

FEEDING SATAN

Written by

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Based on "Bon-Bon," Edgar Allan Poe's
First Published Short Story (1832)

En Français:

*Quand un bon vin meuble mon estomac,
 Je suis plus savant que Balzac -
 Plus sage que Pibrac;
 Mon brass seul faisant l'attaque
 De la nation Coseaque,
 La mettroit au sac;
 De Charon je passerois le lac,
 En dormant dans son bac;
 J'irois au fier Eac,
 Sans que mon coeur fit tic ni tac,
 Présenter du tabac.*

—French Vaudeville

English Translation:

When a good wine fills my stomach
 I am more learned than Balzac -
 Wiser than Pibrac;
 My lone arm attacking
 The Cossack nation,
 Plunders it;
 I cross Charon's lake
 Asleep in his ferry;
 I would go to proud Aeacus,
 Without my heart beating hard
 To offer him some snuff.

—From the introduction to *Bon-Bon*,
 by Edgar Allen Poe

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - DAY

It's a late summer afternoon outside ESTAMINET FIÈVRE ("CAFE FEVER"), a small, limited-seating RESTAURANT near the waterfront in a diverse, mixed-income NEIGHBORHOOD. Parked in front are a couple TV/satellite TRUCKS and a LIMO.

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - DAY

Estaminet's interior combines French bistro and Yankee sensibility. The KITCHEN'S front allows patrons to view their dishes being finished. Today, its white-clothed TABLES and BANQUETTES are abuzz with food and entertainment beat REPORTERS; AGENTS; NEIGHBORS; FRIENDS; and FAMILY.

JOSH POINDEXTER, 29, arts/entertainment agent, speaks from a ROSTRUM fronting the kitchen ISLAND, under TV LIGHTS and whirring SHUTTERS. He wraps up.

JOSH

Well - again, thank you all for coming. Everyone got a media kit?

(shades eyes)

Yes? Good. Without further ado, I give you the man: Academie de Cuisine Paris alum; Michelin honoree; model citizen; and the next TV kitchen sensation: Pe-ter Penuche!

Owner and chef PETER PENUCHE, 39, bare-headed and in his signature burgundy coat, steps from amid his kitchen CREW, cheering and applauding in their starched white TOQUES and TUNICS. Applauding, Josh hands off.

PETER

Thanks, Josh. Thank you very much; you're too kind. Please. Everyone behind me gets a raise, effective tomorrow!

His crew laughs and hoots.

PETER (CONT'D)

Seriously, I'm nowhere without the love and support of my staff; my partners; my loyal patrons; and everyone else who's worked so hard to turn this place around.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

And I'm nobody without my rock and
[reason for being], my daughter,
Isabella.

(NOTE: All instances of the French language shall be indicated by being enclosed in brackets. On screen this text will appear in subtitles.)

ISABELLA PENUCHE, 7, gives a shy smile and wave.

PETER (CONT'D)

As Josh said, we've got a deal on
"Food Fever" and should have a
first-air date by the end of the
month. I can't wait to recruit my
first crop of contestants and get
cookin'!

REPORTER #1

Peter, are you focusing on disabled
veterans because you yourself
served, in Desert Storm?

PETER

Not really. I was lucky; I came
home whole. Credit for that goes to
Estrella, my sous chef and personal
bodyguard.

ESTRELLA HERNANDEZ, 31, grins and raises a trouser leg,
revealing a prosthetic leg.

ESTRELLA

Semper Fi!

PETER

As you were, Lance Corporal!

ESTRELLA

Hoo-Ah, Chef Penuche!

Still smiling, she raises a fist, to applause.

REPORTER #2

Chef, are you going to maintain
your focus on country French
creations in the series, or broaden
your menu?

PETER

Well, Jim, I can't rule it out but,
come on - Provençal's how I trained
and what got us here. Why screw it
up now?

REPORTER #2

Follow-up: Anything in your background predispose you to Continental cuisine?

PETER

Not really. There are rumors about French ancestors back in the Eighteen Hundreds, but I came up in the Southwest. Strictly burgers, fries, and occasional Tex-Mex.

Through the front WINDOW, Peter notices a small GIRL. She stands apart, her long face pressed to the glass.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'd like to bring up Jennifer Hathaway, my manager and good right hand, who handles everything at Estaminet beyond my reach in the kitchen.

JENNIFER HATHAWAY, 37, puzzled, grabs her NOTES and steps up.

PETER (CONT'D)

Cover for me, okay?

JENNIFER

Don't I always?

Jennifer takes the MICROPHONE, and Peter run-walks toward the back door.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Peter emerges and sees COSETTE CAREME, 5, still looking in.

PETER

Hey!

Cosette breaks away. Peter runs after her and grabs an arm. She struggles until he drops to a knee, at her eye level.

PETER (CONT'D)

It's okay, sweetheart. Where's your Mommy?

COSETTE

Don't know.

PETER

Are you all right?

Cosette bursts into tears. Peter hugs and strokes her until her sobs relent.

COSETTE
I'm - I'm hungry.

Peter brightens, braces her, and smiles.

PETER
Know what? I can fix that!

Peter picks her up and questions her further as he heads back.

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/KITCHEN - DAY

Still talking, Peter carries Cosette to the dining room DOOR and spots Jennifer behind Josh. Peter beckons furiously until he catches her eye. She enters.

JENNIFER
Now what?

PETER
Hi, Jennifer. This is Cosette.
She's five. She's hungry. She has
no Mommy. No; that's not true; of
course she has a Mommy, but --

Jennifer takes Cosette.

JENNIFER
Take a breath, Peter.

PETER
Okay. I'm okay. She's okay. She
knows her name and has a pretty
good idea where she lives. Maybe
somebody can rustle her up
something, and maybe Isabella could
keep her company for a while, and --

JENNIFER
I'll take care of it. You'd better
get back. Josh has blood in his
eye.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Peter hustles to the rostrum, interrupting Josh.

PETER
 Sorry, everyone. A roast was
 burning.

JOSH
 (whispers)
 Where have you been? You missed --

PETER
 Relax. I'm back for the duration.

PETER (CONT'D)
 But enough of this idle chit-chat!
 My staff and I can't wait a second
 longer to share our surprise:
Goutère, traditional, late-
 afternoon snacks for all you kids!
 Everything from Pain au Chocolat -
 chocolate bar sandwiches - to
 Fromage Blanc avec Confiture -
 farmer's cheese with preserves.
 And Madeleines! And enough French-
 press to power the city tonight!

On cue, the crew wheels out CARTS stacked with CONFECTIONS
 and ACCOUTREMENTS.

PETER (CONT'D)
 I'll be around, so ask me anything!
 Enjoy!

The horde attacks the treats and Peter circulates, exuding
 bonhomie, under Josh's supervision.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The crew is busy cleaning up. Peter sweeps in.

PETER
 They're gone, at last. Good job,
 everyone! Josh, how'd I do?
 Where's Josh?

JENNIFER
 He's gone - said you two could
 debrief Monday.

PETER
 How'd he seem?

JENNIFER
 You worked your way back. Almost.

Peter's RINGS. He looks at the screen and frowns.

PETER
 (on phone)
 Hey, Heather... It went pretty
 well, I thought. Thanks for
 asking... Isabella? She's fine...

Peter finds Jennifer and holds a shrug. She nods.

PETER (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 She's in my office, napping - long
 day... Yes, I know what time it
 is... Tomorrow? Play date,
 right?... Uh-huh... Cyndi's at 3.
 Got it; she'll be there... I
 promise... Yeah, uh... I know
 that... 'Kay - G'bye.

Peter sighs. Estrella turns from her work, smirking.

ESTRELLA
 Hey, Jefe - want me to take the
 "Ex" out, now?

PETER
 Nah. Let's give it another week.

ESTRELLA
 Offer's open. Just say the word.

Peter nods and looks at Jennifer, wide-eyed.

PETER
 Jen! What about - ?

JENNIFER
 Cosette? Located her mother, not
 far from here; calmed her down.
 Fed the kid, put her in a cab and
 sent some basics home with her.

Peter takes her hands in his.

PETER
 Thank you, Jen. You're just - the
 best.

Jennifer smiles and squeezes. Peter pulls her aside; she
 holds on longer than he wants her to.

PETER (CONT'D)

Uh, listen. Would you mind handling the weekend run-through for me, please? I've got to get Isabella down, and I'm just... done.

JENNIFER

Sure. You know me.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Peter hoists Isabella to his shoulder from the well-used DAY BED. She stirs; he pauses and strokes her until she relaxes.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Peter struggles with the DOOR to the STAIRCASE. Wiping her hands, Estrella steps up and opens it.

ESTRELLA

Know what, Jefe? For the kick-ass leader you are, you're pretty soft.

PETER

I can afford to be, Superstar, knowing you've got my back. G'night.

Estrella pushes the hair off Isabella's face and closes the door gently behind them.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter enters and heads straight for Isabella's ROOM.

INT. ISABELLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Peter lays his daughter on her BED, removes her SHOES, and pulls the DUVET over her. He plants a long good-night kiss on her cheek, and lingers.

PETER (V.O.)

Don't care what your mother thinks, kiddo. It's all downhill from here.

INT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter sees bright, flickering light in the living room.

PETER (V.O.)

Fire?!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peter sprints into the LIVING ROOM, a LIBRARY mostly, with a small DINING AREA. Just inside, the CREDENZA LAMP - on a TIMER - is on, as usual, but a FIRE roars in the FIREPLACE at the other end. As he circles close, a gaunt, black-clad FIGURE leaps up from one of the matched WING CHAIRS, offering a jagged smile and slab-cold hand.

SATAN

Chef Peter J. Penuche, I presume?

PETER

Jesus!

The credenza lamp DIMS. Peter snatches up the closest object to defend himself - an antique GLOBE.

PETER (CONT'D)

Yeah. That's gonna hurt. Who the Hell are you?

SATAN bows, with a flourish. His complexion is bluish and translucent, and what remains of his dark hair is pulled back into a long, tight queue. He wears heavy, opaque WRAPAROUNDS. His worn black SUIT is ill-fitting; his bare wrists and ankles appear well below the cuffs. Shirtless, he wears a filthy CRAVAT tied in the style of a bygone cleric. His worn, scuffed SHOES sport expensive, silver ORNAMENTATION - his only jewelry.

SATAN

More like, "Who in Hell?"
Antichrist. Beelzebub. Mammon.
Ol' Ned. Prince of Darkness.
Lucifer. Call me "Lou."

PETER

Seriously?

SATAN

No. You may use the formal
"Satan." Please sit. We have much
to discuss.

Peter abandons the globe and takes the other chair.

SATAN (CONT'D)

It was just about six generations ago that I visited your grandfather, Pierre Bon-Bon. You know of him?

PETER

Barely. Legend has it he was a great French chef - and a drunk, like my old man. Bit off more than he could chew, on occasion.

SATAN

Ah, you do him no justice. He was brilliant, in the first league of the post-Enlightenment thinkers of his day. It was his passion that caused emotion to overwhelm reason, on occasion. Never carried to any extreme, though - unlike those idiot Germans.

PETER

And your business with him was?

SATAN

I wanted his soul. I had a taste for philosophers at that time. Cream of the crop, they were, and your grandfather's - small, like him - was well-fed, to boot.

PETER

So, how did that turn out?

SATAN

Poorly, for me. His logic and riposte were compelling at first. After consuming the better part of five bottles of wine and developing a chronic case of the hiccups, he grew merely argumentative and tiresome. I was more disgusted than desperate, so I left empty-handed.

Satan strokes his chin. Peter is intimidated and silent.

SATAN (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, Peter - I'm parched. Do you have an appellation suitable to remember your dear ancestor by?

(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)

A Chambertin, perhaps? He put away three of those, as I recall.

PETER

I've got a nice 2005 Faiveley Mazis Chambertin - four grand a case.

SATAN

That will do nicely, thank you.

Peter leaves and returns with a BOTTLE, CORKSCREW, and STEMWARE. He opens and decants the wine into the first GLASS. Satan, seizes it and slurps away.

PETER

Were you gonna let that breathe at all, or...

Satan wipes his mouth on his SLEEVE.

SATAN

Perfect! I am a spirit of impatient appetites, and I'm hungry - so, to work. I want you to procure me some souls and fatten them up for me.

PETER

Good God! What?

The credenza lamp DIMS again. Satan frowns.

PETER (CONT'D)

I - I don't understand.

SATAN

Simple. You bring me the *corpus*; I bargain for the soul; I get it; I eat it.

PETER

Uh, don't you have to take them to Hell and poke 'em with a pitchfork for eternity, or something?

Satan rolls his eyes and sighs.

SATAN

I explained this in detail to your grandfather, to no avail. The soul is a shadow, an incident - perishable, like fine cutlets.

(MORE)

SATAN (CONT'D)

And cutlets bear the care and state
of mind of the calves from which
they are removed. Your task is to
assure my "calves" are milk-fed and
delivered fresh. Mine? Bon
appetit!

PETER

For Christ's sake --

The credenza lamp's BULB EXPLODES. Satan raises a hand.

SATAN

Good sir: I implore you. No more
profanity!

PETER

I have to ask. What happens to the
body?

SATAN

Nothing! T he indentured merely
agrees to forfeit any further right
to endure - you know, resurrection,
reincarnation, whatever. One and
done. Cash and favors are always
popular inducements. Here --

Satan reaches into his breast POCKET and produces a red
leather FOLIO.

SATAN (CONT'D)

I can show you that there are those
you know now who seem soulless,
because they are! No visible
effect!

PETER

No, that's okay. How many, uh,
candidates we talking?

Satan strokes his chin.

SATAN

Oh. Assuming all ends well, let's
say three, a quantity likely to
hold me until I'm hungry again,
bored, or think of something else.

PETER

Any particular type? Like, say,
philosophers, again?

Satan roars with laughter, slapping his thighs.

SATAN

In your culture? I never impose the impossible! No, I think we'll find the ideal among your celebrities.

PETER

Celebrities?

SATAN

Their egos and demands, and their unflinching indulgence, fatten their souls like duck livers. All that will remain for you is to finish them into *pate foie gras* for me.

Satan stands and stretches.

SATAN (CONT'D)

Worry not, my young artist. I will provide acceptable vessels for your creations.

PETER

What if they refuse to go along?

Satan lays a hand on Peter's shoulder.

SATAN

Trust me. Those who have risen to their material station in this life imagine little possibility for future improvement.

Peter looks hard into Satan's eye protection.

PETER

Okay. Bottom line: What if I refuse to go along?

Satan removes his wraparounds, revealing dead flesh where eyes would be.

SATAN

I'm afraid you'll never see your daughter alive again. I apologize, but I released your forebear on a whim. I regret it still.

Satan turns and heads for the fire. Peter tries to stand.

PETER

Wait! How do I know you'll keep your word?

Satan steps into the flames and faces Peter.

SATAN
You don't - but you will be hearing
from me.

The fire goes out. Peter sinks back into his chair.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (DAWN)

Peter startles awake.

PETER (V.O.)
Wow. That was some Goddamned
nightmare!

He detects a sharp, sulfuric smell coming from the fireplace.
He sees the Chambertin BOTTLE and GLASSES, and bolts.

INT. ISABELLA'S ROOM - DAY

Peter bursts in, throws off the DUVET, and nudges Isabella.

PETER
Isabella? Baby?

No response. He shakes her harder.

PETER (CONT'D)
Isabella! Wake up! Please, God -
wake up for Daddy!

Still nothing. He finds respiration and a heartbeat, but
Isabella remains unconscious. Peter grabs and stabs at his .

PETER (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Hello? Nine-One-One?

DISPATCHER
(on phone, filtered)
This is 9-1-1. What is your
emergency?

PETER
(on phone)
It's my daughter - she's
unresponsive! Oh, God, sweetie;
come on!

DISPATCHER
 (on phone, filtered)
 Is she breathing, sir? Does she
 have a pulse?

PETER
 (on phone)
 Yes! Uh, I'm pretty sure...

DISPATCHER
 (on phone, filtered)
 What is your location, sir?

PETER
 (on phone)
 Uh, um, 666 - no, 636 - LeFebvre,
 second floor; it's an apartment...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ICU/ISABELLA'S ROOM - DAY

Isabella lies motionless in her BED, tethered to MONITORS and IVs. Her breaths are irregular and difficult. Peter bends over her, whispering and squeezing her hand.

HEATHER VAN DER BEEK, 36, Peter's ex, sweeps in, followed by her father, HOWELL, 62. She's grim. He's self-conscious and grabs a corner.

HEATHER
 What happened, Peter?

PETER
 I don't know; they don't know -
 yet. She was fine last night, but
 like... this, when I tried to wake
 her.

Heather pushes by him to Isabella's ear.

HEATHER
 Sweetheart, can you hear me? It's
 Mommy, darling. Don't worry; I'm
 here now.

She straightens and glares at him.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
 How was she, before we spoke last
 night?

PETER
She was fine, Heather.

HEATHER
Were you with her before she
crashed in your office?

PETER
Sure. I kept an eye on her in the
dining room...

HEATHER
But you weren't in the office when
she fell asleep, were you?

PETER
No...

HEATHER
I thought so! Peter, I swear to God
--

AABAN HOSSEINI, M.D., 43, knocks at the door jamb and
consults his CLIPBOARD.

DR. HOSSEINI
Mister and Miz - Penuche?

	PETER		HEATHER
Yes.		No.	

DR. HOSSEINI (CONT'D)
Hello. I'm Dr. Hosseini, the
neurologist on call. Mr. Penuche:
you were with Isabella when she was
last awake, yes?

PETER
Yes.

DR. HOSSEINI
Did she faint, or show any signs of
weakness or dizziness?

Heather starts to speak.

PETER
No! I'm sure of that.

DR. HOSSEINI
Any history or prior incidence of
dizziness, fainting spells, or
seizures?

HEATHER
Not that I'm aware of!

PETER
None - she's always been
healthy as a horse, Doc.

Dr. Hosseini writes and flips pages back and forth.

DR. HOSSEINI (CONT'D)
Well. I wish I had an answer for
you now, but I don't, and probably
won't until we've seen her scans
and reviewed her records.
Meantime, I'd like to get her on a
respirator to help her breathe
normally. If that's okay with you,
I'll send the hospitalist around
with the paperwork.

HEATHER
Well, I...

PETER
Of course. Absolutely.

Dr. Hosseini leaves. Heather stares at her daughter and
starts to crumble.

HEATHER
Oh, God. Peter --

She falls into his arms. He holds her tight until her sobs
taper off. She wipes her eyes and pushes him away, clutching
his shirt.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
If she doesn't come out of this, I
will never forgive you. Ever!

She releases him and waves her hands between them.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
I've got to go. I can't be here,
with you, right now. I'll call you
later. Let's go, Daddy.

She stalks out. Hat in hand, her father follows her.

PETER
It's okay, Iz. I'm still here.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - DAY

The staff, silent and uneasy, sits around toying with the
remnants of their regular, mid-Monday morning BRUNCH. Peter
trails in, rumpled and bleary-eyed.

PETER
 Sorry, everyone. Late night at the
 hospital.

Jennifer stands.

JENNIFER
 How is she?

PETER
 No change. Did you get a hold of
 Josh?

JENNIFER
 Yes. He'll see you in his office
 after lunch.

PETER
 Good. Good. Did you apologize for
 me?

Jennifer stifles a frown.

JENNIFER
 Hardly necessary, given the
 circumstances... but, yes, I did.

Peter pulls out the CHAIR next to Estrella and parks a leg on
 it.

PETER
 Okay, everyone. The show must go
 one, and we're going to soldier
 through this - together, as always.
 We have to. Nothing changes.

Estrella touches his arm.

ESTRELLA
 Why, Jefe? There's nothing in this
 world more important right now,
 than that little girl.

Heads nod and affirmations are uttered. Peter moves his arm
 away.

PETER
 Well, pulling the plug now won't
 help Izzy, that's for sure. We're
 way past that point, and we have to
 keep the doors open, too.

ESTRELLA
 But --

Peter slams his fist down on the TABLE in front of Estrella.

PETER
 Goddamn it, Estrella! I need your
 total support right now! And from
 the rest of you, too!

He heads for the kitchen door.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Jen, go ahead with menu planning
 and assignments, through Sunday.
 I'll circle back after I've met
 with Josh. I'll know more then.

Peter disappears. Looks and whispers filter around. Jennifer hands out copies of the week's draft MENU.

JENNIFER
 All right, everyone. The best we
 can do for Peter is what we're good
 at. "Situation: normal" until the
 network's schedule is finalized.

ESTRELLA
 I dunno, Jen - something ain't
 right.

Jennifer smirks.

JENNIFER
 You think?

ESTRELLA
 Beyond Iz, I mean. It stinks,
 somehow.

JENNIFER
 Let's just focus on what's in front
 of us, okay?

INT. JOSH'S OFFICE - DAY

Peter sits at the small CONFERENCE TABLE, watching Josh pace in front of his DESK.

JOSH
 Have you lost your mind?

PETER
 No, Josh. Just about 90 percent of
 a daughter, is all.

Josh stops, sits on the edge of his desk and rubs his face.

JOSH
Peter, I'm sorry; that was out of
line.

PETER
Apology accepted.

JOSH
I just can't process why you want
to make such a huge change now -
especially with Isabella...

PETER
Call it an instinct. We stick with
the "wounded warrior," feel-good
thing, or we throw A-List celebrity
apprentices into *Hell's Kitchen*.
Which makes better television?

Josh laughs.

JOSH
So, now you're Gordon Ramsey? Who
pays for the personality
transplant?

PETER
I didn't mean I have to be over the
top. You don't think having our
pop-culture elite in a kitchen,
with their hands dirty, is enough
of a draw?

Josh frowns and folds his arms.

JOSH
And, how do you propose we recruit
and sign a half-dozen different A-
Listers, let alone jam them into
our planned production schedule?

PETER
Don't exaggerate; it's only three;
I have it on good authority that
when we ask, they'll agree.

Josh gets in Peter's face.

JOSH
Are you working with someone else?

Peter tenses up.

PETER
 "Working" isn't the right word...

JOSH
 Because, if you are, it voids our agreement.

Peter raises his hands between them.

PETER
 That's not it, at all, Josh. Here it is: someone well-connected and persuasive... insists we go this way. Or else.

JOSH
 "Or else?" Or else what?

PETER
 Or else I'll lose everything that's personally important to me right now.

JOSH
 Sounds like extortion to me. Maybe we should get the cops involved -

PETER
 No! Won't help! You've got to trust me, Josh. I have no other options. Please... Help me.

Josh walks back behind his desk and collapses in his CHAIR.

JOSH
 Peter, you know I love and respect you. This deal I've put together is my first big score with the agency. What you're asking me to do here is put my career on the line. For you.

PETER
 I'm sorry about that, Josh. For you: a job. For me: a life. Nothing personal; if you can't help me, I'll have to find somebody else.

A beat, as they avoid each others' eyes. Josh runs his hands through his hair.

JOSH
 Well --

He gets up and motions toward the DOOR.

JOSH (CONT'D)
 - Peter, my man, I'll pitch it
 upstairs like you presented it.
 Understand: no guarantees.

Josh gives Peter a diffident "man-hug" and opens the door.

JOSH (CONT'D)
 Okay, big guy. I'll be in touch.

PETER
 Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STUDIO ENTRANCE - DAY

Peter emerges from his CAR, hands his KEYS to the VALET, and meets an antsy Josh at the entrance.

JOSH
 You ready, big guy?

PETER
 Yes.

EXT./INT. STUDIO ENTRANCE/LOBBY - DAY

We follow Josh and Peter through the entrance and LOBBY to the ELEVATORS. Josh pushes the BUTTON; they wait, avoiding eye contact.

INT ELEVATOR - DAY

Josh and Peter enter and face forward. The DOORS close. MUZAK plays.

JOSH
 You read the proposal, right?

PETER
 Yup.

JOSH
 Any questions?

PETER
 Nope.

Josh grimaces.

INT. STUDIO/RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Josh and Peter enter. KIMMIE, 28, the receptionist, acknowledges Josh from behind her DESK with the standard-issue grin, which he returns.

JOSH
Kimmie! How's my girl?

KIMMIE
Spectacular, Josh! You?

JOSH
Never better!

KIMMIE
Terrific!

Kimmie turns her attention to Peter.

KIMMIE
And you must be Peter!

PETER
Hello. Uh - yes.

JOSH
So. Is he --

KIMMIE
Mr. Michaels is ready for you - go right in!

JOSH
You're the best, girl!

PETER
Thanks.

INT STUDIO/OFFICE - DAY

OVID MICHAELS, 42, corporate-casual perfect, stands before a WINDOW, his back to Josh and Peter.

OVID
(on phone)
Look, Carmine - I really don't give a shit what else is happening tonight. I need that table at nine. Capice?

Ovid points Josh and Peter toward a corner SECTIONAL behind them. They sit.

OVID (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Really?... How's about we discuss moving the account, then... Ah, there's the Carmine I know...
(MORE)

OVID (CONT'D)

Right; see you then... You, too, il mio buon amico. Ciao bella.

Ovid taps off his BLUETOOTH and strides to Josh, hand out.

OVID (CONT'D)

Josh! Good to see ya, buddy! And this must be our man, Peter!

Peter starts to rise. Ovid wrings his hand and pushes him back down.

OVID (CONT'D)

Please! Be comfortable! I'm Ovid Michaels, "Food Fever's" producer for the network. How are you?

PETER

Just fine.

Ovid looks at Josh, who looks away. Ovid remains dominant by perching on a CREDENZA across from the sectional and folds his arms.

OVID

So, okay. Let's talk business!

Josh unsnaps his BRIEFCASE.

JOSH

Why don't we start by taking a look at our propo --

Ovid raises a hand.

OVID

Josh? I'm kinda jammed today, so why don't I cover the basics, and you can tell me if I'm on target. Good for you?

JOSH

Uh, sure.

Ovid focuses on Peter.

OVID

Right. So, Peter --

Ovid begins pacing.

OVID (CONT'D)

We're obligated to go to air with Episode One inside six weeks, and you want to change "Food Fever's" agreed-upon premise? That right?

PETER

Well, yes.

OVID

I'm not going to ask you why, because you're Josh's client and that's his problem, not mine. You want to dump the vets and go after established stars. Is that it?

PETER

Yes, but --

OVID

And you're going book them yourself?

PETER

Um, yeah. Pretty much.

OVID

Any idea who, yet?

PETER

I'll know when I'm told.

OVID

Really? Great!

Ovid looks and leans toward Josh.

OVID (CONT'D)

Josh, your boy is killing me over here!

Ovid marches to his DESK, snatches up a legal PAD and plants himself, feet apart, right in front of the sectional.

OVID (CONT'D)

Now, boys: I've scratched out a few notes on how this has to work if we're to go forward. May I?

Peter and Josh nod.

OVID (CONT'D)

Here it is. Six episodes, not thirteen - any pick-up option to depend on earned audience share alone. Shooting on location, week-to-week, like before, but we'll need two days each - Friday and Saturday. Now -

PETER

But - Estaminet will lose a day's business!

Josh is stricken. Ovid glares, mouth open, and leans down toward Peter.

OVID

Peter, Peter. Have you ever worked with these people, really? I have. Twice the nightmares, twice the time - at least. Perhaps your regulars can hit the ropes for autographs.

Ovid strikes a line from the pad, with flourish.

OVID (CONT'D)

Expenses. Double the production number, plus security, plus whatever fresh Hell they throw at us to appear. We'll front it and handle the logistics, as before, but you'll guarantee the excess - and you're on the hook in full for no-shows.

PETER

What - what about the veterans? Are they still in?

Ovid is thunderstruck. Josh looks like his dog just died.

OVID

Now you're worried about the vets? Pardon me, but you threw them under the bus! We can't control who you put a white coat on to get into a shot, but that's on you. No feature, no credits - unless the director thinks it's worth it and it plots out in post.

Ovid looks the pad over.

OVID (CONT'D)
 I think those are the high points.
 Any questions?

Heads down, Josh and Peter shake them. Ovid obliterates a few more lines and looks satisfied.

OVID (CONT'D)
 We'll leave your back end as negotiated, scaled to reflect increased cost and risk - so, don't spend heavily against it. Okay, Peter?

Peter nods. Ovid turns to Josh.

OVID (CONT'D)
 We good, Josh?

JOSH
 (sighs)
 Oh, yeah.

OVID
 Excellent! Well, gents, it's been a pleasure. I'll have Kimmie get the new paperwork out to you, Josh, and he'll discuss it with you, Peter. We'll expect a prompt response, of course. Now --

Ovid returns to his desk and waves toward the DOOR.

OVID (CONT'D)
 If you'll excuse me, I'm five minutes behind the next scheduled crisis.

As Josh and Peter trudge out, Ovid hits the INTERCOM button.

OVID (CONT'D)
 Kimmie? Get me Legal. Thanks.

INT. STUDIO/ELEVATOR - DAY

Peter and Josh face forward, stony-faced. MUZAK plays.

PETER
 Thanks for sticking up for me in there, counselor.

Josh flushes, mouth open. A beat.

JOSH
You're unbelievable! You know that?

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In the dark, Peter sits in a wing CHAIR in front of the lifeless FIREPLACE and swirls and sniffs at a CABERNET in a claret GLASS. Fetid FLAMES burst upward and Satan steps into the room.

SATAN
Ah, Peter. You received my message -
and prompt, too!

PETER
It's my honor, sir - my head as a
celestial message machine.

Satan breaks into a saw-blade smile.

SATAN
Such sarcasm, from one who has done
so well thus far. I'm flattered.
May I sit?

PETER
Oh, Absolutely. How could I
refuse?

Satan regards Peter suspiciously and takes the other chair.
Peter raises his glass.

PETER (CONT'D)
Should I get another glass, or do
you just want to drain the bottle?

SATAN
I couldn't possibly. Just enjoyed
a particularly satisfying soul. A
Middle Eastern arms dealer, with a
penchant for expensive brandy.

PETER
Really.

SATAN
Oh, yes. I dare say I'm perilously
close --

He calipers a long-nailed thumb and forefinger.

SATAN (CONT'D)
To "Deviling Under the Influence."

Satan roars with delight - alone.

PETER

So, how does this work, now? Do I need to give you a status report, or what?

SATAN

Tsk, tsk, Peter. I am all that I was at Creation. Just because I didn't get the top job doesn't mean I lack the skills. I know everything.

PETER

Everything?

SATAN

I should say, everything that interests me and sustains my attention - as is true of the Man Upstairs, had He the humility to admit it. Sadly, His scribes have written our history.

A best, while Satan ruminates.

SATAN (CONT'D)

At any rate, as I said, you've performed well. I'm pleased. Here --

Satan produces a parchment envelope, sealed with red wax, and props it against the wine BOTTLE on the TABLE between them.

SATAN (CONT'D)

I've arranged for our first client. Open this at your leisure, then notify your studio people. They'll find him quite willing, and agreeable - well, to appear, at least. The rest is between them to arrange.

PETER

"He" shows up here, to cook and shoot. Then what?

SATAN

You're responsible for the menus. Once he's fiddled, been filmed and fed, you bring him up here, to me.

PETER
That's it?

SATAN
Indeed. I've been at this since,
well, long before rocket science.
I'll make my decision on the spot.
Eat or eschew.

Peter spreads his arms to plead.

PETER
Wait. I'm to believe this, this
icon, who likely doesn't crap
without an entourage, will follow
me up here and leave, alone?

Satan rises and heads for the fireplace.

SATAN
Oh, ye of little faith. Focus
yourself on meeting my needs, and
the rest will take care of itself.

Satan steps into the rising FLAMES.

SATAN (CONT'D)
C'mon. It'll be fun.

The FIRE and demon disappear, leaving Peter in the dark.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/OFFICE - NIGHT

Jennifer appears at the DOOR with her usual sheaf of PAPERS
and knocks. At his DESK and on his , Peter motions her in.

PETER
(on phone)
...That's right, Josh -
"international 'Tween idol." His
people will be in touch tomorrow.
One down, two to go, buddy. Later.
(hangs up)
Hey, Jen. What's up? Have a seat.

JENNIFER
It's either stand or collapse. Did
you sign those papers Josh sent
over?

PETER

Yup. Here.

Peter finds and hands over an express PACKAGE.

JENNIFER

I'll courier these first thing tomorrow. Okay, let's see. Normal menu meeting in the morning, plus whatever we know about... Hollywood. Anything else you want to throw at me right now?

Peter gets up and makes for Jennifer.

PETER

Jen, I know this has been especially tough on you, and I don't say it often enough -

Jennifer stops him by bracing his shoulders.

JENNIFER

Save it for my next review, Casanova. There's someone here to see you.

PETER

At this hour? Who --

JENNIFER

Shall I leave her out front, or bring her in here?

PETER

"Her?" Oh, Jesus! It isn't Heather, is it?

JENNIFER

Heather? Ha! I'd have that bitch arrested for trespassing.

Peter eases, leers, and rubs his hands together.

PETER

In that case, bring her to me!

Jennifer laughs.

JENNIFER

Bastard!

PETER'S P.O.V. - JENNIFER & ALINE

Peter watches Jennifer leave the kitchen through the dining room DOOR and reappear with ALINE CAREME, 33, petite, auburn-haired, and open-faced attractive. They stop just inside the kitchen.

JENNIFER

...Yes, I'm certain Peter will remember. His office is right through there.

ALINE

Thank you very much.

As Aline walks toward Peter, he sees a tense, proprietary Jennifer watching Aline approach him, before she leaves through the dining room.

BACK TO SCENE

PETER

Hello. I'm Peter Penuche, proprietor in these parts.

Aline extends her hand.

ALINE

[Good evening] - I mean, good evening. Forgive me; it is so late --

PETER

You're French? How cool is that? Here, have a seat. May I take your coat?

Flustered and flushed, Aline sheds her COAT and sits. Peter arcs her coat over her head onto a RACK covered with kitchen CLOTHING and UTENSILS, causing her to duck. He flushes.

PETER (CONT'D)

Uh, sorry. What's your name, by the way?

Peter reclaims his CHAIR across the DESK and leans onto his elbows.

ALINE

I am Aline Carême, and I apologize for the hour --

PETER

Stop, already - shank of the
afternoon, for me! What can I do
you for, Mademoiselle?

ALINE

It's Madame, actually. I am
Cosette Carême's mother, and I am
long overdue to thank you for your
kindness to her - us.

Aline's anxiety hovers while Peter pauses to think.

PETER

Right - Cosette! Outside; week or
so ago. Is she okay?

ALINE

She is wonderful - the light of my
life.

PETER

Me, too! I mean, my daughter,
Isabella. Is... the light...

ALINE

How old?

PETER

She's seven.

Aline draws herself up and crosses her legs.

ALINE

Well, I would like to meet this
Isabella, so I can return the
kindness you showed my Cosette. Is
she here?

Peter's fingers clench.

PETER

No. She's - she's in the hospital
right now.

ALINE

Why? Is she ill?

PETER

She's... in a coma.

ALINE

[My God!] What happened?

Peter shrugs, helpless and uneasy.

PETER

We don't know... yet. Happened the night I found Cosette outside.

ALINE

Your wife must be beside herself.

PETER

She is - but we're divorced.

ALINE

Oh. I am alone, as well.

PEER

Uh-huh. If you don't mind my asking, what happened with Cosette? That afternoon, I mean.

ALINE

The sitter had to leave early and she couldn't reach me. I held over to help the next shift, and Cosette - she... Excuse me...

Aline fumbles in her PURSE for TISSUE and scrunches down to weep.

PETER

I'm sorry! I've upset you. Can I get you some water? I know we have Perrier.

ALINE

That's not it, Peter - not at all. No one has actually listened to me in a very long time. And, no, thank you.

Peter gets up, pulls his CHAIR around to Aline's and touches her for comfort. Aline sobs and mops at her eyes and nose.

ALINE (CONT'D)

It's just - Cosette and I have been hand-to-mouth for a great while. It's hard.

PETER

What do you do for work?

ALINE

I work part-time at a coffee bar
and do some pick-up translating
through an agency.

PETER

What about her father?

ALINE

Gone - vanished. He's American.
We met in Paris, and I followed him
on a temporary visa, which I've
overstayed. A child wasn't in his
plans. I'm not even certain our
marriage was legal - and I can't
risk finding out.

Peter grasps her hands and pats them as he thinks.

PETER

Can you cook?

ALINE

What?

PETER

Cook! Do you know anything about
cooking?

ALINE

Well - my [Grandmother] taught me
to bake when I was a little girl,
but --

Peter leaps up, tugging at her hands.

PETER

Come with me!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Peter leads a puzzled, reluctant Aline to the BAKER'S
STATION.

PETER

Okay. We're proud of our house-made
goods, and we'll be feeding hordes
for at least a month. Make me some
good French bread.

Aline folds her arms and scowls.

ALINE
Impossible!

PETER
Why not?

ALINE
The dough must rise; be folded;
rise again; be shaped; and slashed -
all before baking. Six to nine
hours. I have a daughter to go home
to.

Peter points at the storage CABINETS.

PETER
Fair enough. Just pull the
ingredients and tell me what you'd
do.

ALINE
I'll save you time. How many?

PETER
How many what?

ALINE
Batards! Baguettes!

PETER
Let's say: three.

ALINE
I will need half a Kilo of French
flour; 20 grams yeast; 12 grams
salt; 75 milliliters of water at 38
degrees Celsius, for the yeast; and
300 milliliters of water, at 23
degrees Celsius, for the flour.

Aline turns, opens, and peers into an OVEN.

ALINE (CONT'D)
You have a proper baker's oven, so
heat and moisture are not an issue.
So, we lack only the secret, French
ingredient.

PETER
Which is?

ALINE
Time, in which to be patient. Slow
mix. Slow knead. Slow rise. Slow
shape.

Peter leans against the COUNTER.

PETER
I'm impressed.

Aline smiles.

ALINE
I was lucky.

PETER
How so?

ALINE
You asked the right question. I
make bread for Cosette and me twice
a week - under much more
challenging conditions.

Peter strokes his chin and points at her.

PETER
When can you start?

Aline's eyes widen and her jaw slackens.

ALINE
What?!

PETER
Gerard's going to need somebody.
He's a gruff old bear, but worth
the study - and it'll be a nice
break for him to have another
Francophone at his elbow. Pay's
not great; probably beats what
you're netting now, though. And,
there are benefits.

Aline labors to keep her balance.

PETER (CONT'D)
Basic Medical. Profit-sharing. A
loud, frantic laboratory, stocked
with baby-sitters. And, if - when -
Izzy gets better, maybe a friend
for Cosette.

On reflex, Aline tears up and hangs a brisk hug on Peter.

ALINE

[Yes!] I mean, yes!

Peter can't find a place on her for his own arms. Flustered, they separate.

PETER

Hey - no harassing the boss! Well, not until you've started, anyway. Can you come in tomorrow?

Aline touches him gently on the arm.

ALINE

[Absolutely.] Certainly.

PETER

Just ask for Jennifer; she'll get you going. Come - let's get your coat, and I'll drop you on the way to the hospital.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. - ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/OFFICE - DAY

Jennifer appears in the doorway. Peter gathers his NOTES and starts to stand.

PETER

Everybody here?

JENNIFER

Hang on a minute.

She closes the door and isn't pleased.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

So - we have a new hire?

PETER

Uh-huh. Aline Carême. Did you get her set up?

JENNIFER

Well, yes -

PETER

Jen. What's wrong?

Jennifer pauses, tapping a STYLUS on her TABLET.

JENNIFER
Is her little girl going to be here
full-time, too?

PETER
Only until she can make other
arrangements. What's the big deal?
We talked about bringing baking
help aboard, didn't we?

Jennifer stiffens.

JENNIFER
You've never done this before,
Peter.

PETER
Done what?

JENNIFER
Made a non-menu decision without
consulting me first.

PETER
Sorry. Felt right at the time -
didn't think you'd mind.

JENNIFER
I'm sorry, too, Peter. I don't
feel right running interference for
you on this one - or the show
changes, either. Since I wasn't
involved, you need to own them,
yourself.

Peter moves from shocked to self-conscious.

PETER
I guess that's fair. Could you at
least introduce her and Cosette to
Gerard, and seat them together?

JENNIFER
If that's what you want.

PETER
It is.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Monday brunch is quieter than usual. Frost hangs in the air
between Peter and Jennifer.

Aline and Cosette, eating and chatting with baker GERARD, provoke stares and whispers. Peter bangs his table KNIFE on his water GLASS.

PETER

Okay, everyone. I have two announcements. First, please welcome into the Estaminet family Aline Carême and her daughter, Cosette.

They stand and Peter applauds. A polite smattering follows.

PETER (CONT'D)

Aline will be helping Gerard, and Cosette might be under our feet for a day or two - but you've all put up with that before.

FRED NEWMAN, 42, the head WAITER, raises a hand.

FRED

How is our Izzy, Boss?

PETER

The same, Fred. Thanks for asking.

A beat. Peter clears his throat.

PETER (CONT'D)

Next, it looks like our first shoot for *Food Fever* will be a week from Friday. There's been a, a change in the show's theme. It's gone from featuring wounded warriors to... celebrities.

Surprise and murmurs. Everyone looks at Estrella, who's on her feet.

ESTRELLA

W-T-F, Jefe?

Peter looks around her, raising his hands.

PETER

All I'll say further right now is that I don't like it any more than you do, but it was unavoidable. Okay?

Peter takes in the restiveness as Estrella sits.

PETER (CONT'D)
Jen will cover the rest of the week
and answer your questions.

Jennifer rises to continue. Peter goes to Estrella; she glares.

PETER (CONT'D)
Got a minute, Estrella?

They depart through the kitchen door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Just inside the DOOR, Peter takes Estrella by the shoulders.

PETER
Look, Superstar, I know this was
your baby, and I'm very, very
sorry.

ESTRELLA
What happened?

PETER
I can't go into any detail - legal
reasons. A change in
circumstances, and the deal gets
redone. For what it's worth, I
still have some room to get some
vets on the show.

ESTRELLA
"On the show" - but not "the show."

PETER
I hate it, too, but I need your
support and leadership in the
kitchen on this. Can I count on
that?

Estrella breaks loose.

ESTRELLA
I'll have to think about that,
Jefe.

She goes back into the dining room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - DAY

Josh, Peter, and the staff are glued to the front WINDOWS, amazed.

PETER
Is the studio responsible for all
this?

JOSH
No way - he is.

PETER
Yikes.

JOSH
Gotta hand it to you, Pete. What a
coup, getting the kid on such short
notice. I'm already taking credit
for it. Promise me you'll tell me
someday how you did it.

PETER
Someday...

EXT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE - DAY

Insanity reigns outside the front entrance. 'Tween and teen
pop FANS jostle with event SECURITY and MEDIA for position
behind the red CARPET'S ROPES.

TIFANI TART
(into camera)
As you can see, Amber, fans have
descended in droves to see Jackie
Fever conquer French cuisine as the
first headliner in Peter Penuche's
new ACX series, "Food Fever," here
at the aptly-named "Estaminet
Fièvre," or "Cafe Fever." Any
moment now --

DANCE-PARTY LOOPS erupt from SPEAKERS. A yellow FERRARI
roars up, tracked by several black SUVs, sending most of a
group of passing BICYCLISTS sprawling in the street. Out
hops JACKIE FEVER, 20, international pop sensation, in
riotous, vanilla hip-hop attire. Several mixed-race POSSE
members and black-clad BODYGUARDS follow. Jackie and his
"boyz" clown up the carpet inside the new security cordon.

TIFANI TART (CONT'D)
Jackie? Jackie!

Jackie spins over.

TIFANI TART (CONT'D)
Jackie, Tifani Tart, ETX News.

Jackie scans her and nods at BODYGUARD #1.

JACKIE
Yo! Number.

Bodyguard #1 nods back. TIFANI blinks.

TIFANI TART
Jackie! Ready to add "French chef"
to your many conquests?

JACKIE
It's all for my fans, Tifani. I
sold out two shows in Paris and I
love their food. If Julia Child
were alive, she'd be "Feverish!"

Jackie flashes two extended "Victory" signs; the fans roar. He mugs into the LENS and dances away. A screaming FAN leans in a little too close and snags Jackie's jacket. She gets TASERED. She throws up on Tifani and goes down. Tifani stifles a retch or two.

TIFANI TART
Back to you, Amber...

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - DAY

Jackie and ENTOURAGE jog through the entrance. EVENT SECURITY STAFF count them and close the doors on a crush of FANS.

SECURITY GUARD
Sorry, folks - closed set. Tune in
to ACX Sunday night.

Peter and his staff are lined up, surrounded by VIDEO EQUIPMENT and ACX STAFF and TECHNICIANS. Banks of LIGHTS snap on. Peter approaches Jackie, hand out.

PETER
Welcome to Estaminet Fièvre,
Jackie. It's a real --

Jackie snaps his fingers. A MINION rushes forward with a small cage and opens it. A MONKEY darts out and leaps to Jackie's shoulder.

JACKIE
 (coos)
 This is "Buddy."

PETER
 Uh - this is a restaurant, Jackie.
 We can't have an animal -

DIRECTOR
 Cut!

Jackie glowers.

JACKIE
 What?!

PETER
 Health regulations.

MINION
 What about dogs for the blind?

PETER
 Well, that's a little different.

JACKIE
 Fuck it - Buddy is my seeing-eye
 monkey. He stays, or I walk!

The food and TV crews grow restive.

PETER
 Okay. How about this? Buddy can
 chill upstairs, in my apartment.
 It's comfortable, and I'll send
 someone to keep him company.

A beat; Jackie mulls the offer. He snaps his fingers and the
 minion gathers up Buddy, his CAGE, and LUGGAGE. Peter looks
 at Jennifer. Her eyes narrow.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Uh, Gregor? Would you mind?

Dishwasher GREGOR PARSKY, 55, shows shock and resignation. He
 advances.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Please take, uh --

MINION
 Trevor.

PETER

Would you like a preview of what we're going to prepare together?

JACKIE

Can't wait, Peter!

PETER

Because you spend so much time on the road, we thought we'd tempt you with traditional French fare available to casual countryside tourists.

JACKIE

Sounds awesome. What's the first course?

PETER

To liven up those taste buds: Cornichone pickles - tiny gherkins and pearl onions, canned a month ago just for you!

JACKIE

I love pickles!

PETER

For the main course, how about Pizza aux Anchois and Olives Noires - pizza with anchovies and black olives?

JACKIE

French pizza? Who knew? Hey, everybody: pizza!

Jackie's bunch cheers and applauds. The Estaminet crew responds politely.

PETER

And, for those who may not dig pizza, Sandwiches Jambon Crudites - ham and cheese sandwiches, with the works.

A few hoots from Jackie's bunch.

JACKIE

Cool.

PETER

And, for dessert, Tarte aux Pommes - apple and custard tart.

JACKIE
Sweet and nutritious, right?

PETER
Absolutely!

JACKIE
Well - let's get to work, shall we?

Cheers all around.

DIRECTOR
And - Cut!

PETER
That was fun, Jackie. Shall we
cover work stations and assignments
now?

Jackie throws Peter a blank look as he pulls out his .

JACKIE
How about you do your thing, and we
cut in establishing shots with our
guys at the end? We can do that,
can't we, Alan?

DIRECTOR
Yeah, Jackie; we can do that.

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS - REALITY VS. "REALITY TV"

- A) Off-camera: Estaminet staff hard at work in kitchen. Jackie's posse drifting through; in the way; flirting; texting; bored.
- B) On-camera: Jackie's crew kitchen-dressed and cooperating in food preparation - smiling, chatting. Smiles on Estaminet staff a little forced.
- C) Off-camera: Estaminet staff busy preparing dining room. Jackie's bunch lying around, absorbed in own activities.
- D) On-camera: Jackie's entourage and Estaminet staff putting final touches on dining room together.
- E) Off-camera: Peter busy in kitchen, alone and with his staff at work in kitchen. Jackie and company aren't seen.
- F) On-camera; In matching coat and toque, animated Jackie interacts with Peter and other kitchen staff.

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Their people surround Peter and Jackie in ranks, arms around one another and focused on a video CAMERA. On cue, they all raise an index finger and

ASSEMBLED CAST
(shouting)
"Food Fever!"

DIRECTOR
That's a wrap. A fine day's work,
everyone! Thanks.

The video crew breaks down and packs. Everyone returns to their cliques. Peter takes Jackie aside.

PETER
Had a lot of fun, today, Jackie.
Thanks again.

JACKIE
Whatever.

PETER
Listen. I have a favor to ask.
Someone - a fan - wants to meet
with you later, at my place
upstairs. Alone. Is that cool?

Jackie starts to react; a strange expression passes over his face.

JACKIE
Sure. I'll be outside, in my coach.
Just come get me.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter leads an entranced Jackie up the stairs to the landing. They turn the corner. Peter slips and staggers after putting his foot down. He examines the sole of his shoe.

PETER (V.O.)
Monkey shit. Perfect!

Jackie remains oblivious.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In the dark, FLAMES leap up in the FIREPLACE, silhouetting Satan. In slow, measured dignity, he walks to Peter and takes Jackie's hand.

SATAN

Ah, Mr. Fever - we meet at last.

(turns)

I'll take it from here, Peter.

PETER'S P.O.V. - JACKIE MEETS SATAN

Satan leads Jackie to a WING CHAIR and seats him. He produces his red FOLIO and a PEN. They chat. Jackie takes the pen and signs a PAGE in the folio. Satan retrieves the folio, bows, and pockets it. He spreads his arm and transforms into an outsized, glowing DEMON, complete with horns, wings, hooves, and tail. No movement or sound from Jackie. The demon reaches behind Jackie's head, extracts a pulsating, multi-hued AURA, and examines it briefly before jamming it into his maw. He chews, swallows, and explodes into a deafening ROAR. FIREWORKS engulf the room and flame out.

BACK TO SCENE

Jackie emerges from the dark, wearing a vacant smile.

JACKIE

Awesome. I'll show myself out.

He walks by Peter and turns toward the stairs, as if compelled.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ETX STUDIO - DAY

AMBER AVALA, 31 and physically perfect, leans into the TELEPROMPTER. On the studio MONITOR behind her rolls a composite of pre-interviews, takes, and B-Roll from "Food Fever's" first episode.

AMBER

Well, Chef extraordinaire Peter Penuche whipped up a tasty little first impression last night by luring teen heartthrob Jackie Fever into his kitchen to learn the basics of Continental cuisine.

TV SCREEN

Jackie responds to an interview question.

JACKIE
 (on TV, filtered)
 Yeah, it was a hoot - Peter and his
 guys couldn't have been nicer, and
 I learned a lot.
 (winks)
 What can I say? It was a soulful
 experience.

BACK TO SCENE

Amber continues to read.

AMBER
 The first episode of ACX's "Food
 Fever" pulled five-point-two
 million viewers last night, putting
 it just inside the week's Top
 Twenty. That's within shouting
 distance of the more-established
 "MasterChef" and "Hell's Kitchen."
 We're all waiting to learn who will
 wear the sidekick toque in next
 Sunday's second episode. Gulstan?"

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/OFFICE - DAY

Peter sits at his DESK. Aline knocks at the DOOR.

ALINE
 You asked to see me?

PETER
 That I did. Close the door and have
 a seat.

Aline complies and settles, uneasy. Peter folds his hands.

PETER (CONT'D)
 I've been watching you.

ALINE
 Have - have I done something wrong?

PETER
 Wrong? Not exactly. Despite all
 the chaos, you've fit in nicely.
 (MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)
Gerard's never been happier. He'd never admit it, but I can.

Aline exhales, relieved.

PETER (CONT'D)
We've a light night tonight. You all caught up?

ALINE
Yes. I suppose.

PETER
Dinner plans?

ALINE
Just Cosette and me, at home.

PETER
I'd like to cook for you both.

Aline hesitates and fiddles with her hair.

ALINE
What happens if I say "no?"

PETER
The scallops get thrown out. Look, I worked hard to scare you into being more agreeable. Don't waste it. Seven give you enough time?

ALINE
I suppose...

Peter glowers in mock annoyance.

ALINE (CONT'D)
[Certainly]. Sure.

PETER
Cool. Use the back entrance, okay?

Aline nods.

ALINE
Anything else?

PETER
Dismissed.

From the doorway, we see a discreet smile on Aline as she exits, while Peter turns to not quite hide a fist pump.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/BACK ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Aline, BAG and Cosette in hand, pushes the INTERCOM button.

PETER
(over intercom, filtered)
You're tardy.

ALINE
I --

PETER
(over intercom, filtered)
Psych! C'mon up.

Peter buzzes them in.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT

At the RANGE, Peter hears a rustle and turns. Aline and Cosette are in the doorway, overdressed.

PETER
Hey - just in time. The compote and polenta are done, and I'm just about to throw in the scallops. What'd you bring me?

Aline looks around as she empties her BAG on the COUNTER.

ALINE
Nicely laid out! I brought some asparagus from the market. I would like to prepare les Soldats for you as a starter - Cosette loves them. Do you have eggs and egg cups?

PETER
Perfect! I've got some eggs eligible for Medicare. Shed your duds and grab a saucepan. What else is in there?

ALINE
A 2005 Domaine André Neveu Sancerre, since I brought asparagus - and homemade bread.

PETER
 And here, I thought I was in
 charge. My Mas Carlot Rosé flees,
 in shame.

Aline puts on an APRON and they busy themselves, in cheerful
 sync. Minutes pass, and Peter looks around.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Where's Cosette?

Aline freezes. Peter grabs his head in mock horror.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Oh, no - not again!

ALINE
 Cosette!

She makes for the doorway. Cosette appears, cradling a
 stuffed BEAR larger than she.

COSETTE
 Look, Mama! A bear - for *moi*!

ALINE
 Cosette! That is not for you! You
 --

Peter kneels before Cosette.

PETER
 His name is "Buster," Cosette. He
 belongs to my Isabella. She's
 sick, and she would love it if you
 would keep him company until she
 feels better, and can come home.
 Would you like that?

COSETTE
 Oh, yes!

ALINE
 Cosette?

COSETTE
 Merci - thank you!

Cosette throws her arms around Peter's neck, who embraces her
 and Buster. Aline beams.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peter and Aline are at TABLE, DINNER wrecked and CANDLES sputtering, absorbed in WINE and conversation. Between them, a nodding Cosette leans on Buster, in the CHAIR next to her.

PETER

That Tropéziennne was magnificent.
Gerard's, or yours?

ALINE

It was - a collaboration.

PETER

French diplomacy - I love it! Uh-
oh. Looks like someone's checked
out.

They look at Cosette, fast asleep.

PETER (CONT'D)

You can put her down in Izzy's bed.
Pajamas are in the top drawer of
the dresser. I'll put on some
music. How does Charles Aznavour
sound?

ALINE

Lovely.

PETER

Coffee, or finish the wine?

ALINE

Wine.

Aline picks up her daughter and heads for the hallway.

PETER

Oh - don't forget Buster.

ALINE

I'll make another trip.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Aline returns, a RECORDING of CHARLES AZNAVOUR warbling
"SHE." Peter greets her with her wine GLASS.

PETER

A toast?

She takes her glass and elevates it.

PETER (CONT'D)
To whatever happens next.

ALINE
Tonight?

PETER
And after all this madness ends.

ALINE
[To your health!]

They clink, drink, and Peter sweeps her into his arms.

PETER
[A dance, Madam?]

ALINE
[It will be my pleasure, Sir.]

Peter guides Aline into a showy box-step which quickly becomes more intimate.

PETER
My feet grow restless.

They twirl toward the hallway.

INT. LIVING ROOM/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Their dance continues. Peter dips Aline just beyond Isabella's bedroom DOOR. WINE spills, she shrieks, and he shushes her. They recover and move toward Peter's BEDROOM.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Aline enters, clad in Peter's T-SHIRT, sipping from a BOTTLE of WATER. She strolls along the walls, pulling and admiring occasional VOLUMES from overstuffed SHELVES. Peter enters, fully-clothed, tiptoes to her and embraces her from behind. She turns and kisses him hard.

ALINE
Oh, Peter - Oh! Are you going out?

PETER
I need to slip over and see Izzy; I missed last night.

ALINE

Do you want me to come with you?

PETER

No. You stay here - and make sure Cosette stays put.

Aline laughs, steps away, and raises her arms.

ALINE

Are all these yours?

PETER

No. Most of them are overdue from the library.

Aline punches his shoulder playfully.

PETER (CONT'D)

Sorry. Yes. I'm the latest in a long line of pack rats. Most of 'em are first editions. Lot of leather, dust, and mold in this room.

Aline's eyes shine.

ALINE

[Splendid!]

PETER

Wait - I've got one right in your ZIP Code.

Peter retrieves and hands her a decrepit, leather-bound BOOK with "Mon Journal" in gold leaf on the spine. She turns it over and scans its pages filled with neat, archaic script.

ALINE

A diary? [In French?]

PETER

Yep. Look there: "Pierre Bon-Bon, 1850." My [Grandfather], six generations removed.

ALINE

[Really?] What do you know of him?

PETER

Not much; my Franglais leaves a lot to be desired. Chef; restaurateur; lover of the grape.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)
I learned recently he might have
been a deep thinker.

Aline pores over the first page or two, muttering. Her finger stops.

ALINE
[Incredible!] He lived in Rouen!

PETER
Yeah. So?

ALINE
Rouen - it is my home!

PETER
Huh. Ain't that a kick in the
derrière. Anyway - enjoy, and stay
as long as you like. I wouldn't
mind knowing more about the old
boy; might be some killer recipes
in there. I'll see you at brunch
downstairs tomorrow.

They kiss and embrace. Peter leaves, and Aline curls up with
the diary in a wing CHAIR.

ALINE (V.O.)
Cul-de-sac... Cafe LeFebvre...
Philosophy... Hmm...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY - CLOSEUP - PETER'S
HAND

Retrieves another parchment, wax-sealed ENVELOPE from the end
TABLE and elevates it out of the shot. Sounds of it being
OPENED.

PETER (V.O.)
Wow. Can't wait to see what Josh
does with this one.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE - DAY

Several rented ESCALADES with fancy RIMS roll up to the front
entrance, where a respectable delegation of SPORTS AND
ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA awaits.

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - DAY

LIGHTS snap on and the video CREW records DUWAYNE JACKSON, 29, a/k/a "Doctor Dee-Stroy" and swingman for the NBA's San Francisco Seals, and his POSSE ducking through the front door and crossing toward Peter and his assembled STAFF. Peter steps forward, hand out.

PETER
Doctor Dee-Stroy! Bonjour --

Smallish posse member TEE-DUB frowns.

TEE-DUB
"Bone" what?

PETER
Welcome to Estaminet Fièvre. It's
an honor to have you as our guests.

DuWayne and his boys strike well-rehearsed poses.

DUWAYNE
(into camera)
That's right! "Ebony Love from
Above" is in the house!

DuWayne seizes Peter's hand; they mug into the CAMERA.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
And... cut!

DuWayne relaxes.

DUWAYNE
Call me DuWayne - when we're, you
know --

PETER
Gotcha. Introduce you around?

DUWAYNE
Sure.

PETER
(to Director)
Alan, can we get this informally,
before we do menu?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Absolutely. And - we're rolling...

The lights come up and the crews intermingle. BODYGUARD #2 approaches Estrella.

BODYGUARD #2

Hello. I'm Albert. You're the vet,
right?

ESTRELLA

At the moment, yeah - I'm it.

BODYGUARD #2

What unit?

ESTRELLA

First Transportation Support
Battalion, First Marine Logistics.
You?

BODYGUARD #2

Second Recon Battalion, Second
Marines. Where'd you take it?

ESTRELLA

Iraq - Asad. Where were you?

BODYGUARD #2

Anbar Province. Sixty percent
casualties. I guess your and I were
lucky, huh?

Estrella takes in the scene.

ESTRELLA

Yes, we are.

BODYGUARD #2

Look. Any of these mooks even look
at you wrong, you let me know,
okay?

ESTRELLA

(smiles)

Semper Fi.

BODYGUARD #2

Semper Fi.

They bump fists.

The bonhomie winds down. Peter and DuWayne conclude and turn
toward the director.

PETER

Alan, we can go straight to menu,
if you want.

DIRECTOR

Good idea. Seats, everyone - and we're still rolling.

Estaminet's staff show the Posse to their chairs, where they resume their gangsta poses. Peter and DuWayne sit at center stage.

PETER

Salut, once again, Du - uh, Doctor Dee-Stroy. Great to have you and your guests here at Estaminet Fièvre. May I call you Dee-Dee-Ess?

DUWAYNE

Got to respect the Doctor, and the Doctor ain't no dentist, yo - even though the Doctor has collected a tooth or two. Doctor Dee-Ess, to y'all.

PETER

Will do, Doctor Dee-Ess. Shall we talk about what's cookin' today?

DuWayne nods, gravely.

PETER (CONT'D)

Well, Doctor, as I get it you perfected your skills on the streets as a young man --

DUWAYNE

True dat, Pete. What a Doctor need with college, anyway?

PETER

And, in your profession you cover, what, seven miles a night?

DUWAYNE

Don't forget the beatin' that go wit' it.

PETER

Exactly. So what we're throwing at you tonight is food from the streets of France, carb-heavy, with starch and sugars, and a good shot of protein and greens for balance. How's that sound?

DUWAYNE

The Doctor and his boys got to eat
good, to bring the Ebony Love from
Above!

Boisterous affirmations from DuWayne's posse.

PETER

We'll tip off with Salade aux
Lardons - light bacon salad with
poached egg.

POSSE #1 (O.S.)

Egg and bacon? Sound like
breakfast, to me.

DuWayne turns and glares.

DIRECTOR

We're rolling, Doctor!

DuWayne recovers and leans in.

PETER

The heart of our game is Poulet
Frites: chicken with french fries --

Tee-Dub jumps up.

TEE-DUB

Chicken? What, fried chicken?!
That's racist!

DuWayne face-palms.

POSSE #1 (O.S.)

Might just have gone to K-F-C.

DIRECTOR

Cut!

On his feet, DuWayne stares Tee-Dub down.

DUWAYNE

Step back, Tee-Dub!
(to room)
Sorry, everybody. He's new.

DIRECTOR

Okay. Places, everyone. Pick it
up again, Peter.

PETER

The heart of our game is Poulet
Frites: roast chicken with the real
deal, French fries. Alongside, a
little fruit: Tomates Provençales,
oven-baked tomatoes.

DUWAYNE

The Doctor likin' it so far, Pete.

PETER

And, down the stretch, Beignets au
Sirop de Rhubarbe aux Fraises --

POSSE #1 (O.S.)

Say what?

TEE-DUB

It's them cool little donuts with
no holes, dumb-ass. Like we get
when we playin' New Orleans.

PETER

Exactly right. With strawberry
rhubarb syrup.

DUWAYNE

Now the Doctor's hungry! Let's get
busy, y'all!

The posse comes to its feet with whoops and hollers.

DIRECTOR

And - Cut!

DuWayne stands and cuts loose a loud whistle. The room
quiets.

DUWAYNE

Listen up, everyone. Peter and his
folks have given us an opportunity
here, so let's make the most of it.
Behave, listen, and learn - and
don't forget Rule Number One. What
is it?

Pull back to see all Posse members.

ALL POSSE

(in unison)

No knuckleheads.

DuWayne cups his ear.

DUWAYNE
I can't hear you!

ALL POSSE
(in unison)
No knuckleheads!

DUWAYNE
That's what I thought. Peter's
gonna tell us what to do now.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY (LATER)

SOFIA, the shortest waiter, stands in a posse forest with an hors d'oeuvres TRAY, her eyes at their BELT level. She gets no attention until she holds the tray as high over her head as she can, shakes it, and yells. Hands from above quickly clean her out.

INT. KITCHEN/LINE - DAY - CLOSE SHOT - ESTRELLA

Smiles and works away. PULL BACK to see Bodyguard #2 bent over slightly with Tee-Dub in a headlock.

BODYGUARD #2
(quietly)
Or, we can take this to the Doctor.
We cool?

TEE-DUB
(muffled)
Yeah. We cool.

Bodyguard #2 releases Tee-Dub and straightens his clothes, who smooths his hair and splits. They watch him leave.

INT. KITCHEN/LINE - DAY (LATER)

VIDUR, a line cook, is demonstrating how to truss CHICKENS for the ROTISSERIE to a posse GROUP in white TUNICS, explaining as he goes. They're all poised with their SMART PHONES.

VIDUR
Um. How about you actually try it before you Tweet it? You know, like, make one, then Twitter Pic it?

They eye him and each other suspiciously. Slowly they pocket their phones.

VIDUR (CONT'D)
 Good. Now glove up, everybody.

INT. KITCHEN/BAKER'S STATION - NIGHT

Aline stirs the SYRUP and chats with POSSE #2 and POSSE #3 as Gerard prepares to transfer BEIGNETS from the FRYER to a PLATE. Into the picture flails POSSE #4, a BASKETBALL spinning off his finger. He crashes into Gerard, sending grease and goods flying, and falls in front of him. Pointing down, Gerard looks at POSSE #1 and POSSE #2.

GERARD
 "Knucklehead?"

They shake their heads.

POSSE #2
 Knucklehead.

POSSE #3
Damned knucklehead!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Peter tilts back in his CHAIR, champagne GLASS in hand. DuWayne ducks in with his.

PETER
 They about done out there?

DUWAYNE
 Uh-huh. Josh and my guy are mopping up with the last of them.

DuWayne leans across the desk, glass extended.

DUWAYNE (CONT'D)
 I just wanted to say "Thank you," again. It was as much fun as I've had in a while.

Peter reciprocates.

PETER
 I have to say, DuWayne, you're not what I expected.

DUWAYNE
 How so?

PETER
 Much... more.

DuWayne laughs.

DUWAYNE
 What can I say? It's a state of
 perpetual adolescence and, like an
 adolescent, I have to live down to
 their expectations.

They drink.

DUWAYNE (CONT'D)
 Peter. May I ask you something?

PETER
 Sure.

DUWAYNE
 Do you love it?

PETER
 You mean what we just did, or what
 I really do?

DuWayne smirks.

PETER (CONT'D)
 I love to cook, to create. Always
 have. In the kitchen, I can soar.
 Makes the rest tolerable.

DUWAYNE
 My Nana dragged me around her
 kitchen while Moms was working,
 when I was tiny --

Peter guffaws and catches himself.

DUWAYNE (CONT'D)
 What's funny?

PETER
 Sorry. I'm having trouble with you
 and "tiny."

DUWAYNE
 Anyway, strong memories. Working
 together, close. On the same side.
 Like you and your team.

Peter rocks forward, mouth open.

PETER
You don't find that, in what you
do?

DUWAYNE
Please. Too many agendas. Too
much skin. Too much at stake.

PETER
Man. That's sad.

DuWayne studies his fingernails.

DUWAYNE
So. Would you consider taking on a
crippled-up genetic freak with a
pigmentation problem?

PETER
DuWayne! How - I don't - When?

DUWAYNE
Could be opening day, in two
months, or ten years from now.

Peter shakes his finger at DuWayne.

PETER
I get it. You're fucking with me,
aren't you?

DuWayne exhales, by measure.

DUWAYNE
Probably.

PETER
Well, you've got my number and I'll
be around. In other news: ready to
go up?

DUWAYNE
Might as well. Too late to party;
too early to sleep.

They drain their glasses and head for the door.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter and DuWayne hit the top of the stairs. Peter stops.

PETER

Your... appointment is right around
the corner. I'll wait here, if you
don't mind.

DUWAYNE

No worries, Man. I'll just be a
minute.

PETER'S P.O.V. - THE ENCOUNTER FROM THE HALLWAY

Explosions of reflected LIGHT and SHADOWS tell the tale.
Same leaping FLAMES; same multi-hued AURA; same deafening
ROAR and FIREWORKS. Silence. Darkness.

BACK TO SCENE

DuWayne emerges, strangely calm.

PETER

You all right? How'd it go?

DUWAYNE

Could've been worse.

PETER

I don't know if I buy that...

DUWAYNE

That's because you've never
negotiated with an owner. Good
night, Peter.

Peter yields and watches him descend.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ETX STUDIO - DAY

Amber Avala takes her cue. IMAGES of Peter, his crew, and
lithe, dark warriors in starched white cooking, eating, and
carousing fill the studio MONITOR behind her.

AMBER

Rangemeister Peter Penuche scored again this week, showing NBA superstar DuWayne "Doctor Dee-Stroy" Jackson and his entourage a good time on his home court, the highly-rated French eatery Estaminet Fièvre. By all accounts, it was a slam-dunk.

TV SCREEN

DuWayne and his mob appear. Tifani Tart strains to get his response.

DUWAYNE

(on TV, filtered)

Yeah, Tif - Pete and his crew showed the Doctor and his boys a real good time. Good eats - fire-roasted. Them little French donuts. Sweet. The whole deal.

BACK TO SCENE

Amber continues to read.

AMBER

The second outing of ACX's "Food Fever" pulled a shade over six million viewers last night by attracting a share of those elusive eighteen-to-twenty-nine year-old males. That was just enough to put "Food Fever" ahead of its culinary competitors. To find out which good guy wears the white hat next, we'll have to tune in, in a week. Gulstan?"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ICU/ISABELLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rumpled and unshaven, Peter sleeps, draped across Isabella's BED. A NURSE enters. She performs her routine tasks and shakes Peter.

NURSE

Mr. Penuche? You okay?

PETER

Huh? What? Oh - hi, Gloria. I'm fine.

NURSE

Can I get you anything?

PETER

No, thanks; I'm good. Got my water.

NURSE

Wouldn't you be more comfortable in a rollaway? I can arrange for one. I'm concerned you might accidentally pull a lead or an IV.

PETER

Oh. Okay. No, don't bother. I'll use the chair.

Peter rolls off and moves the CHAIR next to the bed. Nurse Gloria leaves. Peter stands for a moment, caressing Isabella's face, then sits. He buries his face in his hands and weeps.

PETER (CONT'D)

Oh, my sweet, sweet girl. This is all my fault. I wish I could stop it all right now, but he gave me no choice. I have to do everything he says, or you'll die.

Peter takes a deep breath.

PETER (CONT'D)

We're almost there, my angel. We'll make it and you'll be fine, I promise - because I love and need you more than anyone or anything in this world.

INT. HOSPITAL ICU/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nurse Gloria hears everything. Concerned, she dashes off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/OFFICE

Animated, Peter ends a call.

PETER

Yikes.

He speed-dials Josh.

PETER (CONT'D)

(on phone)

Josh? Hey. "And the winner is..."
 Uh-huh; just confirmed with them.
 You'll never guess... Don't be
 such a baby. Okay. Rhymes with
 "trippy..." That's right, the
 whole damned family!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

A large double axle TRUCK pulls up. The DRIVER, with CLIPBOARD, leaps out and circles to the curb. He stops at the passenger side.

DRIVER

Drop the gate and get started.
 I'll be right back.

The TEAMSTER gets out and the Driver hits the door.

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - DAY

Jennifer is occupied with the Driver when Peter comes through the kitchen DOOR. The front DOOR is open and the Teamster is halfway in with a mobile clothing RACK.

DRIVER

Yeah, buddy - I got three racks of
 clothes and four trunks of shoes
 and stuff. Sign here.

PETER

What? From whom?

DRIVER

The Tarkanian girls.

PETER

For a twelve-hour shoot?

DRIVER

I don't make 'em up, pal; I just
 move 'em around. Take 'em, don't
 take 'em - all the same to me.

PETER

Okay, okay...

Peter signs the manifest.

JENNIFER

How about that far corner? We can pull a few tables.

PETER

Sounds good - don't want any trouble, do we?

DRIVER

Mister, you already got trouble.
(to Teamster)
Over there, Leon.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROOM - DAY - CLOSEUP - TABLET

A manicured FINGER presses "Play" to start an online VIDEO. TIPI TARKANIAN, 33, star of ETX's "Trippin' with the Tarkanians," comes to life in a skimpy, unbuttoned chef's coat; black satin short-shorts; fishnets; and five-inch heels. Rotating her booty in the center of the shot, she purrs over her shoulder.

TIPI

Hi, there. The girls and I will be getting hot with Chef Peter Penuche over at Estaminet Fièvre this Friday. Don't forget to follow us!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ICU/HALLWAY - DAY

Heather yanks her from her PURSE and stabs in a number.

CUT TO:

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/OFFICE - DAY

Peter's at his DESK, reviewing PAPERWORK. His SMART PHONE RINGS.

PETER

(into phone)
Hello?

INTERCUT HEATHER/PETER

HEATHER
(into phone)
Peter? It's Heather. Where are
you?

PETER
(into phone)
I'm at Estaminet. How's Iz?

HEATHER
(into phone)
No change. Dr. Hosseini was just
here. Why weren't you?

PETER
(into phone)
Was I supposed to? Did we have an
appointment?

HEATHER
(into phone)
No, but that's not the point.

PETER
(into phone)
Heather, I've been there almost
every night - regardless.

HEATHER
(into phone)
Our daughter's also in a coma when
the sun's up, you know.

PETER
(into phone)
I'll ignore that. What's really
going on?

HEATHER
(into phone)
Peter, Dr. Hosseini thinks we
should start planning for the...
future.

PETER
(into phone)
Meaning what?

HEATHER
(into phone)
You know - end of life.

PETER
 (into phone)
 Has there been any change in her
 brain functions?

HEATHER
 (into phone)
 Well, no, but -

PETER
 (into phone)
 Absolutely not! We have joint
 custody and power of attorney.
 She'd have to be brain-dead before
 I'd even consider it.

HEATHER
 (into phone)
 Peter, you have to listen to
 reason... and prepare for what may
 be inevitable.

PETER
 (into phone)
 No, Heather! Her condition is a
 responsibility, not an
 inconvenience. I won't hear of it.
 I gotta go. G'bye.

Peter hangs up. He pauses, looks at the phone again, and
 hurls it into a pile of dirty LINEN in the CORNER.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ESTAMINET FIEVRE/FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Three stretch limos pull up. The first disgorges Tipi; her
 sisters, TORI TARKANIAN, 35, and TULI TARKANIAN, 30; and
 their mother, TRISH TARKANIAN, 57. They hit the mid-day
 carpet dressed for midnight clubbing, and pose and vamp for
 the cameras. Their entourage bleeds out of the other two;
 FAMILY fall in step behind and STAFF goes to work with MEDIA
 and FANS. Plain-vanilla punk female S.M., 20, laden in
 ELECTRONICS, ducks in at random to capture video and images.

TIFANI TART
 (into camera)
 Well, the stars of our very own
 "Trippin' with the Tarkanians" -
 Wednesdays, Ten Eastern - have
 finally arrived. Tipi? Tipi!

Tipi trips over.

TIFANI TART (CONT'D)

Tell us true, Tipi. How are you feeling about your first hands-on encounter with French food?

TIPI

Well, Tif, I'm really looking forward to getting hands on Chef Peter, himself. He's trendy, has his own show, and is available. Right?

TIFANI TART

Well said, Tipi. Well said.

Tipi rejoins the procession through the front entrance.

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - DAY

Tarkanians and COMPANY are recorded coming in. Jennifer guides them to keep their stored extra CLOTHING out of the shot. Polite introductions and chit-chat follow; the GUESTS go through the motions. Peter escorts Tipi to center stage, seats her and sits himself. His STAFF handle the others in ranks behind.

PETER

A warm Estaminet Fièvre welcome to you, Tipi Tarkanian, your family and friends to the third installment of "Food Fever."

TIPI

Thank you for having us, Peter. We can't wait to get our hands dirty, can we, girls?

Tipi turns. Her mother and sisters grin and nod.

PETER

Allow me to say that there hasn't been this much beauty associated with anything French since Josephine Baker died!

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT - TORI AND TULI

TULI
 (whispers)
 Who's she? Does she have her own
 show?

BACK TO SCENE

TIPI
 Oh, thank you, Peter. That's sweet.

PETER
 Shall we review today's bill of
 fare before we get to work?

TIPI
 Oh, yes, Peter - let's...

PETER
 Well, we know you Tarkanians are
 always on the go, value your
 sightseeing and shopping time, and
 always have an eye on those
 fabulous figures. Mindful of that,
 we've put together some tasty,
 zesty bistro dishes that meet all
 those needs. Ready?

Tipi leans in, flutters her eyelashes, and nods.

PETER (CONT'D)
 First up: Assiette de Charcuterie -
 a fresh baguette loaded with
 prosciutto and other cured meats; a
 wedge of rustic country paté; and
 assorted pickles and olives - all
 to excite the palate!

TIPI
 Mmmm. I'm excited already.

TORI
 Wait a minute. Those meats have a
 lot of fat, right?

TIPI
 Here we go...

PETER
 Well, any cured meat will be
 rendered with its own fat, of
 course...

TORI

'Cause I have some post-partum issues with fat consumption. My doctor says --

Tipi jumps up.

TIPI

The "Mommy" pounds, again, Tori? Really? It's been almost a year.

DIRECTOR

Cut!

TIPI

Work on your fat ass on your own time. I've got a show to do, here!

Tori jumps up.

TORI

Yeah? Well, at least I have a kid, and have been hooked up for more than five minutes - unlike the Whore of Babylon over here.

DIRECTOR

Cut!

TIPI

Whore? I'll show you "whore" --

They jump each other, trading slaps. A HAIR EXTENSION goes down, then a FALSE EYELASH. A HEEL breaks. They wrestle each other to the floor. Trish wades in and yanks them to their feet.

TRISH

Stop it! Have we come all this way for this?

DIRECTOR

I give up.

Trish turns to see that a few SMART PHONES are out among Peter's staff. She glares.

TRISH

If any one of you posts as much as a Twitter Pic of any of this, you'll never boil an egg again - I swear!

Behind her, Peter swipes at his throat. The phones disappear. Trish fails to notice that S.M. has also been busy.

TRISH (CONT'D)

Now - pull yourselves together, ladies!

DIRECTOR

Let's take five to repair the damage, people.

TRISH

Better make it thirty. I think there's a black eye involved.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY (LATER) - CLOSE SHOT - ESTRELLA & VIDUR

Squint into the LIGHTS as they watch Peter and Tipi wrap up the menu discussion.

VIDUR

(whispers)

Think we should mention that ducks are tortured to get the paté?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Peter and Tipi stand at the SALAD STATION. She's stroking his arm.

PETER

Ready to dive into the Salad Niçoise - for the camera, anyway?

TIPI

Oh, I can't wait.

PETER

Great. First thing is, you've got to get a coat and gloves on -

TIPI

No problem!

PETER

- and pin up your hair and cover it.

Tipi steps back and folds her arms.

TIPI
That's not going to happen!

PETER
 Sorry - health regulations.

TIPI
 But, those are for regular people,
 right?

Peter strokes her arm.

PETER
 C'mon. Won't hurt a bit - I
 promise.

Pouting, Tipi gets outfitted.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Ready? Alan?

DIRECTOR
 Go, Steadycam.

PETER
 Now, Tipi, Salad Niçoise stands
 alone as an easy but savory,
 healthy food. Veggies; good carbs;
 potassium; Vitamin C; protein and
 Omega-Threes from the tuna and
 anchovies -

Peter picks up an ANCHOVY and swims it into Tipi's face. She
 blocks her face with fanning fingers.

TIPI
 Little stinky fishies! Ewww - I
hate little stinky fishies!

She squeals and runs out, on her impossible heels. Peter
 shrugs.

PETER
 We can try again with the quiche, I
 guess.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (LATER)

Estrella assembles INGREDIENTS for the third course, Leek and
 Gruyère Quiche. Tuli dawdles, leaning on the counter,
 alternating between her and sampling.

TULI
So, like, what are you?

ESTRELLA
Excuse me?

TULI
I mean, like I'm Armenian. Are you Armenian?

ESTRELLA
No. I'm a Latina.

TULI
You could pass for Armenian, you know.

ESTRELLA
Does that mean I'd have to starve?

TULI
What? Why?

ESTRELLA
Never mind.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (LATER)

SERIES OF SHOTS - TORI THE SEXY FASHIONISTA

While Gerard and Aline labor over the dessert COURSE - *Citron Givré* (Sorbet-Filled Lemons) - Tori poses suggestively in front, in a series of skimpy OUTFITS and SHOES, using whatever else is handy as props. S.M. records each faithfully. Aline feigns cheer but Gerard quickly fumes to breaking point. Midpoint:

ALINE
Take a break, [my friend].

Gerard stalks out. Aline continues to manufacture smiles.

Last shot: Tori waves S.M. away.

TORI
Post those!

Tori flounces out. S.M. follows, working her TABLET. Aline sheds the smile and shakes her head.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jennifer and Trish watch the crews set up the TABLES and VIDEO EQUIPMENT for the final scenes.

TRISH
So - Peter's single, right?

JENNIFER
Divorced.

TRISH
Any kids?

JENNIFER
A daughter. She's in the hospital.

TRISH
What's he worth?

JENNIFER
What?

TRISH
Money. How much does he have? How much is he getting for this?

JENNIFER
You'll pardon me, but I'm not really comfortable with this conversation.

Jennifer hurries away.

TRISH
Bitch.

EXT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/BACK ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Vidur and S.M. light up JOINTS under the stars.

VIDUR
So. What does "S.M." stand for?

S.M.
"Social Media." They can never remember my name.

Vidur coughs. S.M. laughs. They both laugh.

VIDUR
Are they always like... that?

S.M.

Oh, yeah.

VIDUR

Must be Hell.

S.M.

Crazy, for sure - but things are looking up. I think I might get a raise and benefits next week.

S.M. turns on her digital CAMERA and they smile into a replay of the dining room fight.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter leads Tipi to the living room ENTRANCE. She enters and he retreats.

PETER'S P.O.V. - THE ENCOUNTER FROM THE HALLWAY

Once more, explosions of reflected LIGHT and SHADOWS tell the tale. Same leaping FLAMES; same multi-hued AURA; same deafening ROAR and FIREWORKS. Silence. Darkness.

BACK TO SCENE

Tipi hustles out, giddy.

TIPI

Guess what? He's single - and loaded! Thank you!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ETX STUDIO - DAY

Tifani Tart and Amber Avala man the DESK. The FLOOR MANAGER counts them down.

AMBER

Tifani Tart is here to tell us about our own little family's adventures with Chef Peter Penuche at Estaminet Fièvre last week. Tif?

TIFANI TART

Thanks, Amber. Well, those crazy Tarkanians were indeed "trippin'" with everyone's favorite, new Franco food-slinger in his third reality outing.

TV SCREEN

Tifani interviews the Tarkanian girls.

TIFANI TART

(on TV, filtered)

So, tell me, girls. How was it?

TIPI

(on TV, filtered)

Oh, Tifani - it was so fun! Chef Peter was so kind and so gracious, and we all learned so much. Right, girls?

TARKANIAN GIRLS

(on TV, filtered)

WooooHoooo!

TIPI

(on TV, filtered)

I can't wait to cook for all our friends and fans!

BACK TO SCENE

Amber continues to read.

AMBER

And, looks like our ladies landed "Food Fever" in new territory: largest reality audience share of the week!

TIFANI TART

Yeah - good thing the Tarkanians have another shot at the chef Wednesday night!

AMBER
Indeed - that's Wednesday, Ten PM
Eastern. We'll be right back.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/FOYER - DAY

Jennifer stands at the host's DESK. A young BUSINESSWOMAN in business dress and heels comes in, carrying a BRIEFCASE.

BUSINESSWOMAN
Good afternoon. Peter Penuche,
please?

JENNIFER
I'm Jennifer Hathaway, Estaminet's
manager. May I help you?

BUSINESSWOMAN
No, I'm sorry. I have to see him
personally.

JENNIFER
Well, I'd be happy to give him
whatever --

BUSINESSWOMAN
I must insist.

Jennifer gives her the up-and-down.

JENNIFER
Very well. Follow me, please.

INT. DINING ROOM/KITCHEN/OFFICE - DAY

We follow Jennifer and the businesswoman through the dining room and kitchen to the open DOOR of Peter's office.

JENNIFER
Peter? This is - I'm sorry; you
are?

BUSINESSWOMAN
Not important.

She sets her briefcase on the empty CHAIR, opens it and withdraws an ENVELOPE.

BUSINESSWOMAN (CONT'D)
Peter Penuche?

PETER
That would be me.

She hands the envelope across to him.

BUSINESSWOMAN
You're served.

She retrieves her briefcase and steps past Jennifer into the kitchen.

BUSINESSWOMAN (CONT'D)
Thanks. I'll show myself out.

She leaves. Peter opens the envelope and withdraws a DOCUMENT. He glances through it, drops it, and rubs his face.

JENNIFER
What is it?

Peter sighs.

PETER
Heather. She's petitioning for sole custody. Claims I'm more responsible for Izzy's condition than I'm saying.

JENNIFER
Oh, Peter! That's --

PETER
Give me a minute, will you, Jen?

JENNIFER
Sure. Of course.

Jennifer closes the door and pauses to hear Peter break down inside. She turns into the corner and tears up herself. She wipes them away, swallows, and composes herself before going out front.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter churns, sweating, kicks off the COVERS, and sits up screaming.

PETER
No! Not Isabella! Please, God --

Aline wakes and shakes him conscious.

ALINE
Peter - Peter! Awake! You're
dreaming!

Peter comes to, looks at her, and buries his face in his hands.

ALINE (CONT'D)
What is it, Peter? Is it about
Izzy?

A beat, and Peter breaks down. Aline pulls him to her chest until he quiets.

ALINE (CONT'D)
[I will be here for you, my love.]
Tell me.

Peter sits up and takes her hands.

PETER
If I do, you'll think I'm insane.

ALINE
No. No. Please.

PETER
Everything bad that's happened in
the last two months is my fault.

ALINE
Why? How?

A beat.

PETER
I haven't told a soul this yet but -
here goes. Izzy, "Food Fever," the
vets, all of it, is because of...
the devil.

Aline searches his eyes for understanding.

PETER (CONT'D)
Satan came to me, here, and ordered
me to procure souls for him or Izzy
would... die. She went into the
coma that night.

ALINE
Oh, my God...

PETER

He said he'd stop at three but,
here we are. He has to be stopped,
somehow, but I don't know what to
do. Oh, Jesus...

Peter falls back, his arms over his head. Something seizes
Aline.

ALINE

Wait... Wait!

PETER

What? You don't believe me, do you?
Can't say as I blame you --

ALINE

No! I mean, yes, I do! Did Satan
mention an encounter with your
grandfather?

PETER

Well, yeah. He said Ol' Pierre
bested him by getting soused,
difficult, and hiccuping all over
him. So, that won't work. Wait -
how'd you know?

ALINE

There is a passage in his journal
about it. Come!

Aline yanks him out of bed and pulls him through the DOOR.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Aline drags Peter in and points at the DINING TABLE.

ALINE

Sit!

She fetches the DIARY, sits down, and turns PAGES
frantically.

ALINE (CONT'D)

Yes! Here it is: "Winter, 1832."
He describes the visit in some
detail.

Her finger flies down and her lips move over two facing diary
pages.

ALINE (CONT'D)
Here... Here!

Aline shows the page to Peter.

PETER
You know I'm gonna have to take
your word for it.

ALINE
Right here! He writes that Satan
told him consuming one soul -
Hippocrates' - made him horribly
ill.

Peter leaps up.

PETER
Read it!

ALINE
Um... "Cold, from washing in
Styx"... "Cholera morbus"...
"Asafoetida"...

Peter grabs the "C" volume of an old ENCYCLOPEDIA.

PETER
Cholera morbus... "Acute
gastroenteritis occurring in summer
and autumn and marked by severe
cramps, diarrhea, and vomiting. No
longer in scientific use." Holy
shit!

ALINE
What?

PETER
Asafoetida! It's used in Indian
cooking as an onion-leek
substitute, and herbally to relieve
gas and other G. I. problems. It
must have the opposite effect on
him!

ALINE
So?

PETER
So, we pick recipes heavy on leeks,
onions, or shallots, and substitute
asafoetida!

ALINE
Will that work?

PETER
You see anything else in Pierre's
account?

Aline flips the second page back and forth.

ALINE
Um... No.

PETER
Then it's all we've got.

Aline closes the diary, sits on Peter's lap and takes his
face in her hands.

ALINE
Peter, there's one thing you must
do.

PETER
What?

ALINE
Tell your staff the truth.

Peter squirms.

PETER
Think they'll believe me?

ALINE
They are your family, Peter. You
are them, and they are you. You've
lost their confidence by bearing
this alone. They've earned your
trust; they deserve it now.

PETER
You sure? My daughter's life
depends on it.

Aline kisses his forehead.

ALINE
I promise.

They kiss and hug.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - DAY

From behind Peter, we see shock and concern on the faces of his crew. He's just told them. They study him and each other quietly.

PETER

So. Any questions?

Titters, and some tears, of relief.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for not trusting you enough to tell you earlier. You've endured a lot because of me. I hope you'll let me make it up to you.

Estrella looks around and stands.

ESTRELLA

As far as I'm concerned, Jefe, that asshole stole my leg. I'll be Goddamned if he's gonna take Izzy!

The crew affirms and applauds.

ESTRELLA (CONT'D)

So. What's the plan?

PETER

Jennifer?

Jennifer distributes copies of a DOCUMENT.

PETER (CONT'D)

Okay, kids. Here's the draft menu for the last episode - we hope. The Salade de Chèvre calls for shallots, and the Ratatouille and Tian are onion-heavy. So's the pork loin. We can sneak the asafoetida into everything but dessert.

Vidur raises his hand. Peter acknowledges.

VIDUR

Boss, I grew up on that asafoetida stuff. It smells nasty.

FRED

Probably no worse than Gerard.

Laughter all around. Gerard feigns outrage with mad gestures.

GERARD

You cut me to the bone, you swine!

Aline pinches Gerard's cheek.

PETER

Vidur's right. That's why they call it "devil dung." The odor disappears under preparation, though, and the taste is indistinguishable. Discretion is required, but we've got time to practice.

Peter takes in their expressions.

PETER (CONT'D)

Anything else? If not, let's get ready for tonight.

Chairs scrape and voices rise as the crew makes for the kitchen.

JENNIFER

Everyone?

Sound and motion stops.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

You heard the man - not a word to anyone. One more thing...

Jennifer walks to Peter and sticks out her hand.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Welcome back, Chef Peter Penuche.

Peter gathers her into a bear hug. The crew surrounds them, alive with excitement.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

Several MEDIA VEHICLES bookend a LIMO at curbside. A bank of MICROPHONES stands at center carpet. Up steps real estate/casino/TV reality entrepreneur RONALD POTTS KEES, 70, spray-tanned and sporting a full head of dyed, lacquered, and weirdly cantilevered hair.

RONALD

Yes, I'm eager to see what Chef Penuche can teach me I don't already know about French food - and helping him push his numbers up to a respectable level.

REPORTER #3

But, Mr. Kees, hasn't "Food Fever" already exceeded "Charity CEO's" average share last season, in three episodes?

RONALD

You must be thick. I pulled twenty-two million when we changed formats.

REPORTER #3

But that was five years ago.

Ronald turns and heads for the DOOR. His assistant, KENNY, steps in.

KENNY

That's all!

REPORTER #3

"The Keester" takes a walk. What a surprise.

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/DINING ROOM - DAY

Ronald and DELEGATION enter and stop. Peter steps from the STAFF line to his MARK, his hand out.

PETER

Welcome to Estaminet Fièvre, Mr. Kees. It's an honor.

Only Kenny steps forward.

KENNY

No recording until Mr. Kees reviews the setup.

DIRECTOR

Cut! Take a break, everyone.

Natural light returns.

RONALD

Take care of that, will you, Kenny?

He strides across. Peter offers his hand again. Ronald looks at it, hesitates, and takes it gingerly.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Chef Peter Penuche.

PETER
Mr. Kees. I'm a big fan.

RONALD
You should be, kid - but save it.
We're competitors. You make me
dinner tonight. I throw you a bone
for Sunday. Then, I eat your lunch
in the fall.

Peter squeezes, drops Ronald's hand and takes his elbow.

PETER
How about you meet my staff?
They'll be working with you --

RONALD
Working for me, more like.

Peter escorts Ronald and begins, left to right.

PETER
Mr. Kees, this is Jennifer
Hathaway, the true heart and soul
of the operation. She --

Jennifer offers her hand. Ronald ignores it.

RONALD
Enchanted, sweetie. I won't ask
what the chef pays you, but I'm
confident you can do better.
(turns)
Kenny, make sure Miz... Miz...

JENNIFER
Hathaway.

RONALD
Hathaway gets an application.

KENNY
Yes, sir.

Peter clears his throat.

PETER
Next, we have Estrella Hernandez,
our sous chef and my -

RONALD
(to Estrella)
You legal?

ESTRELLA
Excuse me?

RONALD
Are you here legally? Are you
documented?

ESTRELLA
(fumes)
Bronx-born, bitch!

Vidur catches her arm.

ESTRELLA (CONT'D)
And a trained killer!

Ronald points at Vidur.

RONALD
What about you, Sabu? And the rest
of you people? Does somebody need
to call I.C.E.?

Estrella looks hard at Peter.

ESTRELLA
Jefe?

PETER
All right. You can get to know the
rest better as we go along, Mr.
Kees. They'll be close by.

Peter leads him away, calmly and firmly.

PETER (CONT'D)
You know, Mr. Kees, I'd advise
caution. Estrella lost a leg in
Iraq, and a few more - me included -
have taken live fire. We all have
ready access to sharp instruments.

Peter gains Ronald's attention.

PETER (CONT'D)
 (smiling)
 In this workplace, the term
 "backstabbing" has a bit more
 physical urgency than in yours.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY (LATER) - CLOSE SHOT - ESTRELLA &
 VIDUR

They stand together in line as Peter and Ronald take their
 places for menu review.

VIDUR
 (whispers)
 I think we need to call Animal
 Control.

ESTRELLA
 Why?

VIDUR
 To rescue that creature that's
 trapped on his head.

They stifle hilarity.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY (LATER)

Peter joins Ronald at center stage, who's having his MAKEUP
 touched up.

PETER
 Everything okay, Mr. Kees?

RONALD
 I'll let you know when it isn't.

Peter sighs.

RONALD (CONT'D)
 C'mon, kid, work with me. Conflict
 and humiliation make great TV.
 They're the bedrock of my show.

PETER
 And great sources of indigestion.

RONALD
 Suit yourself.

The lights come up.

DIRECTOR

Ready, everyone? And... action!

PETER

Well, Ronald Potts Keys - if I do say so myself, "Food Fever" will outdo itself for you tonight.

RONALD

Do tell, Peter.

PETER

With your investment prowess in mind, we're featuring fare from the "markets."

RONALD

What - we're cooking and eating stock prospectuses?

Everyone laughs.

PETER

Good one! No, seriously - fresh, locally-sourced meat and produce from our favorite markets. Just like the old country.

RONALD

Well, those socialists can cook - I'll give them that.

PETER

Right! And no need to leave the good old U.S.A.! Here we go. For openers, a nice Ratatouille - a stew featuring selected seasonal vegetables, followed by Salade de Chèvre Chaud - a warm, fresh goat cheese salad. How we doing so far?

RONALD

So far, so good.

PETER

The main event: Rôti de Porc et Sauc aux Cèpes - roast pork loin with rosemary and porcini mushrooms. Accoutrement: Provençal Vegetable Tian - that's a lightly baked *au gratin* with tomatoes, eggplant, and zucchini.

Ronald leans back.

RONALD
Stop right there. Any of those
involve onions?

PETER
Alan?

DIRECTOR
Cut!

PETER
Of course - all three, actually.
Problem?

RONALD
Can't have onions. I like them;
they don't like me.

PETER
Not a problem. We have a
substitute. Gentler aroma; better
flavor; very kind to the gut.

RONALD
Really?

PETER
Really.

Ronald thaws a little.

RONALD
My executive chef needs to know
about this.

PETER
I'll send him a note. Alan?

DIRECTOR
And... Action!

Peter pulls Ronald in closer.

PETER
And, for dessert: Gâteau au Fromage
de Chèvre et Citron - lemon
cheesecake. Ready to make some
supper magic together?

RONALD
Let's get it done.

DIRECTOR

And... Cut! Kitchen in fifteen,
everyone.

Kenny's hovering. Ronald starts to get up. Peter takes his
arm.

PETER

Look - none of my business, but why
don't you give us a chance? My
guys really love what they do.
Sharing it is special to them.

Ronald shakes Peter's hand off and sneers.

RONALD

Listen, "Chef," I eat better every
day in my dining room at the Tower
than you could ever afford to.
When you clear nine figures a year,
presume to give me life advice.
Let's just do it for the cameras
and the suckers, and leave it at
that.

He stands, turns on his heel, and hesitates.

RONALD (CONT'D)

Besides, what do I care? It's not
like I'm ever running for
President.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Peter and his crew gather around the LINE.

PETER

I know this one's tough; like I
said, I hope it's our last.
Another thing: You might have
noticed that "The Keester" --

ESTRELLA

Pendejo, you mean!

Giggles and elbows are exchanged.

PETER

Right - the asshole hates to shake
hands. I think he's a germophobe.
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

So, you have my permission to put your dirty hands on him every chance you get. Maybe a little personal Hell will prepare him for later. Lastly: if this works, I'll never forget any of you.

Peter chokes up. They come to him.

PETER (CONT'D)

Like I could, anyway...

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ronald and Kenny pack up PAPERWORK. Peter enters.

PETER

Hey, Alan - I don't know that I'm satisfied with that closer. Can we do it again?

The lights go up again.

DIRECTOR

And... Once more, with feeling.

PETER

(to Ronald)

You mind?

Before he can answer, the crew spills out of the kitchen and surrounds Ronald. They press their stained CLOTHES into and put every filthy hand on him - including a couple on his hair. Immobilized, Ronald fights to keep his plastic smile in place.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter and Ronald come up the STAIRS. Peter shows him around the corner into the LIVING ROOM. FLAMES burst upward, silhouetting Satan.

RONALD

Finally. Somebody else who plays in the big leagues.

Ronald advances and Peter backs around the corner into the hallway.

PETER'S P.O.V. - THE ENCOUNTER FROM THE HALLWAY

SOUND and COLORS explode into the HALLWAY, but the sound is uneven and the colors are more muted than before. The AURA is ragged and subdued. The DEMON's outcry is less a ROAR than a series of distressed BELCHES. Peter peeks around the corner. Ronald is motionless and the demon is panicked and clutching at his roiling, distended abdomen. Peter ducks back and waits until light and sound cease.

BACK TO SCENE

Ronald appears, eyes wide and smiling.

RONALD
Easiest deal I've ever made!

The hair on his head is burned away, revealing the bony impression of a hideous GARGOYLE at the crest of his scalp.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY (DAWN)

LIGHT creeps into the room. Peter and Aline lie in BED together, both wide awake. They trade glances.

PETER
What time is it now?

Aline checks.

ALINE
Five-fifty.

Peter sighs.

PETER
Might as well check. It's either
no news, or bad news.

They get up and head for the DOOR.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

They enter, arm-in-arm. Aline waits while Peter gropes along the wall and opens the DRAPES. He turns, slowly, and sees the parchment ENVELOPE propped against the LAMP on the END TABLE. He sinks to his knees, arms over his head, moaning. Aline hurries to the envelope, breaks its seal, and withdraws a LETTER.

ALINE
Shall I read it?

Peter continues his crouching and moaning.

ALINE (CONT'D)
(reading)
"My Dear Peter:
Needless to say, I am enslaved to
my own greed and am not a good
loser. Nevertheless, you held to
our bargain and - like your
grandfather - are a clever and
worthy adversary. I salute you.
You will live long and eventful
lives.
Sincerely,
S."

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ICU/ISABELLA'S ROOM - DAY - CLOSEUP -
ISABELLA'S FACE

Pale Isabella lies, eyes closed, her hair strewn over her
PILLOW. Her color returns and her eyes snap open. She sits
up, coughing and grasping at her RESPIRATOR TUBE.

ISABELLA
Daddy?!

CUT TO:

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Peter, on his knees and arms over his head, stops moaning.

PETER
Did he say, "lives?"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESTAMINET FIÈVRE/OFFICE - DAY

Focused on her TABLET, Jennifer knocks and enters.

JENNIFER
What a morning! Josh's already
called me three times, so I'm sure
he's after you, too --

She looks up; no Peter. She unpockets her SMART PHONE and speed-dials Peter's number. It rings once.

RECORDING

(on phone, filtered)

The number you've dialed cannot be reached at this time. The user's mailbox is full. If you think you've reached this number in error, please -"

Jennifer rings off. She heads for the DOOR to the stairs.

INT. STAIRWAY - DAY

Jennifer hesitates at the bottom of the STAIRS.

JENNIFER

Peter?

(a beat)

You home?

(a beat)

I'm coming up, okay?

She ascends and stops at the LANDING.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - DAY

JENNIFER

Peter?

She peeks into the KITCHEN, checks both BEDROOMS and heads for the LIVING ROOM. Everything seems cleaner and more orderly than usual.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jennifer begins a lap of the room. There's no clutter; all the BOOKS are shelved. She spots an ENVELOPE propped against the LAMP on the TABLE between the wing CHAIRS. She goes to it; it has her name written on it. She opens it and reads.

PETER (V.O.)

To my sweet, patient partner, Jen:
I've thrown a lot of curves at you
in the last two months, and you've
hit them all out of the park.
Well, here's one more. You've made
Estaminet what it is today, mostly
in spite of me.

(MORE)

PETER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm not thrilled with who I am
right now, so I need to do
something about that. The one
thing I'm certain of, is that this
place and its family are in capable
hands. Looks beyond ironic as I
write it, but you're in charge.
Take them where you will, with my
blessing.
Forever grateful,
Peter

Jennifer sees Peter's lying behind where the envelope was.
She falls into the chair and bawls. Her rings; it's Josh.
She hastens to compose herself.

JENNIFER

(on phone)

Yes, Josh?

JOSH

(on phone, filtered)

Jennifer! Where's Peter? He's not
picking up. I can't even get to
his voice mail --"

She looks at Peter's PHONE on the table.

JENNIFER

(on phone)

I know - me, neither.

JOSH

(on phone, filtered)

What? Well, where is he?

JENNIFER

(on phone)

Gone. I guess.

JOSH

(on phone, filtered)

Gone?! What do you mean, gone?
The suits want a new deal, and
Peter can write his own ticket! We
--

JENNIFER

(on phone)

Look, Josh. You want Peter, you
got me. We'll figure this out.
I'll call you back.

ALINE

What?

PETER

"I don't mind." What was that?

ALINE

You've asked me a question.

PETER

Yes.

ALINE

Just "a" question, or "the" question?

PETER

Depends. See, I have this tiny box in my luggage that I was gonna break out later, as is customary in these matters. But, if you're not wedded to that...

Aline melts.

ALINE

Oh, Peter. [Yes, my love! With all my heart, yes!]

They kiss. He enfolds her from behind and they enjoy the seaward view.

PETER

So, "Madame Penuche:" How do you think this whole Rouen thing is going to go down?

ALINE

I am confident. If you give it a chance you'll be charmed. I was.

PETER

You have two minutes to impress me.

ALINE

Well... Did you know that Rouen was practically ground zero for French Impressionism? Monet, Pissaro, Gauguin - their Rouen patrons risked their lives supporting them. Claude Monet painted thirty canvases of the Cathedral alone!

PETER

A minute left. What about food?
Other than Grand-Père Pierre's
joint, all I know so far is that
Joan of Arc was roasted on a stick
there. Does that count?

ALINE

[Smart ass!] Two words: Normandy
cheese. Think three hundred twenty-
three restaurants of every
description would do it for you?

PETER

Yeah - but are they any good?

Aline slugs him.

ALINE

[Stupid American!]

PETER

Wow. Sultry - and fiery, too! Who
needs food? "Give me your soul!"

ALINE

That's funny?

PETER

It is, now!

Aline turns and takes Peter's face in her hands.

ALINE

My precious Peter: you are a chef
nonpariel, but not a[n eater.]
Cooking has been your life, but not
in your life. Those you've fed are
not nourished - not truly. To them,
it is a conquest, a possession,
until the next shiny thing comes
along.

She strokes his cheek.

ALINE (CONT'D)

In France, cooking and eating are
the punctuation in the prose of
life. Everything sublime - good or
bad. Laughter. Melancholy.
Family. Love. Libido. [Babies].

PETER

Babies?

ALINE

[Yes.]

PETER

[Very, very good!]

They kiss. The girls bound up, trailed by the Hostess.

ISABELLA

Daddy! Daddy! Guess what?

PETER

What, punkin?

ISABELLA

On our trip, they're going to have a Hallowe'en party, and we get to dress up, and "Trick or Treat," and everything!

COSETTE

Yes!

PETER

Really? That's great!

ISABELLA

Daddy?

PETER

What?

ISABELLA

I want to be a devil!

Peter and Aline trade looks. He kneels, closes on Isabella, and shakes his head.

PETER

Not possible, Izzy.

She frowns.

ISABELLA

Why not?

He hoists her over his head.

PETER

It's too late! You're already my sweet little angel!

COSETTE

I want to be a little angel, too!

Aline scoops her up.

ALINE
And so you shall, [honey]!

PETER
Now - who's hungry?

ISABELLA
Me! [Me]! COSETTE

They drop the girls and all join hands.

PETER (CONT'D)
Let's go see what's cookin'!

They trot amidships. The Hostess calls after them.

HOSTESS
Lots of choices on Deck 2!

Peter waves without looking.

PETER
Got it from here. Thanks!

FADE OUT.