

THE CUISINE WAR

WRITTEN By

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TINTAGEL FILMS

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SCENE 1

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT

A aerial shot of LA at night.

SCENE 2

EXT. BIG BEAR LAKE - MORNING

Underwater: three sets of orange, webbed feet paddle in a flurry of motion.

On the peaceful surface: a mum, daddy and baby mallard float along. Serene quacks echo until... the thunderclap of a hunting rifle.

Daddy and baby fly off in opposite directions.

Mum does not.

SCENE 3

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD - ART OF THE TABLE - NIGHT

A charming, elegant restaurant.

The type of place a man might propose in.

Fresh Flowers adorn the exterior, the chalkboard sign reads: "Grand Opening"

SCENE 4

EXT. ART OF THE TABLE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A fedora is placed next to a man (DANIEL CROMWELL) in a fine suit, Daniel is sat at the corner booth.

Daniel adjusts his place-settings.

Daniel screeches the table an inch over, just where he wants it.

That screech gets the attention of some of the patrons noticing the debonair silver fox, he notices their attention to him & gives them a nod.

Daniel glances over to the empty booth cushion next to him, he pontificates.

In deep thought, Daniel is approached by a server.

SERVER

Good Evening Mr. Cromwell. Welcome to Art
of the Table.

The server pauses..

DANIEL

Go ahead, what's next..

SERVER

Of course, our special tonight, is an
inspired duck. I meant a duck inspired.

DANIEL

Is it fresh?

SERVER

Fresh? I would hope so. Let me double
check.

The Server quickly walks from Daniel's table, he pokes his head in the
kitchen.

SERVER (CONT'D)

Chef, I have a question.

The Chef is in the middle of two dishes, he yells.

CHEF

What now Roger?

SERVER

It's Mr. Cromwell, he's wondering if the
duck is fresh?

CHEF

I caught the duck personally, let him
know it will melt in his mouth.

SERVER

Copy that.

Roger scurries back to Daniel's table.

SERVER (CONT'D)

Good news Mr. Cromwell, the duck is
fresh.

DANIEL

What a relief. Do you know what kind of
duck it is? Mallard?

SERVER

Let me check, just a moment.

The waiter flips through his notes.

DANIEL
So, you're the best?

SERVER
I'm sorry Sir?

DANIEL
You know who I am, which means "*They*"
know who I am.

The server gets flustered & looks around.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Yet, you're the best server *They* could
muster.

Roger looks towards the kitchen for a possible escape.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Look at me when I'm talking to you!

Roger looks Daniel, straight in the eye.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Guess what part this is?

SERVER
What Sir?

DANIEL
This is the part where you confirm my
assumption.

SERVER
Your assumption Sir?

Daniel shakes his head, perturbed.

DANIEL
Tell me that you've actually tasted what
you are recommending.

SERVER
Oh Yes, It was great.

DANIEL
Great? That's it?

Roger is speechless.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I'm thrilled with your command of
superlatives.

The MAITRE'd sees this disaster unfolding from across the room and strolls over.

He dismisses Roger.

MAITRE'D
Thank you Roger, I'll take it from here.

DANIEL
Are you the reinforcement?

MAITRE'D
Nice to see you again, Mr. Cromwell.

Daniel isn't impressed.

MAITRE'D (CONT'D)
You don't remember me, do you?

DANIEL
Was it prior to when I sat down?

MAITRE'D
I owned the previous restaurant in this space, Topaz.

DANIEL
I don't recall.

MAITRE'D
I was having deja vu watching you and Roger.

DANIEL
What are you getting at?

MAITRE'D
Let's just say your review was quite fair and balanced, I can't imagine why we had to close.

DANIEL
That's fascinating, I'll have the duck. What wine do you recommend with it?

MAITRE'D
The 2002 Bordeaux is an excellent complement to the duck. Its earthy tannins cut the sweetness of the glaze beautifully.

DANIEL
Let's give it a try.

Daniel opens his leather journal and begins jotting notes.

SCENE 5

INT. ART OF THE TABLE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Hustle and bustle, clanging and cursing from the staff.

Already de-feathered: the chef uses a cleaver & severs the head of the duck without remorse.

Once prepared, the duck is placed on fine porcelain.

Accoutrements are added, The server gets the nod from the chef to take it to the dining room.

The Maitre'd inspects the dish.

MAITRE'D

Don't worry Roger, if there are any
further issues with Mr. Cromwell, I'll
handle them.

INT. SCENE 6

Roger rushes toward the dining room, nearly tripping on his way.

The Maitre'd stops him.

He pulls out a napkin & wipes the plate.

MAITRE'D (CONT'D)

Remember your training Roger.

Roger nod's, he smoothly glides to Daniel's table, he places the dish down without a word, Daniel nods and Roger departs.

LATER

SCENE 7

INT. ART OF THE TABLE - DINING ROOM

Daniel is deep in thought, swirling his bordeaux while chewing the duck.

The Maitre'd approaches.

MAITRE'D
How is everything, Mr. Cromwell?

Daniel zaps back to the present, Swallowing.

DANIEL
You again?

MAITRE'D
How is the duck treating you Mr.
Cromwell?

DANIEL
You really want to know? It tastes like
this waterfowl fed at a landfill.

MAITRE'D
Ahh, I see. I'm happy to take it.

The Maitre'd reaches for the plate, but Daniel grabs his hand in a
death grip..

DANIEL
Do not touch this plate.

MAITRE'D
My Apologies Sir.

DANIEL
Never take the plate before asking! This
is the number one rule in the restaurant
industry. No wonder your a Maitre'd.

Daniel shakes his head.

MAITRE'D
If it helps Sir, your dinner will be
compliments of the chef.

DANIEL
If your chef knew what he was doing, he
wouldn't have to give his food away.

MAITRE'D
I'll let him know your sentiments.

The Maitre'd walks towards the kitchen..

Daniel looks at the finger prints on his plate & throws his napkin over
the dish. He shakes his head, places his fedora on his head & leaves
the restaurant.

The valet has his car up front, Daniel gets into his 1956 Aston Martin and drives down Sunset Blvd, crossing the 405 & arriving at his Cliff-top mansion in the Palisades.

SCENE 8

INT. DANIEL'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Vaulted Ceilings, Exposed Brick & Mahogany.

Daniel walks inside, his spaniel Ollie jumps on him.

DANIEL
Are you a hungry buddy?

Daniel pours a bowl of dog food, Ollie goes to the closet and grabs a leash in his mouth and walks to Daniel.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Give me a few minutes, I have to get this
out & we'll go.

Ollie gives him a smirk and lays down on the couch.

Daniel flips off his shoes & walks over to his armoire, he plucks a Moody Blues vinyl, places it on the turntable and heads over to his desk, "*Knights in White Satin*" begins playing.

Daniel feeds paper into his 1933 Remington Monarch Typewriter and slides the carrier left and begins typing.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I have been your resident food critic in
LA for 25 years.

You rely on me for one reason: to
distinguish between two types of Chefs:

The True Artists, in pursuit of their own
Sistine Chapel.

(Daniel slides the carrier)

DANIEL (CONT'D)
And the *Kitchen Managers*.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Capable of no more than derivative tweaks
on tired recipes.

Their mere presence, an insult to the
dish itself.

Daniel's stomach growls, interrupting his typing.

He shrugs it off & slides the carrier..

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 ART OF THE TABLE has fooled many, but
 they didn't fool me. Presentation is one
 thing, quality of the lack thereof is
 another.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 To my knowledge, taste buds have no legal
 right to bring forth criminal charges.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 But, should a I seek to establish legal
 precedence, might I suggest Art of The
 Table as a worthy candidate. No stars
 will be given to this facade of a eatery.

Daniel looks at Ollie, who jumps off the couch, wagging his tail, he
 picks up the leash and Daniel takes him on a walk.

SCENE 9

EXT. HOLLYWOOD FOREVER CEMETERY - DAY

Daniel stands with a gathering of people.

A eulogy is being given by a lady named Lea.

LEA
 Death is too negative for me, too final.

Rain begin to fall, everyone looks up.

LEA (CONT'D)
 That must be my mum soaking us, she
 always loved a good shower, there she is,
 up on a cloud smiling down at us.

Daniel whispers under his breath to Shannon (his daughter).

DANIEL
 I can't take this much longer.

SHANNON
 Come on Dad, hush.

LEA
 My Mother was A loving person. Her soul
 will live on forever, in our hearts...

DANIEL

Is she going to go on forever with this nonsense...

Shannon nudges Daniel.

LEA

My Mother didn't want this to be a sad day, more of a celebration of her new journey..

After Lea has finished, she walks over to Daniel & Shannon.

LEA (CONT'D)

What did you think?

DANIEL

You'd think we were burying the Pope or something, If you want to know the truth, it actually felt like something in me was dying whilst listening to you.

SHANNON

It was lovely Lea, really sweet.

LEA

Thanks Shannon, you don't have to be so honest Daniel.

Daniel looks at his watch.

DANIEL

So, what's your plan with the paper? I have a few friends who would be a great replacement for your mum.

Lea's husband, Tom walks over with their son Max.

LEA

You know Daniel, I've thought about it for awhile, I'll be taking over as Editor & Chief of the paper.

Daniel starts laughing..

DANIEL

You don't know the first thing about running a paper.

TOM

Daniel, you should all join us, we are heading to Moonshadows for brunch.

Daniel starts walking backwards.

DANIEL

Thank's for the invite Tommy, I have too many things on my plate today.

LEA

I've thought about it for awhile Daniel, The goal is to sell papers and keep the readers interested. Right?

DANIEL

There's a bit more to it than that.

LEA

Listen Daniel, We'll find a way, thanks for being here this morning.

Shannon hugs Lea.

SHANNON

See you soon!

Shannon catches up to Daniel as he's getting in his car.

DANIEL

This is going to be a nightmare, Lea isn't fit for this industry, she's your friend, can you talk some sense into her?

SHANNON

Dad, let the dust settle, Lea will follow your lead, she's just trying this out, I'm sure you'll find a way to get one of your guys in the captain's chair.

DANIEL

I just don't have the patience to deal with someone that needs training wheels.

Daniel starts his Aston Martin, Shannon jumps in & they leave the cemetery.

SCENE 10

EXT. CEMETERY CARPARK - DAY

Lea's friend Penelope walks over..

PENELOPE

How did he take it?

LEA

Daniel? You know how he is, I don't think he's really accepted the situation.

PENELOPE

You didn't actually tell him, did you?

LEA

You know me too well. I was thinking, we have too many readers who've been following him for so long, we would lose a chunk of them if I just fired him.

PENELOPE

I thought we had a plan. You need to stick to your guns.

LEA

Penelope, I'm taking over the biggest paper in LA, it could actually be helpful having him around.

PENELOPE

That wasn't what we discussed, oh well, now you need to come up with a plan.

LEA

Shannon would never forgive me if I just axed Daniel. He deserves better.

CUT TO:

SCENE 11

INT. DANIEL'S CAR

Daniel zooms down coast highway towards Victoria Point.

He stops in front of Shannon's flat, she looks at her father, he is still thinking about this 'Lea Conundrum', she gives him a kiss on the cheek.

SHANNON

Don't worry, you always end up on top, this will work itself out just fine.

Daniel doesn't seem convinced.

DANIEL

I'd like to think you're right, Lea has something up her sleeve.

She gets out and waves as Daniel departs.

SCENE 12

INT. DANIEL'S HOME - FOYER

Ollie comes up with the leash in his mouth.

DANIEL
Alright buddy, your first this time.

They depart as Daniel is pontificating.

A few neighbors wave to Daniel as he and Ollie stroll around the block.

Just as they round the corner on their way back to the house, Shannon stops next to them in her car.

SHANNON
What are you up to Dad?

DANIEL
Just taking Ollie on his walk, the question is, why are you here?

SHANNON
I don't know, I was just at home thinking, so I thought I'd come over.

DANIEL
Getting soft on me? Did that funeral get my ice princess to start melting?

SHANNON
You know, it did slightly, I won't always have you around.

She walks over to Daniel and pretends to kick him.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
I figured I would stop by for a quick torture session.

DANIEL
Now that sounds like the daughter I know.

She opens her trunk, Ollie runs over and she gives him a biscuit.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Don't give him those, you know he won't eat his regular food if he thinks he can get those instead.

SHANNON
Lighten up, it's just a treat.

DANIEL
One day when you have a dog, you'll understand.

Shannon pulls two grocery sacks out of the boot.

They walk inside and she brings the sacs to the kitchen.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What do you have going on in here?

He pulls out a lobster.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What do you intend on doing with this?

Shannon goes to pull out a saucepan.

SHANNON

I'm going to create lobster scampi.

DANIEL

It was created a long time ago dear, you mean you're going to recreate it.

SHANNON

Can you ever just be my Dad & take your food critic hat off.

DANIEL

When it comes to food, I'm all business. What do you expect? Me to fluff you up?

Shannon walks over to her dad & grabs the lobsters from each of his hands.

SHANNON

When you buy, you decide how it's prepared, tonight is my treat.

DANIEL

Scampi? Why don't we just boil it, Scampi will drown the subtle flavours of the lobster.

SHANNON

Your a food critic, not a Chef, let me at least cook it before you critique it.

DANIEL

Getting personal I see.

She hands Daniel a few shallots.

SHANNON

Why don't you help out & peel these for me.

DANIEL
Okay, sugar blossom.

Shannon pulls back her sleeves.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Is that another tatoo?

SHANNON
None of your business Dad.

DANIEL
Come on! Doesn't your father have a say-
so in your life anymore?

SHANNON
Not when it comes to my own personal
decisions.

DANIEL
Okay, just as long as you've thought
these decisions through..

Shannon starts cooking up a storm.

SCENE 13
INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Daniel is sitting at his dinner table, Shannon brings over the food.

DANIEL
Let's see how it turned out.

She takes a seat.

Daniel has a bite of the scampi.

He gets up, goes to his fridge & grabs a litre of milk, he pours some
in a cup and walks back to the table, he sits down and pours a decent
portion of milk on the scampi.

SHANNON
What in the blazes are you doing?

DANIEL
You over seasoned it.

SHANNON
What?!

DANIEL
Shall I repeat myself, not only is it
over seasoned, you made the cardinal sin
of over salting it.
(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Lobster already has it's own natural salt, you should leave the salting up to the consumer.

SHANNON

Have you ever heard of just saying thank you?

DANIEL

Honey, I told you, when it comes to food, I'm all business. I've lived too long to be dishonest when it comes to facts.

SHANNON

Okay, so now your opinion is Fact?

DANIEL

When it comes to food, I'd say so.

Daniel takes a bite.

SHANNON

Better?

Daniel gets up with his plate, pulls a strainer out & drops the lobster in the strainer. He rinses it with hot water.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

What are you doing now?

Daniel is now melting some butter.

DANIEL

Saving it.

Shortly after, he comes back with the freshly washed lobster, drawn butter and lemon.

He takes a chunk of lobster, dips it in the butter and starts chewing.

SHANNON

Happy?

DANIEL

I wouldn't say that.

Shannon gets up.

She grabs his plate and dumps it in Ollie's dog bowl.

Ollie rushes over and wolfs it down.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

SHANNON

You didn't like it how I made it & you didn't like what you did.

DANIEL

You didn't need to waste it.

SHANNON

Well, it's gone now, unless you want to go over and fight Ollie for it.

Daniel throws his napkin down.

DANIEL

Who do you think you are?

SHANNON

I came here to be nice, all you do is insult me and my cooking.

DANIEL

I didn't insult you, I insulted your cooking. I also don't know why you think you can keep feeding Ollie food that isn't his.

Shannon picks up her bags and walks towards the front door.

SHANNON

He didn't have a problem with it.

DANIEL

He's a dog, are you really going to use him as leverage?

She opens the door and closes it.

SHANNON

Before I leave, can you sign this really quickly?

She pulls out a paper.

DANIEL

What is it?

She hands him the paper.

Daniel puts on his reading glasses and takes a look.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

"I Daniel Cromwell hereby endorse Shannon Cromwell as a qualified Chef".

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What is this?

SHANNON

Just sign it.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

I certainly won't, these are supposed to be my words, did you type this up?

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Yes.

DANIEL

I won't sign anything that I didn't actually write. Who is this for?

SHANNON

I'm applying to be a chef at this place.

DANIEL

A Chef? What place?

SHANNON

It's for a TV show.

DANIEL

A TV show? You've got to be kidding me.

SHANNON

I'm not kidding.

DANIEL

First of all, you've never been a Chef before.

SHANNON

Yes, I have. I was..

DANIEL

A sous chef does not qualify.

SHANNON

Sous Chef? Where did you get that? I was The Executive Chef at Lion Bistro.

DANIEL

I've been there, that is a tapas place,
you are a glorified food prep.

SHANNON

I'm your daughter! Why don't you want me
to succeed.

DANIEL

That's not the point, I don't want to
have my words written by anyone but
myself, especially being where this is my
medium.

SHANNON

You know what Dad, all I need is a damn
recommendation letter. It'll will take
two seconds, just sign it.

DANIEL

Can you at least tell me what I am
recommending you for?

SHANNON

You really want to know?

DANIEL

Yes, I want to know... Who's going to be
reading it?

SHANNON

Gordon Ramsay.

DANIEL

Your talking about The Gordon Ramsay?

SHANNON

Yes, Dad, the same man you 86'd out of
his first Michelin Star. The same chef
who won another 16, I might add.

DANIEL

Two seconds of time wasted if you ask me.

SHANNON

Just sign the bloody letter.

DANIEL

What's the endgame?

SHANNON

The endgame is, if I win, I get my own
restaurant.

DANIEL

Do you know how hard it is to run a restaurant? Just because you think you can cook doesn't mean you know anything about the business of food.

SHANNON

I'll never know unless I have the chance. Just sign the letter.

Shannon pulls out a pen.

DANIEL

I feel like I'm being held at gunpoint.

Shannon smiles.

SHANNON

You are.

DANIEL

I didn't know it was like that.

SHANNON

Now you know.

DANIEL

Who are you? What happened to my daughter?

Daniel signs the paper.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Happy?

SHANNON

I'll tell you when we film the episode, it would be nice to have your support.

DANIEL

I can't wait, let me know, one thing before you go.

SHANNON

What's that?

DANIEL

Ease up on the salt.

SHANNON

You won't give up, will you?

DANIEL

I'm trying to do you a favour.

SHANNON
I'll keep it in mind.

She leaves.

SCENE 14
INT. MIRABELLE - NIGHT

Mirabelle is one of the finest restaurants in Beverly Hills - two men are on a rooftop overlooking the skyline.

CHARLIE MCCARTHY, sits across from his buddy/assistant, MIKE

CHARLIE
So, when did you make these reservations?

MIKE
I don't know, about six months ago.

CHARLIE
Where the hell is our waiter? It seems like he's been gone for six months.

MIKE
I'm starting to think service here is slightly less than stellar.

Charlie is wearing Apple glasses, he slams them on the table.

CHARLIE
Phenomenal, so let's leave.

Charlie's all-too-ready to leave, when:

MIKE
Charlie, this is one of the nicest restaurants in the world. Do you know what a Michelin Star is? Let's give them the benefit of the doubt on this.

Mike pulls the Apple glasses of the table.

CHARLIE
I have.

In a slick, one-handed motion, Charlie flags down the WAITER passing by.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Hi, will you be serving us?

The waiter wasn't planning on serving them, he awkwardly pulls out a checkbook to take their orders.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
We'll have the Bordeaux Red, I hear 2007 was a great year.

WAITER
No sir, 2007 was the worst year.

CHARLIE
Pretty sure your info's wrong. So, we'll enjoy a 2007 Cab, about 80 percent bordeaux, and if you can mix some chardonnay in to soften it up, that would be great.

WAITER
That wine does not exist, sir.

CHARLIE
See what you can do.

MIKE
Hey Charlie, are you ready to order?

CHARLIE
Okay, Listen, We'll each have 5 courses, chef's recommendation, and tell him something that pairs with the wine.

The waiter's eyes bulge out at this order.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Oh, and what's your name?

WAITER
Lorenzo.

CHARLIE
Lorenzo? Seriously? Okay, make it happen. Stat.

As Lorenzo is about to flee, Charlie spots something--

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Oh, oh! Lorenzo. Lorenzo!

Lorenzo returns while Charlie points to the couple at the next table:

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
How is that?

MAN AT THE TABLE

Me?

CHARLIE

Yes, you. Is it good?

MAN AT THE TABLE

Yes, Very.

CHARLIE

Lorenzo, be a good sport & tack a couple of those onto our main course. Thanks Pal!

SCENE 15

INT. MIRABELLE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

LATER

Two plates of Escargot vol-au-vent sit in front of them.

MIKE

So what's this again?

CHARLIE

It's escargot, don't you know anything?
It's like a mushroom, eat it.

Mike pops one in his mouth..

MIKE (WHILE CHEWING)

It doesn't taste like a mushroom. It has a tail & why is it slimy?

CHARLIE

Mike, will you stop all this complaining, think of it like a cooked oyster.

SCENE 16

INT. MIRABELLE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Their table's already crammed, but a FOOD RUNNER somehow squeezes even more plates in front of them.

FOOD RUNNER

Our Norwegian Sea Scallops, presented atop homemade spetzel with cherry tomatoes. Is there anything else I can do Sir?

CHARLIE

Yes.

Charlie picks up the half eaten escargot.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Take this back. It's a revolting choice
for our wine. And what kind of idiot adds
greens to a cream sauce?

The shocked food runner retreats to the kitchen.

MIKE

I didn't know you were going to send them
back.

A few seconds later, the kitchen door swings open.

We here the CHEF screaming: "HE SAID WHAT!?!?"

CHARLIE

This should be interesting.

Mike shovels A few scallops into his mouth as the chef storms into the
dining room.

Charlie whips his Apple glasses on and hits "record".

CHEF

You eat half of the escargot & then send
it back?

CHARLIE

We needed to make sure they were as bad
as they were.

The chef grabs Charlie's wine and hurls it at his face.

CHEF

Get out of my restaurant!

Soaking wet, Charlie stands up..

CHARLIE

You've made a big mistake.

Mike eats a couple more bites of the Lamb and gets up next to Charlie.

CHEF

We're a world-renowned restaurant
reviewed by renowned critics.

Charlie gets in the Chef's face and holds him by the throat.

His staff get closer as Charlie looks the Chef in the eye.

CHARLIE

And that will be changing soon, I assure you.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You Never chastise the customer, let alone throw wine at him for sending dishes back. Your are an AMATEUR!

Charlie grabs Mike and they walk out.

MIKE

That was insane!

CHARLIE

Not as insane as what will happen next.

SCENE 17

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR

Charlie & Mike get into his Lotus, they take off crossing the 405 driving down Santa Monica Blvd & arrive on Ocean Ave.

SCENE 18

INT. CHARLIE'S CONDO - OCEAN AVE

Charlie's Apple glasses recording plays on his TV.

He goes over to his Computer & angrily types away.

CHARLIE

"Mirabelle not only has poor service etiquette, but a head Chef who eavesdrops on his customers & assaults them with Wine. I call for a boycott of Mirabelle & for you all to echo my sentiments with helping to shut this place down.'

SCENE 19

INT. THE TRIBUNE - NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DTLA - DAY

An intern takes down a sign that says Eleanor Pennington, Editor-in-Chief and places a new plaque on the door Lea Pennington, Editor in Chief.

Lea is sitting at her desk when Daniel enters with his hardcopy review. She picks it up & glares at it.

LEA

Daniel, how many times did my Mother ask you for a digital version?

(MORE)

LEA (CONT'D)

Things haven't changed. You do know I have to make an intern retype this.

DANIEL

Are you implying an intern's time is more valuable than mine?

She snatches the review and speed-reads it..

LEA

Art of the Table, Is this the place I think it is?

DANIEL

If you want me to stop reviewing..

LEA

You know I'd never do that, You can review any restaurant you choose.

She looks up, wanting to say more, but pauses.

DANIEL

Is everything okay Lea?

LEA

Not really, I've taken a look at the books & guess what Daniel, we're really struggling here.

DANIEL

What's the problem?

LEA

No one needs us for national or world news anymore, our only edge is with the local stories, even there, we're losing readers.

DANIEL

Your Mother wasn't so focussed on the competition. She was about telling things how they were and having the audience find it's way to the paper, naturally.

LEA

Daniel, my mum is gone. There's a new Chief and we need something to spice up the paper, you know, give us an edge.

DANIEL
I have an idea.

LEA
Enlighten me.

DANIEL
Find me a worthy adversary.

Lea's eyes lock on him.

LEA
I like where your going with this, I'll
see what I can do.

DANIEL
Anything more?

LEA
Yes, bring me digital copies. We don't
need to kill trees anymore Daniel.

SCENE 20

INT. WEST COAST RESTAURANT WARS
- TV STUDIO BURBANK - DAY

Daniel & Lea sit in a front-row seat, watching the stage.

BEHIND THE SCENES, Shannon and her competitor; Colin each clutch two
different door handles.

'TV ANNOUNCER'

And Now, This season's climax to declare the winner.

Gordon Ramsay steps ON STAGE as drums cue and the show resumes to its
FINAL SEGMENT of the season finale. Cutting right to it:

GORDON
This is it! Chefs, are you ready?

SHANNON
Yes Chef.

COLIN
Yes Chef.

GORDON
Chefs: the winner's door will open and
the loser's will remain locked. On three,
turn the handle. One... two... three.

Shannon and Colin each turn their handles:

Colin's door doesn't open, Shannon's does.

Shannon smiles & screams with excitement, extremely elated, she walks over & meets Gordon on stage, who hugs her for an extended period, during the extended embrace, Gordon turns toward the audience, looking straight at Daniel:

GORDON (CONT'D)

Take that, you son of a bitch.

The Audience cheers, Daniel smiles smugly back at Gordon & gives him a wave.

TWO WEEKS LATER

SCENE 21

INT. SHANNON'S RESTAURANT - EARLY EVENING

Shannon moves through her new space.

This used to be ART OF THE TABLE, implying they closed shortly after Daniel's review.

It's now ready to reopen as her place: {ALPHA & OMEGA}

As she glides through the dining room, giddy as a schoolgirl, she stops, as if hit with a case of *deja vu*.

She rings Daniel.

INTERCUT WITH DANIEL AT HIS HOME-OFFICE DESK.

DANIEL

Hello?

SHANNON

Dad, you are cordially invited to be the first reviewer of my restaurant, Thanks to You.

DANIEL

Ah, so kind of you. Although it's a conflict of interest, I would be honoured.

SHANNON

Great! I'll put you down for 8:00 PM tomorrow night.

DANIEL
What's the address?

SHANNON
7963 Melrose Ave.

Daniel freezes.

Shannon is walking around the restaurant..

SHANNON (CONT'D)
It's funny. This place seems so familiar,
like I've dreamt about it before. It's
weird.

(pause)
Dad? You there?

DANIEL
You know what, sweetheart? I forgot, I
have to review another restaurant
tomorrow. I'm sorry. I won't be able to
make it.

SHANNON
Okay. How about another night?

DANIEL
It doesn't work like that darling, I
can't just review whichever restaurant I
choose anymore, Lea has to pick them for
me.

SHANNON
Dad..

DANIEL
That's just the way it is.

SHANNON
Well do you at least want to come over &
check out the place?

DANIEL
I really have to go sweetie.

He hangs up.

Shannon is half-confused and half-furious:

SHANNON
Well, fine! I guess I'll find the 2nd
best food critic in town!

SCENE 22

EXT. DTLA TRAIN PLATFORM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Shannon steps off the train and dials her phone as she walks.

INTERCUT WITH LEA AT HER WORK-OFFICE DESK

LEA

Shannon, is that you? How are you?

SHANNON

I'm good. Another late night, huh?

LEA

Every night running a newspaper is late.
How's the restaurant?

SHANNON

That's actually what I wanted to talk to
you about. I asked Dad to review it and
he mentioned *You Choose* his restaurants
for him.

Lea stiffens, like she doesn't like where this is going.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

So, I was wondering if maybe you could
pull some strings...

Lea stammers, not knowing what to say...

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Hello? Lea?

LEA

I understand, Shannon, it's just, it's a
conflict of interest and if he gives you
a glowing review, which I'm sure he
would, the paper's credibility comes into
question.

Shannon is dejected.

Lea looks like it broke her own heart to say that.

SHANNON

I understand. I'm sorry to ask, do you
know any of *The Other* Top Critics around
town? Perhaps you could help me out that
way?

Something brilliant occurs to Lea, she speaks fast:

LEA

You know what? I might have something for you. Are you at your restaurant right now?

SHANNON

No, I'm swinging by my old place to catch up with my friends.

LEA

Where is that?

SHANNON

The Lion Bistro, where I was a sous chef, you know it, the same place you threw Tom's birthday party..

LEA

Got it, I'll get back to you.

Lea hangs up.

Shannon is curious about Lea's sudden spark.

SCENE 23

INT. THE TRIBUNE - DTLA - LEA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Penelope walks in.

PENELOPE

The maintenance guys are here, you should go home and get some sleep.

LEA

Hey, what's the name of that guy that everyone is talking about? You know, the undercover food critic?

PENELOPE

Charlie McCarthy?

LEA

That's him, he's your friend right?

PENELOPE

Last time I checked.

LEA

Great! Can you call him for me.

PENELOPE

Sure.

Penelope pulls out her cell.

INTERCUT WITH CHARLIE'S HOME OFFICE:

Which is chaotic flat; Guitars are on the floor, Mike is sitting on the couch with a laptop as Charlie frantically looks for something in a box.

His phone rings and he smiles at the caller ID.

CHARLIE

Is this the woman of my dreams?

PENELOPE

Very funny. Hey, what are you doing tonight?

Mike jumps into the conversation.

MIKE

We have a fire-wall problem here..

Charlie takes the laptop from Mike and types away, a real computer whiz, changing the coding as he talks to Penelope.

PENELOPE

There's a place I need you to review for me. It's called The Lion Bistro.

CHARLIE

The French Bistro? I can't just change venues at a moment's notice. You know how many hits my last review got on Youtube? 15 million. Do you know how many people live in LA? 4 Million.

He tosses the laptop back to Mike: problem solved.

Charlie digs back in a box full disguises: wigs, beards, etc.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Besides, I already have my disguise picked out.

Charlie's holding a silicone face mask with a beard.

Penelope has her phone on speaker.

LEA

Hey Charlie, this is Lea Pennington, Editor and Chief of The Tribune. If you do this for us and if it all goes well, we'd like to have you come be our top Food Critic at The Tribune.

Charlie ecstatically punches the air.

CHARLIE

The Tribune?

LEA

You'll be given our top clients and have our best office.

CHARLIE

That's a pretty intriguing offer Lea.

LEA

Great, what name shall I put under your reservations.

Charlie looks at his mask.

CHARLIE

Let's go ahead with *Perrier, Maurice Perrier*.

Penelope grabs the phone.

PENELOPE

Great, we'll have your reservations set.
Thanks Champ!

Charlie hangs up.

LEA

That went well.

PENELOPE

Charlie's really unpredictable, this should be interesting..

Back to Charlie's flat.

Charlie has already put on his face mask.

MIKE

We have 235,000 subscribers already on.
This is going to be big.

CHARLIE

Where are the glasses?

SCENE 24

EXT/INT. LION BISTRO - DTLA - NIGHT

Just outside the door, Charlie adjusts his Apple Glasses, as Mike cuts their camera glasses on.

Mike is wearing a dress and has a red wig on with long hair.

Charlie looks like a 70 year old Frenchman, he is wearing a beret, curly mustache, he bellows a laugh.

CHARLIE

Hello everyone, welcome to another edition of *In Your Face* with me, your Anonymous Host along with my trusted colleague..

MIKE (O.S.)

Hey Guys!

CHARLIE

Tonight we are at Lion Bistro. Chef Tony won Best New Restaurant at the 2019 Circle Awards, and here we go.

THEY ENTER.....

SCENE 25

INT. LION BISTRO - FOYER

HOSTESS

Welcome to Lion Bistro, do you have reservations with us this evening?

MIKE

Yes Madam, Perrier for two.

HOSTESS

(checking)

Yes sir, right this way Mr. Perrier.

She escorts them into a very quaint dining room & out on the candlelit balcony overlooking the river.

CHARLIE

This is the dining room. Clearly I brought the wrong date.

The hostess hands them menus.

HOSTESS

Upon request, we also have vegan and gluten free options.

CHARLIE

Definitely not interested in either of those, but thank you.

HOSTESS

Your server will be over shortly.

CHARLIE

Sounds good, Do me a favour & lets get the ball rolling with a couple of the chef's specials.

HOSTESS

I'll let your server know.

They sit down. Charlie gives Mike the switch look, Mike turns off his glasses.

CHARLIE

How does my face look?

MIKE

Like you've been dipped in acid a few times.

CHARLIE

Thanks, that's encouraging.

MIKE

What about me?

CHARLIE

You look like I plucked you fresh from the red light district.

MIKE

Plucked? Am I just a fruit for your consumption?

CHARLIE

Listen Mike, as long as your my side dish, you'll always be my fruit.

Mike smiles as Charlie gives the 'switch camera glasses on' signal.

SCENE 26

EXT/INT. LION BISTRO - LATER

Shannon walks inside the restaurant & gives the hostess a heart-felt hug, the hostess congratulates her.

Charlie turns his head to hear the loud conversation and BOOM, everything slows down, Charlie is in a trance.

Mike snaps his fingers.

MIKE

Hey Buddy! What are you doing? Back to the task at hand.

CHARLIE

She looks familiar, who is she?

MIKE

Not sure buddy, lets get back to our game plan here. No distractions, eye of the tiger. Right?

CHARLIE

You got it, back to the task at hand.

Charlie refocuses, but his eyes keep veering toward Shannon as she sits at the bar and warmly greets the bartender (STEVEN) *Old friends.*

SHANNON

Is Tony back there?

STEVEN

He should be out shortly.

Shannon smiles, Steven gives her a Jameson neat.

SHANNON

Thank's Stevie, so what's new with you?

STEVEN

We've got an organic sausage and caramelized onion appetizer. *It's outstanding.*

SHANNON

I meant with you.

STEVEN

Well in that case, an organic sausage and caramelized onion appetizer.

SHANNON

(laughing)

I'll start with that.

SCENE 27

EXT/INT. LION BISTRO - LATER

A server passes the bar with Charlie's and Mike's chef's special.

When he places the dishes at their table, Charlie doesn't even look at the food.

He's still gawking at Shannon.

Mike grunts, congests, anything to get Charlie back on point.

Shannon turns and notices Charlie staring at her. Their eyes meet as Charlie abruptly drops his napkin. He picks it up and refocuses back to the food that has been served.

Shannon watches a moment.

Something seems fishy.

SHANNON

Steven, have you heard of that undercover guy, he does those online reviews. He's not really a food critic, but he's pretty funny.

STEVEN

The anonymous guy, yeah. Funnier than hell.

SHANNON

That's the guy!

Shannon pulls out her phone and searches: Undercover Food Critic.

Charlie's site is the top hit.

A tab on it says live, she clicks the link.

After it buffers, she sees herself sitting at the bar.

She twists around to see Charlie and Mike staring at her.

CUT TO:

SCENE 28

INT. CHARLIE'S TABLE

MIKE

Who did you say she was again?

CHARLIE

I'm pretty sure she's the girl who won
Gordon Ramsay's cooking show.

CUT TO:

SCENE 29

INT. LEA'S OFFICE

Lea and Penelope are chuckling at Charlie's live stream.

LEA

I can't believe we pulled this off!

PENELOPE

You can thank me come bonus time.

CUT TO:

LION BISTRO

Charlie has a whole fish in front of him now, like a gentleman, he plays with his food.

He places a pea in the fish's eye socket and moves the fish lips with his fork:

CHARLIE

My name is Sea...bass...tian. Oh excuse
me, me llamo es Sebastian.

Shannon overhears and nearly chokes on her whisky.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Serving a whole fish is the equivalent of
eating fondue: if I wanted to do it
myself I would have stayed home. And
what's with a Chilean Sea Bass with Asian
influence?

That barb at Chef Tony makes Shannon go bonkers.

She marches over.

SHANNON

Excuse me, I couldn't help but overhear
what you said.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, I'll speak softer.

SHANNON

It's not the volume of your banter, it's
the content that needs correcting.

CHARLIE

I think you need to mind your own business miss. This is a public place if I'm not mistaken.

SHANNON

As long as your making disparaging remarks about the proprietor, it's my business.

CHARLIE

I am still at liberty to have my opinions, I don't recall inviting you to our table. Do you work here?

SHANNON

I used to, but that's besides the point.

CHARLIE

On the contrary, that's exactly why you need to piss off and leave my personal space.

SHANNON

I see you barely touched your fish. You don't like whole fish dat speaka da Spanish?

CHARLIE

I love Spanish speaking fish.

SHANNON

(In Spanish)

Good, because last I checked, Indonesia isn't a Spanish speaking country. This is a Barramundi, not a Chilean Sea Bass. That's why your dish has an Asian influence. It is an Asian fish. Furthermore, it's not about what you're eating, it's about the experience.

CHARLIE

Thank you for your tutorial, your time is up.

Charlie waves goodbye.

She waves back to Charlie & then rips Charlie's mustache and beret off.

Charlie leaps across the table, rips the Apple Glasses from Mike's face and breaks them in half.

CUT TO:

SCENE 30
INT. LEA'S OFFICE

Watching this all unfold, Lea and Penelope are laughing hysterically.

Lea looks on her computer, she's linked Charlie's app to her newspaper's app, we see the ratings going through the roof and the comments section going wild.

Lea's eye's go wide at all the new subscribers to her newspaper.

CUT TO:

Shannon storms away.

Mike and Charlie are distraught.

MIKE
She showed you.

CHARLIE
We're screwed!

Charlie's phone vibrates.

A text from Lea: Welcome to The Tribune.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Bloody hell! We got it!

They jump up and celebrate.

Shannon looks back at them, confused at their exuberance.

Charlie throws down a couple hundred on the table and waltzes out the door.

Shannon downs her whiskey in one gulp, still quite miffed.

SCENE 31
INT. THE TRIBUNE - MORNING

Daniel exits the lift, he walks towards his office.

Curiously, he notices several fresh faces on the floor.

Daniel scowls at them as he walks towards his office.

At his office, his key won't unlock the door.

CHARLIE

Hi. Who are you?

Daniel notices his door placard now reads "Charlie McCarthy."

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Hello? Are you the cleaner? This space is off limits. Stanley! Stanley!

All the interns stop and look at Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Who's responsible for making sure people don't wander over here?

STANLEY

Not me, I don't know.

CHARLIE

Well figure it out. What the hell do you think I pay you for?

STANLEY

You don't pay me.

CHARLIE

And now you know why!

Daniel storms past Charlie toward the editors office.

MIKE

That could be the dinosaur your replacing.

CHARLIE

Who know's, not my problem.

LEA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel storms in.

DANIEL

What the hell is going on with my office? And who's that chump at my desk with the other guy?

LEA

His name is Charlie McCarthy, you asked for this Daniel, he's your competition.

DANIEL

I didn't think you'd give my office away!
Where the hell is my *new office* going to
be?

LEA

Your *new office* is our old obituary
column's office.

DANIEL

What? Lucy died?

LEA

Her funeral was the week before my mum's,
you obviously don't pay attention do you?
Lucy wrote her own column, may she rest
in peace.

DANIEL

Listen Lea, you can't replace me. The
medium changes, not the words.

LEA

I'm not replacing you Daniel, this is the
competition the paper needs. I need a
hyena to stir things up.

DANIEL

Your mum is probably rolling over right
now.

LEA

Don't say that. Listen, you're going to
like him. Your daughter certainly does.
Take a look.

She turns her computer screen towards Daniel and plays the video of
Charlie and Shannon.

Daniel is disturbed by what he sees.

DANIEL

Who is this guy? What does Shannon have
to do with this?

Lo and behold, Charlie pops in the door.

CHARLIE

Watching my review? You kids can't get
enough of it, can you?

Daniel and Charlie exchange looks:

Like two cowboys about to have a shoot out.

A furious Daniel versus a confused Charlie.

Lea subtly smirks.

Charlie shrugs off Daniel's look.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Man, how about that girl? Electric.

DANIEL

This is your hire? Are you a maniac? Do you need a physician?

LEA

Charlie, this is Daniel Cromwell. You should know, Daniel is Shan..

CHARLIE

The cleaner? Is this your exit interview?

Daniel raises his eyebrows.

Lea coughs to hide her giggles as Penelope & Mike walk in.

Daniel throws his hands in the air and walks by Charlie and Mike, who give him the eye.

Daniel stops and says;

DANIEL

Game On Pal.

Mike & Charlie laugh.

After Daniel storms out of the office, Charlie walks over to Lea.

CHARLIE

I have to say Lea, dealing with an aggravated beast wasn't what I signed up for.

LEA

You both are going to be good for each other, I have a plan, just trust me.

MIKE

Does this plan include any dirty work
that needs to be done?

LEA

Daniel is not going anywhere. Lets just
focus on the objective gentlemen, selling
newspapers, leave Daniel to me.

Charlie & Mike walk out of Lea's Office.

SCENE 32

INT. DANIEL'S NEW OFFICE / OLD OBITUARY OFFICE - LATER

Smaller than his old one, Daniel looks at a photo of Lucy and her
column in the obituary of herself, the room is dark, all of Daniel's
files and belongings have been thrown in boxes.

He moves past them to peer out his window at the city.

Daniel can't breath, he tries to open the window, it won't open, he
struggles and falls to his knees.

Charlie walks by..

CHARLIE

So this is the obituary office huh? Are
you writing your own?

DANIEL

Why don't you go back to your skits pal,
this is my office and if you wish to
talk, you will have to make an
appointment and my schedule is full.

CHARLIE

You are a pleasant animal. Must have not
gotten your shots for awhile..

Charlie walks off, Daniel looks at his computer/monitor, its a 1990's
version of Windows.

He considers it a moment, then presses the on button, it doesn't start.

DANIEL

Is this thing broken?

He slams it a few times, and calls picks up the phone.

DANIEL

Hey Stan, can you get this computer working and a crowbar to pry my window open, I'm dying in here.

STANLEY

Yes sir, right away.

SCENE 33

INT. THE TRIBUNE - ONLINE DIVISION - LATER

Hectic interns are running around everywhere, all for Charlie.

INTERN #1

We've got reservations for Bella's at 8:00 PM tonight.

CHARLIE

Bella's is good. The chef trained under Wolfgang Puck. You know what, let's get reservations for one of the Puckster's restaurants.

INTERN #2

That will take months.

CHARLIE

Make it happen!

INTERN #2

(picking up the phone)

Will do.

INTERN #3

Charlie, I don't have anything to do.

CHARLIE

What kind of comment is that? You know what, Find me the girl in last night's episode, she won that Gordon Ramsay show a few months back.

SCENE 34

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE

Stanley is prying open the window, drenched in sweat, Daniel stands back and watches, it finally opens.

Daniel then points to the computer, after pressing the button, plugging and unplugging it, Stan can't get the computer to work, frustrated, he shoves it on the floor and breaks it.

DANIEL

What the hell do you think your doing?

STANLEY

I thought it was garbage, did it have a sentimental value to you?

Daniel grabs Stan by the collar & pins him against the wall.

DANIEL

Do you know what you just did? I ought to put your head through that wall boy.

STANLEY

I'm sorry sir, It won't happen again.

Daniel lets him go.

DANIEL

It won't happen again? You just destroyed 25 years of reviews, all the interns before you spent tireless hours saving them, you just destroyed it. Who the hell do you think you are?

STANLEY

I'll make it right.

DANIEL

Here!

Daniel throws one of empty boxes at Stanley.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Fix it! If I see you before its fixed, you won't like it.

Stanley puts the broken computer in the box and scurries out of Daniel's office.

Daniel walks by his old office and mouths to Charlie.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm coming for you.

CHARLIE

It's on buddy, I'm not going anywhere.

SCENE 35

INT. CRAIG'S WEHO - LATER THAT NIGHT

Daniel sits down in a booth. He pulls out a special bag & unwraps a cube of butter, he then pulls out 2 garlic cloves and starts peeling them, followed by a small bottle that has 10 different vitamins.

He lines them all up on the table, he nods to the server who brings over a salad with salmon and some sliced bread. Daniel enjoys his meal, never does he verbally communicate, the staff there understand him.

Afterwards, Daniel decides to take a stroll.

SCENE 36

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie parks his car around the corner, he looks at the screen-shot on his phone, he approaches the restaurant, nobody is there to greet him, so he goes & takes a seat in a booth.

As he is looking around, A waitress comes out of the kitchen & walks over.

WAITRESS

Hi, welcome to Alpha & Omega, our special tonight is butter poached Icelandic lobster with gruyere.

CHARLIE

Sold! Let's go with that, slow night?

The place is empty.

WAITRESS

It's Monday, you know how it is.

CHARLIE

I don't, actually.

WAITRESS

Wait, aren't you that guy?

CHARLIE

That guy?

WAITRESS

Yes, Shannon ripped your mask off on your last episode, I'm sure it's you.

Just at that moment, Shannon appears out of the kitchen.

SHANNON

Oh no! No! You need to get out! Now!

Charlie points to himself, "me?"

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Yes, you! Take your pathetic little glasses and get out. Go on! Shoo!

CHARLIE

Whoa now, no glasses, promise.

He stands and makes a display of patting himself down.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

No review, I just want to try your place, off the record.

SHANNON

Off the record? So I can poison you with rhubarb leaves and toss you in a dumpster and no one will know?

CHARLIE

Sounds delightful.

SHANNON

If I get one iota of your bullshit, you will be escorted by my friends.

She points across the street to two muscle maniacs downing energy drinks. She gives them the nod, they walk in the restaurant.

KILLIAN

Having a problem Shannon?

Killian is flexing his muscles giving Charlie the bull dog look.

RORY

We can take care of him.

SHANNON

No, not yet. I just wanted to see if you were hungry, I have a few appetizers you might like. Take a seat.

She sits them down a couple tables from Charlie.

The waitress comes over to Charlie and whispers, did you still want the lobster?

Charlie nods.

SCENE 37

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - LATER

Charlie savors every bite of a lobster, Shannon comes out wiping her hands, she sits down across from him.

SHANNON

Was it good?

CHARLIE

Best Lobster I've ever had.

SHANNON

Good, you should start feeling sick pretty soon, seriously, what are you doing here?

CHARLIE

Did you know the older lobsters get, the more fertile they become? In fact, many scientists think lobsters can live forever, so long as they don't get a disease or suffer an injury or get eaten.

He takes his last bite. Shannon cocks her head, starring at his phone next to the plate.

SHANNON

Did you just learn that?

CHARLIE

What do you mean?

She snatches his phone, low and behold, he's on the "Lobster" Wikipedia.

SHANNON

Wikipedia, huh?

CHARLIE

Don't knock Wikipedia! It got me through college. Well, almost.

SHANNON

You work at The Tribune and you didn't graduate college?

CHARLIE

How do you know where I work? Seems like your doing your own searches.

SHANNON

I like to know about my customers. Congratulations on that, you've got some stiff competition there.

CHARLIE

Competition?

Now she grins wide, he has no idea at all.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm Charlie, nice to meet you, again.

He extends his hand.

SHANNON

Shannon, I'm not sure if its mutual.

CHARLIE

Thanks for the meal.

SHANNON

As long as you don't bring those glasses,
I won't mind taking your money again.

CHARLIE

Thanks for your warmth and hospitality,
I'm sure business will pick up.

SCENE 38

EXT. WEHO - NIGHT

Daniel is slowly walking down Melrose, many things are eating at him.

He approaches Shannon's restaurant, he hears something and turns, but nothing's there.

Daniel stares at the ALPHA & OMEGA sign.

Through a giant bay window, he spots a certain person sitting with his daughter.

DANIEL

Oh no, No! No! Not Him!

SCENE 39

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie stands up, gives his company credit card to the waitress who walks over to the bar where Shannon is standing.

SHANNON

Tell him we won't take that card, it has
to be his personal card, this is not a
business expense.

WAITRESS

You got it.

CHARLIE

No problem, I'll pay with cash.

From the booth, through the bay window, Daniel is going bonkers.

SHANNON

I'm glad you enjoyed it.

The waitress returns with his receipt and Charlie hands her a hundred extra.

WAITRESS

Thank you!

SCENE 40

EXT. EXT. ALPHA & OMEGA - CONTINUOUS

Daniel paces. Charlie exits.

DANIEL

What the hell are you doing here!?

CHARLIE

Daniel? What the hell are you doing here!? Are you stalking me? Trying to steal my critique secrets?

DANIEL

That would be like a physicist stealing an essay from an elementary student.

CHARLIE

Elementary? That's kind of you, so what are you really doing here? Isn't it past your bedtime?

Daniel is fuming.

DANIEL

You better stay away from my daughter!

CHARLIE

Daughter?

Charlie looks around?

Then inside the restaurant, the waitress is clearing his table.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

The waitress? Relax pal. I gave her a nice tip, nothing more.

DANIEL
No you twat! Shannon! The Head Chef.

CHARLIE
Wait? Shannon's your daughter!?

DANIEL
You've been warned.

CHARLIE
Seriously Daniel, that doesn't make genetic sense.

DANIEL
I'm going to kill you if you come near her again.

Daniel goes towards Charlie with his hands reading to grab him, Charlie runs from Daniel, Daniel runs after him, Charlie runs quickly and jumps in his car.

CHARLIE
We can't let something like this come between us. See you tomorrow!

Charlie zooms off.

SCENE 41
INT. THE TRIBUNE LOBBY - MORNING

Daniel passes the security desk & notices a fresh face outside the building.

DANIEL
Where's Max?

ROBERT
Max?

DANIEL
Did I stutter? Yes. Max my age. He's been sitting right where your sat for the last 30 years!

ROBERT
Ah Max, I never met him, he was let go, they said something about him not keeping up with technology.

DANIEL
Technology? His job is to guard the building and have perspective on who to let in or not.

ROBERT

That's not what I heard, by the way,
where's your pass?

DANIEL

Look on that screen & you should see my
picture. I've worked here since you were
in diapers.

ROBERT

Who do you think you are?

While waiting, Charlie approaches the security guard.

CHARLIE

Hey Buddy.

YOUNG GUARD

My soccer team loves you! That last video
with you chewing gum and calling it the
unconquerable food had us rolling.

CHARLIE

Thanks Robert. Here, I get these for free
sometimes.

Charlie pulls out a gift card and hands it to him. Robert is taken
aback by the generosity.

ROBERT

Thank you sir!

CHARLIE

Robert, you might want to double check
that he's allowed here, I think he might
not be employed here anymore, he might be
trespassing.

As Charlie walks toward the lift.

The Door opens.

Daniel runs past Robert & Charlie, he jumps in the lift and slams the
door close button.

Still not closing.

CHARLIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hold that door!

Robert rushes after Daniel

ROBERT

Stop! I haven't checked you in yet!

DANIEL
Come on! Lets Go! Technology my ass.

CHARLIE
Hey! Hold it!

Charlie squeaks through in the door as it closes with Robert approaching rapidly.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Looks like your not playing by the rules
Danny boy.

They both stare straight ahead, just before they reach the top.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
So.

DANIEL
If you open that jaw, I'll break it.

The door open.

CHARLIE
Have a good day.
(under his breath)
You curmudgeoness bastard.

DANIEL
It's curmudgeonly, cretins make up words.

Daniel goes left, Charlie goes right, they both rendezvous at the coffee station in the break room, entering from opposite directions.

Daniel rushes to the coffee machine.

SCENE 42
INT. THE TRIBUNE - BREAKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel fills a big mug that says The King.

Charlie waits and plucks a mug out of his bag that reads Charles in Charge

After filling his mug, Daniel empties the rest of the pot down the sink.

DANIEL
Feel free to fish it out of there sport.

CHARLIE

Have you always been such a gentleman?
I'm hard pressed to see how they could
have dealt with you for a week let alone
a quarter of a century.

DANIEL

Things were great until the person who
made decisions kicked the bucket. Trust
me, you wouldn't get hired as a intern
here if she was still alive.

CHARLIE

Last thing I would do is trust you with
anything. Enjoy the brew.

Charlie sets his mug down, grabs an energy bar, and exits as Daniel is
adding creme and sugar to his coffee.

Daniel sips his coffee with a clear view to Charlie's office.

INTERCUT WITH CHARLIE IN HIS OFFICE

Charlie sits down in his chair and lets out a loud scream.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Ouch!

Daniel smiles.

Charlie spills his coffee all over himself and crawls on the floor in
agony. A small silver tack is stuck to his butt.

Charlie pulls it out and sits back down.

DANIEL

Told you it was game on chump.

Daniel clenches his coffee cup as an eager intern bumps into him,
spilling scalding coffee all over his suit.

INTERN

I'm sorry sir. I didn't see you.

DANIEL

Didn't see me? I'm not invisible. Eyes
are part of your job description aren't
they?

INTERN

Yes sir.

DANIEL

Well go back to the basics and look where
your going!

The intern scurries off.

A man in an equally nice suit, sans the coffee stains approaches Daniel.

His name is Arthur.

ARTHUR

Well, look what the lion dragged in.
Haven't seen your face around here this
early since the Bush administration.

DANIEL

Arty! Where have you been? There's been a
shake-up since Eleanor died, her clueless
daughter hired this bloody wanker.

ARTHUR

I saw a memo about that, I didn't think
she was going to be this desperate right
off the bat. Apparently he has quite the
following on social media.

DANIEL

I'm not going to let this paper go down
the chute while I'm still on deck, do me
a favour and get some dirt on him.

ARTHUR

What if there isn't any?

DANIEL

Get creative Arty, you're in the
political world, nothing new for you.

Daniel is looking right at his old office.

ARTHUR

I'll see what I can do.

DANIEL

He has to go, one way or another, his
goose is cooked.

ARTHUR

We're not *The News* anymore, we're *The
Old's*.

Arthur walks over and points.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Our very existence is threatened by this new generation of so-called *influencer's*, looking to circumvent the equation with their followers, most of which are paid for.

DANIEL

He's be just another fruitfly in some glass of Bordeaux I had once. His days are numbered, are you up for a challenge?

ARTHUR

Damn straight I am. Let me know what's needed, I'll get to work on the dirt, he's got to have a past.

Daniel slaps Arthur's back.

DANIEL

Thanks mate.

SCENE 43

INT. THE TRIBUNE - BREAKROOM - LATER

There's an 'Gift Basket' sitting on a table. INTERNS #4 and #5, young females, blush over the card.

INTERN #4

It's beautiful! Where's he taking you for your anniversary?

Charlie enters.

INTERN #5

He's taking me to Fellini's.

CHARLIE

(laughing)

Don't go there. The food tastes like it was prepared in a cleaning bucket. What's this fruit orgy?

INTERN #4

It's Fruit assorted to look like flowers.

CHARLIE

Order me one. Send it to Shannon at Alpha & Omega.

Daniel enters to get more coffee.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Have the card say, "Thanks for the lovely dinner".

Daniel cringes.

INTERN #4

I'm on it.

Daniel stops the intern & inspects the card to his daughter, he tears it up and holds it in his fist.

DANIEL

I warned you Chuck, stay away from my daughter.

The two interns race out of the room.

CHARLIE

(cautiously)

Daniel, I didn't see you there lurking over there, like a snake in the grass..

Daniel holds his fist, waiting to sock Charlie.

DANIEL

One more false move and your not going to like what happens.

CHARLIE

Is that a threat Daniel?

DANIEL

Your damn right it's a threat.

Penelope walks by.

PENELOPE

I'm glad to see you two are hitting it off.

DANIEL

There's about to be some hitting alright. Penelope, tell me what type of insanity got into Lea's mind to bring this muppet in?

PENELOPE

Daniel, your not going to like it, but I was the one who brought this muppet in, he's really not that bad if you would just try to get on with each other.

DANIEL

After all the years working here, I can't believe you sold us out in the blink of an eye. Sad. You should be ashamed.

CHARLIE

Hey, Dannyboy, let off your steam with someone who gives a damn, Penelope is also my friend and she did what was best for the paper, you're a thing of the past, I'm the lifeline this place needs.

PENELOPE

Lets see what happens Daniel, don't take this so personal.

DANIEL

Personal? He's going after my daughter and stealing my job, which way would you recommend I take it?

Penelope starts walking.

PENELOPE

Just go with the flow Daniel, consider this a new adventure.

CHARLIE

I like her attitude, You should just go with the flow.

Daniel smiles.

DANIEL

The flow is going, and your going with it.

SCENE 44

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

As Charlie walks back from the breakroom to his office, the door is closed, he goes to use his key to unlock it, it has been super glued.

Arthur is down the hallway tossing out an empty tube of glue, whistling.

ARTHUR

Things tend to get sticky when you mess
with peoples families bud.

LATER: Stanley is on his knees using a drill to open Charlie's office.

SCENE 45

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Charlie parks outside, looks around, the restaurant is empty again, he
takes a seat in the same booth.

Shannon comes out of the kitchen.

SHANNON

Back so soon?

CHARLIE

I'm following my gut, what can I say.

SHANNON

Being where your seemingly sincere, I'll
take that as a compliment.

CHARLIE

That lobster had me dreaming about this
place.

SHANNON

Glad to hear I've penetrated your dreams.
So, what will you be having?

CHARLIE

Make me anything you want, I'm sure it
will be excellent.

SHANNON

I'll see what I can do.

A few minutes later, Shannon brings out a rack of lamb.

CHARLIE

Perfectly roasted.

She sets it down and starts walking towards the kitchen.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Shannon, why don't you sit with me.

Shannon walks back.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Is it normally this slow?

SHANNON

This is only our first month, so hopefully business will pick up.

CHARLIE

That's why you need me.

SHANNON

No one needs you Charlie, get over yourself.

CHARLIE

With that attitude, no wonder your not busy.

SHANNON

Yeah, well you can take your attitude and your remarks and shove it. I don't want your business.

Shannon picks up the lamb and walks back to the kitchen.

CHARLIE (TO HIMSELF)

She's just playing tough.

Charlie gets up and leaves.

SCENE 46

INT. THE TRIBUNE - DAY

Charlie approaches Daniel's SECRETARY (SUSAN) outside his office.

CHARLIE

Is the beast in yet?

SUSAN

Not yet.

Charlie slips his secretary a couple hundred.

CHARLIE

You wouldn't happen to know where he's going tonight.

SUSAN

no idea.

CHARLIE

You're the one making his reservations.

He hands her another hundred.

SUSAN

Blue Fin

CHARLIE

What time?

SUSAN

7:45

Charlie hands her a couple hundred more.

CHARLIE

What does he like there?

SUSAN

Oysters.

Daniel appears out of nowhere.

DANIEL

What are you doing?

CHARLIE

Hi Danny, just checking to see if you had any *allergies*? I was thinking of bringing Maximus, my dog to the office.

DANIEL

Allergies? Just to you.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Hey Chuck, stay away from my office and my secretary.

Daniel turns. Studies his secretary.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Who are you?

SUSAN

I'm your secretary.

DANIEL

Exactly, then why are you talking with the enemy?

SUSAN

He was just asking a question.

DANIEL

Listen, if I see you talking in any way
shape or form with that dimwit, you might
as well pack your bags.

Daniel opens his door & sits down at his desk, he looks out the window,
and back at his secretary, standing in his doorway.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

In fact, you've crossed the line Susan.
Get out of my sight.

SUSAN

What do you mean?

DANIEL

Your fired! You have disgraced my trust
in you.

SUSAN

I haven't done anything Mr. Cromwell.

Daniel is bewildered as he gets up, opens his door & ushers her outside
his office.

Daniel has a blank stare, he waves at her.

DANIEL

Bye!

He shuts the office door.

Downstairs, Susan leaves the building and passes Robert.

ROBERT

Leaving early today Susan?

SUSAN

I was just sacked by Daniel.

ROBERT

That Bastard. Someone needs to teach him
a lesson.

SUSAN

I have a feeling he'll get what he
deserves.

ROBERT

Trust me, his time is coming.

SCENE 47

INT. BLUE FIN - EVENING

Daniel approaches the stand.

HOSTESS

Hello, Mr. Cromwell, nice to see you again.

She escorts him to a corner booth.

DANIEL

The chef was given my pre-order, just tell him I'm here.

WAITER

I'm sorry, sir, the Oysters you had pre-ordered were all given away, the gentlemen in that booth offered to pay double.

The waiter points over to Charlie, Mike & six interns sucking down oysters in each hand, smiling & having a blast, while a waiter is clearing cart full of empty shells..

CHARLIE (YELLS OVER TO DANIEL)

Dannyboy! You've got to try these Oysters, they're delicious.

Daniel's face implodes, he gets up and throws the napkin at the waiter.

Mike gives Charlie a high five as the interns just smile and continue laughing.

Charlie gives Mike the nod & he gets up and leaves the table.

SCENE 48

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Later that night, the time is 9:30, Shannon's restaurant contains one elderly couple.

Shannon checks the book for future reservations. It looks bare.

WAITER #1

Shannon, can I take off? I have an exam tomorrow.

SHANNON

Go ahead Sophia, no problem.

The hostess chimes in.

HOSTESS

I was making more at Starbucks, perhaps
we should change the menu.

Shannon is insulted.

SHANNON

You can also leave.

Waiter #2 (JUSTIN) approaches.

JUSTIN

The couple wants the Butter Poached
lobster with no butter, no gruyere and
instead of fingerling potatoes they want
mashed.

Shannon hangs her head.

SHANNON

We don't have mashed potatoes.

JUSTIN

They also want to share, should I tell
them we can't?

SHANNON

No, I'll make it, it's fine.

SCENE 49

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Justin walks over.

JUSTIN

How was everything?

OLD MAN

It just wasn't very good, I don't think
we should have to pay.

OLD WOMAN

Mashed potatoes and lobster don't go
together.

JUSTIN

Let me talk to the owner.

He walks back to the kitchen.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

The couple are refusing to pay.

Shannon's distraught. As she marches out to the dining room, she hears a loud commotion from off the street.

CHARLIE

Hey stranger, Do you think you got space for six interns and a hopeless romantic?

Shannon glares at him, hesitates.

SHANNON

You caught me on the right night, come in.

As they enter, she smiles and we know just how happy she is to see him and his business.

She walks over to the old couple.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Good Evening, I hear you didn't like the custom order I prepared.

OLD MAN

No miss, we didn't.

SHANNON

Well, let me offer you some complimentary chocolate cake to go with your complimentary meal, perhaps next time, we'll get it right.

OLD LADY

We'll take the cake, but there won't be a next time.

Shannon retreats to the kitchen.

SCENE 50

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - LATER

Huge spreads in front of Charlie, the six interns. whole chickens, bronzino's & bay scallops.

INTERN #1

Why didn't Mike come with us?

CHARLIE

He's handling important work back at the office. Way above your pay-grade.

INTERCUT WITH THE TRIBUNE NEWSPAPER OFFICE

SCENE 51

INT. THE TRIBUNE - NIGHT

Where Mike is picking the lock to Daniel's Office.

SCENE 52

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - LATER

BACK TO SHANNON'S RESTAURANT

CHARLIE

Excuse me, what's a harder drink to make:
a manhattan or a mojito?

JUSTIN

A mojito.

CHARLIE

Great, I'll have one of those.

As Justin heads to the bar, Charlie bolts to the kitchen.

SCENE 53

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Where he finds Shannon, alone, cleaning, her back to him.

She whistles and dances as she cleans, he approaches behind her and she screams.

She pushes him.

SHANNON

Get the hell out! Are you crazy?!

She picks up a butcher's knife.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry.

SHANNON

Out! Just because you come in every night
and I feed you doesn't mean you can roam
wherever you want.

CHARLIE

You're right, I'm sorry.

SHANNON

I despise your profession, you ruin people's livelihoods. Don't mistake my generosity for kindness, this is purely a business relationship.

An intern busts through the door, quite inebriated.

INTERN #2

This bathroom is weird. Hey Charlie, the bill's on the table.

CHARLIE

Yeah I bet it is!

Intern #2 stumbles back out.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Shannon, we'll leave.

SHANNON

Wait, no, I'm sorry. It's been an awful day. An awful month, really.

CHARLIE

I understand. Completely.

Charlie heads toward the door & pauses..

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Let me review your place. It's dead out there. You have nothing to loose.

SHANNON

I shouldn't have to coax reviews, if people can't appreciate what I'm offering on their own, perhaps they don't deserve it.

CHARLIE

I guarantee it will bring people in. Restaurants need buzz, that's what I create.

SHANNON

Perhaps my father was right, this is a tough business.

CHARLIE

That's where you and I will have to disagree, nothing from him is right, you have just started this business, the next step is advertising, My review will jump-start your engine.

SHANNON

Let me think about it.

CHARLIE

Hey, why don't you get out of here, lets
get some fresh air.

Shannon looks at Charlie, he smiles, she grabs her coat and they leave
the restaurant.

They walk down the road & find themselves at the beach, there's a man
sitting on a bench playing his guitar, Charlie hands him a few bills &
he gives Charlie his guitar.

Charlie sings; *Here Comes The Sun*.

Shannon hugs him.

He keeps singing, this time *Love is All You Need*.

A few people passing by join in and sing with Charlie.

After the song is over, Shannon breaks down and starts crying.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

SHANNON

Nothing, you sing so amazingly, I had no
idea.

CHARLIE

That's because you are always so serious,
life doesn't have to be such a burden.

Charlie leans over and gives her a back massage, you gotta lighten up.

Charlie spots some kids playing football nearby.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Come on! This is exactly what I'm talking
about.

Charlie sets the guitar down and pulls Shannon to her feet, they kick
the ball around with the kids, they go back and forth, finally; Shannon
starts smiling, then laughing.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

See! I told you it would be fun!

SHANNON

You're so random! I love it.

SCENE 54

INT. THE TRIBUNE - DANIEL'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Daniel is on his computer, he checks Charlie's Twitter followers, which is now at 44.7 MILLION PEOPLE

DANIEL

How in the name of? There aren't even that many people in California.

Mike walks by Daniel's office as he's on his computer, Penelope runs into Mike, and walks into Charlie's office.

PENELOPE

Lea wants you.

CHARLIE

Tell her I'm a little busy.

PENELOPE

That's not an option, you need to come to her office, now.

SCENE 55

INT. THE TRIBUNE - LEA'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Charlie enters.

LEA

Charlie, take a seat.

CHARLIE

You look nice today.

LEA

Stop with the flattery, listen, we're supposed to be saving this paper, not bankrupting it, we're not picking up the check for your nights on the town, 4,000 on company cards for one week? That's outrageous.

CHARLIE

I can explain.

LEA

There's nothing to explain, having you as a food critic doesn't entail endless meals for staff that show up with hangovers and can't focus on the task at hand.

CHARLIE

I'll pay for last week, not a problem.

LEA

All right, you can go.

SCENE 56

INT. THE TRIBUNE - HALLWAY - LATER

Charlie walks back to his office. As he passes Daniel's office.

DANIEL

Charlie, there you are, just wanted to say, good luck on your test.

CHARLIE

What test?

DANIEL

The Critics test.

CHARLIE

Oh, right! The Critics test, of course, I'll be ready.

Daniel gets up & grabs Charlie by the shoulder, ushering him inside his office.

DANIEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DANIEL

You don't have to bullshit me Chuck, here, take these. Each year, the National *Critics Circle* tests all of us. These are some of my old ones.

Daniel shoves a stack of papers into Charlie's hands.

CHARLIE

Danny, after how Lea just chewed me out, I don't fee this is necessary.

DANIEL

Take it or leave it, Chuck.

Charlie squints at Daniel and reluctantly takes them.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I hope your French is fluent, some of the questions are in French.

CHARLIE

I should brush up on that.

Charlie is about to walk out with the papers.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Daniel, why are you helping me?

DANIEL

It's the least I can do. I'm not the monster you've made me out to be.

CHARLIE

Thanks, I'll get to work.

Charlie leaves Daniel's office.

Daniel picks up the phone - Arthur answers.

DANIEL

The eagle has landed.

ARTHUR

Copy That.

SCENE 57

INT. THE TRIBUNE - CHARLIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Charlie at his computer.

An E-mail from the *Critics Circle* pops up.

He frowns and opens it.

Reading: *all tests must be scheduled during one of the following times...*

SCENE 58

INT. THE TRIBUNE - DANIEL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Charlie walks to Daniel's office.

DANIEL

How's the studying going Chaz?

CHARLIE

Good, you wouldn't have a copy of the tests would you?

Daniel holds the papers up to him. Charlie grabs them.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Thanks Dan! I appreciate you helping me on this.

DANIEL

(in French)

Dance, my little puppet. Dance.

SCENE 59

INT. THE TRIBUNE - CHARLIE'S OFFICE - - LATE NIGHT

Scattered around his office are French books, The French Rosetta Stone, wine books, everything.

Spectacular dark circles are under Charlie's eyes.

Lea walks by his office and checks her watch.

LEA

What are you still doing here?

CHARLIE

Lea! Just learning french.

LEA

(in French)

In that case, you should get some sleep because you look like shit.

CHARLIE

Does everyone speak French but me?

LEA

Why are you learning French?

CHARLIE

It's a prerequisite for the Critics' Circle test, don't you worry, I won't let you down.

LEA

Test, huh? Keep up the good work.

SCENE 60

INT. THE TRIBUNE - CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

Penelope knocks on Charlie's door, after several loud knocks, he opens up.

PENELOPE

Sleeping at the office?

A tired, disheveled Charlie wakes up from sleeping on the floor of his office & enters a packed conference room as Lea talks.

EVERYONE at The Newspaper is here, mostly standing.

LEA

Charlie, you're not late for reservations,
why are you late for my meetings?

Charlie opens his arms to apologize.

LEA (CONT'D)

Relax, rookie. I was just telling
everyone our online ad revenue is up 300
percent, thanks mostly to clicks in
Dining and Culture.

Charlie glances over at Daniel to see him already scowling back, and Charlie smiles at him.

LEA (CONT'D)

The Critics' Circle Awards are next
Saturday. All senior staff have plus
ones. Charlie, do you know Daniel has won
Critic of the Year 12 times.

DANIEL

(soaking it up)

Well, It just comes naturally, what can I
say..

LEA

Let's see if lucky number 13 is this
Saturday..

CHARLIE

Is there anything you need from me?

LEA

Yes, no more sleeping in your office, you
smell like onions, take the day off. We
can't have you lowering the standards of
company hygiene.

Charlie retreats.

DANIEL

Still happy about your hire?

LEA

He has a lot of learning to do, security will be kicking all staff out by 8:00 PM from now on.

ARTHUR

My story on the Chinese Triads is ready, should we get approval to release it?

LEA

Let's shelve that for a bit, we don't want to upset anyone this close to Christmas. Keep up the good work, you can all take the rest of the day off.

SCENE 61

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Charlie wakes up after sleeping all day & throws on his sweats and drives to Shannon's restaurant, he goes back in the kitchen, watching her cook.

It's like she's a ballerina, reaching everything with such grace, such fluidity.

CHARLIE

You never told me your Dad won Critic of the Year 12 times.

She turns to see him, this time calm and smiling.

SHANNON

He's good at his job, he has a sense for his words and has the respect from the community.

CHARLIE

Doesn't sound like the person I know.

SHANNON

The context of your relationship with him is quite different than everyone else. You know, I didn't even get a nod for *Best New Restaurant*.

CHARLIE

That's because you wouldn't let me review it.

SHANNON

Not even an Honourable Mention!

CHARLIE

Things could have been different you know.

SHANNON

Stop giving yourself so much credit.

CHARLIE

We're up 300% on viewers in the last week, I guess that has nothing to do with me.

SHANNON

I'll let you know if I decide to have you review, in the meantime, I need my privacy, can you stop coming into the kitchen uninvited?

CHARLIE

The more I get to know you, I can see how you are his daughter, the apple didn't fall far from the tree. Hopefully your mother was a little kinder.

SHANNON

That's it! LEAVE. Stop Pretending like you know me.

Charlie leaves, confused of her anger.

SCENE 62

INT. THE TRIBUNE - DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

READING GLASSES ON

Daniel works on his Critics Award Speech.

He spies Charlie hovering outside, acting innocently. Daniel makes sure Charlie sees him stick his speech in his Tuxedo Jacket pocket.

SCENE 63

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR - NIGHT

A grand stage and even grander chandelier.

LA's elite, all in tuxedos.

Daniel struts through the hall, nodding to colleagues. Daniel passes the kitchen, makes his way down a long hallway.

SCENE 64

INT. MENS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel ducks into a stall, removes his jacket and washes his hands.

SCENE 65

INT. BANQUET HALL - CONTINUOUS

Charlie walks to his table. Name cards. He finds Daniel's card and swaps it to be right next to his own. He drapes his tux jacket over his own chair and waltzes off to mingle.

SCENE 66

INT. MENS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel finishes washing up at the sink, he pops a breath mint.

SCENE 67

INT. BANQUET HALL - CONTINUOUS

Charlie heads toward the kitchen.

He's stopped by Lea, who's with her husband Tom, who's with the Director for the event; Derek Teller, tall and intrusive.

Charlie gulps.

DEREK

(extending his hand)

Derek Teller, Lea has told me about you.

CHARLIE

Nice to meet you.

DEREK

It must be a wonderful experience working with Daniel Cromwell, he's one of a kind. A real legend.

CHARLIE

I agree with your one of a kind sentiments.

DEREK

Listen, I have something special planned, can you do something to help me out?

CHARLIE

Sure, let me know what you need.

DEREK

There he is! Hold on a minute, I'll be right back.

Derek goes over to greet Daniel, Charlie nods modestly towards Daniel returning to their table.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Mr. Cromwell! How are you ?

DANIEL

Derek! Nice to see you mate.

Derek has a couple words with Daniel.

SCENE 68

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

Daniel is sitting in his chair.

Arthur approaches him from behind.

ARTHUR

You old lion tamer! Get over here, I want to introduce you to a few friends.

Daniel turns to see three ladies surrounding Arthur, all with big smiles.

DANIEL

Thanks Arty, but I'm not into the random banter at the moment, have fun!

ARTHUR

Come on mate, they're harmless, they just want to talk to the *King of Cuisine*.

DANIEL

Alright.

Daniel shoves his speech back into his jacket pocket & hangs it on the chair and walks over with Arthur to the outdoor terrace.

Seeing this, Charlie makes his move: he waltzes by Daniel's table and switches his speech in Daniel's pocket.

SCENE 69

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

Daniel returns to his seat.

He hesitates. Is this his seat? He feels his jacket pocket.

The Paper is in it.

Daniel fills out the banquet menu card options.

Choice of Soup: He Circles {Wagu Beef Soup}. Choice of Entree: He Circles {Golden Perch}.

Finished, he notices Charlie's menu across the table, already circled as well.

Charlie isn't around, Daniel picks it up to critique it.

Charlie made the same exact choices.

DANIEL

The Little twit is learning.

Daniel writes in, Extra HOT! on Charlie's menu, then slinks away.

SCENE 70

INT. BANQUET HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie returns to the table. Doesn't see Daniel around, he takes Daniel's menu, grins, scratches out Shark Fin Soup and circles {LOBSTER BISQUE}. Adds the note, "EXTRA SPICY!"

A WAITER rounds the table, picking up the menus in order. He grabs Charlie's own menu, then Charlie hands him Daniel's menu.

CHARLIE

Thank you, my good man.

SCENE 71

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

Everyone is seated. Soup is served.

Charlie glances at Daniel out of the corner of his eye as he takes a big mouthful of the Bisque. Charlie waits for it.

Daniel enjoys it. Baffled, Charlie now stares right at Daniel and casually sips a tiny bit of his own soup.

CHARLIE

Hot! HOT!

Charlie frantically looks for sugar but there's none on the table. He explodes up, dashing from table to table.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Sugar!? SUGAR! Water! Anything!

SCENE 72
INT. BANQUET HALL - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie bursts through the door, arms flailing. Everyone stops.

CHARLIE
Sugar! I need Sugar!

A waiter hands him a whole box. Charlie rips it open and pours it all over his face, barely any making it into his mouth.

SCENE 73
INT. BANQUET HALL - CONTINUOUS

Soups are removed. Entrees are placed.

Daniel stirs his Bisque. Takes a bite, Takes another and now his taste buds catch up.

DANIEL
Hot! HOT!

ARTHUR
You need some water?

DANIEL
Milk! I need milk!

Daniel darts from table to table. No milk.

SCENE 74
INT. BANQUET HALL - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Charlie cleans up his sugar mess like an heiress doing chores for the first time. An annoyed waiter helps him.

CHARLIE
Thanks a Ton!

Charlie exits through the Out door.

Daniel bursts through the In Door.

DANIEL
MILK! I need milk! NOW!

All of the staff looks at each other in disbelief.

Daniel dashes into the large refrigerator, tears the lid off of a milk carton and goes to town.

Charlie smiles, he finishes dusting himself off & walks back into the banquet hall.

After downing a litre of milk, Daniel storms out of the cold room ready to throw down with Charlie, who isn't there, so he walks out into the ballroom.

SCENE 75

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

Sitting at the table is Charlie, swirling his tongue in his sandpaper mouth.

Daniel approaches the table holding a glass of milk, he points to Charlie.

CHARLIE

The *Man of the Hour* is back. We were worried about you Dannyboy.

DANIEL

Why don't you help me with something back in the kitchen, it's a food related question I need your advice on.

CHARLIE

I think I'll pass on that, thanks for the offer though. I'll be right back.

Charlie gets up from the table, Daniel sits down, dabs his sweating forehead and nurses a glass of milk.

DEREK

Good evening distinguished ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to the Critic's Circle Awards! Tonight we are here to celebrate the food of Southern California. Tonight, we celebrate the people who have the taste buds and strength of character to direct the trajectory of the restaurant industry.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Let me introduce our presenter for Critic of the Year, Mr. Luke Collingwood.

Audience Applause...

Derek walks to the stage..

DEREK (CONT'D)

A Critic is a man of taste, A man of opulence. A man of words. Any Critic can give a bad review, but a Great Critic makes you agree with him. *It's not what you say, it's how you say it.*

Daniel's eyes narrow at Charlie's empty seat.

DEREK (CONT'D)

And to announce, our Critic of the year.

Luke opens the envelope..

LUKE

A man once told me, *It's not what you say, it's how you say it.* Any asshole can give a bad review, but a great asshole makes you agree with him.

(pause for laughs)

How many ways can you say, "This food sucks?" Well, it seems one man has found them all. His command of language has inspired me to, to try to speak with a fluidity that's rare of my generation, to maintain the immaculate standard he has set., We all know and love him. Ladies and Gentlemen, give it up for The Critic of the Year: Daniel Cromwell. A Man of Taste.

Daniel walks on stage to applause.

Charlie embraces him, Daniel whispers.

DANIEL

Don't run off again. We have a score to settle.

Daniel pulls the "paper" out of his jacket pocket.

Offstage, Charlie pulls the real speech out his own pocket and grins.

But not so fast, Daniel pulls a different paper from his *pant pocket* and smiles back, wider.

Charlie opens the speech in his hand.

NOTE FROM DANIEL

I'm smarter than you pipsqueak.

Charlie looks back at Daniel, he opens his real speech, sets it on the podium, smiles at the crowd.

He reaches for his glasses, which aren't there.

He pats himself down, *where the hell could they be?*

Charlie proudly produces Daniel's glasses.

Daniel breaks out sweating, like he's on trial for war crimes.

Daniel's POV - Nothing but blurry lines on the paper, but the good news is he's farsighted, so he can still see every single one of his peers' uncomfortable faces.

DANIEL

(voice cracking)

Ahem!

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Thank you for having me as your choice for Food Critic of the Year. This unprecedented thirteenth win means so much to me. These have been some of the best years of my life, I appreciate your recognition.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Thank You once again for having me as your barometer in the trench warfare of the culinary world.

Audience applause..

After the speech Daniel walks over to the table.

LEA

That was great Daniel, really heartfelt.

Daniel throws his speech on the table.

DANIEL

Have you seen our friend? He has my property on him.

Charlie is backstage and asks Derek the question.

CHARLIE
So when do we have the test?

DEREK
Test? What test?

CHARLIE
The Critics test.

Derek laughs.

DEREK
There isn't any such test rookie.

Charlie gets red in the face.

CHARLIE
Is there an exit this way.

Derek points to a back door, Charlie scurries off.

SCENE 76

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

It's empty. Staff breaks everything down. A waiter vacuums.

Daniel sits alone, Arthur approaches.

ARTHUR
Let me guess, that little punk took your
glasses.

Daniel nods.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Are you ready?

DANIEL
Let's do it.

SCENE 77

INT. THE TRIBUNE - LOBBY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Arthur and Daniel enter, wearing disguises, trench coats over their
tuxes.

NIGHT GUARD
Can I help you?

ARTHUR
We're here for the night shift.

They flash their Tribune badges as if they're federal agents.

NIGHT GUARD

Thomas Jenkins and Paul McDonald? Nobody told me we had a night shift.

ARTHUR

That's because your clearance isn't high. Stand aside.

Let me make a call.

Arthur walks behind as the guard is on the phone and puts a cloth over his head, he is instantly knocked out.

DANIEL

What was that?

ARTHUR

Chloroform, come on, help me.

Arthur pulls out a couple zip ties and drags the guards body to the fence.

DANIEL

I didn't think you we're going to go this far.

ARTHUR

No time to debate, we are on a mission, help me.

Daniel helps Arthur zip tie his feet and arms. Then they rush towards the lift.

SCENE 78

INT. THE TRIBUNE - LIFT - A MINUTE LATER

In the lift, Arthur and Daniel look at each other.

Arthur hands Daniel a mag-lite. They get off the lift on the main floor of the office.

SCENE 79

INT. THE TRIBUNE - MOMENTS LATER

Pitch black. They flash their lights as they walk about, searching for a room, Arthur leads them to a surveillance camera and smashes it with his MAG-LITE.

SCENE 80

EXT. THE TRIBUNE - CONTINUOUS

Arthur leads Daniel into the unlocked office of Charlie.

DANIEL

What now?

Arthur grabs Charlie's computer and hurls it out the window.

ARTHUR

That should do it. Follow me!

SCENE 81

INT. THE TRIBUNE ELECTRICAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Arthur and Daniel poke around looking for a server.

DANIEL

I feel like I'm on a covert operation.

ARTHUR

That's exactly the plan

DANIEL

This feels like Watergate.

ARTHUR

Logic tells me if we crash the server,
all files will be lost. Hey, remember
Star Trek?

DANIEL

Nope.

ARTHUR

I feel like the evil Captain Kirk in that
episode where he sabotages his own ship.

DANIEL

Don't ruin this. Let's focus on the
mission.

ARTHUR

Ah. Here we are.

DANIEL

Here?

ARTHUR

I think this is it.

DANIEL

You think? Are you sure.

ARTHUR

Sure enough.

DANIEL

So, what's next?

ARTHUR

We crash it.

DANIEL

And how do we do that?

ARTHUR

Unplug it, I guess.

DANIEL

Can't they just re-plug it in?

ARTHUR

Good point.

DANIEL

Okay. Why don't we..

Arthur considers the server a moment, then SMASHES IT REPEATEDLY WITH HIS HEAVY MAG-LITE, pieces go to the ground and Arthur repeatedly stomps on the bits.

ARTHUR

That probably did the trick.

DANIEL

Wow. Some plan buddy.

They quickly leave, once downstairs, Arthur sneaks up behind the unconscious guard and chloroform's him again, Arthur cuts the ties and Daniel and him prop him back on the chair and sneak away.

They take a few turns and get on a couple bicycles in an alley nearby and bike off in separate directions.

SCENE 82

INT. THE TRIBUNE - NEXT MORNING

Daniel walks in with an espresso.

LEA

Daniel, I need to see you in my office.

LEA (CONT'D)

Of course, How's your morning going Lea?

Lea gives him the hand signal and waves him over.

Daniel walks into her office.

LEA (CONT'D)
Come over here, let me show you
something.

Lea has Daniel watching security footage on her monitor of Arthur going ballistic on the server.

LEA (CONT'D)
Hold on. Let me backup.

She cuts to the camera of them tying up the guard.

Knock on the door; Charlie enters holding what's left of his computer.

CHARLIE
Mike is downloading everything back.
Thank God for the cloud.

DANIEL
The Cloud? What cloud?

CHARLIE
(to Lea)
Does he know anything?
(to Daniel)
It's an online storage device. Where we
backup all our files.

DANIEL
Huh? The Cloud?

Daniel peers out Lea's window into the sky.

LEA
Thanks Charlie.

Charlie leaves her office, Daniel is holding his espresso and looking out her window.

DANIEL
So, who do you think did this?

Charlie pokes his head back through the door.

CHARLIE
You better have something better than
that Dannyboy.

LEA

Shut it Charlie! Close my door. Sit Daniel.

Daniel sits.

LEA (CONT'D)

Now I have two options, call the police and have them investigate, or you can fess up.

DANIEL

Are you actually accusing me of this? You have to be crazy.

LEA

You and Arthur did this, I know it. Both of you! You have cost us an entire SUNDAY EDITION! Can you even fathom how much revenue.

DANIEL

This wasn't the plan.

LEA

The plan? What was the plan when you came up with this? To destroy my paper?

Arthur walks in.

LEA (CONT'D)

Sit!

Arthur sits next to Daniel.

ARTHUR

What seems to be the problem?

LEA

Do you think I'm stupid? You both are talking all the time about, Penelope has seen you whispering in the office and at the Banquet last night. You did this. Come clean.

DANIEL

I know nothing about this, you have no proof, frankly, I'm shocked you would think I would stoop this low.

Daniel gets up, Arthur follows.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

If you want to call the police, be my guest.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I was at home playing cards with Arthur.
We've been friends for 20 years, friends
talk.

ARTHUR

He has a point.

They exit the office.

Lea calls Charlie on the phone.

LEA

Come to my office please.

Charlie takes a seat.

LEA (CONT'D)

It's all my fault. This is ALL my fault.
Why did I ever allow this madness to
begin.

CHARLIE

I'm still trying to figure it out.

LEA

What should I do? The night security
doesn't remember anything.

CHARLIE

Lea, I think we all have partial blame in
this. Look, it won't do any of us good if
we call in Scotland Yard for their
investigation, we had everything backed
up, lets just let it go and carry on.

LEA

What about you and Daniel?

Penelope walks in.

LEA (CONT'D)

Go get Daniel.

Daniel comes back in sheepishly.

DANIEL

You called.

LEA

Yes, your both.

(contemplating)

Invited to my Christmas Party.

CHARLIE

Actually, I'm visiting my parents.

DANIEL

I must decline. I have a prior commitments.

LEA

No! You are BOTH GOING. Charlie, you are driving because Daniel doesn't drive long distances. As of right now, this rivalry is dead. Buried. Consider it a company retreat to build camaraderie. A mandatory one, plus, Shannon is going.

Daniel and Charlie are stunned.

DANIEL

Does she know this?

Lea pulls out her phone.

LEA

She will in a minute.

CUT TO:

SCENE 83

EXT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Daniel paces.

He pulls out his old school flip-phone & dials Shannon.

Right to voice-mail. Waits for the beep.

DANIEL

Shannon, it's your father. You were supposed to be here 14 minutes ago.

CUT TO:

CHARLIE

Is that a smile I see?

SHANNON

I can't feel my face.

Charlie and Shannon are driving with the top down in his 1957 Ford Mustang, lots of laughing with Shannon and flirtatious touching.

Shannon pulls out her phone to call her father, she notices all the missed calls.

As the pull up, Daniel is standing there, not in the most pleasant mood.

Daniel get's into Charlie's car.

DANIEL

Nice ride. I have this one in Blue.
Except I paid for it, you on the other
hand probably hot-wired this thing.

CHARLIE

I actually found the key in the glove-
box, it saved me the trouble of hot-
wiring it.

Charlie holds up the key.

SCENE 84

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - DAY

Cruising out of downtown. Charlie glances in the rearview to see Daniel giving him a sinister death-stare.

CHARLIE

(smiling wide)

How we doing back there? Need a rest stop
yet? Old Timer?

DANIEL

We've been driving five minutes.

CHARLIE

It's never too soon to stop. My car is
here to cater to your every need.

DANIEL

Listen Chuck, You really know what I
want?

CHARLIE

Tell me, I'm sure it will be
enlightening.

DANIEL

I'd like this car to run you over
repeatedly. Do you think your car could
do that?

SHANNON

Let's listen to music.

CHARLIE

Splendid idea! So Daniel, You feeling some Billie Holiday?

SHANNON

I love Billie Holiday.

Charlie clicks on: *The Very Thought of You*.

DANIEL

If Billie could see me on this holiday,
this day of pain, she'd be thankful she
spent months dying of painful liver
failure instead of being in this car with
you now.

SHANNON

Hush, Dad, you love her.

CHARLIE

If the man doesn't wanna hear Billie
Holiday, the man doesn't have to hear
Billie Holiday. I spent all morning
making this play-list just for you,
Dannyboy.

Charlie hits a button. Sinatra's *My Way* plays.

DANIEL

Why not quit your job so you have more
time to get it right?

CHARLIE

How do you not love Sinatra?

DANIEL

What I'd love to hear is silence. Not
music or your suicide-inducing voice,
nothing but silence. Complete, total
silence.

CHARLIE

Not sure I have that one on my play-list,
let me check.

Charlie turns off the radio and gives Shannon a "gag-face." She stifles her laughter so her father can't hear. But he does.

SCENE 85

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Cruising down PCH.

Daniel, sunglasses on and his mouth agape, *as if* he's asleep.

CHARLIE

I like your dress.

He reaches to feel the material of Shannon's dress, but accidentally puts his hand on her exposed thigh.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What is that? Silk?

Shannon doesn't move his hand away.

SHANNON

I like your tie.

DANIEL

(loudly yawning)

Look at that, we're almost through this particular level of Hell.

Seeing Charlie's hand on his daughter's thigh, Daniel leans up and grabs Charlie's Tie.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What were you saying about a tie?

Charlie's hand recoils at once. Daniel lets go & sits back.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Shannon, what's the name of that chap you used to date? The one who summered down here with you. Peter?

SHANNON

His name was Paul. And you hated him.

DANIEL

I wonder how he's doing? Let's see if his family's up for the holiday, you should invite him over for drinks.

SHANNON

Dad...

DANIEL

What? Laguna reminds me of him, what's wrong for bringing it up, he was almost my son-in-law, no?

SHANNON

No Dad, he wasn't.

DANIEL

Ah. It was William you almost married. The senator's son. They have a house here, too, no? The big one with the indoor pool.

Charlie tightens his grip on the steering wheel.

CHARLIE

You know something Daniel, only the front seats in this car have air bags.

DANIEL

Now those were fine young men. They would make a father proud to have his daughter married to either.

CHARLIE

Hey Daniel, Do you see that big tree up ahead? It could leap in front of nowhere.

SHANNON

That's not funny Charlie.

CHARLIE

(to himself)

Yeah, well, neither is this. It's back on Daniel. Oh, it's back on.

Daniel punches the back of Charlie's seat a couple of times.

DANIEL

Anytime Pal, just pull over so you don't end all of our lives. Unlike you, some of us still have things to live for.

Shannon looks over at her father.

SHANNON

Dad, can we just act like where normal people, we're almost there, you two need to lay off of each other, besides, it's the holidays, this is supposed to be a time of love and appreciation.

Daniel puts his shades back on and crosses his arms.

CHARLIE
Your daughter has a point.

Daniel holds his breath, rolls down the window and Yells.

DANIEL
Why!!! WHY ME??!!

Charlie pulls his car over.

CHARLIE
Alright. You Win.

He opens Daniel's Door.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Come on tough guy.

Daniel hesitates..

DANIEL
What did you say?

Charlie gets closer and Daniel smacks him with the door.

CHARLIE
Listen Daniel, only because of your
daughter, I'm going to refrain from
sending you back to hell.

SHANNON
Charlie, get back in the car and stop
this! He's my father.

DANIEL
I'm her father. Listen to her.

CHARLIE
The next few minutes are going to go by
much quicker if you just let me knock him
out.

DANIEL
Give it a try pal.

Charlie jumps back in the drivers seat, starts the car.

CHARLIE
One more of your taps & I brake hard and
your flying through this windshield. Try
me.

Daniel sits back, looks out the window and just relaxes.

SCENE 86

EXT. LEA'S HOUSE - LAGUNA BEACH - LATER

They pull up to a gorgeous, Art Deco style home on the beach.

Cars overflow the driveway with some parked in the yard.

Daniel gets out and slams the door, Charlie goes over to the door to inspect it, making a fist towards Daniel.

Shannon looks at him & Charlie grins.

CHARLIE

This should be fun.

DANIEL IS FIRST TO THE FRONT DOOR

Charlie is carrying a wine basket gift set.

Shannon rings the bell.

SHANNON

Isn't it great up here? So peaceful.

Lea's Son, Theo opens the door. Behind him, TOTAL CHAOS: little kids race down the hall, a mom yells at one: NO NO NO! The sound of men watching football in another room: GO GO GO!

Max stares at Daniel.

MAX

Grandma! A Monster's at the door!

DANIEL

What a great little kid.

Lea pops into the hallway from a back room.

LEA

Max! Now you remember Uncle Daniel.

MAX

Frankenstein?! Ahhh!

As Max races back inside, Charlie snickers as Shannon jabs him with her elbow.

LEA

You came! MERRY CHRISTMAS!

DANIEL

Thanks for giving us a choice.

Lea hangs their jackets in the closet, hugs and kisses all around. She takes the gift basket from Charlie.

LEA

This is lovely. Thank you, Charlie.

DANIEL

That's from Shannon and I.

LEA

Shannon, you have to save my kitchen.
Penelope's running things; it's like the
Iran-Contra Affair all over.

Lea whisks Shannon by the arm down the hall, calling back:

LEA (CONT'D)

The gents are all in the living room,
make yourselves at home!

SCENE 87

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

HALF-A-DOZEN GUYS: uncles, teenage sons, and other male relatives all watch the game.

GREG

Go, go, go! OH EAT ME, WHY WOULD YOU
THROW A FLAG ON THAT?

Daniel and Charlie both enter like prisoners being escorted to a firing squad. This is not their scene at all.

Lea's husband, Tom, sits in his recliner sipping a glass of scotch. Probably his tenth.

TOM

Dannyboy, long time!

DANIEL

Longtime indeed, I recall you passing out
in my creme brulee during my speech
Saturday.

And now Daniel discovers Tommy's even drunker than then:

TOM

No no, don't get up. I'm fine here.
Thanks for having me over!

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
 (looking at Charlie)
 Did Shannon have a sex change?

DANIEL
 (hiding his laughter)
 Always a pleasure, Tommy.

CHARLIE
 Hi, Tom! I'm Charlie. We met at the gala.
 And let me say how gracious I am to be
 invited here.

TOM
 You were better-looking as a woman. What
 is it with you kids today?

CHARLIE
 Sir, I assure you, I was never a.

GREG
 Hey! Don't block the TV!

It's on commercial.

CHARLIE
 Oh, wait, did you miss a play?

All the guys stare at Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Whoa, boy, I could use some firewater.
 Where's the whiskey?

Charlie stands there like a schmuck, then moseys into the sitting room.

SCENE 88

INT. THE SITTING ROOM

Which bridges the living room and kitchen. He finds Daniel, watching
 the whirlwind of women prepping food in the kitchen.

CHARLIE
 So Danny, I see you couldn't cut it in
 there with the real men.

DANIEL
 Hogwash. My place is here, overseeing the
 preparation..

The four year old, Max dashes by into the living room, being chased by
 a slightly older boy.

GREG (O.S.)

I said this room is off-limits! You kids go outside and play!

CHARLIE

Quite right, as an esteemed critic, it'd be rude not to honour these enchanting ladies with my presence as they prepare this feast.

DANIEL

Your place is with that tornado of little brats racing around.

CHARLIE

It must be burning that coal in your heart to see me courting your daughter, huh?

DANIEL

You're not courting my daughter Chuck.

CHARLIE

Yes I am. I'm totally winning her over.
(calling into kitchen)
Shan! Aren't I courting you and totally winning you over?

SCENE 89

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Shannon's doing ten things at once. She can't help but blush a bit at Charlie's question, but she's still playing hard-to-get.

SHANNON

No! You're not.

Charlie inches his way more into the kitchen, ushering Daniel with him, he wants Shannon to overhear him talking to her father.

CHARLIE

See? We're already disagreeing like some old married couple. We're meant for each other.

DANIEL

No you're not.

SHANNON

No we're not.

But Shannon blushes again, the other women notice her blushing. And she notices them noticing. She claps her hands:

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Penelope, don't close the oven, crack it.
No Penelope, a sliver of butter on each.
Zoe! We're not cremating the turkey, keep
the oven cracked!

(to Lea)

Sorry, I don't mean to be a tyrant.

LEA

You're doing fine, dear, just fine.

Throughout all this, Shannon's been sprucing up a green bean casserole,
a dish way beneath her.

DANIEL

Sweetheart, it's a simple dish, not a
frozen dinner.

Shannon turns to him, her stare is ruthless.

SHANNON

All right, boys, out of the kitchen!

CHARLIE

But, but I'm courting you.

SHANNON

Out! You too, Dad. Scoot!

SCENE 90

INT. BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

Charlie miserably scrunches in between MILES and CALEB, college-aged,
on the couch. Neither looks pleased about it.

Daniel remains standing next to another recliner where UNCLE FRANK,
sits with his infant son.

Greg paces about, even more into the game now.

GREG

These no-talent bitches are trying to
cost me my holiday bonus. What a dumb
play!

Charlie really, really wants these guys to like him:

CHARLIE

I know, right? At least kick it to the
net.

And Daniel really wants them to hate Charlie:

DANIEL

Why am I not surprised you know squat
about football?

All the other guys exchange looks at the ineptitude they're hearing.
Except Tom; he's still inebriated in his recliner.

CALEB

Have either of you ever seen a football
game before?

CHARLIE

What I mean is, they should have waited
for the Umpire to make the call.

DANIEL

Umpire? It's not baseball, genius.

MILES

Umpire? Wow.

CALEB

You're joking right? Tell me you're on
shrooms or something.

Charlie smiles.

MILES

Charlie, buddy, sir, how's about grabbing
me another Heineken?

CALEB

Good call. Me, too.

CHARLIE

Sure thing! But you know, the only reason
the kicker is there.

MILES

I'm sure whatever you wanna say is
fascinating, but how's about telling us
after fetching our drinks so we don't
have to listen?

The guys all laugh as Charlie heads back toward the kitchen.

DANIEL

Chop, chop, little maid.

UNCLE FRANK

Yo, Danny!, Do you mind holding Frank Jr.
for a bit?

DANIEL

What? I'd really rather not, thanks
though.

But Uncle Frank's already out of his recliner and shoves his baby into
Daniel's lap.

UNCLE FRANK

Thanks Danny, you're a natural.

Frank Jr bawls immediately.

SCENE 91

INT. IN THE KITCHEN

Charlie heads for the beer cooler off to the side, but stops. He's
spotted something hanging on the pantry door.

CHARLIE

Hello, what have we here?

OVER AT THE KITCHEN ISLAND

Penelope huffs and puffs, trying to balance three trays of deli meat in
her hands for the guys in the living room.

CHARLIE

Allow me to take those for you.

She turns to see CHARLIE WEARING A PINK KITCHEN APRON.

PENELOPE

Why, are you sure? I don't want to
overload you.

CHARLIE

Penny, please: I would not have put on
this apron if I was not sincere.

PENELOPE

Look how cute you are in that!

CHARLIE

You deserve a break after all your hard work. Go fix yourself a wine and relax a few.

Charlie swoops up all three trays with no problem and EXITS.

PENELOPE

What a sweet, charming man.

ANOTHER WOMAN

And funny! You'd never catch Miles in a getup like that. What a cutie.

Shannon, at the stove, overhears this and bites her lip.

SCENE 92

INT. BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

Daniel holds Frank Jr, still-bawling, out toward Uncle Frank.

DANIEL

Frank, perhaps you should take him back.

UNCLE FRANK

Nurse him a bit, here's his bottle.

DANIEL

You've got to be kidding me, I don't want his bottle, you should nurse him! He's your kid.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Out of the way! Coming through!

Charlie enters with the trays, which the guys pounce on. AND Charlie produces the two Heineken's from his apron pockets. He's killing this pseudo-role of a *maid*.

UNCLE FRANK

Mmm, yummiie, What do you call these?

DANIEL

Trust me, he hasn't the faintest.

CHARLIE

Roast beef and horseradish spirals.

(to Daniel, smugly)

I heard Shannon call them that.

CALEB

Damn, they're good. Thanks.
 (can't remember his name)
 You.

MILES

Yeah, way to go, buddy.

DANIEL

All he did was bring some food.

GREG

(into his cell)

I don't care if it's Christmas, he's a
 bookie for God's sake, get him on the
 phone!

CHARLIE

Fellas, I'll be right back with more
 goodies. Just gotta freshen up in the
 little boy's room real quick.

Charlie exits. Uncle Frank puts an arm around Daniel's shoulder, even
 as Daniel continues to hold Frank Jr at arm's length.

UNCLE FRANK

The kid may not know a lick about
 football, but he sure knows his food,
 huh? I thought you were the critic.

After that comment, Daniel tries hard not to squeeze Frank Jr to death.

SCENE 93

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Charlie finds Shannon exiting the bathroom. Jackpot!

He glances around. For all the commotion everywhere else, this hallway
 might as well be the moon. Quiet. Peaceful. Intimate.

Charlie moves a step closer to her. Shannon doesn't back away.

SHANNON

I had to get out of there a second; those
 women are driving me, bananas.

CHARLIE

Too hot for you in the kitchen?

SHANNON

I'm a chef, I'm always hot in the
 kitchen.

CHARLIE

Yes, you are.

She blushes again.

SHANNON

Well, I should probably get back.

CHARLIE

Why? We're cooking something here.

He strikes a mock *suave* pose.

SHANNON

You realize how ridiculous you look saying that in an apron, right?

Charlie inches closer, keeping up the *suave* charade.

CHARLIE

Why, Miss Cromwell, are you critiquing me?

SHANNON

Perhaps.

CHARLIE

How am I doing? What's the verdict?

SHANNON

For a younger guy, you're very confident, you know. I like confidence in a man, especially a silly man.

Charlie finds his arms around her waist. He drops the *suave* act and suddenly this isn't so silly anymore.

It's electric.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

There are kids around here.

CHARLIE

I know, it's exciting, right? Like we're inside a Norman Rockwell painting and sneaking off to be naughty.

Their faces touch.

SHANNON

I like the sound of that.

This is it, she closes her eyes, awaiting their first kiss.

DANIEL

If you kiss her, I will cram this entire
baby down your throat.

Shannon spins around to see Daniel standing there with a sinister death
stare on Charlie, meanwhile; Daniel's still holding Frank Jr at arm's
length.

SHANNON

Dad?!

DANIEL

Frank Jr had a little spit-up.

SHANNON

(noticing)

Oh, Dad, your suit.

DANIEL

And he defecated, repeatedly. How's that
for a Norman Rockwell picture?

CHARLIE

Now you know how chefs feel when you
review their restaurants.

Daniel stares at Charlie, Charlie stares right back. Like two
gunslingers in a showdown, with Shannon between them.

DANIEL

If you'll excuse me, I have to use the
facilities.

Still holding Frank Jr, Daniel barges past and as he does, he purposely
runs into Charlie, trying to smear some of Frank Jr's vomit on Charlie.

Which he does.

Charlie dabs a finger in it as Daniel slams the bathroom door.

CHARLIE

Thanks Daniel, always stellar moments
with you around.

(noticing Shannon)

Shan, I'm going to head back in there..

SHANNON

I should get back to the kitchen.

Charlie grabs Shannon and kisses her.

Their Eyes Twinkle, the world slows down around them.

It's a magical moment.

After the kiss, Charlie puts his fingers gently over her lips, she wants to say something.

He slowly retreats to the room adjacent.

SCENE 94

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charlie back catering to the guys, who all hoot and holler at a play in the game. He tries to join in:

CHARLIE
How's it going lads?

Greg still paces about as Shannon enters.

SHANNON
All right, guys, dinner's in five.

She looks at Charlie, still enchanted, he smiles but doesn't show his cards.

GREG
I can't eat now. I doubled down on them
to lose the second half. Too focused.

CALEB
Speak for yourself! Yes, lets eat.

Greg mutters to himself as he stomps out of the room, trying to call his bookie again.

This whole time, Charlie's been watching Shannon in awe as she rounds up all the guys and herds them toward the dining room.

CHARLIE
(to himself)
I want to her to have my babies.

Old, drunk Tommy is the last to waddle past Charlie.

SCENE 95

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

It's the greatest spread ever: a dozen delicious dishes on the table with a 10 kg turkey centerpiece.

The kids all at a kiddie table off to the side, flicking peas at each other, as the guys all drool over the main table and the women put out the final dishes.

Lea and Tom sit at the ends, everyone else in between.

Shannon sits beside Charlie.

UNCLE FRANK

Holy moly, I'm going to shovel that entire bird right in my beak.

LEA

Not everyone's seated yet, Frank. We're waiting for Daniel.

MILES

That Gargoyle would be holding us up.

UNCLE FRANK

Get him in here.

Daniel enters, carrying Frank Jr in one arm and in the other, a very soiled suit jacket.

DANIEL

Apologies for holding you up while I tended to your son.

In a rare display of compassion, Daniel gently places Frank Jr in his crib beside the table. He's so loving as he does it.

Shannon's face: Awww.

And like that, the moment passes, for then Daniel makes a big to-do out of marching to the kitchen and chucking his soiled jacket in the trash, glaring at Uncle Frank all the while.

UNCLE FRANK

Gee, Dannyboy, sorry. You want me to get you a new suit?

DANIEL

Not at all, Frank. It's only a Brunello Cucinelli. More than a fair price for your fine company.

(noticing the table)

And this fine meal. My ladies, you've certainly outdone yourselves..

MILES

Yeah, yeah, sit down so we can eat sometime this year.

Hearing Miles sentiments, Daniel, takes his dear sweet time taking his seat.

Everyone waits. Daniel takes an eternity.

LEA

Now then. Tommy? Will you lead us in the blessing?

TOMMY

(slurring)
Hmm? Which holiday is this again?

UNCLE FRANK

Sweet! Let's dig in!

LEA

Hold it! *I'll* give the blessing.

Lea looks around at everyone as they bow their heads:

She sees Daniel staring at Shannon and Charlie, clearly playing footsie under the table, she notices Greg texting on his phone and her beyond-drunk husband.

LEA (CONT'D)

Screw it, let's eat.

The feast begins! Dishes passing back and forth, the clinking of fine china, it's all so grand. After a few moments:

PENELOPE

Well? How is it?

Daniel swirls his wine, about to give a fine critique when..

MILES

(mouth full)
Mm, mmmmm--mmmm.

UNCLE FRANK

(chewing with mouth open)
Nom nom, oh yeah, nom nom nom.

CALEB

(mouth full)
Mmmm, this food is the tits.

DANIEL

(deflated)
Well put.

SHANNON

(to Charlie)
What do you think?

CHARLIE

It's like you ladies took each taste bud in my mouth and placed it in its own palace of pleasure.

(pointing to his tongue)

This taste bud? He thinks it's Christmas morning. This one over here? He's off in FanTastyland, where everything's made of rainbows and dreams.

DANIEL

Typical empty flattery.

SHANNON

Dad!

DANIEL

It's true! He's the only so-called food critic who manages to never say a single thing about the food.

UNCLE FRANK

Bitterness ain't a good look on you, Dannyboy.

CHARLIE

Or good taste. How's that for a review, Dannyboy.

Daniel throws his hands in the air and leans back. Pauses. He leans over Frank Jr's crib:

DANIEL

(baby-talk)

Oh, Frank Jr, at least you appreciate me. Yes you do! Who's a great, appreciative child?

SHANNON

Sure, he likes you now, but wait 'til you start criticising every little thing about the way he sits there and drools.

UNCLE FRANK

He learned from the best!

SHANNON

And then if he asks you for help to improve his drooling, let's see how much he appreciates you then.

DANIEL

Shannon, you have no idea why.

LEA

Enough. Daniel, since you're so keen on being the center of attention, why don't you tell us a story?

DANIEL

Hmm, Okay. Let me tell you about an old pal named Gordon Ramsay.

Shannon narrows her eyes, as of course, she loves Gordon.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Anyone recall his first restaurant in the city? Likely not. It torpedoed in a month, thanks mostly to my review. You can imagine how the self centered bastard took it.

Charlie notices Shannon stewing and brewing.

CHARLIE

I've heard he's not such a bad guy.

DANIEL

Sorry, do you know Gordon Ramsay? Didn't think so.

Lea has this not again look.

Charlie rolls his eyes.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Where was I, so a bit of a rivalry developed between Gordon and myself. You could say he's the best nemesis I've ever had. Ever.

(staring at Charlie)

And what's more, he seemed to do it without even trying, which makes those who Do Try all the more inept. Anyway, when his second restaurant opened, he said, "*This time..*"

Greg interrupts..

Buried in his cell, looking at the football game score. He leans toward his wife, Penelope:

GREG

We're going to refinance our mortgage.

PENELOPE

Shhh, I'm listening.

DANIEL

"You HAVE to review my restaurant! I'll see to it that your editor MAKES you review it!" It was quite the display. I chuckled and said, *Gordon, I'm a staple in this town and my editor knows it is because I review whichever damn place I choose. She'll never bow to your whims.*

Shannon interrupts.

SHANNON

That's not what you told me.

DANIEL

Hmm?

SHANNON

That's *not* what you said Dad.

DANIEL

Shannon, sweetheart, you weren't there, were you?

SHANNON

No, that's not what you said to me. You said you couldn't review my restaurant because you said Lea wouldn't allow it.

DANIEL

Shannon, are we really doing this now?

SHANNON

Oh, we're doing this now! Bottom line, You're a liar! So what is it? You don't want me to be successful? Why the hell won't you review my restaurant?

Her frustration hangs in the air.

DANIEL

Shannon, can we talk about this later?

Her phone rings.

SHANNON

Excuse me, I have to take this. It's somebody who actually cares about me and my goals.

She storms out onto the back patio and answers her cell phone. Everyone at the table is silent a moment.

UNCLE FRANK

That Stroganoff isn't going to eat
itself. Pass it over.

Everyone slowly resumes eating.

CHARLIE

Smooth, Danny, like butter.

Daniel is so bewildered right now he doesn't even offer a retort. He
stares out the window at Shannon.

She's already off the phone.

Daniel starts to get up.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Don't even think about it. I'll go.

SCENE 96

EXT. BACK PATIO - DAY

Charlie approaches her. She turns away.

CHARLIE

Whatever it is, I'm sure you can handle
it. If you can handle having Daniel as a
father, you can handle anything. Who
called you?

SHANNON

The Times reviewed my restaurant this
past Sunday. This is what they wrote;

Shannon gives Charlie her phone;

***"Two Stars" Dire and Derivative -
It's time to silence the reality
show Chef's experiment.***

Shannon laughs at herself.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

I'm such a fool. Here I was, fantasising
about what specials I can offer this
Spring when squash finally is in season,
but I probably won't even have a
restaurant this Spring.

Charlie sits beside her, giving her a shoulder to lean on.

SCENE 97

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

With dinner now over, most of the family says their good-byes and head out.

As Penelope and Greg exit, they're in a heated argument:

GREG

You can't take half my money, because
there is no money!

Penelope snatches Greg's phone.

PENELOPE

We'll see about that.

Penelope calls Greg's bookie.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

Hello! Travis? Can you tell me how much
my husband gave you?

Greg snatches the phone and smashes it on the ground. Penelope and Greg get into a heated shouting match.

Charlie stands off to the side, maybe missing his own family as he watches Uncle Frank, Miles and Caleb all hug goodbye, he notices Daniel isn't around and heads down the hall.

SCENE 98

INT. THE DINING ROOM

Tommy is passed out at the table, again. Daniel folds a napkin and slides it under his head.

Charlie screeches out a chair:

CUT TO:

SCENE 99

INT. IN THE KITCHEN

Shannon helps Lea clean up. She scrubs dishes furiously.

SHANNON

I know you were covering for Dad when you said you couldn't let him review my restaurant, and that's fine, I get it. I just can't believe he'd come up with that hogwash.

She slams the sponge in the water.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Here's a question: who criticises the critics?

LEA

I've been asking myself the exact same thing.

SHANNON

You were the one who backed him up on his lie Lea! I can't believe you would stoop so low.

Shannon throws the sponge in the trash & storms off.

SCENE 100

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie leans across the table talking to Daniel, who is relaxed, leaning back in his chair with his legs crossed.

DANIEL

Oh, please, this should be rich.

CHARLIE

It's true. Deep down, you know you're on the way out. Lea's only kept you on this long out of pity. The restaurant biz never respected you. They're just scared of you. And that's what your legacy will be: a bitter old man who no one actually liked. Even your own daughter doesn't like you.

Hearing this, Shannon intervenes.

SHANNON

How dare you Charlie. You don't talk to my Father that way.

CHARLIE

(turning to see her)

Shannon

SHANNON

You are not even a critic.

DANIEL

Thank you for clarifying this with Chuck,
he's in his own alternate universe.

SHANNON

No one talks to my family that way. I'm
ready to go. Now!

Lea waits to talk to Shannon, who doesn't say goodbye and bolts to
Charlie's car.

SCENE 101

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Charlie, Daniel and Shannon are driving home, same seats as before, but
now they're ALL completely miserable & silent.

Daniel leans in from the backseat, a peace offering:

DANIEL

Hey Chuck, Could we listen to that Billie
Holiday song you put on that playlist you
were talking about.

CHARLIE

Now you want to hear music?

DANIEL

It would sure add a change of pace to
this self imposed misery you two have
created.

Charlie rolls down his window, yanks his phone out of the center
console, and chucks it out the window. After another beat or two of
driving in silence.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I bet you'll wish you hadn't done that.

SCENE 102

INT. ON THE TRAIN - MORNING

An elderly gentleman reads the THE TRIBUNE NEWSPAPER.

Its headline: CRITIC-OFF.

Right next to him, a YOUNG MAN reads the exact same story on his
tablet.

The elderly gentleman nosily glances at Young Man's tablet. As the
Young man notices the same headline.

SCENE 103

INT. THE TRIBUNE - LEA'S OFFICE - MORNING

Daniel storms in and flings the newspaper across her desk.

DANIEL

What the hell is this? You're firing me?

LEA

Not if you win.

DANIEL

You can't fire me, I quit.

LEA

Okay, then Charlie wins by default.

Daniel points a finger at her.

DANIEL

You! You ungrateful.

LEA

What Daniel? Ungrateful employer of your sorry ass for two & half decades? Don't point at me.

Charlie storms in and winds back to throw his tablet on her desk, but thinks better of it and fumbles it to himself.

CHARLIE

Can you tell me what this all about?

LEA

Neither of you have any respect for me or my paper, so you're going to prove who deserves this job.

CHARLIE

Spill the beans.

LEA

Ground rules: you each pick One Restaurant you'll dine at TOGETHER and you'll eat the SAME THING. Then you each review it. The public and I will review your reviews to decide who stays. If it's a split decision between YOU Two, the final restaurant..

DANIEL

Don't you dare Lea.

CHARLIE

At this point, you couldn't. You shouldn't.

LEA

Is Shannon's. The loser is fired. That is all. Now Get out!

SCENE 104

INT. THE TRIBUNE - ONLINE DIVISION - MINUTES LATER

Charlie marches through.

CHARLIE

All interns in my office now!

SCENE 105

INT. THE TRIBUNE - CHARLIE'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Packed to the brim with interns and Mike.

CHARLIE

We need a game plan, a strategy, we need divine intervention.

MIKE

Aren't those the same thing?

CHARLIE

Mike, I knew there was a reason I stayed close to you, even after you turned me in for copying your ethics final.

MIKE

That was a tough decision.

CHARLIE

Your job is to find every article Daniel's ever written and have them on my desk. I want the rest of you to dig up any review of Daniel's reviews from different reviewers from anywhere. Find me critiques of reviews of restaurants that Daniel has reviewed from any reviewer or chef. Bottom line, dig up anything you can on him.

There's a confused look from everyone...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Listen, Just find me Everything with Daniel's name on it. GO!

The interns scramble out of his office.

MIKE
So that's your game plan.

CHARLIE
I need to find his weakness. Go make sure
they do their job!

CUT TO:

Meanwhile, an unenthusiastic Daniel is in the breakroom with Arthur.

ARTHUR
So your jumping out of the frying pan
into the fire?

DANIEL
It's a fitting end to my tenure here. I
could just leave, but I can't bare to let
that wanker win.

ARTHUR
All I can say is, be yourself, it's
worked for you thus far.

SCENE 106

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - KITCHEN - MORNING

Shannon stares at boxes of food like an artist staring at a blank
canvass: utterly overwhelmed. Her SOUS and PREP-COOKS stand behind her
in anticipation.

HOSTESS
(poking in)
Shannon?

SHANNON
I'm busy.

HOSTESS
Gordon Ramsay is here.

The prep-cooks and sous chef are stunned a moment, then act busy.

SCENE 107

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

GORDON
Hello Darling.

SHANNON
Gordon! What a pleasant surprise.

GORDON

I've been meaning to come by, how are things going?

SHANNON

Could be better. I'm in the process of changing the menu.

Gordon looks over her reservation book for the evening.

GORDON

Twelve reservations for the evening, not too promising.

SHANNON

Tell me about it.

GORDON

May I see what your serving now?

SCENE 108

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - LATER

Gordon has a slew of food in front of him. The sous chef comes out with another plate and sets it before him.

SOUS

This is bourbon braised suckling pig with poached Parisienne apples, toasted pecans, maple jus, with fried polenta and swiss chard.

Gordon's not inspired.

GORDON

Excellent, thank you.

SCENE 109

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - LATER

Shannon comes out while Gordon continues to eat.

GORDON

I'd be lying if I said I was impressed. The good news is that it's exactly what I expected.

SHANNON

What am I doing wrong?

GORDON

All of your dishes are over seasoned and overly complicated. You have too many flavours overloading my palate.

Shannon's crushed, she smiles for a second (flashback her father telling her about the Lobster Scampi she made)

Shannon sucks it up.

SHANNON

Yes, Gordon, I understand.

GORDON

Shannon, do you know why you won?

SHANNON

To make my father angry?

GORDON

No, darling, Although that was a sweetener. You have what most chefs do not.

SHANNON

What's that?

GORDON

Not the desire, but the *ability* to learn. A headstrong chef can be their own undoing. If you are not always striving to become a better chef, you become stagnant. That drive cannot be taught. Do you understand?

SHANNON

I think so.

GORDON

Don't over-think it. It's not mathematical, it's a flash of inspiration from the heart.

SHANNON

So what's next?

Gordon gets up and walks towards her kitchen.

GORDON

We start fresh.

SCENE 110

EXT/INT. EL PUERCO LLORÓN - FIRST RESTAURANT - BRUNCH

Daniel parks his car, he walks into a restaurant.

Inside, Charlie's tucked in a booth on his tablet. Daniel joins.

DANIEL

Clever name for a restaurant.

Daniel pulls out his journal and glasses.

WAITRESS

Welcome to The Crying Pig, A taste of the South. What can I get for you all this afternoon?

DANIEL

Go ahead, guru.

CHARLIE

We'll have the Smoked Pork, Fried Bacon with melted Swiss, Pulled Pork Soup, Braised Pork Shoulder, Roasted Pork Chops, And the Pork Taco's. And make that two of everything.

WAITRESS

Are you sure? That's a whole lot of food. Are you sure you can handle it?

CHARLIE

Yes, and we'll also have two of all of your desert items.

The waitress clucks her tongue and walks away.

DANIEL

Are you trying to kill me?

CHARLIE

Yes.

All of a sudden a couple small squealing pigs run out of the kitchen, the chef is running after them, holding a cleaver .

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

At least we know the food will be fresh.

Daniel pulls out a pen & jots in his paperback journal.

DANIEL (WRITING IN HIS JOURNAL)

When you view many *historic buildings* from the outside, they often appear as if infested by a colony of cockroaches.

(MORE)

DANIEL (WRITING IN HIS JOURNAL)

But when you remove the curtain, there's a charm, an elegance, to most. Not this place. This place has a pig farm in their kitchen.

Charlie types on his tablet.

CHARLIE (ON HIS TABLET)

Part of the charm, where owners let pets roam free, where you can find an unassuming hospitality that is none other than an acquired taste.

The Waitress drops off two iced teas and sets down wrapped-straws. Daniel rolls his eyes and slides his back.

DANIEL

I don't do straws.

WAITRESS

Well all right then!

Daniel puckers up but Charlie doesn't flinch. He sucks it down. Fast. When he reaches the bottom, he SLURPS WITH THE STRAW.

Without hesitation, the waitress is there for a refill.

CHARLIE

Thank you.

Daniel and Charlie continue to jot notes.

SCENE 111

INT. EL PUERCO LLORÓN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

All the food comes. Massive plates full of pig cooked every way you could imagine - they switch to a larger table to handle the volume of plates.

Daniel is in awe.

DANIEL

That was fast.

CHARLIE

Welcome to the South.

WAITRESS

Can I get you gentlemen anything else?

CHARLIE

Looks wonderful. I think we're set.

DANIEL

Anything else? What else could you possibly bring from the ENTIRE South that is not on this table.

CHARLIE

Come on Daniel, stop complaining.

J

DANIEL

My arteries are all ready clogged, this meal will be my coup de grâce.

WAITRESS

I'm sorry sir, I just serve the food.

DANIEL

Why don't you go in the back and tell your kitchen manager we will require nothing else for the ENTIRE duration of our lives.

The waitress shrinks off. Charlie shakes his head.

Daniel feels bad, then something devilish occurs to him.

SCENE 112

INT. EL PUERCO LLORON

The Waitress sheepishly returns, because she has to.

WAITRESS

May I take these plates?

Although Daniel hated it, oddly, he now says.

DANIEL

Yes, you may. I sincerely apologise for my sudden outburst. It was not directed at you or your fine establishment. You are a wonderful waitress.

Charlie catches on that Daniel is suddenly mimicking him.

WAITRESS

Thank you. That's okay.
(to Charlie)
Look's like you both enjoyed it!

CHARLIE

To be perfectly honest Signora, I did not. Your dishes were all under cooked. And If I get Trichinosis poisoning, I will stop at nothing to make sure this place is burnt to the ground.

The waitress runs off - even more horrified than before.

DANIEL

Your such a pleasant person to be around. Have you no tact?

CHARLIE

Coming from the King of bad reviews? How many restaurants have you put out of business? 200? 300?

Daniel throws down his napkin & stands up.

DANIEL

Pay the nice lady, Lea is going to appreciate the charge to her paper.

CHARLIE

You know what Daniel?

DANIEL

What?

Charlie pulls out his wallet and slaps down a wad of cash.

CHARLIE

Your welcome.

SCENE 113

EXT/INT. PARADIS DANS VOTRE BOUCHE - SECOND RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Charlie enters an historic building, to find a restaurant called; "PARADIS DANS VOTRE BOUCHE,"

Daniel is already inside engaging in a laughing conversation with CHEF LA'TOUCHE.

Charlie joins, listening.

DANIEL
 (In French)
 Make sure to give this guy the leftovers
 your dog didn't want.

Chef La'Touche laughs.

Charlie sees the menu IS ALL FRENCH.

CHEF LA'TOUCHE
 (In French)
 He must be one of your best friends.

DANIEL
 (In French)
 No one would care if he died today.

CHEF LA'TOUCHE
 (In French)
 Don't worry my friend; we'll take care of
 him the French way.

DANIEL(LAUGHS)
 (In French)
 Just make sure the waiter doesn't put his
 plates on my side and we'll be good.

CHEF LA'TOUCHE
 (In French)
 Don't worry, We've got you covered.

DANIEL
 (In French)
 Let's start with a bottle of your
 cheapest wine, this wanker won't know the
 difference.

They both laugh until..

CHARLIE
 (In French)
 We'll split a bottle of a 98 Bordeaux.
 And go ahead with the chef's choices on
 the entrees.

CHEF LA'TOUCHE
 Sacrebleu! You speak FRENCH? Please know,
 we were just kidding.

Charlie only knows how to speak a few words, but doesn't understand the language.

CHARLIE
 What did he say?

DANIEL
(In French)

I told you he was a half-wit, those are the only ten words he knows in French, lets stick to the game plan, give him cheap wine.

CHEF LA'TOUCHE
(In French)
No problem, he scared me for a second.

CHARLIE
What was that all about?

DANIEL
Chef and I are good friends, we were just catching up. He has the same kind of dog I have.

CHARLIE
You have a dog? I thought dog owners were good people, I guess I was wrong.

Shortly after, the food comes out.

Daniel smiles as Charlie takes the first bite.

DANIEL
Bon Appétit.

Daniel eats his food, after a few bites, Charlie's stomach begins turning, he jumps out of his chair & rushes to the toilet, vomiting.

When he returns the table, Daniel has left, he looks inside the kitchen, it's empty, holding his stomach, he limps out of the restaurant, kicking the door open, he collapses as he gets to his car, he crawls the last few feet & lays in his car, Charlie opens the door & vomits again, while breathing hard.

Once he's in his car, he calls Mike on the phone.

MIKE
What's up man?

CHARLIE
Tell me where he lives?

MIKE
He? Who's he?

CHARLIE
Daniel! Come on! The guy I told you to dig up everything on. Where does he live?

MIKE

Why? What's going on? Something tells me
I shouldn't tell you.

CHARLIE

That's because I'm going to kill him.

Charlie is driving erratically.

A police car pulls him over.

MIKE

Charlie? Are you there?

CHARLIE

Got to go, find out where he lives!!

SCENE 114

INT. THE TRIBUNE - LEA'S OFFICE - MORNING

Daniel sits before Lea, uncomfortably waiting.

Charlie finally arrives, he walks out the lift & rushes to the toilet,
beet red & flatulent, after a few minutes - he walks out of the toilet
& starts walking towards Lea's office, All of a sudden, he pivots and
runs back to the toilet and vomits again.

DANIEL

So how is this contest being tallied
again?

LEA

Lets wait for your opponent to get here.

Charlie wanders in a few seconds later, Looking quite ill, he grabs a
seat next to Daniel.

CHARLIE

I don't get it.

DANIEL

What don't you get?

CHARLIE

Your not sick?

DANIEL

Sick in what way?

CHARLIE

Come on Daniel, I've been having diarrhea ever since that last restaurant. Did you get it too? We ate the same things.

DANIEL

Nope, I'm fine. I just have a more resilient system.

LEA

Shall we begin?

DANIEL

Yes, we've waited long enough.

Lea slices open an envelope and takes out a card..

LEA

With online polling, algorithms, etcetera, I have a verdict.

LEA (CONT'D)

It's a tie.

DANIEL

What!? How can do this? It's impossible! You can't expect me to believe this!

Charlie wipes his brow.

CHARLIE

So, what's next?

DANIEL

Lea, Do we really need to?

LEA

You both agreed to my terms. This isn't a debate. Tonight at 8:00 PM this is settled, once and for all.

Daniel gets up.

DANIEL

Your mum would be ashamed of you Lea.

LEA

What are you talking about Daniel?

DANIEL

Twenty-Five long, painstaking years of towing the line, bringing this paper to the relevance, after all I have done, you pick this bozo for me to deal with.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Not someone with class, culture and
etiquette, just a two bit online bullshit
artist.

Charlie is too sick to say anything.

LEA

8:00 PM this evening Daniel. After that,
either way, you will never have to see
him again.

Daniel slams his fist down on her desk.

DANIEL

FINE! If that's how it has to be.

Daniel storms out of her office.

Lea looks at Charlie, he's in agony.

LEA

And what happened to you?

Charlie can barely speak, he points toward the right, where Daniel just
left, he lurches for her garbage can & vomits again.

CUT TO:

SCENE 115

EXT/INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - THAT NIGHT

Daniel pauses at the door, emotional like the last time he was here,
but he collects himself and FINALLY enters.

HOSTESS

Welcome to..

Daniel stops her with his hand.

DANIEL

Great. Thanks. I know where I am.

Daniel beelines for the corner, but guess who's there..

Charlie's shocked but has no time to react as Daniel yanks the table
out of the booth and chucks a glass of Sangria in his face!

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What are you doing here, you little
fruit?

HOSTESS

Shannon, you better get out here.

SHANNON
What's going on?

HOSTESS
There's a food fight!!

Charlie's huddled behind a tipped-over table, popping up to throw bread rolls at Daniel.

CHARLIE
I know your "roll" old man! You told that
guy to poison me! This was no accident.

Daniel weaves between tables, he grabs a shrimp cocktail of a customers table & hurls it at Charlie.

DANIEL
Prove it you little shrimp! First you try
to steal my job, then my family, find
your own damn life!

Shannon enters and catches a face-full of cocktail sauce.

CHARLIE
(noticing Shannon)
Shannon!

SHANNON
I never want to see either of you ever
again.

CHARLIE
I thought we were going to eat here
tonight?

SHANNON
Not after you both destroyed my
restaurant. GET OUT! NOW!

They both wallow out the door.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
(to her few patrons)
I'm so sorry, everyone. Dinner's on me
tonight.

SCENE 116

EXT. ALPHA & OMEGA - A MINUTE LATER

Bitterly cold. Daniel and Charlie face it.

Shivering.

Across the street, a man hangs a wreath with white lights.

Charlie puts on gloves and pops a breath mint.

Daniel holds out his hand, Charlie obliges and gives him one.

DANIEL

You got some Sangria on your face.

Charlie rubs his cheek against his jacket. Beat.

CHARLIE

You got some cocktail sauce on yours.

Daniel rubs under his nose.

DANIEL

No, it's blood.

(long pause)

Well then.

They disperse in opposite directions, but Charlie stops, turns.

CHARLIE

Hey, you wanna get a beer?

DANIEL

I hate beer.

SCENE 117

INT. SILVERBACK BAR - LATER

They sit on bar stools in a semi-crowded bar.

DANIEL

What kind of beer is this?

CHARLIE

It's a Tooheys dark ale It's been brewed
in New South Wales since 1869.

DANIEL

Thanks for the history lesson. So,
genious, what's next?

CHARLIE

We have to tell Lea.

DANIEL

You know what, this is really her fault.

CHARLIE

Your right, I can't believe Lea did this to us.

DANIEL

I have a plan.

Daniel gets up.

CHARLIE

Where are we going?

DANIEL

My place, lets go!

CHARLIE

What will happen there?

DANIEL

We are should write a review. Together.

CHARLIE

That's your plan?

DANIEL

Yes.

SCENE 118

INT. DANIEL'S HOME - LATER

Daniel and Charlie both smoke cigars.

Daniel feeds paper into his typewriter, he cracks his knuckles, begins to type.

CHARLIE

Wait, I thought *WE* were writing this together.

DANIEL

We are, you sit there and watch.

Charlie gets up.

CHARLIE

Do you have any food?

He walks into Daniel's kitchen & open ups the fridge.

Daniel walks over and opens the freezer.

DANIEL

You've got to try this Lasagna.

Daniel pops it in the microwave & pulls it out.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Here, take a bite.

Daniel grabs a spoon and feeds Charlie a bite, Charlie gladly accepts.

A few seconds later, the phone rings.

Daniel goes over to answer.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Hello?

LEA

Shannon told me what happened tonight.

DANIEL

Listen Lea, It's not what it seemed.

LEA

What do you mean it's not what it seemed
like?! YOU DESTROYED HER RESTAURANT. ARE
YOU BOTH INSANE??!

DANIEL

I don't know what to say.

Charlie goes over to the phone and chimes in.

CHARLIE

We don't know what to say.

LEA

Daniel, Only because I've known you for
almost three decades & Shannon is like a
sister to me, I've straightened this all
out. Be there tomorrow night at 8:00 PM

She hangs up the phone.

DANIEL

That went well.

SCENE 119

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - KITCHEN BATHROOM - NEXT NIGHT

Shannon is over a toilet puking her guts out.

At the sink, she washes her hands as someone knocks:

SOUS

Almost time.

SHANNON

I'll be out in a minute!

SCENE 120

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

EVERYONE's here:

Mike, Arthur, Lea, Food Critics from other papers.

Even a local TV news crew.

It's a bit of a circus.

Lea looks at her watch, then stares at THE empty booth.

They are both late.

Finally, Charlie enters, he pulls out an ENVELOPE WITH SHANNON'S NAME on it, but hides it back as he sees Daniel entering.

Daniel pauses when he sees The Booth.

He sucks it up and sits across from Charlie.

Lea taps her watch and they both nod apologetically.

Daniel pulls out his journal and puts on his glasses.

Charlie pulls up social media sites on his tablet: They're ready.

Charlie looks at Daniel, who intentionally ignores him.

Both feeling awkward after what happened there the night before.

All of the waiters come out at once to their individual tables and address their guests. Daniel and Charlie's waiter:

WAITER

Nice to see you both again. This evening's theme is farm-to-table-family-share.

(MORE)

WAITER (CONT'D)

Each dish serves two, so you'll be sharing, but don't worry I'll bring two plates. There's a menu in front of you if you have any questions.

CHARLIE

Sharing?

DANIEL

We don't, We can't, Screw it! Let's begin.

WAITRESS

Would you like a drink to start?

CHARLIE

I'll have a beer. Daniel, would you like a beer?

DANIEL

I hate beer.

SCENE 121

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - LATER

They eat a beautifully prepared beet and goat cheese salad.

CHARLIE

This is delicious.

Back in the kitchen a ferocious Shannon is in control.

SHANNON

How's my celeriac puree coming?

SAUCE COOK

Two minutes, Chef.

SHANNON

Make it one.

(to the grille cook)

Don't overcook that rack of lamb? What temp is it at now?

GRILL COOK

Medium-rare, Chef.

SHANNON

Take them off now! Let's plate up! Move it!

SCENE 122

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

As in our opening, several sets of hands plate up an amazing presentation: a small dinner for two. A whole fire-roasted pheasant atop root vegetables and other meats.

SHANNON

Who gets the last one?

WAITER

That's mine, Chef.

The waiter reaches for two sharing plates but there are none.

WAITER (CONT'D)

Chef. We're out of sharing plates.

SHANNON

Check the dish cabinet.

He does, None. He raises his hands to her: Nope.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

How the hell do we run out of dishes on a night like tonight?

WAITER

You told us to double up each table and use app plates for sauces.

SHANNON

Okay go next door, quickly, and wait, you know what, Screw them. They can share off the same damn plate.

SCENE 123

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - A MINUTE LATER

The waiter sets dishes before Daniel and Charlie.

DANIEL

Plates.

WAITER

I'm sorry sir. We are out of plates for the moment. I'll bring some soon.

A beat after the waiter leaves. Daniel and Charlie sit closer together to share the dish in the middle.

Daniel begins carving the pheasant.

SCENE 124

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - LATER

Happy customers everywhere, many we know, completely satisfied and raving about the food, having a great time.

Daniel and Charlie: quiet in The Booth.

Lea judging. Reflecting.

Shannon comes out of the kitchen.

People clap and hoot.

Shannon takes it with great modesty, She then gives Charlie and Daniel a cold look.

She walks to Lea & gives her a big hug.

Charlie notices this and has his chance TO PLANT HIS LETTER.

CHARLIE

I'm going to use the toilet.

DANIEL

Good.

Charlie heads for the toilet, but peers into the kitchen. The coast is clear. He ducks in. No one notices, except for.

Lea smiles to herself and continues with Shannon:

LEA

It was delightful, dear. Thank you for indulging me in all this. If only I could use you to pick up readers in the other six sections of my paper.

SCENE 125

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - SHANNON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Charlie sneaks in. He can hear most of the staff out back smoking and talking. Very close-by.

Charlie sets the envelope on Shannon's desk.

SOUS

What are you doing back here?

CHARLIE

I was looking for Shannon.

SOUS

She's in the dining room.

CHARLIE

Oh? Well, can you tell her I'm sorry.

SOUS

Your going to have to do that on your own.

Charlie squeezes by him but the sous purposefully leaves him little room to slide through, as a gesture of disgust for the night before.

SCENE 126

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel jots notes, then takes off his glasses and sets them down as Charlie returns. Daniel immediately removes his glasses from Charlie's reach. They stare at each other. Silence.

Shannon makes her rounds to their table.

SHANNON

What's the verdict gents?

CHARLIE

It's the best thing I've ever had, all time, in my life.

DANIEL

I'm very proud of you.

SHANNON

That will be the day. Dessert will be out soon.

Shannon leaves.

CHARLIE

That went well.

DANIEL

Could be worse, at least we're all on speaking terms. Don't misunderstand me: you will never date my daughter.

Arthur passes, heading to the toilet.

ARTHUR

Your little lioness can cook.

DANIEL

She can indeed.

CHARLIE

Yes, she's incredible.

ARTHUR

Yeah whatever Charlie.

SCENE 127

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DINING ROOM - LATER

After dessert. Plates being cleared. Everyone is leaving.

Lea walks by Daniel & Charlie's table on her way out.

LEA

I want them on my desk in the morning.

Daniel waves his finger, busy jotting.

CHARLIE

Will do.

Daniel continues to jot.

Charlie really wants to talk to him, but doesn't have the courage to say anything. He gathers his coat and tablet. All he can manage is:

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Daniel.

Daniel waves his finger, still jotting. Charlie nods, heads off.

DANIEL

Charlie.

CHARLIE

Yeah?

DANIEL

Come here.

Charlie returns.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Why do you want to be a food critic?

CHARLIE

I don't know, I didn't look for this, I guess it found me.

DANIEL

Well that's an answer. Do you want to know why I became one?

CHARLIE

Yes, Enlighten me.

DANIEL

I became. You know what, never mind. You don't deserve to know.

Charlie leaves.

SCENE 128

INT. CHARLIE'S HOME - MORNING

Charlie lies in bed staring at the ceiling.

He looks at his clock: 11:00 am.

He gets out of bed. Determined.

Charlie rushes outside, he stops by a flower vender.

SCENE 129

EXT. ALPHA & OMEGA - DAY

Charlie approaches the restaurant, with flowers in hand, Birds of Paradise, the door is locked. He knocks.

Thinking Shannon could be in her office.

No answer. He leaves them.

A PASSER-BY sees the flowers leaning against the door, snaps a picture and Instagram's it.

SCENE 130

INT. THE TRIBUNE - DANIEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel looks over his office one last time.

He shuts off the lights and is about to close the door when..

MIKE

Hi, Let's get started Mr. Cromwell.

DANIEL

I'm sorry?

MIKE

I'm your new assistant.

Daniel chuckles.

DANIEL

You ARE Not my assistant.

MIKE

I'm not following. You won the Critic-Off. Lea, everybody, they all agreed you were the better critic.

Daniel walks through THE TRIBUNE office holding his briefcase.

Now we see Charlie leaving his office, with his stuff packed in box.

Daniel & Charlie meet at the lift.

Charlie looks at Daniel, who looks at Charlie.

SCENE 131

THE LIFT

Charlie pushes the lobby button.

They both walk inside the lift & stare at the floor the whole way down.

Doors open.

Daniel steps out.

Charlie is about to go, but Daniel put his hand on Charlie's shoulder.

DANIEL

This is where I get off.

Daniel walks out of the lift, Charlie stays inside.

CHARLIE

Are you sure?

DANIEL

I am.

CHARLIE

Thank you sir. It's been something else.

DANIEL

That it has.

The door is about to close, Daniel puts his hand in & it opens.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Hey Chuck! One thing.

CHARLIE

What's that?

DANIEL

Read a dictionary once in a while.

The doors close & send Charlie back up to his career.

Daniel is walking out to his car & sees Arthur who walks over to him.

ARTHUR

What's going on Danny? Early lunch?

DANIEL

Not quite. I'm done old pal.

ARTHUR

Your what?

DANIEL

You heard me, See you around.

Daniel gets in his Convertable Aston Martin & speeds out driving through the city, he turns on the radio & Frank Sinatra's song My Way starts playing.

Daniel sings along.

SCENE 132

INT. ALPHA & OMEGA - SHANNON'S OFFICE - DAY

Shannon is sat at her desk, reviewing her full deck of reservations.

HOSTESS

Shannon, someone left flowers for you.