

Latté plus

by Ed Higgins

Hurried, hassling suit in front of me is being awful to the barista. So she refuses to serve him, turning away. He starts swearing at her, "Look, Ms Bitch, I've got an important client waiting. Just get me my order. I might even leave a tip."

"Hey, Good for you!" I say over Being-a-Jerk's shoulder to the barista, smiling my encouragement.

Self-important Jerk-Dipshit, turning slightly, "Who are you? This is none of your fucking business."

"Well, I have to listen to you being an asshole. So it's kind of my business," I say, smiling nicely.

Dickhead-Jerk, his back-up at me now turns completely around, "Ok, asshole-yourself. Now you're in the middle of this. Now you're fucking part of this. You should've kept your fucking trap shut."

"Whoa, dude, you soooo need to sloooooow down," I say, still smiling nicely. "Take a deep yoga breath. And stop fucking browbeating someone who's only trying to do her job."

Dickhead, fully steps toward me, shoves his shoulder into mine. "Don't push me!" he threatens. "You fucking hippy queer!"

"Hippy queer? Hey, nice try. But were you just now trying to kiss me? Or was that maybe just a shoulder nuzzle?"

Looking worried, the barista, from her thank-god-safety behind her counter and stainless espresso machines, asks, "Should I call the manager?"

Dipshit steps from the counter, shoulder-glances me once again while moving past, "This is total bullshit." He tosses over his testosterone-infused alpha-male shoulder at the barista, saying that he's going to get her fucking fired.

An entering customer nearly bowled over by exiting Alpha-Butt-Head, politely offers, maybe ironically, "Oops, sorry, man, didn't mean to get in your way." He glances past Jerk-Butt's angry glare.

Now in front of the counter, I smile again at the barista, "Hi, can I get a short, skinny, almond latté, please. That's almond flavoring, not that yuck almond milk.

"Yeah, she makes a yuck face, "Can't stand that stuff myself, either" her blue-green eyes smiling. "And thanks, the latté's on me," she adds.

"Nice of you," my brown eyes smiling back, "But not necessary for the fun I was having with Mr. Alpha-Total-Jerk.

"Still," she says.

Well, ok, sure," I say, but slip five bucks into the dented "Tip for the pour" sticky-note-labeled vintage Folger's coffee can near the register. The guy in the turban on the Folger's can smiles back at me.

Handing me my almond latté, "I saw that," the barista says. "And thanks, again. Have a nice . . . ah, a better afternoon."

"Haha," I laugh, "Ok, sure," as I pick up my latté and head for a table. "And you the same."

