KITCHEN

a pilot

by

Jeff Greenstein

~~based on the story of~~
~~from the diaries of~~
~~*avec la participation de*~~

wonderfully inspired by
Susan Feniger and Mary Sue Milliken

"I never thought about the possibility, 'what if it doesn't work?'"
— Susan

"We were young, hungry and naïve."
— Mary Sue

"She married my ex-husband."
— Susan

"I have her try everything first."
— Mary Sue

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TEASER

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A HAND turns up the VOLUME KNOB on an '80s BOOMBOX.

RADIO DJ (V.O.)
...L.A.'s own X with "The Hungry Wolf" on 106.7 KROQ.

The SONG KICKS IN, drums POUNDING, as we WIDEN to find...

VICTORIA
All right, here we go! Bang-bang!

...a TINY KITCHEN in the midst of DINNER-RUSH CHAOS, four people working in a space better suited for one or two.

CHYRON: **Los Angeles, 1985.**

Two young chefs are in charge: VICTORIA, spiky brunette, a high-spirited cheerleader, and JUNE, buzzcut blonde, a prickly technician. As they attend to pots, pans and prep, talking over each other and to their EMPLOYEES, Victoria's smile never falters, while the pressure and the noise and the close quarters are pushing June to her breaking point.

JUNE
Someone should take this. This has been sitting here. That needs to come off the heat, it shouldn't be bubbling. Please, can somebody -- Wait, have you tasted that? Take a moment and taste, don't just slurp and run, ask yourself, could I eat an entire bowl of that? 'Cause that's what they're gonna do, eat an entire... Good. No, wait, really? Good. Again, is somebody going to... Ow! No, it's okay, just fried my arm a little, but will somebody, please -- AAAAAHHH!

VICTORIA
What's next? This, this can go. Hey, somebody wanna give June a hand with the... This is for table four, "hold the scallions," that's crazy, that cannot be a real... Sometimes I think people make stuff up just to... Honey, you wanna...? Thanks -- hey, how are you not exhausted? Here you go. And this. Easy there, Junie. Wait, "well done"? They did not ask for... I don't care, serve it medium, I'm not turning a nice piece of meat into charcoal just because they --

A sudden lull as everyone reacts to June's crazed outburst. A WAITER cautiously approaches her and takes the plate.

JUNE
...Thank you.

He heads off and the kitchen hubbub resumes. Victoria moves to June's side.

VICTORIA
You okay, June?

JUNE
Twenty-five seats. You cannot service twenty-five seats from a kitchen this small. Unless you suck. We don't suck. So we're always scrambling and rushing, trying to service those twenty-five seats.

VICTORIA
We have thirty-four seats.

JUNE
What??

VICTORIA
I added nine at the bar last April. You should visit the front of the house sometime. It's nice.

JUNE
(shudders)
There are people up there.

She composes herself, blows out a breath.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Victoria, I could really use a --

VICTORIA
I hid it. That wine's supposed to be for cooking.

JUNE
I was going to say "a short break."

VICTORIA
Sure you were, Drunky. Your new nickname is Drunky.

JUNE
Please don't give me any more nicknames. Two weeks after it was over, you were still calling me Periodface.

VICTORIA
Because you still had a Periodface.
(then, apropos of nothing)
Hey, tomorrow, will you help me go rug shopping?

JUNE
Isn't that more your girlfriend's department? Ruby's very fussy about your décor. I brought a cake to your birthday party -- she threw it out 'cause it clashed with the drapes.

VICTORIA
The rug's a surprise for her.

JUNE
A surprise rug.

VICTORIA
Yes.

JUNE
Never in human history has any human bought any other human a surprise rug.

VICTORIA
Will you just help me, please?!

JUNE
Fine.

Busboy JUAN CARLOS -- tall, sloe-eyed, Hispanic, taciturn -- enters with a bin of dirty plates. As he passes June, he looks at her longingly, sighs, and moves to the sink.

JUNE (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Oh dear dear dearie me...

VICTORIA
Uh-oh, you're talking like your Midwestern grandmother. What did you do?

JUNE
I may have made an error. A small error. An errorina.

She glances at Juan Carlos. Victoria follows her gaze.

VICTORIA
So a small... Mexican error.

JUNE
Yes.

VICTORIA
An *erroriña*.

JUNE
Sí.

VICTORIA
(gasps)
Your new nickname is Slutty! You had sex with Juan Carlos??

JUNE
No! It was... sexual, but not all the way to sex. It was "seh."
(beat)
...On the butcher block.

VICTORIA
Ew! I just made crepes on that!

A timer DINGS. June takes this opportunity to flee.

JUNE
I'm going to go check on the fish.

She takes a tray and some tongs and exits out the back door.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND CAFÉ - CONTINUOUS

There's a pair of hibachis just outside. June attends to several pieces of fish, poking some, flipping others. Victoria emerges, folds her arms and says dryly:

VICTORIA
So you and Juan Carlos... are you steadies now? *Los amantes?*

JUNE
Look, I know you think I drink too much and diddle inappropriate guys. But you need to understand something.
(re her head)
There is a lot going on in here.

VICTORIA
Yes, we've met, we've been friends for years, I know that you're --

JUNE
I don't think you do. Do you <u>really</u> understand what's going on in here?

And with that, the ALLEY FALLS AWAY to reveal the INSIDE OF JUNE'S HEAD: a TOWERING WAREHOUSE with a MONSTROUS SPINNING FLYWHEEL three stories high. Occasionally the flywheel throws off something bizarre, like a GIRL'S BIKE or a FRILLY PROM DRESS or a YIPPING TERRIER with a PINK BOW. Victoria gapes.

VICTORIA
Oh my God.

JUNE
When I drink, it slows down. When I have sex, it slows down.

VICTORIA
What about when you cook?

JUNE
(re the wheel)
What do you think <u>makes</u> me cook?

As Victoria takes this in, the FLYWHEEL DISAPPEARS and the ALLEY SLIDES BACK UP around them. June matter-of-factly picks a few pieces of grilled fish off the hibachi and heads back inside. And on Victoria, staring after her partner...

CUT TO:

<u>MAIN TITLE</u>

ACT ONE

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND CAFÉ - DAY

CLOSE ON JUNE as she pulls on a pair of glacier goggles (those '80s sunglasses with the leather side-shields). CLOSE ON VICTORIA as she pulls hers on. WIDEN as the two saddle up their matching white Honda scooters and ROAR OFF.

EXT. MELROSE AVENUE - DAY

As Victoria and June speed along side by side, we get our first look at Melrose Avenue, 1985. Spiky-haired boys in leather jackets, mohawked girls in ripped fishnets, Wacko and Soap Plant and Flip and Retail Slut -- the young, ultra-hip center of the universe. They turn onto La Brea...

EXT. LA BREA AVENUE - CONTINUOUS

...which, by contrast, is a dead zone. A synagogue, a lamp store, and a dreary Oriental rug shop. As the women park their scooters and dismount, June looks around, confused.

JUNE
Here...?

Victoria pulls her toward the door.

INT. RUG SHOP - DAY

A cavernous space with acrid fluorescent lighting. Victoria surveys the room as June picks through a pile of dusty rugs.

JUNE
Okay, the rugs seem to fall into two categories: ugly, and ugly with rat poo. Which do you think Ruby, a woman who made me do the public-toilet hover when I asked to sit on her Eames chair, would like better?

VICTORIA
We're not here for a rug. This is where we're going to open our new restaurant. Whee!

Arms wide, she spins like Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*.

JUNE
Our new -- Are you crazy? We can barely manage a twenty-five-seat --

VICTORIA
-- thirty-four-seat --

JUNE
-- thirty-four-seat café!

VICTORIA
Right, but see, I figured it out. The problem is, we're too small.

JUNE
No, the problem is now you've got me hyperventilating, and with each breath I suck in more aerosolized rat poo. You know, that's how people got plague!

VICTORIA
Just listen for a sec. When we started the café, it wasn't even a café. It was cappuccinos and *petit fours* for the customers at Ruby's gallery. But the problem is, we rock. People loved the food, they started coming for the snacks not the art... Pretty soon we're running a restaurant out of somebody's hallway. Please breathe.

June covers her mouth with her sleeve, takes a quick breath.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
But if we moved here... I mean, look at this space -- the space of this space! We could have a real kitchen, a walk-in fridge, prep cooks, a dishwasher... In a way, it would be easier.

JUNE
I don't even know how to respond to the tidal wave of crazy you just unleashed on me. You're like that lady with the straight-up ponytail and bellbottoms who walks up and down Fairfax muttering about how pigeons are controlling her thoughts.

Rather than fire back, Victoria unexpectedly begins to SING.

VICTORIA
Come with me and you'll be...

JUNE
Oh, no. Please don't.

VICTORIA
In a world of pure imagination...

It's the song from *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*.

JUNE
No. Last time you did this, I went from being very happily sexually harassed in a two-star Paris kitchen to running a café in Hollywood.

VICTORIA
Take a look and you'll see / Into your imagination...

As Victoria prances and sings, the RUG SHOP MELTS AWAY to become a stylish FANTASY RESTAURANT: great lighting, a hip young wait-staff, gorgeous food, appreciative patrons...

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Through these doors you will find / Oh, what's this? A giant open kitchen...

As she leads June into a large, airy kitchen, ANIMATED BIRDS flutter around June like she's Snow White.

JUNE
Really, this is a bit much.

VICTORIA
June's not tense, she's relaxed / Cooking food without the constant bitchin'...
(off June's look)
Oh, come on, it'll be great! This is the next step for us. Look around -- it's like a dream.

JUNE
Exactly. It's a <u>dream</u>.

The FANTASY ABRUPTLY EVAPORATES and they're once again in the dismal rug shop.

JUNE (CONT'D)
You haven't thought any of this through. Like, where's all the money coming from?

VICTORIA
We'll get a loan, borrow from our families.

JUNE
And you're talking about a massive remodeling job. Who's building this restaurant? Who's designing it?

VICTORIA
We'll hire people. Or... I don't know, I'll call my ex-husband, he's an architect.

JUNE
Adam? The guy you dumped for women? Yeah, I'm sure he'll jump at the chance. Plus you're forgetting the biggest hurdle of all: Who says the owner even wants to rent us the place?

VICTORIA
Aha. Well, there, I have actually laid some groundwork.

MISHA, the shop's owner -- 60s, Russian, hot-tempered -- spots Victoria and strides toward her, irate.

MISHA
Out! Out!! I tell you, I am not interested!

JUNE
(to Victoria)
Mmm, good groundwork.

VICTORIA
(to Misha)
But remember how I said I was going to bring my partner to meet you? Here she is. Misha, this is June.

She turns June around to face him... and his tone instantly changes as he breaks into a delighted smile.

MISHA
Ahh. Ohh. You are even prettier than the picture she shows me.

JUNE
(sotto, to Victoria)
You're the worst person. You're like a war criminal.

MISHA
You... you are her partner? You are lesbian with her?

JUNE
No, no. She is... lesbian with someone else. I'm... hetero... Does this really need to be discussed?

VICTORIA
(to Misha)
I wanted to give you another chance to consider leasing us your shop.

MISHA
This is rug shop. Is my business.

VICTORIA
Misha, I drive by here every day. You don't do any business. You'd make more as our landlord than you'll ever make selling rugs. 'Cause we're good. We are really good.

MISHA
(waving this off)
You are teenagers.

VICTORIA
We'll prove it to you. What's your favorite dish? June here will cook it for you with her pretty, pretty hands. Look at these hands. They are so pretty.

JUNE
Wow, you actually went lower. You are now looking up at the inventor of apartheid.

MISHA
Do you know... *kulebiaka*?

JUNE
You mean *coulibiac*?

MISHA
Do not say in French!
(spits contemptuously)
Is great Russian dish!

JUNE
(aside to Victoria)
He just spat on one of the rugs.

MISHA
When I am little boy in Kiev, my grandmother make for me this pie, *kulebiaka*. Fish from Dnieper River. Rice. Fresh onion. Mushroom.

VICTORIA
Sure, we've made that. It's in Escoffier. It's cinchy.

MISHA
Not possible. American women cannot make *kulebiaka.*

That was a mistake. June steps forward, fire in her eyes.

JUNE
Now listen here, bud. Don't you dare tell me what American women can't do. When she and I met, applying for work at a restaurant in Paris, the head chef said he'd rather <u>die</u> than have a woman in his kitchen. He said I'd be better off applying for hat check girl. So we peeled onions, we washed lettuce, we scratched and clawed and fought for respect, and within a year we were <u>running</u> his kitchen.

VICTORIA
He had a heart attack. It was sad in a way, but not really.

JUNE
So we'll make your *kulebiaka*, we'll make you the best damn *kulebiaka* you've ever had! Better than your dumb grandmother's! She probably didn't even wash her hands!

VICTORIA
Easy there, Junebug.
(to Misha)
So whaddya say? If you like our food, will you lease us the place?

JUNE
Damn right he will. You will <u>cry</u> from our *kulebiaka*, punk!

MISHA
(staring, enraptured)
I... okay, yes. Is deal.

VICTORIA
Super! See you soon!

Delighted, Victoria escorts June to the door.

JUNE
Wait, what -- what did I just do?

VICTORIA
You were amazing. By the way, I've never told you this, but when you get mad your nipples go like "voop."

She hustles June out.

EXT. RUG SHOP - CONTINUOUS

As the women emerge, June is now in a full-on panic.

JUNE
Hold on, stop! What are we getting into? That place is way too big! We can't afford it! I'm still paying off my student loan! I've never made *kulebiaka* in my life! And neither have you!

VICTORIA
It's all going to be okay. Worry about that tomorrow. In the meantime, find some way to relax. Do you think you can do that?

June considers.

INT. HOLLYWOOD DISCO - NIGHT

A drunk, giddy June is dancing with SIX GUYS to the POUNDING BEAT of Dead or Alive's "You Spin Me Round (Like a Record)," whipping herself about in a wildly strange fashion.

JUNE
I am so relaxed!!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Closing time. While Juan Carlos washes dishes, Victoria is at the fridge making tomorrow's shopping list. Then they hear RAUCOUS VOICES outside and exchange a quizzical look.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND CAFÉ - CONTINUOUS

They emerge to find a tipsy, giggly June at the picnic table entertaining two SKEEZY GUYS who look like a cut-rate Crockett and Tubbs.

JUNE
...No way, that's disgusting! Okay, maybe I would.

VICTORIA
June...?

JUNE
Oh, you're still here. I didn't...

Stunned and hurt, Juan Carlos angrily pulls off his apron, throws it on the ground, and speaks for the first time:

JUAN CARLOS
I quit! Quit! *Dejo el trabajo!*

He storms off. The women react.

EXT. MELROSE AVENUE - NIGHT

Victoria and June move through the nighttime Melrose new-wave crowd, searching for Juan Carlos.

JUNE
It's not my fault! Who knew Juan Carlos was so sensitive?

VICTORIA
Certainly not you. Then again, did you ever have an actual conversation with him?

JUNE
(admitting)
No. It was mostly... pointing and unbuttoning.

Victoria stops walking, turns.

VICTORIA
What the hell's wrong with you? Is this what you're gonna keep doing?

JUNE
I'll try to keep it out of our kitchen, if that's what you're saying.

VICTORIA
That's not what I'm saying -- although I could do without the image I keep flashing on every time I use the butcher block. Aren't you a little old for this party-girl thing?

JUNE
I'm twenty-six.

VICTORIA
My mother had four kids when she was twenty-six.

JUNE
Your mother, a.k.a. the Wicked Witch of Hadassah, is not a good example of anything. And you're in no position to be lecturing me about relationships.

VICTORIA
Oh, so now you're gonna take shots at me and Ruby.

JUNE
Only one: she doesn't love you enough. You are the greatest person God ever put on this earth, and she treats you like a sparkly bracelet she can put on whenever she feels like it. I gotta be careful how I tell this next story, because it'll make me cry, but remember the Keith Haring opening last year? *L.A. Times* was there, social event of the season? There was this moment when she was talking to someone, and you reached for her hand, and she tapped it and pushed it away... I would've kicked her in the face if I didn't think it would ruin the shine on my slingbacks.
(then)
But I really like her. Keep dating her. She's good for you.

VICTORIA
I -- the bitterness is fantastic, by the way -- I just feel if you met someone, someone who's really cool the way you're cool...

JUNE
Don't say nice things about me just 'cause I said 'em about you. I'm sorry I cost us a busboy. I'll see you tomorrow.

She turns and walks off. On Victoria, thinking...

EXT. MEADOW - SEVEN YEARS AGO - DAY

HANDHELD HOME-MOVIE FOOTAGE of a meadow ablaze with wildflowers. Over this we hear Victoria NARRATING:

VICTORIA (V.O.)
Isn't this gorgeous?

CHYRON: **Montpelier, Vermont, 1978.**

VICTORIA (V.O.)
And here's my gorgeous husband.

THE CAMERA PANS to a grinning ADAM, 20, wiry and athletic, with floppy hair and a twinkle in his eye.

VICTORIA (V.O.)
And here's the house he built for us.

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS ADAM to a LARGE TEPEE in the middle of the meadow, of which he is very proud. He points out a detail.

ADAM
Notice the stitching's on the inside. Even the Indians didn't do that.

VICTORIA (V.O.)
I think maybe they did.

ADAM
Oh. Well, I arrived at the solution independently.

THE CAMERA IS SET DOWN and a 20-YEAR-OLD VICTORIA joins Adam in the frame. Her hair is long and soft, her clothes almost hippyish. She embraces Adam and kisses him. The happy couple wave to the camera. And on Adam's smile...

INT. ARCHITECTURE FIRM - DAY

TODAY'S ADAM enters, carrying a rolled-up drawing. In contrast to 1978 Adam, the hair is shorter, the clothes more conservative, and as for the twinkle, this job has nearly extinguished it.

CHYRON: **London, 1985.**

Adam briskly approaches his boss's office.

INT. FOGG'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Floor-to-ceiling windows display a magnificent view of the London skyline. MR. FOGG -- 55, expensive eyeglasses -- is at his desk when Adam bursts in.

ADAM
Sir, I've reviewed the drawings you're presenting this afternoon, and it is my duty to inform you that you're making a tragic and horrible mistake.

MR. FOGG
I'm sorry, son, I didn't catch your name.

ADAM
Adam. I've worked here two years.

MR. FOGG
And your responsibilities include...?

ADAM
Bringing you your tea.
(then)
What you're proposing is yet another mirrored rectangle in a city awash in mirrored rectangles. If this keeps up, London will soon resemble nothing so much as a large disco ball with Big Ben in the middle. However, Adam has devised an alternative.

MR. FOGG
And that's you.

ADAM
Felt you could use a reminder.

He smartly unfurls a large drawing across Fogg's desk.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Same footprint, same capacity, but organic, human-scale... infinitely more interesting. What do you think?

MR. FOGG
You rolled your drawing over my scone.

He peels back the paper to retrieve his pastry.

MR. FOGG (CONT'D)
I'd like my tea now, please. And after that, I believe there are some blueprints at the repro shop. Run and fetch them, would you?

As Adam fumes, Fogg's SECRETARY appears in the doorway.

SECRETARY
Adam, you have a phone call.

Frustrated, Adam yanks his drawing off the desk and exits.

INT. ARCHITECTURE FIRM - MOMENTS LATER

Adam angrily stuffs the large drawing into a too-small trashcan, plops down at a desk and picks up the phone.

ADAM
Yeah?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CAFÉ - SAME TIME (NIGHT)

The chairs are up on the tables around Victoria as she sits in the middle of the dark, empty café.

VICTORIA
(brightly)
Hey-ey, it's me. How's every little thing?

ADAM
Victoria. The perfect frosting on the crap-cake of my morning.

VICTORIA
(singsong)
I've been thinking of yoooou...

ADAM
Oh, now you're thinking of me. Wish that'd been true on a certain night four years ago, when I walked in on a shower scene more shocking than the one in *Psycho*, but --

VICTORIA
Adam, it's two a.m. here, this is long distance and I'm paying. Don't let's go on the tour. I've been thinking of you. I'm always thinking of you.

Victoria is so warm and sincere that Adam finds himself unable to sustain his current level of snippiness.

ADAM
Okay, sorry. No tour. What's up?

VICTORIA
Well, you know my friend and I have that café, right? It's doing so well that now we're going to open a restaurant. We found an incredible space, a total blank canvas... How'd you like to come here and design it?

ADAM
Excuse me, but I happen to be in the midst of a meteoric rise through the world of architecture. I can't just uproot my whole life because --

There's a tap on Adam's shoulder.

MR. FOGG
I'm sorry, I forgot your name -- Tea Boy? Could you hurry it up, please?

Fogg heads off. Adam returns to Victoria:

ADAM
...I'll think about it.

VICTORIA
Great! But don't think too hard. I want to be open by Christmas.

She hangs up. And on Adam's surprise...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND CAFÉ - DAY

CLOSE ON a LARGE BLACK COD in a box of crushed ice. PULL BACK TO FIND June unstrapping the box from the back of her scooter and carrying it toward the back door.

JUNE
(mock Russian accent)
"American women cannot make *kulebiaka*." Well, watch me, ya big prick.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

June enters and sets the box down on the work table.

JUNE
I know it's traditionally made with salmon, but when I saw this magnificent black cod I couldn't help my-- Wait, what's wrong?

Victoria's smile has a manic edge June knows means trouble.

VICTORIA
Nothing! Just, the fridge went down during the night, so we've got two dozen chickens going bad. And the extruder on the pasta machine's broken, so our rigatoni looks like this.

She holds up a limp eight-inch pasta tube.

JUNE
Reminds me of --

VICTORIA
I've done all those jokes already. Plus we're overbooked for lunch, Juan Carlos is home sulking, and the prep cook who only does heroin on weekends forgot this wasn't the weekend -- I blame the heroin -- so it's just gonna be you and me running the whole --

JUNE
Hang on. Hang on...

PUSH IN on JUNE'S EYES NARROWING -- we HEAR THE SOUND of the GIANT FLYWHEEL spinning up to speed --

JUNE (CONT'D)
I have an idea.

A RECIPE CASCADES DOWN THE SCREEN, kicking off a fast-paced COOKING SEQUENCE which shows the two chefs at their best, breathtakingly skillful and uncannily in sync. The moment June finishes puréeing the filling, Victoria's right there with perfect *al dente* rigatoni. The moment Victoria has the cream sauce at a boil, June's right there with the stuffed pasta. It's a kitchen ballet, and the two are ideal partners.

The climax comes when June pulls a skillet full of bubbling, creamy rigatoni out of the oven. Victoria serves one onto a plate and cuts it in half. She and June each take a bite, chewing reflectively. Then they look at each other and smile.

VICTORIA
Put it on the board.

A HAND writes **RIGATONI STUFFED WITH CHICKEN AND FENNEL** on the café's MENU BOARD, and then above that, **CHEFS' SPECIAL**.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The lunch rush behind them, the crisis averted, the two women are slumped against the prep table in an almost post-coital languor. A burly REPAIRMAN comes up from beneath the counter holding a REFRIGERATOR PART with wires dangling off it.

REPAIRMAN
I replaced the thermostat, but in case it goes again, I'll leave you a used one for backup.

JUNE
Can you show me how to install it?

REPAIRMAN
Eh, maybe you wanna get a man to do that.

VICTORIA
Are you kidding? Who the hell you think got this whole damn place going? Not "a man."

The repairman is taken aback -- and then Victoria punches him in the shoulder and laughs, giving him permission to laugh along. On this, the waiter enters, looking baffled.

WAITER
Someone just asked for a double order of French fries, cooked hard,
(MORE)

WAITER (CONT'D)
extra salt, mayo on the side. Do we even make that?

VICTORIA
Oh ho ho. You know what this means?

With a sly smile, she beckons June to join her at the porthole overlooking the café, where THEY SEE Adam sitting at a table, building a tripod with his flatware. Success! He does a small triumphant fist-clench. Victoria turns to June:

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
...You finally get to meet my ex-husband.

JUNE
Adam? Wait, that's... He's here? He looks so different than in that old picture.

VICTORIA
I know. Hotter, right?

Before June can respond, Victoria exits to greet Adam with a big hug. And as June watches -- he is kinda hot, actually...

INT. CAFÉ - LATER

CLOSE ON a BIG BOWL OF FRIES. WIDEN as Adam dips one in mayo and chomps on it. Victoria sits opposite. (The café's closed between lunch and dinner, so the place is otherwise empty.)

ADAM
...How is that offensive? All I'm asking is, is it some kind of requirement that when you sign on as a lesbian, they make you cut off all your hair?

VICTORIA
Okay, first of all, you don't "sign on." It's not like there's a recruiting center.

ADAM
Could've fooled me. On the way here, I passed this bar on Santa Monica. They were practically giving out crewcuts and Joan Armatrading records at the door.

VICTORIA
It's just hair, Adam, jeez. June's straight and she's got a buzzcut.

She indicates June, who's lingering awkwardly in the kitchen doorway some distance away.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Honey, you gonna come say hello at some point?

June waves from the doorway. She's being weird.

ADAM
(to Victoria)
I... I guess I liked your old hair. When it was long.

This is his way of saying he's missed her, and she knows it. She puts her hand on his for a beat. Then she's all business:

VICTORIA
So! Did you go by the rug shop?

ADAM
Yes. Looked around. Heard from the owner about certain aspects of June's... anatomy...
(calling over)
The Russian really likes you!

June weirdly waves again. Adam turns back to Victoria.

ADAM (CONT'D)
...And regarding the restaurant, I have a few thoughts.

VICTORIA
Great. Let's hear the thoughts.

ADAM
Your plan is stupid.

VICTORIA
Oh, God. Here we go...

She'd forgotten this part of Adam. He gets up and paces.

ADAM
Say the Russian likes your fish pie, hurray, he agrees to lease you the place. You're signing on with a landlord of unknown temperament. During construction you're running back and forth between here and there, resulting in a drop in quality at best and downtime at worst. And there's a huge cash
(MORE)

ADAM (CONT'D)
outlay involved. Also, can we talk about La Brea? What's on La Brea besides Jews walking to temple and people shopping for vacuum bags?

JUNE
Yes! Finally somebody's making some sense!

She leaves her post in the doorway and joins the fray.

ADAM
On the other hand... what if you were to expand the space you have?

VICTORIA
That's not --

ADAM
Just hear me out.

JUNE
Hear him out.

And with that, the café BLEACHES WHITE, SCRIBBLING PEN LINES redrawing the space as Adam continues his pitch.

ADAM
The café becomes your bar. Kitchen goes from there to <u>there</u>. Open up the entryway, put in a few skylights, break through that wall...

VICTORIA
Into the gallery?

The SKETCH VANISHES and we're once again in the café.

ADAM
Well, yeah, that's the plan, take over the gallery. I assume you have a relationship with the owner.

VICTORIA
(avoiding June's gaze)
Yes, we have a... relationship...

ADAM
Then perfect. This way there's minimal disruption, your regulars know where to find you, and if I plan it right you won't even have to close during the expansion.

JUNE
This is brilliant. I don't know why we didn't think of it before.

ADAM
Thank you, June. Nice to meet you, June.

They shake hands -- and as they make eye contact, there's a little spark which is not lost on Victoria.

VICTORIA
No no no. This is not how it's supposed to go. We get set up in the place on La Brea, then you two have sex.

ADAM
Wait, what?

JUNE
What??

VICTORIA
Cat's out of the bag. The real plan is, you two meet, you fall in love, you have sex, blah blah marriage.

They let go of the handshake and back away as if bitten.

JUNE
Oh my God!!

VICTORIA
Just hear me out.

ADAM
I'm not gonna --

JUNE
No, hear her out. We'll need it for our defense at the murder trial.

VICTORIA
June is -- I love ya, sweetie, but there's no other way to put this -- a sexually carnivorous slut-bomb.

JUNE
There was no other way to put it??

VICTORIA
And Adam is --

ADAM
Oh, can't wait for this one!

VICTORIA
-- a sad, lonely failure.

ADAM
Untrue, and not at all colorful!

VICTORIA
So I figured I'd kill two birds with one stone.
(to June)
You get a fantastic guy road-tested by me --

ADAM
"Road-tested"! Five years of marriage, Thanksgivings with your family, reduced to something out of *Car & Driver*!

VICTORIA
And you get this amazing, gorgeous, talented girl. Plus you finally get a chance to design something, so in a way it's three birds.

JUNE
Hang on, what?
(to Adam)
You've never designed anything?

ADAM
(defensive)
I've designed stuff. Lots of stuff.

VICTORIA
Honey, be real.

ADAM
I have! What about the tepee?

JUNE
Didn't Indians design the tepee?

ADAM
Not with stitching on the inside!

VICTORIA
Adam, I'm pretty sure they --

ADAM
Okay, fine, they did! But I arrived at the solution independently!

VICTORIA
(to June)
See how passionate he is? He really is good.
(meaningfully)
In lots of ways.

ADAM
That's right, folks, step up and get your ticket! 'Cause on the big Sexual Subway Line, I'm your last stop before a girl!

VICTORIA
Ooh, wait, that reminds me. You're still sorta in love with me, right? Well, once you're with June, you won't be. Four birds!

JUNE
Hey, Victoria? STOP KILLING BIRDS!!

The room goes quiet. June steadies herself, then:

JUNE (CONT'D)
I'm not broken, I don't need to be fixed, and I certainly don't need to be fixed by you. As for the offer of your ex-husband, you'll excuse me if I find that about as appetizing as "Try this, it's delicious, I just threw it up."
(then, to Adam)
Nice meeting you, too.

She exits out the back door. Victoria looks plaintively to Adam, who scowls and exits out the front door. On Victoria...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The BLACK COD is SLAPPED onto the butcher block. As June expertly (yet brutally) fillets it, Victoria enters.

VICTORIA
You're here.

JUNE
Well, there's work to do. Big Russian dinner tonight.

Her tone is clipped and acerbic. Victoria moves to her side.

VICTORIA
You want me to -- ?

JUNE
I'll do the filling, you do the dough. Stay out of my way.

VICTORIA
Might go faster if we --

JUNE
Stay out of my way.

VICTORIA
Look, I'm sorry I --

JUNE
Don't want to talk about it, just want to work. Stay out of my -- Are you getting it now?

So they work in silence. And in contrast to their earlier stuffed-rigatoni *pas de deux*, now the partners couldn't be more out of sync. Elbows are bumped, handoffs are mistimed, ingredients are spilled... the whole process is clumsy and joyless. As Victoria shimmies past June, she jostles a pan and a metal spoon CLATTERS to the floor. June snaps.

JUNE (CONT'D)
That's it. I'm done. Finish it yourself.

VICTORIA
Please don't go. I can't do this without you.

JUNE
Sure you can. "It's in Escoffier. It's cinchy."

VICTORIA
No, not this.
(arms wide)
This.

JUNE
Oh, come on. You're the one with the big ideas, the one who's always pushing us forward. I don't even know why you need me. Chefs don't have partners.

VICTORIA
Are you kidding? Of course I need you. Yes, I'm the pushy one, but you're the... sparky one. The one who's inspired. Like with the stuffed rigatoni, the way you could see that. I know I'm good, I know I can cook anything, but that... seeing... I don't have it.

Victoria's becoming increasingly emotional, but June's too busy arguing to notice.

JUNE
Of course you do. Plenty of our food is yours. The mussel bisque? That's all you.

VICTORIA
Yeah, and you know how long that's been on the menu without a single person ordering it? But you keep it on there anyway, because you're so lovely... Oh, God, I wish I was you!

She dissolves into tears. Intensely uncomfortable with raw emotion, June has to fight the urge to flee.

JUNE
(shaking her head)
Na na na na na... no crying in the kitchen, that's for employees, don't... Okay, I'm hugging you now, you know I don't do that, that's how much I... Yes, better, less crying, pulling it together, good girl, we got through it.

Victoria sniffs, wipes her eyes on her sleeve, looks at June.

VICTORIA
I'm... sorry...

She starts to tear up again.

JUNE
Unh-uh, don't apologize if it's going to make you cry again, I forgive you, see, all better, on we go.

VICTORIA
Do you really forgive me?

JUNE
(gently)
Don't make me answer that.
(then)
Look, I know we wouldn't be here if it weren't for you. I know wherever you take us next, it's going to be great, and somewhere I never would've gone on my own. But sometimes, lunatic, when I say I don't want to do something -- say, sleep with your ex -- it's 'cause I don't want to do it. It's not a cue for you to start pushing.

VICTORIA
I understand. But... how am I supposed to know the difference?

JUNE
I don't know what to tell you except... look in my eyes.

VICTORIA
I can't. I'm afraid you'll hypnotize me with your crazy pinwheel eyes and turn me into a sex zombie like you.

June's taken aback -- and then Victoria punches her in the shoulder and laughs. June tries not to laugh along.

JUNE
I hate you. Get back to work.

And with that, the *KULEBIAKA* RECIPE CASCADES DOWN THE SCREEN, its elaborate preparation condensed into FOUR QUICK CUTS: June sautés the filling; Victoria rolls out dough; June wraps

the filling in dough, shaping it into a pie; Victoria slides the glazed pie into the oven. As she closes the oven door:

VICTORIA
Think we did it right?

JUNE
Who knows?

INT. RUG SHOP - NIGHT

At an elegant table set up in the middle of the shop, the women serve Misha a slice of the impressive golden-brown *kulebiaka*. He takes a bite, chews -- then looks up at them, moved to tears by this flawless evocation of his childhood. Victoria leans in to June with a little nod:

VICTORIA
We did it right.

June beams. Then she bends down to Misha and snarls:

JUNE
Toldja you would cry, punk.

VICTORIA
(easing her away)
Why don't you wait outside while I wrap this up.

June snatches a glass of wine off the table, then the bottle, and exits.

EXT. RUG SHOP - NIGHT

Sitting on the curb with her wine, June watches through the window as Victoria and Misha seal the deal with a handshake. Then she hears a voice:

ADAM
The Queen summoned me.

June looks up to see him standing over her. It's the first time they've been alone together, something of which she's acutely aware.

ADAM (CONT'D)
I hear you won.

JUNE
We did. Don't know exactly what we won, but...

ADAM
I do. This place is a disaster.

He sits next to her on the curb and opens a folder of papers.

ADAM (CONT'D)
I just spent a few hours at the Department of Building and Safety. Bad construction, bad plumbing, bad wiring... Oh, and I'm pretty sure they tested the atom bomb here, so there may be some radiation floating around. The food'll cook itself.

JUNE
Your plan was better.

ADAM
So much better! Fantastic plan! But you know we're never going to talk her out of this.

JUNE
No, we are not.

ADAM
Gimme some of that.

He points to her wine. June is surprised but complies, handing over her glass. He drinks.

JUNE
Listen, about how I... compared you to throw-up...

ADAM
You don't have to --

JUNE
No, I do, I really do. That was over the line. I'm sorry. But Victoria has this way of pushing my buttons...

ADAM
Tell me about it.

JUNE
Of course, what am I saying, you were married to her.

ADAM
Yup. And now we all are.

JUNE
And you know the worst part? You can't stay mad at her.

ADAM
I know! It's awful! When she dumped me for that Rachel, that butchy, motorcycle-fixing -- don't get me started -- I walked around for months in this rage. I'm surprised I didn't burst into flames. And then my birthday rolls around, I'm trying to distract myself with some frantic masturbation... and Vicky calls me! "Hey-ey..."

JUNE
(chuckles)
I know that "hey"...

ADAM
And she kept doing it! Every year, as if we were friends. No matter where I was, she'd track me down. I never wanted to talk to her, but I always did. I couldn't stay mad.

JUNE
I hate that. God, she's a pain.

The two of them gaze into the shop at the woman who's brought them together. Then:

ADAM
So you wanna go out sometime?

JUNE
No.

After a moment, Victoria bursts out the door, exultant.

VICTORIA
He's going to sign the lease next week. Aren't we thrilled?

June and Adam grunt noncommittally.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Oh, come on. Everything's gonna be great. Our restaurant will be a huge success, Adam'll win awards for it, you two'll get married -- I know, I'm sorry, but you will --
(MORE)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
I'll be in the delivery room for both your babies...

JUNE
Please stop. Please, please stop.

But an undaunted Victoria is already singing that song again.

VICTORIA
Come with me and you'll be / In a world of pure imagination...

ADAM
No, not the singing...

The STOREFRONT MELTS AWAY and we're suddenly in a HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM. June's in labor, sweaty and grimacing, an ashen Adam clutching her hand. Victoria excitedly roves about with a video camera, filming everything.

ADAM (CONT'D)
Okay, Junie, here we go. Time to push.

VICTORIA
Push! Push! Push!

JUNE
No! I don't want to! No pushing!

The DELIVERY ROOM VANISHES and we're back outside the shop. June glares at Victoria.

JUNE (CONT'D)
<u>Stop</u> <u>pushing</u>.

ADAM
Yes. Listen to her. Nothing's going to happen with us.
(to June)
Right?

JUNE
Right.

VICTORIA
(shrugs)
Okay-ay...

But on her serene, maddeningly confident smile...

FADE OUT.

<u>END OF SHOW</u>