

WHAT HAD HAPPENED WAS

Written by

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INT. MA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Grease shoots off a skillet. Pink sausage patties turn brown. Onions and green peppers simmer in a pan.

LAMAR, 33, black, athletic build, unbuttoned chef's jacket, mans the stove and dances.

He pulls a flask from his jacket and takes a swig. His hands grasp a wooden spoon and mixes the meal together.

LAMAR

Mama, come and get this.

Lamar stirs the food together and plates it with care.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lamar walks the plate to the dining table and gently sets it down.

He walks to the kitchen.

MAMA, 61, pajamas, enters from her bedroom.

Lamar enters with a glass of orange juice, a slice nestled on the brim, and a bottle of prescription meds.

MAMA

Lamar, this is too much. Are you trying to kill me?

Mama sits down at the table.

Lamar puts the OJ and the bottle on the table.

LAMAR

Yes, is it working?

Mama forces a grin. She snatches the pill bottle.

MAMA

You don't need to come by every day. I can manage just fine.

LAMAR

I know, Ma. But you, my lady, are a priority.

Lamar smiles and kisses Mama's forehead.

MAMA

You look tired. Maybe you should
prioritize yourself for a change.

Lamar rolls his eyes and nods.

LAMAR

Hear you loud and clear, Ma.

EXT. BERTHOLDT'S BISTRO - PARKING LOT - DAY

An Uber car circles a restaurant, which is nearly vacant
except for a handful of cars parked along the side.

The car stops at the entrance.

Lamar steps out the back door of the car.

INT. BERTHOLDT'S BISTRO - DINING AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lamar enters the restaurant.

A modest dining area with twelve tables. A neon lit bar area
surrounded by bar stools. A hostess counter sits in front of
double steel doors leading to the kitchen.

Lamar fumbles with his jacket.

A CRASH comes from behind the double doors.

Lamar passes by the hostess station and heads for the
kitchen.

AMBER, 24, stands behind the station, arranges menus.

Amber waves at Lamar. He returns the wave.

AMBER

Lamar, what are you doing here?

LAMAR

I'm dying, Amber. How are things
progressing with you?

AMBER

Not bad, except we might have an
extremely productive day.

Lamar wobbles by the hostess stand.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Wait. Lamar. Are you drunk?

LAMAR
I'm nursing a few. Don't worry
about it. Manny is your man in the
kitchen today.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A tight two-man kitchen, stainless steel appliances, prep station, cooking line, dishwasher, walk-in freezer, and various sharp knives, slicers, and graters.

SIMON, 52, crisp white chef's embroidered jacket, stands in the center of the kitchen with a clipboard. He scowls.

LAMAR
Chef Simon?

SIMON
Lamar. You look terrible.

Lamar's shoulder slumps. He stares at Simon, then at the door.

LAMAR
(uneasy)
I try.

Simon snickers and approaches Lamar.

Lamar steps to the side of him, keeps some distance.

SIMON
Well, let's hope this isn't you
trying your best.

Lamar places a hand on a cutting table to prop himself up.

LAMAR
I'm sorry. I'm just not used to
seeing you on Wednesdays. No high-
end customers.

Simon gives Lamar a quick look over.

SIMON
I'm looking to change that. I
figure why can't every day be the
weekend.

LAMAR
Because of the days of the week,
Chef.

SIMON

That's good, or maybe because of standards are down and bullshit is high when you run the kitchen.

Lamar notices his unbuttoned jacket and quickly buttons it.

LAMAR

No, sir. I'm just as meticulous as you are with the job. I just don't make people's lives as challenging.

Simon turns to the grill and checks off a box on his clipboard.

SIMON

Not a job, Sous. That is what you, Amber, and apparently Manny don't understand.

LAMAR

Where is Manny?

Simon ignores the question, plays with the grill's dial.

SIMON

Today is going to go differently than you may have expected. Can I trust you to step up?

LAMAR

I love surprises.

SIMON

Good. Me too.

Lamar inhales deeply.

INT. RESTROOM - DAY

Lamar is on his knees over a toilet. He shoves his fingers down his throat and vomits.

LAMAR

Shit!

Lamar flushes the toilet. He falls down next to it, leans against it, and looks up at the ceiling.

INT. KITCHEN - PREP STATION - DAY

Simon scrubs the grill with a steel wool rag.

Lamar stands over a cutting board, slices chicken breasts.

SIMON
The chicken is dead, Lamar. Can't
fly away from you.

Lamar turns his head, still with the knife in his hand.

LAMAR
Tell him that.

Lamar holds the knife in a stabbing motion while Simon's back is turned.

Simon spins around. Lamar spins around and unsuccessfully cuts chunks off the chicken.

SIMON
You don't seem quite yourself
today?

LAMAR
I'm here.

Simon stares, then sniffs the air.

SIMON
Do you smell something?

Lamar sniffs his lapel and winces.

INT. HOSTESS STATION - DAY

Amber sprays rose scented perfume on Lamar.

AMBER
This way, you don't smell like a
brewery back there.

LAMAR
Instead, I'm going to smell like a
damn dandelion.

AMBER
Roses. Just saying you sure you
don't just want to throw in the
towel.

Lamar shoots her a look.

AMBER (CONT'D)
It's not the worst idea.

LAMAR

I just got to last until the end of my shift or you can get used to Chef Simon being here every day.

AMBER

You must survive this for all our sakes.

Lamar nods.

INT. WALK-IN FREEZER - DAY

Cold steel box with boxes, shelves stocked with uncooked food, and a rolling cart with order numbers, pushed against the walls.

Lamar lies on a keg of beer, hugs his arms around his waist.

BANGS on the door from outside can be heard.

EXT. DUMPSTER - DAY

Lamar throws trash bags over his head to the dumpster.

One gets caught on the side and tears.

LAMAR

Fuck my life.

Lamar picks the trash up by hand, sweating.

Simon stands by the back door, crosses his arms.

SIMON

It goes in the trash can, Sous.

Lamar grins and mumbles to himself.

INT. KITCHEN - THE LINE - DAY

Lamar stands over Simon as he sits on top of a bucket next to the grill.

SIMON

We need some action.

LAMAR

I can go check on the walk-in again.

SIMON

Good. Do that and while you're in there, get some beef and cut some porterhouses.

INT. KITCHEN - PREP STATION - DAY

The slicer's rotating blades whirl with a sharp BUZZ.

Lamar removes beef from plastic wraps, his hands tremble.

He grabs the giant chunk of beef and places it face down on the slicer.

He pushes the beef along the slicer and a LOUDER BUZZ comes from the machine.

He stops, looks at the blades, and moves back.

SIMON

Any day now with that beef.

Lamar changes the dial to 4 on the slicer.

LAMAR

Just getting a feel for it.

SIMON

It isn't a date, Sous.

Lamar stares at the wall and exhales.

He draws the meat back once and gives it a firm push; the slice misses completely.

Lamar leans forward to check the cut, the slicer's blades spin far too fast.

Simon notices and walks over to the slicer.

Simon pushes him out of the way and slices the beef.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You're a special class of stupid today!

Lamar raises his hands and shimmies over to the line, and smiles.

INT. KITCHEN - THE LINE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lamar stands over the skillet and shakes the melted butter.

Amber barges into the kitchen.

AMBER

Hey guys, we got a party of eight.

Simon cuts off slicer and slaps his hands together.

SIMON

We read you.

Lamar grips Amber's arm. Amber mouths, "you got this."

SIMON (CONT'D)

Alright, sous, let's get this day started.

LAMAR

Wonderful.

INT. KITCHEN - THE LINE - DAY - LATER

Orders ring in. A mess of food chunks are scattered on the floor.

Lamar slips and slides, sweat trickles down his soaked chef's jacket. Simon glides with ease, holding plates of finished entrees in hand.

SIMON

You are really spinning today, huh?
You need to pick up the pace.

Lamar shakes a skillet with a beef shank and plates it.

He takes a handful of seasonings and applies it carelessly.

LAMAR

Swinging out!

Amber enters the kitchen, grabs the plate. Simon shakes his head.

INT. THE LINE - AFTERNOON - LATER

Lamar teeters over the grill. Simon sits on the bucket, scribbles on his clipboard.

SIMON

When are you leaving?

LAMAR

Two hours.

Lamar wipes sweat from his forehead with his jacket sleeve.

SIMON

If a slow morning rush makes you
this exhausted, then you need to
consider a career change.

LAMAR

I did my job.

Lamar scoops up some grime from the grill and tosses it into
a trash bin.

INT. THE LINE - AFTERNOON - LATER

Simon cleans the slicer in the dishwasher, he uses a rubber
hose, sprays the blades clean.

Lamar, exhausted, watches from behind Simon.

LAMAR

I can do that, Chef.

SIMON

No, you can't.

Lamar reaches for the hose but, Simon turns it away from him.

LAMAR

I'm sorry. I thought Manny would be
here to --

SIMON

Pick up your slack.

Lamar hesitates to answer.

SIMON (CONT'D)

That is not his job. Take some
ownership. I wanted to kick you out
as soon as I saw you today.

Lamar steps back. Simon cuts off the hose.

LAMAR

Why didn't you?

SIMON

It isn't my first time cleaning up
one of your mess. So what? You
stayed and worked drunk.

Simon points over at the bucket.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Have a seat, Lamar.

Lamar walks over to it and kicks it over.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Lamar, what are you doing?

Lamar picks up a spatula, turns the burner up on the grill, and places a pan on top.

Lamar dances by the grill.

LAMAR
I'm ready to follow your lead,
Chef. I just might need some help.

Simon grins and walks over to the grill.

SIMON
Amber! Get Lamar some coffee and
bring some dishwashing liquid.

LAMAR
We've got plenty, Chef.

SIMON
For you. You smell like a whiskey
soaked rose garden.

Lamar and Simon share a laugh.

INT. BERTHLOT'S BISTRO - BAR - NIGHT

Lamar, Amber, and Simon sit on bar stools at end of day, the bistro is empty and quiet.

BARTENDER, 35, pours drinks for the three of them.

SIMON
You really pulled out all the stops
today.

AMBER
Yeah. I'm just glad no one died.

Lamar and Simon shares laugh. Bartender serves them three shot glasses of bourbon.

Lamar pushes his glass away from him.

LAMAR
I've had enough for one day.