



WAITRESS AND BLUES SINGER
MIRANDA LOUISE, 57.

Miranda Louise: I've worked at Brown's Diner in Nashville for twenty-two years now. It's one of the oldest restaurants in the whole state of Tennessee, been there since 1927. And it's the greatest place in the world.

I came to Nashville to sing blues music in 1981. Brown's gave me a daytime spot a few days a week during the week, so I could leave Thursday and go do my gigs and come back Sunday. It's really hard to find any job where you have that kind of flexibility. If you work for any of these chain restaurants and you say, "I've got a gig in Paris for three weeks, and I've got to go," they'd just say, "Have fun—hope you find a job when you come home." But Brown's gave me the opportunity to keep doing the music that I love.

There's thirteen of us that run Brown's—thinkers and artists and songwriters and musicians, people who don't

necessarily want to wear a suit and a tie. We don't advertise—never, ever. We don't have T-shirts or matches that say "Brown's" on them. We don't even have a computer. And there's no turnover: either you're liked and trusted, or you don't get hired.

When I first got to Brown's, I found out that people don't want to feel like they're being waited on. They want it to be more like their house. So now when I see people I know walk in, I'll turn their order in once I see where they decided to sit. It's almost like people just discovered they can get taken care of in the second living room they didn't know they had. And when they're comfortable, they're coming back.

Now, today's Tuesday, and I know there'll be Larry, Greg Lebleu, Francis. There'll be Joe—he's the minister on death row. There'll be a few others probably, and many of them have been going to Brown's for over twenty-five years. And then there'll be a boatload more people that I know but don't necessarily know their names.

There's a whole way of life that's based around this place. Even the owner treats me just like a cousin or something; he treats all of us that way. I don't know about you, but most of the people I know can't say that their boss tells them that they love them, and I don't mean anything but in the most Christian way.

Some of us have had health issues; some of us have had financial issues. I have a coworker that's losing her vision, and I

told her that if they take away her license, I'll pick her up in the morning and take her in and open with her. We don't throw people away at Brown's. The only reason people leave is because they die.

I think all of us at Brown's feel we have a responsibility to do the job that we have to do, because otherwise it could fall apart. Brown's could turn into a parking lot. I mean, we're held together by duct tape and chewing gum [laughs], and if it's broken, you're fixing it, because we're not getting anything new. If you want to keep a place going this long, that's what the mentality has to be. But we've survived World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, double-dip recession—all those things going on in the world around us.

So I would say that if you're lucky enough to walk into a situation in which you fit, recognize it. Because there's nothing worse than saying what might have been. Recognizing that also made me realize that it's the same with relationships, friends, love life, finances—everything. As soon as you recognize it, grab it. Stay there.



RECORDED IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE,
ON OCTOBER 14, 2014.