

THE MEAL

To Maria...

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

COOK

A man around the age of fifty or fifty-five.

WAITRESS

A woman around the age of twenty-five.

MARIA

A girl around the age of twenty. She is a mentally challenged.

BUTCHER

A man around the age of forty.

SC. 1

In the kitchen of a restaurant. Night. Only candles are lighting up the place.

The Cook is wearing a long, white chef's gown. He is sitting on a wooden chair in the middle of the kitchen, smoking a cigarette.

The Waitress is walking up and down, nervously, with her hands in her pockets. Every time she is approaching the window she looks outside.

Cook: Nothing?

Waitress: Not a living soul.

Cook: Neither tonight.

Waitress: Why? What did you expect?

Cook: Nothing. I expected nothing.

Silence.

Cook: Nobody is coming. Not even tonight.

Waitress: Those days are over. And you know it better than anyone else. You have to know it. We could close this place and go home. But then again, this restaurant... is our home.

Cook: You are right... all the time.

Waitress: All the time.

You still like those old posy expressions.

No one will come back here again.

Cook: Of course, of course... but then... why are you looking out all the time?

Waitress: Just in order not to look in.

Maria comes in. She is wearing a red training suit, much too big for her size. She walks with small but fast steps, like a robot. She stops in front of the Waitress and crosses her arms in front of her breasts.

Waitress: Welcome! Where have you been?

Maria: Me home, youuuu?

Waitress: Have you eaten, Maria?

Maria: Noooo!

Waitress: Will you go and eat your dish?

Maria: Noooo! Me... good girl. You nooot.

Cook: *(a vague smile crosses his face)* Sometimes this girl just gets wise.

Waitress: Stop it now Maria. You must go upstairs right away and...

Cook: And the other one just gets stupid.

Maria: Spaghetti...cold... old ...noooo!

Cook: There we go. The healthy art of complaining. Know your rights. At the same time we are giving the first and most important lesson

for young ambitious chefs. After three days... spaghetti tends to taste cold and old.

Maria: Yeees!

Cook: You better get used to it, pretty one. That's the only thing we have left.

Waitress: Right! But since we can't cook or eat... let's start with calling things by their real name.

From now on Restaurant "Deep Blue" will be called "Deep Black as Hell". Or even better "The Master Chef who starved"?

Maria: Noooo!

Cook: Maria you are right again.

Let's call it "The Waitress Who Sniffed The Entire World".

Maria: Yeees!

Waitress: Million times more interesting than eating cold pasta.

A phone rings far away. The Cook is looking at the Waitress and then at Maria.

Cook: One of you two... will have to get it.

Maria: Noooo!

The Waitress leaves fast. Maria and the Cook are staying still, as they are listening to her speaking on the phone.

Waitress: Good evening. Restaurant.... Deep Blue

(After 7-8 seconds of pause)

For how many persons?

(After a shorter pause)

Yes, sir. I will tell him as soon as I see him.

(After an even shorter pause)

No, no. You don't need to call again. There is no way that I forget it. I will tell him for sure. We will be waiting for you... and thank you very much.

The Waitress comes back, running. She stops in front of the Cook, puzzled.

Cook: Let me guess who it was. The bank?

Waitress: No.

Cook: The lawyer?

Waitress: No.

Cook: The clerk?

Waitress: Stop trying. You won't guess it.

Cook: Spare some light then.

Waitress: It was the president.

Cook: *(jumping up from his chair)* The president?

Maria: Yeees!

Cook: And what did he want?

Waitress: A cigarette.

Cook: Did he call for a cigarette?

Waitress: No, that would be for me. Give it to me.

Cook: No. Not until you tell me what he wanted.

Waitress: First the cigarette.

Maria: Yeeees!

Cook: I said no! Speak up now! Get on with it!

Waitress: He has just made a reservation for Sunday. Lamb... or whatever you can think of. He said that the entire meal is up to you, he trusts you.

That's probably called... politics.

Give me the cigarette now.

The Cook takes a packet out of his pocket. He lights up one for himself and then gives another one to the Waitress.

Cook: For how many persons?

Waitress: The lighter first.

He throws a lighter up in the air, she catches it and lights the cigarette.

Cook: *(louder)* For how many persons?

Waitress: Thirty two.

Maria: Noooo!

Cook: Yes Maria! This time you should say yes!

The president is bringing thirty two persons to us. Can you imagine that?

Maria: Noooo!

Cook: He has always liked our dishes. Do you know how much money this means?

Waitress: A lot. For us, really a lot. But there is a question. Or more than one.

Cook: Thirty two persons... and I can decide upon the meal.

Waitress: How are we going to feed all these people?

Cook: I will start with a...

Waitress: Will we take a loaf of bread and multiply it?

Maria: Yeees!

Cook: For the main course...

Waitress: Do you mean you will perform that fucking miracle with the fishes too?

Maria: Yeees!

Cook: Stop it.

Waitress: Everyone is going to eat but at the end there will be some left for us too!

Maria: Yeees!

Cook: I said stop it.

Silence.

Cook: We will ask for credit?

Waitress: Credit! This is just another magic word. It seems that the whole world is spinning around it. From whom are you willing to ask this time?

The banks have stopped throwing their money away for some time now. These days they offer us only printed bills and thrilling phone calls.

Cook: No, we don't need the banks.

Waitress: Of course, I forgot. We don't need anyone. We have everything.

What are you thinking of?

We can't even get a rotten tomato. We owe money to everyone.

Cook: However there is someone... who is different from the others.

If you think of it a bit, you will spot him by yourself.

Waitress: You don't mean it.

Maria: Noooo!

Waitress: Not even as a joke.

Cook: Why not? He will take good care of us.

Waitress: The butcher?

Cook: He will give us everything we want.

Waitress: Even the electricity that was cut off two days ago?

Cook: If you ask for it, yes. He is ready to do everything... for you. You deserve it, of course.

Waitress: Go on, sell me off to the butcher this time.

Cook: I am not selling anything. Ever.

You are doing it to yourself.

Would it be the first time?

Waitress: That's your last hope.

To throw me into his bed... or even better into his meat machine.

Cook: Don't make it sound so dramatic. You are not playing in an ancient Greek tragedy. Without much hesitation, you have already fallen into so many meat machines... or... were they beds?

Waitress: You are free to call the butcher and promise him that you are going to spend a wonderful night together. Who knows... he might even save your non-existing sex life.

Cook: You remind me, more and more, of the real world out there. Do you think it will be better for our plan, if he brings a couple of lines with him?

Waitress: Yeah, much better. Tell him to do it. I will take care of those... while the butcher will be taking care of you.

Maria: Yeees!

SC. 2

In a room. Night. Low lights.

*The stereo is playing quietly “Black nights in white satin” from **Moody Blues**. In the middle of the room there is a sofa and a little glass table in front of it.*

The Waitress is wearing a short skirt. She is standing in the corner of the room, as far as possible from the sofa, with a glass of whiskey in her hands.

The Butcher is sitting on the sofa. Well-shaved, gel on his hair, a golden cross around his neck, a glass of whiskey in his hands.

Waitress: *(after sipping from the glass)* Alcohol... you always offer the best.

Butcher: A matter of taste.

Waitress: It is undoubtedly our national sport.

When it comes down to whiskey consumption per person, Greece is the world champion. Once in a while we deserve a golden medal, too.

Butcher: Those who don't like it... they can have a cup of tea.

Waitress: Definitely not for me. But I hope that tonight you will not offer... special whiskey only.

Butcher: I know the reason that brought you here. You do not need to remind me.

Waitress: Why are you so touchy?

Cool down a bit. For me, pleasure comes before business.

Butcher: I hope so... however business allows for pleasure. At least that's what I believe in. Come to the sofa now.

Waitress: *(singing in a whispering voice)* "The time has come to see who will be the king of this place..." *("Spanish Train" from Chris De Burgh)*

Butcher: What is that?

Waitress: Nothing, nothing... just an old forgotten song.

The Butcher is watching her. She is slowly approaching the sofa, postponing their meeting as long as possible. Finally she sits down, leaving an empty space between them. The Waitress is staring right in front of her, avoiding his face.

Waitress: I needed to get out of the restaurant. To have some fun. Some say that they would die for being next to sea but... at the end... we all need some company and...

Butcher: Yeah, I know all this, I have heard it over and over again.

Can we get to the business part first?

Waitress: I would prefer...

Butcher: Stop it for now.

On the phone you said something about a job. I am listening.

Waitress: That's right.

On Sunday, some faithful clients will show up in our restaurant. They are having an important meeting... or something like that anyway. We shall take care of the food.

Butcher: Bravo! Success!

Waitress: Thanks. But we need a small favour from you. On Monday we will pay you back.

Butcher: *(putting his palm on her naked thighs)* Monday? That's obviously another day that never comes. Last time I was supposed to get paid on a Friday. Do you remember that?

Waitress: Yes... but we are your clients for so many years.

Butcher: We call clients those who pay. The others... are called by many different names.

Waitress: Come on, you got money from us more than once or twice.

Butcher: Just tell me... who is bringing people to "Deep Blue"?

Waitress: *(suddenly turns and looks right in his eyes)* The president. Are you going to make your remark on him as well?

Butcher: *(astonished but he tries to act cool)* No need to get angry babe. I will bring everything you ask for. On one condition. First you will have to pay back all what you owe me.

Waitress: What a deal! Everybody would do the same.

Butcher: I never tried to be so different.

Waitress: I understand.

Butcher: If you really understand, then everything will be easier.

Waitress: So... are you offering only whiskey tonight?

Butcher: If you come closer, I might give you a little present as well.

She is looking at the ceiling and runs her hand twice through her hair. It takes her some time to decide. She wants to go but she knows she will stay. As soon as she moves her body next to his, he turns to her smiling. He is watching her naked legs.

Butcher: Are you going to reveal your secret? How do you keep yourself so beautiful and thin?

Waitress: With a special diet.

Butcher: It sounds and it looks... impressive.

Waitress: It is a very modern diet, based on spaghetti. What's up with that little present?

The Butcher takes a little folded paper out of his pocket. He leaves it on the glass table in front of him. She tries to take it, but he grabs her hand in the air. The Butcher starts laughing sarcastically.

Butcher: You really need it, huh?

Waitress: While you don't?

Butcher: No. Because I have it.

Waitress: I can always leave.

Just let me know.

He lets her hand free. She is slowly taking the folded paper, putting it into her pocket.

Butcher: Do you remember when you came here for the first time?

Waitress: About a year ago.

Butcher: One year already?

I did not think your bunch would last that long.

Waitress: Everybody in this village believed the same. But the restaurant is still there... the cook is still cooking... and I am still serving food.

Butcher: And Maria?

Waitress: What about her?

It's annoying that she is still alive, huh?

Butcher: No... not at all. It just seems... against all odds. It's... a paradox.

Waitress: That's Maria. Annoying. Against all odds. A paradox indeed.

Butcher: I still remember the day she was born. The news spread so fast all around. The doctors were quite clear about her. They were saying that she was going to die in a month, the most.

Waitress: Why do we have to speak about her?

Butcher: Because she is a miracle. Perhaps the only one that has ever happened over here. Nobody ever imagined that she could survive for so long.

Waitress: Nobody except her father and her mother.

Butcher: Her mother... oh, I remember her too.

How silent she turned following the delivery... never uttering a word afterwards.

She never went back to the church either. Before giving birth she was over there all the time... and after... never again. And when she disappeared, it seems it was the turn for someone else to shut up.

The wordless cook was left all alone next to the sea... and you just got prettier and prettier... while Maria was refusing to die.

Waitress: Is that such a big thing?

Butcher: Are you kidding?

She made it without any doctors, without any cure, without any mother. A retarded child who defied nature... or a goddess.

Waitress: If we keep on rambling about her the whole night, I 'd better go.

Butcher: Wowow! The lady gets rough!

If you want to go, then do it and do not threaten me.

The Waitress starts out towards the door.

Cook: Just do not forget to take something out of your pocket... before leaving this room.

They stand still and silent for while, like soulless dolls. The Butcher starts laughing while unzipping his trousers.

Butcher: But I guess you will not do it!

So... let the party begin!

Waitress: Yes, it is about... pay time.

With a slight delay, the Waitress approaches him and starts taking her clothes off. The Butcher catches her from behind. It looks more like wrestling than sex.

When it is over, the Butcher pours some whiskey into their empty glasses.

Butcher: Have I been good?

Waitress: Good. Very good.

Butcher: Babe, call for last drinks tonight.

I have an important appointment in a while.

Waitress: Yes, of course. So how did you decide?

Butcher: About what?

Waitress: Will you do us a favour for Sunday?

Butcher: I already explained it to you that I can not do anything like that. You owe me money. It is against the principles of my job. How many times have I brought everything you asked for and never got paid?

Waitress: We will pay you all back on Monday morning.

Butcher: No, no, I will not do it and you should know that... deep inside... and it is not because of the money. The supplies for your meal would cost me some more Euros only. I could even afford to loose that money, I don't really give a fuck. But there is something in that cook... something that makes me furious. In his face. For so many years now. Something like... disapproval... like a sense of superiority in his eyes.

As if he would like to spit on me.

Waitress: *(without looking at him)* Why did not you bother?

The cook is lost in his own world for a lifetime.

Butcher: Do you think you are so different? You are exactly the same. Same face, same race. You never really want to look at me either. As if I do not exist.

The Waitress is still not looking at him.

Butcher: See, you are still avoiding me! You are not looking at me either!

Waitress: *(turning to him)* What are you trying to prove?

Butcher: You only come here because you need your present or some money or something else. Huh?

Waitress: Don't make it sound so dramatic. You are not playing in an ancient Greek tragedy. I am here because I want to... and in any case... we are talking about business right now.

Butcher: Business? Who wants to do business with you? You and the cook owe me much more than what you have. You practically borrowed money from everyone who is living in this village. Or rather in this country!

Waitress: *(getting up from the sofa)* You know what? Finally... you really sound like a butcher!

Butcher: GET OUT OF HERE! FUCK OFF AND DON'T BOTHER ME AGAIN. GOT IT?

Waitress: *(puts her jacket on and speaks without looking at him)* I guess I have to thank you for the... lovely night.

Butcher: I SAID GET LOST AND NEVER...

The waitress leaves the room before he could finish his sentence. The Butcher drinks his whiskey up in one gulp.

Butcher: Mistakes of nature! Freaks! A stupid musician who insisted on opening a restaurant next to the waves! The music of the sea and all that crap! And then his wife... a failure... a painter. At least she did one thing right. She disappeared. Leaving him behind with their retarded child. A freak who was supposed to live for one month only and now she is twenty years old with the brains of a chicken. It suits you well asshole! And then this beautiful sister, always bitter, always smart... and always willing to undress... for a line... or two. What a fucking bitch!

(Looking at the audience) OH, I GOT BORED OF YOU! SICK OF YOU!
ALL OF YOU!

SC. 3

In the kitchen of the restaurant. Night. Candle light. The Cook sits on the only chair. The Waitress appears.

Cook: What did he say?

Waitress: *(walking to the other side of the kitchen)* Among other things... that we should disappear.

Cook: How about the credit for Sunday?

Waitress: And not to bother him again.

Cook: Come here!

Waitress: I am too tired, I am going up now.

Cook: I asked you to come here.

Waitress: I am just too... tired.

The Waitress starts moving towards the door. The Cook jumps up and goes really fast after her. She wants to escape but she does not have the time and the agility to do so. The Cook stops right in front of her. She steps back until her back is against the wall.

Cook: This word... tired... is so suspicious.

Are you coming back from the butcher without energy? Now that would be strange, if you ask me.

What has happened? Is the... offering season out?

Waitress: Can I go to sleep now?

Cook: Is your lover turning stingy now?

Waitress: I am not in the mood. Leave me alone.

Cook: You started with a bad mood that was the main fault. How far did you go this time?

Waitress: How far?

Ha... ha... somehow your questions are coming from the last century.

I was with the butcher, have you forgotten it? I went all the way down. I took a deep breath... and then I went even lower.

Cook: Yeah, but it seems you did not reach... the bottom of the line. You are not enough for his taste anymore.

What did he ask that you could not do?

How can we get the credit?

The Waitress is trying to get away from him and to leave the room.

The Cook is moving faster and blocks the door.

Waitress: I am just too... tired.

Cook: You have said that before. What... can the butcher ask in return?

Waitress: Nothing. I know that is what you can not understand... he wants nothing in return. He is not giving us any credit.

Cook: Did you promise him that he will get all his money back on Monday morning?

Without this new credit he is going to lose everything we owe him so far. He ca not deny it... we are his clients for ten years.

Waitress: On the contrary. His greatest joy was to tell me... no... again... and again. In order to bring us something, he said, we have to pay him off first.

Cook: He must be pulling our leg.

Waitress: For sure... but I think that tonight he revealed the real reason.

The butcher has been waiting for a long time to stand in the place where he is standing now. Right before I left, he uncovered his secret.

He says that he sees... something in your expression... something like disapproval.

Cook: In my expression?

Waitress: In your eyes, too. In mine too. I got it from you, he says.

Cook: What exactly did he say? What happened in there tonight?

Waitress: Do you want details?

Fine by me! In the beginning I promised him that we will pay him back. Then I begged him. Then I played the nice girl. Then the stupid one.

Cook: Stop it!

Waitress: No, no! In this game you don not stop whenever you feel like it. At the end I had to play the horny one... but he was unwashed and smelling like rotten meat... so I kept playing the fool but lustful...

a girl without a nose... but with a mouth, of course... and when we were dressed again...

Cook: SHUT UP! SHUT THE FUCK UP!

Waitress: Then he told me not to bother him again. Because the butcher is the most successful businessman in the village and you... and me... we haven't fallen as low as we should.

Cook: It is high time to go and meet this creep. This dealer of...

Waitress: No, you won't go. And you know why?

Because he is right. This little game is clearly over.

Cook: Over?

Where did you learn this new word?

You keep on begging him for another thing. For what you need. It is not credit what you ask for, not even money... it is just...

Maria enters fast with small robotic steps, wearing the same clothes. She stops right between them and crosses her arms on her breasts. She is not looking at them, but somewhere far, faraway.

Waitress: What do I know about this new word?

Let's see. I am over, you are over, she is over, we are over...

Maria: Noooo!

Waitress: Oh yes... we are over.

Maria: Noooo!

Cook: Just what we needed. A generous series of noooo! Maria have you eaten your food? Noooo!

Maria will you go to sleep? Noooo!

Maria have you washed yourself? Nooo!

Maria: *(looking at him puzzled, she starts trembling)* Me good girl.
You nooooo!

The Waitress takes Maria by the hand and leads her away from him. Maria is still trembling, she is moving with difficulty and stiffness. She is still looking at the Cook with fear. The Waitress starts caressing her hair.

Waitress: Come with me. Don't be afraid. Leave him... forget him. We are together now. I will make something hot only for you.

Cook: Really? And what are you going to cook? And how are you going to heat it up? No more lies. It's time to face it. We will starve in the end.

Waitress: Not such a new thing!

At least we will not be all alone. So many people are in the same pleasant situation. Half of the village, half of the country, half of the planet... is doing exactly the same. I suspect they are copying us. It became some kind of a fashion.

Cook: The truth is that it has never really gone out of fashion. Hunger had always been chasing some and indifference the others. Like twin sisters... they come out, walking together, just wearing different clothes.

Maria: Yeees!

SC. 4

In the kitchen of the restaurant. Night. Candle light.

The Cook is sitting on the chair close to the wall. A painting of a bearded man (it could be Jesus but it is not clear) is hanging on the wall above him.

The Cook is holding his head up, as he is starring at the painting.

Cook: You change positions all the time. Today here. The other day there. On this wall. On that wall. Once you had been nailed over here. You were forgotten for a while but don't worry. Now you are hanging again... over our heads. I brought you to the kitchen. I had to. I did it... in order to let you see. Because it is one thing to hear about it and another to see it with your own eyes. You can not keep them closed anymore. Neither here... nor anywhere else.

I know that you like hiding, of course. You always leave space for a vague idea going around your thrilling existence. No, no. Tonight you are here, you are invited. And I bet that for once you will slowly open up those eyes. Slowly slowly you will open them... and you will face... what we... the rest of us... call... reality.

The Cook gets up and lights a cigarette. He makes a few steps around, looking at the floor.

Cook: In a way she believed in art, you know. In painting. And even more in you. Yes, yes, she did! She believed in you more than she did in me... or in herself... or in anyone else. And that's why she is... gone. Long time ago.

By the way, do you remember anything from those days?

From those nights?

No?

But I do! She gave up all her other paintings only to draw your face, talking to you all the time. Have you ever listened to her?

Let me guess.

The Cook is looking up, approaching the painting. He stops standing close to it.

Cook: *(louder)* No, no! You don't see, you don't listen, you don't speak... you exist nevertheless. Of course! Of course! But do you know what the problem is? I listened to her. I really did. In the beginning she was talking to you... then she was yelling... then crying... and at the end there was only a whisper left.

For you.

For your mercy.

Because she was sure that you exist. And that you would do something.

Do you exist?

WHERE ARE YOU?

The Waitress appears and the Cook moves away from the painting.

Waitress: Did you speak with him? Did you arrange it?

Cook: With whom?

Waitress: With the president, who else?

Did you call him to cancel it?

Cook: No.

Waitress: Are you crazy? He has so many guests. He will be so mad that...

Cook: The meal is on.

Waitress: It's Saturday afternoon, six o'clock. Have you realized that?

Cook: That's why we have to start with the preparations. Right now.

Waitress: To prepare what?

Cook: We will start with the salads. The greengrocer agreed to...

Waitress: He is the last man who would lend you without paying him back. Alas he is just a greengrocer. Are you going to serve them lettuce and tomatoes for lunch?

Cook: We will start with the salads and...

Waitress: Do you know what is the most pathetic above all?

Can you imagine?

Silence.

Waitress: Hope.

Cook: I thought that the right answer was... reality.

Waitress: Will you give me a cigarette?

The Cook is taking a packet out of his pocket. He opens it, offering it to her.

Waitress: There is only one left. Your last one.

Cook: We can share it.

Waitress: Us? Sharing it?

Cook: Yes.

Waitress: Are you sure?

He is nodding. She takes it out and he offers her fire. She takes two deep drags and gives the cigarette back to him.

Cook: Do you remember her at all?

Waitress: Who?

Cook: Your mother.

Waitress: My mother? Vaguely.

Cook: Her paintings?

Do you remember them?

Waitress: The basement is full of them. I go down there from time to time and look at them.

I know that you are doing it too, but in different hours.

More than anything I like her... seas. So messed up that they never look like the sea.

Cook: Do you know which was her last painting?

Waitress: No.

Cook: *(he is pointing at the painting on the wall)* That one.

She goes up to the painting while he follows her.

Cook: Those days... in a way... I thought it was normal. In a difficult hour we all try to picture the non-existing.

Waitress: When did she make this painting?

Cook: *(giving her back the cigarette)* Right... after.

Waitress: After what?

Cook: After that evening. The night that she went to his house.

Waitress: His house? Are you calling the church... his house? Especially you?

Cook: You don't understand. We are not talking about the same place.

Waitress: *(giving him back the cigarette)* What do you mean?

Cook: That night your mother did not go to the church. She went to the house of the priest.

Waitress: What's that?

Are you making it up?

You are imagining it!

Cook: *(the cigarette is over, he throws it on the floor and presses it with his shoe)* Once... just once... that's what she said. She insisted on

this... as if the number would play some role. You don't need to be a biologist to know that one time is enough?

Waitress: *(louder)* It is enough for what? What are you saying now?

The Waitress turns to the Cook. He slowly stretches his arms out and takes her face in his palms. They are looking at each other silently for some time.

Cook: Do you want?

Waitress: What?

Cook: To find out.

Waitress: To find out what?

Cook: The truth.

Waitress: I don't know.

Cook: I think that you should.

Waitress: And if I don't want it?

Cook: Nobody wants to know it, but sooner or later the time comes.

Silence.

Cook: Maria is not my child.

Waitress: What? WHAT?

Cook: Maria is the blessed fruit of the priest.

Waitress: No!

Cook: Finally one time is enough. The following morning your mother started painting that painting on the wall. And she went far. Pretty

far from me, from you, from everyone. And when she gave birth, she could not even face her own baby. Perhaps because she was ashamed. And another night... she left. You see, the nights are always coming first... and the days are following... as they are just sad remains.

The Waitress takes his hands off her and starts walking to the other side of the kitchen. She turns to the wall, only her back is to be seen. They stay silent, motionless for a while. All of a sudden, she turns and stares at him.

Waitress: And why... why haven't you told me anything all this time? All these years? By what right?

Cook: Some things... fit better to the darkness. But the time comes. For the awful light.

She is going to the window, looking at the darkness outside.

Waitress: A cigarette... I need a cigarette.

He goes up to her, looking outside similarly.

Cook: We shared the last one. And tomorrow we will prepare our last meal. Tomorrow. So get away tonight, go wherever you feel like, go out, have fun and come back only in the morning. Leave all the rest up to me. I will cook for the bastards. And tomorrow night, when this

cheap feast will be over, take all the money and leave. You must get away from this place.

Far.

As far as you can.

Waitress: We will share the money.

Cook: No, no, it would not enough for both of us. You will go away first.

Silence.

Cook: Are you listening?

Silence.

Waitress: And what are you going to do?

Cook: First I will take... care of Maria.

I have heard about a good institution.

Waitress: Aren't you going to need money then?

Cook: And why are we having the president?

I will arrange everything, don't worry.

I just have one problem for tonight. The electricity. I definitely need it. Didn't you have some friend who worked for the electricity company?

Waitress: Yeah, an old schoolmate.

Cook: Do you think he can help us somehow?

Waitress: If he is in the same... old situation... of course, he will.

SC. 5

In the kitchen of the restaurant. Night. Bright light provided by lamps. The Cook and the Waitress are doing different things, cleaning the counter, washing some vegetables. Their rhythm is fast, enthusiastic.

Waitress: The electricity... at last.

It's nice to see the light again.

Cook: A miracle!

The reconnection took place in half an hour.

It's Saturday night and some employees of the electric company are still working. It's definitely not happening in this country!

Waitress: But of course they are not working.

Cook: No idea how this old schoolmate of yours has managed then but he surely did something.

Waitress: Well, I did something for him, too.

You still don't get it?

My schoolmate is just keeping his old habits from the school years.

She is sniffing her nose, really loud.

Cook: That means... the butcher gave you something.

Waitress: He always had good stuff. Pure dynamite.

Cook: And you passed it on to your schoolmate?

Waitress: Of course! When he tried the first line, he was ready to lighten up the whole village... or rather the whole planet.

Cook: It seems that all payments should be based on this powder.

Waitress: Indeed. It's much more reliable than money. Gold, oil, coins and all kinds of shit... only the powder never loses its value.

Cook: At least we have discovered some way to avoid bureaucracy.

Waitress: With this thing you can avoid much more... almost everything that bothers you.

They keep on working side by side, silently.

Waitress: What are you making for the main dish then?

Cook: Something very special.

Waitress: Tell me.

Cook: I hold it back as a secret.

Waitress: Even from me?

Cook: You will be the first to try and then... you will tell me what you think.

Waitress: Let me guess. I know one thing for sure. We are buying meat from another butcher... is that right?

Cook: It was about time to get rid of that creep.

Waitress: We should have done it long ago. We should have escaped. We should...

Silence.

Waitress: So have you already scheduled a delivery?

Cook: Don't worry about anything. Tonight just go out and have fun.
Leave all the rest in my hands.

Maria enters almost running. She bends over the counter covered with vegetables. She is playing with some spoons and at the end she grabs a knife.

Maria: HUUUUNGER!

Waitress: Maria, put that knife down right away and I will cook a nice soup for you.

Maria: *(throwing the knife on the counter)* Yeees!

Waitress: So yummy that you are going to lick the plate afterwards.

Maria: Me good girl. Youuuu?

Waitress: Stay calm, sit over there on that chair and wait for me. I will bring your plate.

Maria is sitting on the chair, under the painting on the wall. She admires it with her mouth open. The Waitress is bringing her a plate with soup.

Waitress: Do you like this painting Maria?

Maria: He good boy. Meeee?

Waitress: Time for your soup. I bet you will like it.

Maria: Yeeees!

Cook: Leave the serving for tomorrow. I will feed Maria.

Come here instead. I want to give you something.

The Waitress leaves the plate on the counter.

The Cook takes a banknote out of his pocket, putting it fast in her palm.

Waitress: What is this? Where did you find it? You don't need to give me money.

Cook: Money... you are exaggerating. With this you can only pay the taxi for the town and perhaps a drink.

Waitress: What time shall I come back?

Cook: There is no need to rush. I will need you tomorrow morning. After ten. So try to enjoy it tonight.

Maria is still looking at the painting. The Waitress leaves the room. The Cook takes a package of pills out of his pocket and throws three of them into the soup. He uses a spoon to dissolve them.

Cook: Come... to eat.

Maria is going over to sit on the counter. He starts feeding her slowly.

Cook: My baby... your last meal over here... and it's just a soup.

I wish I had something else to offer. But I don't.

This place... shines from the light... like hell.

Who could take care of you?

The clean sheets are costing a fortune.

He keeps on feeding her silently.

Cook: Today I spoke with a lady on the phone.

She was so kind, helpful. She works in a private institute... that's how they call it. Of course.

Eighteen thousand euro per year they wanted... in order to take care of everything. Really everything.

And where the hell can I find that money?

Tell me... where shall I take you Maria?

Maria: *(starts yawning)* You good boy. Meeee?

Cook: The expression "social care" has become a sad joke for us. There are those state places for retarded children. Of course.

Do you know what would happen over there?

The same thing as the last time. The first night... all the male personnel... would take care of you... one by one. Special medical care. And when they would have enough off you... they would leave you in a dark room... filled with shit.

Maria: Noooo!

Cook: Because this is what happens here. This is the mirror where our faces reflect.

Maria: Noooo!

Cook: No, no, you will not end up there. Not any more.

Don't worry, my baby.

We make the best trips by ourselves.

But I will come to find you.

Soon... very soon.

He is caressing her hair.

He starts singing a lullaby for children while he is dancing with her in his arms.

When she falls asleep, he puts her body gently on the counter.

He gives her a kiss on the forehead and then looks up to the painting on the wall.

Cook: Since you are always and everywhere... present... open your eyes up now and watch carefully. Look what you have done... and what I am going to do.

Your deeds and mine.

And if we ever meet, you tell me who did better. But we will not meet. Because down where I am going... you never set a foot. You don't have the guts!

He approaches the counter where Maria is lying. Sudden darkness.

SC. 6

In the kitchen of the restaurant. Day-time.

The Cook is working in a frantic rhythm, all alone. From outside of the kitchen, we hear male voices, laughter, buzz, sounds from the table, a big company eating.

The Waitress is wearing a black skirt and a white shirt. She enters the kitchen, picks some plates up and leaves again.

She returns fast in order to do the same.

We only hear the voices of the clients.

Client A: Salad without oil?

Client B: Oil!

Client C: This salad needs oil.

Client D: Are you listening? Oil.

Waitress: More oil.

Client A: Extra virgin oil.

The waitress enters in the kitchen again.

Cook: Did you finish with the salads?

Waitress: Add some olive oil. They want more.

The Waitress is leaving again with some new plates.

Cook: Oil, oil... they are hungry. And they will always be.

Voices are heard. The Cook is preparing the food silently, listening to them.

Client A: I am hungry. When is the food coming?

Client B: We are hungry. Bread.

Client C: I am starving.

Client D: Bread. We are starving.

Client E: A bit of bread.

Client A: What are they doing? Why does it take them so long?

Client B: BREAD!

Waitress: Shall I bring some bread?

Client C: Lots of it.

Client D: Water. I am thirsty.

Client E: Water. We are dried out.

Client A: And lemon.

Client B: And pepper.

Client C: And salt.

Client D: Too much salt can harm you.

Client E: We are dried out. WINE.

Client A: A glass.

Client B: One more glass.

Waitress: Red? White?

Client A: Red.

Client B: White.

The Waitress enters in the kitchen again.

Waitress: Bread, lemon, wine, water. Faaaaast!

She is leaving with her hands full, even more anxiously than before.

Cook: Bread! The only thing they can not miss. They will never have enough of it. I made a... divine meal and these guys are asking for bread.

The Cook is cutting the bread slowly. Voices are still heard.

Client A: What's up with the main dish?

Client B: When is it coming?

Client C: We are starving.

Client D: Oh god... what a hunger.

Client E: Ah, come on!

Client A: We need it.

Client B: NOW!

Waitress: It's coming right up!

The Waitress enters in the kitchen.

Waitress: What's going on with the main plate? They can't wait any longer.

Cook: It is ready.

I already took it out of the oven.

Bring them a new round of wine from me and tell them that the specialty of the day is on the way.

The Waitress leaves, carrying wine bottles. The Cook starts putting several plates on his counter, filled with hot food. Voices are heard.

Client A: Cheers!

Client B: To the bottom!

Client C: I am joining you!

The Waitress comes back and stands motionlessly for some seconds in front of the new plates. She leans above one of them, trying to smell it.

Waitress: Nice! What did you cook finally?

Cook: I told you that it is a secret. Taste it.

The Waitress takes a small piece from one of the plates. She is chewing slowly, staring at the Cook all along.

Waitress: Mmmm! Unbelievable! Your sauce is so delicious.

You have put some orange in it...eh?

Cook: You got it!

Waitress: And the meat is so soft! Very tasty. I bet you were cooking it the whole night.

Cook: Of course.

Waitress: But I can not tell what it is... pork or lamb?

Cook: Lamb. But if they ask you, do not tell them. Leave it to me.

Waitress: As you wish.

The Waitress is leaving with the new plates.

Cook: Yes... a little lamb.

The Cook sits down on the chair and lights up a cigarette. The Waitress is going in and out, serving new plates. The voices outside are a bit louder now.

Client A: At last!

Client B: Fork.

Client C: With the hands.

Client D: With the teeth.

Client E: As you can.

Client A: On it.

Client B: Grab it.

Client C: Devour it.

Client D: Rip it up.

Client E: Chew it more.

Client A: You can't swallow it like that.

Client B: *(coughing, he can not swallow it).*

Client C: What happened to you?

Client B: I 'm choking. Bbbb....bone!

Client D: Spit it out.

Client E: A plate for the bones.

Client C: I want the bones.

Client A: So delicious.

Client D: Is it pork?

Client E: It is lamb.

Client C: I bet it is baby beef.

Client B: Yeah, beef.

Client D: I think it is pork.

Client A: Can it be duck?

In the kitchen the Cook is looking at the painting on the wall.

Cook: Lamb. The lamb of God. The only one.

The Waitress comes in.

Cook: How do they like it?

Waitress: They are going crazy over it.

They keep making guesses about the meat.

I don't say a word. I keep them in the darkness, as you asked me.

They are all waiting to see you, to congratulate you. To find out what it is.

Cook: To congratulate... huh?

Tell them that I will come after they have finished the meal.

The Waitress leaves. Voices are heard again.

Client A: What a taste.

Client B: Bravo.

Client C: Devine.

Client D: Perfect.

Client E: Unique.

Client A: Ambrosia.

Client B: Congratulations.

Client C: I have never eaten anything like this.

Client D: What a meal!

Client C: I have never eaten anything like this.

The Waitress comes in.

Waitress: The president is shouting with the enthusiasm of a young boy. He is repeating the same thing, over and over again. That he has never eaten anything like this.

The Waitress goes out again.

Cook: It is the truth. And he will never eat it again.

SC.7

In the kitchen. Night. Lights on.

The Cook is sitting on the chair, staring at the painting on the wall.

Cook: So how did you like the meal?

He gets up, goes to the window and looks outside. After a while he comes back and stops in front of the painting.

Cook: You are not saying a word...huh?

That means you liked it. Everybody did, why should you be an exception?

Yes, yes... I know that you liked it. You were waiting for something like this for a long time.

A last... good... meal.

The Waitress comes in. She is wearing a pair of jeans and a thick jacket. She is holding a big backpack.

Cook: Everything is ready?

Waitress: Yes. I can not take more things with me. What are you going to do?

Cook: I will enjoy the night.

Waitress: I did not mean tonight. What are you going to do... like, generally?

Cook: Generally...

Waitress: You know what I mean.

Cook: Yes, of course.

I imagine I will have to make a settlement with the bank and our creditors first. It is simple. I will sell the restaurant... and find a way with them.

In any case, they all want... the same thing.

Waitress: You will give it away finally?

I thought that... you will never decide so.

Cook: Why not?

Waitress: Because you are so attached to it. To this restaurant, to this place.

Cook: At this stage it is the best solution.

Waitress: Who is buying these days?

There is no money around.

Cook: There is always money around. For some people.

I may have to drop the price down a bit, but it will be sold in the end.

Waitress: I must give you some money from what we got today. I can't take it all. Your plan will need some time, as it seems. How are you going to...

Cook: Don't worry.

I will manage as I have done it so many times in the past. You will need the money more in Athens.

Waitress: But tell me, when are you coming?

Cook: As soon as I... finish here.

Waitress: Do you promise me?

The Waitress approaches the Cook. He is trying to avoid her, his back against the wall.

Waitress: Do you promise me?

Cook: Yes...

Waitress: Nice. I will wait for you.

Now tell me where Maria is. I want to kiss her good bye before leaving.

Cook: I had to... take her to your uncle.

Waitress: What? To my uncle? When?

Cook: Last night. Before I started preparing the food.

Waitress: But my uncle is living in that godforsaken village, sixty kilometers away from here. How did you get her there?

Cook: Simple. I put her in a taxi.

Waitress: What an idea! Why would you do such a thing?

Cook: We couldn't have Maria run around while we were having the meal.

She had to go away.

Waitress: Now it's impossible to go up there.

How am I going to see her?

Cook: You will see her the next time... when the three of us will meet again.

Waitress: I hope it won't take long.

The Cook gets away from the wall and goes to the window. He turns his back to the Waitress and looks outside.

Waitress: Now it's your turn... to look outside the window. Why?

Silence.

Cook: You know what I want? A last favour.

Waitress: Tell me.

Cook: Give me some cigarettes.

Waitress: As many as you like.

The Waitress takes a packet out of her pocket and approaches him. He suddenly turns and takes her into his arms. They stay like that for a while.

Cook: Take care.

She takes her backpack and leaves the kitchen.

He grabs a broom and starts sweeping the floor.

After a minute the Waitress comes back.

The Cook stops moving.

Waitress: What have you done out there?

Cook: What?

Waitress: Did you bring the boat to the beach?

Cook: *(starts sweeping again)* Yes.

Waitress: Are you nuts?

Have you seen the waves?

The wind is howling.

Cook: The wind will die away.

I haven't been out in the sea for a while.

I miss it.

Waitress: In the middle of winter?

Cook: The sea is prettier in winter.

Waitress: As you like.

I forgot to give you the cigarettes.

Cook: Oh, yes.

He stretches his arm out and takes the packet.

Waitress: Don't forget to kiss Maria for me.

Goodnight.

I will wait for you.

Cook: Have a nice trip.

The Waitress goes away. The Cook goes over to the window. He looks outside.

Cook: It is the truth. I do miss the sea.

Lights off.