect purple-pink colour typical of the Beaujolais Nouveau.
- Charles *[Holding up glass to look at colour]* well it is certainly red.

- Gaston And a fruity bouquet of banana, strawberries and grapes.
- Charles *[Sniffing wine suspiciously]* I suppose it would smell of grapes. After all that is what it is made from. *[At this point Fiona drinks her wine]*
- Gaston *[To Fiona]* What you are tasting, madame, is the classic Gamay grape – grown in the Beaujolais region.
- Fiona How lovely. *[Pause]* Although it does have a rather bitter after taste.
- Gaston Ah, madame, that is the effect of the tannin. You clearly have an educated palate if you have detected this.
- Charles *[Who has just taken a mouthful of his wine]* Blaah. *[Spits out wine towards Gaston]*
- Gaston Unlike monsieur.
- Fiona I am not sure I really like it.
- Gaston It is an acquired taste of course.
- Charles I don't believe this is Beaujolais Nouveau at all.
- Gaston Monsieur, I can assure you it is. Look at the label on the bottle. *[Shows label to Charles]*
- Charles Well, if it is Beaujolais – it is certainly not Nouveau. I reckon this bottle has been open for some time. That is why you did not uncork it at the table.
- Gaston Oh no, monsieur, you are mistaken. Would Gaston do such a thing?
- Fiona It certainly is very acidic.
- Charles *[Sudden realisation]* That's it! We can conduct a little test.
- Gaston What sort of test does monsieur have in mind?
- Charles A litmus test. I just happen to have some litmus paper with me. *[Produces strip of litmus from pocket]*
- Fiona *[To Gaston]* I didn't tell you he is a Chemistry teacher.

- Gaston *[Doubtfully, but putting on brave face]* Oh no, madame, how charming.
- Charles *[Handing litmus to Fiona]* Here we are, Fiona. Put the litmus paper into your glass of 'Beaujolais Nouveau'.
- Fiona And what am I looking for exactly?
- Charles If the paper stays blue the wine is neutral and so is genuine Beaujolais Nouveau.
- Gaston I have never seen a degustation conducted like this before.
- Charles But if it turns red, it shows the wine had become acidic, and, even if it is Beaujolais – it is of the 'plus agé' variety.
- Gaston My goodness, a chemist and a linguist as well! Is there no end to monsieur's talents?
- Fiona *[Holds up litmus paper having completed the test]* I think we can add wine detective to that list. Look, it has turned bright red.
- Gaston Oh, madame, monsieur, what can I say?
- Fiona *[getting up to leave]* I think au revoir is all that is necessary. Don't you Charles?
- Charles *[Also rising]* Yes indeed, Fiona, but not even 'au revoir'. We won't be coming here again so, Gaston, it is simply 'adieu'.

THE END