

Hector Announces Names

by James Lynn Smith

It was a gala occasion with rich decor and the finest food and drink. Hundreds of guests had filled Magnolia Hall in anticipation of the speech by a famed medical research leader. He would enter with his associates after all guests were seated. The agenda called for an announcer to stand at the door and call out names as in olden days of royal balls. The speaker asked that his associates be announced before him, building up to his grand entrance with the wife. He was dressed in a tuxedo and his wife in a white sheath dress with sequins. She was gorgeous but her mind tended to stray.

Despite careful plans, the intended announcer had car trouble and, in panic, called his nearby cousin Hector to substitute for him. Hector hailed from a remote area of Appalachia and was uncomfortable with the request. With trepidation, he went to his cousin's house, dressed in his spare tux, and reported for duty.

In the back entrance vestibule, Hector couldn't find a list of the special invitees queuing up, so he asked for their names. He finally came to the guest of honor. "Pronounce your name fer me sir," Hector said. "I'm standin' in for the intended announcer."

"Dr. Emil Popsalute," the man answered.

Hector looked confused. "Poo—"

"No, that's Popsalute, Pop' -sah-loot."

"Yes sir, *Popsalute*." He scribbled the name on his card and turned to the wife. "And your name ma'am?"

She ignored him, mindless to being addressed.

“Sorry,” Popsalute said. “She’s *oblivious* to most people.”

At the time for announcements, Hector ran to the his post as the hall doors opened. He then began, voice quavering on the first introductions.

Eventually, the renowned doctor and his elegant but distracted wife entered.

Hector stiffened and strained to concentrate on diction despite wetness trickling from his armpits and beads of sweat on his forehead. Trembling lips opened and he loudly announced, “Presenting Dr. Emile *Poopsalot* and wife *Oblivious*.”

A woman in the audience muttered, “She’d *have* to be to live with that.”

Laughter grew to a roar in less than a second. Dr. Popsalute stood rigid, dismay on his face. His wife looked around with her toothy smile, searching for whatever funny thing might have occurred.

The emcee walked to the microphone and tried to rescue the situation. “No matter what language you pronounce it in, we are grateful to have you as our guest of honor, Dr. Popsalute. Please join us here at the head table.”

Hector backed out of the hall and aimed for the restroom, sure that after throwing up his lunch he would be captured, dragged back to the hall, and publically abased. However, he was able to exit by sheepishly ducking his head and return home. He would not answer his phone for a week.

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