

**MAN WANTED SIDE 2**

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ARLENE

*(To audience)* So I sign up for Italian. That's when I meet Michael Paddington. The instructor groups us in pairs.

MICHAEL

*(Enters. Hands Arlene an apron and gestures to a container.)* Will you look at these mushrooms!

ARLENE

Pretty nice, aren't they? I think they're morels.

MICHAEL

They're terrible! Obviously store bought.

ARLENE

Is something wrong with that?

MICHAEL

Obviously, you have never tasted mushrooms freshly gathered from the field. If you had, you would never ask such a foolish question. What's that on your arm? Looks like poison ivy.

ARLENE

I've been hiking and picked up a little poison ivy in the woods. I apologize if my blisters are offensive to you. I didn't think that they would get in the way of cooking.

MICHAEL

Good heavens, woman, don't you know how to take care of yourself? You should be eating a little poison ivy early in the spring to build up your resistance.

ARLENE

Eat poison ivy!

MICHAEL

Of course. You start off slowly and gradually eat a little more each day. Builds your immunity up naturally. I'll bring some in for you next class. Also some mushrooms from the field. It's fortunate that you signed up for this class. You have a lot to learn.

ARLENE

I know there are thousands of varieties of mushroom. Most are not poisonous, but a few are. Skepticism comes with age, Michael. If you'll forgive my saying this, I'm not sure your knowledge is trustworthy. If you're wrong, I could get very sick or even die.

MICHAEL

You are more likely to die from eating too much red meat. (*Leans over to sniff ARLENE*) I can smell it on you. Meat eaters have a distinctive odor. Now that you're getting older, you need to start taking better care of yourself. Are you getting enough probiotics?

*(ARLENE Removes her apron and flings it at MICHAEL. MICHAEL exits.)*

ARLENE

I'm looking for a companion, not a judge. Whatever happened to the concept of food as fun? As pleasure? But his comment that I was getting older hit home.