

Bigger Fish to Fry

By: Stefano DiMatteo

The local Fish n Chip Store – Somewhere in St. Louis, Missouri

It's the middle of summer break and the temperature outside is hot enough to deep fry a Fish. The girls are all on break sitting outside the front of the Chip shop, sipping on fountain drinks. They're all wearing hairnets and their uniforms are straight out of an episode of Lavern and Shirley.

Linda is working to support her family – though she has kept this a secret from her friends. Her Dad lost his job and her Mom is barely making enough to keep the family with food on the table – a realist. Wilma understands the value of hard work discipline and a woman's right to vote – she is an idealist. Daphne really wants to go to California. She is planning to escape to become a star – a dreamer.

Daphne: Why did women fight for the vote again? I mean, if this is what it means to be equal I think I rather go back to the days when women just stayed at home and the men did all the sweaty gross stuff.

Wilma: C'mon it's not that bad!

Daphne: Really, which part? The sweat on your skin, the constant smell of fish in your hair, the oil that splashes up

and scalds my skin daily! The fact that it's 100 degrees in there and inhaling all that smoke from the griddle is probably giving us the black lung as we speak!!! I mean sure, pre-mature death is not that bad!

Wilma: God, you're so melodramatic.

Daphne: Can I help it if I'm suffering from *post-traumatic-school-dis-order*!

Linda: Is that even a thing?

Daphne: Well it must be. Because what else could explain me getting talked into spending my summer vacation working in a grease pit like this? Geez, I am getting pimples daily.

Linda and Wilma giggle.

Linda: Daphne, if I didn't know you, I'd swear you were a character on a reality TV, show!

Daphne: Exactly

Lindsay: Exactly what?

Daphne: I'm not supposed to be here. I'm destined to be a STAR. If anyone ever saw me working here, OMG, I'd never be able to live it down.

Wilma: Work is good for the soul Daphne. Didn't anyone ever tell you that?

Daphne: Your father, every time I see him.

Wilma: He means well Daphne. He cares about all of my friends.

Daphne: Sure. Whatever.

Lindsay: We all agreed at the beginning of Summer that we would get a job so that we could save up enough money to go on the School trip to California next year.

Wilma: And because Lindsay found a job before summer break, she new they needed extra help and...

Daphne: (Deadpan) We ended up hear.

Wilma: Exactly. We had first mover advantage!

Daphne: Has anyone ever told you, you're really strange?

Wilma: Umm, you do, at least once a day.

Daphne: Just checking. (Then) I remember why we got the job. I just wasn't really paying attention to the where part, of our conversation. I thought maybe we'd get a job at the mall or something. You know, cute boys, Starbucks and oh I don't know, air conditioning. Instead, we get this little slice of heaven to come to everyday for 2 months. Its like Guantanamo Bay was moved to St. Louis. And WE chose too work there.

Lindsay: Hey, Mr. Gutierrez is a really nice man to work for. And the tips aren't half bad.

Daphne: By tips do you mean, stay away from the men's bathroom after Simon has gone in?

The girls fake a Vomiting motion.

Wilma: And working retail, just seemed so predictable for teenagers and lacked a sense of purpose behind the "WHY" I should wake up everyday to help spoiled brats try on jeans or the latest crop top!

Daphne: Riiiiight. Because were saving the world here, one fried fish at a time.

Linda: At least we don't have to listen to the screech and squeal of Tiffany and Brittany's voice for a whole summer. (Sarcastically) "Lindsay I always new you'd be a big success – Wilma, did you save the Dolphins yet? And, Daphne when you said 'I'm going to be a big star', I didn't realize that you meant I'm going to work at BIG STAR!"

All the girls fake another vomiting motion at the mention of Tiffany and Brittany's name.

Daphne: Geez I hate those girls.

Wilma: Hate's a strong word.

Daphne just glares at Wilma. Wilma deflects, as she is kind of afraid of Daphne.

Wilma: Umm, but in their case, completely appropriate.

Daphne: Thank you. I'm telling you, when we get to California, I'm never coming back to this place ever again.

Lindsay and Wilma just look at each other, here we go again.

Lindsay: Look I'm just glad that you girls decided to come work with me this summer. I can't tell you how much that means to me. I'm not sure what I would have done with out the two of you here this summer?

Wilma: I can. You would have had to clean the grease pit alone.

Lindsay: Right. And that would have been...

Daphne: Disgusting!

Lindsay: Well a lot less fun then when you have your two BFF'S around to help out.

WILMA/DAPH: Awww. We love you too Lindsay.

Daphne: Still, I will be happy when school starts again. I can't wait to take off this apron and hair net and get back to my jeans and staring at Parker's backside.

The girl's chuckle.

Wilma: Wow, maybe that whole *post-traumatic-school-disorder* thing, is actually real! Did I just hear you say, you can't wait to get back to school? Though, staring at Parker does kind of make sitting through math class, a whole lot easier.

Daphne: Beats working here. I love you girls, but the best thing I'm taking from this job is my \$10 an hour, and come December, (singing) "I'm leaving on a jet plane, don't know when I'll be back again". Can you believe he's dating Sheryl?

Wilma: Yes. They both make an extremely lovely couple. Why wouldn't they want to date each other?

Daphne: Can you ever just agree with me?

Wilma: Maybe. Sure. Of Course. (Pretending to be outraged) I can't believe he's dating Sheryl.

Daphne feed up with Wilma, turns to Lindsay.

Daphne: (To Lindsay) You're really going to keep this job after summer break?

Lindsay: I guess so.

Daphne: Why?

Wilma chimes in.

Wilma: Because women fought for the right to do so.

Daphne: Here she goes again.

Wilma: I know it sounds crazy to you, but if you paid attention in history class, before World War I women were not allowed to step out side there kitchen, let alone try make it in the world for themselves. We owe a lot to the suffragette movement of the 1800's "The women's contribution to the war effort challenged the notion of women's physical and mental inferiority and made it more difficult to suggest that women were, both by constitution and temperament, unfit to vote. If women could work in munitions factories, it seemed both ungrateful and illogical to deny them a place in the polling booth. But the vote was much more than simply a reward for war work; the point was that women's participation in the war effort helped to dispel the fears that surrounded women's entry into the public work force." Lesile Hume.

Daphne: Thanks for the history lesson Mrs. Peterson. I just meant, why here?

Wilma: Oh.

Lindsay: Because, everyone is really nice to me. It's not as bad as you make it out to be. And because we really need the money!

Daphne: Yes it is. And no we won't. You'll have made enough by the end of summer to pay for our trip to California.

Lindsay: Right. About that...

Daphne: What about it.

Lindsay looks like she wants to tell them something, but isn't really sure if she can.

Wilma: What is it Lynn...?

Lindsay: Nothing it's just. Wow would you look at that, our break is almost done. We should probably be getting back in side. We wouldn't want Mr. Gutierrez to come out looking for us?

Daphne: She's not coming!

Wilma: What? Sure she is. We've been planning for this trip with the school for the last 2 years. Every, i was dotted, every t crossed. This job was the last part of our journey, before our big adventure together. She has to come. We voted on it. It was unanimous.

Lindsay: I can't.

Daphne: I was right.

Wilma: You can't.

Lindsay: I can't.

Wilma: What does that even mean?

Lindsay: It means. I cannot come to California.

Wilma: I know what the word means.

Lindsay: Great.

Wilma: Great and I can't. That's it. That's the best you can muster up Missy. Two years of me planning and lobbying with the school board to help organize a trip to California, that they said our school would never be able to go on. Two years of meetings with teachers, board members and school officials. Two years of struggling to convince them that the cultural experience alone would not only enrich our lives today, but also to help to shape us as the future leaders of tomorrow.

Lindsay: Get a grip Wilma; it's a trip to Hollywood, not the Smithsonian.

Wilma: You are so coming young lady!

Daphne: You can't back out on us now.

Lindsay: I'm not backing out.

Daphne: You just said you weren't coming right. That pretty much means backing out to me.

Lindsay: Please don't make this harder than it has to be. It's not like I don't want to go with you girls. It's just...

Wilma: What?

Lindsay: I can't.

Wilma: You said that already.

Daphne: Explain.

Lindsay: (Pause) My parents said we couldn't afford it.

Daphne and Wilma give each other a puzzled look.

Daphne: We're confused.

Wilma: Correct. We've done the math. We will earn enough money over the summer to cover all our costs for the trip. That was the idea.

Lindsay: That was your idea. I, got the job here before both you, remember?

Wilma: Yes. You said it was because you wanted to have more spending money while we were away.

Lindsay: That's, just what I told you.

Daphne: You lied to us? Why?

Lindsay: Because it was easier than telling you girls the truth.

Daphne/Wilma: Which is?

Lindsay: (Long Beat) My dad lost his job 3 months ago at the plant, and he hasn't been able to find another one since. So,

my family needs the money that I earn here to help out at home.

Daphne/Wilma: Oh.

The girls go quiet. There is a long awkward pause.

Lindsay: It's no big deal. I'm sure he'll get another job soon enough. And California's not going anywhere right?

Wilma: Well that depends on which global warming expert you listen to.

Another awkward silence.

Daphne: You ok Lindsay? I mean...

Lindsay: It just not fair you know? His company said they had to downsize to survive and outsourced most of the work overseas. So, I had to go from being a teenager with summer vacation plans, to a working adult overnight. What gives them the right to outsource my summer vacation? When did I vote to give up the rights to my childhood? And now Dad just mopes around the house. He looks so defeated. (Pause) At first when it happened, he was angry. Upset at the politicians for screwing up our country. He blamed everyone and everything. Then one morning he woke up, with a new can do attitude. And we all felt a little better. Like everything was going to be ok. And after a few weeks when he couldn't find a new job, he just started sleeping in longer and longer. Now when I come home at night, he's still in his same pajamas from the morning. I

don't think he's left the house in a week. And get this, my mom, even asked me to talk to Mr. Gutierrez to see if my Dad could have one of your jobs when we go back to school at the end of summer. I mean can you imagine, my dad working on the griddle beside me? He used to be a supervisor at the plant, and now he's going to have to fry fish for a living beside his daughter.

Daphne: Well he can have mine! God knows I don't want it.

Lindsay: That's not the point Daphne.

Daphne: I know. I just don't know what to say.

Wilma: Well I do. Remember the suffragette movement.

Daphne: Not now Wilma.

Wilma: I'm serious. For a long time women depended on men for their survival. And after the movement women started to realize that they could not only take care of themselves, the kids, the bills, but could also support the family. And that IT was OK. Men don't have to feel ashamed anymore. We don't have to feel like it's our Dad's job to carry the family load. A family is more than one person. A family is all of us doing our part to help each other, when we need each other the most. And I'll sure as heck be... (Pausing, trying to say the word).

Daphne: Go on you can say it... DAMNED.

Wilma: Right. If I'm going to let those women that fought for our right to vote, and our right to feel like equals, down. So if it helps, I want to give my paychecks to you.

Daphne: Seriously?

Lindsay: What? No. I won't let you.

Wilma: And I won't give you a choice.

Lindsay: I didn't tell you, because I want your sympathy. My family is going through a bit of hard time right now, that's all. I'm sure it'll get better. I don't want charity.

Wilma: Its not charity Lindsay. You're our family. And family is supposed to stick together when they need each other most. Besides, California is not going anywhere.

Daphne: Umm... you sure about that?

Wilma: No; but we live in the mid-west, if the global warming experts are correct, we may have beach front properties soon enough. California, may be coming to us.

Lindsay: We better get back inside. I really can't afford to lose this job too.

Daphne: C'mon we got some big fish to fry!

The girls start heading back in. Lindsay hangs back a bit.

Lindsay: Wait. (Pause) I just want to say thank you. For being my friends. For listening and not judging. Cause, I really don't know how I would've made it through this summer working here alone.

Daphne: We know. We're the best. (With a smile) But you know what they say. "Like attracts like."

The girls all smile and share a big group hug. They head in side.

From offstage we here.

Wilma: Ewww, Simon left the bathroom door open again!

End Play.