

Service Industry

written by

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SUPER:

DEDICATED SERVER

INT. COMMERCIAL KITCHEN - DAY

Bloody knuckles grasp a knife. The knife chops cucumbers.

So many cucumbers.

A pair of worried eyes look at a clock on the wall.

It's 4 PM.

Service begins in one hour.

INT. KITCHEN LINE - CONT.

A cook named DAVID tastes a boiling red sauce. It's almost there.

A dishwasher named MIGUEL fills an ice bucket. Something dead needs to be kept COLD.

Another cook, SAMUEL, winces and looks at his thumb. He's sliced a part of it off while using a mandolin to slice potatoes.

He throws away his (now bloody) stack of potato slices.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

CARA DANIELS (20's) looks at a stack of bills on her kitchen table. The light shines on them as if God himself demands payment.

She sips her coffee while browsing job listings online.

CARA  
West Hollywood? No.

She continues.

CARA (CONT'D)  
Headshot? Fuck you.

She looks at her headshot, framed on the wall.

Finally, she sees something.

CARA (CONT'D)  
Okay, maybe you.

A listing pleads: NEED DEDICATED SERVER ASAP. TRAINING BONUS.

She shuts her laptop. Her gaze lingers on the bills, then at a picture of herself back home (somewhere rural).

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Cara smokes a cigarette outside her apartment. She's in formal interview wear. Her landlord approaches.

LANDLORD  
I'm not running a charity for failed actors, sweetie...pay up or get out.

Cara takes a drag. Her nerves are palpable.

CARA  
I'll get the money.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN- DAY

The restaurant manager, STAN (30's, stressed), speed walks through the kitchen.

STAN  
Come on, you morons...it's almost time.

The cooks put some hustle into it.

Stan continues into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONT.

Someone is knocking at the door. Cara enters.

CARA  
Excuse me?

Stan stares at her blankly.

CARA (CONT'D)  
I'm here for an interview...

Stan exhales deeply.

STAN  
Right. Actress, I presume?

CARA  
How could you tell?

STAN  
I can always tell. It won't get in  
the way of your dedication, will  
it?

Cara walks over and hands him her resume. He barely looks at it.

CARA  
I'm a total professional.

STAN  
Fine. You're hired.

Cara stands, unsure what to do. Stan looks her up and down.

STAN (CONT'D)  
Do you have anything nicer to wear?

Cara's smile drops.

CARA  
I could go back home and change?

STAN  
It's too late. Take this.

Stan hands Cara an apron.

CARA  
I really appreciate the  
opportunity.

Stan finally smiles.

STAN  
I'm sure. I only have one rule- do  
everything I say and we'll be A-OK.

CARA  
You got it. I'm a team player.

Cara shakes Stan's hand, but pulls away fast.

CARA (CONT'D)  
Are you okay?

Stan looks at his hand. Then at Cara.

STAN

I run hot. Now go sit down and study the menu. Any mistakes and I swear -

He shoves a menu at Cara. She sits at a table and reads it over.

Another server, DESMOND, walks in. He ignores Cara.

DESMOND

STAN! What the fuck?

Stan enters.

STAN

Jesus...what is it?

DESMOND

I don't think I can do it today.

A beat.

STAN

Don't, then...see what happens.

Cara looks over. She's had abusive managers before. It's the hospitality industry, for Christ's sake.

DESMOND

Fine. Just don't make me clean it up.

Cara looks back down at the menu. They must have a lot of closing duties.

SUPER: PRE-SHIFT

Stan gathers Desmond, Samuel, David, and Cara around a community table. Miguel eavesdrops by the kitchen.

STAN

Alright. Tonight is, as some of you know, extremely important.

Stan looks at Desmond, who looks anxious.

STAN (CONT'D)

The owner is coming in. We need to pull out all the stops. Even if we're new and have no idea what we're doing.

He glares at Cara. Cara waves at the staff.

CARA

I'm -

STAN

Go above and beyond, do anything it takes. Anything.

Cara nods.

STAN (CONT'D)

The specials tonight include a roasted sacrifice.

Everyone looks at Stan.

STAN (CONT'D)

Suckling, sorry. Roasted suckling pig.

A few cooks look at each other with a confused face. They haven't seen any pork deliveries come in.

STAN (CONT'D)

We are pouring a special vintage, donated by a very important investor.

DESMOND

Who's that?

STAN

Why does that matter?

DESMOND

Just curious.

Suddenly, the door opens. It's the HOST.

STAN

There you are...

The host stares at Stan.

STAN (CONT'D)

Well?

HOST

We have 32 covers. The owner comes at 5:30. First seating is at 5.

Cara turns to Desmond and whispers in his hear.

CARA

How did she know that already?

The clock strikes 5.

STAN

Cara, you get the big boss. Give him anything he wants.

CARA

I don't know if I'm prepared for that.

A beat.

STAN

What did I tell you?

CARA

I'll do it...

STAN

That's right.

The doors open.

SUPER: SERVICE

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Cara struggles to remember the menu while talking to a table.

SNOBBY PATRON

Is the manager around?

Cara looks around. Typical manager, nowhere to be found.

CARA

...He's in a meeting.

The host watches her like a hawk at the host stand. She looks over and smiles. The host frowns.

INT. DISH PIT - CONT.

Cara brings empty dishes to Miguel.

CARA

How's your night going?

MIGUEL

This place sucks dick.

CARA

I guess that's how it goes...

MIGUEL

Huh?

CARA

The service industry sucks.

Cara looks around the kitchen. David and Samuel are busting their asses.

CARA (CONT'D)

Why don't you quit?

MIGUEL

Same reason you're here. I'm broke.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONT.

The host seats a party of two in Desmond's section.

INT. SERVER STATION -CONT.

Desmond walks to the server station, where Stan is pacing.

DESMOND

First special, walking in.

Stan doesn't respond.

DESMOND (CONT'D)

Hello??

Stan turns to Desmond.

STAN

I guess that means it's starting.

Desmond looks at Stan. He's stiff as a board.

INT. CARA'S SECTION - CONT.

Cara is in the weeds. She enters an order on a computer. Desmond waits his turn.

CARA

Give me a sec, I got triple sat...

Desmond looks at the Host, who is staring blankly at the door.

DESMOND

She's the worst.

Cara smiles.

CARA  
Well, good luck.

A beat.

DESMOND  
You too.

Cara frees the POS and walks away. Desmond taps her shoulder.

DESMOND (CONT'D)  
Cara?

Cara stops and looks over.

DESMOND (CONT'D)  
Don't let 'em kill you. It's just a  
job.

INT. KITCHEN - CONT.

The bloodied hands glaze a dark red sauce over rare meat. For a split second, it appears as if they're handcuffed.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONT.

Somebody screams bloody murder.

Cara looks over.

A DRUNK WOMAN is having too much fun with HER GAYS.

Stan taps Cara on the back.

STAN  
Take a Ten.

CARA  
What about my tables?

STAN  
Now!

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Cara smokes near some dumpsters. She checks her phone. There's a voicemail.

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)

I'm sorry, hun, you didn't get the part. If we can't get you booked I might have to drop you.

Cara hangs up.

She takes a long drag before googling flights to IDAHO.

Stan opens the front door of the restaurant.

STAN

I said ten! Not eleven!

Cara puts out her cigarette.

INT. RESTROOM - CONT.

Cara washes her hands and looks in the mirror for an extended beat. She's interrupted by heavy hands banging on the door.

CARA

Just a second...

Cara opens the door.

Stan stands in the doorway shaking his head.

STAN

Hurry up...he's here.

CARA

Can't Desmond do it?

Stan turns to Cara.

STAN

He's busy right now.

Cara follows Stan to a new table. It's THE OWNER (stoic as hell).

STAN (CONT'D)

Cara, this is the owner.

Cara smiles.

THE OWNER

Good evening, Cara.

Cara gets into server mode. THE OWNER can make or break her.

CARA  
Pleasure to meet you.

THE OWNER reaches his hand out. Cara shakes it. It's boiling.

CARA (CONT'D)  
...I'll take great care of you this evening.

THE OWNER looks at Cara dead in the eyes.

THE OWNER  
Yes, you will.

A beat.

STAN  
Cara, why don't you get our guest a splash of that special wine?

Cara nods and heads to it.

INT. WINE CELLAR - CONT.

Cara looks for the bottle. She finds it.

It's an odd looking bottle - no label.

INT. SERVER STATION - CONT.

Cara opens the bottle and sniffs the cork for mold. She sniffs again.

She wretches as if she might vomit.

CARA  
My god...

She looks at the kitchen. Something is off.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONT.

Cara hides her shakiness as she pours a taste from the bottle. THE OWNER never takes his eyes off her.

She waits for him to sip.

A beat.

THE OWNER  
Try it with me.

CARA  
I'm sorry?

THE OWNER  
Try it. It's very special.

CARA  
Sorry, sir...I don't...

THE OWNER  
I insist.

Cara looks at her other tables. One of them needs a water refill. She quickly tastes the wine.

THE OWNER smiles for the first time.

THE OWNER (CONT'D)  
Savor it. It's very special.

Cara's eyes water. She coughs a little.

THE OWNER (CONT'D)  
(chuckling)  
Atta girl.

CARA  
I'm sure it's an acquired taste.

THE OWNER scoffs. The voice interrupts.

VOICE  
HANDS!

CARA  
I'll be right back to take your order.

Cara walks to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN- CONT.

Cara looks around the kitchen. Miguel approaches with the special bottle of wine.

MIGUEL  
This shit's blood...

Cara rubs her temples.

CARA  
Is this a joke? Prank the new girl?

Cara looks around, paranoid.

MIGUEL  
I'm fuckin' serious.

Miguel pours the wine into a cup.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)  
Look.

Cara inspects the liquid. It's thicker than wine.

A loud chop.

Miguel and Cara look over.

A cook throws a human hand into a boiling pot.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)  
What the...

Desmond's lifeless body is on the prep table. Sans hand.

CARA  
Desmond?!

Miguel grabs Cara's hand and leads her out of the kitchen.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONT.

Miguel and Cara run into the dining room. It's empty, except for THE OWNER and Stan.

They look at the front door. It's blocked by Stan.

CARA  
Sorry, it's not working out...I  
don't think it's a good fit...

Stan smiles.

STAN  
It's a perfect fit, dear.

THE OWNER looks at Cara like a Cheetah looks at prey.

Cara and Miguel run to the door. The host, holding a large knife, blocks it.

HOST  
Your table is ready...

Using open hands, the host directs their attention to a table that is dressed as an altar. Fruit, candles, and a large pot of human-hand stew adorn it.

Miguel and Cara look at each other.

THE OWNER walks over, dragging Samuel and David with him. They're chained and in robes.

THE OWNER

Do it.

David and Samuel walk over with aggressive force. Miguel shakes his head.

MIGUEL

Fuckin' line cooks.

Stan and Samuel begin tying Miguel. The host and David go for Cara.

CARA

Let me go!

The THE OWNER looks at Cara with the same smug expression as before.

THE OWNER

Calm down. One team, one dream.

SUPER: POST-SHIFT

Cara shakes her head with disgust. Stan appears wearing a chef's coat.

STAN

We do things a little differently here...

CARA

That's what they all say!

Miguel struggles to get free. He's unsuccessful. The host lights the candles on the altar.

HOST

We're a family here.

Stan looks at the cooks.

STAN

It's time.

They nod in unison and head to the kitchen. They return, holding Desmond's dead body. They put him on the altar.

THE OWNER

Desmond was the ultimate team player.

Cara screams. The host laughs. Stan stirs the stew.

STAN

It's up to you...

CARA

What?

THE OWNER rubs Cara's head like a dog.

THE OWNER

We believe in work life balance.

MIGUEL

Yeah right...

Stan charges at Miguel.

STAN

Shut up!

He smacks him. Miguel obeys.

THE OWNER

You're a failed actress, correct?

Cara wipes a tear from her face.

CARA

I wouldn't say failed, necessarily...

THE OWNER

So you're not moving back in with your parents in Idaho?

Cara can't look at THE OWNER. She's too ashamed.

CARA

I was considering it, yeah.

The THE OWNER takes a bite of an apple and hands it to Stan. Stan takes another bite. The host waits for her turn, but it never comes.

THE OWNER

What if I told you that we could  
make all of your dreams come true?

CARA

What does that mean?

THE OWNER

I'm very...connected.

CARA

I don't -

STAN

Shut up and listen.

Cara stops.

THE OWNER

You were hoping for a 20 percent  
tip, but...I can offer the world.

Stan nods his head in agreement. Cara looks with confusion.

STAN

He wants to help you...help us help  
you.

Cara shakes her head no.

CARA

I don't know what you mean.

THE OWNER shoves the apple in Cara's face.

THE OWNER

Eat it.

Cara struggles.

THE OWNER (CONT'D)

Play the game, Cara...

Cara takes a bite and spits it out.

STAN

I thought you wanted the job?

CARA

I wanted to pay my rent...

THE OWNER

I'll pay your rent. I'll get you a reoccurring role, too. All you have to do is...

STAN

Kill Miguel!!!

MIGUEL

What the fuck?!

The THE OWNER grabs the butcher knife from the Host and stabs Stan.

Stan looks honored.

THE OWNER

Time to clock out.

Stan falls to the ground.

STAN

I thought I was on salary?

Stan dies. Cara covers her mouth with fear. THE OWNER chuckles to himself.

THE OWNER

86 Stan.

HOST

Heard!

Stan drops to the ground. Cara's eyes practically bulge out of her skull.

THE OWNER

What do you think?

Cara looks at Miguel, then at the altar.

A long beat.

MIGUEL

Cara, don't do it! If we stick together...

Cara looks at THE OWNER.

CARA

How many months?

THE OWNER

A full year.

Cara stands up. The host hands Cara the knife.

CARA  
Why do I have to do it?

THE OWNER  
Because I'm paying you.

Cara looks at the knife, then at Miguel. David and Samuel watch. Miguel screams as Cara walks over.

HOST  
I knew you'd do it the second I saw  
how you handled that dinner rush.  
Like a beast!

CARA  
I'm a really good waitress...

MIGUEL  
Please, dear god, no...don't lemme  
die at work!

CARA  
I'm so sorry...you'd do the same  
thing!

Everyone smiles and nods.

MIGUEL  
I hate this place!

Cara walks to Miguel and stabs him.

She looks at THE OWNER.

CARA  
Wait....

THE OWNER  
Yes?

CARA  
Do you offer benefits?

She drives the knife deeper into Miguel. He screams. Blood drips on the ground.

THE OWNER  
No.

SUPER: FAMILY MEAL

The host, Cara, and THE OWNER eat the stew. Desmond's dead eyes stare at them.

Samuel and David stand still in their shackles. THE OWNER throws them slop. They grab it from the ground.

THE OWNER looks at Cara, who is eating with glee.

THE END