

Fried French

By Anne Swardson

If you have to work a shit job, it may as well be at an airport snack bar. Especially at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris.

The customers speak lots of languages, so you can't tell what they're saying when they chew you out. They can't figure out the currency, which occasionally results in a big accidental tip. They're in a hurry, so they don't hog the tables for long. They don't notice how awful the food is since they're (mostly) not French.

And it's a great place to plan to kill your boss.

I've been thinking about bumping off Emile for more than a year, ever since he first sidled up and squeezed my butt. He does it every day now, and lately has graduated to titty rubbing and thigh stroking. I know where this is going, and I'm not going to let it happen.

No one at the shop notices his advances, since they're all frantically running around like I am, wrapping doughy sandwiches, sticking stale croissants into the microwave, dealing out hard-boiled eggs and pouring enormous cups of Fanta. When I get home and take a shower, I can't tell whether I'm washing off food stains or Emile smell.

You might be wondering why I don't tell my supervisor about this harassment. My supervisor is Emile. A bigwig from the head office stops by occasionally and checks the cooking surfaces and refrigerator temperatures, but he doesn't even know my name.

It's Fatima, by the way. And I need this job. People may think France is a welfare state, where everyone gets unemployment and goes on strike all the time. I chuckle about that every night as I take the train from the airport to the tiny apartment I share with my mother—who asks me every day when I'm getting married.

I can't bring myself to tell her I'm gay and so, the 12th of *jamais*. That's never, for anyone who doesn't speak French.