Lunch Lady Land

by

James Elwood

First Draft 5/27/08

Second Draft 5/29/08

FADE IN:

INT. CAFETERIA SERVING AREA - DAY

There is long line in the serving area of the cafeteria. Behind the counter, serving desserts and holding everything up, is LOUISE. An old, slightly man-ish, lady in a hair net.

> LOUISE You want some delicious gelatine? For desert, Kevin? You can have some, but you need to say pretty please! Okay?

The KEVIN isn't nearly as enthusiastic as Louise.

There is a boy a few people back in line. He is CHRIS. He is wearing dark, ill-fitting clothes, and his hair is greasy. He is enthralled by Louise's antics.

KEVIN (sigh) Pretty please.

While Kevin says it, Chris mouths it to himself, excitedly.

LOUISE Feel free to come back for seconds, sweet heart!

Other lunch ladies are huddled in a corner, looking over at Louise, shaking their heads in disgust.

It is Chris' turn in line, he nervously smiles and waves to Louise.

LOUISE Hello darling! You've come for a gelatinous treat?!

CHRIS

Uh, uh, yes!

LOUISE Good choice son! But what you need to do... You need to say "pretty Please"!

CHRIS Pr, pretty please!

Louise reaches her hand into a paper bag of granulated sugar.

LOUISE WITH SUGAR ON TOP!

She throws a handful of sugar into his jello.

LOUISE I gave you a little something extra, because you're a cutie!

INT. - CAFETERIA SEATING AREA

Chris walks over to the seating area, and sits alone. His Louise induced smile fades.

INT. - CAFETERIA SERVING AREA

Louise gets pulled aside from her duties by another lunch lady, and brought into an office.

LOUISE You just wait right there, I'll be back in a second to get you your nourishment!

INT. - CAFETERIA SEATING AREA

Sitting at a table behind Chris, is a group of trouble makers, led by DAVE NOSTRO.

Nostro throws an entire bag of baby carrots at Chris' back.

Chris turns his head, but does not retaliate.

INT. CAFETERIA OFFICE

Louise is sitting across from the HEAD LUNCH LADY, at a large, paper covered desk.

LOUISE I must say, however, that I'm quite confused. I've been here for 33 years, the students love me! I'm like the Rick Astley of serving treats!

HEAD LUNCH LADY See! You're almost proving my point, right there. 95 percent of the kids probably don't even know who Rick Astley is!

LOUISE Of course they do! That little red haired boy with the man voice! Oh, he was such a cutie! INT. CAFETERIA SEATING AREA

Chris is still sitting alone, with carrots strewn all around him. The TEACHER that is working lunch duty approaches him.

TEACHER What is all this?

Chris stares silently.

TEACHER (CONT'D) You think you're funny? You think you can make a mess like this without any repercussions? You think I get paid extra for this? You think I LIKE this? DO YOU THINK AT ALL!?

Chris blinks twice, but doesn't say anything.

TEACHER (CONT'D) That's it, you're staying after lunch to help Mr. McCarthy clean up.

Mr. McCarthy pushing a trash can around, stops and waves at Chris.

Chris sighs.

INT. - CAFETERIA SERVING AREA - AFTER LUNCH

Louise and the Head lunch lady leave the office, still fighting.

HEAD LUNCH LADY You need to understand that we CAN'T keep you! You're inefficient, you don't follow the menu, which we let slide for a while, but the things you serve are EXTREMELY unhealthy, and just having you here, violates countless health code regulations.

Chris, while cleaning up the cafeteria, sneaks over, and looks into the serving area to watch the fight.

LOUISE That's FIDDLE FADDLE! If you don't want me here, I don't wanna be here! I quit!

HEAD LUNCH LADY It doesn't work like that, You're fired Louise.

Louise storms out.

INT. - CAFETERIA SERVING AREA - CONTINUOUS

LOUISE DON'T TELL ME WHAT DOES OR DOES NOT WORK... LIKE THAT!

Louise walks out the double-door exit. Chris looks heart broken.

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Chris is last off the bus. He walks toward the side entrance, but sees Louise walking aimlessly around the grass area, and walks toward her.

CHRIS

Miss Louise?

Louise breaks her trance and looks at Chris.

LOUISE Yes, pumpkin?

CHRIS What are you doing?

LOUISE Oh, me? I'm uh, I'm early for work today. I wanted to get a head start, Pasta Thursday's a big day for us here.

CHRIS I saw what happened. I was in the cafeteria after lunch.

LOUISE (on the verge of tears) I'm so embarrassed! I don't know where to go! I usually sleep in the cafeteria, losing this job has me all messed up!

CHRIS (sighs) I wish I knew what to tell you.

INT. CAFETERIA

Chris walks into the cafe. He nervously enters the serving area. There is a HELP WANTED sign on the wall.

INT. CAFETERIA SERVING AREA

Chris is next in line.

CHRIS (quietly) Pretty please.

The lunch lady, not listening, scoops a ladle of mashed potatoes onto his tray.

INT. CAFETERIA SERVING AREA

Chris is sitting alone once again, this time he's crying.

WINDOW

Louise is looking in from outside. She has one tear dripping down her face.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTER SCHOOL

Chris is waiting, leaning up against a desk as Louise enters.

CHRIS Thanks for meeting me here.

LOUISE Well you told me to, and right now I'm not sure I'm in any position to decline.

CHRIS Have a seat.

Louise sits in an open desk.

CHRIS (CONT'D) I think you can get your job back.

Louise jumps out of her desk and shrieks in joy.

LOUISE Ooh! this is perfect. . . how?

CHRIS There was a help wanted sign on the wall. They obviously miss you, if you just show up tomorrow, you can get your job back.

LOUISE Ooh! Jeeze! I could just gobble you up!

INT. CAFETERIA

Chris and Louise are standing in the cafeteria side by side, next to the closed doors of the serving area. The help wanted sign is gone. LOUISE I'm not seeing a sign little boy.

CHRIS There was one here yesterday, I swear.

LOUISE Is this a big joke? Did you go through all this just to make sport of me? Oh, I'm leaving.

CHRIS No, no, no just wait, I'll go talk with the head lunch lady, they probably took it down because it's not during school hours.

Chris opens the door and walks in.

INT. CAFETERIA SERVING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Chris closes the door and walks behind the serving station and knocks on the office door three times.

HEAD LUNCH LADY (O.S.) Come in, it's unlocked.

INT. CAFETERIA OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Chris enters the office.

HEAD LUNCH LADY You that kid from the art program?

CHRIS (nervously) No, uh, my name's Chris, I uh, I was just wondering why the help wanted sign is down.

HEAD LUNCH LADY I think it's obvious that we no longer want help.

CHRIS

Oh.

HEAD LUNCH LADY I hope you don't mind my asking, but what the hell does it matter to you?

CHRIS I uh, someone I know was interested in filling the position.

HEAD LUNCH LADY

I don't mean to burst your bubble, but the position was filled literally five minutes ago.

CHRIS

Oh, don't worry, I know you wouldn't intentionally burst someone's bubble, especially that of a student, I was just thinking maybe, maybe like, we could have maybe like a cook-off of or something? 'Cause I mean like, if we only missed by five minutes...

HEAD LUNCH LADY You actually bring up a good point. How about, next week, you bring your little friend here, after school, and we'll have a competition.

CHRIS

Oh, really, that was way easier than I planned. I expected a long argument or something.

HEAD LUNCH LADY No, I'm pretty cool about those type things.

CHRIS But you can't just give this lady a job for a week, and take it away just like that, can you?

HEAD LUNCH LADY I can... I'm the head lunch lady. You think I won't?

CHRIS I didn't mean it like that.

HEAD LUNCH LADY I know what you meant! GET OUT! SEE YOU IN A WEEK!

Chris leaves, closing the door behind him. The head lunch lady puts her feet up on the desk.

HEAD LUNCH LADY MRS. NOTA! I feel like playing, fetch my figurines!

Mrs. Nota comes out from behind a door. She holds up a small toy in each hand. In her right hand is a toy airplane, in her left is a small bison toy.

MRS. NOTA Plane, or buffalo?

INT. CAFETERIA

Louise is fidgeting nervously as Chris returns.

LOUISE Ooh! Little boy, did it work? Do I have a job?

CHRIS Uh, I guess it worked, you don't have a job yet though. My name's Chris by the way.

LOUISE Good, I'll call you Buster.

CHRIS

Okay, uh.

LOUISE So what's goin' on? When do I start up?

CHRIS

Well, here's the deal, They already hired someone, but if we practice together, you know, sharpen your skills, You can compete with the new hire for the job in a cook-off.

LOUISE (excitedly) OOH! Good job Buster! You did good!

INT. CAFETERIA SEATING AREA

Chris is standing behind a table with Louise. The table is covered with heads of lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, and celery.

LOUISE Is this really necessary? I can chop things, I chop, chopping is my forte.

CHRIS Prove it.

LOUISE With pleasure, Buster.

NEVER GONNA LET YOU DOWN by Rick Astley fades in. Louise closes her eyes, and takes a deep breath in. MONTAGE -- LOUISE: MASTER COOK -- Louise is in vibrant leg warmers, and other eighties style clothes.

-- Chopping at a rapid pace.

-- Perfectly chopped vegetables are falling into neat piles.

-- Holds up her knife, using the shiny blade as a mirror, she winks at herself.

-- Goes back to chopping quickly.

CLOSE UP: Chris

Chris sighs heavily.

The song stops, and we go back to Louise, in her original current day clothes, slowly, and very carefully chopping lettuce. Her tongue is out a little bit, in concentration. She wipes the sweat off of her brow. There is a little bit of lettuce chopped and it's scattered messily on the table.

> CHRIS If this is your forte, we have work to do.

> LOUISE What are you talking about Buster? Did you witness what just happened? I was steamier like a buff-chick and a jalapeño kissing in a hot tub.

CHRIS (sighs) Look at the table.

LOUISE Gracious! I've lost it!

CHRIS

That's why it was so convenient for them to arbitrarily grant us a week to train for this.

LOUISE You're right Buster, they might end up regretting that certain decision.

MONTAGE -- CHRIS TRAINING LOUISE.

- -- Chris pulls out a stopwatch.
- -- Louise taking her time chopping.
- -- Chris showing her fast chopping cooks on the Food Network.
- -- Louise chops slowly again.

-- Chris grabs the knife from Louise, and chops the vegetables quickly.

-- Louise chops slowly again.

INT. CAFETERIA

Chris and Louise are sitting in frustration in the empty cafeteria.

> CHRIS It's been three days, and you haven't made the least bit of progress.

LOUISE I know Buster, but I don't know how much help you're being when you're acting like a little fussy pants.

CHRIS (sighs) I know, but it's not working!

LOUISE It's not the end of the world.

CHRIS Yeah, I know but, you NEED to get your job back!

LOUISE Why does it matter so much to you?

CHRIS

Because! You're... You know, you're Miss Louise! You're the best lunch lady EVER!

LOUISE I know, but there's other lunch ladies, right?

CHRIS Not really, you're the only one who... Who...

LOUISE Who what? Spit it out little owl boy.

CHRIS Well like, I'm not real, uh, popular, I guess, and people don't really talk to me, much. But you do. Everyday, I knew I could look forward to lunch, where I'd have you, and you'd talk to me, like we're old friends we're old friends. (MORE)

CHRIS (cont'd) It was the only time when I could have that relationship.

Louise is crying hysterically. She blows her nose into a handkerchief.

LOUISE That was the most beautiful thing I've ever heard... in my LIFE! Little handsome Buster boy, with your little dark loner attitude, I'm gonna do everything I can to get back to where I was in my hayday.

INT. CAFETERIA SERVING AREA

Chris is in line, he looks up, and his jaw drops.

The new lunch lady is on duty, she is turned around, but is flipping chicken over her shoulder, about five feet, all landing on opened bulkie rolls set up on the counter, faster than Louise did back in the day.

She spins around, revealing a manly face, ketchup bottles in each hand. She rapidly squirts ketchup onto each chicken piece, except one.

She flips up the ketchup-less sandwich, onto a kid's tray, toward the back of the line.

NEW LUNCH LADY There you go Petey, ketchup free.

INT. CAFETERIA SEATING AREA

Petey sits down meeting his friends.

PETEY It's only her fourth day, and she already knows my name AND my fear of processed tomatoes!

INT. BACK IN LINE WITH CHRIS.

Chris is fighting back tears as he gets his lunch from the new lunch lady. The head lunch lady approaches Chris as he walks by.

HEAD LUNCH LADY Hey buddy, whoever that person is you plan on bringing to take her job better be training.

CHRIS Oh, yeah, she is, don't worry. INT. DARK ROOM

Louise is in full training mode, without Chris.

MONTAGE -- LOUISE TRAINING

- -- Chopping
- -- Push ups
- -- jump rope
- -- scrubbing potatoes
- -- Throwing bags of sugar in the trash
- -- Studying recipes
- -- Sitting at a computer

COMPUTER SCREEN

On the computer screen reads

BECOMING PERSONABLE AND FRIENDLY By Louise the Lunch Lady

-- Collecting the paper from the printer.

EXT. OUTSIDE SCHOOL

Louise runs to catch up with Chris.

LOUISE Little boy! Buster!

CHRIS Oh, hey, what's up?

LOUISE I made you something. It's not delicious, but I think you could use it.

Louise hands the paper to Chris.

CHRIS

Oh, uh, thank you.

LOUISE Oh, don't thank me, I just had to, because you're such a little cutie.

INT. CHRIS' ROOM - NIGHT Chris is holding Louise's paper, reading it. LOUISE (V.O.) Chapter one. Or uh, section one. Part one, Communication.

INT. CLASSROOM

Chris is sitting in class. He is fidgeting, back and forth between standing up or not. Louise's voice continues.

LOUISE (V.O.) You can't be sitting around like a bump on a log if you want people to talk to you. Try a conversation starter, but be creative, if I were you I'd say something like...

Chris is standing by a group of kids in conversation.

CHRIS Hey guys, doesn't watching the food network make you wanna snuggle up against Mario Batali's silly little belly?

INT. DIFFERENT CLASSROOM

Chris is sitting again. Louise's voice continues.

LOUISE (V.O.) Part two, make yourself noticed. Think of a skill you have and show it off.

Chris gets up and takes a deep breath. He walks in front of the classroom.

LOUISE (V.O.) Don't lollygag and wait for the right time. Just do it. Personally, I'd dance, but do whatever talent you possess.

Chris starts dancing awkwardly, The class starts looking at each other. They eventually start laughing.

LOUISE (V.O.) People appreciate a person with a skill.

INT. CHRIS' ROOM

Chris is standing by his closet, he is wearing a black DANZIG T-SHIRT.

LOUISE (V.O.) Part three, wardrobe. (MORE) LOUISE (V.O.) (cont'd) You need to knock it off with the little Satan T-shirts! Nobody wants to be friends with somebody spooky. Try a nice little sweater, maybe something Christmassy.

Chris stands in the mirror, in a Christmas sweater, and a turtleneck under it. He tugs on the turtleneck to get some air to his neck.

LOUISE (V.O.) If you don't like that, just do something like a nice collared shirt.

Chris looks at himself in the mirror with a collared shirt on, sighs, and shrugs.

INT. CLASSROOM

A group of kids are sitting around before class talking.

KID #1 Are you guys talkin' about that Chris kid? I never realized that he's like, funny.

KID #2 I know, he's weird, but it's like funny weird though.

KID #3 He's in my math class, and he just got up and started dancing, quite pathetically I might add, but it was hilarious.

KID #1 I wonder why he wouldn't talk before.

KID #3 I dunno, I guess he came out of his shell or something.

INT. DARK ROOM

Louise is stretching getting ready for the competition after school.

LOUISE I'm doin' this one for you Buster. Ste-retch! 1. 2. 3. 4. Ste-retch! 1. 2. 3. 4.

INT. CLASSROOM

Chris is sitting in class. Two girls approach him nervously.

GIRL #1 Hey, Chris? CHRIS (startled) Uh, hi, uh, (deepens voice) hey ladies.

GIRL #1 Um, what do you think of Courtney?

Girl #1 points across the room to a girl who's looking at Chris.

CHRIS Well, Courtney, I think she's uh, she's steamier like a buff-chick and a jalapeño kissing in a hot tub.

GIRL #2 Oh my God! Does that mean 'Yes'?

GIRL #1 Chris, you are so funny. Let's go tell Courtney!

INT. CAFETERIA OFFICE

Chris enters the room, to find The Head Lunch Lady with her feet on the table and hands behind her head.

HEAD LUNCH LADY Can I help you young man?

CHRIS Uh, today's the big day.

HEAD LUNCH LADY Right, Monday, get's it's name from the moon.

CHRIS I was talking about the cook-off thing we have planned for after school.

HEAD LUNCH LADY Sorry, I didn't recognize you without your glasses.

CHRIS

Uh, yeah.

HEAD LUNCH LADY You really think your little secret weapon can take Miss. Bulger out there? The new hire lunch lady is outside the room fine tuning her skills. She's quickly chopping carrots. As the small pieces fall into place we see that she is not holding a knife and is doing it with her hand.

INT. CAFETERIA OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

CHRIS Is she using a knife?

HEAD LUNCH LADY She is not. Care to guess why? Doesn't need 'em. Sharp fingers.

CHRIS That sounds dangerous.

HEAD LUNCH LADY It does, doesn't it? Well it isn't, they're soft to the touch. It defies what you think you know, don't dwell on it. Who are you bringing anyway?

CHRIS Uh, just an old friend. I think you'll like her.

HEAD LUNCH LADY Don't tell me who I will or will not like, get out!

CHRIS Uh, okay, sorry, bye.

Chris leaves.

HEAD LUNCH LADY (cheerily) Bye son! (smile fades) MRS. NOTA!

Mrs. Nota pops out from behind the desk.

MRS. NOTA

Yes?

EXT. SCHOOL - AFTER SCHOOL

Chris approaches Louise, who's standing around waiting to go into the cook-off.

CHRIS Miss Louise!

LOUISE Buster?! I almost didn't recognize you, you don't look like a little gnome anymore!

CHRIS I know, everything you said helped so much. It's weird. I'm like a new person.

LOUISE

Is that so?

CHRIS Yeah, it's weird, people started paying attention to me a ton, right away. There was no like, gradual progression or anything, it was like, from one extreme to the other, like that.

Chris attempts to snap and fails.

LOUISE And don't you feel better now?

CHRIS Well it does help my confidence.

LOUISE Speaking of confidence, I've got a lady-butt to whoop.

Louise motions her arm toward the door, and they enter the school.

INT. CAFETERIA

The Head Lunch Lady is rubbing Miss Bulger's shoulders as they wait for the cook-off.

HEAD LUNCH LADY This is your moment, this is all you, your day, your time to shine.

INT. HALLWAY

Chris and Louise are walking to the cafeteria.

LOUISE I'm gonna do well, I'm gonna try my best, I won't quit, unless I get injured, sick or feel unsafe, my practice has paid off.

INT. CAFETERIA

The Head Lunch Lady is slapping Miss Bulger in the face.

MISS BULGER AGAIN! Make it count! I'm not goin' in there to pet puppies!

INT. HALLWAY

Chris and Louise are closer to the cafeteria.

LOUISE If I don't win, I'll be happy for the other woman, I won't be rude or hold a grudge, I will shake her hand. AH! The anxiety is driving me FLIPPIN' BANANAS!

INT. CAFETERIA

Miss Bulger is blindfolded, doing weird meditation and humming. Head Lunch Lady is approaching her.

HEAD LUNCH LADY Yes, yes, that's it, relax.

Chris enters the room.

CHRIS

We're here

HEAD LUNCH LADY Sorry little boy. We're having a cook-off today, you're little club will have to reschedule.

CHRIS Uh, it's me, Chris, I'm the one who has the other lunch lady.

HEAD LUNCH LADY I know, I know who you are.

CHRIS Huh? Oh, well here she is.

Chris motions Louise in as she enters the room.

LOUISE Hello everyone!

HEAD LUNCH LADY Wait, what? Louise? You can't have the job, you were fired. That's ridiculous. CHRIS Woah, woah, you never said that someone who lost the job couldn't compete to get it back.

HEAD LUNCH LADY I know, but I mean, if I already fired her wouldn't that mean that I don't see her fit for the job? Plus I already know that Miss Bulger is better.

CHRIS Yeah, but she's been training.

LOUISE I've been training like a loon!

HEAD LUNCH LADY Training? Oh... Well that's a completely different situation. I guess it would make complete sense now to have a competition. Let's get it started.

INT. CAFETERIA SERVING AREA

Louise and Miss Bulger are standing behind a counter, next to each other. Chris and the head lunch lady are on the other side.

HEAD LUNCH LADY We've gone over all the rules before, are there any questions?

LOUISE Wait, which one are we doing first?

HEAD LUNCH LADY Chopping speed, Louise, already off to a bad start.

Miss Bulger and Louise turn and stare in each other's eyes, comparable to Ivan Drago and Rocky Balboa.

LOUISE Good luck missy!

Chris walks over carrying two bundles of carrots, putting one in front of each of them.

HEAD LUNCH LADY

Ready!

MISS BULGER

UGH!

HEAD LUNCH LADY

Set!

LOUISE Yes ma'am!

HEAD LUNCH LADY

MONTAGE -- COOK-OFF

GO!

-- Miss Bulger chopping at an incredible rate.

-- Louise, tongue out, chopping slowly.

-- Miss Bulger's pile of carrots is huge.

-- Louise has about two carrots chopped.

SCORE BOARD: Louise 0 Miss Bulger 1

Miss Bulger throwing Buffalo Chicken patties over her shoulder with a spatula, landing perfectly on open buns.
Louise carefully applying buffalo sauce with a brush.
Miss Bulger quickly putting whipped cream on top of plastic cups of Jello.

LOUISE Can I get a pretty please?!

CHRIS Pretty Please!

LOUISE WITH SUGAR ON TOP!

Louise pours a bag of sugar on top of all the jello.

-- Miss Bulger juggling apples.

-- Louise greasing a pan with a handful of lard.

SCORE BOARD: Louise -5 Miss Bulger 58

-- Louise squirting a sub roll with a large amount of mayonnaise.

-- Miss Bulger filling hers with lettuce and tomatoes.

SCORE BOARD: FINAL SCORE Louise -10 Miss Bulger 91

END MONTAGE

Chris is sitting at a table with his head in his hands. Louise is trying to console him.

LOUISE Well, we tried, and they can't take that away from us.

CHRIS We failed!

Chris picks his head up.

CHRIS (CONT'D) The whole thing was a waste.

LOUISE Now, why do you say that?

CHRIS

Are you serious? You didn't get your job back, that was the whole point of this.

LOUISE Don't you see? We won.

CHRIS Are you senile?

LOUISE A little bit, yup. But I know what I'm talking about. Why did you want me to get my job back again?

CHRIS Jeeze, you are senile. Because you're the only person who talks to me, and you make me feel liked and all that stuff, remember?

LOUISE AH HA! Hasn't all that changed? Drastically, in only a few days? Look over there.

Louise points to a pair of high school sweethearts holding hands. They are wearing matching "WE LOVE CHRIS" shirts, with a screen printed image of Chris in a heart.

BOY (waving) Hey Chris.

CHRIS I guess there has been a huge change made recently.

LOUISE My work here is done.

CHRIS So you're just gonna leave?

LOUISE Chris, I NEED to leave. There are places for me out there. (MORE)

LOUISE (cont'd) Places where EVERYBODY's stuck a few years in the past, where NOBODY cares about personal image, hygiene, and most importantly Health. Places called Dedham, and Natick. They need me.

Louise gets up and walks away. When she reaches the door, she looks back and winks to a crying, waving Chris.

EXT. OUTSIDE CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Louise Walks into the sunset.

FADE OUT.