

OFF THE MENU

(Fuera de Menú)

Pilot Episode Treatment

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EPISODE 1: "THE BASEMENT"

OPENING — THE BASEMENT

Total darkness. A metallic thud. Neon lights switch on in a chain over a huge industrial kitchen: assembly lines of trays, boilers the size of bathtubs, steam, the constant drone of motors and extractor fans. A rooftop caption places us: "Hospital Basement — 6:00 AM." FRAN, forty, clocks in with a dry click and walks between the lines to his station, next to an enormous boiler. Beside him, BIG MOUTH chops vegetables without pause, rehashing layoff rumors he's been repeating for three years. TONINO "MASCARPONE" passes and bumps him with his shoulder without a word — he doesn't need one. Fran stirs the boiler; some lentils stick to the bottom, burning. He looks at them a beat too long, almost with recognition, before scraping them loose. A brief flashback shows a much younger Fran, confident with a knife, being evaluated by a far more energetic and engaged PADRE PELES — the version of the boss we won't recognize in the present.

THE TRIBUNAL — THE MACARONI

AMANDA, head of all personnel, holds up a plate of dried-out macaroni like a murder weapon, surrounded by nutritionists and staff, while Padre Peles watches from the doorway, unable to meet Fran's eyes. Fran tries to explain — the macaroni sat out for hours, it wasn't his fault — but Amanda isn't listening, and drops, almost in passing, the word that changes the scene: disciplinary file. Fran looks to Peles for support; he doesn't find it. "That's not what they're saying, Fran..." He leaves the office, stops for a second in the hallway, alone, swallowing the whole humiliation all over again.

THE HALLWAY AND CLARA

Still burning with contained rage, Fran runs into CLARA, the nutritionist whose complaint started it all. She apologizes, uncomfortable; even mid-rage, he can't help freezing up around any woman who catches his attention — an effect he confesses out loud to his imaginary confidante, Nina. Something shifts in the air between them, less reasoned than urgent. Clara pulls him into a rarely used staff restroom. Afterward, Clara promises to smooth things over on the disciplinary file — "around here you take every small win you can get, the big ones never come" — and leaves without ceremony. Fran is left staring at his own reflection with a new, still-clumsy determination.

THE ENVELOPE

Days later, in a busier hallway, Molars needles him with a "heard about your thing yet?" just before Trucker hands him an envelope without ceremony: an official disciplinary file, opened in writing. Fran rereads it three times, as if expecting the words to change. Something in his face crosses a line. Instead of heading back to the kitchen, he looks toward the elevator up to management. Hesitates a second. Walks toward it.

THE PERSONNEL WAITING ROOM

For the first time in twelve years, Fran pushes back: he walks into the HR waiting room with no appointment, box of utensils under his arm, and sits down to wait with his back straight. When an HR MAN of trained, empty courtesy finally sees him, Fran doesn't apologize or explain — he demands it be put on record that there was no negligence, and that someone review the case. "I've worked down there twelve years without a single sanction." Thrown by the cook's quiet firmness, the HR man gives a little ground: he'll note that a review was requested. It's not a victory, but it's the first time Fran has left an office with his back straight.

THE SISTER, THE FATHER, THE METRO

That night, in his El Carmelo apartment, Fran video-calls his sister SONIA, settled in Germany with an orderly life and a quartz countertop she shows off with pride. She pushes, warmly and from a distance, for him to come over: "Nothing's easy until you do it." Fran deflects, plays down how tired he is. He then calls his FATHER, dry and terse from the village, who shuts down any real conversation with a line that keeps echoing: "A man can't spend his whole life running from everything that makes him uncomfortable." A flashback drops us into a teenage Fran on a metro car, shrinking with shame while his father makes a racist comment about an older man sitting across from them — the same swallowed shame that, years later, Fran will keep swallowing in front of Amanda, Tonino, and so many others.

THE SUPERMARKET AND LAURA

The next morning, at the neighborhood supermarket, the hum of the freezers starts climbing exactly like it did in the locker room — the first real sign that something in Fran isn't right. A rat shriek bursts out, brief. Fran flinches, but pulls himself together in a second this time, not a full collapse. At the register, THE CASHIER — whom a tender flashback to their first meeting months earlier reveals to be LAURA — jokes with him about his age and his student's breakfast. For a few minutes, with no hierarchies and no tribunals, Fran feels like a normal person talking to another normal person.

CLOSE – COLLSEROLA

At dawn, Fran runs a trail through Collserola — the only version of himself who breathes freely in the whole episode. He stops dead: a family of wild boars crosses the path without fear, next to a "Wild Boar Coexistence Plan" sign. Fran watches them with a mix of fascination and a revulsion he can't quite explain, confessing to Nina, quietly, that he can't

bring himself to like them — that they remind him of Mascarpone, that same certainty that the ground belongs to them. The episode closes on Fran resuming his run harder, as if the physical effort could also leave the thought behind, as the sun finishes rising over the pines.