THE HUNDRED FOOT JOURNEY

by

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Based on the book THE HUNDRED FOOT JOURNEY by

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OPEN ON BLACK

Caption: 'We are all in the gutter. But some of us are looking at the stars'. (Oscar Wilde).

Suddenly...

INT. MUMBAY, CRAWFORD MARKET, COOL HALL - EARLY MORNING

Every sense is ravaged by a vast interior dripping blood, juice and flower petals.

The morning market is the place where the whole of Mumbay gets its meat, fish, fruit, bread, flour and spices.

For a moment the place is a blur of color and people as customers fight each other for the best bargains. Sheep with their throats freshly cut hang limp on hooks. Pomegranate mountains are wheeled at speed across neatly swept floors. Chickens are sold live, cockerels strut, blue black ravens fight over the scraps carrion.

Among this we see a woman in her forties (MAMA) and a young boy of fifteen. They are running fast through the bustle. Mama wears a flowing *Sari* that billows as she runs. The boy is evidently dazzled by the sights and smells all around.

This boy is HASSAN.

Mama is running to keep pace with a covered hand cart which is being wheeled at speed on the other side of the counters and is only just visible through the chaos.

Mama yells as she runs...

MAMA
(*Got to get there first! Only get them once a year!*)

Other customers see Mama and Hassan running then see the hand cart they are chasing. Word spreads and others begin to chase the hand cart.

For a while there is an escalating dash through the colors and carts, with dogs barking and people yelling.

Mama arrives breathless at the teeming, icy palace of *Anwars' Fish Counter*. Hassan skids to a halt on the wet floor. Anwar himself sits cross-legged on a shelf above the counter, surrounded by contented cats.

Anwar has his eyes closed, aware of the chaos that is about to be unleashed.

CONTINUED:

His stall is decorated with yellow garlands and incense burns. There are mountains of pomfret and perch and sea bream, along with shell fish of all kinds.

As Mama and Hassan arrive, the hand cart has its canvas cover pulled away and a large box of SEA URCHINS is violently turned over and emptied onto glistening ice. As they crunch on the ice, Mama yells...

MAMA (CONT'D)
(I take the lot!)

Anwar keeps his eyes closed as other customers, bigger, stronger, louder, begin to bid for the case of sea urchins. But Mama is firm and professional and stays in Anwar's face, insisting she won the race fair and square...

As this chaotic bid process swirls, we come close to Hassan. The sound of bidding and yelling is muted. We see the boy close up as he stares all around at the fish and shellfish before him. He is being pushed to the edge of the ice but he is a tranquil still point in the madness.

He leans forward and picks up one of the spiky, glistening sea urchins. Almost in slow motion he lifts it from the pile and brings it to his nose, unobserved by Anwar who is still in meditative pose.

A spine of the urchin pricks Hassan's finger but he is oblivious.

Hassan sees a blunt knife sitting on the ice. He picks it up and cracks open the sea urchin. The yelling and bidding continues all around but we are only with Hassan.

He sniffs the soft, brightly colored living ooze inside the urchin. A drop of blood from his finger drops into the urchin and mingles with the sea water. He takes out his tongue and touches the flesh of the urchin. He closes his eyes, intoxicated by the smell. Then, with sexual pleasure, he licks the raw, living urchin from the soft shell and sucks it up.

His eyes open as if he's been hit by an electric shock. At that moment, he realizes that Anwar, the stallholder, has been watching him intently and their eyes lock.

Anwar recognizes the delight in the boy's eyes and, through the madness, he smiles at him. Mama turns to Hassan, whose expression is fixed, his blood dripping, the sea urchin still held aloft.

CONTINUED: (2)

ANWAR
Sold! To the boy who knows.

INT. MUMBAY VILLAGE, BATTERED OLD VAN

Hassan sits beside Mama, who drives the van with seasoned expertise around pot holes, spilt vegetables, wandering goats and children. Hassan is reading a book which, for now, we don't see.

Mama is driving through a busy semi-rural neighborhood where a class of school children in spotless uniforms take their class cross-legged on the side of the road. We hear them chanting in response to their teacher. Then we hear a burst of Indian music from a CD stall. A spice vendor sings a melodic song to sell his spice. A tailor cuts bolts of brightly colored cloth and his wife waves the yellow sheets against the blue sky. Noises swell and disappear through the open window. A couple of stall holders wave and smile at Mama and she hoots her horn.

Everywhere there is color, chatter, commerce...and <u>food</u>. Food for sale, food being cooked on open fires, food being argued about. Smoke wafts and Mama savors the aromas. As she drives us through this world, we should sense a community where everyone knows everyone.

Hassan is oblivious to all this, studying the book on his knees with forensic interest. Mama stops at a crossroads and casually buys two samosas from a vendor through the window. She hands one to Hassan and he takes a bite without taking his eyes off the book. Mama glances at him with pride.

The book on his knees is an old Indian cookbook of seventies vintage. He has found a reference to SEA URCHINS and we glance a photograph on the page where he is devouring the recipes.

Suddenly...

A truck almost takes the front end of the van off as it speeds by. It is a sudden moment of near death and the truck hoots loudly.

Hassan's book slides from his knees as the van brakes sharply. Mama yells a curse. Then she stares at the tail lights of the truck and considers. She makes a decision and turns off the main road and drives down a small dirt track.

HASSAN
Why are we going the long way?

Mama darkens a little.

CONTINUED:

MAMA
Because today the short way is not safe.

EXT. 'BOLLYWOOD NIGHTS' RESTAURANT, NAPEAN SEA ROAD

The restaurant sits half way up a steep hill scored through by a dusty dirt road. It has a gaudy neon sign and, in the open restaurant garden, we see spinning glitter balls, wired up with long drooping cables.

Mama and Hassan pull up to a set of closed wooden gates. Mama hoots her horn and Hassan looks up from his book in puzzlement.

HASSAN
Mama? Why are the gates closed?

A young boy has responded to the hoot and has begun to pull open the gates. Mama stares ahead. She decides she must explain.

MAMA
Last night some people far away flew airplanes into some very tall buildings.

As Hassan reacts we see the restaurant appearing from behind the gates as they are pulled open.

HASSAN
What has that got to do with us?

Mama rocks her head a little then shifts gear to pull away.

INT./EXT. 'BOLLYWOOD NIGHTS' RESTAURANT, KITCHEN

The kitchen is working at full tilt.

Through steam and smoke and flames we see the tandoori oven being stoked and fed with dry wood. Pots boil and a live chicken is carried to a slab ready to be dispatched. Small children run through the legs of the chefs.

Cooks and porters yell in various languages we don't understand. A door swings open and we glimpse a big 365 seat restaurant which is full to bursting with customers. We hear roaring Bollywood music which is cut when the door swings shut.

In a quiet place, Mama and Hassan are giving the sea urchins the respect they deserve.

CONTINUED:

Mama is scraping the flesh from the inside and placing each scoop into a bubbling, bright yellow sauce. Hassan watches and imitates. Mama glances at him and is evidently impressed by his method. She speaks softly to Hassan in English.

MAMA
What you tasted in the market Hassan was life. The urchin was filled with beautiful life.

She drops another urchin into the stew.

MAMA (CONT'D)
But cooking is about death. To cook you must kill.

She looks up at Hassan fiercely.

MAMA (CONT'D)
The trick to cooking is to make ghosts. Yes. Spirits that live on in every ingredient beyond the bubbling moment of death.

She dips a spoon into the bubbling pot and offers it to Hassan. He blows it and takes a sip.

MAMA (CONT'D)
Still alive?

He smiles...

HASSAN
Still alive.

She takes the spoon from him and then stares deeply into his eyes...

MAMA
I have seen you cooking. More importantly I have seen you *tasting.* You have it Hassan. Trust me I know. You have it.

Hassan is a little bewildered...

HASSAN
Have *what* Mama?

At that moment, even above the din of the kitchen, Mama hears rhythmic chanting from outside.

EXT. 'BOLLYWOOD NIGHTS' RESTAURANT

On the top of the hill there are large houses, lit with electricity and surrounded by high fences. At the bottom of the hill there is a shanty, lit by oil lights.

On the restaurant patio, customers are eating and drinking but, one-by-one, they turn to look down the hill.

A mob of angry men are making their way up the hill from the shanty. They carry flaming torches and some roll oil barrels with their feet. They are being led by a big fat man who is yelling...

FAT MAN
(The Muslims drink our blood from cow horn cups! Death to them!)

There is yelling, laughter. Two red mopeds speed by and between them is a fluttering red banner with a crude depiction of a man in a turban with a long beard, his teeth dripping blood.
Across it is written in English 'ISLAM OUT OF MALABAR'.

INT. 'BOLLYWOOD NIGHTS' RESTAURANT, KITCHEN

Mama is trying to concentrate on her work (knowing trouble is ahead) but Hassan looks up when he sees a young man burst in through the outside door and race toward an older man (PAPA) in starched white chef clothes who is lost in steam and heat hazes.

The young man imparts the news and Papa reaches up to a high shelf and brings down a cake tin.

Hassan's eyes widen as he sees Papa taking a revolver out of the cake tin. Mama sees too. She quickly wipes her hands and dashes across the kitchen. Word is spreading and suddenly each chef grabs the biggest knife in his apron.

In just a few seconds, every implement in the kitchen has a different, deadly purpose.

Some grab machetes, others cleavers. Men whip their hats from their heads. Hassan stares around in wonder then sees that the sea urchin stew is bubbling too hot. He is about to turn down the flame but suddenly he is grabbed by a girl two years older than him, dressed for bed. This is his sister MEHTAB.

MEHTAB
Hassan! Come!

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
No! The urchins will die in the wrong way.

She yanks his arm and stares into his eyes...

MEHTAB
It is <u>us</u> who will die in the wrong way if we don't go.

We hear a yelling and breaking of glass and tables out in the yard...

EXT. 'BOLLYWOOD NIGHTS' RESTAURANT

We see the mob descending on the restaurant. Fires are being lit, petrol bombs are thrown. Some waiters fight back and gun shots ring out.

In silhouette against the fires of the tandoori ovens we see Hassan, Mehtab and other members of the family, some younger, some older, being ushered out of the back door by Papa.

Flames flicker on Papa's anxious face as he engages his Second World War vintage pistol. As Hassan runs by...

PAPA
Hassan! Where is Mama!

HASSAN
She is still inside!

Papa reacts with horror and races back toward the kitchen. Hassan slows and wants to return but Mehtab pulls him and yells for help. An older chef grabs Hassan and picks him up bodily.

Hassan struggles and yells out...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Mama!! Papa!!

A petrol bomb lands close by and flames erupt. Two gun shots ring out. Then another petrol bomb lands at the door of the kitchen and Hassan struggles free.

INT. 'BOLLYWOOD NIGHTS' RESTAURANT, KITCHEN

The room is now being engulfed in flames and smoke. It is as if every stove and oven has burst into extra life. There are two crazed gun men at the restaurant door and they are smashing the place to pieces.

CONTINUED:

One of them hurls a pigs head into the middle of the kitchen and shrieks with delight.

Then he sees Mama, her head wrapped in a cloth to keep her hair from the flames, making a dash for the door with a sack over her shoulders. She is just a fleeting shadow and the crazed gun man takes aim.

She is almost at the door when the gun shot rings out. At that moment Papa flies back into the kitchen and sees Mama hit by the bullet. He yells in rage and shoots the gunman dead. The second flees.

Papa runs to Mama and turns her around. The spiny sea urchins have dug into her back and the wounds drip blood. But, as she turns, Papa sees the single bullet wound in her head has killed her.

Papa takes a gasping breath of smoke. He is oblivious to the flames as he stares. The tandoori oven belches and Papa's *Kurta* catches fire.

We see Papa burning, holding his dead wife in his arms. Then the door flies open and Hassan bursts inside with the big chef who tried to take him away. The chef grabs a pot of cold water and hurls it over Papa. Still he doesn't move.

Through the smoke and flames Papa turns to Hassan and their eyes meet. They share a moment of absolute horror.

The sea urchins have begun to cook in their own juices and steam rises from the sack.

CUT TO BLACK. The baleful hoot of a ship's horn.

EXT. HOLLAND, ROTTERDAM HARBOR

As the horn hoots, the blackness begins to move. We discover it is the gigantic bow door of a cross-channel ferry which runs from Dover, England to mainland Europe. Gulls shriek and as the door slowly lowers onto its giant chains, we see a line of vehicles waiting to be driven off from the vast interior.

The vehicles begin to stream out of the darkness toward a customs post. Among the vehicles there is a battered white van and from it we hear arguing and laughter. The language is Gujarati.

Caption: 'Rotterdam, Holland, five years later'.

EXT. HOLLAND, ROTTERDAM HARBOR, CUSTOMS POST

A bored, uniformed Dutch Customs Officer is checking passports through driver's windows. The white van pulls up.

Papa is in the driving seat. We glimpse the faces of others beside him and in the darkness of the van behind but as yet we don't identify anyone but Papa. People are arguing, kids making gun shots with their mouths because the guard has a gun.

Papa hands the guard a stack of Indian passports and speaks proudly.

PAPA
We are the Haji family. Come to seek a new life on your beautiful continent.

The guard looks up and half smiles.

GUARD
Pull over.

INT. HOLLAND, ROTTERDAM HARBOR, BUSY BORDER CONTROL AREA

The immigration control area is efficient and almost pleasant, but there are lots of people of many nationalities being interrogated in the open plan space. We hear a babble of languages.

We find a line of desks where Papa and the family are being questioned separately. We track along the line slowly, from desk to desk, where each family member is being questioned by their own uniformed officer.

In these brief exchanges, we meet the Haji family one by one, five years on from the opening scenes.

First we join Mehtab, who has been given a sympathetic, female customs officer...

FEMALE OFFICER (CONCERNED)
...Mehtab, we just need to establish that you are not being taken to Europe for an arranged marriage.

Mehtab looks around at her siblings and speaks confidentially...

MEHTAB
Trust me. In <u>this</u> family, <u>nothing</u> is arranged...

CONTINUED:

We track on slowly to join Papa and his young, officious officer, who is taking notes and checking papers...

PAPA
Ok, ok, this is how it is. When we left Mumbay we were given asylum in London. We have been living in London for five years. Long enough to discover that London itself is an asylum. And too cold. So. We have decided to open a restaurant in Europe.

The guard looks up.

GUARD
Yes, but Europe is a big place. Which *part*?

Papa doesn't blink.

PAPA
First we look, then we choose. Like when you buy aubergines in the market. You squeeze them, sniff them.

OFFICER
And that is what we are going to do with Europe. Squeeze it and sniff it.

Papa rocks his head. The officer reacts as we drift on to the next desk to find Hassan's older brother MAYUR with his younger brother and sister MUKHTAR and AMMI. Mukhtar is ten, Ammi is eight and is sitting on Mayur's lap. The officer speaks directly to Ammi....

OFFICER (CONT'D)
So, Ammi. This man is your brother, yes?

AMMI
No. He kidnapped me.

MAYUR
Ammi, will you <u>shush</u>.

Ammi giggles. We move along and finally find HASSAN AS A MAN OF TWENTY ONE. We stop tracking and study him for a while as his designated officer consults papers. Hassan is noticeably handsome with an air of wit and confidence. As we settle on Hassan, we should feel we have reached the main course. The officer looks up.

CONTINUED: (2)

OFFICER
Name?

HASSAN
Hassan Haji.

OFFICER
How old are you?

HASSAN
Twenty one.

OFFICER
What is your profession?

Hassan speaks evenly.

HASSAN
I am a cook.

OFFICER
Do you have qualifications?

HASSAN
Nothing on paper.

OFFICER
Can you prove you are a cook?

HASSAN
Only if you have a stove and a frying pan and perhaps some chicken and yoghurt.

The guard glares at Hassan.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
And a little cardoman. Why not?

The guard turns a page.

OFFICER
Why are you leaving London?

HASSAN (DEAD PAN)
Onions.

OFFICER
Onions?

HASSAN
Yes. Onions.

CONTINUED: (3)

OFFICER
The vegetable?

HASSAN
Onions are very important in Indian cooking. In England the onions have no....

He looks around the babbling room to find the word....

HASSAN (CONT'D)
...In England they have no...life.

The officer is about to write 'onions' on his form but finds he can't. He looks up. Hassan hides a smile...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Also tomatoes. We heard they are very good in Italy...

As the officer reacts, we hear an Italian opera tenor belting out a song...

EXT. TUSCAN COUNTRYSIDE (OR SIMILAR)

In a wide shot, the white van drives through a grove of tomato plants. As the opera music swells, we see the van pull up sharply. Still in wide Papa gets out and hurriedly steals a few ripe tomatoes from the vines. He jumps back into the van and it pulls away. Still in wide we hear Papa say...

PAPA (OOV)
Ok we all try one and give marks out of ten. No salt...

EXT. ITALIAN/SWISS BORDER, MOUNTAIN ROAD (OR SIMILAR)

The white van chokes and coughs as it climbs a steep mountain road and passes through the (very open) border crossing. As the van enters Switzerland we hear Papa instructing...

PAPA
So what we are looking for here is cheese. They say the cheese is...

The van swerves. Hassan yells...

HASSAN
Keep your eyes on the road Papa...

EXT. CAMARGUE PLAIN, LONG FLAT ROAD

Wild haired cows graze the salt marsh grass. Again, we see the white van in wide shot, this time driving along an endless straight road through the marshes as the sun sets...

Still in wide we hear the family arguing....

PAPA (OOV)
The woman said if we drive straight we will find it....

HASSAN (OOV)
No one would have a butcher shop in the middle of nowhere Papa.

PAPA (OOV)
Can’t you see the bloody cows everywhere?

MAYUR (OOV)
Papa, you took a wrong turn. Admit it.

AMMI (OOV)
I need to pee.

The van pulls up sharply. Suddenly...

INT. WHITE VAN

The family are screaming in terror. The van is hurtling down a steep hill. We see Papa driving with Mehtab, Ammi and Mukhtar in the back seats. Beside Papa in the passenger seat is Mayur. Hassan is between Papa and Mayur. He is yelling just like the others.

HASSAN
Papa stop!!!

PAPA
The bloody brakes!

MAYUR
Pull the hand brake.

Papa yanks the brake. A grinding sound. The van jerks a little but continues to roll at speed down the hill. There is no time to register where we are. We just see the terrified faces of the family.

CONTINUED:

Fortunately the steep slope which they are hurtling down has a corresponding up-slope ahead and when the van eventually hits the up slope it begins to slow down.

The family fall silent by degrees, still terrified and clinging to each other as Papa screws the van to the left into a hedge and the van comes to a halt. Steam and a wisp of smoke rise from the engine. Everyone looks to everyone else. Papa stares ahead.

PAPA
I am no mechanic but I think it is something to do with the brakes.

At that Mayur gets out of the van and slams the door in fury. Papa looks in the rear view mirror.

EXT. SOUTHERN FRANCE, HILLSIDE

It is only now, as the family jump out of the stranded van, that we see where they are. Beautiful rolling hills stretch out to high snow capped mountains. Dark green lines of vines and olive groves are smudged with leaf burning smoke. It is an impressionistic painting of Southern French beauty.

But the family have no eyes for this. Mayur is in an absolute fury and when he lets rip we guess he has been holding this back for years. His anger is aimed directly at Papa.

MAYUR
That is <u>it</u> Papa!! That is the end!! No more!

He then yells in Gujurat....

MAYUR (CONT'D)
(We were nearly all killed by your stupid stubbornness).

The rest of the family cower. We sense no one speaks to Papa like this but Papa takes it...

MAYUR (CONT'D)
Someone has to say this to you Papa. Enough of this crazy wandering!

Hassan is about to intervene but Mayur is on a furious roll....

CONTINUED:

MAYUR (CONT'D)
We were happier living under the flight path at Heathrow. At least we had a home!

PAPA
Wherever the family is, that is the home...

Mayur turns and confronts.

MAYUR
And where is the family right now Papa? Answer me.

PAPA
France.

MAYUR
France!! Exactly! Papa, in case you didn't realize it, the French don't even <u>eat</u> Indian food. They have their own food. It is famous all over the world!

Papa lowers his head and takes some of the steam out of Mayur who bites his tongue. Mayur looks at the younger children and speaks more softly for their sake.

MAYUR (CONT'D)
<u>This</u> is the end of the road.

Everyone looks around apart from Papa. Instead Papa begins to walk up the hill. Mayur is contrite. He glances at Hassan...

MAYUR (CONT'D)
Hassan, talk to him. He listens to you.

After a moment Hassan hurries after Papa.

EXT. HILLTOP

Papa reaches the brow of the hill. Below there is an exquisite river valley with a picture post card French village nestling in the folds. We will learn that this is LUMIERE.

Papa arrives and stares, deep in thought. Hassan joins him and they both look ahead in silence for a few moments.

CONTINUED:

PAPA
Must be someone down there who can fix brakes.

Hassan nods gently.

HASSAN
Papa?

A pause.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I think what Mayur is saying is...'what are we exactly looking for?'

A long pause. Papa smiles...

PAPA
You know what we are looking for. The right ingredients.

Hassan reacts wearily.

HASSAN
If mama were still alive she would not want us roaming the world like Gipsies.

Papa reacts fiercely.

PAPA
That's where you're wrong.

He turns to Hassan...

PAPA (CONT'D)
You see, I speak to her. Most nights. Her spirit lives on.

Hassan reacts with concern.

HASSAN
And what does she say to you Papa?

Papa fights tears. He is about to answer but can't. Then they hear a car horn hoot. They turn to see an old Citroen van pulling up on the hill top beside them. A woman in her mid-twenties (four years older than Hassan) half gets out and smiles. She is pretty, red cheeked, a product of this valley. We will learn that this is MARGUERITTE. She speaks French and we see sub-titles.

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGUERITTE
(Are you alright?)

A spark in Hassan's eyes as he peers at her. He replies in schoolboy French...

HASSAN
Non. Nous avons...accident...non-arretez. Brakes...

MARGUERITTE
You speak English?

HASSAN
Yes. Do you?

She smiles...

MARGUERITTE
Yes.

Hassan reacts and looks bashfully down the hill at the old van and his family.

HASSAN
Look, we really need some help.

INT. MARGUERITTE'S HOME, LIVING ROOM

A rumble of thunder. Heavy rain on a window.

We are in the living room of a small farm house on the outskirts of the village of Lumiere. The Haji family, including Papa and Mayur and Mehtab are sitting in silence near to a small wood fire. The children sleep on a sofa. A clock ticks. After a moment Hassan enters, soaked by rain...

HASSAN
The mechanic says he needs to send out for parts. It won't be fixed until tomorrow.

MAYUR
So where do we sleep?

HASSAN
I found a guest house. I spoke to the owner. They have rooms.

PAPA
How much?

CONTINUED:

MAYUR
Papa, no. You will not barter. We will just pay the rate.

Papa half sits down.

MAYUR (CONT'D)
Like normal people.

Papa hisses...

PAPA
Normal people get the best value. Only Europeans accept the first price.

Then Margueritte enters. She is carrying a large tray. On it there are cold meats, cheese, olives and fresh baked bread which is still hot from the oven. There are also madeleines and grapes, some duck liver pate, croutons, and fresh water fish in jelly. Some pickled onions glisten in a bowl and there are delicate slices of wood pigeon with sweet chutney.

The food is not fancy or fussy, but it has been laid out with style and it looks delicious. Margueritte lays it down on the table in the middle of the room.

MARGUERITTE
I thought you might be hungry.

She pours some olive oil from a clear jar into a bowl as a dipping sauce.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
I took out all the pork.

The golden olive oil drips seductively into the dish. The children stir. Even Papa sits forward in his chair.

HASSAN
This is very, very kind of you. What is all this?

MARGUERITTE (MODEST)
Oh just some cold things we had in the larder.

Hassan stares at the beautiful food...

HASSAN
This is...amazing.

Margueritte reacts...

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGUERITTE
Please. Eat.

The family hesitate then Hassan takes the first bite of the crusty bread. He reacts.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Try it with the olive oil.

Hassan dips his bread in the gold/green oil which shines his lips as he tastes. He is hit by the flavor...

HASSAN
Where do you buy this?

MARGUERITTE
My mother bakes it.

HASSAN
(My God Papa, try this).

A pause. Papa takes a piece of bread and dips then tastes. He reacts too. Margueritte smiles at their reactions. Mayur takes a taste.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Where is this oil from?

MARGUERITTE
From the olive trees in the garden.
We pressed it two weeks ago.

Hassan tries a slice of cheese...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
The cheese is from the cows in the field at the back. And my brother caught the fish in the river.

Hassan, Papa, Mehtab and Mayur have begun to select morsels from the dishes set before them with silent awe. Ammi and Mukhtar are eating the madeleines and reacting with delight.

AMMI
Papa? These are better than Mama's Kulfi.

PAPA (DISTANT)
Hush Ammi.

Papa and Hassan swap looks. They are sharing the same thoughts. Margueritte thinks the silence is awkward and breaks it.

CONTINUED: (3)

MARGUERITTE
Do you drink wine? The next door neighbor makes his own.

Hassan half smiles.

HASSAN
Forgive the silence Margueritte but I think my family are afraid that they died in the accident and we have entered heaven.

She smiles and shrugs.

MARGUERITTE
This is just what we eat in Lumiere.

Papa nods and savors a dark green olive close to his nose. He speaks as if asking the olive a question...

PAPA (SOFTLY)
Lumiere?

EXT. LUMIERE STREET/INT CAR - STORMY NIGHT

The spring storm shows no sign of abating.

In a flash of lightning we see the family hurrying across the main street of the village toward a small guest house, where lights burn. As they hurry we just glimpse the picturesque village square with its fountain and statue.

Then a large black car cruises down the street and its headlights catch the Haji family hurrying, quarrelling and spilling their luggage. They call to each other in Gujurat and their voices cut through the drum of the rain.

The car is forced to slow down. It is being driven by a middle-aged man in a suit (HENRI). In the back seat we find a woman of a certain age who is elegantly dressed. She was once a great beauty and has aged like fine wine. She has an air of entitlement. This is MADAM MALLORY.

She is staring at the Hajis and making a call on her cellphone. The light of the screen lights her face. As the car clears the delay caused by the family, Madam Mallory looks in the rear view mirror and speaks into the phone.

MADAM MALLORY
(Claude? I was just driving through the square and I saw some very strange people invading your hotel. Who *are* they?)

CONTINUED:

She hears and repeats...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(Just passing through. Very good.)

She cuts the call and we stay with her elegant and composed expression as she is driven on.

Lightning flashes on her face through rain spattered windows.

INT. CLAUDE'S HOTEL, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The storm has passed and rainwater gurgles through ancient pipework across the roof and down the walls outside. Papa is lying on the bed fully clothed but with his eyes closed. Hassan is lying awake on a second single bed. An owl hoots.

HASSAN
So Papa. You didn't answer me when I asked you what Mama says to you.

Papa snores. We come close to Hassan who assumes his father has fallen asleep. Hassan takes a moment then speaks softly to himself...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
That food today. It was...

PAPA
...Perfect. Just perfect.

Hassan is a little startled that his father is actually awake. Hassan sits up. Papa painfully sits up too.

PAPA (CONT'D)
I saw in your face that you noticed.

Papa stares out at the wet streets of Lumiere and speaks firmly....

PAPA (CONT'D)
This is an exceptional place.

Hassan hears the gravity in Papa's voice. He turns to Hassan.

PAPA (CONT'D)
Hassan. Perhaps it is fate. Maybe our brakes failed here for a reason. Perhaps it is our <u>lucky</u> break at last.

Papa turns and stares at Hassan intently.

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
What do you mean?

PAPA
On the way into the village while you were all busy being angry with me...I saw something.

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD - VERY EARLY MORNING

We are close to a cockerel, standing proudly on a wall and crowing against the back drop of a slightly decrepit looking courtyard. There is an orange stucco building with windows boarded up and the gates are chained.

When the cockerel jumps down from the wall, we see the words '*Restaurant. A vent. For sale*'.

A shadow falls. Papa walks toward the locked gate with his hands behind his back, like a man out for a casual stroll. He even whistles. Hassan catches up, still buttoning his shirt. He stares through the gates too.

HASSAN
We should speak to Mayur first.

PAPA
Is it Mayur's money? No. Not until I die.

Papa tries the gate. It is padlocked...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Until then it is mine and Mama's money and we will decide how we spend it.

He turns to Hassan and smiles...

PAPA (CONT'D)
She likes this village very much. Come.

He sets off around the back. Hassan hesitates then follows.

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD, BACK OF THE BUILDING

Papa forces a rickety gate and he and Hassan steps into an overgrown yard, stealthy as burglars. Another cock crows. We see restaurant tables long since stacked and stored. Water from last night's storm has formed big puddles which they navigate.

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
Papa, we are trespassing.

PAPA
Look, it has a covered yard the same size as the one in Mumbay.

They dare to walk on to the building. Papa wipes dirt from a window and peers in.

PAPA (CONT'D)
A hundred covers at least. And look...

Papa stands in a corner under a dripping gully...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Here would be the tandoori oven. We would burn olive branches. To signify peace.

Suddenly...

MADAM MALLORY (GOOD ENGLISH)
Can I help you?

Hassan and Papa turn sharply. Madam Mallory is standing before them dressed in tweeds with a small terrier at heel beside her.

HASSAN
Sorry, we were just looking around.

MADAM MALLORY
This is private property.

HASSAN
Papa, come on, let's go...

Papa holds his ground.

PAPA
Do you own this place?

MADAM MALLORY
No.

PAPA
Then you are trespassing too.

Hassan rolls his eyes and grabs Papa's arm, speaking in Gujurat...

CONTINUED: (2)

HASSAN
(Papa, time to leave).

Papa tugs his arm free.

PAPA
Do you know the owner of this place?

MADAM MALLORY
Very well. They moved back to Paris. I keep an eye out for them...

PAPA
Oh I bet you do.

MADAM MALLORY
You are quite rude.

PAPA
How much are they asking?

A disbelieving pause.

HASSAN
Papa, please.

MADAM MALLORY
I do not deal with their affairs.

PAPA
Then do you know who does?

Madam Mallory allows a smile to curl her lips.

MADAM MALLORY
A property this size in this village would be very expensive. I hear you asked for a discount in Claude's hotel.

Hassan double takes...

HASSAN
Papa? You didn't...

PAPA
Asking for a discount doesn't mean I am poor. It means I am thrifty.

MADAM MALLORY
I don't know that word.

CONTINUED: (3)

PAPA
Then I will use simple words. I want to make an offer to buy this restaurant.

The words hang in the air. Hassan's jaw drops. He knows that Papa is doing this partly just to prove he can. Hassan steps ahead of Papa and smiles at Madam Mallory...

HASSAN
Pardon. Mon Papa. Il est une peut...crazy.

INT. MECHANIC WORKSHOP

Mayur is paying a mechanic in cash for the work he has done on the van. Hassan enters fast.

HASSAN
Mayur, you'd better come quick.

INT. CAKE SHOP

Mehtab is treating the little ones to cake and coffee in a pretty little village cafe. The lady at the counter is amused by these odd visitors and is being sweet with them. The bell on the door rings and Hassan puts his head around the door...

HASSAN
Mehtab...

MEHTAB
Hassan, you have to try these cakes, they are beyond words...

HASSAN
(Mehtab, I think Papa has lost his mind and I think Mayur is going to kill him).

INT. CLAUDE'S HOTEL, BREAKFAST ROOM

The tables have been cleared and Papa has set himself up at a table against the wall with his cellphone and some paperwork already spread out. Mayur, Hassan and Mehtab all approach as a delegation. Mayur is trying hard to control his temper.

MAYUR
Papa. If you won't listen to me, listen to Mehtab. You always call her the sensible one.

CONTINUED:

Papa folds his arms.

MEHTAB
Papa, it is a very sweet location and the building is fine, but there is a problem that makes it impossible for us to open a restaurant there.

Papa blinks, waits...

MEHTAB (CONT'D)
There is already a restaurant.

MAYUR
Just across the street. One hundred feet.

MAYUR (CONT'D)
We measured.

MEHTAB
That is why the people before moved back to Paris. They couldn't make it pay.

Mayur almost enjoys the revelation and smiles.

MAYUR
Papa, the restaurant across the street has a Michelin star.

Papa doesn't react for a moment. Then...

PAPA
I know. I saw it. Twinkle, twinkle so what?

Mayur takes Papa's arm and speaks softly...

MAYUR
Papa, it is the best restaurant for fifty miles in any direction. The President of France dines there.

Papa is close to Mayur but now he looks only at Hassan. It is as if he is talking over and across Mehtab and Mayur and sharing his thoughts directly with Hassan. They are two conspirators...

PAPA (TO HASSAN)
Is the President of France able to order Murg Masala with cashew nuts and cardoman when he goes there?

CONTINUED: (2)

Mehtab and Mayur swap looks.

MEHTAB
No, but....

PAPA (TO HASSAN)
Is the President able to order tandoori kid goat with sag aloo and dal, cooked the way Hassan cooks it. Sprinkled with roast spices?

Mayur glances at Hassan and sees that Papa's sumptuous references to food have Hassan beguiled. Mayur controls his voice...

MAYUR
Papa, the restaurant doesn't serve those things because people here don't like to <u>eat</u> those things...

Papa is implacable...

PAPA
How do they know? They have never tried. But now they shall.

Mayur picks up a dinner knife and his knuckles turn white around it. He hisses at Hassan...

MAYUR
Hassan. *Speak* to him.

At that moment CLAUDE, the hotel owner, enters with his cellphone.

CLAUDE
It is Monsieur Levec. From Paris. He wants to speak Mr Haji.

MAYUR
That is me. Give it to me.

Papa gets to his feet...

PAPA
Give the phone to me...

MEHTAB
Papa, Mayur, let me speak to them...

HASSAN
I can speak French. Give it to me...

CONTINUED: (3)

An unseemly squabble breaks out as Claude watches with bemusement. The language turns to Gujurat and Mayur and Papa almost come to blows. Finally, Papa yells loudly...

PAPA
I am still head of the Haji family and I will take the call!!!

The sheer volume silences everyone. Claude is scared too. He quickly whispers something in French into the phone and hands Papa the telephone.

Mayur hangs his head. Hassan and Mehtab look to each other. She forces a smile...

MEHTAB (SOFTLY)
Will you teach me French?

INT. DISUSED RESTAURANT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

A mouse scatters as Hassan walks into the half lit space. There are old ovens and burners and the sink is rusted.

Hassan mooches around and checks out a couple of cobwebbed pots and pans. Then, on a high shelf near the window, he sees some hard backed books. He pulls one down.

It is a 1947 edition of *'Le Cordon Bleu', a* classic French cook book. Hassan blows off dust and opens it up. There are a hundred traditional recipes and he begins to turn the pages to read and peer at the illustrations. He looks to be immediately enthralled. Suddenly...

PAPA
I just agreed a price.

Hassan looks up. Papa comes close and looks at the open book. He pointedly closes it.

PAPA (CONT'D)
This will be the finest *Indian* restaurant in the whole of France.

EXT. DISUSED RESTAURANT - MORNING

In bright sunlight and from on high we see Papa, Mayur and Hassan arriving in their van and pulling open the gates. A small truck loaded with timber edges into the courtyard behind them.

Slowly we move a hundred feet across the street. First we study a beautiful weeping willow tree, the pride of the restaurant garden, which hangs over a wall.

CONTINUED:

Then we move to the Saule Pleureur restaurant. When we see the sign 'Saule Pleureur' we are also give a translation...'*The Weeping Willow'*. Then, for the first time, we see the sleek, under-stated exterior of the place, and glimpse the single star on the door.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR' RESTAURANT - MORNING

The interior of the restaurant is magnificent in its dignified beauty. Twenty tables with starched white table cloths already have the places set. White net curtains filter the light.

Madam Mallory enters, as starched and dignified as her restaurant. She goes to the window and opens the curtain. She sees a workman in blue overall taking down the '*For Sale*' on the restaurant across the street. She reacts.

Then the Lumiere church clock chimes seven am. On the first chime, the door from the kitchen opens and the staff of the restaurant file in, already dressed for the day's labors. There are three chefs in whites, along with porters, apprentices and waiters.

The *chef de cuisine* is Jean Pierre, who is darkly good looking. There is an apprentice called MARCEL, who is a little overweight and looks porcine. The Maitre D'hotel is HENRI LE BLANC, an elegant man in his fifties who has an air of authority.

The staff all enter and take seats at tables, a respectful murmur of conversation. By the time the seventh bell has chimed, everyone is in their place and we should guess this is how it is every morning.

Madam Mallory waits for the seventh chime then smiles.

MADAM MALLORY
(Good morning).

They all respond like children responding to their teacher and Madam Mallory goes to the counter where there is a pile of menus, handwritten and photocopied. She begins to distribute them among her staff...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(Today I want to take advantage of the morel mushrooms which I am told are very sweet at the moment because of the heavy rain).

We catch the faces of her staff as they take up the menu. Jean Pierre nods enthusiasm.

CONTINUED:

JEAN PIERRE
(With a little cream.)

MADAM MALLORY
(Smoke the cream first).

Jean Pierre nods.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Also...

At that moment the kitchen door bursts open. It is Margueritte, flustered and late. All eyes turn to her.

MARGUERITTE
(I'm so sorry I'm late).

Madam Mallory is frosty...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
(My van got stuck behind a truck delivering timber to the new restaurant across the street).

A frozen silence. Madam Mallory is ram rod straight.

MADAM MALLORY
(Margueritte, the... *establishment* that is apparently opening across the street does not qualify as a restaurant).

She begins to wander and address the world...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(I am led to believe by the mayor's office that it will be an ethnic kitchen offering...'fast food').

Her disdain for the English words is palpable.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(The old man who bought the place is apparently insane. And I believe his enterprise will last about as long as it takes to cure a good winter ham, which is, Marcel?...)

Marcel was only half listening but recovers...

MARCEL
(Two and a half months in full brine Madam).

CONTINUED: (2)

MADAM MALLORY
(Very good).

Madam Mallory checks her watch and walks to the counter.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Now, let us prepare for lunch. And Margueritte, since you were late, you can go to market.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

Close up, we find Papa entering the kitchen, carrying a large black box.

The kitchen is still derelict but now there is a set of ladders erected and some building material stacked. Outside we hear workmen yelling and, through a window, we see a delivery van reversing.

Papa puts the black box down in the middle of the kitchen in a shaft of light from the skylight. He opens the box. Inside he finds a hundred old music cassettes, dusted with age and travel. They are all hand labelled in Gujarati. Beside the cassette box is a bulbous old cassette player.

With reverence Papa selects a particular music cassette. He slips it into the player. With momentous pleasure he presses play.

Suddenly the old French kitchen begins to swell with a powerful, rhythmic Indian music track. Papa closes his eyes. *Now* this is home...

EXT. LUMIERE FOOD MARKET

The Indian music swells and hits its stride.

Lumiere market is a more tranquil version of the Mumbay market, but no less exquisite. The best produce from the valley is on display. Rabbits hang in their fur and the crustacea and chickens are alive. Fresh cut flowers decorate the stalls and there are cascades of oysters all around.

The locals are going about their business and we find Hassan, wandering among the gorgeous plenty with joy. Some older locals stop and stare at him, and some of the young men give him hard looks, but most pay him no attention. Hassan takes a deep breath of air. He savors the smells of cooking and the beauty of the produce.

Intercut....

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

The cassette player is providing a soundtrack for the industry inside the kitchen. French workmen are beginning the business of ripping out the old cookers.

Papa is pulling an iron *balti* pot from a box of straw. He peers at it as if it were an old friend. It is still oiled. Papa savors the smell of the seasoned iron.

EXT. LUMIERE FOOD MARKET

The driving Indian music continues. But Hassan is experiencing <u>French</u> pleasures. He has found a stall selling hot fresh made crepes. He produces some coins...

HASSAN
Une crepe avec limon et sucre.

The stall holder smiles.

CREPE LADY
Ah. Vous parlez Francaise, tres bien.

Hassan watches as she expertly spins her scoop around the wet batter then flips the crepe a few seconds later as the batter takes on color. He speaks softly to himself...

HASSAN
So simple...

She then sprinkles sugar and juice and folds it into a cone. It is all done with panache. Hassan reaches for cash and the lady speaks in English...

CREPE LADY
First one free. If you're taking on the Madam of Lumiere you will need all the help you can get.

Hassan takes a bite of the crepe and is deeply impressed.

STALL HOLDER (LAUGHING)
She eats her competitors for breakfast.

Hassan smiles and turns to walk. As he steps away, we see Margueritte. She is shopping but stops when she sees Hassan.

She watches Hassan from between the crowded stalls. She studies him for a moment. When he turns she quickly looks away and disappears behind a row of smoked hams.

CONTINUED:

The Indian music continues...

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

Mayur, Mehtab and even Mukhtar and Ammi are hard at work. A delivery of plates is being stacked. Papa is carrying a tray of milky tea and offering it to the French workmen.

PAPA
Assam tea sweetened with condensed milk. Very good. You will never drink coffee again.

As Papa drifts on, a workman takes a sip and reacts. He surreptitiously pours it away into a drain...

EXT. LUMIERE FOOD MARKET

Hassan is savoring the aroma of a pile of odd looking green tubes...

HASSAN
C'est vegetable, oui?

The stall holder chuckles...

STALL HOLDER
Non, non, en Anglais...barnacle. Shellfish. Try.

Hassan is offered a snap of sea barnacle. He sucks the sea juice and reacts. It is beautiful. Then, through another stall, we see Margueritte again. She glances at Hassan then drifts on...

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

Papa is unwrapping some lethal looking knives from pages of old editions of 'Mumbay Times'. He spins a knife out of its yellowing newspaper wrapping and holds it up to the light...

EXT. LUMIERE FOOD MARKET

The music continues.

An oyster knife digs deep into a shell. Hassan is being urged to take a fresh oyster from the flat of a shell by an old lady stall holder with a twinkle in her eyes.

OLD LADY
(Good for sex. Yes? Understand?)

Hassan smiles, prepares the oyster. The old lady giggles. Hassan throws back the oyster and savors the flavor.

CONTINUED:

Then, as he wipes the juice from his chin, he finally sees Margueritte (who, this time, doesn't see him). Margueritte is laughing with a stall holder. She looks perfectly at home in this place, a product of the valley.

Hassan swallows the oyster. The montage music ends (for the moment).

EXT. LUMIERE FOOD MARKET, MUSHROOM STALL

Margueritte is buying a large quantity of Morel mushrooms. Hassan walks by as if the meeting were accidental. He stops and double takes...

HASSAN
Hey.

She turns as the stall holder begins to fill bags with mushrooms.

MARGUERITTE
Ah hello. I hear you're staying.

Hassan is still incredulous at the turn of events...

HASSAN
It was a bit of a whirlwind.

MARGUERITTE
I didn't even know you were chefs.

HASSAN
I'm not a chef. I just cook.

MARGUERITTE
And it will be fast food, yes?

Hassan smiles at the casual remark...

HASSAN
Actually, my father's signature dish takes three days.

The stall holder calls out...

STALL HOLDER
(These ceps ok?)

Margueritte tastes one of the ceps and Hassan watches as she analyses the flavors in her mouth.

MARGUERITTE
(Very good. The whole lot).

CONTINUED:

STALL HOLDER
(Deliver before nine am, yes?)

MARGUERITTE
(Yes.)

Hassan sees the quantities...

HASSAN
That's a lot of mushrooms.

Margueritte smiles and knows she is delivering news...

MARGUERITTE
Le Saule Pleureur is a big restaurant.

She wanders to the next stall. Hassan realizes that Margueritte is ordering for the restaurant and catches her up....

EXT. LUMIERE FOOD MARKET, FRUIT STALL

Margueritte is ordering juniper berries and oranges. Hassan joins her...

HASSAN
So you work for the madam of Lumiere.

MARGUERITTE
Yes.

HASSAN
You are a chef?

MARGUERITTE
I am a *sous* chef. I am studying to become a *chef de cuisine*.

Hassan is instantly intrigued...

HASSAN
I have never met a *real* French chef before. Are you any good?

She shrugs as the stall holder hands her a juniper berry to try. She bites the seeds between her front teeth...

MARGUERITTE (STOCK ANSWER)
I am trying to improve every day.

Hassan likes her glacial style and wants a way in.

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
I found a book. Old French recipes. I found them hard to follow....

Margueritte makes a decision about the berry and shakes her head. The stall holder immediately opens a different batch. (Hassan is impressed). Margueritte speaks to Hassan as an aside...

MARGUERITTE
You should not <u>follow</u> recipes. A chef should lead. A recipe is advice not instruction.

Margueritte tries another juniper berry and nods.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
That is what Madam Mallory teaches us.

Hassan is smitten by Margueritte, by her smartness, her maturity and her knowledge of food. She is a gateway into another culinary world. The stall holder offers Margueritte an orange. She scratches and sniffs the peel...

HASSAN
I hear the madam is not happy to have competition.

MARGUERITTE
She is not happy no matter what...

To the stall holder...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
(Two kilo of both. Deliver before nine.)

She walks on and Hassan follows...

HASSAN
Why is she not happy?

Margueritte consults her shopping list.

MARGUERITTE
She has one, she wants two.

HASSAN
Children?

Margueritte giggles at the absurdity.

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGUERITTE
No. Stars. Children would get in the way.

HASSAN
Of the stars.

MARGUERITTE
Of course. In France all that matters to a chef is the stars.

Margueritte folds her list and puts it in her pocket.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Ok. C'est tout.

She gathers up the bags she is taking back by hand. Hassan wants to delay her...

HASSAN
You know, I would like to learn about French cuisine. Perhaps you can recommend some books...

MARGUERITTE (DEAD PAN)
Now why would I help you? You are the enemy now.

At last she smiles. Hassan smiles too...

HASSAN
See you on the battlefield.

The loud Gujarati music resumes as Hassan watches Margueritte walk away...

MONTAGE: EXT./INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY' RESTAURANT - DAY/NIGHT

As the music establishes again, we see the restaurant gradually being transformed by local builders and the family, including Hassan, whose job it is to paint a large mural on the wall of an Indian village scene with oxen and women hauling water (Hassan is a talented artist).

The development of the mural is intercut with other developing features. A hand-painted sign eventually reads '*Maison Mumbay - la culture Indienne en Lumiere'*.

Carpenters and other craftsmen work on the structure and we witness the deliveries of regular kitchen equipment as well as more exotic items, such as a tandoori oven, all the way from India.

CONTINUED:

The entire family are present as the straw is removed from the packaging and the oven is revealed to loud applause from all the family.

We also cut to scenes of the French workmen enjoying lunch at a trestle table outside. Hassan joins them and literally breaks bread with them. Papa looks on with some disapproval as he works through.

Also intercut, a taxi arrives and a large Indian chef gets out with his suitcase. This is UMAR, who will be the Maison Mumbay's version of the *chef de cuisine.* He is a huge barrel of a man with a cavernous laugh. He hugs the children so hard they squeal...

MUKHTAR
Umar! You are even fatter!

He goes to give Papa a hug but Papa evades and offers his hand. Umar picks Mehtab up off the ground.

MEHTAB
Uncle Umar, did you not get the magazine article I sent you about cholesterol.

UMAR
No one trusts a thin cook.

Hassan has appeared from behind Umar...

HASSAN
Then I am in trouble.

Umar spins to see Hassan. We see the respect Umar has for Hassan and he becomes almost formal. He reserves a special hug for Hassan. Umar glances at the door to the kitchen...

UMAR
(Show me our Kingdom).

We see Papa and Hassan showing Umar around the kitchen and see him unfolding his leather apron of knives. Everything about Umar is big and his knives are like cutlasses. He swipes the air with a knife as if a declaration of war...

UMAR (CONT'D)
I hear there is a rival restaurant...

Umar grins. We cut away to...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR' RESTAURANT

The Indian music continues...

We visit the restaurant for lunch and dinner as intercuts. Each time the place is busy and functioning well, but Madam Mallory spends most of her time hovering near to the net curtains and looking over at the developments across the street, a hundred feet away.

We see her reaction to the large painted elephant which is erected on the restaurant nameboard. The music continues to pound and when we cut inside the Seaule Pleureur it competes with the Bach and Mozart which plays inside the restaurant.

INT./EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR' KITCHEN

In the spacious kitchen we visit a frantic lunchtime service. Jean Pierre, Marcel and Margueritte are all working hard.

Then we join the three of them as they smoke cigarettes outside the back door of the kitchen. Over the fence and across the street they see Hassan, shirt off, working on the roof of the restaurant. Margueritte watches him work and Jean Pierre notices her staring.

JEAN PIERRE
(You know I saw that Indian guy buying things in the convenience store.)

MARGUERITTE
(I only ever see him shopping in the market).

JEAN PIERRE
(His trolley was full of cat food.)

Jean Paul chuckles and gestures at Hassan...

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
(They don't even have a cat. I guess it was for the curry.)

He flicks his cigarette away and goes back inside the restaurant. Margueritte glares at him as he goes. She appears to make a decision.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURT YARD

Hassan returns to the restaurant from an early morning run, wearing sweatpants and a T-shirt. He finds a package on the doorstep, hand delivered and addressed to him.

CONTINUED:

He opens it up on an outside table and finds a stack of six time-worn French cook books. He peers at them and looks for a note. There is none.

He looks across the divide at the place where Margueritte works. He smiles.

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR'/'MAISON MUMBAY'

The Indian music continues...

The road that runs between the two restaurants is now a frontier. The understated elegance of the French restaurant contrasts the bright colors and graphic imagery of the Maison Mumbay.

We read a sign...'*Ouverte Samedi*' (opens Saturday).

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', HASSAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hassan is reading one of the cook books Margueritte gave him. The others are piled beside the bed. He consumes the books as if they were food pornography, arousing and illicit.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY' COURTYARD

The portable stereo we saw earlier is now on an outside table. It is playing the montage music loudly to entertain Papa. He is carrying tables and chairs into position, ready for the opening night. The rest of the restaurant is now complete.

Hassan enters through the cane gate, carrying a box of plates to the kitchen from a rental van.

Suddenly the music stops. Silence.

Hassan and Papa turn to see Madam Mallory, who has just turned the portable stereo off.

MADAM MALLORY
You may like this kind of music. The rest of the village does not.

HASSAN
Sorry Madam...

Papa drops the table he is carrying.

PAPA
Did someone invite you on to my property?

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
Papa...

MADAM MALLORY
I knocked. You didn't hear me because the music was so loud.

Papa and Madam Mallory stare at each other.

PAPA
You received my invitation to our opening night on Saturday?

MADAM MALLORY
We are very, very busy on Saturdays.

A pause.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
But I am interested to take a look at a menu.

Papa doesn't move. Hassan, eager to build bridges, grabs a photocopied menu and hands it to her.

HASSAN
The specials will change from day to day.

She gives him a withering look...

MADAM MALLORY
Curry is curry isn't it?

Papa smiles...

PAPA
You have obviously never eaten Indian food.

Papa gestures at Hassan...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Especially not Indian food cooked by my son.

Madam Mallory nods at Hassan, evidently dubious.

MADAM MALLORY
Yes. I hear you people like to keep everything in the family.

A frosty moment as even Hassan reacts to her mild racism. Madam Mallory glances at the menu in her hand.

CONTINUED: (2)

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Well if your food is anything like your music...

She smiles and whispers patronizingly at Hassan...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
...You will need to turn it down.

She turns to walk. Papa calls after her....

PAPA
I have a new name for you. Madam Taliban. No music, no dancing.

Madam Mallory keeps walking. Papa strides back to the portable stereo and turns the music back on. Madam Mallory has gone. Hassan is irritated with Papa and turns the music off again.

HASSAN
Papa, will you stop! What is it with you and this woman?

Papa has placed the table firmly in position and dusts his hands.

PAPA
When we left Mumbay I made a pledge to Mama.

He glares across the street.

PAPA (CONT'D)
We will never again be chased away like dogs.

Hassan reacts wearily.

HASSAN
Papa, this is <u>not</u> Mumbay.

Papa stares into Hassan's eyes. For the first time we sense Papa's deeper understanding of the world which goes beyond Hassan's youthful naivety.

PAPA
Hassan. You will learn. When there are differences between people, <u>anywhere</u> can be Mumbay.

Papa turns and walks. Hassan reacts. He looks across the street and then back to where his father went.

EXT. LUMIERE MARKET

We find Papa and Mehtab handing out leaflets advertising the opening night of the Maison Mumbay restaurant in the village square. Mehtab is wearing a *sari*. Most locals take the leaflets politely but some of the young guys sipping beers outside a cafe are staring across the square and conferring.

We spend some time on the dark reactions to Papa and Mehtab, though we get no translations. Papa calls out to passers-by...

PAPA
We open tomorrow night. Tasting menu half price. My son is the best Indian chef in Europe. In fact the whole western world.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', PAPA'S BEDROOM

In half light we find Papa peering out of the window across the hundred feet to the upper windows of the Saule Pleureur. He lets the curtain drop, kneels down and from under the bed he pulls a big, battered suitcase. He runs his hand across the leather case with reverence. It is a fifties model, with lots of very old airline stickers mottled in the grain of the leather. He picks up the case and walks.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is deserted apart from Hassan, who is busy getting the kitchen ready for tomorrow. The Lumiere church clock is ringing midnight.

Papa approaches from the shadows and stares at Hassan for a few moments as Hassan works on oiling pans. Then Papa steps into the light, startling Hassan.

The last chime rings out.

PAPA
Midnight. Only eighteen hours until we open for business.

Hassan reacts to the suitcase.

HASSAN (ALARMED)
Where are you going?

The suitcase is heavy and Papa heaves it up onto the table. Papa clicks open the locks.

CONTINUED:

PAPA
I have been waiting many years to give you this.

Hassan reacts to the smell first. A great breath of spiced air hits him. Inside the case there are hundreds of boxes and bags of spices, all neatly labelled in a woman's hand. (In this earlier moment, the case is full).

Hassan reacts with awe.

PAPA (CONT'D)
This is the first case I packed when we left Mumbay. I never opened it in London because I knew it was not our destination.

Hassan takes a moment to examine the contents.

PAPA (CONT'D)
It was mama's.

Hassan finds Saffron, turmeric, garam masala, but also rarer spices that widen his eyes.

PAPA (CONT'D)
And now it is yours.

Hassan turns.

PAPA (CONT'D)
I flew Umar out here from London because he is a very good and organized chef.

Hassan picks up a bag of spice and sniffs it...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Umar will teach you a lot about how to organize a service and get meals to tables on time.

Papa picks up a particular spice box with reverence...

PAPA (CONT'D)
But Mama always said, that this case should some day belong to you.

Papa opens the spice box. They share the aroma of the spice.

CONTINUED: (2)

PAPA (CONT'D)
There are enough spices in this suitcase to last one cook a whole lifetime. Do what you will with them.

Papa turns and walks. We are left alone with Hassan and the case of spices. He takes another deep breath of the aromas.

EXT. LUMIERE MARKET - NEXT MORNING

Bright morning light. A hand grabs a chicken and it is dispatched by an axe. The place is busy as usual. Hassan and Papa pull up in their mended van and park. Hassan gets out consulting a long shopping list.

Hassan and Papa approach the *'ITAN'* fish stall, where the usual surfeit of shellfish and fresh fish are spread out. The fishmonger (MONSIEUR ITAN) looks a little apprehensive as Hassan and Papa approach. Papa picks up a langoustine and sniffs it.

PAPA
Perfect for the languoustine masala, yes?

Hassan takes a langoustine and stares down into its eyes, then sniffs it and then rocks the shell between his fingers.

HASSAN
Firm. They will be very sweet.

He turns to Monsieur Itan.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Deux kilos de langoustine.

Monsieur Itan takes a moment...

MONSIEUR ITAN
(Pardon Monsieur. All the langoustine are sold).

Monsieur Itan points to a hand-written sign which reads *'vent'*. We don't get a translation but we see Hassan's face drop and see the anxiety of Monsieur Itan...

PAPA
What did he say?

HASSAN
He said all of the langoustine are sold.

CONTINUED:

Hassan thinks quickly and grabs some crevettes...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Ok...deux kilo de crevettes..

MONSIEUR ITAN
Pardon Monsieur, toutes les crevettes aussi.

Papa sees the reaction as Hassan begins to have suspicions.

HASSAN
The cervettes too are sold. *Ok, les moules?*

MONSIEUR ITAN
Vent.

PAPA
Sold?

HASSAN (QUICKLY)
Sold.

A pause. Papa steps in front of Hassan and asks in English.

PAPA
Sold to who?

EXT. LUMIERE MARKET, VEGETABLE STALL

The vegetables overflow as Hassan and Papa engage the pleasant country woman who is serving. Hassan has ordered from his list. However...

VEGETABLE STALL HOLDER
Desole messieurs. Tout mes flor de courgettes son vent.

Papa turns sharply and walks to the next stall.

EXT. LUMIERE MARKET, MUSHROOM STALL

The mushroom stall holder is shrugging as Hassan looks up from his list...

STALL HOLDER
Non. Les ceps aussie. Tout est vent.

HASSAN
Toutes les ceps?

CONTINUED:

The stall holder finally decides to reply in English, speaking confidentially...

STALL HOLDER
Monsieur, Le Saule Pleureur has bought almost everything up. The madam came herself very early this morning.

PAPA
And bought things she would not normally buy, yes?

The stall holder nods and shrugs. Papa spins on his heel and Hassan follows.

EXT. LUMIERE MARKET

Hassan and Papa walk through the bustle toward their van. Some of the people appear to be oblivious, some are a little concerned, others seem to think their plight is funny, but it seems most people have heard what has happened. Papa is steaming...

PAPA
You gave her our menu. I <u>knew</u> it was a mistake.

Hassan has spotted something about the van and stops dead. Papa rolls on...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Every fresh ingredient we need has been bought.

Papa takes a moment, then speaks softly...

PAPA (CONT'D)
So. War.

Papa smiles...

PAPA (CONT'D)
War it is.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

Papa and Hassan pull up in the van with a screech. They hurry, opening the back doors of the van and grabbing boxes. Mehtab runs to them...

MEHTAB
Did you break down?

CONTINUED:

PAPA
No. Someone declared war on us.

MEHTAB
What?

HASSAN
Papa, please don't escalate this...

MEHTAB
Escalate what?

Papa storms off with a box of courgettes in his arms. Mehtab turns to Hassan...

HASSAN
We had to drive to the coast to get fish.

Mehtab grabs a box too...

MEHTAB
What happened to the market?

Hassan gestures across the street.

HASSAN
Madam Mallory happened to the market.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

The place is frantic. Even Ammi and Mukhtar have been recruited to peel vegetables. Umar is yelling in Gujarati. He is a force of nature, his great bulk dominating the kitchen. He wipes copious sweat from his brow and comes to Hassan who is carefully stirring a thick sauce on a flame and sampling from the tip of a tea spoon...

UMAR
Hassan. We won't have time to cook the mutton properly. We should take it off the menu..

HASSAN
No. Soak it in a little red wine vinegar. And add some crushed cardoman.

UMAR
Vinegar?

He glances at the 'Cordon Bleu' cook book which Hassan has placed beside his station.

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
Vinegar will tenderise the meat.

UMAR
We don't use vinegar.

HASSAN
This is an emergency.

Umar stands his ground and Hassan turns.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Umar, when in Rome.

UMAR
We're not in Rome.

Hassan speaks clearly above the noise of the kitchen, a statement of intent...

HASSAN
Vinegar dissolves the sinews in tough meat. To survive here we will need to adapt. We must make the most of what is close to us. The vinegar here is not like at home, it is sweet and fragrant. I have tasted it.

He meets Umar's eye and lays his cards on the table...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Look. Indian food shouts from the rooftops. The flavors are big and strong, and that is good. But here in France...

A pause. Hassan comes close and lowers his voice..

HASSAN (CONT'D)
...Sometimes the food will need to whisper.

Umar takes a moment to understand.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Just soak the mutton in the vinegar and add cardoman.

Umar hesitates then goes to his station. Hassan stirs and takes a breath. He adds softly to himself...

HASSAN (TO HIMSELF) (CONT'D)
And pray to God that it works...

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY' - EVENING

The gates to the courtyard of the Maison Mumbay are unlocked and opened slowly. These are the same gates Hassan and Papa peered through when the restaurant was derelict. Now they are painted up like the gates of a palace.

When the gates open fully we see they are being opened by Papa in a dark suit. The Lumiere clock is chiming six.

Papa stands in the gateway. He looks up and down the street to see it is deserted. He notices Madam Mallory staring down at him from her bedroom...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM

We come close to her as she stares across at Papa in his outfit.

MADAM MALLORY
(No one will come, you fool).

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY'

Papa stands at the gates as traffic drives past. Some of the drivers slow but no one stops. Mayur approaches from inside the restaurant and stands beside Papa. Finally he speaks up...

MAYUR
Papa, it isn't like in India where you stand at the gate and drag people in who are passing by.

Papa glances up at Madam Mallory's bedroom. Mayur follows his eye line...

MAYUR (CONT'D)
You should come inside. Or you will look foolish.

Papa holds his ground for a moment, then he appears to acquiesce. Mayur watches him walk inside, perhaps surprised he gave in so easily...

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', PAPA'S BEDROOM

...Or did he?

We can hear voices from downstairs and the sound of cars passing by. We are close on the mirror. Then an odd sight. An elaborate Maharaja's turban. Then Papa.

CONTINUED:

Papa is dressed as a nineteenth century Mogul, complete with silk turban and gold waistcoat and baggy white trousers. He has waxed his moustache and studies himself in the mirror.

PAPA (TO HIS REFLECTION)
We wouldn't want to look foolish now would we?

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR' RESTAURANT

Madam Mallory is drifting among her customers, half an eye on the net curtains and the street beyond. She takes a peek and sees a car pulling in to the Maison Mumbay, and hears the doors of another car slamming.

People are going into the Maison Mumbay and Madam Mallory frowns a little. Then, in headlights, she sees Papa in his Maharaji outfit, greeting an amused couple.

Madam Mallory is incredulous...

MADAM MALLORY
(It's true. He is insane.)

Papa then steps into the light of the gates and another passing car slows suddenly and reverses.

Papa spots Madam Mallory looking and reacts. He goes to a control panel outside the main door and hits a switch. Indian music begins to play. Papa turns pointedly to stare up at Madam Mallory as he cranks up the volume.

In front of Madam Mallory the window vibrates a little. Papa returns to the gate. He puts his hands together below his chin as a traditional Indian greeting and gives her a deep bow.

Madam Mallory lets the curtain drop.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

The kitchen is working hard. We hear the music leaking in from outside. Mayur enters dressed in his waiter clothes. He stuffs an order onto the ridge and calls out...

MAYUR
Two more for the taster menu.

Hassan is frantically busy but calls out through the steam...

HASSAN
How many?

CONTINUED:

MAYUR
One third full. Half of them are English tourists. Some of them are dancing.

Umar glances at Hassan as he works frantically...

UMAR
Any complaints about the mutton?

MAYUR (BUSY)
Why would there be complaints about the mutton?

Hassan and Umar swap looks.

MAYUR (LEAVING WITH DISHES) (CONT'D)
Anyway, they are all too busy getting pictures taken with Papa to complain.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

A flicker then a flash of a cellphone camera. A young woman is having her photo taken with her arm around Papa, who dutifully smiles.

The tables are occupied mostly by young people out for a Saturday night. Some people dance to the music, half liking it, half making fun of it. But it is fun nevertheless. Papa patrols with his arms behind his back.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR' - SAME TIME

Bach plays gently as diners in expensive clothes enjoy their meals. Madam Mallory is at her station at the front of the house. As an elegant couple enter and the door swings open, she hears the music from across the street for a moment and reacts.

She glimpses the flash of cameras, the outline of Papa in another photo. He has taken her attention away from the customer, who waits with his coat over his arm...

GUEST
(Is it a wedding party over there?).

Madam Mallory's face hardens instantly...

MADAM MALLORY
(A funeral. The death of good taste in Lumiere.)

EXT. LUMIERE SQUARE, CAFE

Bright morning sun reveals the beautiful market square of Lumiere. A breakfast of *cafe au lait,* croissants, and a large baguette is being delivered to an outside table in Lumiere market by a waitress.

A portly man with receding hair (THE MAYOR) is sitting at the table and reacts with delight to the breakfast being set before him. Then a young girl in office clothes skids to a halt on her bicycle right beside him (we will learn this is his secretary).

SECRETARY
(Quickly. The Madam has called. She wants to see you.)

INT. LUMIERE, MAYOR'S OFFICE

The office is not grand and faces the old church through a first floor window. There is an impressive mayoral crest above the chair behind the old oak desk. The mayor is finishing his huge baguette of cheese and local ham with oozing mayonnaise.

An old fashioned intercom buzzer buzzes and he flicks a switch to answer with a full mouth...

MAYOR
(Send her in.)

He finishes his mouthful quickly and smooths his hair and straightens his tie. Madam Mallory enters like a battleship, but with a distant smile.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
(Good day Madam).

She sits...

MADAM MALLORY
(Is it? That is questionable)

MAYOR
(My secretary said something about noise.)

MADAM MALLORY
(Yes. I wish to make an official complaint.)

CONTINUED:

A pause. The mayor opens a drawer and takes out a form with three pages, which he places on the desk. Then he takes a moment and decides to speak out...

MAYOR
(Madam. May I offer you a word of caution).

Madam Mallory is unused to even token opposition and angles her head.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
(Many have tried to make a success of the restaurant opposite the Saule Pleureur. And many times you have seen them off).

A pause.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
(But these people are different. They are not French. Some in the village...the worst sort...use ugly words about them.)

Madam Mallory is unmoved.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
(Be careful you are not seen to be in sympathy with them).

Madam Mallory gives a half smile, totally unmoved...

MADAM MALLORY
(I will fill out the form here and now so that you don't have to wait for the postman.)

Madam Mallory takes out a gold pen and turns the form around. The mayor sits back and sighs...

EXT. LUMIERE RIVER - MORNING

Hassan is casting a fishing line into the tranquil waters of the river. He sits and tosses some bread as ground bait around his hook. He looks around at the beauty of the countryside.

After a moment he sees someone cycling up the path beside the river, then recognizes Margueritte. Almost unconsciously he straightens his appearance. She cycles close and Hassan calls out...

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
Hey, Margueritte. Thank you.

She dismounts because the path is narrow...

MARGUERITTE
For what?

HASSAN
The books.

MARGUERITTE (TEASING)
What books?

He smiles and turns back to his line. Margueritte checks his fishing tackle box...

HASSAN
I found it in the attic.

Margueritte examines some of the hooks and looks dubious.

MARGUERITTE
Too big for perch. And you need worms, not bread.

HASSAN
You’re not supposed to help me.

MARGUERITTE
Perhaps I’m deliberately deceiving you.

HASSAN
Perhaps you are.

MARGUERITTE
Anyway, how come you get free time? We are always at our stations by seven.

Hassan studies his line...

HASSAN
We are not so disciplined.

MARGUERITTE
And your food is less disciplined too.

He turns to her...

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Lamb with turmeric and courgette flowers. Apparently very good.

HASSAN
You are sending spies?

MARGUERITTE
Lots of people are talking about you. They say your food has...*Je ne sais quoi...*

Hassan is happy she has taken an interest. He reels in and casts out again. He sees Margueritte is about to set off and again wants to engage her...

HASSAN
You know, I love the morel mushrooms from the market. But I am finding them quite tough. Do you have any tips?

Hassan waits. Margueritte doesn't respond.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I will swap you. I noticed you have pigeon on your menu. Have you tried stuffing them with nutmeg? Old Himalayan mountain recipe. Very good.

Margueritte takes the idea, (and the olive branch) on board. She decides....

MARGUERITTE
Lemon juice. For the morels. Ten minutes in lemon juice then dry them completely on paper.

Hassan tightens his line and Margueritte can see Hassan committing the instruction to memory. She studies him. Perhaps she recognizes her own thirst for knowledge. After a moment...

MARGUERITTE (MYSTERIOUS) (CONT'D)
French cooking has five fingers.

Hassan turns. Margueritte raises the fingers on her right hand one-by-one...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Sauce, mousse, compote, tartare, demi-glaze.

CONTINUED: (3)

She holds up her outspread hand.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
That was my own system for remembering. When I was first learning. I taught myself to master all five basic techniques...

Margueritte adds detail to emphasize the oddness...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
...I was twelve. I read every book in my mother's kitchen. It became an obsession.

Now Hassan recognizes himself in Margueritte. She lowers her hand. He begins to repeat...

HASSAN
Sauce, mousse...

MARGUERITTE
...compote, tartare, demi-glaze. You master those, you can begin to study French cuisine.

HASSAN
And I will find all five in those books?

MARGUERITTE
They are no use in books. You must put them in your heart.

He considers her, sees the fire burning inside when she talks about cooking. He feels the same fire. He casts out his line...

HASSAN
I have an idea. I will make the five fingers. I will bring them for you to try.

MARGUERITTE
Bring them where?

Hassan is assured...

HASSAN
We will have a picnic. Somewhere private.

He glances around...

CONTINUED: (4)

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Under that big oak tree on the hill.

Hassan gestures at a big spreading oak in the near distance. Margueritte suspects seduction...

MARGUERITTE
I will bring my boyfriend.

Hassan doesn't respond for a while and busies himself with his slack line. Then...

HASSAN
You have a boyfriend?

MARGUERITTE
He is a pilot.

HASSAN
So bring him.

She considers Hassan...

MARGUERITTE
He will almost certainly be away somewhere. He is as dedicated to his work as I am.

Hassan turns to her...

HASSAN
So why did you mention him?

MARGUERITTE
I wanted to check.

HASSAN
Check what?

MARGUERITTE
That this is about food.

Hassan takes a moment...

HASSAN
<u>Everything</u> is about food.

Margueritte likes the answer. He is right. After a moment...

MARGUERITTE
I have one afternoon off a week. Mondays.

Hassan gets the inference straight away...

CONTINUED: (5)

HASSAN
So. Our picnic will be on a Monday.

She gets on her bike...

MARGUERITTE
Which Monday?

HASSAN
Next Monday.

She laughs with incredulity and cycles away, calling back...

MARGUERITTE
All five in one week? Impossible!

Hassan watches her go.

INT./EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

Another evening service is under way and this time the place is a little more full. Papa is wearing ordinary clothes and is acting as Maitre D'. We follow him as he strolls out into the courtyard, which is half full. The customers are enjoying the food and there is a buzz about the place. The music is playing loudly. We drift through the hedge at the back of the patio...

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', HEDGEROW NEARBY - SAME TIME

We find a spectacled young guy hiding in the undergrowth, wearing headphones. He is hooked up to a small decibel monitor on his lap and he is studying the dial intently as it reacts to the music coming from the restaurant.

He makes a note.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', HASSAN'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Hassan is reading one of his illicit cook books. He is deeply engrossed. It is late and he has been reading for a long time. The Lumiere church clock strikes three and Hassan takes that as a cue to put the book aside. From under his pillow he takes a list of the 'five fingers'. Already 'sauce', 'mousse' and 'compote' have a line drawn through them. Tartare is next on the list.

He swings out of bed and takes the cook book with him as he leaves.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN - JUST BEFORE DAWN

The kitchen is sleeping.

CONTINUED:

Hassan is in his pyjamas. He has already chopped some shallots and some caper berries and is now finely dicing some prime beef. He breaks a raw egg and mixes it with the beef. He checks the recipe in the cook book which he has open.

We time cut to see Hassan turning the raw beef out of a spice bowl onto a plate. The shallots and capers have been mixed in. Hassan then breaks another raw egg over it.

He sits down and considers the dish. Steak tartare. He speaks softly...

HASSAN
Yes mama, I know. Only dogs eat raw meat.

Then he dips his fork in and takes a mouthful. He reacts to the strange cool texture of the raw ingredients. Then he begins to eat. We see that it is good. As he continues to eat he takes the list of dishes from his pyjama pocket and crosses off 'tartare'.

EXT. LUMIERE MARKET

Papa is at a table outside the market cafe, sipping coffee and looking pleased with himself. He has the local paper open on the page where there is a photo of Papa in his Maharaji outfit, arm around Hassan, smiling into camera. The headline reads...

'La cuisine Indienne arrive en Lumiere - et c'est magnifique'

As Papa sips, Madam Mallory arrives in a car driven by her Maitre D' Jacques. As she gets out and walks by, Papa bows a greeting. Madam Mallory ignores him.

She heads for the poultry stall, where chickens and wild pigeons hang. The POULTRY MAN gives a reverent smile. The exchange is in French but we shouldn't need a translation to get the sense of it.

MADAM MALLORY
(*Bonjour Phillipe. Je voudrais deux canard de barbary*).

POULTRY MAN
Ah. Desolee madam. Tout mes canards son vent.

MADAM MALLORY
Vent?

CONTINUED:

POULTRY MAN
Oui.

MADAM MALLORY (INCREDULOUS)
Tout les canards?

POULTRY MAN
Oui. Tout.

A pause...

MADAM MALLORY
Vent a quoi?

The poultry man looks over Madam Mallory's shoulder to where Papa is climbing into his van and firing the engine. Madam Mallory and Jacques stare as Papa drives by and waves at them through the window.

Madam Mallory's face darkens to a deep pitch.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURT YARD

Papa pulls up in the van and slides open the door. Hassan and Umar join to help him unload. The first thing Hassan sees is a dozen ducks.

HASSAN
Papa? Why so many ducks?

Hassan picks one up and sniffs it...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
We don't even have duck on the menu.

Papa chuckles...

PAPA
No, no, the dish we are serving today is called...'revenge'.

He walks with a box of vegetables. Hassan and Umar swap looks then Hassan hurries after Papa.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

Hassan catches Papa up and walks beside him as he goes to the cool room to store the vegetables. Papa giggles as he takes out a scribbled recipe.

CONTINUED:

PAPA
Tonight Madam Taliban has some Government minister dining in her restaurant. She always serves him this.

Papa shows Hassan the duck recipe...

HASSAN
How did you get this?

PAPA
She should pay her kitchen porters better. Then they wouldn't be so easy to bribe.

Hassan reads the recipe...

HASSAN
Barbary duck with truffle mousse...

PAPA
Very difficult recipe to cook if you have no duck.

Hassan gets it. Papa walks and Hassan follows...

HASSAN
Papa, you can not <u>do</u> this.

PAPA
She did it to us, I do it to her. War.

Papa grins...

PAPA (CONT'D)
That dish takes seven hours to prepare. She will have to drive to Caen to get the ducks because they are a special breed. By the time she gets back it will be too late.

Papa claps his hand...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Papa is smart, yes?

Hassan sits back against a surface with the recipe in his hand as Papa walks away. Hassan looks down at the recipe.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Jean Pierre, Marcel and Margueritte are all working hard. They come to attention as the back door is opened and Madam Mallory enters. Jacques follows, carrying a bag of ducks on a surface. Jean Pierre is anxious and hurries to them...

JEAN PIERRE
(Madam? What happened? It is too late. The Ministers' dish...)

Madam Mallory controls her fury.

MADAM MALLORY
(I am aware of the recipe's requirements Jean Pierre. However, circumstance dictates that we do something different with the ducks this evening.)

Everyone is stunned. A tap drips. Then there is a knock on the kitchen door. Marcel crosses the kitchen to open it. All heads turn.

Hassan is standing there in chef whites. He has a silver service tray. In silence he steps inside the kitchen and places it down.

HASSAN
I would like to apologize on behalf of my family for my father's poor behavior.

A disbelieving silence around the kitchen. He removes the lid. A wisp of steam. A roast duck in a stiff sauce glistens magnificently.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Barbary duck with truffle and rosemary mousse.

They all stare. Hassan glances at Margueritte...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
There is a sauce and a mousse. I got the recipes from a very old cook book.

No one moves for a moment. Jean Pierre is about to flare up but Madam Mallory silences him with a raised hand. She remembers what Papa said about his son. Even in this moment she needs to find out for herself. She picks up a tea spoon and goes to the dish.

CONTINUED:

No one breaths. She dips the spoon in the sauce and sniffs then tastes. A pause. She looks at Hassan who is burning under the attention. She takes a bigger spoonful to taste. She is hard to read and holds her reaction inside but we should realize....

The dish is perfectly cooked.

A long silence. She stares at Hassan. We might think she is going to congratulate him or thank him. Instead she very deliberately picks up the dish and scrapes it into the trash. She turns to Hassan.

MADAM MALLORY
You wasted your time. Go.

A pause. Hassan darkens then turns and walks. Jean Pierre glances at Margueritte with a look of triumph.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM

The bedroom with its one star is empty and in half darkness for a moment, then Madam Mallory enters. Now she is alone she can show her real emotion.

She goes to the window and stares across the divide. Hassan is walking back to his side of the road. She watches him and speaks softly to her God...

MADAM MALLORY
(Dear Lord? Why are you so unfair?
Why choose someone like him?)

Hassan disappears into the kitchen. Madam Mallory lets the curtain drop. She looks to the floor.

EXT. OAK TREE - MORNING

It is a beautiful morning in a glade near to a stream with vineyards stretching across the valley in all directions. A single ancient oak tree stands against the burning blue sky.

We see Hassan walking toward the tree, carrying a wicker picnic basket. From the opposite direction Margueritte approaches carrying a basket of her own.

A minute later a blanket is being flapped and spread on the ground. Without a word Hassan and Margueritte begin to unpack their delicacies. Hassan produces five containers. Margueritte produces pate and jellied meats and olives.

CONTINUED:

MARGUERITTE (JOKING)
I thought I would bring some food in case yours was inedible.

They spread their foods out on opposite sides of the blanket, both amused but playing it straight. When the food is unpacked, Margueritte hands Hassan a bottle of red wine and he pops the cork. Two glasses are placed and Hassan pours.

They both sit cross-legged on the blanket and raise a toast. Hassan offers the first container. There is a delicate creamy sauce inside. Margueritte takes a spoonful and reacts. She frowns...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Ah. Now I know why Madam Mallory threw your duck into the trash.

Hassan reacts. A moment of doubt. Then Margueritte smiles...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
She was angry. Because it was so good.

Hassan is relieved but doesn't want to let it show too much.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Maybe you got lucky.

Hassan offers the next container. Margueritte begins to help herself to his other offerings. Each one elicits a sigh of approval as she talks...

MARGUERITTE (INTERRUPTED BY SAMPLING) (CONT'D)
Madam Mallory says she can tell in just one mouthful if a chef has the potential to be great. When someone comes for a job she doesn't interview them, she just tells them to make an omelette.

The last thing to sample is the mousse. Margueritte dips her finger into it...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
She takes one bite of the omelette and then her tongue decides. Yes or no.

Margueritte sucks her finger. She reacts to the flavor of the mousse. After a moment...

CONTINUED: (2)

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Thank God. Too much lemon.

He smiles.

HASSAN
Four out of five isn't bad.

MARGUERITTE (SOFTLY)
Four out of five is...

A pause.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
...*incroyable*.

She studies him. He has passed an important test. They begin a rapid back and forth, a kind of race toward cooking intimacy...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
What is your favorite dish to cook?

HASSAN
Jalebi. Fermented dal and flour deep fried. The smell reminds me of my mother.

MARGUERITTE
The smell of pigs feet in vinegar remind me of my father.

HASSAN
Where is your father?

MARGUERITTE
Gone. Your mother?

HASSAN
Gone too. Food is memories, yes?

MARGUERITTE
Food is memories.

HASSAN
So what is *your* favorite dish to cook?

MARGUERITTE
Rabbit in port wine. Favorite dessert?

CONTINUED: (3)

HASSAN
Kulfi with hot toffee. Death row breakfast?

MARGUERITTE
Coffee, smoked haddock, truffle omelette, followed by a cigarette.

HASSAN
You smoke?

MARGUERITTE
I quit. But it's death row so who cares?

A pause. The fast exchange stops. Margueritte takes another taste of Hassan's demi-glaze. They are close now. Hassan sips his wine. We might suspect that they are becoming intimate by degrees. But then...

Suddenly a gun shot.

In the near distance they see Jean Pierre, the chef from the Saule Pleureur kitchen with a shot gun crooked over his arm. He has just shot a pigeon.

Jean Pierre strides up the hillside as his dog races to pick up the dead bird. Margueritte reacts with smothered venom and speaks softly to herself....

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
There are no secrets in this stupid village.

Jean Pierre reloads as he approaches and calls out in French.

JEAN PIERRE
(Margueritte? What are you doing getting your ass wet sitting on the grass?).

Hassan prepares, sensing trouble. Jean Pierre's shadow falls across the blanket.

MARGUERITTE
(The English call it a 'picnic'.)

Jean Pierre glares at Hassan and switches to English...

JEAN PIERRE
'*English*'? He is not English.

CONTINUED: (4)

Hassan gets to his feet. Jean Pierre snaps his shotgun shut as his dog appears at his feet with the dead pigeon in his jaws. The two men face each other. Margueritte is infuriated by the intrusion.

MARGUERITTE
(Jean, it is my day off. I do what I want).

Jean Pierre still glares at Hassan and looks down at the food that Hassan brought with him. He speaks lightly as he fastens a lead to his gun dog...

JEAN PIERRE
The good thing about you people moving in opposite...

He smiles...

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
All the rats have crossed the road. They prefer dirty kitchens.

Hassan doesn't rise to the bait. Instead he smiles...

HASSAN
Yes, we cook them, you know. I can give you the recipe if you like.

Jean Pierre stares.

JEAN PIERRE
Non. I have never believed that the cuisines of different races can mix. The result is always...

He glares at Margueritte...

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
...disgusting.

Jean Pierre turns and walks away with his dog trotting at his feet, leaving a chill behind. Hassan glances back at the picnic and they both sit down.

They sip in silence. Then, almost entirely as an act of defiance to Jean Pierre and others like him, Margueritte takes Hassan's face in her hand and kisses him on the lips. Hassan reacts with astonishment. After he has recovered, he then speaks in deliberately academic tones...

CONTINUED: (5)

HASSAN
Margueritte, if that kiss was nothing more than an empty gesture of defiance aimed at the small minded bigots of this cultural environment then...

A pause. A smile...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
...That is absolutely fine by me.

Margueritte looks away. She stares into the distance.

MARGUERITTE
Yes. That is exactly what it was.

A pause. Hassan lies back, hands behind his head, and stares at the blue sky.

HASSAN
I hope he wasn't flying over.

MARGUERITTE
Who?

HASSAN
Your pilot. He might have seen us.

Hassan smiles. Margueritte looks up at the empty sky then down at Hassan, who now has his eyes closed.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

Papa is sitting at the kitchen table with the Mayor. The Mayor is giving Papa printouts from a decibel machine. Papa studies the results...

PAPA
So, it is the law?

MAYOR
Yes. Public nuisance.

The mayor mops his brow.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
Unless you turn your music down, we have the power to...close your restaurant.

Papa nods. He puts the pages down.

CONTINUED:

PAPA
You know my son foolishly did her a favor. He thought he could win her over with kindness.

The mayor takes a moment to shrug the impossibility...

MAYOR
She has always been very...in French we say...(*'stubborn as an ox'*.)

PAPA
In Gujurat we say (*miserable old cow*).

The mayor glances across the street.

MAYOR
The restaurant hasn't always been her life. Once there was a man...

PAPA (GROWLING)
Let me guess. She cooked him and *ate* him.

MAYOR (IGNORING)
It was thirty years ago. She was in love with him and he with her. But there was a problem. He was the village priest...

A pause.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
It was a terrible scandal. The church moved him to Italy. He killed himself shortly afterwards.

Papa reacts...

MAYOR (CONT'D)
Since then, for the madam the restaurant is everything.

Papa nods. For a moment, we might imagine he has sympathy and even empathy.

PAPA (SOFTLY)
Very well. I will turn the music down.

The mayor takes the papers back. Papa smiles...

CONTINUED: (2)

PAPA (CONT'D)
But you can tell her from me. I will turn the heat up.

Fast Hindi music begins to play over a short 'war' montage...

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR'/'MAISON MUMBAY'

Papa crosses the road between the two restaurants with a ladder under his arm. He walks toward the weeping willow tree that droops over the wall of the restaurant garden...

He puts the ladder against the wall.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM

Madam Mallory notices the ladder from her window and sees Papa climbing the ladder then dropping a tape measure from the lowest branch of the weeping willow to the ground.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE

The mayor is sipping coffee and eating his morning croissant as his secretary shows Papa into his office. Papa has a photocopy of pages from a local district council regulations book. He has had the fine print meticulously translated and lays the pages down on the mayor's desk...

PAPA
The branches of her weeping willow tree are six centimetres lower than regulations allow. They are a danger to traffic.

The mayor studies the papers.

MAYOR
That tree is her pride and joy.

PAPA
So she is above the law of France?

The mayor sighs. The music continues...

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR'

A van pulls up outside the wall of the restaurant and some tree cutters in blue overalls climb out. They lean ladders against the wall.

One of them pulls the cord of a chain saw.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR'

An early lunch crowd are being served. Madam Mallory is drifting among her customers. We hear the chain-saw fire up outside and Madam Mallory reacts. She has obviously been informed of what is happening and takes the ripping sound with a steely look. The war is hotting up...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR' - DAY

Madam Mallory is taking photographs of the Maison Mumbay backyard, where Ammi and Mukhtar are feeding a flock of chickens that they keep in a wire coop.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', PAPA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Papa is spying on the Saule Pleureur from a comfortable position he has set up especially. A delivery vehicle pulls up at the gates. Papa hastily makes a note of the licence plate.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

The music continues.

Papa slaps a complaint form down on the mayor's desk. He glances at it and pushes it back. He opens a drawer and pulls out some photocopied sheets...

MAYOR
She is ahead of you.

EXT. LUMIERE MARKET

The mayor is walking arm-in-arm with his wife on a quiet evening in Lumiere market square. He sees Madam Mallory and tries to divert but it's too late. She comes to him and offers him a photograph taken from her bedroom. On the photographs we just make out the flock of chickens in the Maison Mumbay backyard. The Mayor looks at them...

MADAM MALLORY
(They are not vaccinated...)

The mayor glances at his wife, then pulls out some paperwork from his pocket which he gives to Madam Mallory. We glimpse that they are records of vaccinations. Madam Mallory reacts.

MAYOR
(He is ahead of you).

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE

The mayor is taking a phone call as he stands and peers out of the window.

MAYOR
...Yes Mr Haji, I can assure you she had a fire door and smoke alarm fitted between the kitchen and the dining room yesterday.

Down in the square he sees Madam Mallory and Jacques, handing out leaflets.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
Just as you have had a ramp fitted to your rear entrance to meet EU regulations, now wouldn't it be cheaper for you both if you just...

The call is cut. The Mayor puts the phone down with a weary sigh.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
Stopped this...

The montage music ends.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR' RESTAURANT, KITCHEN

Jean Pierre is preparing a *tete de veau,* a very traditional dish made from an entire pig's head. His work is slightly stomach turning. It is early morning. Madam Mallory enters....

MADAM MALLORY
(You are very early).

JEAN PIERRE
(No. I am still here from last night. These old recipes take time).

He slices an ear...

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
(We must show the village that traditional French food...

He cracks the skull with a cleaver...

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
(...can not be beaten.)

CONTINUED:

Jean Pierre wipes his brow and Madam Mallory sees he's been at work for hours. She half smiles and sits at the chef table. We see weariness.

MADAM MALLORY
(You would make a very loyal soldier Jean Pierre.)

Jean Pierre goes to the sink and swills his hands...

JEAN PIERRE
(I believe we must stand up to invaders. And Madam look at the date.)

Jean Pierre dries his hands of blood and delicately hands Madam Mallory a calender. A date is circled.

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
(Bastille day in three days. Madam Mallory....if I may make a suggestion...)

He takes a seat opposite Madam Mallory at the table.

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
(On Bastille day we must reclaim Lumiere. And strike a blow. The people will support us).

Madam Mallory peers into Jean Pierre's fervent eyes and silently asks what he means...

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
(Fireworks Madam).

MADAM MALLORY
(Fireworks?)

Jean Pierre nods his head and speaks softly...

JEAN PIERRE
(As they say in English)...'fight fire with fire'.

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', GARDEN - THAT NIGHT

Close up, a match is put to a blue fuse. The fuse fizzes then a giant rocket shoots up into the night sky.

The Bastille day celebration is a huge affair and most of the village has turned out, along with lots of well heeled customers.

CONTINUED:

Madam Mallory is in her element, drifting among her guests. The food is a sumptuous banquet spread out with all the finest dishes the restaurant has to offer. It is a culinary show of strength. More fireworks are lit and the crowd gasp.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

The place is deserted and the roar and bang of fireworks echo off the walls. Papa walks with his hands behind his back through the empty tables, ram rod straight, not flinching at the fireworks.

Umar comes out to light a cigarette. He has an agenda.

UMAR
There is a lot of food left over. In fact it is all left over.

PAPA
Mehtab has given you a diet sheet. Don't eat it. Put it in the fridge.

Umar sees Papa's genuine anger as he stares across the divide. He comes close...

UMAR
It is their national day. Why would they eat Indian on their national day?

Papa doesn't reply. He spots Mukhtar and Ammi standing on stools near to the kitchen to get a better view of the fireworks...

PAPA
Hey. Get down. Go to bed.

AMMI
We can't sleep Papa.

PAPA
Yes. I will be making an official complaint about the noise in the morning. Go.

The children reluctantly hurry inside. The fireworks crackle on Papa's face. Umar decides he must intervene. He goes to the gate and turns the '*ouverte*' sign around to '*ferme.*'

As he clears we re-join Papa staring across the street. He sees Madam Mallory handing out appetizers. She breaks off to stare at Papa. The early 'closed' sign is a victory. Papa goes into the restaurant and slams the door.

EXT. LUMIERE, DARK LANE - NIGHT

Margueritte is walking home after an exhausting service. On the horizon fireworks still explode and light the lane. Then she hesitates. A figure ahead in the hedgerow. A man.

The man is groaning and cursing in a strange language. He stumbles out of the hedge and Margueritte is about to flee. The man then looks up and sees her.

In the flash of a distant rocket she sees it is Hassan. A huge relief. She laughs and approaches...

MARGUERITTE
What the hell are you doing?

Hassan is pulling thorns from his sleeve, reacting to scratches...

HASSAN
We closed early. So I decided to come out and pick mushrooms...

She giggles as he pulls another lethal thorn from his arm...

MARGUERITTE
From underneath a hawthorn bush?

He comes to her, serious...

HASSAN
I saw some beautiful yellow ceps. They are best picked at night...

Margueritte continues...

MARGUERITTE
...Especially under a full Moon. Page 75 of the '*Rodin guide to fresh fungi and herbs*'.

Hassan nods. We guess this is one of the books she gave to him. They now both know the same books. They are physically close. She pulls the last thorn from his sleeve...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
You are very dedicated.

A pause. The next logical step would be an embrace. But they stay apart. Hassan looks up at the sky...

HASSAN (TEASING)
You know, whenever we are alone, I think he is up there, watching.

CONTINUED:

Margueritte giggles. Then becomes serious...

MARGUERITTE
He is not the problem Hassan.

A pause.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
No sensible person in the whole world would have a relationship with a chef.

He considers...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Eighteen hour days...

HASSAN
Except they are not days, they are nights.

MARGUERITTE
And always fighting, struggling, trying to keep up.

HASSAN
No sleep. No time...

She peers at him...

MARGUERITTE
I made a vow to myself. No chefs. Ever.

A pause. Hassan takes a moment...then smiles.

HASSAN
So I am a *chef*?

She glances at the thorn bush.

MARGUERITTE
You are more a chef than anyone I have ever met.

A pause. They peer at each other.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
So. C'est la vie.

They would kiss but they don't. Margueritte finally walks and Hassan watches her go. One last thorn digs into his arm.

EXT. LUMIERE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Hassan walks home down the lane of Lumiere by moonlight. He has mushrooms in a sack. His head is full of Margueritte. But then, Hassan notices something silhouetted on top of the gate of the restaurant. In moonlight he sees a pig's head impaled on a spike. Then, to his horror, he sees graffiti has been splashed onto the wall in white paint.

We don't delay to read the graffiti because, at that moment, Hassan sees two men straight ahead with scarves around their faces standing beside a van. They have lit kerosene soaked rags attached to bottles of fuel. The men draw on cigarettes and then hurl the petrol bombs over the low wall of the Maison Mumbay and through the window of the kitchen...

There is a splash of flame...

HASSAN
Hey! What the hell!!!!

The men hear the yell and leap into their van and screech away. Hassan runs fast...

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

The flames are beginning to catch on cloths and oil cans. An oil can pops and the liquid takes the fire to the middle of the kitchen. Hassan bursts inside and turns on the taps in the big sinks.

He hammers on the fire alarm bell with his fist and cuts his hand. The bell begins to ring. He tries to grab a fire extinguisher but it is among the flames and is too hot to hold.

A few seconds later Papa flies into the kitchen in his pyjamas. He immediately joins the task of putting out the flames. They grab water from pots which have been left to soak overnight and hurl it onto the flames.

As they fight the flames, the parallels with the opening scenes speak for themselves.

Then, suddenly, a pan of oil catches and explodes. Hassan is next to the explosion, holding a pot of water, and the burning oil splashes over his hands. He drops his pot with a clatter.

Umar and Mehtab have run into the kitchen too. Umar is a whirlwind. Using his giant strength he hauls a pot of stock from a stove and pours it onto the flames. He then grabs an extinguisher. Umar is now in charge and deals with the fire.

CONTINUED:

Papa rushes to Hassan and plunges his hands under a running tap of water.

For a beat they peer at each other. No words are needed. Papa was right. Hassan breaks away angrily and he and Papa rejoin the fight to control the flames. Finally, they manage to put the fires out.

Smoke swirls. Silence apart from dripping water. They look from one to another. Hassan sees that his Cordon Bleu book has been charred and is smouldering.

It in only now that the panic is over, that Hassan feels the pain in his hands. He looks down and sees they are badly burned. He falls back with a clatter against a stack of pots and pans.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM

An alarm clock rings in darkness. A wake up call.

It is a minute to 6am and Madam Mallory is out of bed already as she shuts off her alarm. She goes to the window (as she always does) and pulls open the curtains.

She stares down and sees the Maison Mumbay kitchen doors open, with pieces of furniture, some smoke damaged, out in the courtyard. Then she sees the graffiti on the walls. The slogans are in French but we get a translation...

'Muslim scum go home'. 'France for the French'. 'Go or we burn you out'.

The Lumiere clock chimes 6. Madam Mallory stares down. We see total shock then a huge emotion behind her eyes. A deep, deep regret. She takes a breath and fights tears.

Then, there is a knock at the door. She speaks on automatic.

MADAM MALLORY
Come.

Marcel enters with Madam Mallory's breakfast tray of coffee and eggs Benedict. He appears to know what has happened and places her tray without a word. He wants to leave and heads for the door...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(What happened?)

Marcel hesitates. Madam Mallory insists with her eyes...

CONTINUED:

MARCEL
(Their restaurant was attacked. Some people from another village...)

Madam Mallory questions his certainty without looking at him...

MADAM MALLORY
(Because, of course, people from Lumiere are not like that.)

Madam Mallory mocks his certainty with a look.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(Perhaps they started the fire with the leaflets I handed out).

MARCEL
(Madam, it was people from another village...)

Madam Mallory spits out...

MADAM MALLORY
(Of course. Because people from Lumiere are so open minded and accepting...).

She stops herself. We might guess she is perhaps referencing her own 'scandal', when the village may have turned on her during her relationship all those years ago. She stops herself. She has learnt to swallow it down. She looks back at the burnt out restaurant. She feels a burden of responsibility.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(Was anyone hurt?)

Again Marcel is hesitant. Madam Mallory insists...

MARCEL
(I have a friend who works at the hospital. One of them burnt his hands).

Madam Mallory nods gently.

MADAM MALLORY
('One of *them*').

A pause.

CONTINUED: (2)

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(Which 'one of them'?)

MARCEL
(The young chef).

Madam Mallory closes her eyes. A pause...

MADAM MALLORY
How badly?

A pause.

MARCEL
(He burnt his hands. Just skin.)

MADAM MALLORY
(But he will cook again?)

Marcel is slightly horrified, believing perhaps that Madam Mallory hopes he won't cook again (he is wrong).

MARCEL
Oui madam.

Madam Mallory opens her eyes. Down below, she sees Papa bringing a damaged chair out of the kitchen. He feels Madam Mallory's stare and turns to look up at her window. Papa stares defiance. Madam Mallory soaks it up (feeling she deserves it) and then lets the curtain drop.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', HASSAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Hassan lies on the bed with both his hands bandaged. The stack of French cook books are on the bedside table as a taunt. The door opens and Mehtab enters with a bowl of soup.

Without a word, Hassan sits up and Mehtab begins to spoon the rich spicy soup into his mouth (we might imagine she did this when he was a child). Hassan takes a sip.

He takes a sip. After a moment...

HASSAN
Not enough cardomon.

MEHTAB
Not enough gratitude.

Mehtab half smiles and glances at the French cook books.

MEHTAB (CONT'D)
You should burn those.

CONTINUED:

Hassan takes another sip.

HASSAN
No. No more burning. Chefs don't burn things.

She scoops up some more soup...

MEHTAB
Aren't you angry?

Hassan studies his bandaged hands and speaks softly.

HASSAN
You know what they say. 'If you can't beat them, join them'.

Mehtab reacts with alarm to Hassan's apparent acceptance. However, Hassan looks resolute, still staring at his bandages.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Except, I <u>can</u> beat them. And I will.

He focuses on Mehtab. He painfully takes the spoon from his sister's hand and wedges it between the bandages.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I have decided. I will join them. <u>And</u> beat them.

He brandishes the spoon like a weapon.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
With this.

Mehtab peers at Hassan. She sees that the attack has changed him. He is taking his destiny in his own hands. The boy has become a man.

EXT. LUMIERE, SMALL CATHOLIC CHURCH OUTSIDE LUMIERE

After the violence, the little church is a picture of rural French tranquillity. Birds sing among the gravestones and we see Madam Mallory approaching the church then entering.

INT. SMALL CATHOLIC CHURCH

The place is beautiful in its rustic simplicity. It looks rarely used. Madam Mallory genuflects then takes a seat near to the altar. She looks up.

MADAM MALLORY
Plus ca change. ('Nothing changes').

CONTINUED:

We might guess she is communicating silently with the Priest who she loved and who was taken from her by village narrow minds. Her focus is not on the statue of Christ but on the pulpit.

Silently she makes a decision, helped by the voice inside her head. She nods once firmly.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY'/'SAULE PLEUREUR' - LATER

The door to the Saule Pleureur opens and Madam Mallory emerges. She is dressed in working clothes under a raincoat and is carrying a heavy leather bag, like a tool bag. It is almost too heavy for her to carry and Marcel offers to help her but she refuses.

Jean Pierre is dumping trash from the kitchen into the metal trash cans outside. A cigarette dangles. He spots Madam Mallory and double takes. He turns to stare...

From on high we see Madam Mallory crossing the hundred foot divide and walking toward the Maison Mumbay.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY' - DAY

A splash of paint.

Madam Mallory very delicately begins to paint over the graffiti with dainty stabs of the brush....

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR'

Jean Pierre watches with disbelief as Madam Mallory paints over the graffiti. His face hardens and he storms back into the kitchen, slamming the door...

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY' - DAY

Madam Mallory continues to paint. This is <u>not</u> work she was born for and a car hoots as it drives by.

As she straightens she sees Papa, who has emerged from the court yard. Madam Mallory hesitates for a moment. She wants to apologize but instead retreats into practicalities...

MADAM MALLORY
This is the same paint. Left by the previous owners. They left it with me.

Papa doesn't react.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Is he alright?

CONTINUED:

Papa goes to take the paint...

PAPA
I can paint my own wall.

She resists...

MADAM MALLORY
Technically the outer wall is not *your* wall, it belongs to the village. Ask the mayor.

A pause. Madam Mallory concludes softly...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
I know because I had a clever plan to have it demolished.

Papa reacts to the emotion in her voice at last. They both reflect on the pettiness of their squabble and its consequences.

At that moment, the mayoral car drives by. The mayor slows a little and sees the paint and the brush in Madam Mallory's hand. With a slight gesture he acknowledges the break through. He drives on.

Papa is silent. Then, without a nod, he turns and walks back into his restaurant. Madam Mallory splashes more paint.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY' RESTAURANT, FROM ON HIGH

We see Madam Mallory continuing to paint over the graffiti from on high, then realize we are with Hassan, who is watching from his bedroom window.

Then he sees Papa climbing into the van and leaving. He is alone now with Madam Mallory. He stares at her, his mind working. Then he makes a decision.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY'

The last letter of the obscenity is painted over. Madam Mallory stands back and sees a stray white dot and stabs it with her paint. She looks quite vulnerable and sweet with flecks of paint on her face.

Hassan approaches and she turns sharply. She sees the bandages on his hand. She takes a moment and then looks to her feet.

Hassan speaks softly...

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
Madam Mallory?

A pause.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I want you to make me lunch.

Madam Mallory looks up and hesitates. She glances at her own restaurant. Hassan shakes his head and gestures at the Maison Mumbay.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

Madam Mallory enters the enemy territory with trepidation. The kitchen is sleeping. She stops...

MADAM MALLORY
Your father...

HASSAN
At the mayor's office. Filling out insurance forms. There is no one else here but me.

Hassan gestures at the burners and takes down a frying pan. He lays it on a burner.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Madam Mallory, instead of expressing regret, I would like you to cook me an omelette.

Madam Mallory reacts to the word. She peers at Hassan. She begins to get it. She angles her head...

MADAM MALLORY
An omelette?

HASSAN
Yes. A simple omelette.

Madam Mallory realizes the significance...

MADAM MALLORY
Margueritte told you...

HASSAN
Oui. If someone wants to work in your kitchen, you tell them to make an omelette.

Madam Mallory nods gently. Hassan holds up his bandaged hands...

CONTINUED:

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Right now I can not do it myself. You will have to follow my instruction. To the letter.

Madam Mallory realizes that this is a job interview, an act of redemption and an opportunity all in one. They peer at each other...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
First, you will break some eggs.

A pause. At last, a half smile from Hassan...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.

Madam Mallory nods once. We begin to cut and fade and cut and fade between the processes of making the omelette. The sequence should be sensuous and almost sexual. Madam Mallory breaks eggs into a bowl with Hassan watching over her. The pan flashes as Madam Mallory puts it to the heat to warm.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Turn the heat down to almost nothing. Eggs are afraid of heat...

We come close to the flame on the burner being reduced. The power structure is odd. Hassan is giving orders but he is also the one trying to win approval.

As Madam Mallory whisks the eggs...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Now add black truffle oil...

MADAM MALLORY (INCREDULOUS)
To the <u>eggs?</u>

HASSAN
T*rust* me Madam Mallory.

We cut close to rich oil dripping into creamy eggs.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Now butter milk.

MADAM MALLORY
Butter milk is too rich.

HASSAN
No.

CONTINUED: (2)

We cut close to Madam Mallory as she puts her nose to a bowl of butter milk. She looks up...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I have steeped the butter milk with basil leaves and fenugreek to cut the richness.

Hassan silently nods for her to trust him again. She pours the mixture into the eggs...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Now. Do exactly as I say...

We cut close to an omelette under a flame grill, the strips of Mozzarella cheese bubbling and browning.

Then...

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY' RESTAURANT

The tables all have white tablecloths but are not set. Only one table has a plate and cutlery. Madam Mallory and Hassan enter from the kitchen. Madam Mallory has the steaming omelette on a plate.

Hassan gestures for her to sit. He sits opposite her, his bandaged hands poised. He gestures her to eat. After a moment she cuts a corner of the omelette and tastes.

It is an electric shock, an orgasm. She eats for a few seconds then her head drops.

HASSAN
Well?

With humility...

MADAM MALLORY
Sharp and cool and hot. All at once on the tongue.

She seems to be overcome by emotion.

MADAM MALLORY (SOFTLY) (CONT'D)
Alors. (You have it.)

A pause. She peers at Hassan.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Your duck had it too.

HASSAN (FIRMLY)
I know. I knew. And I know.

CONTINUED:

Madam Mallory peers at him.

MADAM MALLORY
Arrogance.

HASSAN
A chef should lead...

Madam Mallory begins to celebrate inside at last and repeats...

MADAM MALLORY
Sharp and cool and hot in one mouthful. You know how difficult that is? You know how long chefs train to do that?

A pause. Hassan half smiles. Madam Mallory knows now she has him. Madam Mallory dabs her mouth with her napkin then nods gently as he looks out at the sunlight in the courtyard...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
What will your Papa say?

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD - LATER

From outside we hear Papa suddenly yell....

PAPA
No!!!!!!!

He bursts out into the courtyard, followed by Hassan.

HASSAN
Papa, it would only be a six month trial.

PAPA
No, no, no, no, no!

HASSAN
I will get a more classical training!

Papa begins to put out the chairs for the evening service, slamming them into position.

PAPA
Classical?! Why is Indian not classical?!

Hassan is resolute but doesn't answer.

PAPA (CONT'D)
No! Absolutely and completely no!

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM

Madam Mallory is preparing her face in the mirror for the evening service when she hears yelling...

PAPA (OOV)
Do you hear me up there Madam Taliban?! I say no!!

Madam Mallory goes to the window. Papa is cupping his hands and yelling across the street...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Do not try to steal my children!!

For the first time Madam Mallory giggles. Giggling suits her too. She seems changed. In a gesture that would previously have been way too vulgar she pulls up the window and yells back...

MADAM MALLORY
I will report you Mr Haji for making so much noise!

PAPA
And I will report you for attempted child abduction!

MADAM MALLORY
Have you even asked the boy what he wants?!

Papa growls and storms back inside the restaurant. Madam Mallory grabs her jacket...

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

The chickens scatter as Madam Mallory enters the back courtyard. She enters and firmly puts the chair down in the middle of the yard.

She sits down and folds her arms. Umar appears from the kitchen to dump some trash. He double-takes when he sees Madam Mallory sitting beside the chicken coup.

UMAR
Excuse me. What are you doing?

MADAM MALLORY
I am waiting.

UMAR
Waiting for what?

CONTINUED:

MADAM MALLORY
For Hassan Haji or death. Whichever comes soonest.

Umar reacts and hurries back inside.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

There is a cacophony of voices in English, French and Gujurat. Umar, Mayur, the children and Mehtab are all reacting, peering out of the back window.

Papa has grabbed the house phone.

PAPA
Yes Mayor. I have a complaint. She is now sitting in my courtyard with my chickens and she refuses to move.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE

The mayor leans back in despair...

MAYOR
When I drove by today, I thought you two had declared peace.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

Papa is fuming on the phone among the yelling...

PAPA
There was war and then peace and war again. And *now* she is demanding <u>hostages</u>!

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

Madam Mallory is sitting in her chair among the chickens with a resolute look on her face. Half the family come to the windows to peer out. Madam Mallory pulls her shawl around herself like someone prepared for a long wait.

INT. MARGUERITTE'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Margueritte is lying in bed, staring at the ceiling. It is 3.30am. Her cellphone rings. She is surprised and sits up to check the number. She takes the call fast...

EXT. OAK HILL, PICNIC

Hassan is sitting near to the oak in moonlight. Margueritte is wrapped in a heavy coat and hurries to join him.

CONTINUED:

MARGUERITTE
Hassan, I heard what happened. I thought you were still in the hospital.

Hassan holds up his bandages.

HASSAN
You have any idea how long it took to dial your number? I had to use my nose.

She smiles, sits...

MARGUERITTE
What is so urgent?

A pause. Hassan takes a moment...

HASSAN
I need to ask you a very important question.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', PAPA'S BEDROOM

Papa is trying to sleep. The Lumiere clock strikes 4am. He gets out of bed and peers down into the courtyard.

Madam Mallory is still sitting there. She is snoozing now.

He lets the curtain drop and curses in Gujarati. Then, as he paces...

PAPA
What will I do with this crazy, crazy French woman?

He paces.

PAPA (CONT'D)
If I still had my gun, I could fire shots over her head.

He glances out of the curtain again. Madam Mallory allows herself a sly glance upward. Papa lets the curtain drop again.

EXT. OAK HILL, PICNIC

Hassan and Margueritte are side-by-side on the grass.

MARGUERITTE
You are asking my permission?

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
Your opinion.

A pause. She glances at him.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
And your permission.

After a moment...

MARGUERITTE
We will both have to be very professional.

HASSAN
Yes. And anyway we will be so busy..

MARGUERITTE
Always.

HASSAN
And you have made your vow. And you have your pilot. So we will be fine.

Margueritte nods firmly. A pause.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Then it is a deal.

She nods.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I would shake hands but I can't.

She turns to him.

MARGUERITTE
Welcome to the other side of the street Hassan.

She gets up and walks. Then she stop and turns and calls out...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
It is only a hundred feet Hassan!

We stay with his face as she goes...

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', PAPA'S BEDROOM

Papa walks by the curtain, not able to sleep.

CONTINUED:

PAPA (TO HIMSELF)
If she dies of exposure, it will probably go on my insurance.

The curtain billows in a breeze. Then the moonlight makes it sparkle. *Suddenly...the curtain becomes the beautiful sari that Mama was wearing on the night she died.*

Papa stares at it, his eyes transfixed. It is a powerful emotion for him but not unprecedented...

PAPA (CONT'D)
My love?

After the initial shock, Papa recovers quickly. (As he told Hassan, he often talks to Mama). The curtain/sari shimmers in the moonlight and seems to be alive as the wind blows again. After a moment Papa looks away. He listens as if hearing words...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Please Haleema, don't say that.

He looks down at Madam Mallory, who is snoozing now. He listens to the breeze and responds...

PAPA (CONT'D)
But if Hassan leaves, he will never return. It is not a hundred feet, it is a million miles.

Papa thinks hard. He appears to hear a resolution. Finally...

PAPA (SOFTLY) (CONT'D)
So. It is decided.

He slowly looks back to the curtain. It is just a curtain again. Papa knows what he must do.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

Madam Mallory hears the back door being unlocked. Papa emerges, carrying a hard-backed chair of his own and a blanket.

He puts the blanket around Madam Mallory's shoulders and places his chair beside her. They sit side-by-side in silence in the moonlight for a while.

PAPA
You want him because you want another star for yourself, yes?

CONTINUED:

MADAM MALLORY
Yes. I will not lie.

A pause.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
But I also want to offer your son a stepping stone to the world. He deserves it. He has a gift.

A pause. Papa looks around at the dark courtyard.

PAPA
You are very stubborn.

A pause. Madam Mallory doesn't reply. A long pause. A cockerel crows and Papa looks up to see the first streaks of daylight in the sky.

He checks his watch.

PAPA (CONT'D)
It is morning already.

Madam Mallory shrugs. Papa checks his emotion. The cockerel crows again.

PAPA (CONT'D)
A new day. A new dawn.

Madam Mallory senses hope but holds it in. Finally Papa speaks in a matter-of-fact voice...

PAPA (CONT'D)
How much will you pay him a week?

The moment of decision is taken on board quickly by Madam Mallory and, almost as a tease, they both quickly revert to their hard-nosed selves...

MADAM MALLORY
Two hundred Euro.

PAPA
Now you are proving you are insane.

MADAM MALLORY
Two fifty plus food.

PAPA
If you sit out in the cold all night he is worth six hundred.

CONTINUED: (2)

MADAM MALLORY
In your dreams.

PAPA
Four fifty or I walk.

MADAM MALLORY
Three hundred and no more.

PAPA
You know madam, you are not like a European.

MADAM MALLORY
Three twenty. Rising to three fifty after three months. Do we have a deal?

A pause. Suddenly a voice at the gate behind them.

HASSAN (OOV)
Yes. You have a deal.

They both turn. Hassan slips into the courtyard as the cock crows for a third time.

Papa and Madam Mallory slowly get to their feet. Hassan steps close and they are about to shake hands but the bandages prevent it. Instead they are forced to hug (perhaps for the first time in a long time). Madam Mallory smiles.

Hassan speaks to her over Papa's shoulder...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
We will have breakfast, then I will come.

EXT. ROAD BETWEEN 'MAISON MUMBAY' AND 'SAULE PLEUREUR' - MORNING

From on high we see the sun has risen and it is a beautiful morning. The charred furniture is still in the courtyard. One-by-one the Haji family come outside and form a line at the gate. From a distance we see Hassan walking out of the kitchen and making his way to the gate with a small case of belongings.

Mukhtar pulls the gate open. Hassan emerges into the bright sunlight. Papa watches with his emotions in check. Then from the shadows he takes the case of spices that Mama left. He holds it up...

CONTINUED:

PAPA
Hassan? You forgot this.

Hassan takes a moment to look at the case and look across the street.

HASSAN
They have their own spices Papa.

Papa puts the case down and lowers his head. Mehtab smiles and takes his arm.

MEHTAB
He will come back for them one day.

Pap nods and looks up at Hassan, giving him permission to go without the case. Umar hurries after Hassan and gives him a huge hug then kisses Hassan on the cheek. He then whispers in his ear...

UMAR
Thank you for teaching me how to whisper.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM

Madam Mallory looks out from her bedroom window and watches as Hassan appears from inside the courtyard and begins his hundred foot journey.

EXT. ROAD

We walk with Hassan as he crosses the road. The family are behind him, watching him go. At a kitchen window Hassan sees Margueritte at a sink. She pretends to be hard at work but finally looks up and smiles.

Hassan disappears into the Saule Pleureur restaurant.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', HASSAN'S TINY ATTIC BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING.

It is 5.40am and Hassan's alarm is ringing. He sits up with a start and looks around. He shuts off the alarm. His hands have healed. Time has passed...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN

Hassan has been thrown in at the deep end. The kitchen is frantic with preparation and we see Margueritte and Jean Pierre and Marcel hard at work.

CONTINUED:

Then we find Hassan in his chef whites. He is almost lost behind a flurry of feathers as he plucks a pile of wood pigeon. Madam Mallory wanders by and picks up a plucked carcass. She shakes her head...

MADAM MALLORY
(For *salmis de palombe* there can be no spines under the skin.)

She reaches into her pocket and produces a pair of tweezers...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(Do it properly).

Hassan reacts. Jean Pierre clatters a pot near to his ear. The tension between them is palpable.

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN, WORK SURFACE

Hassan is chopping an industrial amount of onions. He is chopping as fast as he can but an older sous-chef is chopping twice as fast.

After a moment Jean Pierre approaches Hassan's station and picks up a slice of onion that Hassan has chopped. He examines it, checks its width. He then picks up all of the onion that Hassan has chopped and scrapes it into the trash. Jean Pierre glares at Hassan then departs.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', HASSAN'S ATTIC ROOM

Once again the alarm rings at 5.40am. Hassan takes a while to respond and wakes blearily.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN

Hassan is cooking a basic shallot and Merlot sauce over a high flame. Madam Mallory walks by and raises an eyebrow. Hassan shrinks. She tastes the sauce with a silver spoon and shakes her head just once. Immediately Jean Pierre sweeps the pan away and drops the contents in the trash.

EXT. LUMIERE MARKET

Hassan is loading sacks of potatoes into a white van along with Marcel. They work hard. Hassan sees Papa and Mayur sitting outside a cafe playing chess, drinking coffee. Hassan wipes his brow.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', WINE CELLAR

Hassan is blind folded and is tasting wine with Madam Mallory. He swigs each glass then spits. We don't hear the dialogue but see that Madam Mallory is testing him and recording his score.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN - EVENING SERVICE

Hassan is working hard on a sauce. The kitchen around is frantic. He wipes his brow as he grinds some herbs in a blender.

Then Margueritte joins him from the cold store. She has a pile of ingredients. They work in unison side-by-side to perfect the dish. They are totally committed to their work and we watch the dish develop.

Then, as the dish is delivered to the pass, we see (but Hassan *doesn't* see) Margueritte giving Hassan a long look. They are both sticking to their deal but we should feel the strain on Margueritte's face. Jean Pierre sees the way she looks at Hassan and reacts.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN

A half carcass of a pig is hauled into the kitchen by a porter. It is dumped onto a steel surface. Jean Pierre approaches with a boning knife. He whistles to Hassan and offers the knife.

Jean Pierre knows that Hassan may be uneasy handling pig and relishes the moment. Hassan takes the knife and begins to set about butchering the animal without a flicker. Only when we come close to his face do we see any uncertainty.

A splash of pig blood squirts onto his face and he wipes it away with purpose...

INT. LUMIERE VINEYARD, WINE WAREHOUSE

Madam Mallory is leading Hassan through the corridors of barrels. They stop at a tasting table. Madam Mallory turns to Hassan and offers him a glass. Hassan sips, spits then responds...

HASSAN
Languedoc Rousillion. The wine region around Marseille. Produces ten per cent of the nation's Appellation Controlle. Best with game, beef, but not game poultry. Cook in to dark vegetable sauces.

CONTINUED:

Madam Mallory shrugs approval.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', HASSAN'S ATTIC ROOM

Hassan is at a small desk by lamplight, studying a book on oysters, making notes as he studies the photographs of the shellfish and comparing them to empty shells of real oysters.

He rubs his eyes wearily. He closes the book and breaks away. He goes to the window and peers across the road at the Maison Mumbay. All the lights are off except one. Papa's light. He sees a silhouette of Papa staring out at the Moon as the curtain billows beside him. Hassan smiles...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN - LUNCH TIME

A frantic service is underway. Hassan and Margueritte are side-by-side. Jean Pierre is at the pass. Then Madam Mallory enters and calls out...

MADAM MALLORY
(The Agriculture Minister has booked a table for tonight. We will serve his dish.)

Madam Mallory heads straight for Hassan, brushing past Jean Pierre...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Hassan? You will cook it.

Jean Pierre turns, knife in hand. Margueritte smiles to Hassan and then steps up...

MARGUERITTE
(Madam? Shall I prepare the mousse).

MADAM MALLORY
(No. Hassan will work on this alone.)

Madam Mallory takes Hassan's pan away from him and leads him off. Now it is Margueritte's turn to react. She swaps looks with Jean Pierre before returning quickly to her work...

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR'

A match is put to a blue fuse and a rocket flies into the air. It is Bastille day again and a draped banner announces it.

A year has gone by. As the rocket bursts...

EXT. 'MASION MUMBAY' - EVENING

...the explosion echoes in the courtyard of the Maison Mumbay. This time the restaurant is closed and Papa is holding Ammi up in his arms to watch the fireworks. Madam Mallory arrives with a tray of delicacies which she hands around the family.

As she comes to Papa, he twinkles a little and she reacts almost girlishly. When she walks back toward the gate, Papa follows her with his eyes. Suddenly...

MEHTAB
Papa?

Papa jumps a little and straightens his jacket with a tug as Mehtab smiles...

MEHTAB (CONT'D)
I hear she likes to dance. <u>You</u> like to dance. Why don't you take her dancing?

A rocket explodes above their heads. Papa stares up.

PAPA
Don't be absurd Mehtab. We are not children.

Mehtab shakes her head wearily and leaves him to stare up at the sky. A moment later he looks across the road...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN, BUSY SERVICE

An oyster is prized open. Hassan scrapes the oyster into a warm sauce. In the din of the kitchen we hear him whisper to himself...

HASSAN
Ostrea lurida. From the coast of Brittany. Best with German or Alsace wine.

He selects a splash of wine and stirs the sauce. Jean Pierre is never far away. He is cooking frantically too and Margueritte hurries by and places a warm plate onto the surface with purple broccoli already presented. Hassan carefully pours his dish onto the plate beside the broccoli and arranges it with care.

He then takes it to the pass where Madam Mallory is waiting. She samples the dish with a silver spoon and reacts.

CONTINUED:

MADAM MALLORY
What is this herb that is fighting against the oyster?

HASSAN
I added Marjoram Madam.

Madam Mallory turns...

MADAM MALLORY
Why did you add marjoram to a two hundred year old recipe, Hassan?

Jean Pierre grins into his steaming pot. Margueritte is listening...

HASSAN
Because a recipe is advice, not instruction. And maybe two hundred years is long enough.

The din of the kitchen continues but we sense that all ears are open. Finally Madam Mallory calls out...

MADAM MALLORY
Service!

The single word means the dish has passed the test. In the steam Jean Pierre reacts. We might expect fury but, instead, we see that the life is sucked out of Jean Pierre. He fights against tears. Meanwhile, Margueritte takes a moment.

She could be jealous, or she could accept. In that moment, through the flames from the burners, we see that she accepts his gift. They smile at each other...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', DINING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Quiet. The clock ticks.

The starched white tablecloths are out but the restaurant is closed. Only one diner sits. It is Papa.

Madam Mallory enters from the kitchen with a bottle of Champagne. She sits. There is a strange air of tension in the room which won't be explained for a while. Papa studies the Champagne label.

PAPA
I am guessing this is a good year.

Madam Mallory checks her watch and puts her cellphone onto the table. She is evidently waiting for a special call.

CONTINUED:

MADAM MALLORY
Every year is a good year for Champagne. But 1969 was the very best.

Papa nods and checks his watch too.

PAPA
How long have you been waiting to open it?

A pause.

MADAM MALLORY
We won our first star nineteen years ago. I have been waiting since then.

Silence. Tension. The clock ticks.

PAPA
They always call at seven?

MADAM MALLORY
Yes.

PAPA
Always a Monday.

MADAM MALLORY
Yes.

Papa looks around.

PAPA
Then they are cruel to make you go through this every year.

Madam Mallory half smiles.

MADAM MALLORY
Yes. Cruel like Gods.

A pause. Papa fidgets...

PAPA
So what are the chances?

Madam Mallory doesn't reply.

EXT. OAK TREE - SAME TIME

The sun is setting magnificently behind the old oak. We find Hassan sitting on the brow of the hill. He checks his watch. It is five minutes before seven. He looks thoughtful.

CONTINUED:

Then Margueritte joins him with a bottle of wine and two glasses from a picnic basket. They sit side-by-side, staring at the sunset and Margueritte pours the wine.

MARGUERITTE
Try. It's good.

Hassan takes a sip.

HASSAN
Yes.

MARGUERITTE
You taste it?

HASSAN
No. My mouth is too dry.

MARGUERITTE
Mine too.

Hassan checks his watch again.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
You know, I have never seen Madam Mallory cry.

HASSAN
It's hard to imagine without an onion being involved.

MARGUERITTE
But she will cry tonight.

A pause.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Every year the bottle of Champagne goes back into the cupboard.

She puts her hand on Hassan's arm.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
But this year will be different.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', RESTAURANT

The Lumiere clock begins to strike seven in the evening.

Madam Mallory and Papa tense a little. They wait. Madam Mallory's phone remains unlit. After a few moments...

PAPA
Are they usually punctual?

CONTINUED:

MADAM MALLORY
This is France.

The clock ticks. A pause. Papa sees the agonizing tension on Madam Mallory's face and tries to understand it. Then he is almost affronted by the pain she is in. He makes a mad decision. He grabs the bottle of Champagne.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
What the hell are you doing?

Papa gets to his feet and begins to tear away the foil wrap.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Stop! Give that to me!

She goes to grab him. He turns his back and untwists the wire...

PAPA
To hell with them.

MADAM MALLORY
Have you lost your mind?

PAPA
You deserve to taste this come what may.

MADAM MALLORY
You are insane! Give it to me!

Madam Mallory is now clawing at Papa to rescue the bottle. Papa is removing the wire cage while defending the bottle from her. They are engaged in a comically awkward tussle with Madam Mallory resorting to exclamations of fury in French.

PAPA
They are not Gods. Forget their stars, madam, <u>you</u> are the star!

The fight gets intimate and it looks like an embrace. Papa manages to pop the cork and it flies and lands at their feet.

At that second Madam Mallory's wall phone begins to ring. They both freeze as the Champagne fizzes and overflows.

After a few seconds silence, Madam Mallory takes the phone. She takes a moment, peering into Papa's eyes. Finally....

MADAM MALLORY (INTO THE PHONE)
Madam Mallory, Saule Pluereur.

CONTINUED: (2)

A pause. The Champagne has puddled on the white tablecloth. Two Champagne glasses stand side-by-side. Papa stares at Madam Mallory. Her face hardly changes. Finally...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Merci.

She cuts the call. Papa doesn't breath. Madam Mallory blinks quickly then picks up the cork from the floor. Papa fears the worst...

PAPA
Should I put it back in?

Madam Mallory looks at her feet.

MADAM MALLORY
With Champagne that is not possible.

A pause. She looks up. After a moment, she speaks softly....

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Deux.

EXT. OAK TREE

Margueritte has answered Hassan's cellphone and yells....

MARGUERITTE
Deux!! Deux! Deux! Deux! Deux!

Hassan and Margueritte begin to dance around in each other's arms. They spill their wine and we see them as silhouettes against the beautiful sunset.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR' RESTAURANT

Madam Mallory is sitting in a restaurant chair, almost overcome. Her cellphone is ringing and two restaurant phones are ringing. Papa brings a glass of Champagne to Madam Mallory.

When she looks up, we see tears in her eyes. The church bells begin to peal outside and Madam Mallory begins to laugh and cry at the same time.

MADAM MALLORY
Listen. They are ringing the bells of St. Marie for us.

The phones ring, the church bells ring, then the door bell begins to ring and there is hammering on the door. Papa crouches near to Madam Mallory and dries her tear.

CONTINUED:

They peer into each other's eyes.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
But now....

Her face darkens through tears.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
...The Gods will take him from us.

EXT. OAK TREE - ALMOST DARK

Hassan and Margueritte finally stop dancing. They face each other, breathless. More than ever their deal is hard to sustain. It is Margueritte who steps back first. They are now just shadows against the sky. Hassan drains his glass. The sun slips away. Margueritte slips away too.

EXT. 'CHIEN MECHANT' - MORNING

A two star restaurant called 'Chien Mechant' on the Rue de Vallette. Traffic passes by and a guy in jeans and a sweater emerges from the front door of the restaurant.

We come close and see a guy in his late thirties emerging. This is PAUL VERLAINE, a restaurateur. He pulls on a crash helmet. He straddles a Harley Davidson motorbike and fires the engine.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR' - SAME MORNING

Hassan is on his own, cooking as ever. He tastes his sauce. Then Mukhtar enters and sits on a work surface.

HASSAN
How many times have I told you? In a French kitchen check the surface is not hot before you sit down. They don't always use flame.

Mukhtar watches Hassan cook.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
What do you want anyway?

MUKHTAR
I want to see the star.

Hassan smiles.

HASSAN
It is not a real star.

CONTINUED:

MUKHTAR
And I want to see if you look any different now you've won it.

Hassan smiles, keeps cooking.

HASSAN
I am completely different. I now have super powers. I am like Batman.

Hassan clatters a spoon...

MUKHTAR
So after two stars comes three, yes?

Hassan pretends to dismiss.

HASSAN
Two is two. Two is enough. Shut up.

MUKHTAR
But Papa said there are three. So two is only half way.

Hassan cooks on. He adds some spice.

HASSAN
How can two be half of three? What do they teach you?

MUKHTAR
But two is <u>less</u> than three. So you are not the best.

Hassan flicks a towel at Mukhtar who laughs. Hassan tries to shake off the fact that now 'two' is gone, already 'three' has taken its place. Then, Jean Pierre enters from outside.

The air chills. Even Mukhtar feels it. Hassan stirs his pot. Jean Pierre puts his bag down on a surface.

HASSAN
Great news, huh Jean?

Jean Pierre turns with a sour look. We should guess he knows he is not getting any credit for the achievement.

JEAN PIERRE
The <u>good</u> news is right outside.

Jean Pierre smiles a nasty smile...

CONTINUED: (2)

JEAN PIERRE (CONT'D)
There is someone here to see the famous Hassan Haji.

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', BACK COURTYARD

Paul Verlaine sits at a table. His motorbike is parked at the gates. Hassan steps outside, drying his hands on a cloth.

PAUL
Hassan Haji?

Hassan approaches.

HASSAN
Yes?

They shake hands.

PAUL
Paul Verlaine.

Hassan reacts instantly...

PAUL (CONT'D)
Ah, you read the magazines.

HASSAN
<u>The</u> Paul Verlaine.

Paul shrugs...

PAUL
I own a few restaurants in Paris and Nice. Yes.

This is obviously an understatement and Hassan is awed as they sit. Hassan glances at the motorbike.

HASSAN
You were passing through?

Paul sips his black tea and looks around the beautiful valley.

PAUL
Non.

He stares at Hassan.

HASSAN
So what are you doing in Lumiere?

CONTINUED:

Paul Verlaine grins.

PAUL
You have no idea of the storm that is breaking, do you? Right above your head.

Paul Verlaine gestures across the street.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Last night I called Madam Mallory. She is an honorable woman. She told me the truth. You are the real thing.

A pause.

PAUL (CONT'D)
But, of course, I had heard all about you already.

HASSAN
You? Had heard of me?

Paul casually pulls a brochure out of his bag as he talks. He places the brochure on the table...

PAUL
You go into a kitchen that has had one star for nineteen years and the first year, bang. It's two.

Paul waves his hand...

PAUL (CONT'D)
From Marseilles to Calais we talk. We listen. We send people to taste. Marjoram with Bretagne oysters. Who knew? You.

Hassan glances down at the brochure once more.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hassan Haji. Chef, Chien Mechant, Paris.

Hassan is too stunned to speak. Paul Verlaine smiles and gets to his feet.

PAUL (WHISPERING) (CONT'D)
I will go and speak to the Madam.

INT. MARGUERITTE'S HOME, LIVING ROOM

Margueritte is sitting in the same armchair where Papa sat when the Haji family first arrived in Lumiere. She is drying hard fought tears. Tears she chides herself for. Then she hears a car pull up outside and quickly dries her eyes. There is a knock at the door and Margueritte checks the damage to her face from crying.

It's ok, she will get away with it. She goes to the door and transforms her mood.

INT. MARGUERITTE'S HOME, LIVING ROOM, DOOR

Margueritte opens the door and Hassan bursts inside. He is buzzing.

HASSAN
Margueritte, I have some amazing news.

MARGUERITTE (BUZZING TOO)
So do I.

HASSAN
Amazing, amazing news.

MARGUERITTE
Moi aussi.

He passes through into the living room and Margueritte follows....

INT. MARGUERITTE'S HOME, LIVING ROOM

Hassan can hardly be contained by the room as he spills his news.

HASSAN
You will think I am joking but it's true.

He spins and takes her arms...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I have just been offered the position of....

MARGUERITTE
Yes Hassan. I know already.

Hassan stops. Margueritte looks delighted...

CONTINUED:

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Madam Mallory just called and told me.

Hassan exclaims.

HASSAN
Paris, Margueritte! Le Chien Mechant!

MARGUERITTE
Yes. It's...it's *magnificent!*

She grabs both his hands. There is an air of unreality on their excitement which escalates...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
Now ask me <u>my</u> news.

HASSAN
What? Tell....

She speaks quickly and firmly...

MARGUERITTE
When Madam Mallory called to say you were leaving, she also offered me the position of *chef de cuisine* at the Saule Pleureur.

Hassan reacts with astonishment.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
She wants to promote me over the head of Jean Pierre because she says I have the ability to retain the stars and he does not.

Hassan is stunned...

HASSAN
Margueritte!

They both explode with joy...

MARGUERITTE
It is what I have wanted all of my life. Since I was a girl in my mom's kitchen. But, Hassan, it was you who gave me the final ingredient...

HASSAN
No. You taught me, I taught you.

Hassan fizzes...

CONTINUED: (2)

HASSAN (CONT'D)
And now you realize...

He catches his breath...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Both our fates have been decided in the same moment.

They begin to come down...

MARGUERITTE
Yes. Decided.

HASSAN (SOFTLY)
Fate.

MARGUERITTE
Fate. Yes. Your brakes fail and you come to Lumiere. Then this happens and you leave.

A pause as they catch their breaths.

MARGUERITTE (SOFTLY) (CONT'D)
And it is done.

They pull apart slowly. Hassan looks around the room where it all began in Lumiere. A pause. The clock ticks.

HASSAN
But of course we can meet. There are trains from Paris to Lumiere. It only takes two and a half hours.

Margueritte looks at her feet.

MARGUERITTE
Except *t*hat is not how it will be.

A pause. Margueritte is definite and assured.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
You will fight for the third star in Paris. I will fight to keep the second star here. There will be no time for trains. So. *Voila.*

She finally looks up, fighting tears again and cursing them. Hassan may be a little astounded that she is so upset. She has been so good at hiding her feelings, and Hassan has felt obliged to hide his.

CONTINUED: (3)

Now that it is impossible, they both realize the depth of each other's feelings.

Hassan takes her arms. She smiles...

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
C'est la vie de la chef de cuisine.

Hassan takes a moment. He arrived at Margueritte's house on top of the world and now he is in turmoil because he realizes what he is letting go. Even though Margueritte tries not to show it, she is in turmoil too. Hassan needs to blame something...

HASSAN
The bloody stars, huh?

Margueritte doesn't respond. Hassan waits but she doesn't look up. He takes one last look around the room then departs. We are left with Margueritte and the reality of her upset.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

A rumble of thunder and a flash of lightning. It is a dark and stormy night, just like the night when the Hajis arrived in Lumiere. Heavy rain falls.

A taxi pulls up outside Maison Mumbay.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM

Madam Mallory is at her familiar place at the window, staring down at the rain swept scene.

INT. MARGUERITTE'S HOME, BEDROOM

Margueritte is staring across the storm toward the village as rain hammers on her window.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

Hassan has a case packed. The taxi driver comes to take the case away. The family are gathered to say goodbye to Hassan.

Hassan hugs Umar and Mayur, then gives big hugs to Mukhtar and Ammi. He straightens to hug Mehtab, who wipes away a tear. Finally Papa is standing at the end of the line.

PAPA
Hear everything but listen to no one.

Hassan and Papa hug.

CONTINUED:

PAPA (CONT'D)
Mama will be with you.

Hassan glances at the kitchen one last time and walks...

EXT. OAK TREE

In a flash of lightning we see the oak tree. Rain pours. Then we see a lone figure walking toward the tree, carrying a leather bag, oblivious of the rain.

INT. MARGUERITTE'S HOME, BEDROOM

Margueritte is still at the window. Her cellphone glows and she sees a text message. *Text message - 'Au revoir'.*

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY'

Hassan is putting his cellphone into his pocket as he walks through the rain and heads for the taxi. The driver fires the engine and the lights beam through the rain...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM

Madam Mallory looks down as Hassan stands in the pouring rain and waves up at her. She smiles then darkens...

MADAM MALLORY
(Forgive me Hassan. Now you will never escape).

Hassan gets into the taxi.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY'/'SAULE PLEUREUR'

Papa stands in the rain in the middle of the road between the two restaurants and waves goodbye to Hassan as the taxi pulls away. He looks up to Madam Mallory, who lets the curtain drop.

EXT. OAK TREE - STORM

In a flash of lightning we see the figure approaching the tree is Jean Pierre, the former head chef at the Saule Pleureur.. He has a look of grim determination on his face. As rain lashes him, he opens his leather bag and produces a length of rope.

He throws it over a low branch of the oak tree and we see a NOOSE already tied at the other end.

INT. TAXI/EXT. LUMIERE MARKET

The church clock rings nine as the taxi passes through the deserted, rain swept Lumiere market. Hassan peers out as the car passes through.

EXT. OAK TREE - SAME TIME

Jean Pierre has tied off the rope and the noose is two feet above his head. He pulls himself up on the rope and struggles to hold his own weight as he slips his head into the noose.

Then, in the pouring rain, he lets go of life. His body falls and his neck breaks. We pull wide to reveal Jean Pierre hanging in the rain, lit by lightning.

The stars have claimed him.

CUT TO BLACK.

Caption: Paris

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', BASEMENT KITCHENS

After the bright sunlight of Lumiere, we are in the dark tunnel basements of the big city.

The underground staff area of the restaurant is grey and functional. It is also enormous. A swing door flies open and Paul Verlaine leads Hassan at speed through long corridors. As they walk with purpose (to a driving track), we hear Hassan in voiceover...

HASSAN (OOV)
Dear Ammi and Mukhtar, here is the news from Paris. Paris smells of poo. Especially under ground...

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', KITCHEN

Mukhtar and Ammi are in pyjamas at a chef table, reading the letter from Hassan, tugging the pages from each other. Mukhtar insists on reading aloud to Ammi...

MUKHTAR (READING)
'The restaurant I am working in can hold ten million five hundred thousand customers...'

His eyes widen...

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', RESTAURANT - LUNCH

We cut back to the Chien Mechant dining room. A hundred tables are all full. High-end diners in business suits are being served by uniformed waiters. The sommeliers drape yellow and white cloths over their arms as they glide through the bustle. We should feel that we have moved up several divisions from the Saule Pleureur. This place is serious.

We follow a hurrying waiter through the restaurant and through the door to the kitchen...

HASSAN (OOV)
And you would not believe the kitchen Ammi...

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', KITCHEN

After the bustle outside, sudden quiet. The kitchen is vast and windowless. The surfaces are spotless and the chefs and porters work in virtual silence. Nothing flames or flares. Pots simmer gently.

HASSAN (OOV)
I am chained to the work surface twenty hours a day and, listen to this, in our kitchen no one is allowed to even speak. Can you imagine?...

We see a flask of liquid nitrogen being taken from a freezer. Dry ice swirls around a dessert creation. Some of the chefs wear goggles.

One of the chefs lifts his goggles and we see it is Hassan, a cog in a machine. Hassan and all the other chefs wear BLACK uniforms which contrast the white brilliance of the tiles.

HASSAN (OOV) (CONT'D)
And guess what? The kitchen doesn't <u>smell</u> of <u>anything</u>!

Hassan has stopped to wipe his brow with a cloth. He sees that the other chefs all have a black cloth bandana tied around their heads in rakish style. He decides he must do the same. As he ties his head scarf, a poster above the surface reads '*Trois, trois, trois*'. As he peers at it we cut to...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

...Madam Mallory tearing open a letter from Hassan. She has her tray of coffee and eggs Benedict on her lap. We hear Hassan in voiceover...

HASSAN (OOV)
Dear Madam Mallory...I have good news. I have been promoted...

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT' KITCHEN

Hassan is at a different work station which is nearer to the pass. He has his black cloth tied around his head. He adjusts an ear piece in his ear as he arranges some ingredients for a sauce...

We come close to Hassan's intense look as he works...

HASSAN (OOV CONT'D)
I have been moved from station seven to station four...

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

Mehtab is sitting in the sun in the courtyard as the chickens peck around at her feet. She is reading a message from Hassan on her *iPad.* Hassan's voice fades in from his previous voiceover...

HASSAN (OOV)
...I have now been moved from station four to station two...

She scrolls down...

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', PASS

A small silver fish fillet is being placed into a *bain-marie* by Hassan's skilled fingers. We come close as he works with ferocious intensity, the kitchen working at full pelt around him. His voiceover fades in and out again...

HASSAN
...I have now been moved up from the numbered stations to the specialist stations. I am now the Chien Mechant *poissonniere*.

At the pass, Paul Verlaine enters from the restaurant and seeks out Hassan through the crowd. He joins him at his station...

CONTINUED:

PAUL
Hassan. What is happening to the fish soup?

Hassan works on...

HASSAN (BUSY)
What do you mean?

PAUL
Usually the fish swim in their soup like ghosts. No one even notices them.

Hassan looks up. Paul is stern. Then he smiles..

PAUL (CONT'D)
Table twelve. CEO Ford Europe. He wants to give his compliments to the chef.

Hassan nods acceptance and works on. Paul Verlaine takes his arm...

PAUL (CONT'D)
Non, non, non. CEO Ford Europe gives his compliments *in person*.

Paul calls out to a nearby chef...

PAUL (CONT'D)
(Take over here...)

Hassan is reluctant to leave his station but finally wipes his hands and walks alongside Paul toward the restaurant. He is about to whip his black cloth from his head but Paul shakes his head...

PAUL (CONT'D)
Keep it on. It looks cool.

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', DINING ROOM

The place is buzzing and we should see it through Hassan's eyes. A mythical place. Hassan follows Paul toward a large round table in the heart of the restaurant (the best table in the house) where well-heeled diners are eating desserts. Hassan doesn't enjoy the attention of the other diners as he walks. Paul speaks softly...

PAUL
I told this guy you started out hawking street food in a Mumbay slum.

CONTINUED:

HASSAN
A slum? It wasn't a slum and it wasn't street food...

PAUL
Hassan, an interesting back story is good. For you and the restaurant.

At the round table ahead, businessmen and their wives are turning, smiling, preparing to greet Hassan. Hassan slows and hesitates...

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hey. Hassan come on. You're in Paris, you're handsome, you're a chef and you're good.

A pause.

PAUL (CONT'D)
That makes you a rock star.

We come close to Hassan's face. Suddenly a heavy, heavy rock track fires up.

INT. CENTRAL PARIS, NIGHT CLUB

As the rock track throbs, we find Hassan being introduced to a fashionable crowd by Paul. We hear no words but sense Hassan's initial shyness. Someone hands him a huge cocktail.

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', KITCHEN

A tired looking Hassan chops onions on a chopping board with machine gun speed...

INT. HALF LIT NIGHT CLUB, TOILET

With the same rhythm, a pair of hands chop a line of cocaine.

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', KITCHEN

Hassan joints and chops a chicken with lightning speed...

INT. HASSAN'S PARIS APARTMENT - NIGHT

In half light, with a view over Paris through the windows, Hassan has sex with a woman whose face we don't see. He moves to the same rhythm as the chopping. The rock music roars...

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', DINING ROOM

Paul is showing Hassan to another table where he is being offered compliments by wealthy looking diners. As he approaches, an attractive older woman pulls out a chair for him and beckons him to sit.

He is easier now, his smile is not forced. At another table someone turns to take his photo with a cellphone.

INT. PARIS, BAR - NIGHT

Hassan is drinking a cocktail with some of the more attractive members of his brigade. He laughs and jokes as the rock track drives on. Then Paul enters and approaches. He takes Hassan aside...

PAUL
Hassan, I have some news. I just fired Patrice..

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', KITCHEN

The rock track drives on.

The entire staff of the kitchen are smiling, applauding, standing on chairs. Then we see Paul leading Hassan toward the pass as the brigade hoot and cheer all around. Hassan takes the acclaim with aplomb.

When they reach the pass, Paul turns and whistles for silence. Then he declares...

PAUL
Ladies and gentlemen. The new Chien Mechant *chef de cuisine*. Hassan Haji!

He turns to Hassan and smiles...

PAUL (CONT'D)
Paris is yours.

The rest of the kitchen explodes with applause and cheers. The rock music rises.

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', PASS

The music reaches a crescendo as we see a half dozen different meals rattling onto the pass. Hassan samples the dishes in a range of different moods, outfits, levels of stubble, suggesting a long sequence of nights when he has been chained to the pass.

CONTINUED:

Finally, he sits back against the pass wearily. Then on a beat, the music changes...

INT. LUMIERE, DANCE HALL

...A string quartet plays the waltz. It is an afternoon ballroom dancing class for people of a certain age. There are six couples dancing, mostly in their fifties and sixties. Among them we find Madam Mallory and Papa.

We come close to them as they dance. Madam Mallory turns and returns...

MADAM MALLORY
So has he called you lately?

Papa smiles as he turns in the dance.

PAPA
Of course. He calls all the time...

Papa is lying and Madam Mallory now knows him well enough to know it. The dance ends and they bow to each other...

EXT. LUMIERE, CAFE

In bright sunlight, Papa and Madam Mallory are sitting opposite each other at an outside table, drinking coffee.

MADAM MALLORY
So if he calls you all the time, no doubt he told you about this...

Madam Mallory produces a restaurant trade magazine and hands it to Papa. It is open at a particular page. Papa scans the article which is headlined in French. We are given a translation (*'Kid from the gutter on the road to third star'*).

There is a photograph of Hassan looking handsome and renegade, with his black head scarf around his head. Papa stares...

PAPA
He looks like a bloody terrorist.

MADAM MALLORY
People who know are saying he is about to win the third star.

Papa begins to slowly read the article (his French still not great).

CONTINUED:

MADAM MALLORY (AS HE READS) (CONT'D)
It will be announced the day after Bastille day. Appropriate, no?

Madam Mallory knows already that Papa is troubled. He re-reads the headline. He points to a particular word...

PAPA
What is this word? What does it mean?

Madam Mallory hesitates....

MADAM MALLORY
'Gutter'...

Papa reacts. He speaks softly...

PAPA
So. Hassan is a '*boy from the gutter...*'

MADAM MALLORY
The press like to twist things.

PAPA (SOFTLY)
And he does nothing to untwist them.

Finally....

MADAM MALLORY
How long is it <u>really</u> since he called?

A pause. Papa becomes wistful...

PAPA
He has been gone four years. The first year every week. Second year every month. Third year whenever he had time.

A pause.

PAPA (CONT'D)
Fourth year apparently he *has* no time.

Papa hands the magazine back (not wanting to read). He becomes upset and gets up and leaves his half drunk coffee. Madam Mallory watches him go.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', PAPA'S BEDROOM - SAME AFTERNOON

In a shaft of afternoon light, the lid of the suitcase of spices opens. Papa has the suitcase on the bed and savors the smell. He takes a moment...then sits down on the bed. The curtain billows...

PAPA
Yes. I will speak to him.

He painfully gets up (stiff from dancing) and goes to a desk by the window, where he opens a laptop computer. The screen comes to life. We see devilment in his eyes. As he hits the keys, we hear Papa in voiceover...

PAPA (OOV) (CONT'D)
Dear Hassan, it is Papa...

INT. HASSAN'S PARIS APARTMENT, BEDROOM

As Papa's voiceover continues, we track across an expensive Parisian apartment in afternoon sunshine. There is a half drunk bottle of expensive wine and two glasses beside a full ashtray. There is also a laptop computer, which lights up briefly. Papa's e-mail has been received. As we continue to explore the room we hear the text of the e-mail in voiceover...

PAPA (OOV)
...I read in a magazine today that you might be about to win your third star. I just wanted to say good luck.

Our move across the apartment finds a pretty woman with make-up smudged, sleeping in bed, facing us.

PAPA (OOV) (CONT'D)
It makes me very proud that you are doing so well. Especially since you came from such...*humble*.. beginnings. In the article there was a word they used in the headline...

Hassan wakes and sits up in the bed beside her and looks around. He is wearing his black chef outfit.

PAPA (SLYLY OOV) (CONT'D)
A word I didn't recognize at all...

Hassan looks more than three years older than when we last saw him. He evidently has only a vague idea of who the woman in his bed is (YVETTE?). Papa's e-mail continues...

CONTINUED:

PAPA (OOV) (CONT'D)
But the important thing is that it makes for a good story. Yes?

Hassan takes a moment then very carefully gets out of bed, trying not to wake the woman...

PAPA (OOV)(CONT'D)
Just now I looked your restaurant up on the internet and realized something...

Hassan wanders to his computer to check his e-mails. He lights a cigarette. Papa's voiceover continues...

PAPA (OOV) (CONT'D)
....The Hassan Haji tasting menu at the Chien Mechant now costs more for one person than the entire amount I received when I sold our restaurant in Mumbay.

Hassan has hit a key and begins to read Papa's e-mail. As he reads, he catches us up...

PAPA (OOV) (CONT'D)
That must be a measure of how successful you are. Or perhaps how unsuccessful I was.

We come close to Hassan's face as he reads his father's message. We see that the words are having the effect Papa intended. (Papa is deliberately but obliquely reminding Hassan who he *really* is).

PAPA (OOV) (CONT'D)
...Anyway, everything here in Lumiere is boring and the same. We go to the market and buy whatever food is freshest. I still choose everything myself. We cook vegetables in season and catch fish in the river.

Hassan scrolls down, his face made of stone...

PAPA (OOV) (CONT'D)
We cook a huge *Balti* on Sundays made with lamb from the valley or our own chickens and fresh anise that Amii finds on the trees when it is frosty.

A pause.

CONTINUED: (2)

PAPA (CONT'D)
Everyone comes. Madam Mallory. The mayor. Margueritte...

Hassan pauses, scrolls...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Margueritte is learning Indian cooking from me. She seems to need to fill her days. I hear her pilot finally flew away for good.

Hassan takes a moment (Papa knows the effect this news might have).

PAPA (OOV) (CONT'D)
Anyway, once again, good luck tomorrow. You are welcome to join us for a B*alti* anytime. It wouldn't win any stars. But as Mama used to say. 'It has <u>life</u>'. All my love Papa.

Hassan finishes the e-mail. He takes a moment to react. The lady in the bed blinks awake.

YVETTE
(Good morning.)

Hassan doesn't respond. She peers at him as he stares at the screen of his computer. Then she checks her watch.

YVETTE (CONT'D)
(My God. Look at the time. We are late).

Hassan finally looks away from the screen, hardly hearing. Yvette gets out of bed and heads for the bathroom...

YVETTE (CONT'D)
Chef, you have a special menu to prepare today. It is Bastille day.

She disappears into the bathroom. Hassan takes a moment then closes his laptop.

EXT. 'CHIEN MECHANT' - LATER

Hassan is walking toward the restaurant in bright afternoon sun, still hung over. The outside of the restaurant is decorated with French flags for Bastille day and the streets are filling with tourists.

CONTINUED:

Hassan notices a white van which has parked across the street. A family of Asians are spilling out of it, arguing, laughing, reacting to the traffic swirling around them.

He sees that they are setting up a food stall, ready to sell street food to the tourists who will be around that night. A boy hauls a can of oil. A mother puts a small stove onto a hatch. The father strings some French flags across the serving hatch.

Hassan turns and glances at the menu of the Chien Mechant in the window. He remembers Papa's words about the cost of his menu.

The street vendors are reflected in the glass of the menu...

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', DINING ROOM

The place is empty apart from waiters preparing the room. There are French flags everywhere and a special menu decorated with the flag too. He heads for the kitchen.

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT' KITCHEN

The place is resting, with just a few porters clearing up and scrubbing pots. Hassan approaches the pass in his black uniform and ties his black bandana around his head. The stations are all gleaming. Above the pass he reads the words '*trois, trois, trois*'.

He isn't impressed. He begins to wander among the stations. He wipes a surface and finds no dust. He opens an oven and finds no dirt. He lifts up a pot and angles it into the sunlight.

A fearful ASIAN PORTER dares to speak up....

ASIAN PORTER
All clean chef.

HASSAN
Yes. I see that.

ASIAN PORTER
Spotless.

HASSAN
Yes. Just one little imperfection and the stars fall from the sky.

Hassan puts the pot down and looks at the porter.

CONTINUED:

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Where you from?

ASIAN PORTER
Bangladesh Sir.

Hassan nods...

HASSAN
You ever eat the food we cook here?

The porter is dazzled by the attention. He squirms a little.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Come on. It's ok.

After a pause...

ASIAN PORTER
No Sir. I bring my own food.

HASSAN
Show me.

The porter double-takes. He hesitates...

From a low metal drawer he pulls out a sandwich box. He opens it. Inside we are close on some samosas and Puri's with a small container of dipping sauce. Hassan puts the box to his nose and sniffs. The aroma is intoxicating.

ASIAN PORTER
My wife cooks it. Over a fire in the yard.

HASSAN
May I try?

The porter grins. Hassan tastes the samosa. He reacts as he savors the flavor. After a moment he speaks softly...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Food is memories.

The porter becomes a little sad...

ASIAN PORTER
Yes. Each bite takes me home.

Hassan nods gently. Silence as Hassan reflects on home. Suddenly...

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', GARDEN - NIGHT

Almost as if it is in Hassan's memory, the blue paper of a rocket is lit. The rocket flies high into the air and explodes.

We are in the garden of the Saule Pleureur restaurant for Bastille day evening. Papa, Mehtab, Mayur and the family are all among the hundred guests. Madam Mallory and Margueritte are handing out delicacies.

Then, through the crowds and the flash of fireworks, we see Margueritte handing round appetizers. Papa and Margueritte glance at each other, the same memories on their minds...

INT. 'CHIEN MECHANT', KITCHEN

We find Hassan in the thick of a frantic service. He is at the pass, tasting, ordering, organizing. But something isn't right.

A dish rattles on the pass and someone yells...

VOICE
Canard au mousse de truffe...

Outside a firework explodes and the light crackles on Hassan's face.

Hassan turns and, through the crowd, he thinks he sees Mama standing among the black uniforms and white tiles. It is a strange refracted image made up of reflections. She is staring at him. Then a door opens and she is gone. Hassan breaks off and leans on the pass. He looks sick. Paul approaches....

PAUL
Hassan? Are you ok?

Hassan turns and looks around the kitchen.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Heavy night last night, huh?

Paul drifts on. Hassan wipes sweat. The kitchen begins to close in on him. He takes a moment. A waiter enters and calls out...

WAITER
Two Hassan Haji taster menus!

The order is yelled again three times across the kitchen. Hassan follows the order with his eyes.

CONTINUED:

Papa's words echo in his head. He sees the Bangladeshi porter whose lunch he tried earlier, working frantically to scrub pots clean.

Paul returns and peers at Hassan...

PAUL
Hassan? There are orders stacking up here. What's happening?

Hassan finally focuses on Paul.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hassan, you look sick...

Hassan pulls off his black bandana. He then reaches up and pulls down the poster which reads '*trois, trois, trois'*. He stuffs it into his pocket and begins to walk...

PAUL (CONT'D)
Chef? Where are you going? Hassan!?...

Hassan continues to walk.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hey!

Paul grabs him and tries to physically stop him but he pushes Paul aside. Hassan begins to run, clattering pots and pans as he makes a break for the door.

EXT. CHIEN MECHANT, BASTILLE NIGHT

A gigantic firework display (the real thing) is exploding over the streets of Paris, making the city seem almost unreal. Lovers and families stare at the sky above the Seine. Then, among the crowds, we find Hassan in his black chef uniform, emerging from the back of the restaurant.

He pushes his way across the street and goes to the street food van that he saw being set up.

Hassan is lit by crackling fireworks as he approaches the busy street vendor. When his turn comes, he shrugs and speaks in Gujarati...

HASSAN
(I have no pockets, so I have no money).

The vendor grins...

CONTINUED:

VENDOR
(On the house brother).

He hands Hassan a greasy chapati with a Poori sauce dripping in the folds. A whole barrage of fireworks explode at once. The flavor explodes inside Hassan's mouth.

EXT. PARIS, BANKS OF THE SEINE - BASTILLE NIGHT

As the fireworks continue to explode, we find Hassan eating his street food in his black chef uniform, oblivious of the crowds, staring up at the rockets as they explode and reflect on the river. He wipes his mouth with his sleeve and grins...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', MADAM MALLORY'S BEDROOM

The two star Michelin award on the wall is lit by an exploding rocket through net curtains. We stay on it for a moment.

Then Madam Mallory enters after the end of the Bastille day evening. Car doors are slamming as the last of the guests depart. In the distance there are still fireworks exploding at other parties. She sits down at her mirror and takes a breath.

She studies her bed in the reflection. She considers its emptiness.

Then she gets up to peer across the street. She sees Papa is sitting in the yard in a hard-backed chair, sipping a glass of wine. She studies him for a while.

MADAM MALLORY (SOFTLY)
Old fool.

She studies him some more then she makes a decision.

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURT YARD

Papa is sitting alone, staring up at the stars. The yard gate opens and Madam Mallory enters. She is carrying her own chair and places it beside the hen coop, just as she did when she waited for Hassan. She pulls her shawl tight around her shoulders. After a moment...

MADAM MALLORY
Can't sleep?

PAPA
I've been thinking about Hassan.

CONTINUED:

He glances at her. Then Papa reaches out and takes her hand. Madam Mallory surprises herself as she allows her hand to be taken. Then Papa turns to her.

PAPA (CONT'D)
This afternoon I sent him an e-mail.

Madam Mallory nods approval.

MADAM MALLORY
What did you say to him?

PAPA (LIGHT)
None of your business.

Madam Mallory shrugs. A pause. Then Papa decides to lie (for his own purpose).

PAPA (CONT'D)
Actually, I told him that you and I spend a lot of time together these days.

Madam Mallory shifts uncomfortably...

MADAM MALLORY
No you did not.

PAPA
I told him about the dance classes. And that we go to the market together and take turns to buy up all the truffles. And that once we picked flowers by the river.

MADAM MALLORY
We didn't 'pick flowers'. We were looking for mushrooms and *found* flowers.

PAPA
Which we picked.

Madam Mallory reacts. Papa is amused and decides to tease her.

PAPA (CONT'D)
In my e-mail I said 'Hassan, it is like having a girlfriend'.

MADAM MALLORY
Oh, you are too absurd.

CONTINUED: (2)

PAPA
I said it is like having a girlfriend except for one thing.

Madam Mallory reacts. A long pause. He squeezes her hand.

PAPA (CONT'D)
One thing.

Madam Mallory blinks quickly.

MADAM MALLORY
You really are too absurd.

PAPA
Now why would it be so absurd? Because we are old? That is not absurd, it is just more of a challenge.

Madam Mallory takes her hand back and quickly gets to her feet.

PAPA (ASTONISHED) (CONT'D)
Oh now come. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you. Please. I am just an old fool who has been drinking wine...

She hurriedly walks away...

PAPA (CONT'D)
Don't go...

She has trouble scraping open the gate but manages...

PAPA (CONT'D)
You forgot your chair.

Madam Mallory has gone. Papa peers at the empty chair and half smiles to himself. A long pause.

PAPA (CONT'D)
Bloody crazy French woman.

He takes a breath and looks up at the stars.

PAPA (CONT'D)
Haleema, you said it was ok to ask.

A pause. He looks down at his lap them back up...

CONTINUED: (3)

PAPA (CONT'D)
It is almost certainly entirely hypothetical anyway.

A pause. He smiles to himself and decides it is time to sleep and he gets to his feet. As he stands, he sees the light go on in Madam Mallory's bedroom. She comes to the window and stares down. Papa stares up at her.

There is a fixed expression on Madam Mallory's face. Papa studies her. Then Madam Mallory nods her head just once. Papa reacts with controlled astonishment. He points to himself to check he is understanding correctly. Madam Mallory closes the curtain...

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUEREUR'/'MAISON MUMBAY', ROAD

In moonlight we see Papa taking the same hundred foot journey that Hassan took. He walks away from Maison Mumbay and disappears into the shadows of the Saule Pleureur yard.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUEREUR', RESTAURANT, RECEPTION

The starched white tables glow in the half light. Madam Mallory comes to the door, straightening her hair. She opens it. She shows Papa inside then closes and bolts the door.

A pause. Madam Mallory is burning. Papa touches her cheek. He speaks as a gentle question...

PAPA (SOFTLY)
So. I will be <u>him</u>?

She looks up and smiles. After a moment...

MADAM MALLORY
No. You will be you.

Papa is about to speak but Madam Mallory continues...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
We will do this just once.

A pause.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
Then we can both be old in peace.

He kisses her gently on the forehead. She takes his hand and leads him toward the staircase.

Suddenly...

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE

A TGV train hurtles through shot at a hundred and twenty miles per hour.

INT. PARIS-MARSEILLE TGV TRAIN HEADING SOUTH - NEXT MORNING

Hassan wakes with a start. He is sitting in a First Class compartment, all alone. He looks around and realizes his cellphone is buzzing on the table. He picks it up and sees 'Paul Verlaine'. He ignores it. Hassan leans back in his seat and stares out at the countryside.

EXT. OAK TREE

It is a beautiful late afternoon. The vineyards and olive groves stretch out into the distance. Margueritte is walking in the bright sunshine, enjoying the summer heat.

Then she looks up toward the oak tree and stops dead. We turn around to find Hassan standing there. After Margueritte has recovered from the shock, he walks a few paces toward her.

HASSAN
It's Monday. I guessed your routine is the same.

MARGUERITTE
What are you doing in Lumiere? You should be in Paris. You find out about your star today.

Hassan glances back toward the tree and they share the memory.

MARGUERITTE (CONT'D)
In the village they call it the hang-man tree now.

HASSAN
Something beautiful destroyed. By the stars.

A pause. She peers at him...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
That's why I chose this place to do this.

MARGUERITTE
To do what?

CONTINUED:

Hassan looks around. She peers at him.

HASSAN
To tell you that I have realized something. *The stars are not the most important thing in the world.*

He steps forward and takes her hand. She looks away.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
Tonight I want to cook a meal for my family and my friends. I want to cook because I love them and I want them to eat because they are hungry.

A pause.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
No one knows I'm here except you and Madam Mallory. I have asked her if I can use the Saule Pleureur kitchen.

A pause. He peers into her eyes.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I want to cook a dish I haven't cooked for a long time. The last time I tried I was interrupted. Will you help me to cook it?

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', RESTAURANT - EARLY EVENING

The dining room is empty and the white starched tablecloths gleam. The house phone is ringing. Madam Mallory appears and takes the call as she fixes an earring.

MADAM MALLORY
(No, I'm afraid we are closed this evening).

A pause.

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
(Yes, there is a private function. Family and friends).

She puts the phone down and looks around the room. She goes to the window and pulls aside the curtain. She stares across at the blue elephant sign. Then she sees the back gate of the Maison Mumbay opening...

EXT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', COURTYARD

The whole Haji family are dressed for an occasion. The children are four years older. Ammi is wearing bright Indian clothes and Mukhtar wears a suit. Papa is in a formal dark suit, as is Umar and Mayur.

They walk as a family across the street toward the Saule Pleureur. As they cross, the Mayor of Lumiere cruises down the road in his official car and pulls up outside the restaurant.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', RESTAURANT

The Haji family are greeted by Madam Mallory and Marcel. Jacques takes coats. Papa and Madam Mallory greet each other with formal kisses on the cheek. The mayor is just arriving in his mayoral car...

PAPA
So what is this all about?

MADAM MALLORY
I have an announcement to make.

Papa shrugs and the family move on as Madam Mallory greets the mayor...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN

The back door opens and Margueritte enters, followed by Hassan. They are both wearing chef whites and are carrying ingredients from the market.

Without a word they begin to lay the produce out on the surfaces ready for preparation. They lay out onions, garlic, shallots, tomatoes, olives, all the best things of Lumiere.

Then Hassan uses a knife to prize open a balsa wood box. Inside there are three pounds of sea urchins. They glisten in the box. He smiles...

HASSAN
I just have to get one more ingredient.

INT. 'MAISON MUMBAY', PAPA'S BEDROOM

The room is empty. The curtain, which once became Mama's sari, billows in a breeze. Then Hassan enters. He kneels and pulls the suitcase of spices from under the bed. He takes hold of it and studies the faded leather. Then he leaves the room with it.

CONTINUED:

The curtain billows again...

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', RESTAURANT

In the dining room there is lively conversation and Champagne fizzes. Papa is pouring the drinks and he and Madam Mallory share a smile across the room. Madam Mallory checks her watch.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN

Hassan and Margueritte cook side-by-side. They work with grace around the steaming pots and flames. Without speaking a word they find their rhythm, and make a physical connection through the dishes they are preparing.

The suitcase of spices is open on a surface. Hassan goes to it and selects certain spices which he brings to the stove. He begins to spice the dishes and Margueritte helps.

Between them they begin to create a fusion. The dishes are part French, part Indian, all flavored by spices from the suitcase.

We stay with the process for a while and watch as the dishes develop. Then Hassan drops a tray and Margueritte bends to pick it up.

As they straighten they are close. A pause. Suddenly they kiss with a passion that almost hurts. Steam and smoke rise all around. They kiss again and it is obvious this is a run-away train...

HASSAN
What about your vow?

She breaths hard, grabs his face...

MARGUERITTE
Screw my vow.

They kiss again with passion. All those years of control snapped in a second. They fall back against a surface and an empty saucepan is clattered to the floor. The sex is wild for being so delayed. More saucepans clatter around them. Then the kitchen door flies open and Marcel enters, calling out...

MARCEL
Madam Mallory wants to know when....

He sees Hassan and Margueritte making love. They are against a surface, oblivious of the world. Marcel spins on his heel and walks out.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', RESTAURANT

Through the crowd we see Marcel approaching Madam Mallory and explaining. From her reaction we suspect she approves.

INT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', KITCHEN

Hassan and Margueritte are recovering from their moment of madness. They slowly go back to their pots and pans, turning down the heat, checking flavors.

EXT. 'SAULE PLEUREUR', RESTAURANT - LATER

Marcel's face is close to the dinner gong as he strikes it and announces with great formality...

MARCEL
(Ladies and gentlemen, dinner is served.)

The door to the kitchen opens. Two waiters begin to bring the silver service trays out from the kitchen and lay them on a large round table. The Haji family, Madam Mallory and the Mayor all take their seats at the table.

Madam Mallory claps her hands. First Margueritte, then Hassan, emerge from the kitchen. Ammi and Mukhtar instantly run to him and Papa stands up, astonished. Hassan hoists Ammi in his arms. Papa lays down his napkin...

PAPA
Hassan? What are you doing here?

Papa glances at the clock. It is almost seven...

PAPA (CONT'D)
You should be in Paris.

HASSAN
I have left Paris Papa.

The room falls silent. Hassan glances at Margueritte and we guess this is news to her too...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I am leaving the Chien Mechant.

He reaches out and takes Margueritte's hand.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I am coming back to Lumiere...

Before anyone can react, Madam Mallory steps forward...

CONTINUED:

MADAM MALLORY
And I am giving him total control of the Saule Pleureur...

She glances at Papa...

MADAM MALLORY (CONT'D)
...Since I have decided to retire.

As Margueritte reacts, Hassan takes her hands.

HASSAN
Not sole control.

He addresses Margueritte almost as if this were a wedding vow...

HASSAN (CONT'D)
I will only come back if you think you and I can work together again.

Margueritte reacts. She straightens her hair, ruffled by love-making.

MARGUERITTE
We should try the dishes we have cooked and see.

She smiles. Hassan turns to the table...

HASSAN
Yes. We should eat and let the <u>food</u> decide our fate.

Hassan is about to step toward the table but at that moment the Lumiere church clock begins to chime the hour. Papa speaks softly...

PAPA
Seven.

One-by-one everyone freezes as the chimes ring out. On the fifth chime, Hassan takes out his cellphone and puts it on the table beside the dishes he has cooked. The last chime rings out.

Then the phone begins to ring. After a moment Hassan takes the call. He listens. No one breaths. Everyone staring at Hassan's face, which has no expression. He looks up at the room. Then he begins to smile...

MADAM MALLORY
Trois?

CONTINUED: (2)

A pause. Hassan looks almost relieved...

HASSAN
Non.

The room reacts but Hassan is still smiling. He reaches into his pocket and produces the poster he took from the Chien Mechant which reads '*Trois, trois, trois*'.

He turns and sticks it above the door of the kitchen at an angle to the frame. He returns and takes Margueritte's arm.

HASSAN (CONT'D)
We will win it here.

A pause. He glances at Madam Mallory who nods acceptance of the challenge.

MADAM MALLORY
Pourquoi pas?

HASSAN
Now. For God's sake, can't we just <u>eat</u>?

Hassan and Margueritte head for the table. Then the Haji family, Madam Mallory, Marcel, the waiters and the mayor all sit down at the table to eat.

We depart the table as wine is poured and conversation fizzes. We pull out of the Saule Pleureur and rise up to look down on the road between the two restaurants, and the hundred foot journey that separates them.

THE END