

KNIVES

Episode 1: Pilot

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TEASER

INT. WALK-IN FREEZER

STEVIE (35) sits huddled and shivering in a corner of a dim, meat-filled walk in freezer. She wears chef blacks, her name stitched in white over the breast pocket.

She pulls hard on the cigarette wedged between her teeth as her breath plumes, contemplating something behind a thousand yard stare.

Rising from her huddle, we now see the object of her contemplation -- a wheeled stainless steel food prep table. Atop it, a lumpy something lies inert under white plastic.

Gingerly, smoke still clenched in her teeth, Stevie uses one pinky finger to lift the sheeting. It's dark, but the naked, brown-skinned flank of a woman is dimly visible.

Abstract floral tattoos scroll up over the ribs, down towards the thigh. Stevie's eye follow them up the torso, lifting the plastic to show their progress -- up between the breasts, towards the neck --

They cut off abruptly just where the woman's head has been neatly severed with near surgical precision.

Stevie bites back a scream, quickly drops the plastic. The door of the freezer opens. The light is blinding -- she can only see the YOUNG MAN'S silhouette.

She gets up, throws the cigarette aside as she prepares to make a break for it. She gets a few paces before he raises-- a gun?

No. A mobile phone. Flash on. Recording her, and the body. Stevie shields her face from the light.

STEVIE

This isn't necessary. Let me talk to him.

Over the glare of the flash, we just catch a glint of the YOUNG MAN'S smile. He holds up a well-manicured hand in an OK sign.

YOUNG MAN

Bellissima.

Still grinning, he lowers the phone, and backtracks out of the freezer. Stevie lunges for the door, but he pulls it shut before she can get there.

She slams her palms on it. Smacks the emergency handle, but the door's barricaded from outside.

STEVIE
LET ME OUT.

She kicks the door, hurts her foot. Growls as she limps back over to the table. She stumbles, catches her hand on the corner, then draws back at once from the thick pool of blood.

Too late -- now it's all over her. Panic rising, she scrambles away, slipping in a half frozen puddle on the steel floor. She goes down on her ass, screams in frustration.

She fights to keep from hyperventilating, taking long, slow breaths. It doesn't work. Panic overcomes her again and she start pulling down frozen food containers, looking for a weapon, anything --

Something SKITTERS across the floor. Her eyes go to it -- it's a mobile phone in a gaudy orange day-glow case, easily visible. Her eyes WIDEN.

She snatches it up and carries it with her back to the corner. She hunches down, cautiously touches the screen. It lights up, illuminating her terrified face.

She attempts to dial 9-1-1, but her hand is soaked in blood. Her finger slips, leaving a bright red smudge across the screen.

STEVIE
Fuck.

She wipes it off, tries again. This time she gets it. She raises the phone to her ear.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
(filtered)
9-1-1, please state your emergency.

Stevie takes a deep breath.

END TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - MORNING

STEVIE (35) walks the busy main floor, dressed for chilly weather. Under her arm she carries a black canvas case -- a worn chef's knife roll.

She checks her phone, a different one, against the Metro North schedule, then weaves through the press of commuters towards the front exit, phone in hand.

As she reaches the doors, she makes a call.

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - MORNING

Stevie finds a spot where she can stand and have a smoke. She balances her phone against her shoulder and digs in her pockets for her cigarettes.

STEVIE
 (into the phone)
 It's Stevie. Track work on the
 express. It's fine, I'll just be
 late.

She clicks open a zippo and fires up a smoke. She takes a satisfying drag and waves off a BUM (female, 40s) with a sharp gesture before she can ask her for one.

STEVIE
 (into the phone)
 What? No, ma. I quit a month ago.

She turns her phone away as she exhales.

STEVIE
 Yeah, I'll tell him. I have to go,
 they're calling my train.

She hangs up, and takes her time finishing her cigarette. There's no rush.

INT. METRO NORTH TRAIN - DAY

Stevie drowns against the window, headphones on.

ANNOUNCEMENT (O.S.)
 Dobbs Ferry, next stop. Dobbs Ferry,
 and points north.

The announcement wakes her. She gathers her bag and goes to stand by the door as the train slows.

She turns her head to glance out the window to the other side. A gathering of three point bucks sit around in the misty field

EXT. FERRY VILLAGE MANOR - DAY

Stevie gets out of a local cab in front of an imposing brick apartment complex. She heads into the main office.

INT. FERRY VILLAGE MANOR - DAY

Stevie heads to the desk, where NOEL (female, 40s) sits in front of the computer.

NOEL
He's in the kitchen, Miss Stevens.

STEVIE
Already?

NOEL
You can go straight in.

The glass security door BUZZES. Stevie heads through.

INT. FERRY VILLAGE DINING ROOM - DAY

Stevie hurries through a dining room that very much resembles a hotel banquet hall. Two attendants in aprons set the tables for lunch.

She gives them a quick wave and breezes past.

INT. FERRY VILLAGE KITCHEN - DAY

A large industrial kitchen, full of stainless steel. The present-day SIGGE STEVENS (late 60s) talks with JOHN OGOLO (35) a broad Black man in a crisp white uniform.

Sigge is upright and dignified in spotless chef whites.

JOHN
What's the difference?

SIGGE
 Confit is rich. It melts in your
 mouth. Braised meat needs something
 extra or it's just wet flesh.

Stevie enters, and puts her jacket and things on a stainless
 steel table.

SIGGE
 Hey honey.

They embrace.

STEVIE
 Hey Dad. Hi, John.

JOHN
 Hey, Ms. Stevens. Your father's been
 educating me on the finer points of
 meatcraft.

STEVIE
 It's Stevie. We've been over this.

JOHN
 Sorry. Old habits.

STEVIE
 Yes, you habitually make me sound
 like a Catholic school marm with a
 caning fetish.

John grins and holds open his hands.

JOHN
 I'm a Buddhist.

SIGGE
 You can meditate later, young man.
 We're already behind. Honey, get the
 fish out, would you?

Stevie rolls up her sleeves, but John touches her arm. He
 looks at Sigge, who is too busy sharpening knives to notice.

JOHN
 (to Stevie)
 It's Thursday.

Stevie nods, and pulls a cart with two large pans containing
 trussed beef roasts.

Sigge turns around and stares for a second, then gestures dismissively, as though waving away a fly.

Stevie pats Sigge on the back, and goes to work chopping a bundle of herbs. Sigge smiles and begins to skin root vegetables.

John watches this scene from behind a magazine. He lingers on Stevie, but she's focused on her work.

Stevie sautés vegetables in a cast iron skillet with an expert hand, then slings the skillet into the oven.

Sigge rolls the roasts in the chopped herbs and arranges them to go into the oven.

Stevie notices her father is about to use his bare hand to move the broiling hot cast iron skillet. She catches his arm and pulls it away gently.

John perks up from behind his magazine but Stevie waves him off.

STEVIE

I've got it, Dad.

She grabs the handle with a dry dish cloth.

SIGGE

Check and see if they're done.

He turns away, and starts cleaning off the counter as though nothing unusual has occurred. Stevie meets John's eyes. She needs a moment.

STEVIE

I need to get to work.

JOHN

He'll be fine. I promise.

Stevie goes over to her father.

STEVIE

I have to go, Dad. I'll come back on Sunday.

Sigge puts an arm around her.

SIGGE

Okay, sweetie. Tell Stevie to come see me, okay? She hasn't been by for weeks. I think she works too hard.

Stevie smiles hard, as though she is not crushed. John looks after her as she leaves. He ducks his head into the dining room.

INT. FERRY VILLAGE DINING ROOM

John beckons to one of the other ATTENDANTS.

JOHN
Take over for me.

EXT. FERRY VILLAGE ENTRANCE - DAY

Stevie fumbles for a cigarette with shaking hands. John, now in his winter coat, comes up from behind her.

JOHN
Hey. Let me give you a ride to the station.

STEVIE
I can take a cab.

JOHN
Come on, it'll take ten minutes.

INT. JOHN'S HONDA CIVIC - DAY

Stevie huddles in her coat.

STEVIE
He's getting worse.

JOHN
They all get worse. It helps when you come see him, though.

STEVIE
He almost gave himself a third degree burn. What's next? He starts putting drain cleaner in the bisque?

JOHN
I know it looks bad, but your father is actually doing relatively well. He has a lot of deep rooted passion to draw on.

STEVIE
(bitter)
That's what he was famous for.

JOHN
I wasn't talking about that.

They park outside the station. Stevie broods.

JOHN
Progress with the lawsuit?

STEVIE
The network's claiming there's no link between "the erratic behaviour" that caused them to terminate the contract and... well.

She jerks her thumb over her shoulder, indicating the direction they came from.

STEVIE
Mom sold the restaurants to pay for all of this. Good thing he's losing his mind, because he'd be devastated.

JOHN
I wish I had something to say that could make it better. But it's not going to get better, Stevie. It gets ugly. Are you ready for that?

STEVIE
I guess I'll find out.

JOHN
I'll be here if you ever wanna, you know-

Stevie abruptly gets out.

STEVIE
Thanks for the ride.

She slams the door. John looks over the wheel after her as she walks away for a long beat, then starts his engine and backs out of his parking spot.

EXT. FAUSTA - DAY

Stevie walks past a floor-to-ceiling window facade, over which the word *Fausta* is rendered in a rough black stencil. She does not go in, but turns a corner into an alley.

EXT. FAUSTA - ALLEY - FIRE EXIT - DAY

Stevie unlocks the back door.

INT. FAUSTA KITCHEN - DAY

Stevie bustles into the kitchen, the door slamming behind her. It's larger and nicer than the average restaurant kitchen, but still feels cramped.

She dumps her stuff on a prep table. Then takes a moment, takes a deep breath, grabs her phone and heads to the changing room. She starts a call, listens to it ring.

INT. STEVIE'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT - DAY

CALEB (35) lounges on the sofa, coding on a laptop resting on his stomach and watching TV out of the corner of his eye.

His phone RINGS. He reaches up to mute the TV, knocking over a towering bong in the process.

CALEB

Shit.

He answers the phone as he tries to recover the bong. He shoves an old newspaper on to the spill in an attempt to soak it up, using an unnecessary amount of body english.

CALEB

Hold on, I just spilled something.

INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

Stevie works her way into a black chef coat, juggling the phone at the same time.

STEVIE

Did you get the apartment?

INT. STEVIE'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT - DAY

Caleb tries to mop up the bong water, gives it a sniff and draws back. The carpet evidently still reeks.

CALEB
It wasn't a good fit.

STEVIE (V.O.)
(filtered)
Caleb.

CALEB
I know, I know.

INT. BACK ROOM - DAY

STEVIE
It's been three months. We signed the papers.

CALEB (V.O.)
(filtered)
Listen, I know we talked about this, but if it's too awkward I can always--

STEVIE
It's fine. Just send in your half of rent by tomorrow, okay?

She hangs up, and heads out to the kitchen.

INT. STEVIE'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT - DAY

Caleb tosses the phone aside. He Fabreezes the bong water stain, and resumes his place on the couch, his expression troubled.

INT. FAUSTA KITCHEN - DUSK

Stevie works the dinner rush with tattooed twins CARLOS and EMILIA (20s) on the line. Behind the line, SOLOMON (22, Filipino) wrangles dishes.

The sound of people TALKING AND EATING comes through the pass-through window, where headwaiter LEON (40s) drums his fingers on the counter.