

"HERO WAITRESS RESCUES POOR BOY FROM HIS ABUSIVE MOM"

SECOND DRAFT POLISH - 12 JULY 2022

INT. BENNY'S DINER - DAY

A 50s-style family-run DINER in Riverside. The restaurant is bustling during the midday rush.

Carrying a stack of plates to the kitchen is ALICE JUNIPER (Early 40s, working single mom, heart on her sleeve), Billy's mom from the 'Trailer Park Teen' video. She's in a classic diner uniform, hair tussled from running around all day.

She pauses to take a breath. Wipes the SWEAT off her brow. As she does so, she hears someone SNAPPING at her aggressively. She looks up to see, at one of the booths, a mother and son-- the mother GLARING at her.

This is HENRIETTA (Late 30s, dressed gaudily in a minx coat and a pretentious beret, obnoxious and selfish to the bone-- the biggest contrast to Alice imaginable), and her son is CODY (8, sensitive kid with a good heart, but very low self-esteem due to his mom's mistreatment).

As Henrietta harasses Alice, Cody looks down, as if embarrassed by his mom, or trained to be silent, or both.

HENRIETTA

Hello?! Excuse me, are you deaf?!  
I'm trying to get your attention?!

Alice clearly bristles at the rudeness, but with the trademark patience of a lifelong server, she holds it inside and forces a smile as she goes over.

ALICE

Sorry about that! It's just me  
tonight and we had a big rush come  
in -

HENRIETTA

(Dripping with  
condescension)  
Are you seriously going to give me  
excuses? You're a waitress, for  
god's sake, how hard can it be?

Alice takes a quiet breath, keeping her inner calm. She knows she has to have a thick skin with customers like this.

ALICE

Again... My apologies. Now, what  
can I get you folks?

(Noticing her quiet, shy-  
seeming son)

This guy here seems like he's  
hungry for some... dinosaur chicken  
fingers? Don't worry, they're just  
shaped like dinosaurs.

Her joke plays off terribly with Henrietta, who LOSES IT.

HENRIETTA

What?! How dare you?!

ALICE

I... I didn't mean--

HENRIETTA

First of all, you have no idea what  
you're talking about, calling him  
"hungry." Second of all--don't  
ever, ever speak to my child.

Cody, horrified at seeing his mom explode at a waitress,  
tries to say something--in the meekest voice imaginable.

CODY

(Barely audible)

Er, Mom, please-

SMACK. Henrietta's hand comes down hard on the table--not far  
from Cody's head. Her eyes burn with inexplicable rage. Her  
words are laced with the threat of violence, razor-sharp.

HENRIETTA

Shut it. Right now. Or else.

HENRIETTA (TO ALICE) (CONT'D)

Is that understood, or do I need to  
speak to your manager?

Cody gulps in what is unmistakably FEAR of his mom, and jerks  
his head downward again obediently.

Alice tenses up. Her eyes drift to Cody. **How awful for him.**

She almost says something... But looking back through the  
kitchen window, sees BENNY (Late 50s/early 60s, curmudgeonly  
diner owner and cook, always has money on his mind). He  
glances up--and she flinches, breaking eye contact.

She turns back to Henrietta, again forcing a warm tone.

ALICE

(Taking out her notepad)  
Understood, ma'am. Again, my  
sincere apologies, and I'd be glad  
to take your order and get it to  
you right away.

Henrietta grins smugly. There it is. The deference and  
groveling servitude she has been waiting for.

HENRIETTA

Well. That's more like it. Now,  
write this down.  
(Scanning the menu)  
I'll have a plate of waffles, a  
chocolate milkshake, ham and cheese  
omelette with bacon on the side...  
And oh, why not, an order of  
sausages too. It's my cheat day.

Alice looks at Henrietta and then at Cody, who says nothing.  
Alice hesitates, trying to find a less direct way of asking.

ALICE

And er, will that be everything?

Henrietta seems oblivious to the elephant in the room, still  
staring at the menu hungrily.

HENRIETTA

Hm, yes. For now.  
(Remembers)  
Oh wait of course, Cody will have  
one hard-boiled egg.

Alice looks at Cody--he dodges her eye contact and goes back  
to staring at the ground, his face flushing red.

ALICE

Oh...  
(Hesitates)  
Just so you know, we do have our  
kids special, which comes with two  
pieces of--

HENRIETTA

(Groans dramatically)  
Oh lord, I did not ask for your  
little "recommendations." I told  
you our order already.  
(Leaning toward her,  
incredibly condescending)  
(MORE)

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)

Now have some professionalism, and  
go get it for us. Okay? Can ya do  
that? Or are ya just too dumb?

Alice returns her glare for a moment--but relents, her face  
flushing red with her inner rage.

ALICE

(Painfully)

Of course... Right away, ma'am.

As Alice walks away stiffly, Henrietta calls to her again.

HENRIETTA

Oh, I almost forgot--

(Alice turns around  
begrudgingly)

My little Cody needs a drink, too.  
Fetch him some tapwater--room  
temperature will do.

Alice breathes, nods, and carries on towards the kitchen.

INT. BENNY'S DINER - KITCHEN - DAY

Alice passes the slip to Benny, who sweats away at the grill.  
Through the service window she can see Henrietta and Cody,  
now able to look without Henrietta noticing.

ANGLE ON: ALICE'S POV. Cody's body language is odd, frozen  
with his eyes fixed downward. Looking defeated like no eight-  
year old she has ever seen. In the meantime, Henrietta is  
texting away on her phone. Alice points them out to Benny.

ALICE

Benny, that mother and her boy.  
Have they been in here before?

Benny glances up for a quick moment just to see who she's  
talking about, but he's too busy to really care.

BENNY

They come in once in awhile. She's  
a bit ... picky.

ALICE

I got a bad feeling about her, and  
the kid looks terrified.

BENNY

None of our business Alice. Our  
business is taking orders.

(MORE)

BENNY (CONT'D)

Now go cash out the couple at table  
twelve. \*

ALICE \*

Something rotten is going on here. \*  
I don't trust that woman. \*

Benny groans, leaning on the countertop. Alice always gives  
him a hard time--getting in the way of his profits. \*

BENNY \*

Her name's Henrietta, and she's a \*  
good customer who likes to leave a \*  
decent tip as long as you make her \*  
happy -- So just do exactly that. \*  
Make her happy -- And make me happy \*  
by giving table twelve their bill \*  
before they think their meal is on \*  
the house. \*

ALICE \*

But, Benny don't you care-- \*

Benny suddenly SNAPS, smacking his hand hard on the table. \*

BENNY \*

NO! No I don't care! I care about \*  
happy customers -- I care about \*  
these two plates of food making it \*  
to table four! \*

He gestures to two breakfast orders sitting in the kitchen  
window with an order slip. Alice frowns, still pushing. \*

BENNY (CONT'D) \*

ORDER UP!! \*

He DINGS the service bell at the window obnoxiously, staring  
daggers at her. Alice can see it's no use, with Benny. \*

ALICE \*

Fine. \*

She storms out, taking the plates with her. \*

INT. BENNY'S DINER - BAR AREA - DAY \*

A couple minutes later, Alice is now grabbing the drinks for  
Henrietta's table. \*

She has waters and some cutlery on a tray already--but looks up at the milkshake machine.

CUT TO:

Alice adds a cherry to a made milkshake.

She adds it to the tray.

ALICE

This is your chance, Alice.

INT. BENNY'S DINER - HENRIETTA'S TABLE

She brings the drinks to the table. Jimmy's eyes light up as he sees the orange juice being put in front of him.

HENRIETTA

(Notices)

What the hell is that? Did you seriously get our drink order wrong?

ALICE

Er... No, it's on the house. No charge.

CLOSE ON: Alice WINKS subtly at Cody... He manages to give her just the faintest smile back.

HENRIETTA

Oh, so you don't think I can afford a milkshake for my son?

ALICE

I- No, no that's not what I was trying-

HENRIETTA

If we wanted a milkshake, we would have ordered a milkshake. What if he was lactose intolerant?

Alice is speechless. She can't believe even this tiny gesture has backfired.

ALICE

I...

HENRIETTA

You "what"? You messed up, that's what. I won't forget that.

Henrietta grins devilishly as if she is keeping score on Alice to torture her.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)

Now go back and get it right this time. Or else get me someone who can do their job properly.

ANGLE ON: CODY, watching Alice go. Receiving an act of kindness is a foreign experience for him, he's almost in awe. ***Is it possible... Someone actually cares about me?***

CUT TO:

HENRIETTA'S TABLE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Alice returns to the table carrying the food order.

ANGLE ON: THE TABLE. We see the infuriating contrast between Henrietta's huge meal and the SINGLE EGG for Cody.

As Alice lays out the plates, Henrietta suddenly points at Alice, recognizing her face.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)

Hold on. I knew I recognized you from somewhere. You're one of those trailer park people, from down in Riverside Trail.

ALICE

It's Riverside Valley actually.

HENRIETTA

Well, that explains everything. No wonder you can't take an order properly. Your whole family must be a bunch of inbred hillbillies.

Shielding Alice's anger away from Cody, she decides to play fun at the insult to make it fun for him.

ALICE

Yup! Just a bunch of crazy billy goats on a hill! MEEEEEEEEEEH!

Cody cracks a smile.

HENRIETTA

(Laughs)

Well it's so nice of Benny to give you a job here. He must pity you and your pathetic life.

ANGLE ON: While his mom is distracted, Cody is reaching out for a piece of bacon--a bold move, but he's so starved that he doesn't care anymore.

Henrietta sees it and FREAKS OUT.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)  
 (Smacking his hand away)  
 Get that hand away from my plate,  
 you little brat! Oh you are in for  
 it now. I buy you a lovely  
 breakfast, and this is how you  
 thank me? Stealing off my plate?  
 You awful, nasty little boy.

This really sets Alice off. She can recognize downright child abuse when she sees it. We can see something change in her face, a sense of courage, as she decides to take action.

She purposely spills coffee on the table, making sure it spills onto Henrietta, covering her in coffee.

She freaks out -- grabbing napkins to try and soak up the mess from her lap.

HENRIETTA (CONT'D)  
 Don't move.

She retreats to the bathroom.

Alice sits down across from Cody.

ALICE  
 Are you in danger?

Cody seems to understand intuitively what she is asking. His eyes are fixed very intensely on her but he is frozen in fear.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
 You don't have to say anything --  
 If you need my help ... Take a sip  
 of your water, right now.

Quickly, his hand visibly shaking, he picks up the water and SIPS it.

CLOSE ON: Alice nods very slowly. Bingo.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
 Okay... I'll be back. I promise.

INT. BENNY'S DINER - KITCHEN - DAY \*

Alice hurries into the kitchen, trying to stay calm. She opens her small locker containing her valuables, takes out her cell phone. Benny sees this and comes over--his face is intensely serious now. \*

ALICE \*

Look, Benny, that kid needs our help - \*

BENNY \*

It's not our problem. \*

He puts his hand out, waiting. Alice is speechless. \*

BENNY (CONT'D) \*

Give me the phone Alice. \*

A heavy beat. Alice absorbs what he just said. \*

ALICE \*

Or what Benny? \*

BENNY \*

Or else you can find another place to work. Think carefully Alice... Think of your son, Billy. \*

Alice is completely thrown off by this. On the one hand, she has to help the child and time is ticking. On the other hand, she can't afford to lose her job. \*

Benny holds out his hand again. Alice stares frozen, deeply conflicted as we CUT TO: \*

INT. BENNY'S DINER - HENRIETTA'S TABLE \*

Alice, still shaken up, is settling the bill with Henrietta at her table... It appears she relented to Benny's demands. \*

Henrietta pays with her credit card and hands back the machine to Alice, who subtly looks down at the MERCHANT RECEIPT as every server does, to see their tip. \*

CLOSE ON: GRATUITY written at the bottom: a meagre \$1.00. \*

As Alice looks up in disbelief, Henrietta is already looking at her devilishly. She grins with satisfaction. \*

HENRIETTA

What's wrong sweetie? A dollar is still a lot of money for trailer trash like you. Think of it as one hundred whole cents!

Just then, behind Henrietta, whose back is turned to the door, a CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES WORKER (30s/40s, stern-looking female walks in along with a police officer. From the kitchen window, Benny immediately sees her, his eyes WIDENING IN HORROR.

CPS WORKER

Good evening Mrs. Foster.

Henrietta is speechless.

HENRIETTA

No.

She looks at Alice, who returns the stare with a newfound calm. ***She made the call.***

CPS WORKER

(Knows it's her)

Looks like we have to escort you and your son to the office immediately, so we can re-open your file and re-assess your custody status.

HENRIETTA

You called the police?!

ALICE

The only thing we have in common is that we are mothers. The difference is my maternal instinct: to remove toxicity away from this child before it's too late for him to know he deserves better.

Benny turns to Alice, furious.

HENRIETTA

I'm a wonderful mother!  
(Sees Benny)  
Tell them, Benny! I'm your best customer! A very generous person!

ALICE

Using the large amount of child support all to yourself.

BENNY

After eight years... I thought I  
could trust your word that you  
wouldn't call, Alice.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Alice remains calm and begins undoing her apron.

\*

BENNY (CONT'D)

What- what are you doing?!

\*  
\*

ALICE

I can't work for someone whose  
morals are stewed in greed. I quit,  
Benny.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

She tosses her apron to Benny, who scrambles to catch it. He  
stands frozen in shock as she turns and WALKS OUT.

\*  
\*

As she does, she exchanges a warm SMILE with Cody--who stands  
with the officer, eager to be as far from his mother as  
possible. Like earlier, she WINKS at him--but this time,  
freely and without having to hide her solidarity.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

They're free now... Both of them.

\*