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As I walked in on my first day, I groaned softly as I surveyed the scene. Dishes were stacked up two feet high because my co-worker decided not to show up. The main chef, who doubled as my boss, glanced at me hurriedly and told me to get to work. He must have seen my look of utter fear and confusion because he walked me over the sink to show me how to run the dishwasher. I stood there at that washing station for four hours straight, pausing only to put dishes away. Later, I sat there in my car after work, I thought to myself, “if this day is anything like how the rest of my job is going to be, this is going to be the worst job I’ve ever had.”

My main complaint is one that many teens complain of: that this job was just plain boring. Every day was the same. I would walk through the back door on the loading dock where a surprising number of employees used to smoke or vape. I would tie my white apron over my t-shirt at my waist. I would clock in and head to my dishwashing station. From there, I would start loading the dishwasher with plates smeared with expensive cheeses and smoked fish. They would come out piping hot, and from there I would put them away on their respective shelf or drawer.

After a few hours of this, I would receive the cutting boards that signaled that the chefs were done cooking and I could begin closing up. With a huge grin on my face, I would rush to sweep, scrub, and squeegee the floors and complete all the closing rituals.

Feet hurting and fingers throbbing from the scrapes and burns I had endured, I would triumphantly punch in my number to clock out. As I exited the door, I sighed at the thought of my meager paycheck I would soon receive. However, even though it was small, it was the only thing that helped me endure my summer washing dishes at the White Bear Yacht Club.