

Employees Must Wash Hands... Before Murder

By Don Zolidis

(The Burgatorium. A low-end fast food restaurant somewhere in the heartland of America. The set can be largely suggested, but there should be a counter area separated from a kitchen area upstage. ASHLEY, the new girl, enters cautiously, accompanied by TOROK, the manager.)

TOROK

All right, this here is the floor. The floor is what keeps us from falling into the earth.

ASHLEY

Oh. Thanks.

TOROK

Now you got your walls and your ceiling too. I'm in charge of those. Any questions about what they do, come to me.

(Pause)

Any questions?

ASHLEY

No, I'm okay with it.

TOROK

Good. Now, in the Burgatorium team, we like to do things a certain way. Before you do something, ask yourself this question: Will someone sue me? If the answer to that question is no, then you go ahead and do it. If the answer to that question is yes, do it very quietly. And then sign your name to it. And then sign this form releasing the store of any responsibility.

ASHLEY

Right.

TOROK

You got your counters here, this is where we talk to the customers, and then the customers eat their stuff over there and then run to the restrooms, which are located on either side of us—Behind the counter is the kitchen area, which is where the magic happens. You are gonna start out in the kitchen, and if you can handle it, you just might move up to the counter. The counter, though, requires a whole different skill set. Like pressing buttons. And talking. But most important: Listening. You gotta listen to what the customer wants, because the customer is going to tell you, and if the customer doesn't know what they want, then you wait and stare at them, and if they still don't know what you want, then you spit at them. Got it?

ASHLEY

You spit at them?

TOROK

No. Not if you're going to get sued. All right then.

(He stares at her.)

Perhaps this short instructional video will help you understand the history of the Bugatorium. I'm going to go play solitaire on my computer to pass the time.

(He leaves, lights change. The ANNOUNCER walks onto the stage.)

ANNOUNCER

The year... was 1988.

(old civil war music plays.)

The United States was barely two hundred and twelve years old. It was a simpler time, a time when families still ate together at dinner... while secretly wishing they were somewhere else. A time without cell phones or the internet. A time of innocence. And a young man named Michael Jackson released an album named Bad and everyone started to think he was a little weird.

(short pause. J. TYLER enters, dressed in a t-shirt and shorts circa 1988.)

The Cold War was over. And One man, J. Tyler Higginbotham, thought it was a perfect opportunity to start a fast food restaurant.

(J. TYLER sets up a small stand.)

J. TYLER

Hey! Hey you! You want some food?! You want some food?!

ANNOUNCER

His first idea, the Sardine Emporium and Raw Fishery, was a failure.

J. TYLER

You want some raw fish?! Do ya?!

ANNOUNCER

So he decided to copy some other restaurants and sell burgers. But not just any burgers. Burgers that tasted good.

J. TYLER

You want a burger?!

ANNOUNCER

So J. Tyler started the first Burgatorium in his garage. His first employee: his mother.

(MAMA HIGGINBOTHAM enters.)

MAMA HIGGINBOTHAM

I'm so glad we can spend this time together, J. Tyler.

J. TYLER

That's Mr. Higginbotham to you, and I don't pay you for chit chat.

MAMA HIGGINBOTHAM

I'm not getting paid at all.

J. TYLER

And if you wanna keep that salary, you'll get back to work.

ANNOUNCER

He was a kind man, a visionary—

MAMA

I don't feel well...

(she slumps over)

J. TYLER

This is the second day you've been sick this week, and I'm getting a little tired of these excuses—

MAMA

My heart hurts.

J. TYLER

Yeah well my head hurts from your constant whining.

MAMA

I love you, son...

J. TYLER

That's nice. I love burgers. Go make some.

(She exits. J. TYLER follows.)

ANNOUNCER

After his mother's death, J. Tyler used the inheritance money to renovate a funeral home, turning it into his very first restaurant. And from there, he continued to expand, opening restaurant and after restaurant after restaurant until he had four. And then he died. Or so we think. But the body was never found. And to this day, there are rumors that...

(The ANNOUNCER looks around suspiciously)

Never mind.

(He exits.)

(You can read an excerpt of almost the entire script at www.playscripts.com)