I arrive five minutes early for my interview, nervous but practicing confidence as I walk inside the building. This will be my first time soliciting a management position. I’m anxious to come off as qualified, not having much experience. I wait in a line of suspended customers staring down the menu with shiftless eyes. My resume sways gently in my hand and I take this opportunity to glance behind the counter into the kitchen.

Customer service employees chat idly by the registers as massive hoards of tacos are wrapped and flung down the line like a waterfall rushing, pooling, and then swept away into bags to be replaced by more. The last couple customers in front of me clear out of the way and I introduce myself to the cashier who calls to the back and then asks me to take a seat to wait for my interview.

Moments later the general manager struts out quietly. Her height is brief, her wrists thin and straight, but most noticeably she has a look to her of constant survey. I discover quickly that she, beyond her look, loves to smile. She tells me to call her Misty and before I know it the interview has swept by and I am being placed on the schedule.

I’ll start out learning the basic positions in the restaurant before being trained to be a manager, assuming all goes well. I leave feeling accomplished and excited to learn something new. I slide into my car a smile falling to my lips. The light cast through the chartreuse leaves around me shimmers chaotically as if to congratulate me. The next couple weeks go by smooth. I memorize the menu and learn the flow of the store.

I start my third week on a Tuesday. It’s a warm summer afternoon, I pull up to the parking lot under the trees still and towering. As I approach the entrance the harsh glare from the sun seems to rush me inside. I step through the doors, the concentrated smell of beans and overheated oil seeping out in a gentle rush as the door is pushed open. Approaching the front counter, I’m greeted by a less than welcoming atmosphere. I feel my ankles held back as if trudging through something thick in the air that has settled on the ground after a long day.

A couple side glances, but the usual cheerful night shift has arrived parade doesn’t ensue. Not questioning the displaced looking crew, I wash my hands and take my place at the drive-thru window. I’ve only handed out one order as my partner for the night approaches drying off his hands and says, “So, you’re going to be a manager now?”

McKayla a feisty and determined cook turns her head sharply upon hearing the question. “Oh, did Misty say that?” I ask surprised not realizing she had already told people. I confirm with him that in my interview I asked to be trained as a manager. The conversation fades away into talk of weekend plans and tired jokes. As the conversation relaxes, I notice in contrast the tension in the rest of the store.

Dinner rush comes in a flood and then slows again to a simmer. Half of the crew who wasn’t able to get breaks heads to the back of the store to take sips of their drinks and relax, one or two of them sneaking out for a quick smoke. I hand out the last order on the screen and walk to the back as well. I catch Mckayla in an agitated rant, “Why is she even getting to be trained as a manager when there’s already people who have worked here for years and haven’t been promoted.”

I pause, awkward with the accidental intrusion, my confidence fading a bit upon realizing the tension in the store had been caused by news of my success. Our eyes meet and before I can say anything, she storms out the back door. I’m disappointed to discover that several people from the crew have similar feelings. The rest of the shift trudges by slowly taking its time around the corners, rubbing in at any chance it can, how dreadful the day has been. I choose not to confront with anyone the issues that have arisen from the day. I’m too exhausted. I manage to get home somehow and collapse into a mound of blankets instantly falling asleep.

I wake up the next morning attempting to shake off the weight of yesterday. I sit curled up in blankets thinking about what I should do. I contemplate talking to McKayla the next time we work together. I don’t know what I would even say. My stomach churns and shrinks at the thought. Ultimately, I end up returning to work empty handed.

Over the next couple weeks, I think a lot about how I should handle this rocky start. I begin notice lots of little things about people. Like how they handle their stress. How Tanner, the current closing manager, hides in the back when a shift is rough. I notice more importantly, how I handle it, and feel disappointed.

I start to notice something about myself that I had failed to notice before. I notice that I don’t come off as self-assured. I notice that I apologize too often when it’s not necessary and tend to shrink inside myself when confronting things that are new to me. I realize this and I decide that I want to change and I need to change.

The following morning, I end up working next to Mckayla. The same feeling arises that I felt that night walking into her conversation. But this time, I choose to ignore it. Instead of shrinking under the line to hide with the back up sauces and stow away discarded taco toppings, I take my place next to her.

I ask her how the start of her shift has been and listen when she says it’s been crappy. I talk to her like I care, because I do despite our bad start. She talks about the employee that didn’t show up for his shift and the customers that made her hard job and next thing I know an opportunity to joke comes up and I take it, not sure if she’s willing to humor me. To my surprise she laughs, a real laugh, the kind where your eyes light up and you forget yourself for a moment. It’s in this moment that I realize the role I’ve played in how people reacted to me being a manager and I know that I’ll change a lot.