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## Christin Fergus-Jean

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the dishwasher grazing the inside of someone's white wine glass. All is a masquerade, covering the chaotic reality underneath.

I have a job to do. Staring at the fly circling around the lights is not getting the three cappuccinos, cheesecake and brownie a la mode done for table 64. Like clockwork I set down plates, wash and place and arrange and organize and primp my painstaking creations. The mint sprig must go just right. Perhaps a little more cinnamon on that second cappuccino. A new waiter enters, panicked. He had forgotten this order and now jams precariously teetering plates on a tray. Matt, I think his name is. Sweating, cursing. I stare at him in calm anger, wondering if he realizes he completely smeared my chocolate designs. Exiting with a flourish, he rejoins the flow of the restaurant. It moves like a living organism, everyone moving as if choreographed in a dance. I see a busboy run by and notice a happy birthday plate I had made earlier. The key lime pie had one bite out of it and the strawberry decorations were tossed carelessly on the side. Had this been my first night I might have been shaken, but not now. This is the restaurant's nature. The dance continues outside my station, as some older women almost collide with a waiter. The hostesses scramble to soothe arguments and everyone is watching out for Jen. This is her hour, striding through the restaurant clearing tables, setting down drinks and stroking egos all in one fell swoop. I cannot help but be impressed. Checking the mirror, Jen puts on lipstick.

—Leandra Palermo

*Christin Fergus-Jean*

