

PART. V -Buttered Side Down

In "The Kitchen Side of the Door," the grandeur of New Year's Eve in New York contrasts sharply with the gritty reality behind the scenes in the kitchen of the Newest Hotel. Amidst the chaotic celebrations marked by debauchery and excess among the rich and glamorous, Miss Gussie Fink, the kitchen's checker, stands as a beacon of order and diligence. Despite the surrounding decadence, including a Russian Grand Duke look-alike enjoying champagne from a lady's slipper, and other guests indulging in the hotel's extravagant offerings, Miss Fink remains focused on her duty. Her job entails verifying the content of the waiters' trays, ensuring everything served is accounted for.

Amid this night of revelry, the divide between public opulence and private sorrow is starkly evident. Miss Fink, once engaged in a flirtation with Heiny, now a waiter turned Henri, experiences the pang of their ended relationship. Henri's new status as a waiter has elevated him from the kitchen to the dining room, straining their romance. The scorn and envy of their coworkers add to Miss Fink's woes.

The story reveals the harsh realities and human dramas unfolding away from the guests' view. In the kitchen, Miss Fink's integrity and no-nonsense attitude keep the staff in check, much to the chagrin of some, like Tony the Crook, a waiter known for his devious ways.

As midnight strikes and celebrations peak, Miss Fink's world collides with the outside glamour when she is asked to assist in the hotel's bar. There, she encounters tales of Henri's service to a lavish party indulging in expensive champagne, marking his complete transformation and distancing from her world.

However, the night takes a sobering turn when a drunken woman from Henri's table collapses, revealing the ugly aftermath of the night's excess. In this moment, the facade of Henri's new life cracks, allowing him to see the genuine, unblemished kindness and simplicity in Miss Fink, contrasting sharply with the tainted glamour he has been serving. This incident realigns their relationship, as they find solace in their shared escape to the normalcy and simplicity of a humble meal at Joey's, finding comfort in each other's company away from the pretense of their New Year's Eve roles.

This chapter highlights the contrasts between appearance and reality, the superficial versus the meaningful, and ultimately, the return to genuine connections and values amidst the superficiality of societal celebrations.