

FOOD TRUCKS

by

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FADE IN:

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

Stainless steel stoves, refrigerators, prep tables, etc.

Photos of vintage food transporters on a wall: an old chuck wagon, an old lunch truck, a truck shaped like a hotdog, etc.

Plastic-gloved hands massage dry rub onto chickens tightly packed on metal skewers.

Hands in oven mitts pull large trays of cupcakes from ovens.

A meat grinder quickly stuffs sausage casings.

The chickens turn on a rotisserie, getting brown and crispy.

Spatulas deftly ice cup cakes.

Hands quickly twirl and twist lengths of casing into individual sausages.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

EMILE OGLETREE, a gay African-American, mid-20s, talks on his cellphone.

EMILE

Jesus, Bradley, at least tell me if you don't want to continue seeing me.

He clicks off.

EMILE (CONT'D)

Why even try?

BEV (O.S.)

Be patient, Emile. It's barely a year since Robert's accident.

EMILE

I'll get the ice into the truck.

He leaves.

BOB and BEV SMITH, early 30s, scrub and dry russet potatoes and put them in stainless steel containers.

They look at each other with expressions of concern for Emile.

Bev wears an apron of pastel pinks and blues. Bob's apron is black.

BOB
Emile needs professional help.

BEV
He needs time.

BOB
He's too impatient to let time heal anything.

Bev tosses her dish towel onto the metal table.

BEV
We should go off the pill.

BOB
Now? We're just starting to save money.

BEV
I thought Joy Hunter was cutting us a check for a hundred-thousand dollars.

BOB
She likes our chicken.

BEV
Get serious.

BOB
Our chicken is more and more popular.

BEV
You're afraid of having a kid, I understand.

Bev picks up a container of potatoes and walks off.

BOB
(calling after her)
Somebody's gonna get a check.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

CHRIS BRAUER, a Little Person, pushing 40, carefully places sausages into a stainless steel container.

CHRIS
Kielbasas don't pick up we'll do a
garlicky pork brat.

SAM (O.S.)
But the kielbasas were your
grandfather's favorite.

CHRIS
I'll lay a rose on his grave. He'll
understand.

SAM MORRIS, mid-20s and very tall, comes to Chris's side. He wears a Charlotte Hornets tee and cap.

SAM
How was yesterday?

CHRIS
Just under fifteen-hundred.

PHIL MORRIS, mid-20s and very tall, comes to Chris's other side. He wears plastic rimmed glasses secured with an elastic band.

PHIL
Better each week.

CHRIS
You guys ever figure what you
averaged a day with the Hornets?

SAM
Phil wasn't there long enough to do
the math.

PHIL
Sam was there long enough. He
couldn't do the math.

CHRIS
Double coverage on the links, guys.

PHIL/SAM
(ad lib)
Right, coach./You got it, coach.

They each grab a container of sausages and leave.

Chris folds his arms on the table and stares glumly into space.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

MAI LING WONG, Chinese-American princess, early 20s, attractive, elegant, ices a cup cake as she moves her tongue over her lips. Enjoys what she's doing.

To one side, MALKA STEIN, Brooklyn, early 20s, talks on her cellphone

MALKA

Mother, some how you always turn our conversation into law school versus cupcakes.

(listens)

I know you don't do it intentionally.

(listens)

Okay. I'll call you Tuesday.

She clicks off with a sigh of exasperation.

ASTRID NAVARRO, a beautiful Mexican-American, early 20s, walks up carrying a tray of iced cup cakes.

ASTRID

Be happy you have a Jewish mother. My mother, mi mami, would be happy if I married the paper delivery boy long as we had lots of kids.

MAI LING

Our cupcake truck horrifies my parents. They want me to marry a nice Chinese-American boy who'll make lots of money.

MALKA

Your family's loaded, Mai Ling. You should ask them to set us up in a brick and mortar.

MAI LING

Yeah, when Justin Bieber retires. My mother's afraid I'll sprain my wrist icing a cupcake.

ASTRID

Try my shoes on, guys. I could be deported to Mexico, a country I hardly remember.

MALKA

My mother thinks I'll be happier in
law school.

Bev and Chris pass by with stainless steel food containers.

BEV

You can't do something to be happy.
Happiness is what happens.

Chris piggy-backs sarcastically on Bev's comment.

CHRIS

(sing song)

It's not what happens to you in
life. It's how you accept it and
what you do about it.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - LATER

The nine chefs sit around the kitchen with coffees.

Bob reads a weekly advertizer.

INSERT - ALTERNATIVE WEEKLY, whose masthead reads:

"OUT AND ABOUT"

BACK TO SCENE

BOB

(reading)

Listen to this: "Food trucks
continue to multiply throughout the
city. And the diversity and quality
of the food they offer is becoming
ever more remarkable. Surely there
is one truck out there that
deserves a brick and mortar
establishment in which to sell its
fare? We shall see, we shall soon
see."

He looks up at the others.

BOB (CONT'D)

From Joy Hunter's weekly column
"Honey and Vinegar".

BEV

Chris, you guys been selling the
hell out of your sausages.

(MORE)

BEV (CONT'D)

Joy Hunter just might help you put down some roots and quit the nomadic life.

CHRIS

Sometimes I wish my grandfather had never gotten into charcuterie.

EMILE

God, Chris, you can be such a downer.

CHRIS

Some people are given lemons in life. And some manage to make lemonade.

SAM

Me and my brother got bum knees, is what we got.

CHRIS

I got three dog turds --

Suddenly there is the LOUD CLANG of a DINNER BELL.

MAY THOMAS comes marching in carrying a big platter of scrambled eggs and bacon and toast following by GUS, who runs a striker around the inside of a triangle.

May is overweight, country and in her 60s.

Gus, mid-50s, is the personification of a wiry fry cook, complete with the little white hat.

MAY

Git it while it's hot, cowboys and cowgirls.

The chefs AD LIB their surprise and appreciation.

MAY (CONT'D)

Cain't go off in your trucks now with empty stomachs.

Every one grabs a fork and eats off the big platter.

SAM

How do you get eggs to come out like this?

MAY

Slow, slow cooked with cream and butter.

May is off kilter today.

BEV
You okay, May?

MAY
A step slower, honey. But old
rockin' chair ain't got me yet.

She hugs Bev and waves to the others as she leaves.

BEV
I worry about May.

SAM
Her business down? Sell these eggs.

CHRIS
A slow butter and cream scramble?
She couldn't feed twenty-five
people in an hour.

SAM
Five to one they say.

PHIL
Five to one? Hath Sam a pearl of
wisdom for us?

SAM
Get five dollars back for every
dollar you put into food.

BOB
Were it that simple.

Chris gathers the dirty forks and places them in the sink.

CHRIS
Nothin's simple.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Three food trucks leave the lot.

Signs on trucks read:

"CRISPY CHICK"

"THREE CUPCAKES: CUP CAKES SWEET AND MUFFINS SAVORY"

"LINKS, LTD.".

EXT. BUSINESS PARK - DAY

Several office buildings surrounded by attractive landscaping with wide cement steps leading down to a parking lot.

EXT. PARKING LOT

The three trucks are parked along one side of the lot.

Other food trucks are also parked there.

The crews of the three trucks get ready for the office building lunch crowd.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

Crispy brown chickens turn slowly in a rotisserie.

Emile removes one of the skewers and sits it on a cutting board.

Bev puts a potato in a French fry maker, pulls the handle and the potato falls into ready-to-cook French fries.

Bob puts a stainless steel container of cole slaw into the service buffet.

Bev drops cut fries into two deep fryers.

Oil bubbles strongly.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

Bev looks out the serving window toward the office buildings.

She sees people coming out of the lobbies.

BEV

Here they come.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

Phil and Sam move about the kitchen with difficulty because of their height.

Chris grills sausages.

CHRIS

Don't hit your head on the rim,
guys.

Sam bumps his head on the edge of the smoke hood above the stove.

SAM
Son of a bitch!

PHIL
(condescending)
Maybe we should have a portable grill outside.

CHRIS
My next food truck? Little People only.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

Malka and Mai Ling set out rows of cupcakes and muffins.

MALKA
Sell every fucking one today, girls.

Mai Ling smiles enthusiastically at her profanity.

MAI LING
(learning to swear)
Every fucking one.

Astrid looks out the serving window.

She sees a throng of office workers coming down the steps toward the food trucks.

Among them is a woman in a bright red suit in the company of several acolytes.

ASTRID
Shit. Here she comes. Here comes Joy Hunter.

EXT. BUSINESS PARK STEPS

JOY HUNTER, a well-tended mid-40s, descends the steps like the outrageous food celebrity and editor that she is, holding court, looking all about and waving now and again to persons she knows.

A FUSSY MAN, maybe fifty, is right in step with her, his clipboard at the ready.

Others from her office try to walk in her aura of light.

A woman approaches Joy with a magazine in one hand and a felt tip pen in the other.

AUTOGRAPH SEEKER

Ms. Hunter, could you sign my copy
of Toque?

INSERT - TOQUE MAGAZINE

Joy signs the cover.

BACK TO SCENE

Joy hands the magazine back to the woman.

AUTOGRAPH SEEKER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

JOY HUNTER

George, have one of the girls take
an order of May's mac 'n cheese and
short ribs up to Steven in
accounting.

FUSSY MAN (GEORGE)

Lynn, mac 'n cheese, short ribs to
Steven.

LYNN

On it.

She peels off from the group.

JOY HUNTER

Keep me away from May's truck,
George. High caloric
ambrosia. I'll gain a ton.

GEORGE

Your word my duty, Ms. Hunter.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

They walk up to the Crispy Chick truck.

GEORGE

(to Bev)

One thigh a half side of slaw,
please.

Bev hands George the anticipated order without pause who, in
turn, passes it to Joy.

Joy takes a bite of chicken and gestures a hello to Bob and Bev and Emile.

JOY HUNTER
(loudly)
Love it!

Bob and Bev smile in return.

Joy takes a bite of slaw and chews it thoughtfully.

JOY HUNTER (CONT'D)
Slice the cabbage thinner.

Bob and Bev's smile flickers.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

Joy and George approach the service window of Links, Ltd.

Chris serves orders of sausage to two couples who quickly walk away.

GEORGE
Just a Regular Dog, light on the
mustard and a bit of sweet relish.

JOY HUNTER
There was a piece of gristle in
your brat last week, Chris.

CHRIS
(conceals annoyance)
I'll not stop until I find the
responsible party.

SAM
A joy to see you, Joy.

He hands Joy's order to George.

JOY HUNTER
Still the best basic hot dog in the
city, you guys. Keep it up.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

A potted begonia sits on the counter.

Malka hands order after order of cupcakes and muffins out the service window of her truck.

Mai Ling takes the money and makes the change.

Joy and George approach.

Joy takes a last bite of her hot dog.

MALKA

Hi, Joy. Nice to see you.

JOY HUNTER

Hi, Malka. Nice to see you.
Let's try a red velvet.

Malka hands her the cupcake on a small paper plate.

Joy takes a bite and chews for a moment and then frowns.

JOY HUNTER (CONT'D)

It had a better crumb last week.

A flicker of annoyance crosses Malka's face.

RUSSIAN MUSIC suddenly fills the air and grows quickly louder.

All heads turn in its direction.

EXT. PARKING LOT

A new food truck has pulled into the lot.

A sign emblazoned on its side reads: "THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING!, THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING!".

The truck flies the Russian flag.

YURI, SASHA and OLGA KERENSKY, all mid-20s, get out.

The men are dashing, the woman, out of a Russian fairy tale.

Yuri and Sasha wear tunics and sailor hats, Olga a colorful peasant dress, her hair in blonde braids around her head.

As the truck's P. A. blares Russian music the two men energetically perform a cossack dance, squatting and kicking and then locking arms with their backs to each other, while their sister claps them on.

Then Olga executes turns of a graceful folk dance while her brothers improvise dance steps.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Moving with balletic grace, Olga and Yuri begin to distribute kabobs among the crowd, which includes Joy Hunter.

Joy watches in fascination.

In a city-ordinances-be-damned gesture, Sasha distributes small plastic glasses of vodka among the crowd.

Malka, Phil, and Bob stand nearby, sober witnesses to their new competition.

Olga hands a kabob to Joy Hunter.

OLGA

(in Russian; subtitled)

Have you ever tried shashlik?

(in English)

Have ever you tried shashlik?

JOY HUNTER

Shashlik? I love shashlik!

Yuri and Sasha hand kabobs to Malka and Bob.

YURI

(to Phil)

You not get one. You big enough already.

Phil frowns at him, embarrassed.

JOY HUNTER

Oh, my God, the best shashlik I ever had.

Bob and Malka look at each other as they sample their shashlik.

Their expression as they chew confirms their fears. The shashlik is superb.

Joy and several of her acolytes lift their glasses in a toast.

JOY HUNTER (CONT'D)

Not much work's getting done this afternoon.

Phil touches his glass to those of Bob and Malka.

PHIL

Look at the bright side. Free
vodka.

Joy starts moving her entourage back toward the office
complex.

JOY HUNTER

About time this city got a Russian
food truck.

EXT. STREET WITH RESTAURANTS AND BARS - NIGHT

Individuals and couples out on the town stroll along the
brightly lit street.

EXT. SIDE STREET

The three food trucks are parked along the curb.

The late night crowd snakes along the street.

There are customers in front of each truck.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

THROUGH the service window of the Crispy Chick truck.

TIPSY CUSTOMER

The half chicken, fries, slaw.

Bob places half a chicken on a paper plate along with a
handful of fries and a spoonful of slaw.

Emile hands the plate to the customer who, somewhat
unsteadily, begins to walk away.

EMILE

Your change --

The customer answers with a wave of his hand.

A young couple is next in line.

YOUNG MAN

Two fries and two medium colas.

BEV

When you went out any sign of that
Russian truck?

BOB
They're probably in a dacha
somewhere counting their money.

BEV
Vodka. That was ballsy.

EMILE
They're Russians. What'd you
expect?

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - NIGHT

A line has formed in front of May's truck.

A sign next to the service window reads: "MAY'S HOME COOKED."

FAT WOMAN
The meatloaf with the mac n' cheese
and baked beans. A piece of
chocolate cake, too.

MAY
Meat, mac, baked.

INT. FOOD TRUCK - COUNTER

May's daughter, JOANIE, 40, places meatloaf, mac 'n cheese
and beans on one paper plate.

Gus places the cake on another.

EXT. SERVICE WINDOW

May hands the plates to the customer.

The customer walks away carefully holding on to the two
plates.

JOANIE
We're down to three meat loaves and
two macs, mom.

MAY
Let's call it a night, guys.

GUS
I'll take a meat loaf and a mac
home with me.

May frowns and stares out the service window.

INT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

THROUGH service window.

CUPCAKE DEVOTEE

A dozen of the red velvet and a
dozen of the orange zest with
creamed cheese icing.

MAI LING

Forty-eight dollars please.

Mai Ling takes the money.

INT. SERVICE WINDOW

She hands the box of cupcakes to the customer.

MAI LING

We make twenty four cupcakes; we
get forty-eight dollars. It feels
so good. I never earned money
before. It was always given to me.

MALKA

Good girl.

Astrid looks out the service window.

She sees a big man in mirror sunglasses and safari shirt
approach the window.

BIG MAN

Give me any three of your cupcakes,
honey.

He lays six dollars on the counter.

Astrid quickly puts three cakes on a plate and hands them to
him.

He takes a bite of one.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)

Now that is to die for.

He takes in the scene while he chews.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)

Where you from?

Astrid doesn't want to answer his question.

ASTRID
San Antonio.

BIG MAN
Read that forty-four percent of San
Antonions speak Spanish.

ASTRID
Texas used to be part of Mexico. Go
figure.

BIG MAN
You speak Spanish?

ASTRID
Some.

BIG MAN
Wife and I were in Mexico once. Not
one cupcake. Lotta shitty pastries
though. Shit language too. But hey,
that's my opinion.

He finishes his first cupcake.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)
Git down to Mexico much?

ASTRID
Nogales. A few times.

Man pulls a small notebook from his shirt pocket and jots
something down in it.

BIG MAN
Bet I see you again, honey.

The man saunters off.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

Malka and Mai Ling come to Astrid's side.

There are looks of concern on their faces.

ASTRID
That ass hole could make a lot of
trouble for someone like me.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

Chris leans on the service window counter with his chin in his hands.

A man stands off to one side and stares at him.

CHRIS
You wanna sausage or are you just gonna gawk at me?

STARING MAN
(embarrassed)
Sorry.

He quickly walks away.

Two customers stand nearby eating their hot dogs.

Chris watches them disinterestedly.

HAPPY CUSTOMER #1
That guy's grandfather started Links, Ltd. out of a pushcart.

HAPPY CUSTOMER #2
I've tried everything they make. It's all great.

CHRIS
(sarcastic, to self)
"It's all great."

Sam comes to the window.

SAM
What'd you say, boss?

CHRIS
I said wouldn't it be great if we were in Miami.

SAM
What's wrong with L.A.? Not as humid here.

CHRIS
(sarcastic)
Oh. Right, Sam. I forgot about the humidity.

INT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

THROUGH service window.

A full-of-himself PUNK in a leather jacket and a pompadour comes up to the service window.

PUNK
Why three cupcakes?

MALKA
Because there are three of us.

Young man looks puzzled.

MALKA (CONT'D)
Cupcake is an old slang word for a pretty girl.

PUNK
Okay... So what are muffins savory?

MALKA
Not sweet. They have cheese or bacon in them.

PUNK
Why don't you call them savory muffins?

MALKA
Muffins savory sounds classier.

PUNK
Give me two.

Malka hands him a plate.

PUNK (CONT'D)
You look classy. When do you get off?

MALKA
I don't get off.

PUNK
We could have a beer.

MALKA
We could. But I'm disinclined.

PUNK
You a smart ass cupcake maker?

MALKA

In Brooklyn you're what we call a scutch. And you probably don't know what disinclined means.

The young man turns and walks off.

PUNK

God damned bitch.

Mai Ling comes to Malka's side and looks at her admiringly.

MAI LING

I wish I could handle myself like you.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Malka puts a spoonful of sugar in her coffee and slowly stirs.

MALKA

(doing Joy Hunter)

"It had a better crumb last week."
We make 'em the same every time for cryin' out loud.

EMILE

Tocque is a hoity toity food magazine. So Joy thinks she knows everything.

CHRIS

(mock chastised)

Our brats got gristle.

BEV

She'd pan Julia Child's boeuf bourguignon.

BOB

Out one side of her mouth our slaw's got the perfect tang, out the other the cabbage is too thick.

PHIL

What'd you expect? She calls her weekly column "Honey and Vinegar."

Malka takes a sip of coffee and abruptly spits it out.

MALKA

Some asshole put salt in the sugar bowl.

BEV

How sophomoric.

CHRIS

Don't look at me. I can't reach the spice rack.

PHIL

Gotta be someone who has access to the kitchen. Probably Sam.

SAM

The Russians!

ASTRID

Too sophisticated for that sort of thing.

BOB

Those guys are going to be serious competition.

CHRIS

We gotta get proactive with them if any of us has a chance of getting the nod from Joy Hunter.

A DOOR OPENS and there is the sound of voices.

BEV

Speak of the devil.

The three Russians, wearing black leather jackets, stand looking in the direction of the nine chefs.

The chefs look at the three Russians.

Olga takes her brothers' hands in hers and walks up to the chefs, as if coming downstage for a curtain call.

With flourishes and bows.

OLGA

I am Olga.

YURI

I am Yuri.

SASHA

I am Sasha.

The chefs AD LIB niceties a little stiffly.

SAM

Like a cup of coffee? We have cream and sugar too.

OLGA

How kind of you. But we have to set our kitchen. Up.

She looks at Phil and flicks her eyes.

PHIL

Some other time then.

YURI

Some other time yes.

The Russians walk back to their kitchen area.

BOB

Phil, I think Olga has an eye for you.

Phil seems pleased to hear this.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW - DAY

Mai Ling waters the begonia plant that sits on the service counter.

It's lunch time at the business park.

Mai Ling looks out at the office workers milling about.

She sees Joy Hunter and her entourage go by.

Joy wears an artist's smock and a beret.

She sees Mai Ling and waves.

JOY HUNTER

The Russian truck has pirozhki today! I'll try to save room for a cupcake.

Mai Ling waves weakly to her.

Malka puts her hand on Mai Ling's shoulder.

MALKA

Gotta come up with something wild to counter shashlik and pirozhki.

ASTRID
A cupcake flambé anyone?

Bev walks up to their window.

BEV
I'm getting us all pirozhki. Know
your enemy they say.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Joy and her entourage stand eating their pirozhki near the
Russian truck.

JOY HUNTER
Shashlik and pirozhki. A one-two
punch.

The entourage AD LIBS approval of her metaphor.

Bev approaches the service window.

BEV
Hello, Olga.

OLGA
Oh, hi. You're chicken woman.

BEV
Beverly Smith.

OLGA
Want pirozhki?

BEV
Ten.

She hands Olga a bill.

BEV (CONT'D)
Come by our trucks and try our
food.

OLGA
We promise.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Bev, Emile and Phil stand outside the Links, Ltd. truck.

Chris and Sam are at the service window.

All eat pirozhki.

PHIL
These'll fly out of their truck.

SAM
(to Chris)
Can't we come up with some Super
Duper Dog?

Chris stares hard at Sam and then looks off as if at the approach of the sausages of the apocalypse.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

May and Joanie put food on plates at the food station.

May has a pained look. She perspires.

JOANIE
Mom, you look like you've run a
marathon. Sit down for a while.

MAY
We git a restaurant I'm gonna
double A. C. the kitchen.

JOANIE
It's not hot in here. You should
make another appointment with
Doctor Young.

MAY
I seen Doctor Young. Said I been
rid hard and put away wet too many
times.

JOANIE
Well see him again. You gotta hose
come loose. A person gits to an age
--

MAY
Enough, Joanie. Okay?

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Astrid opens the two doors of a cabinet and looks. She opens another cabinet.

ASTRID
Mai Ling, where's the flour?

MAI LING
Where it always is.

ASTRID
Not there now. Baking powder's gone
too.

Malka opens more cabinets.

MALKA
Flour-less baking is becoming more
popular but this is ridiculous.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Sam walks up to Chris, who writes on a clipboard.

SAM
You're not gonna believe this.

CHRIS
L.A.'s getting a football team?

SAM
The pork's gone.

CHRIS
(matter of fact)
Where'd it go?

SAM
There's none in the fridge or the
freezer.

CHRIS
Jesus, we had over three-hundred
pounds yesterday.
(pause)
How many links we got total?

SAM
Forty or fifty.

CHRIS
Shit. We're shut down for the day.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Emile exits a walk-in freezer.

EMILE
We got a problem.

Bob and Bev walk over to Emile.

BOB
What?

EMILE
The chickens have flown the coop.

BEV
Meaning?

EMILE
The coop is empty.

BOB
We had three-hundred chickens in there.

EMILE
Not any more.

BEV
What about the fridge?

EMILE
Let's look.

The three walk over to the refrigerators.

Bev opens one.

A single wrapped chicken sits in the now empty fridge.

BEV
A hundred chickens in here yesterday.

BOB
No way Sal can get more chicken to us for today.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Mai Ling sets a pastry box on a stainless steel table.

MAI LING
I had an idea.

MALKA
We're all ears.

MAI LING

The Brown Derby restaurant was the culinary center of Hollywood during its golden age. And its most famous dessert was the Grapefruit Cake Brown Derby.

Mai Ling lifts the lid of the pastry box.

Inside are a dozen cupcakes with thick white icing and a section of pink grapefruit on each one.

ASTRID

Don't tell me --

MAI LING

Miniatures of the Grapefruit Cake Brown Derby.

Malka takes one and removes its paper baking cup. She takes a bite.

MALKA

There's grapefruit inside too!

Astrid and Mai Ling both take a cupcake.

MAI LING

The grapefruit's texture and tang compliment the soft crumb of the cake and the smooth sweetness of the icing.

ASTRID

What a brilliant idea! Absolutely delicious.

MALKA

I predict our best selling cupcake.

Mai Ling is proud of her original contribution to their truck's business.

Her eyes fill with tears.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Chris stands on a step behind a stainless steel table.

On it sit a food processor, a stand mixer and a large bowl of ground meat.

CHRIS

Five pounds of pork shoulder
through a medium die. After thirty
minutes in the freezer through a
small die. So far its got salt,
pepper, mace, nutmeg, ground ginger
and fresh sage.

SAM

(inhales)
Smells good already.

CHRIS

The secret ingredient.

He holds up what look to be dried strips of toast.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Rusk.

PHIL

(British)
Rusk, you say.

CHRIS

Just a simple English biscuit. Hot
oven for ten minutes. Then lower
the heat and give it another ten
minutes. Leave out overnight so it
gets stale.

Chris drops the dried biscuits into a food processor and
quickly turns them into crumbs.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

This stuff holds water like nothing
else. Keeps them juicy. Put it into
thirty-two millimeter hog casings.

SAM

Then fry 'em up?

CHRIS

No. Poach 'em twenty minutes in one-
hundred forty-nine degree water.

(pause)

You heard me. One-hundred forty-
nine degree water.

PHIL

(British)
A fussy sausage, really.

SAM

Then brown them.

CHRIS

Exactly. Other wise they pop open.
They don't call them bangers for
nothing.

SAM

Then?

CHRIS

Over mashed potatoes with onion
gravy.

PHIL

Bangers 'n mash may be our
lifesaver, coach.

SAM

Can I run something by you guys?

Sam has a guitar in his hand.

PHIL

Not the "Concierto de Aranjuez,"
Sam. It's too highbrow for
sausages.

Sam ignores Phil and begins to sing.

SAM

"Ten fat sausages sizzling in a pan
Ten fat sausages sizzling in a pan
One went pop and another went bang
There were eight fat sausages
sizzling in a pan.

(strums transition chords)

Eight fat sausages sizzling in a
pan
Eight fat sausages sizzling in a
pan
One went pop and another went bang
There were six fat sausages
sizzling in a pan."
ETC.

PHIL

You just neutralized the bangers 'n
mash.

SAM

Mom used to sing us that song.

CHRIS

Let's save it for when we're in the rest home.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Emile stands behind a stainless steel table.

Bob and Bev stand on the other side.

EMILE

I've come up with something.

A small deep fryer stands on a stainless steel table. Beside it is a large mandolin and some food containers.

Behind Emile is a stove on which sits a large skillet.

Emile reaches into a container and pulls out a large bun.

EMILE (CONT'D)

A brioche bun. Parisian Bakery has a good price on lots of fifty.

He slices it with a knife, turns, and places the two halves in the skillet.

EMILE (CONT'D)

Toast the cut sides.

He quickly slices an un-peeled potato on the mandolin.

He places the toasted halves of brioche on a plate.

He gathers the slices of potato and drops them in the deep fryer.

EMILE (CONT'D)

A simple chicken salad. All white meat. Some diced green onion and dill pickle. Homemade mayo. Black pepper.

He places a scoop of salad onto a half of the brioche.

He reaches into another container.

EMILE (CONT'D)

A zucchini pickle. Just one night in the brine.

He removes the basket from the oil and hangs it on the fryer so the chips can drain.

EMILE (CONT'D)

A little sea salt. Voilà. Utter simplicity. Sell it for seven ninety-nine.

Bev takes the sandwich and holds it up to Bob who takes a bite. Then she takes a bite.

BEV

Very good.

Bev and Bob help themselves to the pickle and the chips.

BOB

The zuke pickle is a perfect touch.

BEV

Who doesn't like home-made potato chips?

Bob studies the plate of food.

BOB

There's something familiar about this dish.

Bev also looks at it carefully.

BEV

(remembering)

Callie from Kalamazoo!

BOB

Oh, my God, she blew us all out of the water with this combination.

EMILE

Found it in my old notes from Dr. Peal's Menu Planning class. The zucchini pickle recipe from Callie's grandfather's deli was in there.

Bev walks around the table and hugs Emile.

BOB

Good work, Emile.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Bev mixes spices at a stainless steel table.

She looks up and starts.

She sees a good-looking African-American couple in their mid-60s. DR. ALEX OGLETREE and DR. MAVIS BAILEY OGLETREE.

The cut of their dress says jazz musicians or actors.

ALEX

Didn't mean to startle you.

MAVIS

The door was open.

BEV

It's okay. We seldom see people we don't know in here.

ALEX

Emile Ogletree. Is he here?

BEV

(over shoulder)

Emile, you've got visitors.

Emile glides in carrying a tray of chickens. He sees the Ogletrees.

EMILE

Uncle Alex! Aunt Mavis!

He sets the tray on the table and goes over and hugs his aunt and uncle.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - LATER

Alex and Mavis have quickly befriended the other chefs.

ALEX

From what you tell me, it's not one-hundred percent the Russians ran off with your supplies.

MAVIS

The sooner you put to rest any suspicion about them the better.

BOB

I agree.

(beat)

What part of New Orleans do you live in Dr. Ogletree?

ALEX

Alex, please. The Garden District. Near the French Quarter.

EMILE

Aunt Mavis will solve all your life issues. She's a psychologist. Uncle Alex any drugs you need. He's a psychiatrist.

BOB

More coffee, Alex? Sorry no chicory.

ALEX

Chicory's overrated.

BEV

Are you both still working?

ALEX

Pretty much retired. I fiddle with my collection of jazz photos and do some counseling with seniors.

MAVIS

I'm teaching a painting class at a local community college.

EMILE

Aunt Mavis is famous for her paintings of New Orleans.

MAVIS

Paul Picasso is famous. Mavis Bailey is small potatoes.

ALEX

So we got chicken, cup cakes and sausages.

MAVIS

Three Cupcakes. Well you girls certainly are pretty.

MALKA

(to the other two)
She gets it.

MAVIS

Cupcakes a stepping stone to something else?

MALKA

Me a high end baker. And I've applied to law school.

ALEX
Law school your idea?

MALKA
My mother's. My father was a
muckety-muck lawyer in Brooklyn.

ALEX
What does he say?

MALKA
Not a whole lot. He died.

ALEX
Oh, I'm sorry.

MAVIS
What about you...

ASTRID
... Astrid.

MAVIS
Astrid?

ASTRID
I gotta get into college. Otherwise
I could be deported.

ALEX
You're here illegally.

ASTRID
Since I was a little girl. I don't
even have a driver's license.

MAVIS
I'm sorry, honey. That's an awful
way to live.

ALEX
Where will cupcakes take you, Mai
Ling?

MAI LING
It's silly...

MAVIS
Silly is doing the same thing over
and over and expecting different
results.

MAI LING
I want to be an independent woman.

MAVIS
Raised a Chinese-American princess?

Mai Ling is amazed at Mavis's acuity.

MAVIS (CONT'D)
Honey, I've counseled a lot of
young women like you.

SAM
You've got guts, Mai Ling.

ALEX
(to Sam)
Son, I've seen you...
(to Phil)
... and your brother before. On a
basketball court.

CHRIS
Jeez, what do they know about me?

PHIL
We were with the Hornets. Not long.

SAM
We got glass knees.

MAVIS
Basketball to bratwurst.

PHIL
We went to culinary school before
the NBA.

SAM
Chris was kind enough to offer us
hands on work.

ALEX
Emile told me in an e-mail your
grandpappy taught you how to make
sausages.

CHRIS
He did. It's served me well. But
I've about come to the end of my
links.

MAVIS
Then what?

CHRIS
(laughing)
Maybe we can figure it out
together, Doctor.

MAVIS
Maybe we can.

ALEX
Mavis and I know all about Bob and
Bev. They convinced Emile to go to
culinary school with them.

BEV
We love Emile.

EMILE
(eyes closed; to self)
Now or never.
(opens eyes)
Uncle Alex, Aunt Mavis, I've come
out. I'm gay.

Alex fixes his gaze on Emile for several beats.

ALEX
I knew you were gay when you were
five years old.

Emile is stunned.

Then he is all smiles.

MAVIS
Bless your heart, Emile.

Chris puts a hand to his forehead and closes his eyes.

CHRIS
Alex, Mavis. I'm thinking of a
card...

Everyone laughs.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - LATER

Everyone is drinking beer.

ALEX
So you think this rich editor is on
the verge of setting up one food
truck in a brick and mortar, out
of, what?, twenty trucks?

BOB

Exactly.

MAVIS

So most of you will have to continue working out of your truck or find something else to do.

BEV

Until recently we were pretty sure it would be one of our trucks in the brick and mortar.

PHIL

Until the Russkies started a real food fight.

MAVIS

Inside or out, the food purveyance business is a bitch.

CHRIS

It's turning me into Rumpelstiltskin.

EMILE

You're like clockwork, Chris.

Alex stands and raises his bottle of beer.

ALEX

Listen, Mavis and I cook for you all tomorrow on your night off.

EXT. BUSINESS PARK - PARKING LOT - FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Phil and Astrid approach the Russian food truck.

A sign taped near the service window reads:

"PELMENIS"

INT. FOOD TRUCK

Olga looks through the service window.

She sees Phil and Astrid coming toward the truck.

OLGA

(in Russian; subtitles)
Here come Phillip and the Mexican.

Phil and Astrid come up to the service window.

PHIL
Not sure what pelmenis are but
we'll take eighteen of them.

ASTRID
Hi, Olga.

Sasha and Yuri get on the pelmenis.

OLGA
You still believe we stole chicken
and pork?

ASTRID
Guess we wouldn't be here if we
did.

Yuri comes to the window.

YURI
Hola, Astrid.

ASTRID
Hola, Yuri.

PHIL
I love your blonde braids.

Olga reaches out and touches Phil's glasses.

OLGA
Thank you. Your glasses is cute.

PHIL
(embarrassed)
A leftover from my playing days.

Olga does not understand.

PHIL (CONT'D)
I used to play on a basketball
team.

OLGA
That's why you are tall.

PHIL
I'm not tall because I played on a
team. I played on a team because
I'm tall.

Olga puts her hands on her hips and gives him an impatient look.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Sorry. Sometimes I get flustered
around women.

Olga hands them the pelmenis.

OLGA
American men fluster easy.

ASTRID
You guys gotta come try our new
dishes.

PHIL
We invented them because of you.

Astrid gives him a look.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

Chris sits in the service window.

The other chefs stand outside the Links Ltd. truck.

They eat the pelmenis.

ASTRID
Simple dumplings, actually.

PHIL
Every nation has something akin to
the pelmeni.

BOB
They're good.

BEV
But not up to the pirozhki.

MAI LING
I agree.

CHRIS
Browning pelmenis improves them.

SAM
So the Russians aren't perfect.

EMILE

They put their pants on one leg at a time.

PHIL

Olga looks pretty perfect to me.

The others react with surprise at Phil's admission.

EXT. BUSINESS PARK STEPS

The lunch crowd descends the steps toward the food truck area.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Chris serves sausage plates to several customers.

A sign taped near the service window reads:

"BANGERS AND MASH"

INT. FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Joy comes up to the window. She is in tight jeans and a long sleeved blouse with the cuffs turned up.

JOY HUNTER

I like trucks that try new dishes.
Just one banger, Chris.

CHRIS

Where's your entourage?

JOY HUNTER

George is out of town. The girls
are brown bagging it. We go to the
printer in two days.

Joy looks into the truck's interior.

JOY HUNTER (CONT'D)

Phil, you and your brother should
wear hard hats in there.

Sam wears a Band-Aid on his forehead.

PHIL

Good idea. Sam can't afford to keep
banging his head.

Chris hands Joy her order.

She takes a bite of sausage and potato together.

JOY HUNTER

The banger is light as a feather
and fragrant with nutmeg and
ginger. Onion gravy is usually
missing something. Yours is
perfect.

CHRIS

We did good.

JOY HUNTER

A line of British ex-pats will soon
at your window. Congratulations to
the three of you.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Joy walks up to the service window of the Three Cupcakes.

A sign taped nearby reads:

"GRAPEFRUIT CAKE BROWN DERBY"

JOY HUNTER

Hi, Mai Ling.

MAI LING

Hi, Joy.

JOY HUNTER

My eighty year old father still
asks my mother: "Jeannine, why
didn't you ever learn to make that
grapefruit cake the Brown Derby
used to serve?"

Malka sets one of the cupcakes in front of Joy.

MALKA

And there it is.

Joy takes it carefully into her hands and takes off the
baking cup.

She bites into it slowly.

She begins a little dance.

JOY HUNTER

Oh, my God! Girls what have you done?

ASTRID

Mai Ling created it.

JOY HUNTER

The Brown Derby was before my time.
Now it's part of my food memories.
Thank you, Mai Ling.

Mai Ling puts her hand over her mouth. Her face registers joy.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Joy approaches the service window of Crispy Chick.

Nearby is taped a sign that reads:

"CHICKEN SALAD SANDWICH WITH
HOMEMADE CHIPS"

INT. FOOD TRUCK

Joy stands at the service counter.

JOY HUNTER

Bev, I'm almost afraid to try the chicken salad.

BEV

Why?

JOY HUNTER

The bangers and the grapefruit cake...

BOB

Out of sight, huh?

JOY HUNTER

Lay it on me.

Emile sets a plate on the counter.

Joy takes a bite of the sandwich a little self-consciously.

She chews and reflects.

She eats a potato chip.

She takes a bite of the zucchini pickle.

She comes back to the service window.

JOY HUNTER (CONT'D)

This goes on my Top Ten List of light lunches. Whoever came up with this belongs in the short order hall of fame. Keep it up, guys.

She walks away with a light step.

Bob, Bev, and Emile watch Joy as she walks away. Bev has her arms around the two men

BEV

That would be Callie from Kalamazoo.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - NIGHT

Chris sits at the service window.

Some distance away, Phil and Sam stand in front of the Crispy Chick truck eating chicken and talking to Bev. They turn.

They see a woman, in her 30s, walk up to Chris.

Chris's face lights up in recognition.

The woman hugs Chris and kisses him on the cheek.

The two begin to talk.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - LATER

The woman hugs Chris again before turning and walking away.

INT. FOOD TRUCK - NIGHT

SAM

Who was the good looking woman you were making time with?

CHRIS

Linda?

PHIL

You never mentioned a woman.

CHRIS
She's my sister.

Phil's face registers incomprehension.

SAM
A blood sister?

CHRIS
(mocking political
correctness)
What can I say. Linda is average
size. Notice I didn't say normal
size.

PHIL
So your parents are...

CHRIS
... Little People. I have a brother
and a sister who are also little
people. Linda's the family freak.

SAM
Wow.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW -- LATER

Chris sits glumly looking out the service window.

He sees a dwindling crowd.

BACK TO SCENE

CHRIS
Let's call it a game, guys.

PHIL/SAM (O.S.)
Good idea, coach./Yeah, let's.

CHRIS
Haven't had a customer in fifteen
minutes.

A man in sneakers, jeans, a tee and a sport coat walks up to
the window.

MAN IN SPORT COAT
Got a soft drink?

Chris quickly fills his order.

CHRIS

On the house. We're closed.

MAN IN SPORT COAT

Say, I've noticed you this past couple of weeks.

CHRIS

You want me to come perform for your daughter's birthday party?

MAN IN SPORT COAT

(taken aback)

No, nothing like that.

He fishes a business card out of his shirt pocket.

MAN IN SPORT COAT (CONT'D)

I'm a producer.

CHRIS

Let me guess.

PRODUCER (MAN IN SPORT COAT)

Santa Monica.

CHRIS

You're casting a new fantasy movie.

PRODUCER

Well, we're always looking for more...

He hesitates.

Chris leans toward him.

CHRIS

(draws word out)

... dwarves?

PRODUCER

Well, yeah.

(sips soft drink)

Little People.

CHRIS

Nothing against Warwick Davis or Tony Cox, but I don't see myself dressed in skins and wielding a sword in The Hobbit, Part Ten.

The producer puts his business card on the counter.

PRODUCER

Warwick Davis got two hundred thousand dollars for Willow.

(beat)

In 1988, fer Christ's sake.

CHRIS

I'm sick of sausages but they're a roof over my head. No apology for the mixed metaphor.

PRODUCER

Ah, the nobility of the sausage.

CHRIS

Besides, Warwick Davis can act.

PRODUCER

You're funny. Funny people can act.

Chris picks up the business card and reads it.

CHRIS

Nicholas Q. Bennington? Give me a break.

PRODUCER

Nick.

He smiles, extends a hand to Chris.

Chris reluctantly extends his.

CHRIS

Chris. Brauer.

PRODUCER

Give me a call, Chris. I'm not blowin' smoke.

The producer turns and walks quickly away.

Chris slowly tears the business card in half.

CHRIS

Wise guy.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The three Russians visit the three food trucks.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

They walk toward Links, Ltd.

INT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

They approach the service window.

CHRIS

Do Russians hate Little People as much as they do gays?

OLGA

That not fair.

CHRIS

I apologize. I have a rock in my shoe today.

SASHA

Take it out.

CHRIS

Figure of speech, Sasha.

YURI

We want to share plate of Bangers and Mash.

Phil comes to the window.

PHIL

Hey, Olga. Guys.

OLGA

Hi you, Phil.

CHRIS

What about me?

SASHA

Remember Russians not like Little People.

Sam hands the order to Olga.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

Olga cuts up the bangers. Everyone eats off the single plate.

YURI

What in America is comfort food.

OLGA

Damn tasty.

SASHA

This is only name of British food I know. Russians would eat hell out of this.

The three salute the three chefs in the service window with their forks.

INT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

The three Russians approach the service window.

BEV

Well, look who's here.

YURI

Everyone talk about your chicken.

SASHA

Can we share plate?

BEV

Order, Bob.

OLGA

Phil gave us Bangers and Mash.

BEV

He's cute.

OLGA

I ask him on date, yeah?

Bob hands Sasha the order.

BOB

They say Russian women work fast.

YURI

Russian woman have bad reputation in America.

BEV

Come now, Yuri. That is just a back-handed compliment.

YURI

I don't understand this English.

BEV
American men adore Russian women.
Ergo, American women rag on them.

Emile comes to the window.

EMILE
What is it about Russians and gays?

OLGA
Many Russians keep close-mind and
homophobic.

EMILE
You three seem cool.

OLGA
Believe me, Emile, we are cool.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

The three Russians eat from the single plate.

OLGA
(to Crispy Chick)
Never find chicken this good in
Russia.

SASHA
I like American cole slaw, too.
Crispy like chicken.

YURI
Still has juice.

EXT. PARKING LOT

The Russians walk toward Three Cupcakes.

INT. FOOD TRUCKS - SERVICE WINDOW

They approach the service window.

SASHA
Hellooo. Anybody home.

Astrid comes to the window.

ASTRID
Oh, hi, Sasha. Never thought you
would come by.

YURI
We need our dessert now.

OLGA
Three of your grapefruit cupcakes.

Malka hands them their order.

MALKA
Thanks for coming by, you guys.

Mai Ling comes to window.

MAI LING
What is the most common dessert in
Russia?

SASHA
I like bliny. Pancake with honey or
jam.

OLGA
Apple pirozhki...

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

The three enjoy their cupcakes.

OLGA
(to Cupcakes)
You say in English 'sinful'. I like
that.

YURI
Outstanding.

SASHA
I marry you for these, Astrid.

ASTRID
They were Mai Ling's idea.

SASHA
Then I marry you, Mai Ling.

Mai Ling bows her head shyly. Astrid smirks at Sasha.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Astrid, you not jealous of Mai
Ling?

ASTRID

Russian men are so full of
themselves!

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

All the food truck chefs sit about.

Bob holds a copy of the alternative weekly "OUT AND ABOUT."

BOB

Listen to this.

(reads)

"Last week this veteran food critic
and editor was once again astounded
by the inventiveness of our city's
food trucks. Links, Ltd. offered me
a taste of their new Bangers and
Mash, the likes of which I haven't
tasted since I was in London two
years ago. Three Cupcakes brought
me to my culinary knees with their
resurrection of the old Brown
Derby's Grapefruit Cake. And Crispy
Chick's chicken salad sandwich on a
toasted brioche bun with a side of
homemade potato chips and zucchini
pickle is smart as a whip."

EMILE

We've leveled the playing field.

SAM

Tied the score in the second half.

ASTRID

Thanks to Mai Ling's retro cupcake.

Mai Ling puts her hand over her mouth in modesty.

PHIL

Chris reached into his bag of
tricks and pulled one out.

CHRIS

Anyone know where I put that bag?
Maybe left it on the crosstown bus?

SAM

Chris may be short in stature but
for me he's a giant.

CHRIS
Let us all puke.

BEV
Not to forget Callie from
Kalamazoo.

MALKA
She should get royalties.

BOB
Let's keep an open mind about the
Russians.

SAM
Meaning?

BOB
Someone else could have walked off
with the chickens and the pork
butts and the flour.

EMILE
Maybe. But you rarely see anyone
getting out of a car in this
neighborhood let alone walking
along a sidewalk.

EXT./INT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW - NIGHT

Mai Ling sits looking out the service window.

She sees a SMART ASS, mid 20s, a bottle of beer in his hand,
come up to the window.

SMART ASS
What're the three cupcakes you
sell?

MAI LING
My two partners and I are the three
cupcakes.

The man doesn't understand.

MAI LING (CONT'D)
Cupcake is old school for a pretty
girl.

SMART ASS
Kind of conceited if you ask me.

MAI LING

I don't remember asking you.

Mai Ling covers her mouth and almost laughs at her impolite remark.

SMART ASS

You're kind of rude too. For an Oriental.

MAI LING

Oriental went out with Charlie Chan.

SMART ASS

Meaning?

MAI LING

You want a cupcake?

SMART ASS

I'm not sure I want to give you any money now.

MAI LING

(Brooklyn)

You gotta a lotta shit whichoo.

She can't believe she's talking like this.

SMART ASS

You know where you can put your cupcakes?

MAI LING

Any regrets about not finishing high school?

The man pivots and walks off.

SMART ASS

God damned slant eyes.

Malka comes to Mai Ling's side and looks at her admiringly.

MALKA

(doing Charlie Chan)

For Oriental you getting vely, vely tough.

Mai Ling beams.

EXT. BUSINESS PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Some of the lunch crowd moves toward the "Three Cupcakes" truck.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

Malka sets a tray of grapefruit cupcakes near the serving window.

MALKA

These have been flying off the counter.

ASTRID

Fifteen hundred dollars a day.

MAI LING

Who needs a rich Chinaman husband?

A LARGE WOMAN comes up to their window.

LARGE WOMAN

We're having a retirement party this afternoon. I'll need an assortment of three dozen.

Mai Ling puts cupcakes in pastry boxes.

MALKA

Seventy-two dollars.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

The Large Woman walks away with three pastry boxes.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

Several people stand in line at the service window.

SERIES OF SHOTS

MAN IN SUIT

Dozen of the grapefruit.

WOMAN IN SUIT

One grapefruit, please.

TEENAGER

Two grapefruits.

MECHANIC
Two chocolate icings.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK

Man in Suit walks away from food truck.

He takes a bite of one of his cup cakes and reacts in disgust.

MAN IN SUIT
Christ, that's awful!

The Woman in Suit takes a bite of her cupcake and quickly removes it from her mouth with a napkin.

Teenager takes a big bite of a cupcake and quickly spits it out.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

There is still a line at the service window.

Malka hands a pastry box through the window to a woman along with some change.

The Man in Suit, the Woman in Suit, and the Teenager walk quickly up to the window.

MAN IN SUIT
There's something in your cupcakes.

WOMAN IN SUIT
It puckered my mouth.

TEENAGER
Give me my four dollars back.

MALKA
(to Astrid and Mai Ling)
What the hell?

The line of customers quickly dissolves.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - NIGHT

Malka, Astrid, and Mai Ling bring in their last loads from the truck.

ASTRID
 Why the grapefruit and not the
 others?

MALKA
 It's our cash cow.

MAI LING
 (to Astrid)
 We don't know for sure about the
 others yet.

ASTRID
 You gonna take a little bite of
 everyone we got left?

Malka puts her laptop on the counter. She goes on line.

MALKA
 I think I know what it is.

Astrid and Mai Ling stop what they are doing and look at
 Malka.

MALKA (CONT'D)
 Alum.
 (looking at monitor)
 An astringent compound used in
 medicines.
 (reads)
 Stops bleeding in minor wounds.

MAI LING
 That is not good.

ASTRID
 The bastards.

Malka walks over to canisters. She opens one. Wets a finger
 and sticks it into the canister. She makes a face.

MALKA
 They put it in the sugar.

ASTRID
 That was the sugar we used for the
 grapefruit.

MAI LING
 Bastards!

EXT. STREET WITH RESTAURANTS AND BARS - NIGHT

Individuals and couples out on the town stroll along the brightly lit street.

EXT. SIDE STREET

The three food trucks are parked along the curb.

The late night crowd snakes along the street.

There are customers in front of each truck.

INT. FOOD TRUCK - NIGHT

The women serve customers as everyone speaks.

MALKA

You think Joy Hunter knows about
Cupcake Gate?

SAILOR

Two caramel cupcakes.

ASTRID

How long 'til something like that
fades away?

Mai Ling hands the Sailor his cupcakes and takes his money.

MAI LING

Pretty quick if it doesn't happen
again.

A DRUNK makes an effort to hold up three fingers.

MALKA

You want three cupcakes?

DRUNK

Three, yeah.

MALKA

The grapefruit?

DRUNK

Not fruit. Cupcakes.

MALKA

Three white cakes with chocolate
icing, Astrid.

She takes a ten dollar bill from the man's hand and replaces it with four ones.

She hands the three cup cakes on a paper place to the man.

He walks carefully away as if carrying nitroglycerine.

EXT. THREE FOOD TRUCKS

A line of customers stands at each of the three food trucks's service windows.

A SHADOWY FIGURE, carrying a large box, moves to a tree off to one side of the trucks.

It stops and crouches by the box.

SHADOWY FIGURE

(yelling)

Rats! There are rats coming out of
the rear of these three food
trucks!

The three lines of customers begin to break up as as they react to the warning of the Shadowy Figure.

RATS

Suddenly there are rats running among the feet of the customers.

CUSTOMERS

Rats!/Jesus!/There's one!/There's
another one!/God, there are rats
everywhere!/Don't eat that!

EXT. THREE FOOD TRUCKS

The service windows are closed; the customers are gone.

Bob, Bev, Emile, Malka, Mai Ling, Astrid, and Chris stand about.

Phil and Sam examine the empty box by the tree.

SAM

Son of a bitch had a box of rats.

PHIL

Russian saboteurs?

BEV
Or just bad luck?

EMILE
Ask Sasha and Yuri where they were
tonight.

CHRIS
C'mon. They woulda hired someone.

MALKA
I need some bourbon and a good
night's sleep.

SAM
It's gotta be the God-damned
Russians.

BOB
We gotta have a talk with the
Russians tomorrow.

MAI LING
God-damn rats.

ASTRID
Let's go, Mai Ling.

EXT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - PARKING LOT - MORNING

The three food trucks are parked in their respective spaces.

EXT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DOOR

The nine chefs file out the door and head for their trucks.

Three Cupcakes is the most distant truck; Crispy Chick the
nearest truck.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - CRISPY CHICK

The truck fires to life.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

Bob backs the truck and almost immediately there is a LOUD
BANG.

Bev and Emile AD LIB their surprise.

BOB
Somebody sabotaged the tires! Gotta
warn the others!

He spills out of the cab.

EXT. PARKING LOT - FOOD TRUCKS

Bob runs toward Links, Ltd.

BOB
Don't back up --

Too late. The truck's rear tires BLOW OUT.

Bob turns his attention to Three Cupcakes.

BOB (CONT'D)
Don't back up --

Too late again. The truck's rear tires BLOW OUT.

EXT. PARKING LOT EXIT

The nine chefs stand behind Crispy Chick.

Phil holds up a section of 2 x 4 with three large spikes
protruding from it.

CLOSE on section of 2 x 4.

BACK TO SCENE

PHIL
Silver lining, guys, we only lost
our rear tires.

EMILE
But we're done for the day.

CHRIS
I'll call the police lotta good
it'll do.

SAM
I say pound Yuri and Sasha. Get
some answers.

EXT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The three food trucks are parked in their respective spaces.

EXT. PARKING LOT - FOOD TRUCK

A Shadowy Figure moves near the truck.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - WINDSHIELD

A baseball bat smashes into the windshield.

EXT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - PARKING LOT - DAY

The nine chefs stand among the three food trucks.

They muddle about bewildered, dumbstruck.

All of the trucks's windshields have been knocked in.

BOB

Our outlet panel has been
flattened.

The outlet panel is badly damaged.

Sam stands looking at the panel shaking his head.

SAM

Let me have Sasha and Yuri for two
minutes.

BEV

Give it a rest, Sam.

Sam punches the side of the Crispy Chick truck.

He grabs his hand in pain.

Bev conceals a smile.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mavis and Alex make dinner.

They stand behind a prep table laden with ingredients: sliced
sausages, cubed pork, disjointed chickens, onions, green
peppers, garlic, and so on.

The nine chefs gather around them.

Everyone has a glass of wine.

Alex chops green peppers and onions.

MAVIS

My mother was from Gonzales,
Louisiana. The Jambalaya Capital of
the World.

ALEX

I think ya all see where this is
going.

MAVIS

Chicken Jambalaya.

Positive AD LIBS from the nine chefs.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Mavis holds up two large skillets.

She pours olive oil into each skillet.

She quickly places chicken pieces into them.

The chicken pieces brown in the skillets.

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

Got three cut up fryers in here.
Don't hurry this step. Let each
piece get nice and brown.

Mavis takes chicken pieces from skillets and places them on
two large plates.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

Never had nine chefs watch me cook.

INT. STOVE - SKILLETS

Mavis drops chopped vegetables into the now empty skillets.

MAVIS

We got onion, green pepper,
scallions, garlic, and parsley.
Saute them in the fond and the fat
from the chicken.

BEV

How many times you made jambalaya,
you think?

MAVIS

Honey, I could make jambalaya with
one hand both eyes closed.

INT. STOVE - SKILLETS

Mavis adds ham and pork to the skillets.

MAVIS

Chopped baked ham and three pounds cubed fresh pork. Stir them around until they're nicely browned.

INT. STOVE - SKILLETS

Mavis drops the sliced sausages into the skillets.

ALEX

Chris got up early to make these wonderful Creole sausages.

CHRIS

After working two hours in my silver mine of course.

BOB

What makes a sausage a Creole sausage?

CHRIS

Lots of garlic and Colgin's liquid hickory smoke.

SAM

Isn't liquid smoke cheating?

CHRIS

Not if you need 'em the same day.

Mavis sprinkles spices over the skillets.

MAVIS

Black pepper, salt, cayenne, crushed bay, dried thyme and basil, mace, and a touch of clove.

INT. STOVE - SKILLETS

Mavis finishes adding back the chicken parts.

She pours in rice.

Then she pours in water.

MAVIS (O.S.)

The rice cooks with all these good things. The chicken and sausage fat coats each grain so it stays whole as it absorbs all the flavors.

She covers each skillet.

MAVIS (CONT'D)

I'm ready for another glass of wine.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN

The skillets of jambalaya simmer on the stove.

Every one is rosy from the wine.

Mai Ling and Astrid are putting together a salad.

ALEX

Those of you don't get a restaurant... Can you handle the green-eyed monster?

MALKA

I think we can because we all respect each other's cooking.

MAVIS

I hear those Russians set a pretty good table.

MAI LING

If the Russians win, I'll bite my tongue.

SAM

What green-eyed monster?

Phil takes bread out of the oven.

PHIL

Someone, please bring Sam up to speed.

EMILE

Jealousy.

SAM

Jealousy is a green-eyed monster? I never knew that.

MAVIS
Everyone start in.

ASTRID
The last time Joy Hunter set up a truck in a brick and mortar, some of the other trucks eventually broke up.

MALKA
Yeah, people went in new directions.

Malka puts jambalaya on her plate.

ALEX
(to Malka)
What if you get into law school?

MALKA
I'll be torn. In fact, probably tear my hair.

MAVIS
(to Astrid)
What have you done about your migra problem?

Astrid tosses the salad.

ASTRID
I talked to an immigration lawyer.

ALEX
And?

ASTRID
I'm definitely at risk.

CHRIS
Of being deported?

Astrid nods.

ASTRID
I need to find a way into a college.

ALEX
Girl, that may be tough without a valid I.D.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW - DAY

Chris stares dejectedly out the service window.

He sees an odd-looking man, 50s, in a rumpled suit with a clip board, walking purposefully toward the truck.

CHRIS
Here comes trouble.

Phil looks out the window.

PHIL
Potts!

CHRIS
The rats.

The man, an officious bureaucrat, comes up to the service window.

MAN (POTTS)
Afternoon, gentleman.

Chris and Phil don't respond.

POTTS
If you remember I'm the E. H. S.

The three men still don't respond.

POTTS (CONT'D)
Environmental Health Specialist.

CHRIS
Health inspector.

POTTS
Inspector Potts, if you wish.

PHIL
We kinda were expecting you.

POTTS
Understand you were attacked by a
war party of rodents last week.
(fiddles with clipboard)
Well, we'll check everything out.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

POTTS
Long as I'm here gonna do a full V.
O. I. R.

CHRIS
Let me guess.

POTTS
Vehicle Official Inspection Report.

Potts squats and shines his flashlight along the floor under a counter.

POTTS (CONT'D)
Could use a little elbow grease
down here.

He opens bins and doors and shines his light in.

INT. FOOD TRUCK

Potts puts his flashlight into his back pocket.

POTTS
No sign of vermin.

SAM
The rats came from the Russians.

POTTS
What?

CHRIS
Don't mind him, Inspector.

POTTS
(to Sam)
Young man, what is a comminated
meat?

SAM
Comminated?

POTTS
Comminuted.

Sam struggles to come up with an answer.

POTTS (CONT'D)
Chopped meat! Sausage, man! What
your truck sells.

PHIL

What not just say 'chopped meat'
then?

POTTS

I just did.

(turns back to Sam)

Comminuted meat, sausage, should be
heated to what temperature for how
long?

Sam closes his eyes as if looking for the answer on the back
of his eyelids.

SAM

One sixty-five Fahrenheit for
thirty seconds.

POTTS

Well, at least your sausages will
be safe. Customers may find them a
bit dry.

CHRIS

One fifty-five for fifteen seconds.

POTTS

(rote)

The Food Inspection Bureau
assembled the Retail Food
Inspection Guide to enhance the
understanding of the inspection
process. The Guide is intended to
facilitate the transition of
California retail food safety
programs from the
California Uniform Retail
Facilities Law to the California
Retail Food Code (the C.R.F.C.), a
risk and intervention based
inspection methodology.

(to Sam)

And you haven't read the Inspection
Guide.

Potts picks up a cup.

He looks into it.

POTTS (CONT'D)

Whose cup is this?

SAM

Mine.

POTTS
Ever wash it?

SAM
Now and again.

POTTS
Sanitize it and keep it washed.

SAM
You writing us up for it?

Potts cranes his neck to look behind the stove area.

POTTS
Pretty greasy back of the hot line.

Potts pulls a food thermometer from his front pocket and sticks it in a container of baked beans in the steam table.

He pulls it out and looks at it.

POTTS (CONT'D)
I don't remember which of you is
the P. I. C.?

PHIL
P. I. C.?

POTTS
P. I. C. Person in Charge.

CHRIS
That would be me. I know I'm
forgettable.

POTTS
Those baked beans are at one
thirty.

CHRIS
My thermometer has read them at one
thirty-five for the last five days.

POTTS
But my thermometer is the one that
counts. Baked beans are a common P.
H. F.

PHIL
What is this? The Acronym Show?

POTTS
P. H. F. Potentially Hazardous
Food.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Chris, Phil and Sam wait for Inspector Potts to finish his report.

POTTS
Missed keeping your A rating by one point. Eighty-nine percent.

CHRIS
You're giving us a B rating?

POTTS
You gave yourselves a B rating. I just do the computations.

SAM
Exactly what does a B mean?

POTTS
Now you are "generally good" in food handling practices. Before, you were "generally superior".

He hands Chris the report.

POTTS (CONT'D)
I've indicated the date when you can request another inspection.

Potts checks to make sure he has his thermometer and flashlight.

POTTS (CONT'D)
Good day, gentlemen.

He walks quickly away, then turns.

POTTS (CONT'D)
Those delightful cupcakes, where's that truck?

Phil points out the direction to Potts.

SAM
How was I supposed to know a word like 'comminated'?

CHRIS
Comminuted.

SAM
Comminuuuuuuuted.

CHRIS
(holds up hands)
I absolve you, my child.

PHIL
And I am going to hold off on the
suggestion you start up a Dim Sam
truck.

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - DAY

Warehouses of all sizes cover acres of weedy fields. The
effect is dystopian.

INT. FOOD TRUCK CAB - DAY

Emile is at the wheel. Bob and Bev sit in jump seats.

BOB
Skid row's not far from here.

BEV
We don't have many alternatives.

EMILE
Business down sixty-percent.

BEV
I still don't think it's the
Russians.

EMILE
They're the only ones with anything
to gain.

Bob looks at his cell phone.

BOB
No mention of the rats on our web
site or Twitter in twenty-four
hours.

INT. FOOD TRUCK CAB - DAY

Malka is at the wheel. Astrid and Mai Ling sit in jump seats.

MALKA

Damn whoever fucked with our sugar.

Mai Ling has her swearing down pat.

MAI LING

Damn the bastards who fucked with our truck.

She smiles at Malka.

Astrid looks out the passenger window.

ASTRID

Haven't seen a soul.

MALKA

People work in these warehouses.
They gotta eat.

MAI LING

Probably brown bag P. B. and J.

MALKA

Everybody likes cup cakes.
(hits her forehead)
What am I saying? Who am I kidding?

ASTRID

Eventually we may have to sell our bodies.

MAI LING

Should be easy. We're cupcakes.

INT. FOOD TRUCK CAB - DAY

Sam is at the wheel. Chris and Phil sit in jump seats.

CHRIS

What a grim panorama.

SAM

We should play a march or something over the P. A. Liven up the area.

PHIL

Great idea, Sam. The workers will parade in formation over to our trucks.

CHRIS

My dumb idea to come out here.

PHIL
Did you Tweet?

CHRIS
Yeah, but I doubt there's one smart
phone per square mile out here.

SAM
We gotta try new places. Our cash
flow's a trickle.

PHIL
It'll come back around. Once we
find who's doing this.

CHRIS
Sing your sausage song, Sam.
That'll bring people out of these
warehouses.

EXT. EMPTY STREET - DAY

The trucks are parked along the curb fifty yards apart.
Emile rings a dinner bell vigorously.

EMILE
Straight up noon! Lunch time! Come
and get it!

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DOOR - DAY

A door opens and a solitary EMPLOYEE exits.
He stands, shading his eyes with a hand, squinting at the
three trucks.
He begins walking in their direction.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

Chris, Phil, and Sam watch the man approach their truck.

SAM
Maybe he's got an order list from
the other employees.

PHIL
(British)
Or the only bloody employee in the
bloody building.

The Employee, 30s, is small and wiry with a wild shock of hair. He speaks with a strong southern accent.

EMPLOYEE

Ya'll make me a hamburger? With pickles, onion, and mustard?

PHIL

All we have are sausages.

EMPLOYEE

Sausages... Dang it I was set on a burger.

He heads down toward the Crispy Chick truck.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

Through the service window, Bob, Bev, and Emile watch the Employee approach.

EMPLOYEE

Can ya'll make me a hamburger?

BEV

I'm sorry. We just serve chicken.

BOB

Very good chicken, I may add.

EMPLOYEE

I'm awful set on a burger. And pickles, onion, and mustard. Think I'll try that third truck.

EMILE

They just do cupcakes.

EMPLOYEE

I could eat a dozen.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

The Employee walks up to the Three Cupcakes truck.

EMPLOYEE

Cain't git me a hamburger guess I'll settle for a cupcake.

MALKA

You've come to the right place.

EMPLOYEE
Gimme your best one.

MAI LING
Our grapefruit cupcake.

EMPLOYEE
Grapefruit? Them's sour. Don't know
about that.

ASTRID
You don't like it we'll give you a
chocolate one free.

Malka hands him a grapefruit cupcake.

The Employee takes it carefully in his hands and looks it
over. He sniffs it.

He takes a bite, closes his eyes and chews. In two more bites
the cupcake is gone.

He walks back to the service window.

EMPLOYEE
Ladies, dang if that weren't the
best cupcake I ever et. They wasn't
so pricey I eat a dozen. Why not
give me two to go.

ASTRID
How many work in your warehouse?

EMPLOYEE
'Bout a hunderd.

MALKA
Think we could get some of them
over to our trucks?

EMPLOYEE
'Less you make hamburgers not
likely a whole lot.

MAI LING
But some of them must like chicken
and hotdogs.

EMPLOYEE
May be. But most brown bag 'cause
there ain't no burgers close by.

MALKA
Where do these people come from?

EMPLOYEE

Ever place, I guess. Lotta them got
a pretty hard road.

ASTRID

Think they'd be willing to eat a
cupcake.

EMPLOYEE

Not many at two dollars per.

MAI LING

(earnestly)

A couple have the sausages or the
chicken maybe they spread the word.

EMPLOYEE

Ladies, I'm not the sharpest tool
in the box but mosta the guys work
in there are dumber'n shit.

EXT./INT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

The three women look out the service window.

They see the Employee down the street heading back to the
warehouse.

MAI LING

Oh, no. The begonia.

The begonia is dead.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - NIGHT

The nine chefs heatedly discuss their predicament.

SAM

It's gotta be the Russians.

PHIL

They're dancers. They wouldn't be
ham-handed.

SAM

No one stole their vodka.

EMILE

Or broke their windshield.

CHRIS

Yeah. Nor even broke an egg yoke.
Be fair, guys.

BEV

It just doesn't add up.

BOB

Sabotage? Come on. They put out
great food.

MALKA

And know how to put on a show.

ASTRID

I admit I begrudge them that. Still
they seem like nice people.

SAM

They're bamboozling us.

MAI LING

I agree with Bev. We don't have all
the facts.

SAM

By the time we have the facts we'll
be out of business.

PHIL

Senator McCarthy here thinks
they're bamboozling us.

A DOOR OPENS. The three Russians, all in black, enter the
building.

They freeze when they see the nine chefs.

Before Phil can stop him, Sam takes several confrontational
steps toward them.

SAM

You've fucked with us for the last
time.

YURI

Here come Uncle Sam the Ugly
American.

OLGA

Both you be quiet!

SASHA

We did not took your food and broke
your trucks.

SAM

The hell you didn't!

Sasha takes a quick dance step forward and hits Sam in the
face.

Sam grabs Sasha and hurls him into a stainless steel cart
that bangs across the floor.

Yuri tackles Sam.

Both groups move close to each other.

OLGA

Sasha, Yuri, stop!

BEV

Sam, cut it out!

The other chefs become involved in the action in their own
way.

Bev, Emile, and Chris fall on Sam's shoulder as he tries to
stand.

Phil grabs an angry Sasha as he gets to his feet.

Olga leaps on Yuri's back.

Malka, Mai Ling, and Astrid extend their hands like referees
trying to quell a melee.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - LATER

The nine chefs sit glumly about.

Sam holds an ice pack to his face.

PHIL

Nice move on the international
relations.

Sam says nothing.

ASTRID

I'll be lucky if Sasha ever speaks
to me again.

EMILE
Same with Yuri.

CHRIS
Someone could have gotten hurt. Me,
for example.

The Russians suddenly appear.

They head for the door.

Yuri and Sasha stop.

YURI
(Russian with subtitles)
Americans are morons!

SASHA
(Russian with subtitles)
Want another Cold War? You got it,
baby!

Olga grabs both men by the jacket collar and pulls them
toward the door.

They exit.

SAM
Up yours, too.

EXT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - PARKING LOT - DAY

The three food trucks sit idled in their parking spaces.

Newspapers and other debris are lodged against their tires.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - NIGHT

The nine chefs sit about with beers, their heads in their
hands.

CHRIS
No one wants to return to the
warehouse district, right?

EMILE
There's more business on the moon.

BOB
The police have no clue.

BEV

Even though they've questioned the
Ruskies.

SAM

I still say grab Sasha and Yuri by
the collar.

PHIL

Give it a rest, Sam. I can't
imagine Olga being a party to
sabotage.

SAM

Olga plays you like an organ.

MALKA

Unless it's one of us, there won't
be anymore sabotage. We got
everything in the kitchen under
lock and key.

ASTRID

Improved lighting in the parking
lot.

Chris looks around at everyone.

CHRIS

It isn't one of you, is it?

EMILE

Come on, Chris.

BOB

Tomorrow it's back to the business
park.

BEV

Come what may.

MAI LING

We concentrate on rebuilding our
reputations.

Phil and Sam stand.

PHIL

Okay, we're outta here.

ASTRID

(stands)
Me too.

CHRIS
See you all tomorrow.

BEV
Bob and I will lock up. We have
some prep to do.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN

Their prep work done, Bob and Bev are ready to leave the kitchen. All the lights are off except a couple over the counter.

BEV
I won't sleep 'til I find that
spare set of keys.

BOB
One of us absentmindedly put them
somewhere.

BEV
Give me five minutes.

BOB
I'll rotate the tires on the car.

Bob leaves.

Bev looks carefully along the counter.

Then she opens several cabinet doors one by one, looking inside.

She retrieves a folded apron from one and puts her hand in the pocket.

She pulls out the set of keys.

She replaces the apron.

She turns off one of the lights and is about to turn off the last one when a METAL BOWL or something CLANGS to the cement floor in the section of kitchen used by the Russians.

Bev freezes.

She listens, then begins to move quietly toward that section.

She moves along a wall until she comes to a doorway.

She peeks around the door jamb.

She sees someone with a flashlight in the darkened room standing at a counter.

BACK TO SCENE

Bev's hand feels along the wall for the light switch.

She switches on the overhead lights.

The person turns in alarm.

BEV (O.S.)

May?

May stands holding the flashlight alongside her leg.

BEV (CONT'D)

May, what are you doing here?

MAY

I -- I -- The Russians said I could borrow some of their flour.

BEV

In the dark with a flashlight?

MAY

(begins to cry)

Thought it would be quicker than -- than --

BEV

Than flipping a light switch?

(beat)

What's going on, May? What are you doing here at this hour?

May slowly sags to the floor.

She hangs her head and sobs.

Bev goes to her side and kneels beside her.

MAY

Wanted to help Joanie.

BEV

What are you talking about?

MAY

Git the restaurant.

BEV

Joy Hunter's brick and mortar?

May nods her head.

BEV (CONT'D)

It was you who put alum in the
Cupcakes's sugar!

MAY

Don't know how to use things like
chipotle and radicchio in my
cooking. Don't even know what
chipotle and radicchio is. I make
plain food. Simple country food.
But Joy Hunter never'd put us in a
real restaurant for it.

BEV

You tried to keep Links, and
Cupcakes and Crispy Chick from
winning. And tonight you planned to
sabotage the Russians, too.

MAY

I got me a brain cancer. Gonna die
soon and Joanie'll be all alone.

BEV

Jesus, May. Why didn't you tell us?

MAY

I know I shoulda. Now everthang's
ruint.

Bev helps May to her feet.

MAY (CONT'D)

Paid Lennie Wilson a hunderd
dollars to let them rats loose. An'
another hunderd to bang up your
trucks.

BEV

I'm disappointed in you, May,
cancer or no cancer.

MAY

Not like I'm disappointed in
myself. I'm glad you caught me.
I'll die of shame 'fore I die of
cancer.

Bob comes through the door.

BOB

May?

MAY
I been a bad girl, Bob.
(cries)
A real bad girl.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Olga, Yuri, and Sasha snack at a stainless steel table in their kitchen area.

A big bottle of vodka stands by the snacks.

They all touch glasses and down vodka shots.

They speak Russian with English subtitles.

OLGA
I'm so upset I could cry.

SASHA
At least you're interested in Phil,
not Sam.

YURI
That we would steal their food?

There is a KNOCK at the door.

Yuri walks over and opens it.

He sees Sam standing on the threshold.

He has a black eye.

BACK TO SCENE

Yuri immediately assumes a defensive position.

Sam holds his hands up in a gesture of peace.

SAM
Can I come in?

Yuri steps back, reluctantly gestures for him to come in.

Olga and Sasha approach the two men.

As soon as Sam enters, the other eight chefs file in.

Mai Ling holds a large bouquet of flowers in her hand.

Malka holds a large bottle of vodka wrapped in red foil.

Emile holds a small Russian flag.

SAM (CONT'D)

All of us at one time or another thought you guys were behind our misfortunes. We were wrong, wrong, wrong. And we apologize.

All the chefs speak at once.

CHEFS

We apologize.

MALKA/MAI LING/ASTRID

We apologize.

PHIL/CHRIS

We apologize.

BEV/BOB/EMILE

We apologize.

SAM

But it was me who was totally convinced you guys stole the food and wrecked our trucks. I apologize for this. I apologize for being a damn fool.

OLGA

Why you saying this now?

SAM

It was May.

BEV

May was behind the theft of our supplies and the damage to our trucks.

BOB

Bev surprised May while she was trying to adulterate your flour.

YURI

May the lady with bad accent who cooks at home?

PHIL

(British detective)

I'm afraid so. That one, yes.

The three Russians stand motionless without saying a word.

Then Sasha walks quickly over to Sam and sticks out his hand.

SASHA
You aren't neither nor Uncle Sam
and Ugly American.

The two men shake hands and embrace.

OLGA
Oh, my God, I am so happy now.

CHRIS
May has cancer. She wanted her
daughter Joanie to have a chance at
getting the brick and mortar.

SASHA
(Russian with English
subtitles)
What is 'brick and mortar'?

OLGA
(Russian with English
subtitles)
The contest thing with Joy.

EMILE
She gets our three trucks out of
the competition she has a chance.

BEV
She had to get you guys out too.
That's why she was going to
sabotage your flour.

YURI
(to Olga)
'Sabotage'?

OLGA
(in Russian)
Sabotage.

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN

The Russians and the nine chefs talk a mile a minute as they
down shots of vodka.

All are happily drunk.

Phil stands with Olga. Emile with Yuri. And Astrid with
Sasha.

OLGA

May so sweet. Never suspect her.

PHIL

Her cancer, her love for her
daughter blinded her.

EMILE

We should go out for dinner.

YURI

Yes. But no chicken no sausage no
cupcakes.

SASHA

You are first Mexican girl I meet.

ASTRID

Mexican-American.

Sasha touches her hair.

SASHA

Mexican-American hair shine.

CHRIS

You average-sized people can sure
hold your liquor. I'm tighter than
a Scotchman's purse.

BEV

Chris, how un-P. C.

SAM

(to Chris)

It's not just a body weight thing.
I'm higher than a kite after three
shots.

BOB

Jesus, what a relief. Now we're
friends.

Sasha steps forward and raises his hand to quiet the group.

Both he and Yuri grin from ear to ear.

SASHA

Yuri and I have confession of one
sabotage.

YURI

Was my idea.

The chefs become suddenly quiet and serious.

SASHA

We put salt in your sugar plate...
bowl.

They all howl with laughter.

MAI LING

I'm beginning to love Russians.

MALKA

All on the same page again, guys.

Emile holds up his shot glass.

EMILE

I am glad you Russians came along!

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

The chefs and the Ogletrees sit about the kitchen area.

May sits glumly in a chair while Joanie and Gus stand behind her.

Joanie has her hands on her mother's shoulders.

BEV

Bob should be back any minute.

ALEX

Are ya'll ready for this news?

CHRIS

I just want to get it over.

MALKA

My gut tells me Links Limited has
an inside track.

ASTRID

Malka doesn't think cupcakes and
muffins are heavy enough hitters
for a brick and mortar.

MAVIS

Where are your Russian friends?

EMILE

They think it wiser we be apart on
decision day.

ALEX

I think they're right.

Bob walks into the kitchen with a copy of the weekly "Out and About".

SAM

Well?

BOB

I resisted a peek.

MAI LING

I hate anticipation.

PHIL

Will it be honey or vinegar?

EMILE

Lay it on us, Robert.

Bob sits and opens the newspaper.

He finds Joy Hunter's column.

BOB

Here it is, guys.

He reads silently for a moment.

He looks up at the group.

BOB (CONT'D)

(slowly)

Son of a sea captain...

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. SUPPER CLUB - NIGHT

SUPER: "ONE YEAR LATER"

People eat at tables around an elevated dance floor.

A small bar jammed with drinkers stands off to one side.

This is a happening place.

BAR

Mai Ling, chicly attired, tends, commands, rather, the bar.

She sets a small carafe and shot glass in front of a customer.

MAI LING
Beluga vodka. Made with
Siberian spring water.

He slides a twenty to her which she picks up.

She smiles.

She walks to the end of the bar where a male customer, 30s, has just slipped onto a stool.

He eyes Mai Ling and smiles lasciviously at her. She's the reason he's here.

Mai Ling loses her smile.

CHEEKY CUSTOMER
Evening, Mai Ling. Gin and tonic
with a wedge of lime and a pinch of
you.

Mai Ling makes his drink quickly, effortlessly.

She sets it before him.

CHEEKY CUSTOMER (CONT'D)
You look radiant, Mai Ling. Please
reconsider going out with me
because --

MAI LING
Cut the Mai Ling shit, Bennie, or
I'll have Tony throw your flat ass
out on the sidewalk.

A fanfare of music suddenly comes from the direction of the stage.

Mai Ling turns toward it, a smile back on her face.

Russian music fills the room.

STAGE

Yuri and Sasha, in cossack attire, enter dancing, followed by a dancing Olga.

They dance for a few moments.

Then from the opposite wing Phil and Sam, also in cossack attire, enter dancing, albeit not terribly well.

The five perform a brief, energetic routine, Phil and Sam struggling to keep up.

STAGE - SIDE TABLE

Joy Hunter sits with George and two female acolytes.

Her face is flushed with alcohol, and she sways to the beat of the music, clapping her hands in time.

Even George seems mildly pleased.

JOY HUNTER

Olga's got the basketball players
doing a Cossack dance!

She takes a shot of vodka.

She stands, clapping the dancers on.

She pulls a reluctant George to his feet and urges him to clap.

George tries to get into it.

Joy lets loose a string of encouragements.

JOY HUNTER (CONT'D)

Ya, ya, ya, ya, ya, ya, ya, ya!

The performance ends with all the dancers taking a bow.

The crowd roars its approval.

Joy and George sit back down.

Joy is out of breath.

JOY HUNTER (CONT'D)

George, get us more vodka. Caviar
too.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

A LAW PROFESSOR in a three-piece suit and a red bow tie stands at a lectern.

He is in his 60s and speaks with stentorian authority.

LAW PROFESSOR

A tort... is a wrongful act or an infringement of a right leading to legal liability.

REVERSE ANGLE

Twenty students listen intently and take notes.

MALKA

Sits in the back next to a window, a look of indifference on her face.

LAW PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

Tort, the word, comes from the Latin torquere, T-O-R-Q-U-E-R-E. Meaning 'twisted' or 'wrong'.

MALKA'S NOTEBOOK

She has written "TORT" and under it "TORQUERE".

BACK TO SCENE

LAW PROFESSOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Tort law, then, is a body of rights, obligations, and remedies that is applied by courts in civil, not criminal, mind you, proceedings to provide relief for persons who have suffered harm from the wrongful acts of others. The person sustaining injury or pecuniary damage as a result of tortious conduct is called the plaintiff. The person responsible for inflicting the injury or loss and incurs liability for the damage is called the defendant or tortfeasor.

While the professor is lecturing Malka looks through the window.

She sees a food truck.

It is parked at the curb along a large greensward.

A long line of students has formed at the service window.

BACK TO SCENE

MALKA'S NOTEBOOK

Her pen draws a line through the word "TORT" and above it quickly prints the word "TORTE".

Just as quickly, she writes further down on the page "STRAWBERRY TORTE".

And then a list of ingredients: "8 LBS. PASTRY FLOUR/2 LBS. SUGAR/3 LBS. SLICED STRAWBERRIES..."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Bev and Bob serve a line of customers.

Bev wears her pink and baby blue apron. She is pregnant.

Bob wears a white apron.

He puts his hand tenderly on her shoulders.

BOB

You wanna sit down for a while?

BEV

I'm fine.

BOB

I can handle the last customers.

Bev smiles and kisses him on the cheek.

BEV

See, it's not so bad.

BOB

Not so bad? It's great honey.

BEV

You've sure come around

BOB

I'll have him/her serving customers by the age of six.

BEV

Maybe we should look at Russian names.

Bob playfully throws a towel at her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOOD TRUCK - DAY

Sam and Phil and a new employee, BARRY, 25, tall, attempt to work in the confined space with dubious results.

A line stands at the service window.

EXT./INT. FOOD TRUCK - SERVICE WINDOW

At the counter, two teen-age BOYS, one in a red shirt, the other a blue shirt, wait for their sausages.

SAM

(sings half aloud)

Ten fat sausages sizzling in a pan.

Ten fat sausages sizzling in a pan.

One went pop and another went bang.

There were eight fat sausages

sizzling in a pan. ETC.

The Boy in Red Shirt and the Boy in Blue shirt regard Sam.

Then they look at each other.

BOY IN RED SHIRT

Where's Chris?

SAM

Hollywood.

PHIL

Making pictures now.

BOY IN BLUE SHIRT

Gee. I liked Chris.

BARRY

What about me?

BOY IN RED SHIRT

I've seen you on TV.

BOY IN BLUE SHIRT

You played for the Hornets.

BARRY

Long enough to blow out my knee.

BOY IN RED SHIRT
Jesus, you should call this the
Truck of Hard Luck.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUSINESS PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Holding hands, Astrid and Sasha walk among the food trucks.
They stop at the window of May's Home Cooked truck.

JOANIE
Hi, Astrid. Hi, Sasha.

ASTRID
We're so sorry about your mom.

JOANIE
She passed quickly and painlessly.
And in peace. You were all so
forgiving of her.

SASHA
She cooked real American food.

JOANIE
Will The Three Cupcakes ever ride
the road again?

ASTRID
I hope so.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

SASHA
Now no problem. Work in open?

ASTRID
Because of the Deferred Action for
Childhood Arrivals program I won't
be deported. Plus I got a driver's
license. No more hiding.

SASHA
Maybe I go to school with you.

ASTRID
What about the supper club?

SASHA
The club make lots of money.

ASTRID

Yuri?

SASHA

Think he like Emile. Weird for me
but good for them.

ASTRID

I'm gonna study sociology.

SASHA

I be very boring.

ASTRID

Not for me.

SASHA

What become of Three Cupcake?

ASTRID

Malka quit law school. She's coming
back to California.

SASHA

You still make cupcake?

ASTRID

Part time maybe. It depends on Mai
Ling.

SASHA

Mai Ling like cupcake more than
martini, I think.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Alex, Mavis, Emile, and Yuri sit in a booth at a posh
restaurant.

Each has a glass of red wine.

Hors d'oeuvres sit about.

The Ogletrees acknowledge and celebrate Emile and Yuri's new
relationship.

ALEX

I hope you like French food, Yuri.

YURI

Yes, like.

MAVIS
You're a handsome couple.

Emile puts his hand on Yuri's.

EMILE
Thank you, Aunt Mavis.
(to Yuri)
I love you.

YURI
I love you too. All of you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOVIE SET - FAUX ROCK OUTCROP/FAUX TRUNKS OF TREES - DAY

Grip puts finishing touches on lighting for the set.

Camera, reflectors, and other movie equipment stand about.

CHRIS

Walks into FRAME and stands observing the grips.

He is dressed in a robe made from an animal skin and wears a crown of faux gold and gems.

He holds an ornate scepter.

A DIRECTOR walks up to Chris.

DIRECTOR
Ready for the speech scene?

CHRIS
I'll start softly, build to a fortissimo.

DIRECTOR
Miss the sausage?

CHRIS
Does the U.N. Commission on Human Rights miss Osama bin Laden?

DIRECTOR
Knock 'em dead. Remember, you're the King of the Dwarves.

CHRIS
Academy, ballots please.

Chris takes his mark on a flat rock amid the trees.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Speed. Sound. Action.

Chris spreads his arms.

CHRIS
Citizens of Gondor. I come to you
not as your King but as one of you.
The Grundel warriors gather at our
border as I speak. They are giants,
I know. But I see them as small men
for they have always underestimated
us. I come to you not just as one
of you, but also as your King. I am
King of the Dwarves and with your
help we shall drive the Grundel
warriors into the sea!

Chris comes down off the set to the Director.

He takes off his crown and hands it to the Director and his
scepter as well.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
(to camera)
I may no longer make sausages, but
a piece of ham I am!

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

A SUGGESTION?

THE LAST IMAGES ON THE SCREEN ARE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE FIVE
FOOD TRUCKS:

MAY'S HOME COOKED

May, Joanie, and Gus stand facing camera.

THREE CUPCAKES

Malka, Mai Ling, Astrid have their arms around one another.

CRISPY CHICK

Bob and Bev stand with their arms around each other. Emile
strikes a Donatello pose.

LINKS, LTD.

Phil and Sam kneel. Chris stands between them, his hands on their shoulders.

THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING

Olga, Yuri, and Sasha pose theatrically.

FADE OUT.

THE END