

CHEVES: THE PERFECT MEAL (PILOT)

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A SERIES OF TALKING HEADS TO START OUT

They talk, in turn, in regular documentary style setup: the interviewees sit on a wooden chair close to the camera, but not super close. They're lit, but behind and around them is in the dark.

CRITIC 1

This is like a play. Except that you-- you're performing. -- You are the audience, but you're also part of the show. -- You are putting on the show, and you are the show. -- It's a whole new kind of art, really.

Next talking heads.

CRITIC 2

It's every one of the five senses. What you see, what you hear. -- But then, of course, what you taste and what you smell. -- Holding the bowl, and the spoon. The feel of the food in your mouth. -- A meal: it has the opportunity to be the most complete art possible, doesn't it? -- Movies are this big, ultra-engaging spectacle-- but they can only be sight, and sound. -- It's only cooking-- it's only food-- that can be all give: sight, sound, taste, touch, smell. Dinner is, genuinely, the most all-encompassing art there is. Of all the gesamtkunstwerks, the absolutely most gesamt there can be. -- At least: this is what Myron has done. What he's realized, more than anyone else. What he's taken further than anyone else today. He has made his restaurant into the most total of the total art works.

The next talking head.

MYRON

(he leans back in the chair, a very present physicality, but also a hint of impatience, if not outright contemptuousness about the goings on)

(MORE)

## MYRON (CONT'D)

How could I *tell* you. How could my words-- How could I possibly explain-- Can you *tell me* the taste of chocolate? -- What does it taste like: go ahead. Explain. -- There's no-- There aren't words. There aren't words for it. -- Explain it to someone who's never had chocolate before. Someone who's never smelled chocolate before. Make them understand, with your words, exactly what it's like to eat milk chocolate, dark chocolate. So that they can imagine the taste. -- There are no words to convey the experience of eating chocolate. None that even get close. None that can communicate even the smallest part of it.

(a long beat: he shakes his head; and then...)

My food. This restaurant. This dining-- I can't tell you anything-- And your camera people won't be able to film it. Capture it one frame. -- There's no use. There's no point in talking about it. -- Waste of time.

## INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY

A shot of the soon-to-be diners in the hallway, standing in a not-too defined line, waiting for their turns.

Then we see a closer shot on only a few of them: they're all holding the same ditto sheet. People study the sheet as they mumble to themselves.

## MORE TALKING HEADS

## CRITIC 3

Man. You think of everything that had to happen for this restaurant to even become an idea in the first place. All the things that had to line up, and take place, for Myron to think up this... I mean, it's not precisely a restaurant, actually, is it? It's more... an event? It's some kind of...

## MYRON

You can't *know* my cooking. You can never know it. You can never plumb the depths of all possible-- Even if you eat it. Even if you do eat my cooking. That doesn't tell you-- that tells you only how I made one dish. The one dish that you ate. -- But this might have been a lucky moment for me. This might have been the one best dish, the best I'll ever make. -- My arm twitches and I accidentally pour in some extra butter that I forgot to clean off the pan. -- But that's just the right, exact, amount. And that makes this one dish the very supreme version of it. -- So now you go around thinking, 'Ah, Myron: he cooks this amazing vodka pasta.' -- But your friend, who had my vodka pasta another night. Who happened to have gotten served the worst VP I've ever handed to anyone. When I burned the butter, and nothing came together just right. -- Your friend thinks the vodka pasta is just the worst thing he's ever had. -- Because you can't *know* my cooking. Know every bite of food that I've ever made. **That's** what you would have to-- even I don't know my cooking. I taste the sauce, of course, every time. I even eat a little at the end of the prep-- but that's just a little. I don't know how every little tiny bit of the dish has turned out. -- I don't know. I don't know how good these dishes that I serve are. -- I don't know how good my cooking is.

(quick beat: he looks  
ahead of him into the  
middle distance)

And I never will... I never will.

## INT. THE APARTMENT HALLWAY AGAIN

A slightly overhead shot or two of the people in line, excited mumbling.

Then, down to the three people at the front of the line.  
 (Though we can still hear the people practicing their lines,  
 the suppressed excitement of everyone. We can hear that in  
 the background of all the hallway interactions.)

DINER 1

Have you ever had it?

DINER 2

Yes. Oh my god. Yes. It is--

DINER 3

It's the single best mouthful of  
 food that I've ever eaten.

DINER 2

The best mouthful-- all the best  
 mouthfuls. -- Like you if ranked  
 the top fifty mouthfuls of food  
 I've ever eaten, forty of them  
 would be Myron's vodka pasta.

DINER 3

Yeah, easily. -- It's so fucking--

DINER 2

So fucking good.

TALKING HEAD

CRITIC 2

It's the best dish of food-- and  
 it's goddamned vodka pasta. -- The  
 simple-- I don't even really like  
 vodka pasta. I don't remember the  
 last time I chose to eat it. I  
 never liked-- But this. Myron's  
 vodka pasta-- It hurt. It hurt me  
 to eat it the first time, a little.  
 Because I wasn't used to tasting  
 all so much at once. It's like, you  
 know, if you jog once or twice a  
 week, occasionally-- And then you  
 have to go ahead and do a hundred  
 yard dash for some reason, full  
 sprint. Dead sprint. Your body,  
 your whole body will burn. -- And  
 that was my taste buds, the first  
 time I had Myron's pasta.

INT. THE HALLWAY

DINER 3

(as if she's answering an interviewer's question, looking at some place specific just next to the camera, talking to the person standing there)

Uh... I guess I like vodka pasta. -- Well enough, at least. -- I like it. It's not like, something I look for, but if I'm in a mood. A kind of very specific mood. Yeah.

A cut, as if she's been asked and is now answering another question.

DINER 3 (CONT'D)

I might do... I guess I'd usually, probably, go up to like... \$30. That's probably the most, really the most that I would pay for vodka pasta. At like, a great restaurant. That's my limit... So yeah: \$200 here for Myron's pasta-- That is Not normal for me, haha, no.

Another cut, she's answering another question

DINER 3 (CONT'D)

Three times. -- Well: four. This is my fourth. This will be number 4.

INTERVIEWER

So...

DINER 3

So yeah: that's a thousand dollars. A thousand dollars on four bowls of vodka pasta. -- I know that maybe sounds, a little-- But I don't even-- that's not even: I don't flinch. No, like, regret, or anything. -- Zero buyer's remorse, at all. -- Four amazing bowls of vodka pasta in a kind of dingy old, walkup apartment.

TALKING HEADS

## CRITIC 1

You go around, look at every available spot for a restaurant in your city. -- You hire a consultant to do the numbers and tell which place is the exact, right, absolute best location for you-- and then Myron opens up the best restaurant in the whole town, by far, in his old apartment. -- The second floor, right above a bar. -- Becomes a mecca for food lover's, from everywhere, across the nation. They come here and walk up those steps and stand in the hallway next to the lower-midrange three bedroom apartment that Myron shared with two other chefs in his twenties.

Another talking head.

## BOOTH

Yeah: when we toured the place the first time with the landlord, no one had any idea that this-- what? Hundred year old apartment>-- would be the destination dining spot in the whole city-- maybe in all of America? -- Landlord would've tried to charge us a bit more for it, I'm sure.

Another talking head.

## MYRON

People are always saying-- They reveal themselves, how little they understand of what we do. How wrong the misconceptions they've been taught about food and dining. -- They say that this place-- They say things like:

(in the voice of a  
hypothetical restaurant  
critic)

'Ah, Myron's new establishment-- *in this old apartment*-- It just proves that, really, where you eat doesn't matter: it's the food that matters.

(back to his normal voice)

Wrong! They could not be more wrong. -- This place-- This setting: it is **essential**. Utterly essential.

(MORE)

MYRON (CONT'D)

This meal could not-- it simply  
could not happen anywhere else.

INT. HALLWAY

DINER 4

I mean: can you imagine. Being the  
first person-- Being Booth. The  
first guy-- The first guy that  
Myron made the vodka pasta for,  
that first night.

DINER 5

Crazy.

DINER 4

No idea. He had no idea what he was  
about to eat. No clue.

TALKING HEAD

BOOTH

Yeah, it's me: I'm Booth. I was the  
one who ate-- I was the one he made  
the pasta for, the original, the  
first bowl of vodka pasta.

Cut to him answering an interviewer question.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

No, it was just-- Like just a  
regular night. The most regular  
night of all time. If I'd have  
known-- If I'd have known what was  
about to-- If I'd have known that  
everything that I did that night  
was going to be copied, again and  
again; every little thing that I  
did, and chose, and said, repeated  
a dozen times a night, each night  
of the week, for years afterwards:  
I would have... I would have done  
some things... differently.  
Definitely... differently.  
That's... definitely...



## HALLWAY AGAIN

## DINER 4

(to DINER 5)

So I think I have the lines down,  
pretty well. What i'm-- I dunno if  
I'm *nervous*, exactly. But the one  
thing that I *am* thinking about, is:  
the room itself. Like the layout of  
the room. -- Like I've watched all  
the videos, and you kind of imagine  
yourself in there, you know. But it  
has to be-- It has to be different  
than you're picturing it, right?  
Like at least a little bit, right?

Slightly overhead shot of the people in line practicing their  
lines for a little while.

## TALKING HEADS

## CRITIC 1

To say it's a "reenactment" is just  
not-- it makes it sound so-- stale.  
Stale. -- But it's not stale: not  
at all.

## CRITIC 2

It's really every chef's dream. To  
have every single second of the  
service planned out and perfected.

Cut to later, him answering an unseen interviewer question.

## CRITIC 2 (CONT'D)

I don't-- do you really need a  
summary? The whole thing-- just  
have to watch it and see what it  
is. -- It's exactly, just: Myron is  
leading you through a meal that's  
precise replica of one night when  
he made his roommate Booth a bowl  
of vodka pasta--

## BOOTH

I'd had a crazy shift-- didn't have  
a spare moment to even think about  
eating my shift meal-- but then  
when I got home I was so tired I  
couldn't-- I just came in and sat  
on the couch.

Intercut with a black and white reenactment shot of him on the couch.

Doing nothing, watching FRIENDS--  
It was the one where Phoebe says  
the N word-- And that's when Myron  
came in. I guess he'd had the day  
off, and he saw that I was  
struggling, so he asked if he  
should make me something.

Another talking head.

MYRON

We had tomatoes, eggs, flour, a  
tiny bit of vodka. -- But there  
were other ingredients, other  
things we had too. I have no idea  
why vodka pasta, these specific  
ingredients-- it just seemed so  
obvious to me. -- That's how  
intuition works. The decision  
process-- it happens, it happens  
somewhere inside of you, but it's  
so fast and so free that it feels  
automatic, but of course it wasn't.  
It was just your mind working so  
quickly that your thoughts couldn't  
keep up. -- That's-- I hate the  
word inspiration-- *hate it*--  
because it implies that this is all  
coming from somewhere out of  
yourself. As if you're just a  
passive recipient of this great  
idea. -- It's not. It's you. It's  
your idea. It's your stroke of  
genius: the stroke of **your** genius.

Another reenactment shot of BOOTH on the couch, but this time  
you can see Myron working in the kitchen. Cooking sounds from  
the kitchen, sitcomy sounds from the tv (the patter of  
banter, the laugh track). After a moment of this...

BOOTH

Oh my god-- Is Joey gonna say it  
too out of solidarity?

HALLWAY AGAIN

Close shot of Diners 6 and 7 rehearsing the same thing we  
just saw. Diner 7 is running their lines, diner 6 is holding  
the cheat sheet.

DINER 7

And then I say... "Oh my god-- Is Joey gonna say it too now in solidarity?"

DINER 6

Close. It's "Oh my god-- Is Joey gonna say to too out of solidarity." So no "now," and then it's "out of solidarity."

DINER 7

Out of-- Out of-- Out of--

TALKING HEAD

MYRON

(in the voice of a hypothetical doubter)

*'Why does it all have to be the exact same. Why do they have to say all the same things that Booth said, or sit in just the place where he--*

He breaks off suddenly, huffs exasperatedly. Looks off into the middle distance for a moment

Then he looks back ahead of him at the interviewer.

MYRON (CONT'D)

It was a perfect meal. Perfect. I didn't even know how to dream of a meal like that-- And then it happened. How could I ever let anything-- How could I change...

Stares off for a beat.

MYRON (CONT'D)

Have you ever fallen in love? Your wife, your husband-- what made you fall in love with them? Was it her eyes? Was it her smile? Was it that thing she said on your fifth date that made you laugh in a way you'd never laughed before?

(nods his head, though now he starts smiling)

It was everything. Nothing less than everything. Every single, solitary-- Would you change your wife's... ear?

(MORE)

## MYRON (CONT'D)

The smallest thing: would you ever want to change your wife's... toenails? The look of her elbows? Nothing. None of it. You wouldn't dare-- You wouldn't even think of it. You wouldn't ever change one, lone, thing-- Because she's perfect. Because she's absolutely perfect. -- And that was a perfect meal. An absolutely perfect meal. -- And so we won't ever change anything. We'd never want to. The meal will continue on, no changes; the same, forever.

He sits there with that last sentence for a beat.

He nods.

He looks at the camera.

## THE DINER SERVICE

Title card: "The Dinner Service"

Alternate between shots of the contemporary diners being let into the apartment and going through the meal with shots of the black and white reenactment with BOOTH.

BOOTH sits down on the couch; one of the diners sits down on the couch in the same place; another one of the diners sits down in the same place.

BOOTH turns on the tv; one of the diners does so too; another one does so.

MYRON comes in. A few shots of him coming in during the different timelines.

Intercut smalltalk: "Hey man"s and "That was a monster shift"s and "I am Dead dude"s.

At one point. BOOTH nods towards the tv:

BOOTH

It's the one where Phoebe says the N word.

More intercut smalltalk.

Then MYRON tells BOOTH:

MYRON

I'll just make you something

And he tells it to diners.

Myron starts cooking: a bunch of food porn closeup shots of the food being made (the blue flames of the stove coming on, cooked noodles falling down into the sauce pan, the sauce being poured over the noodles, the sauce and the noodles being mixed around together-- stuff like that).

Myron brings out the food. Everyone in their different timelines starts eating, (very similar) looks of extreme pleasure on their faces.

Intercut shots of them eating, telling MYRON how great it is, etc. Etc.

At one point in this eating sequence, BOOTH holds his bowl without eating for a moment while they both watch the tv. BOOTH says, looking at the tv:

BOOTH

Damn-- they let Monica get away  
with a **hard** R.

Back to shots of them eating, their delectation.

Gradually, we see DINER 4 more and more. She is killing it: her looks of pleasure and repletion look so much more obviously, happily pleased and replete than anyone else's. She's just obviously more enthusiastic than any of the other diners (including BOOTH).

BOOTH finishes his meal, followed by the contemporary diners. They just hang out and watch the rest of the FRIENDS episode for a few shots.

Then, the FRIENDS episode is over. MYRON and BOOTH are just sitting on the couch. BOOTH has had an idea.

BOOTH (CONT'D)

There should be like a fantasy--  
You know how they have like rock n  
roll fantasy camp or whatever, like  
space camp, where you go for like a  
week and you do rock and roll star  
things for a week, astronaut things--  
- There should be a fantasy camp  
that was for white people to go and  
live on a plantation for a week  
like they were slaves.

(MORE)

## BOOTH (CONT'D)

So that we could get like some notion of what it was like. A slavery fantasy camp for white people.

## TALKING HEAD

A quick cut to contemporary BOOTH in his talking head interview.

## BOOTH

Would I have said that? If I knew? Would I have said that if I knew that everything I said that night would be repeated a million times for the rest of history? Would I have said that? Would I-- Would I?

## BACK TO THE DINER SERVICE

One after another, the diners say "A slavery fantasy camp for white people." -- "A slavery fantasy camp for white people." -- "A slavery fantasy camp for white people." -- "A slavery fantasy camp for white people."

## CUT TO:

A QUICK SHOT OF BOOTH IN HIS TALKING HEAD JUST STARING AT THE CAMERA

And then hold there like that for a few beats.

## BACK TO THE DINER SERVICE

We reach the end of the diner service. We see BOOTH at the end of his original meal...

## BOOTH

Hey man-- thanks for that. That was... that was incredible. -- I've never had vodka pasta-- Fuck man: I've never had any pasta as good as that. That shit was...

He's at a loss for words.

The other contemporary diners repeat him.

BOOTH takes his bowl back to the kitchen, but the camera stays with MYRON, who has a content smile on this face.

After a moment,

MYRON  
(to himself)  
"That was the perfect meal."

Now we see another diner say the last of those closing remarks to MYRON and take their bowl back to the kitchen, and then MYRON's response.

Another diner takes their bowl to the back. MYRON's response

Another diner.

Another.

Finally we get DINER 4. We see her say the whole thing:

DINER 4  
Hey man-- thanks for that. That  
was... that was incredible. -- I've  
never had vodka pasta-- Fuck man:  
I've never had any pasta as good as  
that. That shit was...

And again, she has more verve to what she says, what she does, than any of the other diners.

When she's back in the kitchen, MYRON repeats to himself:

MYRON  
That was the perfect meal.

But then he pauses.

The words sink in.

He realizes.

MYRON (CONT'D)  
**Oh fuck.**

He looks off, his eyes widening in distress.

MYRON (CONT'D)  
**That.** Was the perfect meal.

He stands there. In shock. The camera stays on him, but he doesn't notice it, doesn't think about it. He doesn't see anything in the room, doesn't think about anything there. His attention, in its abject astonishment, is entirely elsewhere.

After a long while of this, MAUREEN comes in to start to prepare for the next guest.

She comes in, straightens the pillows on the couch a bit, saying to herself:

MAUREEN  
Okay, good. Okay, good.

She turns the tv back on, goes back through the menu to set up the right episode of FRIENDS, the one where Phoebe says the N word.

While she's been doing this, MYRON has just been standing there, unmoving.

Once MAUREEN is done with all the little tasks that she does between diners, she finally comes to MYRON.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
Right. So.

MYRON doesn't look over at her.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
8:52. Next diner coming in at 9. We can set the...

She notices MYRON's distraction.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
Um... So...

MYRON doesn't move, doesn't blink.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
Uh... Myron? ... Myron? My-- Did that... Was something wrong? Is something wrong. -- Myron?!

Myron finally looks up at her.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
Is everything okay? Did that go alright?

MYRON  
(in a whisper)  
It was perfect.

MAUREEN  
Great-- good, good. I thought for a second-- But now we can-- We should...



MYRON  
(in the same whisper)  
No.

MAUREEN  
No? No... No what? ... No... ?

Myron looks at her full in the face now. A look of sudden determination.

MYRON  
We have to close the restaurant.

MAUREEN  
*What??*

MYRON  
(his eyes distant already  
again, his voice back to  
a whisper)  
We can't do this anymore.

MAUREEN  
The fuck-- Why-- Wha...

Her words peter out in flabergastation.

MYRON  
She was the perfect customer. That  
was the perfect meal. **That was.**  
That.. was.

MAUREEN  
Okay, so... But why would that--  
What does that mea--

MYRON  
We can't do this anymore. -- We  
can't do... this... anymore.  
(beat)  
That was perfect. She was perfect.  
That was the perfect dinner.

A beat.

Then:

MYRON (CONT'D)  
(loudly, certainly)  
It's done-- It's done-- We're done--  
Done!

He turns suddenly and walks heavily but swiftly to the hallway.

MAUREEN is nonplussed for a second, and then follows. The camera follows too.

MAUREEN  
Myron-- Myron!-- Myron!

He doesn't turn.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
Myron we have reservations-- Myron  
we have a whole night-- Myron we  
have three hours of-- Myron--

MYRON's gotten to his old bedroom. Without looking back or pausing for a second, he goes in and closes the door behind him.

MAUREEN skipwalks up to the door, tries it-- but it's locked.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
Myron-- Myron!

The camera catches up to her. MAUREEN notices them for the first time. She turns to them

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
Not now-- Please-- Can you--  
Please? Can you-- We're in the  
middle-- There's something-- Can  
you turn that off-- Please-- For  
now

She looks at the crew, the director.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)  
Please-- There's-- We need to-- I  
need to hand-- I need to get this--  
It's not a good time. Can you  
please turn that off? -- CAN you--  
I need you-- Can you please-- Okay--  
Just now? -- Please: Please. -- I  
need this-- This is not-- We can't--  
THIS IS NOT A GOOD TIME, OKAY. THIS  
IS NOT A GOOD TIME.

She's looking at them in distress.

A beat.

Then, the camera points down at the hardwood floor, goes black.

The screen stays black for a while.

A long while.

Then...

EXT. THE ALLEY BEHIND THE APARTMENT/RESTAURANT

The camera turns on, pointed at the ground. It moves up, up to a person standing in facing it, holding a small mic. When he starts to speak, we realize that he was the interviewer we've heard stray words and phrases from throughout.

INTERVIEWER

Hi, I'm Dustin Schlossberg, and I... Well, I don't usually... Typically, I never step in front of the camera like this. I'm one of the documentaries who... Normally, I just ask questions and then let our subjects talk and stay out of the frame. But this... This is not... Sometimes, you're doing one thing, but then a story just happens. A story just erupts, kind of, out of your previously straightforward profile. -- That is what has happened. What you'll probably have seen up to this point is what we recorded up to three days ago. What we recorded while things were sort of going according to plan. But then, as you'll have seen, Myron... Myron had a customer who... shook, his faith, I guess you'd say, in what he does. A customer who was so enthusiastic and had such a good run-through of his standard dinner service that, it seems, Myron thinks that this was a superior meal to the actual, original meal that it was replicating. And, given that the whole premise of Myron's restaurant, The Perfect Meal, is that he is, in fact, guiding you through the actual, singular, absolutely perfect meal, this has... well, this was... Myron locked himself in his bedroom within the apartment that he runs his restaurant out of.

(MORE)

## INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

And sometime after Maureen, and us, and the rest of the diners there that night, we all eventually gave up and left-- sometime after that Myron locked the doors into the restaurant. And he hasn't let anyone in, not since that night. We haven't been able to... The restaurant has stopped service, all the reservations for the last three days have been postponed. We haven't had any word at all from Myron. Neither has Maureen, his manager, or any of his staff or friends-- none that we're in contact with, at least. -- So we've been, the last two days, coming to this alley behind the restaurant, just in case there might be something... There's really been nothing else for us to do. We've just been back here, seeing if there might be anything that we could observe from back here, just in case. And, well: something has, we think... There is *something* to at least film...

(to the cameraperson)

Chris-- now up to--

(nods up to the side  
towards the apartment)

The camera goes up, to the side. To the right floor, and then along to the left. To the left with the window until: Myron. We see Myron. His silhouette. He is standing looking straight ahead out the window, arms crossed. He is, for every second that he's in the frame, absolutely unmoving. He is also naked. Given the distance and the obscurity provided by the window, we can't see anything illicit. But it is very apparent from his silhouette that he is not wearing any clothes, none at all. He is naked, staring out his back window, his arms crossed, thinking intently.

## DUSTIN

He's been-- Well, I guess we don't really know how long he's been up there like that, really. We didn't see him come up to the window or anything. We just kind of noticed him up there-- But we saw him, what? Like, twenty minutes ago? Was that when we first noticed him? It's been... Yeah, It's been a little...

(MORE)

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Because we wanted to make sure...  
We were discussing whether or not  
to... It's been at least twenty  
minutes, probably, since we saw him  
up there first. -- And he's just,  
really, been standing there, like  
that, without-- just standing up  
there at the window, frozen like  
that, in that stance, since we saw  
him. I don't think he's moved...

The camera closes in on MYRON slightly.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

No, he hasn't moved... As long as  
we've seen him...

The camera holds on MYRON for a bit.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Just... standing there... Just...  
hasn't moved... at all... Not  
since... not for a while... not...  
twenty minutes, at least...

The camera holds on MYRON.

It stays on him.

It stays on him for a beat longer.

Just stays on him.

Then--

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The documentary crew are all in a hotel room. DUSTIN sits at  
the little hotel room table, a computer open in front of him.  
Other members of the crew stand around him. They mumble talk  
to each other while this interaction takes place.

DUSTIN  
(to Chris, the  
cameraperson)  
(MORE)

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Okay, so, when we start the video, obviously we'll actually cut to an insert of the video itself, not going to try to have you record it on camera over my shoulder from the computer itself-- that would probably be impossible to see, make out anything-- But, still, when I'm done setting it up, and then turn and bring up the video and start to play it, you kind of come around, follow behind me and set up over my shoulder for the shot. Just so it kind of visually makes sense: now you're seeing the video that I'm watching on the computer.

CHRIS

Yeah, over behind your shoulder, and then tight in on the screen.

DUSTIN

Yeah-- that makes-- Yeah: that's good. -- Okay--

(now talking generally to everyone)

Okay: are we all...?

Everyone else quiets.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

We're all-- Right, good.

(to Chris)

You're good?

CHRIS

Yea... Start whenever you're...

Dustin nods.

He clears his throat, straightens up, prepares to talk to the camera.

DUSTIN

Today is Monday-- Well, I don't think we've really been keeping track of the days, at least not on screen. But it's four days since the last time we recorded, since we were out in the alley back behind Myron's restaurant.

(MORE)

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

-- We are recording again, today, because there's a new-- There's a video, that's been uploaded to the website for the restaurant, and all their socials. The title, of the video, and all the social media posts, is just "An Update." There has not been any other... That's the only thing, anywhere, from the restaurant, since it closed five days ago. There's no other info or explanation. Just this video. -- So: there's nothing else. Nothing else... but to watch it.

(nods back to the side)

Okay now Chris--

The camera moves around to behind DUSTIN, while he turns to the computer, tilts the screen up ever so slightly with both his hands, fixes himself to watch the video.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Alright.

The camera closes in on the screen, down to the video box.

DUSTIN clicks a click, and the video starts.

INT. A BLACK VOID

The video.

DUSTIN stands, clothed, in the middle distance, surrounded on all sides by all black.

MYRON

Shakespeare says that Nothing will come of nothing. But Shakespeare was-- That's not right. It's poetic license. -- But it's wrong. It's wrong because: sometimes, stuff does come from nothing. Sometimes, you have to be annihilated-- a-  
**nihil**-atied. Nihil, nothing. Annihilated: brought to nothing. Sometimes you have to be annihilated before you can come out with a new thing. Sometimes you have to be brought to nothing, before you can make something. Sometimes-- Sometimes: you have to be destroyed before you can create.

(MORE)

## MYRON (CONT'D)

(pauses, nods his head for  
a beat)

Yea... Yea...

(a beat: he looks away off  
into the distance; then  
he looks back at the  
camera and resumes:)

I recently-- Just a few days ago. I  
was destroyed. Annihilated. Brought  
to nothing. Because my restaurant  
failed? Because of a horrible meal?  
A terrible dish? A disappointed  
diner? No. Because of the most  
successful meal of my entire life.  
My restaurant was ruined by the  
highest accomplishment that it ever  
achieved.

(he gives it a beat to let  
that shit really sink in)

A few days ago, I was a part of the  
greatest meal-- *the* greatest meal,  
that I have ever experience, in any  
way: as chef, as the person eating  
it. -- Last Monday, I served a dish  
of vodka pasta at my restaurant.  
And by the million little  
coincidences and triumphs and  
accidents and inspirations that  
combine to make a moment like that,  
it was the best-- it was the best  
dinner. The best meal. The perfect  
meal. -- Which would have been  
great-- Except that the whole idea  
of my restaurant was that we were  
already recreating the best dinner,  
the best meal, the perfect meal. --  
And so this new dinner service,  
that recreated that vodpas I served  
to Booth all those years ago--  
recreated it but superseded it?  
Well, that, quite simply, ruined  
the idea of the restaurant. The VP  
I served to Booth was no longer THE  
VP. -- Kat's was. That's who: that  
was the dinner. Kat. -- Her  
excitement for the meal, her  
engagement with her part-- the  
vivacity that she brought to the  
whole thing: everything.  
Everything: everything was  
elevated. Everything rose up to new  
heights. -- I stood there at the  
end of her meal, and shock--  
actually shock came over me.

(MORE)



## MYRON (CONT'D)

That was how good it all was. That was how much better than perfect it had been. -- And in that shock: for a while, I was just... frozen there. Frozen in that... astonishment. For who knows how long. Just standing there, dumb to the world. -- But then, my next thought, the next full thought that filled out in my otherwise deserted mind: I can't do the restaurant. I couldn't do it anymore. I couldn't serve one more person. -- "The Perfect Meal" was suddenly a lie. The restaurant was a lie. The meal was a lie. -- I couldn't have the next person come in and serve them the Booth vodpas. That was a far cry from the one I served to Kat. -- This whole meal: I couldn't go through it with the next reservation in the idea that this was THE meal. I couldn't pretend. I couldn't perpetuate a falsehood like that. -- So I closed the restaurant. I closed it that day. -- And I thought, the first days after I did, that I'd closed the restaurant for good. How could I do it now? How could it work? The restaurant was finished. It was over. It was nothing. I had nothing.

(pauses a beat, looks at the floor-- this is some real godamn shit man; but then he looks up)

But out of nothing: suddenly, two days ago, I realized. Kat's meal was the perfect meal. That recreation of the Booth vodka pasta dinner. So... If I wanted to serve people The Perfect Meal... I had to recreate Kat's recreation of Booth's meal. -- It was simple, really, once I thought of it: we went through and did the same things that Booth and I did before; now, we just had to go back through, start from the beginning of Kat's day-- start earlier. Go back through all the things that Kat did that day that she came to the restaurant.

(MORE)

## MYRON (CONT'D)

Recreate her whole day. Get dinners into exactly that experience, exactly the same experience that she had on the day of her meal. The things she did to prepare, the videos she watched to study the meal: everything that set her up to be the perfect customer for that fucking perfect meal. -- She has, graciously, gone out of her way to help-- done everything that we could-- gone back through with us, and documented every last thing that she did, everything she ate, everywhere she went, so that we can recreate it. She sold us her apartment, so that dinners can actually go through the entire day, the same way she did-- the *same* way, down to the last detail.-- Nothing has been overlooked. No moment of her day has been lost. Sleep in her bed. Wake up in her bedroom. Shower in her bathroom with her soap and her shampoo. Nothing missed: we replicated it all. All that she did up to the moment that she came to the restaurant. And then, of course, you go through the dinner service that she went through. Sitting on the couch. Watching the episode of FRIENDS. Eating the vodpas. The same meal. The exact same meal. -- Because: from my destruction, arose this new creation. The new meal. The new experience. A whole day. Every second worked out to set you up for the perfect meal that put the old perfect meal to shame. The most perfect meal.

(a beat: he closes his eyes, nods to himself)

So: our update. The Perfect meal. Reopening. Reservations on the website.

## MONTAGE

A quick montage of a bunch of dinners going through Kat's day: waking up in her bed, showering in her shower, going to the pharmacy and picking up the same meds that she picked up.

All the way up to them all going through the meal itself in the apartment with MYRON (with additional vodka pasta food porn shots). Including them saying the lines about how this episode of FRIENDS they've started is "the one where Phoebe says the N word," and then later, "Damn-- they let Monica get away with a **hard** R." And then on through to the end of the meal. All the "Hey man [thanks for the meal]" speech and everything.

After the meal's over, we seque into...

#### TALKING HEADS

DINER 10

I can't... amazing. Just... I...

DINER 11

Yeah

(laughs out his nose a  
litte, nods in smiling  
disbelief)

Yeah. Yeah. -- Puhh--

DINER 12

I think I can just, like, eat  
raisin bran and stuff from now on.  
Like what's the point. I'll just  
eat uncooked kale. Who cares. --  
It's like, what could compare,  
after that? I can eat all...  
flavorless health food now. All  
taste the same, since I've had  
**that**. -- What could impress me,  
anymore?

DINER 10

Yes. It was worth it. \$5000-- yeah.  
Definitely worth it, no question.

MAUREEN

It's exhilarating. This whole thing--  
- it's been such a creative  
ecstasy, really.

CRITIC 3

Remarkable. Remarkable.

CRITIC 2

I think my review will just be "GO  
THERE." The rest of the page just  
empty. Because there's nothing else  
to be said: Go there. Do the day.  
Eat the pasta.

## CRITIC 3

Critics are supposed to help explain a restaurant, an experience, to you. If you haven't been there, to explain what they have to offer. If you have been there, then to help explain the meal to you: what you tasted. How the tastes came together. What this one note you couldn't quite place-- what that was. -- But with Myron's restaurant: how do you explain this? How do you explain the first time you smelled rain? How do you explain the first time you did drugs? How do you explain getting shot in the face?

## CRITIC 1

I hope we appreciate it. -- I hope we appreciate it, *enough*. -- You always hear stories of great art, great artists, who, in their time, people didn't really understand what they'd done. -- Van Gogh never sold any paintings, Moby Dick sold two copies in one whole year, there were boxes of *The Great Gatsby* gathering dust in a warehouse somewhere, unwanted. -- I hope that we aren't like that. -- I mean, I know that Myron's food is celebrated. But do we celebrate it enough? Do we give it justice? Do we give it the appropriate amount of love? -- I hope we do. I hope I do. -- To be lucky to be alive while this is happening, and to get to revel in it all, as much as it ought to be reveled in-- that-- Well, that... We're so lucky.

## A CLOSING TALKING HEAD

## MYRON

(sitting back, relaxed, a feeling of deepest contentment)

I think that, humans, we're *loved* into shape. If a person loves you, their love transforms you.

(MORE)

## MYRON (CONT'D)

-- Take the beauty and the beast myth: that's the real intuition of that story, the real essential truth behind it. That someone's love for you can change you from a horrible beast to a charming prince. -- We are loved into shape-- Which is why, when a person is unloved, or they feel unloved, then they feel so formless. It's like they're diffuse. They don't even feel like a person anymore, just a vague cloud of worry. -- Until someone loves you. And you, as they say, *come into yourself*. -- And that's what cooking is. That's what making a meal for someone-- I'm sharing my love. I'm sharing my love with you. I make this vodka pasta out of love. My love for my food, for this food: my care, my attention, my sincere hopes for it, that it is good and nourishing and that it is as good and nourishing as I can possibly make it. And that you will like it. That it will fill you and delight you, that you'll have a remarkable meal here. I want to give you the best meal of your life-- So when I'm handing you a bowl of vodka pasta, I'm handing you a bowl of my love. My love made manifest. In noodles and oil and tomatoes and vodka. -- How great is it, that we, as chefs, get to do this. To get to see our love made into a real thing. To be able to hand our love to someone. To be able to watch them take our love into themselves. -- And you: after I hand you that VP, you get to eat it, to eat my love, and to be loved into shape. For that one night, that one night at least, you'll be a whole, complete, **one**, specific, unique person. You'll feel magnificent, wonderf-- Like the beast turned into the prince. Or princess. The prince or princess that you could be, and that you are. With my food in you. With my love in you.

(MORE)

## MYRON (CONT'D)

-- We really, as chefs: of course, we keep people going-- keep them fed, keep them healthy and well. But we don't just maintain them: we create them. You aren't yourself when you're hungry. You are yourself-- you become yourself, when I feed you. -- And how we feed you. How our food inspires this or that flight of fancy. How it emboldens you. How a certain dish can get a whole entire night to feel a certain way. -- We make-- I make life. And I make the people who live it.

(a beat: he looks up, to the side, dreamily)  
Like god.

END CREDITS

The credits roll for a moment.

Then, while the credits keep rolling (maybe to the side), an insert: one last talking head.

## BOOTH

I'm just saying-- It's like: I know that a fantasy camp, obviously, isn't *the exact same* as being a slave-- of course I know that a rock and roll fantasy camp makes you Mick Jagger. -- But-- But. All I'm saying. Is that it would be good, if maybe white people could have even the *slightest* idea of what being a slave-- If we could imagine a little bit what slavery was like. -- I don't think-- It's not like I think that slavery is like a-- like it's a fun fantasy thing to do. I don't want to belittle slaver-- *that's why I want the camps*. It's because I think slavery is so serious. Because I think that slavery was so terrible. Slavery-- I hate slavery. Hate it. Totally. -- Slavery is one of the worst things that I hate the most in the world. -- Not that I think-- "one of the worst"-- I don't mean it to sound like I think there are things worse than slavery-- I mean. Though... Like murder. If you got murdered.

(MORE)

## BOOTH (CONT'D)

Murder is like-- because if you're a slave, at least you're alive, you know? With that one, you'd have to go with slavery. -- If I had to choose, I'd choose slavery, any day. Slavery isn't *that* bad.

(realizes he's just said  
the words "slavery isn't  
that bad.")

Ah-- Fuck.

END