

## *Joey on the Cake Line*

JOHN O'HARA

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FRIEND TED:

Well Xmas is coming and the geese are getting fat, please put a penny in the blind man's hat as the old saying use to go but not that I am asking you to put a penny in my hat or am not a blind man either as far as that is concerned. I never saw the day wherein no matter how much moola I had I could not use some more but I am saving you for a big touch in case I want to start my own band in competition with you (who knows I may be kidding on the level and that would be quite irony if it ever happened?) I do not know why it is that I sound like everything was sharp and I was right up there because if you want the truth and the whole truth and nothing but the truth your pal Joey is on the cake line. That is my way of putting it that I am on the bread line only I am still a little better off. You get what I have reference to about cake & bread. It was a famous historical topper when Josephine, the wife of Napoleon was informed that the poor people did not have any bread to eat and she said "Why dont they eat some cake if they havent any bread." Very good considering what they did was lop off her conk for saying it. Well I got my head lopped off too but not for making any crack. I went to the club one nite to give with the vocal chorus and add some class to the joint with my new midnite blue tails only there was no club there. That is the place was burn to the ground. 10,000 nite clubs in this country but I guessed they repealed the law of averages because they had to pick the one I was in to have a fire. I notice I never get that kind of odds when I go to the track. But who is complaning. I know one lug is complaning but will come to him later. So this nite I went there and all there was was ropes and fire hoses with ice hanging down and the joint stank worse than ever because you burn some rugs and pour some water on it and the water freezes to ice and you have some stink. Believe you me. Well there was nobody around but some firemen and a cop I know and the cop pointed to the joint and said to me "The hottest nite spot in Chicago" and I asked him what caused it and he said kiddingly "I guess some sparks from your singing." I have enough on him to crucify

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him but he lets me park anywhere so I did not report him. It seems I did not read the afternoon papers when I got up that afternoon and did not know there was this fire. Well I finally got in touch with the "owners" and they said act of God and fire etc. wash up a contract automatically and I said to them to wait a minute I did not have a contract. I didnt either and I did not want them babies to think they had me under contract because another spot was making me offers but they did not understand what I meant but tho't I was going to try to hold them up for my week as it was only a Tues. So they said "Joey you are the 1st one to come here and did not try to make some trouble for us and with us you are a right guy altho it is a pleasant surprise, even if we would of had a contract we would not had to pay you because of fire and act of God but let us repeat you are a right guy and any time we open up again we hire you before we even hire a waiter." So I saw what they were thinking I meant when I said I did not have a contract. They were thinking I was giving them a break so I said "Well what the hell, I said. I do not pretend I am some kind of a patsy but you fellows always put it on the line for me every pay day and gave me good billing so I did not want to come here only to offer you my sympathy and if I had some moola put away I would even lend you some or any part of it to open up again." One of them looked at the other and looked at me and then at the other and said "Well, I have seen everything" and then he stood up and shook hands and said "As you know we are only the front men here as the backers do not wish to appear but as long as we are in this business one guy will always have a job and it is you Joey. How are you fixed?" So I said well you saw that new midnite blue tailcoat I just bo't I said that was not paid for only partly, just the down payment. I said you know how it is in this business a guy has to have a front and I would hate to lose that and they realized it and said they would give me my week right away and reached in his pocket and peeled off 5 20s, my week. I tho't I might as well give it to them but good so I said not if they couldnt spare it and they said that was alright. Then Solly the one fellow said he had been thinking it over and he had a little propositon for me and it was this. He said for me to keep going around to the good spots every nite and make contacts until they opened up again and then when

they did I would still be a big attracton because people would not get the chance to forget me and get myself some publicity as much as possible and he would leave that to me. I started to say what would I use for moola and he said to me "I anticipate yr. queston. We in this business hate each others guts but we all have to co-operate with one another and all I have to do is call the boys that run the other joints and tell them I would appriiate it providing they would not slap a couvert on you and I personally will give you 50 a wk to pay yr expenses, how does that look to you?" Well you know how it look to me. Getting paid for what I would do anyway so I shook on it and so that is what I am doing and do not have to worry about another job but am ruining the vocal chords smoking too much in joints and only singing once in a while when some m.c. says "I see we have another celebrity in our mist" and introduces me and I give. So that is why I am on the cake line not the bread line.

But will have to tell you a funny story like I hinted above regarding one fellow that is complaning. I did menton how I bo't this tailor-made tailcoat but only pd. the down payment. It is midnite blue and it fits me like a sword holder fits a sword. About a wk. before the joint burned down I got delivery on this tailcoat and had to con the tailor into letting me have it for only the down payment. All told it was to cost me \$100. I put down 25 down payment. But I said to him how can I pay you if you dont leave me wear it and I lose my job. So when they had the fire I went to him and said he could have it back as I could not pay for it and he yelled bloody murder and I walked out on him and said go ahead sue because you cannot garnishy my salary as I have no salary and anyway I am bankrupted. Im not but how does he know. So he had to take it back then I got a guy in the band with the same build I have and he went in to the same fellow and said he was thinking of having a tails made and the tailor did not know it was a friend of mine and he said "I have just the thing for you. A customer did not call for this" proving he was a crook. My pal said well he wanted one more conservative not blue but the tailor said "I will tell you what I will do I will let you have it for \$65 the latest thing." My friend said he was not thinking of paying that kind of money and anyway he could get a ready made for 40. So the tailor came down to 45 and my pal said okay. He took it. So I gave my pal

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a fin for his acting ability and so all told I got my tailcoat for a total of 75. They always overcharge you anyway those tailors because they figure on losing dough when they give credit and bad debts etc. So I just paid him what the damn thing was worth altho on me it is very becoming as they say in that gag.

I guess you got my Xmas card. A funny thing. I ordered two kinds this Xmas, the kind I sent you and also the conservative ones with very formal Greetings of the Season and a stage coach & four and my name engraved on it. They were for the Onawentsia Club crowd friends but "accidentally" I got one of the ones I sent you in the envelope with the stage coach ones and now I understand the whole town is talking about the amusing cards. Everybody wanted to know who posed for it. Nobody did as the fellow that drew it copied it out of *Esquire* but I just look wise when anybody says they think it was so and so or this one or that. It certainly got me plenty publicity.

Well Merry Christmas, as the saying goes. Guess I will have to go to bed for 24 hrs so I dont have to stop hating my fellow men. But that does not go for you, Ted. The best.

PAL JOEY