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PRE-SHIFT MEETING

Lead Focused / Comedy / 4-5 min
Cast 4-5 Female x2 Male x2 Any x1

Noah was promoted to manager four days ago. He has a laminated agenda and twenty minutes before service. The walk-in dies, the printer will not stop, and the reservation book has betrayed him.

CHARACTERS

NOAH (LEAD) - 20s, promoted to manager four days ago, has read one book about leadership and laminated the results.

BEA - 50s, veteran server, has outlasted six managers.

RUBEN - 30s, line cook, calm in the way of someone who has seen many fires.

KIP - late teens, dishwasher and food runner, extremely eager.

MARISOL - 20s, host, brings bad news in a cheerful voice. Can be cut, with her lines given to Bea.

SETTING

The back dining room of a small neighborhood restaurant, 4:30 on a Friday afternoon, twenty minutes before service.

*The back dining room of a small restaurant.
Chairs are still up on the tables. NOAH stands at the head of a pushed-together table holding a laminated sheet. BEA, RUBEN, and KIP sit.
Somewhere in the building, a receipt printer is printing without stopping.*

NOAH

Okay. Welcome to pre-shift. First one with me as manager, so bear with me. I made an agenda.

BEA

He laminated it.

NOAH

I laminated it. Item one. Specials.

RUBEN

There are no specials.

NOAH

There's the halibut.

RUBEN

The halibut is in the walk-in. The walk-in is at fifty-one degrees.

NOAH

Since when?

RUBEN

Since I checked it. Which was when you said "item one."

NOAH

*(trying to write on the
laminate with a marker that
doesn't work)*

Okay. Item one is now the walk-in. Kip, call the repair guy.

KIP

Which one?

NOAH

The number's on the wall by the phone.

KIP

There's like nine numbers on the wall by the phone. One of them just says "DO NOT CALL."

NOAH

Don't call that one.

KIP goes. BEA holds up a long ribbon of receipt paper.

BEA

It's printing the same ticket. Table twelve, two soups. A hundred and forty times so far.

NOAH

We don't have a table twelve.

BEA

We do now.

MARISOL enters with the reservation book, smiling.

MARISOL

Quick thing. Fun thing. You know the party of twenty at seven?

NOAH

Item two. Reservations. Yes.

MARISOL

There's also a party of eighteen at seven-fifteen. The book was open to the wrong page when you took them. Both of them. On different days. Same page.

NOAH

That's thirty-eight people.

RUBEN

Thirty-eight people and a warm halibut.

NOAH

Okay. Okay. Deep breath. Item three. Positivity.

BEA

You wrote "positivity" on the agenda.

NOAH

I wrote "Item three, positivity, two minutes." Because the book I read said that a team that...

The lights flicker off. Then on. A smoke alarm somewhere begins to chirp once every ten seconds.

NOAH

Is that a fire?

RUBEN

That's a battery.

NOAH

Is it gonna be a fire?

RUBEN

Everything's gonna be a fire eventually. That one's a battery.

KIP

(returning, phone in hand)

He says he can come Tuesday.

NOAH

It's Friday.

KIP

He knows. He said it with, like, a laugh.

NOAH sits. He puts the laminated agenda face down.

NOAH

Bea. How many managers have you had here?

BEA

Six. Seven if you count the week Dana's nephew did it.

NOAH

What did the good ones do?

BEA

There weren't any good ones. There were ones who asked.

NOAH

Okay. I'm asking.

BEA

Move the party of eighteen to the patio. It's warm out. Tell them we're doing it special for them. Light candles so they can't see the patio.

RUBEN

Put the halibut on ice in the bar sink. I'll sell it all by eight, or it's staff meal. Either way it doesn't hit the trash.

MARISOL

I'll call the twenty and tell them seven-thirty. People love being told a later time. It feels exclusive.

KIP

I can unplug the printer.

NOAH

Can you?

KIP

Nobody's ever let me try.

NOAH

Kip. Unplug the printer.

KIP runs off like it's the greatest day of his life. A crunching sound. The printer goes quiet.

NOAH

(standing again)

Okay. Revised agenda. Item one: don't die.
Item two: patio. Item three...

BEA

Positivity.

NOAH

Positivity. Two minutes.

His phone buzzes. He looks at it.

NOAH

It's the owner.

RUBEN

Don't answer it.

NOAH

(answering)

Hey! Yeah. No, everything's great. Totally under control.

The smoke alarm chirps. The lights flicker. Offstage, KIP shouts "I FIXED IT" and something metal falls over.

NOAH

(brightly, into the phone)

That's just the team. Being positive.

He gives the room a thumbs up. BEA gives him one back. It's almost sincere.

END OF SCRIPT