

## THE COUNTESS' NEW CUISINE

by Supercake Studio (<https://www.patreon.com/supercakestudio>)

“I wonder what culinary atrocity the old airhead is inflicting on us this week?” the Duchess of Brevance asked, full lips curving into a wicked grin behind the privacy of her cherrywood fan.

“Oh, you mustn't say those sorts of things, really you mustn't!” the Duchess of Emberly cried, giggling in spite of herself. Her golden-blond ringlets jounced as she shook with suppressed laughter. “Really, Brevvy, you're *awful*. You know the countess only wants to share her exotic culinary discoveries with her circle of friends.”

“Wants to soak up the praise for making those discoveries, more likely,” Brevance said, flapping the fan. Her chocolate-covered curls fluttered in the breeze, brushing against the flawless tan skin of her bare shoulders. “While we—not incidentally—soak up grease and sugar and consequences. Just take a good look at us, Em. These heavy luncheons are fattening us up like a pair of Christmas geese.”

“It's a fine excuse to buy a new dress, at least!” Emberly tittered.

“I don't know about you,” Brevance grouched, “but a few more *excuses* like this and I'll be shopping for a *tent*, not a dress.”

“Oh, but Brevvy, you look smashing!”

“Credit my tailor, dear, not my figure—if I weren't for being sewn in I could scarcely see my own slippers—though I must admit I'm not as badly off as *some*.”

The ladies turned to watch the Lady Astermere clamber down from her carriage, an ungainly finger slathered in a low-cut robe of soft cream-colored velvet, followed by her friend and companion, the Lady Findalain.

“Good lord,” Brevance murmured, “I do believe the woman is in danger of overflowing.”

Indeed, the Lady Astermere's bodice strained with the effort of hoisting the sheer abundance of her chest, and the rest of her was scarcely slimmer. The overall effect was of an overfilled cream puff.

“Goodness, I'm absolutely ravenous,” she said, huffing and puffing up the stairs to join the Duchesses, her dark tresses beginning to wilt with unladylike perspiration. “If I don't get something to eat soon, my stomach will devour itself.”

“A very large meal,” Brevance observed.

“I feel rather weak as well,” the Lady Findalain said nervously. “I've been fasting for a full day. I do hope I shan't offend our hostess with a lack of appetite.”

Lady Findalain, a slender and slightly-built young thing with a shining copper bob, had the greatest difficulty of them all in taking in their hostesses' generous repasts.

Another carriage pulled up—this one pulled by a pair of enormous, midnight-black stallions—and from it emerged the Crowbarrel sisters, Lamia and Lilith. They looked, with their pale skin, dark hair, and enormous, watery blue eyes, like a pair of beautiful corpses, and their matching black-lace dresses were fit to be buried in. Nodding at the others in unison, they swept into the luxurious mansion of the Countess d'Mignon.

None of the assembled ladies were poor, but the level of wealth displayed by the Countess made more than one of their souls turn a deep and envious green. The floor was pure polished snow marble overlaid with the richest ornamental gorilla-fur rugs from distant Zamfaria. The walls were solid plumwood inlaid with white gold and mouse ivory, the chandelier a greenhouse's worth of crystal glass suspended from a spiderweb of gold filigree. The dining room contained a rose-oak hair-carved dining table surrounded by whipped-leather ladies' dining ensconcessments, each sized perfectly—(perhaps even a bit insultingly so, in the case of Lady Astermere)—to accept its intended occupant's posterior.

The Countess herself stood at the head of the table, commanding an army of maids loaded down with enough silver to kill an opposing army of werewolves, in the form of an endless line of tureens and dishes and covered platters.

"I should have fasted for *two* days," Findalain moaned under her breath.

The countess herself was a lovely young woman, green-eyed, rosy-cheeked, and ripe of figure (if a bit less full than Astermere), with copious blonde locks piled high upon her head. She wore a glittering gown dripping with emeralds, and bounced with excitement at greeting her guests.

"Ladies, ladies, I have such wondrous treat for you tonight!" she squealed, beckoning them. "Do come in! Have a seat!"

"Oof, I think I've got yours, Finny," Lady Astermere commented, having wedged herself into the narrowest chair at the table. When she tried to stand up, the seat came with her. "Er—but never mind for now." She plopped back down again, the chair creaking under her weight.

"Now I know with warmer weather on the horizon, we're all concerned with keeping our figures trim," the countess continued when her guests were seated. "That's why I've arranged for lighter fare tonight."

"I'll believe it when I see it," Brevance murmured to Emberly.

"I've contracted the services of a most miraculous pair of cooks," the Countess went on. "They have mastered a new style of cooking which is unaccountably delicious and yet which will never add so much as an ounce, no matter how much one consumes. Nor will it cause the slightest discomfort to the abdomen no matter the quantity eaten, so that one may feast indefinitely without suffering from bloat or pain. A miracle food, which satisfies without stuffing, which nourishes without fattening." Her eyes darted about the table, and she smiled. "And *we* lucky few shall be the *first* to enjoy it! Ladies—*bon appetit!*"

She dropped neatly into her chair, and the servants at once began to distribute the first course, a heavy butter soup with chunks of beef and heaping baskets of warm, crusty bread. Her famished guests fell upon the meal ravenously.

"Effquffite," Astermere mumbled around cheeks stuffed with bread. Emberly delicately slurped down a spoonful of soup, murmured her appreciation, and then asked the hostess where she had ever discovered such a miracle.

"The cooks were trained in the Far East," the Countess whispered conspiratorially. "They had just *oodles* of offers from royalty—they said even the Queen was interested!—but I was able to outbid them all and acquire their *exclusive* services for tonight's banquet! The best part is—their technique can be used to prepare nearly any dish, though what that technique actually *is*—well, I suppose artists must have their secrets!"

The bread and soup was soon demolished, followed by a spring salad dripping with a complex vinaigrette, then a salted fish dish garnished by a garden of seafood delights, and then a small dish of flavored ice as a palate cleanser, and then a vegetable pudding which was followed by a platter of sizzling beef.

"Oh, dear," Emberly said, rubbing her stomach as she cast her eyes over the vast fields of meat. "Miggy, sweets, are you *quite* sure about that 'satisfies without stuffing' business?" There were a few chuckles of agreement from around the table.

The Countess d'Mignon nodded. "Yes, the cooks were very clear on that—to ladies of light and virtuous hearts, like us, the fare will be nigh-weightless, like unto the food of angels. Only a base harlot, a woman of debauched virtue, could possibly find herself in discomfort because of it." She looked concerned. "*You're* not in discomfort, are you, Duchess?"

"Oh, no!" the Duchess of Emberly said hastily, spearing an enormous lump of meat and stuffing it into her mouth. The pace of eating among the guests, which had grown sluggish, picked up again enormously as the assembled ladies began shoveling down as much as possible and as quickly as they could. The empty platters were cleared and replaced with a shrimp mousse, followed by a towering potato-froth whip, followed by a selection of stuffed squashes, followed by a lemon-oiled chicken breast.

"It's simply amazing—" Emberly said, "how light and fluffy everything is! Why, I feel like I've

eaten absolutely nothing at all!”

“My sister and I remain utterly ravenous,” Lamia Crowbarrel said in her usual monotone.

“Oh, ravenous. Absolutely,” Lilith added hastily. She belched.

Brevance raised an eyebrow. “Are you really, Lilith?”

“She is,” Lamia snapped, spearing her own chicken breast and stuffing it whole into her sister's mouth. “She's so hungry she's eating off my plate, aren't you, Lily dear?”

“Mmf-hmpff,” Lilith said, nodding quickly. The end of the chicken flopped up and down, splattering grease across the table and dribbling it into her cleavage.

Brevance grimaced and looked down at the lump of fowl which mocked her from her own plate. The mere idea of food that the virtuous could gorge on forever was ridiculous, and yet it did indeed seem that nobody at the table was suffering from any lack of appetite—*except* for Brevance herself, of course. The Duchess of Brevance was growing uncomfortably stuffed. But then, she was hardly 'virtuous', and if she should reveal the damning evidence of her fullness, well—her quick wit and sharp tongue might be tolerated, even celebrated, but there *was* a line of propriety, and her dalliances with the servants had crossed it repeatedly.

She grew warm just thinking about reclining in the flower bed while the handsome, copper-thewed gardener plowed her field and sowed his seeds, of rushing back home to wash the dirt off her back before the Duke returned and finding the kitchen boy waiting in a hot bath to scrub her clean. Then there was the stablemaster, a fiend with a riding crop and yet kind-hearted enough to hand-feed her a few sugar cubes and an apple afterward, and that dear little maid who was so good with a feather duster...

But none of her friends—as frigid a bunch of prudes as she'd ever met—would understand the pleasures of her domestic smorgasbord. Even poor innocent Em would feel forced to shun her socially, if her escapades ever became public knowledge. No, the Duchess of Brevance had to put on a brave face, and an even braver stomach, and keep eating. Steeling herself, she speared the chicken with her fork and sawed off a generous mouthful.

The Duchess of Emberly watched her, a sick feeling twisting her own packed gullet. *Surely if even Brevvy is still hungry after all that food, it must be true, she thought in despair. I'm the only one here who is...impure!*

And if Brevvy ever learned the truth—that the Duchess of Emberly had been secretly meeting with the Duke of Brevance while his oblivious wife was at home tearing her hair out over the estate's constant servant problems—it would mean an end to their lifelong friendship. Emberly couldn't give up her dear Brevvy. But she couldn't give up Brevvy's husband either. Those hours of smoldering bliss, of long, filthy rutting sessions in the secret apartment until she stank of dried sweat and had to gulp papaya juice by the quart just to rehydrate herself—who else could give her *that*? Her own cold fish of a husband? A man who turned up his nose at even *her* perfect figure? Surely no woman could be faulted for needing more than *that*, could she?

No, she couldn't give up either of them. Which means she *had* to get through this vast dinner even if it killed her. *I'll be as big as Asty*, she thought miserably, *and then what will my husband think of me?*

Across the table, Lady Astermere polished off the last of the chicken and stifled a moist burp. She was shocked that the others were matching her dish for dish—if those scrawny twigs could hoist in a meal that was beginning to overwhelm even *her*, the magical properties of the food must be a reality.

She shifted in her seat, hoping to settle the food in her stomach, and heard the chair creak ominously as the legs wobbled and her bulging flanks strained the armrests.

She was well aware she'd packed on a little weight recently—even if she *hadn't* noticed been able to feel how tight her dresses were getting, all her lovers had mentioned something to the effect. Well, how could a girl help it when she was being wined and dined by so many suitors, none of whom knew about the others?

“Perhaps I've been taking you on too many of these romantic picnics,” the Duke of Brevance had

murmured into her ear. They lay on the grass, naked, and he embraced her from behind, running his hands over the soft, squishy hillock of her belly. “You're growing plump, dearest.”

“One can never had too many romantic picnics,” she countered, rolling over to face him and kissing him with pie-smearred lips.

An hour later, she was on the other side of the forest, polishing off a *second* romantic picnic with Lilith Crowbarrel's husband. “You certainly do enjoy your vittles, love,” he'd observed. “Gettin' right round, you are, right round indeed, not that I minds when it's a lass as pretty ez you ez, mind you.”

After some rather languid lovemaking against a tree, she had bid him farewell and waddled off for her third secret picnic. The Duke of Emberly had already unpacked an enormous hamper overflowing with delicious-smelling dishes of every description.

“I do love a woman who knows how to eat,” he said, coaxing a fourth gigantic hunk of gooey chocolate cake into her mouth. “A woman with a little *meat* on her bones! Not like my underfed stick of a wife—always another diet, always moaning on about her figure. But you—you! Oh, come now, have another slice of chicken—and here, a lovely crispy pie. Oh, my dear, you're so voluptuous—and soft—and gorgeous—” and so it had continued until the entire contents of the hamper had become the contents of Lady Astermere.

“You're getting to be a fat pig,” her husband had told her bluntly at dinner that night. “I don't know how you're managing it when you just pick at your food like this, but you are.”

*Well*, she sighed to herself, *I supposed that's what comes of treating others women's husbands like an endless buffet to glut myself on*. But ah, what a glorious time she had had putting on those pounds, each one a souvenir of some joyous occasion! She would just have to hope her copious stomach could get her through where her virtue could not.

Lilith Crowbarrel worked the last of the chicken down her throat and swallowed. *I can't hold any more!* she groaned to her sister. The two of them shared an exceptionally close mental bond, and could communicate mind to mind. *I'm going to rupture like a bloated corpse!*

*I'm as full as you are and you don't hear me whining*, Lamia snarled back (quite untruthfully, as her sister was two chicken breasts ahead). *I put myself out a great deal covering up for your little misadventure with the butcher knife. I even helped bury your dear departed husband, and wasn't I the one who found that dockworker who looked almost exactly like him?*

*Y-yes*, Lilith said.

*I won't have all that go to ruin just because you've got an upset stomach. Now sit up straight!*

Lilith straightened.

*Smile!*

Lilith smiled.

*Suck in that paunch!*

Lilith tried.

*Close enough. Now you listen to me, Lily, and listen good—you're going to eat every single bite that preening bitch puts in front of you, even if I have to jam it down your throat with a tamping rod. Is that understood?*

*Y-yes, Lammy*, Lilith thought, smile faltering.

*Good.*

Across the table, Lady Findalain rested her head on her chin and observed the half-empty wine bottle in front of her.

“Finny, dear, are you all right?” the Duchess of Emberly asked around a mouthful of chicken.

“Oh, yesh, yesh, I'm fine!” Findalain said hastily. “A bit ligh'-headed, p'raps. Jushta *tush* too mush wine!” She hiccuped. “...Or more'n a tush.”

“It can't be *that*,” the Countess said. “Intoxication is a form of overindulgence, and the virtuous simply can't overindulge on *anything* on this table.”

Findalain sighed. If anyone here guessed at the truth she'd kept secret for years—that once, when

she was nineteen, she'd accidentally seen a boy undressing to bathe and hadn't averted her eyes for a full thirty seconds—they would know her for the base, debauched harlot she was, and her life would be over. That simply *couldn't* happen. Steadying herself against the table with one hand, she gripped the bottle tightly in the other and, biting her lip in concentration, slopped a generous portion into her glass.

The Countess looked around the table at her guests, and wondered why her own stomach felt so unpleasantly heavy and full. She almost would have thought that her new cooks' remarkable claims were lies—but everyone else here was ripping into the food as if they hadn't eaten in days. She'd always thought of herself as a virtuous woman—no affairs, no real vices, all her hard work to create a pleasant social setting for her friends and expand their culinary horizons at the same time...was she truly a bad person? A woman without virtue?

Perhaps—but *they* must never know. She clapped her hands. “Next course, please!”

There followed a course of strawberry cream tort.

Then a platter of Chinese egg-noodles and crispy waterfowl.

Then a rack of steaming ribs which radiated heat.

Then yet another soup course, followed by another salad.

Then another palate cleanser.

At last came a course none of them could describe afterward, for none of them could bear at this point to look at food—they merely had to squeeze their eyes shut, force down their rising gorges, and cram it into their bursting stomachs as quickly as possible. When the plates were scraped clean and taken away, there was not a word around the table. The guests slumped like sacks of suet poured into silken finery, stunned senseless from round after round of enforced gluttony.

“I believe,” the Countess d'Mignon managed, crumbs spilling from her lips, “that that was the final course.”

“What an awful shame,” the Duchess of Brevance groaned, massaging her distended belly with her fingertips. “And I was just getting started, too.”

“Yes, I'm quite as peckish now as when I started,” Emberly agreed, struggling into a sitting position. Threads popped loudly, one by one, as a seam burst somewhere in her dress.

Lady Findalain hiccuped and slid slowly beneath the table, flopping onto the floor with an audible slosh. “Shtarving.”

The Crowbarrel sisters belched in unison.

“Why, I'm *wasting away!*” Lady Astermere said loudly, to cover the sound of splintering wood. She leaned onto the table, trying to take a little of her weight off the teetering chair.

“Perhaps I'll have a little snack,” the Countess said, “*later*, once everyone goes home. For now I think we ought to retire to the lounge and...lounge for a few hours.”

Slurred murmurs of agreement went around the table. “Not moving for several hours does have its appeal,” Brevance observed.

“Begging my lady's pardon,” one of the maids said, “but we haven't served the dessert yet.”

There was dead silence, and then, under the table, Lady Findalain began to cry.

“Very well,” the Countess said icily. “Serve the dessert.”

The maid placed a horrifyingly large platter in the center of the table and uncovered it to reveal a seven-layer chocolate-covered cheesecake the size of a carriage wheel. The rest of the servants cut it and began to dole out thick, enormous slices.

“It looks...delicious,” Emberly said, turning green. “Oh, Miggy, you shouldn't have. You *really* shouldn't.”

Brevance forced down a small bite. “It's to die for,” she stated in strained voice, “and I think I just might.”

Findalain's drunken sobs turned into snores. “I suppose you may have her piece,” the Countess told Astermere, “as she's indisposed. I know how much you love sweets.”

Lady Astermere watched the servants hoist Findalain's slice and slab it down on top of her own,

forming a towering fourteen-layer monstrosity. “How...lovely.”

“Let us eat...slowly!” the Countess suggested. “To savor the deliciousness.”

“Slowly it is,” Emberly agreed.

“Teeny-tiny bites,” Brevance put in.

“Miniscule ones,” Lamia said with a nod, scraping off a microscopic sliver and placing it on her tongue. “Oh, it's wonderful! Lily, you simply *must* try this.” She scooped up an enormous hunk of her own cake and crammed it into Lilith's mouth over her sister's impotent protests.

Emberly managed a full quarter of a slice before grinding to a halt again. She simply couldn't stuff down another crumb. If she tried she would explode right here at the table, she was sure of it, and *that* would be a *major faux pas*.

“Would you like mine, Brevvy?” she gasped. “I can't—I mean, I'm getting tired of cheesecake.”

“Good God, no!—I mean, I wouldn't dream of it!”

Lamia tried to cram another forkful into Lilith's mouth, which was already so full that her cheeks were puffed out like a chipmunk's. “Come on, open up, Lily!”

Lilith grunted. Cheesecake filling oozed from her mouth.

Lamia made sure nobody was looking, and then emptied the rest of the plate down Lilith's cleavage. She slammed the empty plate down in front of her. “All done!”

Lilith gurgled and scraped cheesecake off of her chest with a napkin.

Lady Astermere worked away diligently, packing the disgustingly large confection into what little space she had left. Sweat beaded on her brow. There was a third of it gone, then two thirds—she picked up the plate and leaned back, balancing it on her bulging belly to more easily stuff in the rest—

With a sickening crack, the chair collapsed beneath the combined weights of the heaviest meal of Lady Astermere's life and the heaviest Lady Astermere of Lady Astermere's life. She landed with a meaty smack on her generous rump.

“Oh! Asty!” Emberly yelled, getting up as quickly as she was able.

“We must get her to a physician right away!” Brevance said immediately.

“I'm fine,” Astermere groaned, “just a bit of a bump.”

“Nonsense, dear, you've probably shattered your tailbone,” Brevance said. “Come, Emberly, help me—ugh—lift her—oof.”

“Of course, I—oh dear—I—errgh—I'm help—aaargh—my *God*, Asty, you're substantial!”

“Someone get Findalain at least!” Astermere said as she was marched out. It fell to the Crowbarrel sisters to haul out the inebriated Lady Findalain and cart her off, still clutching an empty bottle of wine.

The Countess sat alone, surveying the remains of the feast. She sighed and pushed away her own untouched slice of cheesecake.

“I trust your guests enjoyed the meal, mistress?” one of the cooks asked, poking her head out of the kitchen.

“They did, but I—” the Countess said. “Well, I *thought* I was virtuous. I suppose I wasn't, or not enough. The truth is, I'm simply *bursting!* I won't be able to eat a *thing* for *days!*”

“Very sorry to hear that, mistress. But it was otherwise a success?”

“Oh, yes,” the Countess groaned. “They loved it! Now I'm going to have to do this every week. So much food...”

She stretched, stood, and looked down at her middle, round and bulging like an overstuffed crepe.

“I shall be enormously fat before the year is out, but that's the price of being a good hostess, I suppose. Blast! I'm going to need an entirely new wardrobe!”

The cook looked thoughtful for a moment, then grinned. “Mistress,” she beamed, “I think I have the perfect solution for you. My sister and I are tailors as well, you see, and we happen to know of a *miraculous* new fabric...”