

FADE IN:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT KITCHEN - EVENING

A young woman cuts an onion in the kitchen of a bustling, upscale Irish Pub. She's plump. Her nails are painted pink. A ring on her finger. The silver, shiny stovetops and dish racks are infested with frazzled chefs.

The woman dumps the onions into a pot of onion leek soup. Her white apron reads CHLOE.

A SEEMINGLY TOO TALL MAN mixes the soup just briefly before pouring it into a porcelain white bowl. He wafts over some of the STEAM radiating from it. He inhales, then smiles, mouths "perfect."

A few steps to his right sits a metal rack. He sets the bowl upon it next to a neatly prepared cup of bread and butter pudding. The man gently shifts the cup, straightening it.

A FEMALE SERVER puts the single bowl of soup onto a round, metal tray. Her demeanor is calm and composed compared to the madness of the kitchen.

She carries the soup through the pristine kitchen doors.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The dining room walls are a dark red. Mahogany tables, bar counters, shelves.

An energetic bartender handles a wall of alcohol. He wipes off a glass with a CRISP WHITE TOWEL.

It's all dimly lit. Patrons and staff well-dressed. A dining room alive with the steady chatter of happy, well-fed guests.

The female server weaves her way through the tables. She stops in front of one with a portly man in a full out suit and tie: the CRITIC.

Anyone can tell that the man's jet black hair is an artificial attempt at hiding the grey. He wears a bright blue tie as if to distract wondering eyes and make him seem young. Still, he looks like all business and no play.

The server sets the dish in front of him. The two exchange that polite conversation that typically takes place between a server.

The woman heads back into the kitchen.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

FEMALE SERVER
(Triumphant)
And the critic's got the soup!

Clapping emerges. The chefs take a second to congratulate themselves.

They go back to their tasks.

Some time passes as new dishes are prepared. An Irish meatloaf is garnished. A loaf of soda bread is sliced.

They begin the critic's entree - a new baking dish, a bag of potatoes, a recipe read over. The recipe is for an Irish classic: shepherd's pie.

The tall man who'd smelled the onion soup looks over his shoulder at the young, CLIVE O'SULLIVAN, a new chef. He's 17, lanky, and very timid.

RED CURLS BURST out of his hairnet.

He fidgets with the knife in his hand. The tall man makes an exaggerated face of both worry and disbelief. Clive notices him watching out of the corner of his eye. They shares an awkward, nervous laugh.

All he has to do is cut up a few of the vegetables for the critic's dish. It's actually not that hard.

He takes a DEEP BREATH before placing the knife gently on the corn. He slides it down. Kernels fall off beautifully.

Clive sighs. He SMILES at his temporary success. The tall man still watches him. Feeling it, Clive looks back at him. He's given a thumbs up.

Easy-peasy.

A BUS BOY and SOUS CHEF walk through the aisle in opposite directions.

The tall man swiftly turns back around, re-focusing. Clive turns too. He picks up a carrot. Cuts it.

Another carrot. As he picks up the knife, Chloe, carrying a plate with a Guinness cake on it and talking with the sous chef,

SLIPS.

CRASH. The shattering of fine silverware.

Clive GASPS.

A few co-workers scramble over to the clumsy Chloe. Other's hardly allow more than a glance.

Clive looks down at his cutting board. His knife is separating the tip of his FINGER instead of the carrot.

Another gasp.

Chloe is back on her feet, patting her apron. She smiles.

Clive hastily picks up a checkered towel on the counter beside him. He looks around, gently wiping the towel to cover the blood. Shouldn't he be wincing in pain?

It wasn't that much finger really.

A server reviews the rack of dishes ready to be served and checks his watch. He's running out of time.

ANOTHER CHEF yells.

ANOTHER CHEF
We need those vegetables! NOW!

PANIC.

Clive throws the towel aside, dumps the contents of the board into the dish of peas and corn (Yes, the finger included). He hands it off to the beckoning co-worker and runs into the back storage room.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Clive winces. A few quiet curse words here and there as he squeezes his bloody pinky.

He finds bandaids. Putting one on, Clive's eyes widen. He's only now realized his mistake

CLIVE
(flustered)
Shit.

He runs out of the storage room, but stops immediately as the door flies open.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Straight in his line of sight, the shepherd's pie is being put into the oven.

Clive's about to run and stop it, but what kind of idiot cuts off his finger and then puts it into the food? He can't fess up.

He walks back to his station, his left hand rubbing his other arm. A nervous habit.

A RANDOM CO-WORKER shuffles by quickly, bumping into Clive. He stumbles and runs a hand through his hair. Or tries to anyway, but there's the hairnet. He SIGHS.

Finally, he's back in front of his station. He continues working on his next set of tasks. What else can a guy do?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The critic sits patiently at his table. The female server takes away his empty cup of soup with a smile. Her's is much bigger than his.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT

The finishing touches are put on the lightly browned shepherd's pie. The cast-iron dish wiped off with a cloth. The garnish sprinkled.

The shepherd's pie goes on the rack just like that.

The female server puts it on a tray. She walks through the doors. Clive watches. A lump in his throat.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The female server sets the shepherd's pie down on the critic's table. Enjoy.

The critic rubs his hands together and sticks a fork in the pie.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT

The female server comes back through the doors. She's just as triumphant as last time, if not more.

The HEAD CHEF takes a bow, congratulating himself. There's clapping again, but the world might as well be mute to Clive. He's flushed with anxious energy and possibly regret.

Should he have told?

The head chef makes an announcement.

HEAD CHEF

I must inquire immediately. The
anticipation will kill us all!

So dramatic.

He walks out into the dining room. Clive follows.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

He stands just outside the door, straining to listen as the head chef makes his way to the critic's table.

HEAD CHEF

How do you like your shepherd's
pie, Sir?

The critic chews for a moment. It seems like an eternity to Clive. A strange look crawls onto the critic's face. This is it. Oh God. He looks up at the head chef.

CRITIC

It's... very good, very good
indeed. A nice twist on the classic
dish, with the seasoning and...
there's a slight...

The critic puts his fingers to his lips, trying to find the right word.

CRITIC (CONT'D)

...crunch. I like that, yes I like
that crunch.

From this perspective, we can see Clive in the background as the critic gives his praise. His hand is over his mouth. He's about to vomit.

Clive bursts back through the kitchen doors.

FADE TO BLACK.