

THE MENU

Written by

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BLACK

A nautical bell. Foghorns. Waves lapping the shore. Seagulls.

1 EXT. WATERFRONT DOCK - EVENING

1

A young COUPLE stand alone on a dock. They're dressed elegantly for a big night out.

MARGOT stares off, a little bored. TYLER drums his hand against his leg. His eyes dart around, a little panicked.

TYLER

What time is it?

Margot looks at her watch nonchalantly.

MARGOT

It is...6:26.

TYLER

Shit.

MARGOT

Tyler, relax.

TYLER

No, sweetie, this is bad.

MARGOT

I'm sure it's fine, babe.

TYLER

Well, where is everybody?

MARGOT

You're positive we're in the right place?

TYLER

Yes. I followed the directions on the website exactly.

MARGOT

Okay, well, then reset the mood. We've still got four minutes.

Tyler nods, but he's unconvinced. Margot lights a cigarette. Tyler notices and grimaces disapprovingly.

TYLER

Babe, please don't smoke. It'll kill your palette.

MARGOT

Then my palette will die happy.

TYLER

Hey.

(insistent)

Margot.

Tyler's tone stops Margot in her tracks. She looks at him. The mood is suddenly a little tense. He's dead serious.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Tonight is huge, okay? The flavor profiles - it's all super delicate. When you smoke, you ruin your ability to appreciate them.

(beat)

Please.

After an edgy silence, Margot stamps out her cigarette.

MARGOT

Fine. Jesus.

TYLER

Thank you.

A FOGHORN blows close by, startling both of them. A small but gorgeously appointed BOAT pulls into the harbor.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Thank God.

MARGOT

Is that gonna fit everyone?

TYLER

Easily. 12 customers total.

MARGOT

A night? How do they turn a profit?

TYLER

850 a head, that's how.

Margot nearly does a double-take.

MARGOT

You're fucking joking right?

TYLER

C'mon, let's not ruin this by talking price, yeah? Just go with the flow. Let it be magical.

Margot just chuckles and shrugs.

MARGOT
Hey, it's your dime.

A MERCEDES pulls into the dock and parks. THREE RICH TECH-
NERD BROS in their 30s and 40s-- BRYCE, SOREN, DAVE-- get
out, a little drunk, a little rowdy.

BRYCE
--just such a fuck-you to Accounts.
It's not even a client dinner!

They all laugh. Tyler looks at them with distaste.

TYLER
Great. A power tasting. They'll be
wasted by the *amuse*.

Margot sees an OLDER COUPLE getting out of a Town Car.
RICHARD (60s) gets the door for his wife ANNE (also 60s). As
he does, he turns and briefly locks eyes with Margot. He
seems to recognize her. Margot's eyes dart away instantly.

MARGOT
(under her breath)
Fuck.

TYLER
What?

MARGOT
Huh? Nothing.

A finely dressed BOATMAN lowers a gangway on the boat.

BOATMAN
All aboard for Hawthorn!

TYLER
I have to log every nuance of this.
To silkscreen it on my brain.

Most guests have now arrived. They file on the boat, showing
tickets on their phones. As Tyler and Margot queue, Tyler
notices someone behind them and averts his eyes.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Ho-ly fucking shit. Don't look.

MARGOT
What?

Margot looks and sees a MIDDLE AGED WOMAN in a colorful blouse and hip tortoise shell glasses and A MIDDLE AGED MAN.

TYLER

I said don't look?

MARGOT

What am I supposed to not be looking at?

TYLER

Lillian Bloom.

MARGOT

Who's Lillian Bloom?

TYLER

Shh, just - food critic for *Saveur*.
Play it cool.

MARGOT

You're the one freaking out?

TYLER

She's running her Top 100 list this month. I bet this makes the top spot. She doesn't usually double up with San Pellegrino but for Slowik?

MARGOT

No totally. I'm always saying that.

TYLER

Lillian goddamned Bloom. Well it's official: Tonight will be madness.

2

INT. BOAT - EARLY EVENING

2

Margot and Tyler step inside the main cabin of the boat. It's like something out of a fairy tale. Brass fixtures. Small tables with linen tablecloths. Floral arrangements. Ravel's "*Une barque sur l'océan*" PLAYS dreamily.

We hear the VOICE of the CAPTAIN on an intercom.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, please make yourselves comfortable for our 30 minute journey to Hawthorn.

Tyler is in heaven. He turns to Margot.

TYLER

Not gonna lie, I am diamond hard
right now.

Margot makes a disgusted face. We hear VOICES off screen.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

We get a private room though right?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

I checked. They don't do that here.

Who should finally enter but none other than a famous middle-aged MOVIE STAR and his young assistant, FELICITY.

MOVIE STAR

Yeah, no, that's fine. Totally
fine. You definitely checked?

WAITER

Welcome, sir.

Movie Star sees the other passengers. Big smile.

MOVIE STAR

(suddenly "on")

Ahoy! Avast me hearties! Let's hope
she's seaworthy, eh?

The Movie Star is given champagne. He eyes it with desire but hands it to Felicity, who politely gives it to the waiter.

ON TECH BROS outside of Movie Star's earshot. Soren eyes him.

SOREN

Whoop, famous person. We got an FP,
folks.

BRYCE

FP in the house.

DAVE

Barely F anymore though? Maybe in
like 1998?

BRYCE

Hey, he's a P and he's F, what do
you want?

We SWING back to Margot and Tyler on two plush seats by the window. Tyler looks anxious. Margot smiles at him.

MARGOT

Look at you.

TYLER

I know. I have to say: I'm weirdly nervous.

MARGOT

To eat dinner?

TYLER

Right? It's crazy.

MARGOT

No, it's cute.

(sees movie star)

Oh wow. Check it out. I *loved* him when I was a kid.

TYLER

Oh yeah. Apparently he's a big foodie. Or you know - *thinks* he is.

MARGOT

He looks kinda like an alien in person?

A WAITER steps forward holding a tray of food.

WAITER

Chef Slowik would like to welcome you with a raw local oyster in a mignonette emulsion, with lemon caviar and an oyster leaf. Enjoy.

Tyler and Margot take their trays.

TYLER

Beautiful. Thank you.

The waiters leave. Margot stares at her tray.

TYLER (CONT'D)

One of his classics. The lemon pearls are made with an alginate.

Tyler takes a quick photo with his phone before eating his.

MARGOT

Alginate? As in-?

TYLER

As in algae.

MARGOT

Algae. Like from a pond. No, lovely.

Tyler's too busy greedily devouring his tiny bite to respond.

TYLER

Oh my god. It's laughable. It's actually fucking laughably good.

Margot cautiously tries it and nods her head.

MARGOT

Mmm. It's good. I'd be happy with just the oyster, though. I love oysters.

TYLER

No, no, it's the balance of the products. You need the mouthfeel of the mignonette.

MARGOT

(smiles)
Please don't say 'mouthfeel.'

TYLER

(smiles back)
Too late.

They share a warm beat. The HORN BLOWS as the boat sets sail.

3 EXT. OCEAN - EVENING 3

The boat glides across the water, the ISLAND in the distance.

4 INT. BOAT - EVENING 4

As the great Lillian Bloom holds court, we cut to close-ups of all the diners listening. We end on Margot, as though we are seeing them through her eyes.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Slowik has always had trouble staying put. Cut his teeth with Bocuse, a spell in Kyoto, stages with Ferran in Spain just for the fuck of it. Then he opens his own place in New York, Tantalus. I discover him. Then boom, two Michelin stars.

Tyler softly to Margot.

TYLER

He didn't get the second star till year two, she's fucking up the story, but whatever --

LILLIAN BLOOM

What's that?

TYLER

Nothing. This is great. Go on.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Then at the top of his game, he closes up shop. Disappears. Falls off the map. Must have lost a fortune on the lease.

Tyler can't let it go. Annoyed, he whispers to Margot:

TYLER

Also, she "discovered" him? Bullshit.

FELICITY

Where did he go?

LILLIAN BLOOM

Some say Lyon. Some say Hanoi of all places. No interviews, no photos, zip. I tried like hell to track him down, but he's a phantom. Now cut to three years after that.

TED

Final chapter of the Slowik creation myth. King Maker here is in... where were you, Lilly?

LILLIAN BLOOM

Ladies and gentlemen, Ted Feldman, my editor.

TED

Hello, everyone.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Would you like to take the baton?

TED

(put on the spot)

Oh, yes, sure. Well, so, you were at, the - it was a food expo, or--?

Lillian takes the baton right back from him.

LILLIAN BLOOM

So I'm in Portland. Umbrellas,
beards, heroin. Big food con.

TYLER

Cascades Food Expo, right?

LILLIAN BLOOM

Yes, well done. Huge arena full of
pop-ups. And I think, if I have to
eat one more deconstructed avant
cassoulet *whatever* I'm gonna puke.
So I leave and stop at a Korean
taco truck a block away. And... I
flip. It's like the Platonic ideal
of a Korean taco. The Korean taco
of your youth.

Margot blinks. The Korean what?

LILLIAN BLOOM (CONT'D)

I peek into the truck, and guess
who's manning the grill. Julian
fucking Slowik. I almost fall to my
knees and start believing in God.
And I get him to agree to an
interview.

TED

That's the famous piece Lillian
wrote about him. Culinary
hagiography. Calvin Trillin meets
Gregory of Tours.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Stop. Anyway, suddenly every foodie
investor is hounding him. He says
he'll consider it on three
conditions. One, complete privacy.
Two, land to forage and plant.
Three, it has to be by the water so
he can source his own fish. That's
when Doug Verrick swoops in and
offers him a fucking island.

TED

Thanks to your piece. This is all
because of Lillian.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Tasting menus, *exhausting*. I'm more
of a basic three-course bitch these
days, but this should be fun. I
haven't been since it opened.

(MORE)

LILLIAN BLOOM (CONT'D)

He texted me personally last week with the invitation. I didn't even think he had a phone.

SOREN

We were on a six-month waitlist but then I got an email a week ago saying tonight opened up. Lucky.

As conversations splinter off, Tyler turns to Margot.

TYLER

Pretty inspiring shit, yeah?

MARGOT

Yeah I mean? Sorta grim too, right?

TYLER

Grim?

MARGOT

I don't know. Spending your entire life on a tiny island cooking for rich strangers? Bit of a nightmare?

Tyler eyes Margot and smiles a bit condescendingly.

TYLER

Well, Margot. Let me ask you. Do you love what you do?

MARGOT

Sure, I like what I do.

TYLER

But do you *love* what you do?

Margot stares at Tyler blankly for a moment.

MARGOT

No.

TYLER

Me neither. But this guy does. And when you love what you do - I mean really love it - nothing else matters. Trust me he's got it made.

The waiter appears.

WAITER

May I take your dishes?

TYLER

Yes, please. Utterly ethereal.

RICHARD looks at his phone while his wife sips champagne.

Tyler puts his arm around Margot lovingly and they gaze out the window. The water sparkles in the early evening sun.

MARGOT

'Ooh, ahh, lovely view.'

TYLER

(smiles, charmed)

Such a little pestilence.

Behind them, the dot-com guys are posing for a photo with the movie star. They are saying iconic lines from his movies.

ON TYLER AND MARGOT.

TYLER (CONT'D)

It's already the best night. And just think: It hasn't even started.

MARGOT

Yeah.

Margot smiles. But it feels a little false.

5 EXT. OCEAN - EARLY EVENING 5

The boat glides smoothly through the water.

6 EXT. HAWTHORN DOCK - EARLY EVENING 6

FRONT OF HOUSE lines the dock, smiling, poised.

We follow Margot and Tyler as they disembark. It's very ceremonial. Margot's a bit unnerved by all the pomp.

MARGOT

Jesus. This is like prom.

TYLER

Yeah? I didn't go to prom.

MARGOT

Really, why not?

TYLER

None of the cool girls like you said yes.

MARGOT

Aw, poor baby. Fuck those bitches.

She smiles at him, the coolest girl ever. Tyler likes it.

The restaurant's captain, a severe woman named ELSA, checks the guests' names from a list. When Margot and Tyler reach Elsa in line, she smiles coldly.

ELSA

Welcome to Hawthorn, Mister
Ledford. And Miss-- Westervelt?

Elsa looks puzzled. Margot, equally puzzled, looks at Tyler.

TYLER

Oh, uh-- Right. Sorry. There was
actually a change of plans. This is
not Miss Westervelt, this is--

MARGOT

I'm Margot. Nice to meet you.

Elsa eyes her with a trace of suspicion. She smiles tightly.

ELSA

Margot. Welcome. We'll endeavor to
make your evening as pleasant as
possible. Right this way.

Elsa ushers them ahead. Tyler whispers to Margot:

TYLER

Sorry. That was, uh-- That was a
little awkward.

MARGOT

(smiles)
It's fine.

The boat leaves. Margot, it seems, is the only who notices it leave. She looks longingly at it as it sails away. And then she looks at this island. No way out. She snaps out of it.

Nearby, the tech guys continue to chat with the Movie Star, who seems happy for the attention.

BRYCE

So what are you working on now?

MOVIE STAR

Top secret, bro. Don't worry about
it. But I'm sort of moving into the
presenter phase of my career.

(MORE)

MOVIE STAR (CONT'D)

You know, be me, do me, authentic
shit. None of this artifice, or
story...

FELICITY

...or lines to memorize.

MOVIE STAR

(laughs, but it stings)
Hey now, wise guy!

SOREN

Ah, okay. Cool.

MOVIE STAR

Plus I'm a huge embarrassing
foodie. Love this stuff. Friends
with the chef in fact.

Tyler overhears this and makes a face: 'Like hell you are.'

7

EXT. CLEARING BY THE DOCK - EARLY EVENING

7

The guests are all assembled on a beautiful expansive lawn.
Elsa stands before them. She smiles and addresses the group:

ELSA

Welcome to Hawthorn. You are all
part of an enormously special
evening. First of all, we recognize
it is not easy to secure a
reservation at our restaurant.

(smiles)

That alone makes you pretty
special, doesn't it?

The group laughs nervously.

ELSA (CONT'D)

But tonight is not like other
nights. Tonight's menu will be
different. Unusual. Tonight we will
tell you a story we've never told
before. And one we'll never tell
again. So let me warn you now:
Wonderful surprises await you all.

ANGLE ON the excited FACES of the various guests.

ELSA (CONT'D)

But first. Let us introduce you to
our home. Follow me please.

All start walking -- except for the Liebrandts.

RICHARD

We'll wait here, if you don't mind.

ANNE

We've seen it. Many times.

ELSA

Yes, you have, haven't you?

(to the group)

The Liebrandts are very loyal customers.

8

EXT. DRIFTWOOD BEACH - EVENING

8

Elsa leads the rest of the group toward the gardens.

ELSA

Hawthorn Island comprises twelve acres of forest and pasture. Our owner purchased the island in 1989, but we prefer to think of it as ownerless. As wild. As a natural outgrowth of the sea and the air and the sky.

ANGLE ON Margot listening to this pretentious speech.

ELSA (CONT'D)

We have the bounty of the sea surrounding us. Out there, right now, we are harvesting scallops. You'll eat them tonight!

She waves at a GUY IN A ROWBOAT. As if on cue, he waves back. The guests join in and wave as well.

MOVIE STAR

Harvest harder my dude! We're starving!

Everyone laughs at what the famous guy said, even though it wasn't actually that funny. Felicity rolls her eyes.

As they continue on walking, Lillian leans in to Ted --

LILLIAN BLOOM

I do like the sense of it being a sort of biome of culinary ideas.

TED

Yes, like an - epicurean salon.

Margot overhears this.

MARGOT

We have reached the base camp of
Mount Bullshit.

TYLER

I love it. Come on, let's catch up.

9 EXT. SMOKEHOUSE - EVENING 9

Elsa removes a SLEEK, STYLIZED KEY RING and opens the door.

10 INT. SMOKEHOUSE - CONTINUOUS 10

All enter a room where MEAT and FISH hang on sharp hooks.

ELSA

Our smokehouse is in the Nordic
style. We use dairy cow meat only,
which we age for an astonishing 152
days to relax the protein strands.

DAVE (TECH BRO 3)

(laughs)

What happens if you serve it on the
153rd day? All hell breaks loose?

Elsa smiles politely but coldly.

ELSA

Well, I suppose the bacteria might
introduce itself to the customer's
bloodstream, spreading into their
spinal membranes, at which point he
or she would become incapacitated
and shortly thereafter expire?

Pause. Dave is silent.

ELSA (CONT'D)

So yes. All hell would break loose.

Elsa laughs. They all laugh.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Good thing we're pros, yes? Come --

11 OMITTED

11

12 EXT. HAWTHORN GARDENS - EVENING

12

The guests are taken through a beautiful garden.

ELSA

Wild sea beans, salmonberries and sea lettuce are foraged from our shores. And our gardens supply us with no end of seasonal produce.

MOVIE STAR

Sorry, is this the time to mention I have a severe peanut allergy?

FELICITY

You don't think I told them?

ELSA

Oh, yes, we know, sir. We've planned for that. And Mrs. Liebrandt's shellfish allergy. And Mr. Lorimer's gluten sensitivity, though technically no such condition exists.

DAVE looks slightly offended.

ELSA (CONT'D)

We learn all about our guests, and Chef plans the menu accordingly.

13 EXT. GREAT LAWN. EVENING

13

The group follows Elsa as the tour continues. Tyler squeezes Margot's hand romantically. She gives him a flirty eye.

We PAN to the front. Lillian Bloom is takes notes.

ELSA

Writing good things, I hope, Ms. Bloom. Not like what you wrote about our friends at Mercia.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Mercia? Be fair, I wrote a very kind review of Mercia.

ELSA

Well not completely, Ms. Bloom.

ELSA smiles and opens a door.

14 INT. BUNKHOUSE - EVENING

14

The group is led inside what looks exactly like a MILITARY BARRACKS, complete with bunk beds.

We see also tiny SHOWER SPIGOTS, like at a YMCA, and a ROW OF TOILETS with no walls or doors, like at a prison.

ELSA

And this is where we live.

BRYCE

Wait, you guys actually live here?
All of you?

ELSA

All of us. Except Chef.

TED

Esprit de corps. Lovely.

ELSA

No, Mr. Feldman. It is more than that. Here we are family.

Tyler smiles, inspired. But Margot looks less sure.

ELSA (CONT'D)

A common mission unites us, to run the world's finest restaurant. We work 80 hours per week if we're lucky. And we're never lucky. Each day starts at six with five hours of prep work. We harvest. We ferment. We slaughter. We marinate. We liquify. We spherify. We gel.

MARGOT

You *gel*?

ELSA

We gel. Dinner is typically four hours and twenty-five minutes.

MARGOT reacts. That's long.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Each day ends at well past two in the morning. So yes, it's best that we all live here.

SOREN

Don't you guys get burned out?

ELSA
'Burned out?'

The phrase disgusts her. But she composes herself.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Chef holds himself to the highest
standard, and so do we. We never
'burn' anything unless by design,
to make delicious.
(big, too big smile)
Now. Who's hungry?

15 EXT. GREAT LAWN - DUSK

15

Tyler puts an arm around Margot. Dream date with dream girl.

TYLER
Chef will win you over by the end,
just wait. You'll be licking crumbs
from his hand like a Labrador.

MARGOT
Yeah, maybe? If we ever finish our
tour of Food Auschwitz.

TYLER
(chuckles)
Nice one.

She snuggles against him as they walk. They both smile.

As they approach the restaurant, Tyler notices a charming
COTTAGE perched on a hill in a copse of trees.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Excuse me, Elsa. Who lives there?

ELSA
Chef.

TYLER
Are we seeing that?

ELSA
Even we are not allowed inside
Chef's cottage.

Tyler nods, a bit chastened.

MARGOT
(whispers to Tyler)
We mustn't disturb the Lord High
Emperor of Sustenance.

TYLER
All right. Easy now.

16 EXT. HAWTHORN RESTAURANT - DUSK

16

Elsa shows everyone inside and quietly locks the door.

The room is minimalist and faux rustic. A touch sad even. A museum mood where one doesn't necessarily "enjoy" eating.

A sad husk of a woman, LINDA (75), drinks wine at a small table abutting a wall. The diners are mildly confused by her presence. She nods at a few of them.

LINDA
Hello. Welcome.

Everyone is shown to his/her seat. Elsa turns to Margot.

ELSA
Miss...?

MARGOT
Mills.

ELSA
Miss Mills. You will be sitting in
Miss Westervelt's seat. Enjoy.

Margot makes a face. Was that really necessary?

Richard and Anne sit at a table near Margot and Tyler. Richard's seat is positioned facing Margot. He notices this and looks concerned.

RICHARD
Switch seats with me.

ANNE
Why?

RICHARD
Just because. I want to have a
better view of the water.

A weird request. Every seat has a view of the water.

ANNE

Fine.

THE KITCHEN is open, visible from the dining area, the bustling staff hard at work. Tyler can't believe his eyes.

ELSA

(deeply pretentious)

Feel free to observe the cooks as they innovate. But please do not photograph our dishes. Chef strongly feels that the beauty of his creations lies in their ephemeral nature.

MARGOT

(to Tyler)

And I strongly feel the need to punch her in the cunt. Like an uppercut. Right to the cunt.

TYLER

Here, come on. We can't miss this.

Tyler leads Margot by the hand into...

17

INT. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

17

...Hawthorn's world-class machine of a kitchen, filled with COOKS OF ALL RANKS -- more cooks, in fact, than diners. Tyler watches a SOUS-CHEF (JEREMY) plate a cold, snow-like powder.

TYLER

Do you make that with a Pacojet?

JEREMY

Exactly right, sir.

TYLER

(to Margot)

A Pacojet can produce a powderized snow-like texture.

MARGOT

Ah. Fascinating.

JEREMY

You really know your stuff, Mr. Ledford.

TYLER

You know my name?

JEREMY

We like to know everyone who dines
with us.

TYLER

And Chef is around here somewhere?
I'd love to talk with him, if--

JEREMY

Why don't you take your seat?

Tyler is unsure whether to feel offended until --

JEREMY (CONT'D)

We're about to serve.

TYLER

Yeah, okay. Sure. Thank you.

18 INT. DINING ROOM--CONTINUOUS

18

LINDA still sits alone, idly playing with her empty wine
glass. A cheery SOMMELIER approaches with a bottle.

SOMMELIER

More Lambrusco, madam?

Linda nods silently.

Back at Tyler and Margot's table, they sit down.

TYLER

The attention to detail, it's like -
fuck! He knew my name, babe!

MARGOT

I noticed you didn't ask *his* name.

TYLER

Shh. There he is.

We get our first glimpse of the man himself: CHEF JULIAN
SLOWIK(40s/50s), brooding, intense. Utterly focused, he
glides swiftly from station to station, tasting.

Elsa approaches Chef Slowik and talks softly to him. We don't
hear what is said, but he looks in Margot's direction.

TYLER (CONT'D)

(looks away, excited)
Fuck me? Is he looking at me?

But he's looking at Margot. They lock eyes. In that moment the great chef and his guest share a type of recognition -- a sadness perhaps? A longing? Chef tersely breaks eye contact and resumes his tasks. The cooks around him continue to work with an almost sinister focus.

19

TITLE CARD AGAINST BLACK:

19

AMUSE BOUCHE

SERVERS fan across the dining room in perfect unison.

SERVER #1

Here we have a compressed and pickled cucumber melon, milk snow, and charred lace. Enjoy.

LILLIAN BLOOM

This ongoing obsession with 'snow.'

TED

It's a plague. No one is immune.

We join the movie star's table. He's enjoying his *amuse*.

FELICITY

So look, I want to hear your pitch for the show, but first I just want to thank you for the opportunity. The last two years have been--

Movie star raises his glass

MOVIE STAR

...Great, and I look forward to many more!

He clinks their glasses.

FELICITY

C'mon, stop. It's a goodbye toast.

MOVIE STAR

No it ain't.

FELICITY

My mom got me a job at Sony. You know this. I gave you my two weeks two weeks ago.

MOVIE STAR

Yeah, yeah, I know. But... c'mon.

He smiles like, "Yeah right." Felicity goes into her bag.

FELICITY

Here's my work phone. Here's our production company's credit card. Here are the extra keys to your house in LA. Here are the keys to your apartment in New York, and your *other* apartment in New York that your wife doesn't know about.

MOVIE STAR

Can we just eat? It's like, research or whatever. For the show!

AT THE TECH BROS TABLE.

BRYCE

(to Soren)
So how's Amanda?

SOREN

We're doing the talking about our lives thing now?

BRYCE

Hey I don't want to either. But shouldn't we?

DAVE

Do we have to?

SOREN

Not good, Bryce. Amanda and I are not good. How's that?

BRYCE

(to Soren)
Your fault?

Soren makes a face like, 'Of course it's my fucking fault.'

BRYCE (CONT'D)

At least we've got work.

DAVE

And money.

BRYCE

To work and money!

They sarcastically cheers.

DAVE

We're pathetic, aren't we?

BRYCE

Oh yeah!

They laugh.

MARGOT AND TYLER. Tyler holds his amuse just so and furtively snaps a photo. He will do this with every dish. ELSA notices. She will always notice. He eats the dish and is in heaven.

TYLER

Jesus Christ. I want to live inside this thing.

MARGOT

Uh huh. It's pretty good.

TYLER

"Pretty good?" You're --
(laughs, shakes head)
You're funny.

Margot considers, then:

MARGOT

So... this is okay then? That I'm not as into it?

TYLER

No, no. It's good. It's what I like about you, the 'above it all.' I'm sitting with the coolest girl here.

MARGOT

Okay, good. Didn't want to ruin your fun. Too much.

She puts her hand on his leg.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

So what's with this food obsession?

Tyler gathers himself and then...

TYLER

I don't know. It's like - you know how people idolize athletes and musicians and, like, painters and stuff?

MARGOT

Sure.

TYLER

Yeah, those people are idiots. What they do doesn't matter. They play with inflatable balls and ukuleles and shit. Chefs play with the raw materials of life itself. And death itself. Like, I've watched every fucking episode of *Chef's Table* two or three times. I've watched Slowik's probably twenty times. I've watched him explain the exact moment at which a green strawberry is perfectly unripe. I've watched him plate a raw scallop during its last dying contraction of muscle. It's art on the edge of the abyss. Which is where God works too.

Margot nods. Does she buy it?

MARGOT

That's beautifully put, Tyler.

TYLER

Oh stop it.

MARGOT

No really. I am starting to get it, a little.

TYLER

Ah, see? Told ya you'd come around.

Tyler looks pleased with his mansplain triumph. Margot looks out the WINDOW.

20

TITLE CARD AGAINST BLACK:

20

FIRST COURSE

CLOSE on Chef. He tastes something, closes his eyes and keeps them closed, deep in contemplation. Then he opens them.

CHEF SLOWIK

Okay.

We follow him into the dining room, where he surveys his guests, raises his hands and CLAPS. Once. Loud. All conversations stop. His staff stops. Everything stops.

Chef Slowik stares at his diners, smiling tightly. This whole solar system revolves around him, the all-powerful sun.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Welcome to Hawthorn. I am Julian Slowik, and tonight it will be our pleasure to feed you.

The diners applaud. Margot scrunches her face and plays along. Lillian and Ted exchange proud, possessive looks.

LILLIAN BLOOM

The curtain rises.

CHEF SLOWIK

Over the next few hours, you will ingest fat, salt, sugar, protein, bacteria, fungi, various plants and animals -- at times entire ecosystems. But I have to beg of you one thing. Just one. Do not eat.

(dramatic pause)

Taste. Savor. Relish. Consider every morsel you place inside your mouth. Be mindful. But do not eat. Our menu is too precious for that.

ON THE PATRONS, who look a little confused, especially the movie star. Tyler, however, is just lapping this up.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Look around you. Breathe deeply. Accept it. Accept all of it. *Forgive.* And on that note --
(smiles)
Food!

Servers fan out in perfect formation carrying exquisitely manicured plates.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Our first course is called "The Island."

One of the plates lands on a table in a gorgeous, slow-motion CU product shot. Perfectly curated bits of flora and jewels of scallop meat rest artfully atop a smooth, icy rock.

A SUPERIMPOSED TITLE reads, "THE ISLAND. Foraged plants, scallop, seawater."

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

On your plate are plants from around the island, placed on rocks from the shore covered in barely-frozen, filtered seawater which will flavor the dish as it melts.

Tyler smiles and whispers to Margot a little too loudly:

TYLER

This is what the guy was fishing
for earlier in the--

The room is silent. Chef Slowik stares right at Tyler with a
withering glare. Tyler tenses in his seat, mortified.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Sorry, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

(smiles)

It's perfectly all right. Yes, they
are those very same scallops.
Except, of course, for Mrs.
Liebrandt. She has salmon.

Anne smiles appreciatively.

ANNE

Thank you.

CHEF SLOWIK

(back to the group)

Here is what you must remember
about this dish. We, the people on
this island, are not important. The
island and the nutrients it
provides exist in their most
perfect state without us gathering
them, manipulating them or
digesting them. What happens inside
this room is *meaningless* compared
to what occurs outside, in nature,
in the soil and the water and the
air. We are but a frightened
nanosecond. Nature is timeless.

(warm smile)

Enjoy!

He returns to the kitchen. Diners exchange glances with their
partners. Margot arches an eyebrow at the pomposity.

MARGOT

Cheery thought.

(noticing)

Um. Hey. Are you - crying?

TYLER

Yeah. Sorry.

(laughs awkwardly)

I know.

(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)

It's just, I find it all very moving. It's all so...I don't know. It's just so beautiful.

Tyler holds his phone just so and snaps a shot of his plate. Elsa clocks it. Simmering rage.

TYLER (CONT'D)

It's almost too beautiful to eat.

Margot looks at her plant-covered rock warily. She's not so moved. But then she smiles, as if remembering something.

MARGOT

You know, the nicest restaurant in my hometown was this shitty red sauce place called Martini's that--

TYLER

(interrupting)

You don't think Chef's mad at me, right? Because of the scallop thing?

MARGOT

You don't have to address him as "Chef," Tyler. And no, I doubt he's even aware of your existence.

Tyler keeps his eyes fixed on CHEF SLOWIK, who is intensely directing his staff in the open kitchen.

TYLER

I know. It's just, I kind of want him to - ya know.

MARGOT

To what? To like you?

TYLER

(laughs)

Yeah. Kinda.

MARGOT

You're a customer. You're paying him to serve you. It doesn't matter whether he likes you or not.

Tyler nods, then considers this. He looks mildly offended.

TYLER

Right. Wait. What does that mean?

MARGOT

(smiles)

Nothing. Relax. You're good.

The sommelier slides up, seemingly out of thin air.

SOMMELIER

And to pair, from our friends at
Isabelle et Denis, a premier cru
Chablis from 2014. Not just single
vineyard but a single row of vines.

THE MOVIE STAR and FELICITY stare at their perfect plates.
Neither lifts a fork.

Movie Star pops a scallop in his mouth. Smiles.

FELICITY

How is it?

MOVIE STAR

Good!

FELICITY

You're going to need to say more
than "good" for the show.

MOVIE STAR

It's not brain surgery, okay? It's
a travel food show thing. I go to
Italy, we shoot me in Capris on a
pastel green Vespa driving to some
Guiseppe's farm with cheese and
there's a close-up of me eating the
cheese and I close my eyes and fake
an orgasm, then I'm off to South
Africa or wherever and I eat goat
and talk about how racism is maybe
not so cool and bingo bongo there's
your show.

Felicity stares at him.

FELICITY

Wait... is that it? That's the big
pitch you're giving to three
streaming services on Monday?

MOVIE STAR

(shrugs)

Pretty much yeah.

FELICITY

Holy fucking Jesus --

MOVIE STAR

Look. Relax. When it's time to
deliver I deliver. I always do.

We glide over to Lillian Bloom and Ted as they eat the dish
with expressions of pure ecstasy.

TED

Thoughts? I think it's quite --

LILLIAN BLOOM

Half-great. It's there in moments.

TED

It's there in moments.

LILLIAN BLOOM

There's a *neediness* to the plating.
Tweezered to fuck. But the flavors
are there. Very clean, very...
thalassic.

TED

Thalassic?

LILLIAN BLOOM

Oceanic. Thalassa was the Greek
primeval spirit of the sea. So.
We're eating the ocean.

TED

We're eating the ocean. Yes.

RICHARD AND ANNE sit eating silently like two live corpses.
They could just as well be eating prime rib at a casino.

Finally Anne barely speaks.

ANNE

I saw Perry at DeLaurenti's the
other day.

RICHARD

Mm.

(beat)

How was he?

Anne shrugs.

ANNE

You know...

(then)

Perry.

And with that, the scintillating Perry chat is over.

THE TECH BROS are in fact purely eating and drinking, not even looking at their plates as they talk.

DAVE

--and the cloud space is only getting crazier. Everyone scales up, and their OPEX budgets are--

BRYCE

Dude enough. You sound so douche-y.

SOREN

(pointing at plate)
You like?

BRYCE

The otter food? Oh, yeah. Solid.

SOREN

The plating's a little schmance though, right? And I've had shellfish just as good at Kashiba, or even with my chef at home. But whatever. Now we can say we've been here. As my dad used to say, "We're buying an experience."

ELSA stands against the wall, eyeing them with contempt.

21 INT. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

21

The staff prepares the next course. Chef looks up to stare at Margot, noting her tense posture and nearly-full plate. Then he sees Tyler extend his fork toward her food. Chef winces.

CHEF SLOWIK

(irritated)
I want plating in five.

WHOLE TEAM

Yes, Chef!

22 EXT. HAWTHORN ISLAND - TWILIGHT

22

Darkness falls. We see the restaurant from afar, bay windows aglow with warm light. Out here, amidst the water and trees, all is quiet save for the lonesome, distant call of a loon.

AGAINST BLACK, TITLE CARD:**BREAD SERVICE**

23 INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

23

Margot and Tyler wait for the next course. Tyler observes something about Margot and smiles. Margot notices.

MARGOT

What?

TYLER

Nothing. It's fun watching you in this place. You're just so *Margot* about it all.

MARGOT

Oh yeah? How so?

Tyler examines and catalogues the specimen.

TYLER

This is your whole thing: You hate these fancy places because you're working-class and real and just a true-blue down-home girl, all spiky and snarky. That's so who you are. I love it.

Margot smiles and nods. She goes along with it.

MARGOT

Yeah, well? You grow up poor in Philly like I did and then step into a place like this? Yeah, sure. Your fists go up a little.

Tyler looks turned on by the notion of taking a fist in the face from a tough poor girl. Margot smiles playfully.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

You like that, huh?

TYLER

I like you.

MARGOT

(moment of sweetness)

I like you, too.

Margot smiles at Tyler. Tyler really feels a connection.

TYLER

Beautiful night.

As Tyler looks out the window, he doesn't see Margot's smile gradually decreasing to a glare. No connection on her end.

Chef Slowik CLAPS again. Margot jumps a little, startled.

MARGOT

Is he going to keep doing that?

Chef waits in silence a few moments. Too many moments.

CHEF SLOWIK

Bread has existed in some form for over 12,000 years, especially amongst the poor. Flour and water. What could be simpler? Even today, grain represents 65% of all agriculture. Fruits and vegetables? Only 6%. Ancient Greek peasants dipped their stale, measly bread in wine for breakfast. And how did Jesus teach us to pray if not to beg for "our daily bread?" It is, and has always been, the food of the common man. But you, my dear guests, are not the common man. So tonight you get no bread.

Margot actually chuckles -- you've got to be kidding.

Servers place SHALE PLATES on the tables, along with a lovely parchment NOTE. Where there would normally be bread is an empty space surrounded by condiments -- creams, pickles, etc.

A SUPERIMPOSED TITLE reads, "BREADLESS BREAD PLATE: no bread, savory accompaniments."

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

In this spirit, please enjoy the unaccompanied accompaniments.

MOVIE STAR'S TABLE. Felicity reads the parchment note.

FELICITY

"The bread you will not be eating tonight was made from a heritage wheat called red fife, crafted with our partners at the Tehachapi Grain Project, devoted to preserving heirloom grains..."

MOVIE STAR

(eating)

I have to say, the shit around the table absence of bread is tasty.

LILLIAN BLOOM AND TED.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Now *this* is a wickedly clever conceit. Slowik is famous for his bread. Tartine doesn't hold a candle. And tonight no bread?

TED

Outrageous.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Fiendish, really. He's always been keenly aware of food as a history of class while still preserving a sense of the delicious.

(poking at a sauce)

Although I will say the emulsion here does look slightly broken.

TED

I didn't want to mention it, but I was just thinking the same thing.

LILLIAN BLOOM

And you really --

(whispers)

-- you really shouldn't see that in a restaurant of this quality. I'm frankly surprised. Minor quibble. But there it is.

Chef Slowik sees this exchange.

MARGOT AND TYLER.

TYLER

Next level bad-assery. The way he weaves in historical allegories. The game is trying to guess what the over-arching theme of the entire meal is going to be. You won't know till the end.

MARGOT

Wait, you like this? He's basically insulting us, isn't he?

TYLER

No no no, you don't get it. It's a concept.

MARGOT

I know what a concept is, Tyler.

TYLER

No, trust me. He's telling a story. That's what makes his food so exciting. He's not just a chef. He's a storyteller. And he doesn't give a fuck about the rules.

MARGOT

Yeah, well, call me the girl next door but maybe some rules you should give a fuck about.

Tyler takes her hand, kisses it, and smiles mischievously.

TYLER

My dearest, no one would ever call you the girl next door.

Meanwhile, back at Lillian Bloom's table:

LILLIAN BLOOM

I bake my own bread at home, of course.

TED

Oh?

LILLIAN BLOOM

Very rustic. Peasant style. Yeasty.

TED

What kind of yeast do you use?

LILLIAN BLOOM

I make my own. From apples.

TED

Of course you make your own yeast from apples, you wicked thing.

Elsa approaches with another, LARGER CONTAINER of the broken emulsion Lillian complained about.

ELSA

Ms. Bloom, here is another broken emulsion. Courtesy of Chef Slowik.

She points to the kitchen, where Chef Slowik offers a wave and warm smile. Lillian smiles nervously and waves back.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Oh, I -- thank you.

BRYCE

(calling to Elsa)

Excuse me. Excuse me.

Elsa heads to THE TECH-BRO TABLE.

ELSA

Is everything to your liking, sir?

BRYCE

Well, actually, no. Thanks for asking. I mean, look, the food's great and we totally get all the conceptual stuff. But could we please get a little bread? You guys are super-famous for your bread, and we don't know when we'll ever get a chance to eat here again.

SOREN

Everybody always talks about your amazing bread.

ELSA

Yes. And?

BRYCE

Could we please just try some of your bread? You know, and some gluten-free for my friend as well?

ELSA

No

BRYCE

No?

ELSA

No.

The men exchange an exasperated look. Elsa stares coldly.

BRYCE

This is all very clever and, I didn't want to play this card, but you know who we are, right?

ELSA

Yes.

SOREN

You do. You know who we are.

ELSA

I know who you are.

SOREN

You know we work with Doug Verrick.

ELSA

No, you work for Mr. Verrick.

Lillian and Ted overhear. Lillian makes a "yikes" face.

DAVE

Exactly. So you know we all play on the same team. So just slip us a little bread. Please.

SOREN

We won't tell a soul.

ELSA

No.

BRYCE

Did you say no?

ELSA

I said no. Yes.

BRYCE

Okay. Wow.

Elsa leans in to speak in a menacing whisper.

ELSA

You will eat less than you desire and more than you deserve.

She spins and walks away.

MARGOT and TYLER. Margot is not eating. Chef stares at her.

TYLER

Well if you're not going to eat, I'm gonna eat.

Tyler reaches over and picks up her entire plate to exchange it with his own empty one. He tries to do it carefully but bumps a wine glass with his elbow. It SHATTERS on the ground.

Two servers appear to clean up the mess. Tyler is mortified. Now Tyler spots Chef Slowik marching over to their table.

TYLER (CONT'D)

So, so sorry. Total accident.

Chef focuses solely on Margot.

CHEF SLOWIK

You haven't touched your food.

MARGOT

Yeah, sorry. A lot of food coming, right? Don't want to fill up.

CHEF SLOWIK

That would not be possible. I've precisely designed the portions to account for that. Please eat. The menu only makes sense if you eat.

MARGOT

But you told us *not* to eat.

CHEF SLOWIK

This is not what I meant, madam. And you know it.

MARGOT

Thanks, but I'll eat what I want to eat. And when.

Chef half-smiles and half-grimaces. No one talks to him like this. He walks away. Tyler looks sick.

TYLER

Jesus. That was humiliating.

MARGOT

I'm not humiliated. He's a prick.

AT LINDA'S TABLE.

Chef kneels and gently takes her hand. She looks at him with glazed, wounded eyes. He smiles at her understandingly. She weakly smiles back. Chef kisses her forehead and heads into --

-- where he looks at his watch.

CHEF SLOWIK

Plating in three, my friends.

ENTIRE KITCHEN
Yes, Chef!

25 EXT. HAWTHORN ISLAND - NIGHT 25

Tall, spindly evergreens shiver in the cold darkness.

AGAINST BLACK, TITLE CARD:

SECOND COURSE

26 INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING 26

RICHARD and ANNE silently await more food. No eye contact.

MARGOT AND TYLER. The sommelier arrives.

SOMMELIER
Here's a 2009 *Valpolicella Classico Superiore* from Tommaso Bussola, which we've hyper-decanted with an immersion blender. Slavonian oak. Rich cherry and tobacco notes. A faint sense of longing and regret.

Margot smiles as the sommelier walks away.

MARGOT
Mmm. Longing and regret. My favorite.

Margot glances over at Richard and Anne's table. She looks at Anne staring off. Anne feels Margot's eyes on her. Anne then looks at Margot and Margot looks away.

ANNE
She's staring again.

RICHARD
Uh-huh.

ANNE
Where do we know her from?

RICHARD
We don't.

ANNE
She really does look like Claire.

RICHARD

Why do you keep saying that? She doesn't.

ANNE

You don't think so?

RICHARD

She's nothing like our Claire.

There is something sad in Anne's face as she watches Margot.

ANNE

That same faraway face --

RICHARD

Can we not obsess? Please?

A touchy topic. Anne looks away. They sip their wine.

FELICITY and MOVIE STAR

MOVIE STAR

Hypothetically, if you were leaving, which you're not, what would you be leaving for?

FELICITY

Associate Development Co-Exec.

MOVIE STAR

What is that?

FELICITY

(not quite sure)
Um, just developing, or helping to - develop. Things?

MOVIE STAR

Uh huh. And hypothetically, *why* would that be better than working for me?

FELICITY

Um. Well. There's a - future there?

That hits like a hammer. She can tell that hurt.

FELICITY (CONT'D)

No hey. A different future I meant.

It's a gut punch. But then Movie Star turns it back on.

MOVIE STAR

Right. Well. Thank God that was all hypothetical!

Beat.

MOVIE STAR (CONT'D)

My wife found out about the apartment in New York that she shouldn't know about.

FELICITY

Hypothetically?

MOVIE STAR

Sure.

We hear Chef Slowik's CLAP.

CHEF SLOWIK

The next course is called "Memory." That's what it's meant to evoke -- a memory. Let me tell you one of mine. When I was a child growing up in Waterloo, Iowa, Tuesday was taco night. Taco Tuesday!

The guests smile, but his enthusiasm feels forced and odd. Chef Slowik puts his hand on Linda's shoulder.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

This is my mother. As you can see, she is rather drunk. This is not unusual. When I was seven years old, one Tuesday my father came home quite drunk. Also not unusual. Mother grew angry and screamed at him. At which point he proceeded to wrap a telephone cord around her neck and pull it tight. I wept and screamed and begged him to stop. To make him stop, I finally had to stab him in the thigh with kitchen scissors. You remember that, mother, don't you?

Linda reacts vaguely, continues drinking.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

I suppose I should have stabbed him in his throat that evening. But we are not so smart when we are young.

The diners exchange uneasy glances. Lillian turns to Ted with a reassuring look -- "Don't worry, all par for the course."

Margot, however, watches Chef intently and with empathy, as if understanding his pain. Noticing, Chef locks eyes with her and says the next line directly to her.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Well. It was, as you can imagine, a very memorable taco night.

Servers appear and set down plates fashioned out of coiled telephone cords, as well as bowls of tortillas. On the plates are chicken thighs with TINY SCISSORS sticking out of them.

A SUPERIMPOSED TITLE reads: "MEMORY. Marinated grilled chicken thigh, tortillas, green salsa cubes, red salsa halo."

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Here you have house-smoked Bresse chicken thighs *al pastor* and our own tortillas made with heirloom *masa*--one of Hawthorn's signature dishes. We change our menu constantly, but, as Miss Bloom knows, this has been a staple since day one.

(turning to her)

It's what you once said --

LILLIAN BLOOM

Put you on the map.

CHEF SLOWIK

Put me on the map. And precisely what map would that be?

Chef lets this rhetorical question hang in the air.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Anyways, because we are always innovating-- because we fear irrelevance...

Movie star reacts.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

...an update to a classic: images on the tortillas have been made using a laser engraving machine. We hope this taco night evokes strong memories for us all.

(warm smile)

Enjoy.

LILLIAN BLOOM examines her tortillas: images of buildings.

TED

What are they, Lil?

LILLIAN BLOOM

They're - restaurants.

TED

Restaurants?

LILLIAN BLOOM

That I reviewed That -- that closed.

She holds one with a sign reading "MERCIA."

TED

Oh. So, it's like a - gag?

LILLIAN BLOOM

(chuckles nervously)

I think so? Odd, isn't it?

RICHARD AND ANNE examine their tortillas. The first reads, "Happy Anniversary, Mr. and Mrs. Liebrandt." Anne is touched. The other tortillas show what looks like Richard and Anne sitting at their table during previous Hawthorn visits.

ANNE

Richard, what are these?

RICHARD

Taco things. For the tacos.

ANNE

I mean the pictures. Look, they're all of us.

Richard dons his glasses.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Oh, look at this one, Dick. This one was after you had that melanoma removed from your forehead.

There's the bandage. Isn't this nice? They remembered us.

(squinting at another)

Huh. That's you... but who's that woman?

She picks it up to reveal a tortilla which has been engraved with a B&W image of a man who looks like Richard sitting at a restaurant table with a young woman.

ANNE (CONT'D)
Richard, who is that?

RICHARD
How the hell should I know? It's
faked. Some sort of stupid joke.

He grabs the tortilla from his wife's hands.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
This whole place is a fucking joke.

Anne just stares at him.

THE TECH BROS discover tortillas printed with dense blocks of
FORMATTED TEXT, like business records.

SOREN
What the fuck?

DAVE
Are these --? How did they --?

BRYCE
That's it.

He slams a tortilla on the table and waves Elsa over.

ELSA
Can I help you, sir?

BRYCE
What the hell are these?

ELSA
These are --
(perfect accent)
-- *tortillas*. *Tortillas deliciosas*.

BRYCE
I said what are these?

ELSA
These are *tortillas* which contain
Echobright's tax records and other
documents showing how your company
has hidden transactions with shell
companies and created invoices with
fake charges.

BRYCE
How did you get these?

ELSA

I'm sorry, but Chef never reveals his recipes.

SOREN

Do you know how fucked you are? We'll have you shut down by morning.

ELSA

Oh, no. That won't be necessary.

The MOVIE STAR and FELICITY examine their tortillas.

FELICITY

Looks like they're all the same.

MOVIE STAR

Indeed. Indeed they are.

Each depicts a MOVIE POSTER -- the same movie poster. For a middling comedy called *Calling Dr. Sunshine*.

MOVIE STAR (CONT'D)

Calling Dr. Sunshine.

FELICITY

Huh. Forgot about that one.

MOVIE STAR

Dumb part. Bad script. Fun shoot.

TYLER examines their tortillas, crestfallen.

MARGOT

What's on them?

TYLER

They're all me... from tonight.

Margot looks. Each shows Tyler sneaking photos of the food.

MARGOT

Jesus. What's with this guy? This means they've been photographing us the whole night.

Margot looks around. She actually does see a few small spherical ceiling cameras. But Tyler's too shattered to care.

TYLER

I knew it. He hates me. God damn it. I didn't think he'd really mind. Should I apologize?

MARGOT

What? Why would you apologize? They have no right to--

A flustered Tyler angrily cuts her off.

TYLER

Just fucking stop talking and let me think, okay? I have to make this right somehow. I have to.

MARGOT

I'll tell you how: Send it back.

Margot turns to wave a server over.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

Excuse me. Excuse me!

TYLER

Hey. Hey! Margot!

Tyler snaps his fingers at Margot violently.

MARGOT

Did you just snap at me?

Tyler glares at her with cold, remorseless eyes.

TYLER

Are you out of your mind? Do you know how long I've been trying to get a reservation here?

MARGOT

No, and I don't care! This is--

TYLER

You don't send shit back to this kitchen, you child. You thank them for even letting you in the door.

Margot reels back, stunned.

MARGOT

What did you just call me?

TYLER

I called you a child because that's what you're fucking acting like.

MARGOT

Tyler, you need to apologize to me now. You can't talk to me like--

TYLER

Well, yeah, actually I can. Because
-- ding dong! -- I'm the one who's
paying. So, maybe, shut up and eat?

He angrily makes a taco, takes a bite. His rage disappears.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Oh my god. Oh my god, this is
incredible. You have to try this.

Margot just stares at him, her eyes burning with contempt.

MARGOT

Don't let me interrupt.

She throws her napkin on her chair and leaves the table.

27

INT. SIDE HALLWAY

27

En route to the ladies' room, Margot stops at a stunning
SILVER DOOR molded in an ornate floral pattern. Curious, she
slowly reaches for the handle.

ELSA

Can I help you, madam?

Margot turns to see a disapproving Elsa.

MARGOT

I'm looking for the ladies room.

ELSA

To your right.

MARGOT

What's behind this door?

ELSA

Something very special.

28

INT. LADIES ROOM - EVENING

28

Margot enters the dim, modernist bathroom and locks the door.

She stops and suddenly sits down on the tiled floor. She's
breathing heavily, almost hyperventilating with rage.

MARGOT

Stop it.

She gets a cigarette from her purse, cracks a tiny window and lights up. She notices an artsy framed photo on the wall showing a marshmallow roasting on a campfire.

She gazes out the window and sees a curious sight: a COOK carrying a pair of large costume angel wings across the lawn.

Suddenly the LOCK turns on the door. Margot flicks the cigarette out the window. Chef Slowik enters. He looks upset.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

Hey, what are you - ?

CHEF SLOWIK

I would like to know, specifically, what it was about the last course that you did not enjoy?

MARGOT

The - what?

CHEF SLOWIK

You've barely eaten the food. Why? I need to know. Why don't you eat?

MARGOT

Why do you care?

CHEF SLOWIK

I take my work very seriously, and you are not eating. That wounds me.

Margot can see he's actually quite hurt about this.

MARGOT

I guess I'm just not very hungry.

He takes a slow, deliberate step toward her. He's harder now.

CHEF SLOWIK

I've told you who I am. I'm Julian Slowik and I am the chef here. Now--

He takes two slow, deliberate steps forward. Margot steps back until her BACK is against the wall.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Who are you?

Margot is speechless.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

I'll ask again. Who. Are. You.

Margot composes herself.

MARGOT
I'm Margot Mills.

CHEF SLOWIK
And where are you from Margot?

MARGOT
Seattle.

CHEF SLOWIK
No. Where are you from?

She stares at him, trying to read him.

MARGOT
I'm from Grand Island, Nebraska.
Okay? You want the address for my
mom's trailer, asshole? Excuse me.

She tries to move past him but he blocks her.

CHEF SLOWIK
No, not who you want me to think
you are. Who are you?

Margot is thrown. Her usual game isn't working.

MARGOT
I'm Margot.

She slips around Chef Slowik and thinks she is about to get out the door, when Chef Slowik stops the door with his hand.

CHEF SLOWIK
You shouldn't be here tonight.

MARGOT
Get the fuck out of the way.

No one talks to him this way. He's impressed, curious. Margot exits the bathroom.

29 INT. HAWTHORN DINING AREA AND KITCHEN - EVENING

29

Meanwhile the movie star puzzles some more over his tortilla.

FELICITY
Maybe he's a fan of the movie?

MOVIE STAR
I don't think so.

FELICITY

Why not?

MOVIE STAR

Because nobody's a fan of that movie.

FELICITY

I'm sure it's just a joke. You're friends with him, right?

MOVIE STAR

I mean, 'friends'? Do I have friends? I know him?
(looking dead at Felicity)
Are you my friend?

Margot returns. Before she sits she kisses Tyler, violently.

MARGOT

Watch your mouth, sweetheart. Or I'll smack the taste right out of it. Okay?

TYLER

I -- Okay.
(he likes it)
Sorry.

Richard looks at Margot from across the way. She catches his eye and winks at him. Richard quickly looks away.

As Elsa passes his table, Richard snaps at her a bit.

RICHARD

Tell your boss if he thinks I'm paying for those tacos he's nuts.

ELSA

(smiles)
I'll be sure to tell him.

THE TECH BROS

BRYCE

I don't like the feel of this. At all. I want out of here.

SOREN

Dude, chill. It's a fucking taco.

BRYCE

A fucking taco that might hold up in court?

DAVE

We all have plausible deniability.
And if they try and turn us in --

SOREN

Right. Then they're turning Verrick
in too. And then they're just as
fucked as we are. We're fine.
(unsure)
Right?

They sit with this thought. Then, shrugging, they make tacos.

30

AGAINST BLACK, TITLE CARD:

30

THIRD COURSE

The patrons silently watch two servers methodically unrolling a TARP across the middle of the floor and smoothing out all the wrinkles. Other servers arrive with decorative baskets and cover the tarp with sea fennel and edible flowers.

TED

Theatrical. But minimalist, like in
the Japanese *minimirasuto* style.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Mm. They were being playful, yes?
With the tacos?

TED

Stop worrying. It's a dialogue.

LILLIAN BLOOM

No I know. I think the concept just
- missed the mark for me.

Margot watches the team unfold the plastic tarp and then looks at Chef Slowik, who is staring at her. He continues to stare, and then a LOUD CLAP. This time, Margot isn't fazed.

CHEF SLOWIK

We are ready for our next course,
which I think you'll find --

SOREN

(rising to his feet)
Excuse me. But what exactly is
going on here?

CHEF SLOWIK

Yes, if you would let me finish?
(motions for him to sit)
Please.

Elsa calmly re-folds the tech bro's napkin for him. It does have a certain calming effect. The Tech Bro sits back down.

MARGOT

Tyler, I don't like this. Can we--

TYLER

Shh. It's fine. Relax.

CHEF SLOWIK

Ladies and gentlemen, please meet
sous-chef Jeremy Loucks.

A chef around thirty strides out of the kitchen and stands in the middle of the tarp. He stares straight ahead, stoic.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Jeremy created the next dish. It's called "The Mess." Jeremy, may I explain "The Mess?"

JEREMY

Yes, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

Originally from Sparks, Nevada, Jeremy studied at the Culinary Institute in Hyde Park. Jeremy's goal, as he wrote in a heartfelt letter, was to work for me here at Hawthorn. Isn't that right, Jeremy?

JEREMY

Yes, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

Jeremy is talented. He's good. He's very good. But he's not great. He will never be great. He desperately wants my job, my prestige. My talent. He aspires to greatness, but he will never achieve it. Correct, Jeremy?

JEREMY

Yes, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

Jeremy is like me at his age. He has forsaken everything to achieve his goals. He works twenty hours a day. No time for friends. Or family. He can't go to the park or see a movie or stop at the bank. Jeremy, when's the last time you called your mother?

JEREMY

I don't remember, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

Like mine, his life is pressure. Pressure to put out the best food in the world. Pressure to please his Chef. Pressure to please the customers. And the critics. And even when all goes right, and the food is perfect, and the customers are happy, and the critics are too, there is no way to avoid The Mess. The Mess you make of your life, of your body, of your sanity, by giving everything you have to pleasing people you will never know. Jeremy, do you like your life, this life you dreamed about?

JEREMY

No, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

Do you want my life?

Sweating, Jeremy looks at Chef. He wasn't expecting this.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

It's okay. You can answer. Do you want my life? Not my position or my talent. My life.

JEREMY

(tears in his eyes)
No, Chef.

Chef gently touches Jeremy's head and kisses his cheek.

CHEF SLOWIK

Ladies and gentlemen, your fourth course. Sous-chef Jeremy's Mess.

Chef takes a step back. Jeremy removes a pistol from the back waistband of his apron and BLOWS HIS BRAINS OUT.

Everyone shrieks as blood splatters on the walls and the floor and on their faces -- including on Linda, who continues to drink, unfazed. Jeremy falls backwards.

The kitchen staff all look for a second, then return to work.

Chef Slowik takes in the horrible sight, CRYING a little, mourning. Servers rush over and, with practiced efficiency, roll up the tarp with Jeremy's body inside.

Panicked and screaming, many diners rise from their seats and run toward the door. Servers and cooks rush out to block their way, but more reassuring than threatening.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Please. Please. Sit. Make yourselves at home. Everything's fine. All part of the menu. All just part of the show.

As the shocked diners are corralled back to their tables by the cooks, servers approach tables with perfectly-folded moist washcloths so diners can wipe their faces. Still other servers fan out with PLATES for the tables.

A SUPERIMPOSED TITLE reads, "THE MESS. Pressure cooked vegetables, roasted filet, potato confit, beef jus, bone marrow. R.I.P. Jeremy Loucks, 1990-2022."

SOREN

(in shock)

Oh Jesus. What the fuck?

DAVE

Is he dead? Was - is this real?

BRYCE

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Lillian Bloom looks rattled, but tries to calm the others.

LILLIAN BLOOM

No, no, it's theater. It's just-- stagecraft. It's part of the menu.

SOREN

The fuck are you talking about? He just shot himself.

TED

It looked very real, Lillian?

LILLIAN BLOOM

Listen, I'm telling you. Trust me.
This is what he does.

Ted nods numbly. He doesn't want to be a rube here.

TED

Extraordinary.

Chef sees everyone shocked, not eating.

CHEF SLOWIK

EAT.

(returning to the kitchen)
Fourth course, on order!

ENTIRE KITCHEN

Yes, Chef!

MARGOT AND TYLER haven't moved. In fact, Tyler is now eating.

MARGOT

Tyler, what -- what's happening?

The sommelier sashays up, cheery and helpful as ever.

SOMMELIER

This is a biodynamic Cabernet
Franc/Gamay blend from our friends
at *Clos de l'Elu* in the Loire
Valley. No added sulfites. A bit of
barnyard funk, but a wonderful
match with braised proteins.

RICHARD AND ANNE

RICHARD

We're leaving. Now.

ANNE

My -- my coat.

RICHARD

Forget your coat. Get up!

They rush to the front door, but Elsa runs to stand in their way. Everyone else watches to see how this goes.

ELSA

Is something wrong?

RICHARD

Get out of our way. We're leaving.

ELSA

There is no boat to leave on.

RICHARD

Then I'll call a helicopter.

ELSA

That will be difficult without phone service.

RICHARD

Fucking move!

He tries to push past when two cooks with cleavers appear. The other diners squirm, some even stand instinctively.

ANNE

Oh, Jesus. Richard, just do what they say, for God's sake.

RICHARD

Let me handle this. I'll handle this.

ELSA

With which hand?

RICHARD

What?

ELSA

With which hand will you "handle" this, Mr. Liebrandt? Left or right?

RICHARD

What the fuck are you saying?

ELSA

Shall we choose?

RICHARD

Choose what?

ELSA

Very well. Left hand. Ring finger.

One cook grabs Richard and forces his left hand onto a table. The other one tries to aim, but Richard squirms.

ELSA (CONT'D)

Mr. Liebrandt, please hold still.

He looks at her for a split second and freezes, giving the cook the opening to chop his finger off. Everyone screams. It seems pretty clear now that this must be for real. Right?

ELSA (CONT'D)
(to the room)
Please stay seated. Thank you.

A petrified MOVIE STAR and FELICITY watch the chaos.

MOVIE STAR
This is real, isn't it?

FELICITY
I think so.

MOVIE STAR
I can't do this, a whole hostage thing. I can't--

FELICITY
Could you talk to him - I mean, because, you know him?

MOVIE STAR
Uh huh? Yeah, I made that up?

She looks at him. Jesus.

RICHARD writhes in pain on the floor. Two servers gently wrap a linen napkin around his bleeding finger stump and tie it with decorative ribbon. Elsa picks up his finger from the table, slides the wedding ring off and offers it to Anne.

ELSA
Your husband's ring, madam.

ANNE
(in a daze)
Thank you --

LILLIAN BLOOM watches. This can't be real, right?

LILLIAN BLOOM
Maybe this is for *our* benefit?
Just for us? That's why he texted me. This is incredible.

Ted nods, stunned, and leans over to the movie star.

TED
The actors are astonishing.

Anne overhears this as she walks Richard back to their table.

ANNE

We're not actors. We're *real*
people.

MARGOT AND TYLER. Margot watches in stunned silence as a blood-spattered Tyler quietly eats his food. To Margot's horror, he seems to be actually enjoying it.

MARGOT

Jesus Christ.

It is becoming clear to Margot that she is facing this alone.

ELSA

Miss Mills, please join Chef Slowik
in the kitchen.

MARGOT

What?

ELSA

Chef would like you to join him in
the kitchen. Right now. Please.

TYLER

Can I come, too?

ELSA

No.

Tyler watches helplessly as Margot follows Elsa toward the kitchen. COOKS guard the entrance, but Elsa waves them aside.

31 INT. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

31

Scared but brave, Margot enters and stands face to face with Chef. He looks her up and down and shakes his head.

CHEF SLOWIK

No. No, I'm sorry but you're all
wrong.

MARGOT

Why are you doing this?

CHEF SLOWIK

You're just, simply wrong.

MARGOT

What are you talking about?

CHEF SLOWIK

Who are you?

MARGOT

I'm Margot.

CHEF SLOWIK

I've served many Margots. You are not a Margot. Who are you?

MARGOT

What the fuck does it matter?

CHEF SLOWIK

It matters because this menu, this guest list, this entire evening, has been painstakingly planned. And you were not a part of that plan and it's spoiling everything. In order to proceed, I need to know where to seat you: With us or with them? It's really very important.

MARGOT

And then you'll - let me live?

CHEF SLOWIK

No, of course not. That would ruin the menu. We're all going to die tonight.

(to the kitchen)

Isn't that right?

ENTIRE KITCHEN

Yes, Chef!

CHEF SLOWIK

So do you want to die with those who give or with those who take?

MARGOT

But I die either way. It's arbitrary.

CHEF SLOWIK

It is not arbitrary. Please pick.

MARGOT

You've lost your mind. You're sick.

CHEF SLOWIK

What I've done here over the years is sick. Yes. But right now, my mind has never been clearer.

He believes it.

At that moment, the movie star tentatively tries to enter.

MOVIE STAR

Hi, sorry. Chef I don't know if you remember, we've met before, and--

CHEF SLOWIK

Leave my kitchen at once.

MOVIE STAR

Got it! Yes, absolutely, sir.

He immediately leaves.

CHEF SLOWIK

I don't want to rush you.

He sets a KITCHEN TIMER.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Our menu is strictly timed. In 15 minutes I'll have a break between courses. That is how long you have to decide. Our side or theirs. In the meantime, please return to your seat. The next dish is exquisite.

(turning away, clapping)

Plating in five!

ENTIRE KITCHEN

Yes, Chef!

CHEF SLOWIK

I love you all!

ENTIRE KITCHEN

We love you, Chef!

Put yourself in Margot's shoes. Mass psychosis.

Margot returns to a wide-eyed Tyler.

TYLER

Did you get a kitchen course? You did, didn't you? God damn it, it's not fucking fair, why do you get a kitchen course?

(calming himself)

What was it? Protein or veg?

Margot just stares at this creature, utterly bewildered. She slaps him. Hard. He stares at her.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Protein or Veg?

33

AGAINST BLACK, TITLE CARD:

33

Fourth Course

The TECH BROS quietly conspire at their table.

BRYCE
So, so, what's the play here? What are our options?

DAVE
The door is locked and guarded. The windows - ?

The movie star overhears and joins in.

MOVIE STAR
We've got forks, though? Knives?

SOREN
Yeah, fucking butter knives.

DAVE
And you think we have better knife skills than them?

BRYCE
So what, then? We bargain?

Suddenly Soren rises to his feet, picks up his chair and hurls it at one of the big bay windows. It bounces right off of the thick reinforced pane.

A few burly SERVERS step forward with knives, ready for Soren to bolt. There's nowhere for him to go. So he just screams.

SOREN
GAH!!! FUCK!!!

Elsa perfectly places Soren's chair back at his table. The cheery sommelier arrives at Margot and Tyler's table.

SOMMELIER
Everyone all set with wine?

MARGOT
Fuck yourself.

Chef enters. CLAP!

CHEF SLOWIK

There's a saying: "Sometimes all you need is a good cup of tea." I learned that growing up in Bratislava.

Some guests exchange glances. Didn't he say Iowa earlier? Maybe a weird appreciative smirk from Margot.

BRYCE

Please. Just let us go free.

CHEF SLOWIK

(puzzled)

I am.

(beat)

I've found that not only does tea cleanse the palate, but it offers a soothing balm when facing some hard, home truths.

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE reads: 'PALATE CLEANSER- wild bergamot and red clover tea.'

Servers fan out with bowls filled with the tea.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

So, before we continue, are there any questions about me or Hawthorn or why none of us are getting out of here alive?

This is the first time everyone is hearing this. It's silent.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

No questions?

People are hesitant to raise their hands. Tyler does.

TYLER

Is this bergamot I'm getting Chef?

Some people glare at Tyler: 'That's the question you ask?'

CHEF SLOWIK

Yes it is.

The movie star raises a tentative hand.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Yes?

MOVIE STAR

I suppose I -- I'd like to know--

SOREN

Why the fuck is this happening?

CHEF SLOWIK

Okay. Well. Think of yourselves as ingredients in a degustation concept. Figuratively speaking. That's the best way to describe it.

The diners are puzzled. What the fuck is he talking about?

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

But none of this should be a surprise to most of you. Ms. Bloom -- Lillian, if I may -- my cherished early advocate, knows the damage she has done to so many livelihoods.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Now, hold on, Chef, I've been very--

CHEF SLOWIK

You don't talk. I was happy in my little taco truck. I was fine. It was the happiest I've ever been.

Margot clocks that remark. Skeptical.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

(to Ted)

And you, you enable her filth. You buttress. You coddle.

Ted looks offended. Then a server approaches Lillian Bloom and sets down a comically LARGE NEW CONTAINER.

SERVER #2

More broken emulsion, madam.

Lillian Bloom stares at it. How is this happening?

CHEF SLOWIK

You *loved* that I texted you an invitation for this evening. *Me* yearning for *your* attendance.

Lillian might nod her head. Sure. Fine. He's right.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

That is to be expected. And you
have fed my ego as well, sadly.

Elsa appears near Margot and gestures to the TIMER in her
hand. The texture of reality grows stranger by the moment.

ELSA

10 minutes, Miss Mills.

Anne speaks up.

ANNE

Please, my husband! He needs to go
to the hospital!

RICHARD

I'm fine. Just let my wife go.

Chef glares at Richard and Anne.

CHEF SLOWIK

My loyal regulars. How many times
have you eaten here in the last
five years?

RICHARD

I, I don't know. Six? Seven?

ANNE

(under her breath)
I think more than that, Dick...

CHEF SLOWIK

Eleven. Eleven times. Most people
consider themselves blessed if they
eat here only once. Mr. Liebrandt,
kindly name one dish you ate the
last time you were here.

(off his silence)

Eleven times you take the boat out
here, where we introduce *every*
dish, *every single* time. We tell
you *exactly* what we are feeding
you. We create elaborate stories.
We make it fun. We even give you a
copy of the menu to take home.
Please tell me one dish you ate the
last time you were here. Or the
time before. One. Please.

Richard looks at Anne for help.

ANNE
(whispering)
Cod.

RICHARD
What?

ANNE
Cod.

RICHARD
(to Chef)
Cod.

CHEF SLOWIK
It wasn't cod, you donkey. It was
halibut. Rare fucking spotted
halibut.

ANNE
What does it matter?

CHEF SLOWIK
It matters to the halibut, Mrs.
Liebrandt. And to the artist whose
work turns to shit inside your gut.

Margot can't take this any longer. Some type of mask or
willingness to "play the game" seems to be slipping.

MARGOT
I have a question.

CHEF SLOWIK
Yes, Margot from Nebraska.

TYLER
I thought you were from Philly?

MARGOT
Why do you deserve to die?

Chef Slowik takes a deep breath and smiles.

CHEF SLOWIK
Thank you. Key question. I've
allowed my work to reach the price
point where only the class of
people in this room can access it.
And I've been fooled into trying to
please people who can never be
pleased.
(pointing to Linda)
Starting with *her*.
(MORE)

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

But that's our culture, isn't it?
And my restaurant is part of the
problem. So it's time to die.

BRYCE

It's not your restaurant.

CHEF SLOWIK

Come again?

BRYCE

You said it's your restaurant. But
if we're all just being honest
tonight, like you say, it's not.

CHEF SLOWIK

You're right. He's right. Doug
Verrick is my angel investor. He
owns this island and this
restaurant. And since Hawthorn's my
entire life, Doug Verrick owns me.
All of which is complicated by the
fact that I currently own Doug
Verrick.

Chef looks to Elsa, who flips a SWITCH on the wall. Outside,
spotlights reveal DOUG VERRICK, about 100 feet away,
suspended by a contraption above the water with angel wings
on his back.

BRYCE

Ho-ly shit.

SOREN

Okay, okay, seriously, how do we
stop this?

(to Slowik)

Just tell us how to stop this!

DAVE

We have money! Obviously, we have
money. Just tell us how much and
we'll give it to you!

Margot sees this is the wrong tactic.

MARGOT

Shut up.

Dave makes a sudden rush to the door but he is quickly bumped
to the floor by a large SERVER. He splays out pathetically.

Elsa steps forward.

ELSA

We appreciate your support. Your bill will be distributed at the end of the meal and all major credit cards will be accepted.

Bryce stands up and YELLS like he owns the place.

BRYCE

He kept you open through COVID, you prick! He did that!

CHEF SLOWIK

Yes he did. And he questioned my menu. He would even request substitutions, despite the fact that--

(screaming at the window)

THERE ARE NO SUBSTITUTIONS AT HAWTHORN!!!

Chef gestures to Elsa.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Fallen angel, please.

Outside, the contraption slowly lowers Verrick into the bay. They can just barely make out his panicked screams.

CAMERA creeps closer to Chef.

BRYCE

You are a fucking maniac.

CHEF SLOWIK

Shh. Just listen.

SOREN

This is --

CHEF SLOWIK

I said listen.

They watch, pained, as Verrek is slowly lowered into the water, down, down, down, until finally he goes under.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

And...

He waits for total, serene silence.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

(a whisper)

Quiet.

Eyes closed, Chef listens a few more seconds. Nothing.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
Do you hear that silence? Listen.
Can you hear it? That silence
means... I'm free.

Close on MARGOT. She's horrified, but also struck by Chef's serenity. Tyler breaks the silence and leans into Margot.

TYLER
I'd say about three more savory
courses and then dessert. Maybe a
pre-dessert? What Chef would call a
transitional element.

Margot is too numb to even hear him babbling. And then --
BEEP BEEP! The kitchen timer.

ELSA
Time's up, Miss Mills. Chef will
speak with you now. In his office.

TYLER
May I speak to Chef as well?

ELSA
You may not.

Elsa gestures to the back of the kitchen. Margot begins to walk in that direction, but Elsa stops her with her HAND.

ELSA (CONT'D)
You will not ruin Chef's menu. Do
you understand me?

Margot stares daggers at Elsa. She then lifts her hand, which is holding her napkin, and drops the napkin. Elsa of course scrambles to pick it up.

Margot keeps walking.

She is guided by two cooks toward a door that leads to Chef Slowik's office. She knocks. We hear Chef's voice.

CHEF SLOWIK (O.S.)
Come in.

34 INT. CHEF SLOWIK'S OFFICE

34

A small, shitty office.

CHEF SLOWIK
You've made your decision.

MARGOT
I have.

CHEF SLOWIK
And what have you decided?

MARGOT
I - I've decided you're right. I shouldn't be here tonight. And I say this with respect because I'm sure you're quite brilliant but all of this - it wasn't meant for me.

Chef looks disappointed at her attempt at flattery.

CHEF SLOWIK
You're not sure I'm brilliant, so don't say it. It's tacky. False.

Margot flinches.

MARGOT
Fine then. I'm not sure you're brilliant.

CHEF SLOWIK
Sloppy.

MARGOT
Fuck you.

CHEF SLOWIK
Sloppy girl. I was expecting more. I guess I have to make your decision for you: You belong here, with your own breed.

MARGOT
What breed is that?

CHEF SLOWIK
With the shit shovelers. Oh, you thought I couldn't tell? I know a fellow service industry worker when I see one.

Beat.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
Mr Liebrandt. How do you know him?

Margot doesn't answer.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
You've been eyeing him all evening.

MARGOT
Well? I think you know.

Chef Slowik nods.

CHEF SLOWIK
So, he paid for an experience. And I can tell, from one provider of experiences to another, that you don't rattle easily. So how did he rattle you.

MARGOT
It's not--

CHEF SLOWIK
Margot.

A moment.

MARGOT
He told me to agree with everything he said, and not break eye contact while he jerked off.

CHEF SLOWIK
Uh huh. Specific.

MARGOT
Not really. It's pretty unoriginal. What rattled me was that he told me to tell him he was a good man, and that I was his daughter and that I loved him and then he--

Chef cuts her off.

CHEF SLOWIK
So he's a romantic.

They might share a little smirk. The smallest chuckle.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
I don't need the details. I know what a bad customer is.

They connect for a moment.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Do you enjoy providing your services?

MARGOT

I used to. Do you enjoy providing yours?

CHEF SLOWIK

I used to. I haven't *desired* to cook for someone in ages. And one does miss that feeling.

Beat. The slightest opening in his chain mail.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Come with me. I would like to show you something.

AGAINST BLACK, TITLE CARD:

FIFTH COURSE

35 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

35

Chef and Margot enter. Tension and dread hang in the air. Exhausted diners flinch as Chef walks near, like beaten dogs.

Chef CLAPS, but the diners are too numb to respond.

CHEF SLOWIK

Ladies and gentlemen, for our next course, let us take the evening air.

They all sit there. What is he talking about?

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Come, come.

Elsa is standing by the now open door to the outside. The escape hatch has been opened. But what awaits them outside?

36 EXT. GREAT LAWN - NIGHT

36

The diners are led out to a beautiful al fresco dining setup. The evening air is indeed beautiful, and a series of torches lend an almost primeval atmosphere to the proceedings.

Tech Bros whisper as they gather around the dining setup.

DAVE

There might be a spare boat
somewhere? We could get out of
here?

BRYCE

(resigned)
To what?

DAVE

What?

Bryce seems somehow more reconciled to his fate than the
others. Like he somehow accepts it.

BRYCE

Get out of here to what?

SOREN

What are you talking about?

BRYCE

Forget it.

LILLIAN AND TED. Lillian stares up at the stars.

LILLIAN BLOOM

We're going to die tonight, Ted.

TED

Alrighty.

Silence. Chef Slowik CLAPS and everyone comes to attention.

CHEF SLOWIK

Ladies and gentlemen, our next
course will be presented by sous
chef Katherine Keller.

KATHERINE steps out of the darkness. She smiles amidst the
exquisite silence, her face lit by torchlight.

KATHERINE

Good evening, everyone. I have a
story for you all. Three years ago,
Julian Slowik tried to fuck me.

Chef Slowik nods slightly but remains impassive. Elsa looks
longingly at chef.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I refused his advances. A week
later, he tried again. And again, I
refused. But he didn't fire me.

(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

"That would be unethical," he thought. So he kept me in his kitchen and refused to look me in the eye or speak directly to me for eight months. He can do that. Because he's the star. He's the man.

Chef Slowik looks away, a bit pained.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Which mean he gets to be the dark romantic genius who suffers for his art. A woman chef is a trooper. A go-getter. She's a mother hen. She makes grandma's recipes with a sly modern twist.

(beat)

Isn't that right?

Diners shift uncomfortably. But LILLIAN BLOOM nods.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I have been groped, I have been leered at, I have earned more but made less, and all of it in the service of men so enraptured with themselves that they don't see their own pointlessness. So let's help them see.

(sincerely warm)

Our next course is called "Man's Folly."

Katherine approaches Chef and stands very close, looking him right in the eyes. She pulls a small PAIR OF SCISSORS from her apron and stabs him in the thigh. He accepts it with a wince and a nod.

Katherine and Chef Slowik share a long, meaningful hug. Theirs is a deep understanding that we'll never know.

CHEF SLOWIK

(a whisper)

I'm sorry.

Katherine smiles at him. He smiles back and pulls the knife from his thigh. A SERVER is there with a tray with a little flower on it to take it away. For the rest of the movie, Chef will have a growing bloodstain on his pants and a limp.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

To our male diners. We now offer you the chance to escape.

(MORE)

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

You will be given a 45 second head start, at which point members of my staff will try and catch you. If they do catch you...

SOREN immediately makes a break for it and doesn't wait for the chef to finish his statement.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Okay.

At this point all the other male diners make a break for it too. Before Richard leaves...

RICHARD

(to Anne)

I'll send for help. First thing.

And Richard's near 70-year old body approximates a run.

Before MOVIE STAR leaves, to Felicity...

MOVIE STAR

Yeah, sorry. Obviously, you know - I'm awful?

And he also kinda runs out of there.

Tyler doesn't move. He wants to stay.

CHEF SLOWIK

You too.

Tyler reluctantly nods and then walks off, slowly.

Chef turns to the remaining women.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

I'll leave you to it.

Chef exits. The female diners are left alone. Frighteningly alone. What will be done to them?

KATHERINE

(warm)

Care to join me inside? It's getting chilly.

The female diners enter and there is one table, small, round and intimate, with six place settings.

Lillian, Anne, Margot, Felicity, and Linda take their seats. And then Katherine sits, and smiles warmly at them.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Hi. May I join you?

LILLIAN BLOOM

Um - sure.

37 EXT. GREAT LAWN. EVENING

37

Random shots of the men running wildly for their lives. Dave runs with Soren.

SOREN

Don't run near me dude. Get the fuck away from me!

38 INT. HAWTHORN RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM. EVENING

38

On the women. It's tense. They're waiting for the other shoe to drop. And yet, there is undeniably a warmer energy in the room now that Chef Slowik and the other men are gone. Beautiful plates of food are set in front of them.

A TITLE reads: "SEVENTH COURSE: 'MAN'S FOLLY' - Dungeness crab, fermented yogurt whey, dried sea lettuce, umeboshi, kelp."

Silence. Someone has to say *something*.

ANNE

So. How's everyone's night?

They lightly laugh. But scared, jittery laughs.

FELICITY

Yeah. Terrific.

Lillian takes a bite. Katherine eyes her as she does so. Lillian sighs. But a sigh of deep respect. She turns to Katherine with an almost apologetic look.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Well. I have to say it's fabulous. The tartness of the umeboshi. Waves of ferment. Rich yet clean.

KATHERINE

Yes, well... There was a time that would have meant a lot to me.

Katherine looks away coolly. But it's clear the compliment from the great Lillian Bloom still does mean something.

They continue eating. Until suddenly Katherine begins to softly weep. The women diners look at each other awkwardly. Are they supposed to... comfort their captor?

Not knowing what else to do, they eat.

39 EXT. THE WOODS. EVENING

39

A SHOT of Ted running. It's a pretty dainty run. One of the sous chefs appears on the horizon and Ted turns and sees him giving chase. Ted screams. He looks pathetic.

In a nearby clearing, the movie star is running. He hears a pop in his hamstring and comes up lame.

MOVIE STAR
AHHH!! I heard a pop.

And then he gets tackled by a sous chef.

40 INT. HAWTHORN RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM. EVENING

40

The women eat. Katherine wipes the last tears from her eyes, revived.

KATHERINE
Oh, I almost forgot. Bread.

They look at each other surprised.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Did you actually think we would not serve our famous bread, on this the night of our final menu?

She glances up at the servers and they bring bread.

Margot takes a quick glance at the hallway leading to the exit. And then she shifts her eyes to see Katherine looking dead at her. Katherine silently shakes her head as if to say, "No chance." Margot smiles.

MARGOT
Is there butter?

KATHERINE
Not necessary. Eat.

They all take a bite of bread. As scared as they are, their faces can't hide just how shockingly good the bread is.

FELICITY
Jesus fucking Christ...

Some dazed nods from the table. A strange feeling: doomed captives nevertheless enjoying a moment of deliciousness. Despite everything, for the first time it almost feels like real people eating dinner together.

Elsa watches them, with maybe the slightest trace of longing.

We see at one of the windows, Tyler is staring in longingly as well, wishing he were inside, not even trying to escape.

41 EXT. COASTLINE. EVENING 41

Soren has managed to locate a rowboat stashed on the far side of the island. He pushes it frantically across the pebble beach to the water.

42 INT. HAWTHORN RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM. EVENING 42

They eat bread and drink wine. The tension and dread is still there, but it has oddly settled into a kind of dazed warmth.

Margot can feel Anne's eyes on her. It's a bit uncomfortable.

FELICITY
So, you can tell us... are we
really going to die?

Katherine nods.

FELICITY (CONT'D)
It's just...I'm supposed to start a
new job Monday. At Sony. Associate
Development Co-Exec.

Katherine just stares at Felicity. And then...

KATHERINE
It doesn't work if you live.

ANNE
What doesn't work?

KATHERINE
The menu.

FELICITY
Why not?

KATHERINE

It needs an ending that ties things together conceptually. Otherwise it just... tastes good. And who cares.

ON MARGOT, who clocks this answer.

LILLIAN BLOOM

You should have your own place.

Katherine says nothing. Lillian's wheels turn.

LILLIAN BLOOM (CONT'D)

I could help with that of course?

Katherine looks at her.

KATHERINE

I'm sure you could, Ms. Bloom.

LILLIAN BLOOM

Of course we'd have to see about the whole - dying thing?

KATHERINE

Oh everyone dying was my pitch actually. I'm super proud of it.

Katherine smiles. She's as crazy as Chef. Or crazier.

43

EXT. COASTLINE. EVENING

43

Soren pushes the rowboat into the water. He clambers in just as he sees TWO COOKS running up the beach in the distance.

He only has one oar in the boat. He tries frantically to row, switching left and right.

The cooks are now in the water, swimming after. They can swim faster than Soren can row. Within seconds they have caught up to him. One of the cooks begins to climb aboard. Soren hits him with the oar a few times, but he can't be stopped. The cook grabs the oar and pulls Soren into the water.

44

EXT. FARM/GARDENS. EVENING

44

A fenced-in chicken coop next to the greenhouse.

Richard, having been caught, is being dragged by the cooks back to the restaurant.

45 INT. CHICKEN COOP. EVENING 45

Bryce has hidden himself inside the darkened chicken coop. Nesting hens sleep. Not a bad hiding spot, actually.

He sees a HAND enter the coop door holding a plate with an egg elegantly presented in a cup. A SERVER peeks his head in.

SERVER #2

A special bite for the last guest to be caught. A little play on the Passard egg with creme fraiche and maple.

Bryce sighs. They've truly thought of everything.

46 INT. HAWTHORN RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM. EVENING 46

They eat. Little side conversations around the room. A sense of warmth in all this madness. Some of the other female staff have joined. Everyone but Elsa.

Anne continues to stare at Margot, here it comes:

ANNE

So, Margot, you know my husband then?

It all stops. That cuts through everything. Margot looks at Anne, whose eyes are on her. Margot considers lying. But why?

MARGOT

Yeah.

Anne smiles sadly and nods.

ANNE

Right.

Maybe the hint of a tear in Anne's eye. She looks away.

After a beat, Lillian jumps in to break the tension:

LILLIAN BLOOM

I miss smoking in restaurants. One of life's simple pleasures taken away-but I think tonight's circumstances call for an exception?

A beat. Katherine nods.

LILLIAN BLOOM (CONT'D)

Anyone have a cigarette?

A few smiles. Margot hands Lillian a cigarette. Lillian lights it on her table candle. The mood is restored.

Margot takes a bite of bread. She feels a comfort. She looks at the women, then:

MARGOT

My name's Erin. I'm from Brockton,
Massachusetts.

At this moment, the male diners are brought back into the restaurant. Some are bleeding. They look exhausted. Some are crying. They look just pathetic.

KATHERINE

(to the women)
Party's over.

Bryce, busted nose, notices the basket of bread.

BRYCE

You got bread? This is so fucking
reverse sexist.

Soren, soaking wet, enters and sits down. Utterly defeated.

Tyler sees the food at the table where the women were sitting. An entire course he didn't get to try. And bread?!? He rushes to the table and starts shoveling food in his mouth.

Richard sees Ann and Margot together. It's clear they talked.

RICHARD

Shit.

MOVIE STAR AND FELICITY. He looks haunted. She notices.

FELICITY

How'd ya do out there?

MOVIE STAR

Oh, wonderful. I got away.

Felicity smiles sadly.

MOVIE STAR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I'm a failure.

FELICITY
It's all right.
(then, sudden honesty)
I've been stealing money from you.

MOVIE STAR
I know.

FELICITY
I know you know.

Chef enters. He sees Tyler stuffing his face. Sheer contempt.

CHEF SLOWIK
Folks, I'm afraid our menu cannot
continue as planned until we deal
with an unresolved matter.
(To Tyler)
You.

Tyler, mouth full, looks around. His hero is talking to him.

TYLER
M-me?

CHEF SLOWIK
Tell me why you're here.

TYLER
Why I'm--?

CHEF SLOWIK
Here.

TYLER
Because I-- I wanted...

CHEF SLOWIK
Swallow first.

Tyler finishes.

TYLER
To experience your food. Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK
And what were you told?

Tyler glances at Margot.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
Don't look at her. What were you
told ahead of time?

Tyler hesitate for a moment.

TYLER

I was told tonight would be the
greatest menu ever created.

CHEF SLOWIK

And?

TYLER

And - that everyone would die.

It dawns on MARGOT what he's saying. He knew. He always knew.

CHEF SLOWIK

You had a date. Not the young woman
here tonight. What happened to her?

TYLER

She broke up with me, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

And so you brought Margot. Why?

Tyler hesitates. But Chef leans down, inches away from Tyler.

TYLER

Be-- Because you don't offer
seatings f-for one.

ANGLE ON Margot. Her eyes are filled with malice.

CHEF SLOWIK

You hired her knowing she'd die.

TYLER

Yes, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

But thinking you wouldn't.

TYLER

Yes, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

Are you sorry about this?

TYLER

No, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

Would you like to change your mind?

TYLER

No, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

Why not?

TYLER

I want to experience the menu.

Chef Slowik stands up straight again. He towers over Tyler.

CHEF SLOWIK

For the 8 months I've corresponded with you. I gave you access to our world. I swore you to secrecy. Why do you think I would do this? Why do you think I wanted you here?

TYLER

Because - I know a lot about food?

Chef Slowik places a gentle hand on Tyler's shoulder.

CHEF SLOWIK

You're not like the others, are you? You knew what a Pacojet is. The bergamot. You're a cook. And cooks belong in the kitchen.

Tyler looks to the STAFF assembled behind Chef. They smile warmly and nod. Elsa approaches with folded CHEF'S WHITES.

TYLER

Chef?

CHEF SLOWIK

Go on. They're for you.

Tyler stands and hesitantly dons the whites and apron. A server places little tweezers and a meat thermometer in Tyler's sleeve pocket. The word "Hawthorn" is embroidered on his breast. Underneath, Chef, in Sharpie, writes "Tyler."

Tyler looks at Chef. He can't help feeling a little proud.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

You look wonderful. Doesn't he look wonderful, Margot?

LINDA

Mr. Handsome Boy!

Tyler doesn't quite know what to say.

CHEF SLOWIK

Now cook.

TYLER

What?

CHEF SLOWIK

Cook. You're a cook, so cook.

TYLER

What do you mean, cook *here*? Me?

CHEF SLOWIK

COOK COOK COOK! GO ON NOW, COOK!

Chef starts shooing him into --

47

INT. THE KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

47

-- Chef takes Tyler by the shoulders and positions him in front of the burners as everyone watches. Tyler shakes.

CHEF SLOWIK

What do you need? We have everything. Just tell me what you need for your dish.

TYLER

L-leeks?

CHEF SLOWIK

Get the cook some leeks!

SOUS-CHEFS

Yes, Chef!

Someone hands Tyler two leeks. Tyler's hands shake as he takes a knife and finds a nearby cutting board.

CHEF SLOWIK

What else?

TYLER

Um. Sh-sh-sh-

CHEF SLOWIK

Shit? Would you like some shit?

TYLER

Shallots.

CHEF SLOWIK

Shallots for the great foodie! The Phenomenal Mr. Food himself!

Someone hands Tyler shallots. He's so flustered he can only cut haphazard chunks. Margot watches from the dining room.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Everyone pay close attention. We must learn from Tyler. This is a new dicing method of which we have been woefully ignorant. What next?

TYLER

B-butter?

CHEF SLOWIK

Butter! Leeks and shallots sautéed in butter! I bear witness to a revolution in cuisine!

Tyler nervously dumps all the food into a pan. Someone hands him a piece of lamb, which he numbly adds to the pan. They hand him a spatula. Completely out of body, he stirs.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Is it done? Or would you like to jam it into the Pacojet?
(Tyler shakes his head)
Then plate it.

Someone produces a plate, and Tyler basically just dumps the food onto it. He tries to arrange it in some artful way, but his hands tremble, and it's just terrible.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Shall I taste it?

Tyler can't even respond. He's crying.

Chef takes a spoonful of Tyler's food and lifts it to his mouth. Just as he's about to try it --

AGAINST BLACK, TITLE CARD:

SUPPLEMENTAL COURSE

CLOSE on Tyler's hideous plate. A SUPERIMPOSED TITLE reads, "TYLER'S BULLSHIT. Under-cooked lamb, inedible shallot-leek butter sauce, utter lack of cohesion."

Chef Slowik takes a bite. He looks surprised. And delighted. He looks to be savoring it. Tyler watches through tears.

CHEF SLOWIK
Mmm. Wow. Mmm. I have to say...
it's actually quite bad.

And then he spits his food out onto a napkin.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
You are why the mystery has been
drained from our art. You see that
now, don't you?

TYLER
Yes, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK
Come here, son.

Chef begins whispering into Tyler's ear. We don't hear it. But Tyler nods along as he whispers. When chef is done, he looks at Tyler, warmly smiles, and waits for an answer.

TYLER
Yes, Chef.

Tyler removes his chef whites, hands them to Elsa, and exits in the direction of Chef's office.

Chef Slowik turns to Margot with a serene look.

CHEF SLOWIK
And now you're free too.

Chef Slowik turns to his diners with a remorseful expression.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
I want to apologize to you all.
What you just saw was not
originally part of tonight's menu.
We were presented with a problem
and were forced to adjust as best
we could. We strive for perfection,
but there is no such thing. That is
a hard truth for me to accept.
(beat)
Please forgive me.

He hangs his head low and walks back toward the kitchen. As he passes Margot, he mutters to her:

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
Follow me.

48 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

48

Chef leads Margot into the pastry area, where the PASTRY CHEFS, faces dotted with flour, ply their craft.

CHEF SLOWIK

We have only one more savory course left in our menu. That means we must prepare for dessert.

Margot has no idea what to do with this information. And she's still shaky from what just transpired.

MARGOT

Okay?

CHEF SLOWIK

Dessert requires a large--

MARGOT

Chef?

CHEF SLOWIK

Yes?

Pause...she's coming up with something.

MARGOT

I'm sorry you're at the end.

Chef turns and looks at her.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

You've reached the end, right?

(to the staff)

Everyone here reached the end?

You're tired?

(back to chef)

I'm tired too. I'm exhausted.

Everyone exhausts me... But I'm not at the end. I'm the only one here who isn't. If anyone can see that, it's you. Or maybe you can't, I don't know. Maybe you're so far gone that you can't even tell what's real anymore.

Chef is listening.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

But I do not deserve to die tonight. I know how to be alive. I like life. And I happen to be excited for what's next in mine.

Pause. She looks at Chef and Chef back at her.

MARGOT (CONT'D)
This didn't work did it.

CHEF SLOWIK
No, but a marginally better
attempt. I do appreciate that. May
I continue?

Margot truly looks defeated. She's met her match and lost.

MARGOT
Sure.

CHEF SLOWIK
Dessert requires a large barrel
that is supposed to be there, in
the corner. Do you see a barrel?

MARGOT
(weary of the charade)
No. No, I do not see a barrel.

CHEF SLOWIK
Neither do I. That is because my
negligent employee Elsa forgot to
assign someone to bring it.

Elsa, always somehow nearby, is gutted by her error.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
You will fetch the barrel instead.

MARGOT
Me?

CHEF SLOWIK
You remember the smokehouse?

MARGOT
I - think so?

ELSA
Chef, perhaps one of us should --

CHEF SLOWIK
Margot is now one of us, Elsa.
Right, Margot?

On Margot who looks stone-faced.

MARGOT
Yes.

CHEF SLOWIK

Yes, what?

MARGOT

Yes, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

Give her the smokehouse key.

ELSA

Yes, Chef.

Elsa slides a KEY off of her key ring and, against her better judgment, hands it to Margot.

Margot looks at Chef, and leaves. On her way out of the restaurant, she walks past Chef's office. The door is slightly ajar, and she can see through the crack in the door Tyler's LEGS DANGLING OVER CHEF'S DESK. He's hanged himself.

She's initially shocked, but then, a hint of a smile.

49 EXT. HAWTHORN ISLAND - NIGHT 49

A clear, beautiful evening, lit by moonlight. Calls of insects and night birds. Margot walks across the lawn. She's actually going through with this. She moves with purpose, strength, conviction.

Up ahead looms a patch of WOODS.

50 EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER 50

Margot enters the dark forest along a path leading to the small SMOKEHOUSE lit by a single, dim porch light.

As she walks, she hears a rustling sound in the woods and a distant SNAP. She stops and turns to listen. Nothing. Then she looks down at the KEY in her hand.

51 INT. SMOKEHOUSE - NIGHT 51

Margot enters and flips on the overhead light. Sure enough, there's the BARREL resting beneath hanging trout.

She approaches the barrel as if to retrieve it. But instead she reaches behind it, where a SCALING KNIFE hangs by a nail.

Taking the knife, she glances out a small window and spots Chef Slowik's COTTAGE bathed in moonlight.

52 INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

52

While Felicity stares off, exhausted, the movie star gazes at her with a look of deep regret. Then he looks away and nods.

The room is silent. Chef Slowik enters and is about to clap when, scared but brave, the movie star rises to his feet.

MOVIE STAR

Excuse me, Mr. Slowik. Chef.

Chef turns to him. The famous actor has summoned all of his talent and experience for this crucial moment. But the way Chef makes eye contact immediately throws him.

MOVIE STAR (CONT'D)

(stumbling through)

Um, yes, hi. How are you? Or -- well, I just, wanted to say, because - and I'm not trying to sound all, whatever here or anything, but it's just - I just - I don't think it's really, totally fair, maybe, what's happening here? So - ? But, yeah.

(quick, panicked breath)

My point is, we're all people, you know? And people are people - obviously - and if the people of, you know, of the *world*, I guess, could all see each other as people, then maybe - you see what I'm saying? It's like - *divisions*. There are just such, we have so many divisions, nowadays, I think? Um, and it's so... But it's like, *fuck*, don't *kill* people, you know? I know that sounds totally, 'Yeah, no shit' - but also, like? I do think we should all just - you know? That's how I feel. At least. Anyway. Just, please don't kill Felicity, okay? I mean, that would be, just - come on, don't do that. And... yeah.

He quickly sits down.

Chef Slowik takes all of this in and nods subtly.

CHEF SLOWIK

Not quite off-book with that speech, were you?

MOVIE STAR

No, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

You really have lost it, haven't you?

MOVIE STAR

(almost relieved to hear)

Yes. Big time.

Felicity looks at the movie star. She smiles sympathetically.

CHEF SLOWIK

Do you wish to know why you are being punished?

MOVIE STAR

Sure.

CHEF SLOWIK

I saw the film *Calling Dr. Sunshine*, and I did not enjoy it.

MOVIE STAR

Sorry?

CHEF SLOWIK

It was a Sunday. My one day off in months. The most precious day. The day where I was allowed to live. And I saw the film *Calling Dr. Sunshine* alone in the cinema.

MOVIE STAR

I didn't, you know, direct the film. I just acted in it.

CHEF SLOWIK

The memory of your face in that film -- and seeing you again now -- haunts me, drives me. What becomes of an artist when he loses his purpose.

The movie star looks at Chef, who stares at him. It's futile.

MOVIE STAR

Right.

(pointing to Felicity)

And her?

CHEF SLOWIK
(to Felicity)
What school did you go to?

FELICITY
Um, Brown?

CHEF SLOWIK
Student loans?

FELICITY
No...

CHEF SLOWIK
Sorry. You're dying.

Chef turns and walks back into the kitchen. It's not fair.
But the movie star sits down, resigned to his fate.

52A EXT. CHEF SLOWIK'S COTTAGE 52A

Margot stands outside the front door.

53 INT. CHEF SLOWIK'S COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS 53

Margot enters and looks around. The interior is an exact
REPLICA of the interior of the restaurant.

MARGOT
Motherfucker.

In the middle of the dining room sits a COT. Next to the cot
is a small table with lamp and a Bible. This is apparently
where Chef sleeps.

It's so quiet here, so clean. Pristine.

For reasons she doesn't know, she takes her same seat from
the restaurant, closes her eyes, and breathes in the
tranquility. It is quiet and still.

54 INT. HAWTHORN DINING ROOM--CONTINUOUS 54

HARD CUT back to the real dining room. Not quiet. People
screaming. Felicity is being forced to feed the movie star
nuts, which he is allergic to. It's clear he is having a
massive allergic reaction.

A SUPERIMPOSED TITLE READS: "EIGHTH COURSE: 'GONE NUTS' -
peanut dashi, peanut foam, peanut curd, peanut brittle, and
raw peanuts hand-fed"

We see as well that Lillian is being waterboarded in a giant pail of the emulsion.

55 INT. CHEF SLOWIK'S COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

55

Silence. Margot continues to sit. And then she starts to breathe heavily, fighting tears. It's as if she is now processing everything that has brought her to this point.

MARGOT

Stop it.

Then Margot realizes something. She gets up, leaving the scaling knife on the table.

Sure enough, she finds an exact replica of the SILVER DOOR she glimpsed earlier. She tries to open it, but it's locked.

She hears the front door open. We see the footfalls of the person stepping inside the cottage. CAMERA rises to reveal --

ELSA

I told you when you arrived that nobody enters Chef's home. And you have disobeyed this rule.

Elsa sees the scaling knife on the table and smiles.

Margot enters the dining room, ready for a confrontation, and sees Elsa holding the knife.

ELSA (CONT'D)

I worry about the customers so Chef can worry about the menu. And you have made my job very difficult.

Elsa takes a step toward Margot, who braces for whatever attack Elsa might unleash.

MARGOT

Why would you die for him?

Elsa is shaking now. Almost breaking down.

ELSA

You will not replace me.

*

Elsa lunges at Margot, swiping with the knife. Margot dodges backwards. She turns and runs, pursued by Elsa, into...

THE KITCHEN

Margot scans the room for a knife, a weapon, *anything*. But Elsa's already there, trapping Margot in the kitchen.

Margot starts grabbing whatever she can find -- ladels, bowls, sheet pans -- and throws them at Elsa, as Elsa pursues her around the kitchen island. But Elsa keeps coming at her.

Margot finds a blender-sized kitchen appliance and heaves it as hard as she can at Elsa, who tries to deflect it, but it slams against the side of her head, *hard*. Elsa reels.

The appliance crashes to the ground, and we see the label in CLOSE-UP: "PACOJET."

Margot tackles Elsa and manages to get on top of her. She wrestles away the knife. Elsa is beat. She knows it. Suddenly all of her fight is gone. A strange, sad look of realization:

ELSA (CONT'D)
He never told me...

MARGOT
What-?

ELSA
About a barrel... He thought he told me... But he didn't... It wasn't me who forgot...
(acceptance)
It was him.

Elsa admits a long denied truth: She's given her life and all of her talents to a man whose talents have slipped.

Elsa suddenly grabs Margot's wrist. With her usual impeccable service, she helps Margot guide the knife down into her own throat. Elsa dies.

Margot then takes the key ring from Elsa's pocket and returns to the silver door.

Margot enters. A lovely room. A private haven. Warmly lit and beautiful. An actual life. A desk. Leather chair. Stacks of recipe books.

AND FRAMED PHOTOS all along the wall. We might see glimpses of a few. They seem to be from different points in his life: A preppy, affluent YOUNG SLOWIK in a school uniform. A photo of Slowik, his mom, and a meek looking man.

They look quite normal. What appears to be a family photo of Slowik with a beautiful woman and a young girl. A vigorous, focused Slowik opening his first restaurant, Tantalus in New York. Finally, SLOWIK OPENING HAWTHORN, standing with Doug Verrick. Slowik looks drained by this point, the humanity drained from his face. But in NONE OF THE PHOTOS is he smiling.

But Margot's attention is on one framed photo in particular. She walks closer and closer to the photo, and then takes it off the wall and gazes at it for a long beat. We never see the photo she sees, but it touches a nerve in Margot.

Then Margot notices a RADIO on a shelf. She dashes towards it and fiddles with the transceiver.

MARGOT

Hello? Is anyone there? Can anyone hear this? Hello! Can anyone hear this? CAN ANYONE FUCKING HEAR ME?

VOICE

(crackly)
Come in?

MARGOT

Hello? Who is this?

VOICE

Coast Guard. Who am I talking to?

MARGOT

Oh, thank Christ. I'm at the restaurant. The... Hawthorn. Hawthorn! People are getting murdered. Send help. Send help!

VOICE

What did you say?

MARGOT

Just get here! Now! PLEASE!
Hawthorn Island! People are dying.
It's an emergency!

VOICE

Okay, just, uh -- don't move!

57 INT. CHEF SLOWIK'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

57

Margot staggers back out into the "dining room" and retakes her seat. Silence.

A sudden, startling CLAP from an INTERCOM speaker.

CHEF SLOWIK (O.S.)

Do you like my home?

Margot makes a face like, "Of course this isn't over."

CHEF SLOWIK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

People always say you shouldn't take your work home with you. I disagree. Go ahead, speak.

MARGOT

Elsa's dead.

We hear a small, resigned sigh from Slowik.

CHEF SLOWIK (O.S.)

It's what she wanted. It's what I want, too. Death is nothing. I'm a chef, I work with death every day. Death is my business. How can I call myself a chef if I don't experience death for myself?

Margot thinks about this for a beat.

MARGOT

Your self-pity doesn't track. Why not go run a soup kitchen? Or a monastery? Or go back to your little taco truck? Come to think of it, why did you park a taco truck next to a convention you knew was swarming with food critics?

Beat. No answer.

CHEF SLOWIK (O.S.)

Why do we do the things we do. What's your excuse?

MARGOT

I like beating men like you.

CHEF SLOWIK (O.S.)

There is no man like me.

MARGOT

That's the dumbest fucking thing you've said all night.

We hear Chef Slowik LAUGH softly and knowingly.

CHEF SLOWIK (O.S.)

Fetch the barrel. Our customers are waiting.

58

INT. HAWTHORN DINING AREA AND KITCHEN

58

We PAN ACROSS the dining room. Panic, exhaustion.

Chef Slowik carries a birthday cake loaded with candles over to Bryce.

He is singing 'Happy Birthday.' The entire kitchen staff follows him into the dining room, singing along. Some guests might numbly sing along too.

BRYCE

You told them it was my birthday?

SOREN

(shrugs)

It seemed funny three hours ago.

Chef Slowik sets the cake in front of Bryce and touches his shoulder meaningfully.

CHEF SLOWIK

Happy Birthday

BRYCE

(weirdly touched)

Thanks.

A sweaty Margot enters the restaurant, rolling the barrel in front of her. The diners look at her hopefully.

CHEF SLOWIK

Leave it there. And take your seat.

Margot sits at her table, which has been cleaned and perfectly re-set. Chef Slowik walks over.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

I thought about your question.
Here is the answer. I am a monster.
No, *was* a monster. And a whore.
But tonight everything I'm doing is
pure. Egoless. And at last, the
pain is almost gone.

There's a CANDLE on Margot's table. Chef Slowik extends his hand directly over it. The flame burns his flesh, but he doesn't so much as flinch.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Chef's Hands. "Asbestos hands." I
can carry a cast-iron from a hot
oven to your table with no
protection. That's a cook's
training.

He snuffs the candle with his thumb and forefinger.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

I can no longer be hurt, Margot.
As Dr. King said, "We know through
painful experience that freedom is
never voluntarily given by the
oppressor. It must be demanded by
the oppressed."

MOVIE STAR

Did he just quote Martin Luther
King?

Outside the windows, a LIGHT appears on the water. A small BOAT. Margot sees it out of the corner of her eye.

Chef Slowik spots it, too, for a moment frozen with indecision, perhaps even fear.

CHEF SLOWIK

So you found our radio.
(to the kitchen)
Clear the dining room. Immediately!

Servers appear from everywhere to get people seated again, wipe down the floor, their work hyper-fast.

One server applies a white bandage to Chef's hand and ties a new apron around his waist to mask his blood-soaked pants. The movie star is given a fast-acting anti-allergy syringe.

Margot looks out the window to see a lone COAST GUARD OFFICER stepping onto the dock. No back-up. Not good.

MARGOT
(quietly)
No no no.

Chef Slowik sees what Margot sees. He smiles just a little.

CHEF SLOWIK
You will be tempted to ask him for help. To plead, even. This would be unwise. He cannot help you.

The guests look unconvinced and exchange conspiratorial glances. How can they let this opportunity pass?

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
I see you don't believe me. You think this might be your only chance. But ask yourselves two questions: One, if you really want to be responsible for the death of an innocent man. And two, ask yourselves -- this entire evening, why didn't you all try harder to fight back? To get out of here? Honestly, you probably could have.

The patrons look around. He's right. Why didn't they?

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
Anyway, something to think about.

A knock. Chef Slowik nods at a server to unlock the door.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
Good evening. How can we help you?

COAST GUARD OFFICER
(stepping inside)
I got a report of a disturbance.

CHEF SLOWIK
Here? What kind of disturbance.

COAST GUARD OFFICER
A violent one. In fact, I don't want to alarm you folks, but there was a report of a possible murder.

We cut to the diners' quietly panicked faces. Chef Slowik laughs, and one by one the whole staff joins in, laughing as well. The diners play along wearily with forced smiles.

CHEF SLOWIK

No, officer. Nothing of that sort.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Are you the owner?

CHEF SLOWIK

Ownership changed hands recently, but that's another story. I am the executive chef. I don't wish to be rude, but, as you can see, we are right in the middle of service.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Oh. Are these your only guests?

CHEF SLOWIK

Tonight is a private event. We're peer-testing a new concept menu.

Not quite understanding what that means, the officer looks around at the diners. They seem composed enough.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Did anybody here call in a distress on the short-wave tonight?

All shake their heads, except for Margot.

CHEF SLOWIK

We are not in the habit of serving our guests short-wave radios with their meals.

The cooks laugh again. Maybe a little too loud.

The Coast Guard Officer notices the movie star, who looks a little worse for wear, but better than before. A glimmer of recognition passes across the officer's face.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Hey, are you --?

MOVIE STAR

Yes.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Oh, wow. I'm a big fan.

MOVIE STAR

Thank you.

CHEF SLOWIK

Would you like his autograph?

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Well, I don't want to bother you.

MOVIE STAR

No bother at all.

The officer walks over to the movie star. A server arrives with a pen and paper on a tray.

MOVIE STAR (CONT'D)

What's your name?

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Dale.

MOVIE STAR

Dale. Hello, Dale.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

You're great. My wife and I loved that, uh... what's it called? The one where you're the surgeon?

MOVIE STAR

Calling Dr. Sunshine.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Yeah. Great stuff.

The movie star smiles sadly and hands over the autograph.

MOVIE STAR

Thank you. You're very kind.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Okay. Well, sorry again to bother you folks. I'll be going now.

CHEF SLOWIK

Thank you for your service.

The officer turns and walks back toward the door. As he does, he looks down at the AUTOGRAPH. It reads "HELP US."

The officer turns, whips out his gun, and points it at Chef.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Hands above your head! Now!

CHEF SLOWIK
Are you joking?

COAST GUARD OFFICER
I am not joking, sir!

A cook behind Chef Slowik steps forward to protect his master, but Chef holds up a hand.

CHEF SLOWIK
Clearly there's a misunderstanding.

COAST GUARD OFFICER
Get down on your knees with your hands up. Now!

Chef Slowik draws a long breath and complies.

ANNE
Help us! He wants to kill us all!

Others diners chime in as well.

COAST GUARD OFFICER
Nobody move till I say so!

The officer inches forward. When he has almost reached Chef, he pivots toward Margot's table, gun still pointed, and pulls the trigger. A SMALL FLAME emits from the barrel, and he lights the extinguished candle on Margot's table.

MOVIE STAR
Oh, fuck me.

The officer holsters the gun, puts on an apron, and joins his comrades by the kitchen.

CHEF SLOWIK
Thank you, Dale.
(to Margot)
In a kitchen we all work together or nothing works at all. You have betrayed our sacred bond of trust. And you've shown your craft to be careless. I was wrong. You're an eater. A taker. An animal like all the rest.

We scan the faces of the cooks and servers behind Chef Slowik. He's right. She has failed the test. She has not lived up to the rigors and standards of Hawthorn.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
Final course plating in five!

ENTIRE KITCHEN

Yes, Chef!

Two cooks tip the barrel on its side. A VISCOUS LIQUID pours out across the floor. What is it -- chocolate? Rendered fat?

Resigned to their fate, the diners don't even bother lifting their feet. By now some even feel as if they deserve it.

Margot's head droops. All is lost. But she doesn't look scared. Or sad. Instead, a kind of quiet, simmering anger builds inside her, something that wants to burst out.

MARGOT

(barely audible)

I don't like your food.

Servers have begun draping thick sheets of MARSHMALLOWS strung together with candy floss over the diners and themselves.

Margot doesn't move as she's draped in a marshmallow sheet.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

(louder)

I don't like your food.

Again no one hears. The staff continue to hustle, creating elaborate, Jackson Pollock SPLATTERS AND SWIRLS of melted CHOCOLATE and GRAHAM CRACKER crumbles atop the tables.

The SOMMELIER pours dessert wine into glasses, onto the tables, and over some diners' heads.

SOMMELIER

This is Borovicka, a Slovakian spirit flavored with juniper berries. I think you'll find it highly flammable and redolent of a crisp evening's walk in the shadow of Mount Bystrá.

Margot rises, tears off her marshmallow coat, hurls it onto the floor, and CLAPS. Once. Loud.

Everything stops, just like at the beginning of the meal. Chef Slowik looks over from the kitchen.

MARGOT

I don't like your food!

CHEF SLOWIK

(entering the dining room)

What did you say?

MARGOT

I said I don't like your food. And
I would like to send it back.

We see the staff, shocked and ready to kill her. Slowik draws a deep breath, and something inside him seems to shift.

CHEF SLOWIK

I am sorry to hear that. What about
my food is not to your liking?

Margot draws a deep breath and then lets him have it. We slowly PULL CLOSE on her face as she calmly, coldly, and quite sensibly critiques his entire style of cuisine.

MARGOT

You've taken the joy out of eating.
Every dish we've had tonight was
some intellectual exercise rather
than something you just want to sit
and enjoy.

The COOKS can't believe what she's saying, even if deep down they know there's a kernel of truth to it.

Chef Slowik and Margot face each other squarely in the dining room, like a sort of final showdown.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

When I eat your food, it tastes
like it was made with no love.

SLOWIK

That is ridiculous. I always cook
with love. Everyone knows love is
the most important ingredient.

MARGOT

You're kidding yourself.

Chef reacts.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

Isn't tonight a night where we face
some hard, home truths? You cook
with obsession, not love.

Chef is silent. This hits.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

Even your hot dishes are cold. And
dead. Like they were made by one
of those fish hanging in your
little smoke shack. You're a chef.

(MORE)

MARGOT (CONT'D)

Your one single purpose on this Earth is to serve people food that they will like. And you've failed. You've bored me. And worst of all, I'm still fucking hungry.

Chef Slowik takes it all in and nods slightly.

CHEF SLOWIK

You're still hungry?

MARGOT

I am.

CHEF SLOWIK

How hungry?

MARGOT

Starved.

CHEF SLOWIK

What are you hungry for?

MARGOT

What do you have?

CHEF SLOWIK

Everything.

MARGOT

You know what I really want?

CHEF SLOWIK

Tell me.

MARGOT

A cheeseburger.

The word gives him a moment of real pause. Chef Slowik thinks about this. He nods.

CHEF SLOWIK

We can do a cheeseburger.

MARGOT

I mean a real cheeseburger. Not some fancy deconstructed avant bullshit.

CHEF SLOWIK

I will make you a very good, very traditional cheeseburger.

MARGOT

I don't think you can.

CHEF SLOWIK

I will make you feel as if you are eating the first cheeseburger you ever ate. The cheap one your parents could barely afford. The one that tasted better than any other cheeseburger in the world.

MARGOT

Show me.

CHEF SLOWIK

How do you like it?

MARGOT

Medium. American cheese.

CHEF SLOWIK

American cheese is the best cheese for a cheeseburger because it melts without splitting.

MARGOT

And no weird homemade artisanal ketchup. I want Heinz.

CHEF SLOWIK

I make a special sauce that's equal parts Heinz, mayo, and hot dog mustard.

MARGOT

That sounds weird.

CHEF SLOWIK

You want it. It's delicious.

MARGOT

How much will this set me back?

CHEF SLOWIK

\$9.95.

MARGOT

That come with fries?

CHEF SLOWIK

(over his shoulder)
Niels!

SOUS-CHEF NIELS

Yes, Chef?

CHEF SLOWIK

Is the fryer still on?

SOUS-CHEF NIELS

Yes, Chef.

CHEF SLOWIK

(to Margot)

Crinkle-cut or Julienne?

LATER

The sound of cooking. Slowik is alone in the kitchen. The entire staff has gathered in the dining room. The tension in the room has oddly dissipated. Margot waits patiently.

Chef emerges from the kitchen and, sloshing across the liquid still covering the floor, places a plate in front of her.

It looks, no shit, like the best cheeseburger ever. A SUPERIMPOSED TITLE reads, "SUPPLEMENTAL COURSE: 'A CHEESEBURGER - just a well-made cheeseburger'"

Margot looks at it and nods. Then she picks it up and takes a bite. She closes her eyes and savors the bite for a long glorious beat. Then she opens her eyes and looks at Chef.

MARGOT

Now that is a cheeseburger.

CHEF SLOWIK

Yes. That is a cheeseburger.

They smile and share this moment. Margot takes a deep breath.

MARGOT

Unfortunately, my eyes were a little bigger than my stomach.

CHEF SLOWIK

I understand.

MARGOT

Can I get the rest to go?

DOLLY IN on Slowik as he thinks. He looks around his restaurant. The ferocious beauty of his food. The havoc he has caused. The totality of his life. And somehow he knows this is the perfect ending to his menu. He nods. And smiles.

CHEF SLOWIK

One moment, please.

Chef Slowik walks back to the kitchen and we watch as he delicately wraps Margot's burger and puts it into a Hawthorn to-go bag. We linger on him for a moment before he walks back into the dining room. He believes he's doing the right thing.

He gives Margot the burger. Along with a Hawthorn gift bag.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

Thank you for dining at Hawthorn.

Margot reaches into her purse and hands Chef a \$10 bill.

MARGOT

Thanks for everything. Goodnight.

Margot take a last look at Chef and Richard and Anne and walks out of the restaurant. And we sense, perhaps, that she is also walking away from the life she had. Away from a world of men she is now finally done with.

Chef Slowik CLAPS.

CHEF SLOWIK

So. Before our final course, there is the matter of the bill.

Servers place CHECKS on the tables, along with little Hawthorn gift bags.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)

We're on a no-tip system, so gratuity is included. Please enjoy your gift bags. A few goodies in there -- a booklet of our local suppliers, some house-made granola, one of Doug Verrek's fingers, and a copy of tonight's menu.

LILLIAN BLOOM reaches for his wallet until Ted stops her.

TED

No, this is on the magazine.

He notices that Lillian is almost about to cry.

TED (CONT'D)

I know.

LILLIAN BLOOM

No, it's just - I just realized I'll never get to write about this.

On CHEF-- devilishly satisfied by this odd form of revenge.

RICHARD reaches for his wallet with his one good hand and gives it to Anne.

RICHARD
Can you take out my Amex?

He looks at her.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Anne?

ANNE
I don't want an apology, Richard.

RICHARD
Happy Anniversary.

EACH TECH BRO tosses in a credit card -- they're going Dutch.

The movie star puts down his card.

FELICITY
I am your friend.

The movie star smiles at his only friend.

MOVIE STAR
Told you you weren't leaving.

BACK TO CHEF

CHEF SLOWIK
Again, thank you all for dining with us tonight. You represent the ruin of my art, and my life, but now you get to be a part of it. A part of what I hope is my masterpiece. Well done. Give yourselves a hand.

With Chef's prompting, the guests slowly begin to clap. The movie star can't help but give it up sincerely for himself and for a fellow artist. The cooks applaud as well.

Tears well in Chef Slowik's eyes. He pauses, takes a deep breath. He has somehow found... release.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
And now, our final dessert course is a playful twist on a comfort food classic...

59 EXT. HAWTHORN ISLAND - NIGHT 59

From afar we see Margot board the coast guard boat.

59A INT. HAWTHORN DINING AREA AND KITCHEN--CONTINUOUS 59A

The staff has now surrounded Chef in a semi-circle.

A sous-chef turns several knobs on the wall so that the lighting is nearly dark, but almost a spotlight on chef.

Katherine applies a marshmallow jacket to Slowik.

CHEF SLOWIK
(to Katherine)
Thank you, chef.

The slightest nod from Katherine.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
The S'more: the most offensive assault on the human palate ever contrived. Unethically sourced chocolate and gelatinized sugar water imprisoned by industrial grade biscuit. It's everything wrong with us and yet we associate it with innocence. Childhood. Mom and Dad.

Chef looks at his mother, who is passed out at her table.

CHEF SLOWIK (CONT'D)
But what transforms this fucking monstrosity is fire. The purifying flame. It nourishes us, warms us, re-invents us, forges and destroys us.

Tears in the eyes of our diners. They know what's happening.

ANNE
(quietly)
Please --

But is she pleading for him to stop... or to continue?

CHEF SLOWIK
We must embrace the flame. We must be cleansed. Like martyrs or heretics we can be subsumed and made anew.

Chef strikes a match and tosses it in the flammable pool. A watery curtain of blue flame billows across the floor.

A warm, metamorphic glow illuminates the FACES of our diners.

CLOSE ON Chef Slowik's serene, smiling face in the firelight.

60 INT. COAST GUARD BOAT - NIGHT

60

Margot steers the boat with one hand on the wheel, gazing wearily into the distance, Hawthorn Island at her back.

But then the engine stalls. The PROPELLORS stop spinning. The boat just drifts there in the water, maybe a half a mile or more from the island.

Margot tries for a bit to fiddle with the controls and restart the engine. But it's no use.

Finally, nothing else to do, she goes and quietly sits on the deck of the boat. It's a beautiful night.

She gazes at faraway Hawthorn Island. BRIGHT FLAMES begin to rise inside the restaurant. Soon it is a warm, shimmering inferno casting orange reflective streaks across the water.

Margot sits and gazes silently at the distant fire. She takes the cheeseburger from the to-go bag and eats it as she watches Hawthorn and everyone inside it burn, the flames dancing in her eyes.

Then she takes the MENU from the gift bag and uses it as a napkin to dab her lips.

AGAINST BLACK, TITLE CARD:

"FINAL COURSE"

61 EXT. ISLAND - MORNING

61

FIREFIGHTERS scavenge through the charred remains of Hawthorn Restaurant. We STEADICAM through the wreckage, passing the remains of the dining room and the kitchen. We may pass some rescue workers trying to force a stubborn charred four fingered hand into a body bag

A SUPERIMPOSED TITLE reads: "DESSERT: 'S'MORE' - marshmallow, chocolate, graham cracker, customers, staff, restaurant."

We finally reach the locked SILVER DOOR, the portal to the room inside, which has somehow not burned.

It's like a jumbo-sized version of an airplane black box. Officers blow the door with an explosive, and it opens in a plume of smoke.

We continue in through the door. When the smoke clears, we see the interior -- a bare room with only a single table in the center. On top of the table rests a framed photograph. The same photograph Margot saw in Chef's home.

We hurtle closer still and finally see what Margot saw: A photograph of a YOUNG CHEF SLOWIK, perhaps at his first summer job at a fast food stand. He has a big smile on his face and an apron that reads "Kiss the Chef." He's never been happier, his face lit by the fire of the grill.

And he's flipping the world's most perfect cheeseburger.

THE END