

## Why We Really Work in Food

the apron tied around her waist  
surrounds her like a frock  
of mustard and ketchup  
and ranch dressing—the white trash fav.  
oh how tasteful.  
the shoes—sold at a most refined discount shop  
on highway 41—  
smell like old bacon and sausage—  
eau de pork, saks, one would assume.

the tag on his grand, off-white, not quite Tide-clean lapel  
reads manager—proudly—boldfaced—MANAGER.  
a vinyl belt, tags still hidden, untorn, beneath the simulated  
gold buckle,  
hitches up the shit-brown, polyester stylers covering  
the legs that never see sun.

“over easy?” she cries, less than hopeful that little johnny will  
reply,  
at the family of 12 at table 11.  
“duh” they seem to sing together, like a church choir—  
but they’d actually tip less if it were sunday—  
jesus gives more than 10%  
spells her favorite button.  
“over easy? eggs over easy?”  
repetition is the only chloroform she carries  
in her lint and small change-laden pockets.  
someone recalls english and returns from helen keller land—  
revived by hunger.

“thank you” he says pseudo-sincerely to an elderly couple  
with hashbrowns streaked across their golf polos  
as he rings tickets and collects strawberry-preserved  
dollars.

“come again” he says—and glances at her.

she pivots and grins coyly.  
he chuckles and meets her sweaty gaze  
winking across the orange and green striped carpet at her  
as she carries a tray full of syrupy, slobbered-on dishes.  
she notices her lipstick on his collar  
as he turns to follow her into the kitchen  
to see what’s cookin’  
out back  
behind the dumpster.

*Michelle Liffick*