

WHO GIVES A HOOOT?

I had just finished my first college audition and was starving for lunch. Unfortunately, it was a Sunday in Georgia, and nearly every restaurant was closed for business; my patience and energy wearing thin, I found myself, along with a few other auditionees, willingly walking into the sweet embrace of the Hooters restaurant directly across from the Westin in Peachtree Plaza.

I never expected to visit a Hooters location in my lifetime. Being a 17-year-old girl with reasonable parents, I would be dining at the notorious restaurant for the first time, and I wasn't sure if I could handle (or even comprehend) the Hooters environment. My hunger and exhaustion, however, were too overwhelming to deny whatever Hooters had to offer; with a true "YOLO" attitude, I marched myself into the fine establishment, expecting anything but what I experienced.

Immediately, I was confronted with an obnoxious scent, the origin of which I never found. It was a nausea-inducing sort of smell, reminiscent of cheap perfume, old chili and a strange blend of sweat and blood. Walking deeper into Hooters with my small posse, I felt as if we were unassuming animals preparing to walk into the depths of a slaughterhouse.

I am pleased to report that the Hooters staff was very pleasant to interact with. As a feminist, I believe it is one's duty to respect the choices of women, even if the thing they want most is to work at a restaurant with a reputation like Hooters'. Wearing the skimpy Hooters uniforms may make some women feel empowered, and I'm totally down with that, if it makes them happy.

That being said, something felt a little ... off about the Hooters girls. Though they were extremely kind and helpful, yet I couldn't help but feel that they were a little robotic. We may not have seen any direct harassment from Hooters customers, but at the same time the air was thick with palpable bestial, misogynistic sexual desire. Any time a TV set needed to be adjusted or something had to be picked up from the ground, the eyes of

customers young and old darted to the hindquarters of the waitresses at work. The few families that I saw actually seemed to encourage their young children to participate in the barbaric spectacle. It grew exceedingly uncomfortable to watch patrons staring at the women as they did their jobs in (somewhat) compromising positions, and I couldn't help but infer that this robotic behavior was a response to the constant stares. I felt kind of bad for the Hooters girls; maybe their robotic demeanor was their way of coping with being objectified and stared at like an animal.

Regardless of the uncomfortable atmosphere, I had to realize that I came to Hooters for one reason only: to eat. I managed to order some chili cheese fries and a sweet tea without breaking eye contact with our waitress. Like a baby deceitfully fed a lemon slice, I gulped down my sweet tea without considering the consequences of artificial flavoring. The 5 trillion packages of Splenda were too much for my poor sweet tea to handle, and after I had finished my drink, rather than feeling refreshed, my mouth felt drier than the Sahara Desert. I warn you that Hooters' sweet tea is an embarrassment to Atlanta, and all of the South.

My advice is: order water. It's free and it won't make you grimace. Finally, after a wait that seemed to last an eternity in the timeless Hell that was Hooters, I finally received my fries with warm, gooey satisfaction; or so I anticipated. It pains me to say that, although I can't say I was expecting a queen's meal, the chili covering the curly fries was almost unbearable. It was reminiscent of a variety of chili common in trailer parks; it had a flavor somewhat resembling that of old meat festering in a can. The fries, however? Awesome. Then again, it's pretty difficult to mess up fried potatoes.

After paying way too much for my too-sweet sweet tea and batch of future food poisoning, I waltzed out of Hooters with an eerie sense of the darkness of humanity. I'm not sure what I was expecting, but I was speechless after my meal. The smell of Hooters still lingers in my nightmares.

-Hannah Martin

