

Boulangerie

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WGA
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INT. FRENCH BAKERY - NIGHT

Heavy rainfall POUNDS on an old window pane. Amidst the dripping water, you can barely see the village townspeople running to get home.

RICHARD DUBOIS, 57, slams a piece of dough on the table and starts to knead it.

His hands move in smooth motions. Eyes transfixed, never losing sight of the dough.

He keeps kneading in anger and frustration. A hypnotic craze.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

Richard wipes his hands on his apron. Rolls up his sleeves. Opens the door.

MADELEINE, 8, with wavy brown hair, wears a hooded raincoat. Visage hidden partially by the hood and her hair.

RICHARD
(hurriedly)
Can I help you?

She looks up. Takes off her hood. A sweet face.

He recognizes her.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
Madeleine...I...

He sighs.

Richard motions for her to come in. She storms into the wooden sanctuary. Plops down on a stool in the corner.

He brings her a red blanket. She nods in gratitude, her eyes watering.

Richard's eyebrows no longer furrow. He returns to knead.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
I'm going to have to call your
mother.

MADELEINE
But-

RICHARD

But nothing. I know she's hard on you. I had strict parents, but we always have to respect them.

THUNDER strikes nearby.

EXT. FRENCH BAKERY - NIGHT

Rain pours down the windows as if wax. Stragglers hurry outside to get home.

INT. FRENCH BAKERY - NIGHT

Three candles are lit. Shadows flicker. Baked bread protrudes from brown baskets. Rain POUNDS on the window.

Richard picks up the phone. Dials.

INT. RUSTIC HOME - NIGHT

RING. Old-fashioned telephone shakes.

RING. Framed photograph on the floor. Madeleine and her 37 year-old MOTHER, glass-shattered.

RING. A tattered doll on a shelf.

INT. FRENCH BAKERY - NIGHT

Richard hangs up, annoyed.

RICHARD

You're lucky your mother isn't picking up.

MADELEINE

(sniffles)

How'd you learn to bake bread?

Richard is caught off guard. Looks at her perplexed.

RICHARD

Well...

(pause)

...my dad taught me.

Madeleine's face lights up.

MADELEINE

I've always wanted a father.

RICHARD

He was one of the best bakers in France!

Richard strides to a desk in the corner. Opens the middle drawer. Rummages through a pile of papers. Pulls out a leather-bound book.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

This is my family's book of recipes.

He holds it against his chest. Then, hands it to Madeleine.

She stares down at its beauty. Her eyes are transfixed. She pauses. Then, opens the book. Leafs through the pages.

MADELEINE

This is so old!

Richard chuckles. His eyes beam.

RICHARD

Just because something is old doesn't mean it can't be helpful or insightful.

Madeleine nods in gratitude.

MADELEINE

Thank you.

She rolls her long hair back behind her ear, revealing a bruise near her elbow. He grabs her arm.

RICHARD

Madeleine, what's this?

MADELEINE

Nothing.

She snatches her arm away.

RICHARD

Madeleine! Tell me. This is serious.

MADELEINE

It's nothing, honest. I just fell off my bike yesterday.

Madeleine's voice trails off. He keeps staring at her arm. Remembering...

INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A 34 year-old WOMAN slaps an 8 year-old boy's cheek.

A distant echoing sound intervenes -

INT. FRENCH BAKERY - NIGHT

Madeleine pokes at the baker.

MADELEINE

Mr. Dubois?

The baker comes back to reality. Richard and Madeleine stare into each other's eyes.

Richard scrunches his eyebrows, panting. A tear streams down his cheek. Sighing, he catches his breath.

He takes a soft loaf of bread from a basket. Tears it. Hands one half to Madeleine. Madeleine takes it. Pauses. She looks down at the gift and embraces him.

He begins to tear up. They pause as they share a moment of shared vulnerability.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

I think I'd like to learn how to
bake, Mr. Dubois.

Richard snuffles and chuckles.

RICHARD

Then you shall, my child.

They let go of their embrace. Richard winks at her.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You most definitely shall.

FADE OUT.