A high stakes life choice that I have made was leaving my first formal job. I have had a job in the past, but it was just at my pools snack bar. I don’t really count that as my first formal job; therefore, I count my first job at a dry cleaners I used to work at. The place was called “Southwest Cleaners”, and I heard of the job from my friend who was working there at the time. She told me they were short staffed and that I should apply to get a job there. Since I knew that the snack bar closed after summer, I knew I needed another job during the school year. So I applied for the job not too long after talking to my friend. After the first interview they told me I was hired and I could start working right away.

At first, I liked it. I was by myself most of the time unless the workers in the back still had clothes to clean. All I needed to do was tag clothes when customers brought their clothes in, write what I tagged on a piece of paper, and get the clothes that customers may have needed to pick up and charge them for it. Since it was a dry cleaners, I did not have many customers, so I did not have a lot of work to actually do. I would work 4 hour shifts during the week and 5 hours if I worked on a Saturday, and we were closed Sundays. I could get my homework done there, listen to music, basically whatever I wanted to do. After about 7 or 8 months, I started noticing the bad side of the job.

Being there started getting pretty lonely. It was always dead quiet in the place unless someone came in to either pick up or drop off their clothes. I would want to eventually talk to someone, interact with a human; but there was no one around and obviously no one in the cleaners that I could talk to. I also started noticing the dust. It was everywhere. It was under the racks of clothes, in every corner you looked, in the bathroom, everywhere. I felt like I was breathing in dust in every part of the place. After being alone for so long in a dirty place like that, you start to get a little creeped out by it. If anyone knew you were alone, they could possibly hurt you, kidnap you, do anything to you and no one would know.

I was getting sick and tired of breathing in the dust, feeling lonely, and being nervous that I was alone. One day, I decided that this job cut its final straw.

I needed to use the bathroom, really bad. The normal bathroom that we were to use was closed; I want to say that it was closed for plumbing issues. I knew there was another bathroom in the back, but I was never brave enough to use it. You needed to go through the owners work space, into the back, take a left, and then you would find it. To even get through the owner’s space, you need to go through these flimsy doors that both push open into another part of the building.

My bladder was about to explode, so I knew I needed to go and use it. I took a deep breath and bravely went into the back. I opened the doors slowly as they creaked into the darkness. It took me a minute or two to find since there were absolutely no lights and it was dark out by that time. I slowly passed all of the clothes hanging up on the ceiling and dodge all of the machines in my way and clumps of dust on the ground. I turn to the left to get to the back of the store, and I find the bathroom. Once I walked inside, I reach for the light switch and switch it from down to up. They didn’t turn on. So I took out my phone and turn on the flashlight. I put it facing upwards on the corner of the sink so I could have at least a little light in the room. I look down and see more dust on the ground, in every corner, behind the toilet, next to the sink. I look up and there’s cobwebs on the ceiling hanging as low as where my head was. The tiles on the floor are old and faded, and there is no windows anywhere around.

I go to use the toilet, as soon as I touched the rim the whole toilet shifted. It felt like it moved downward and to the left. I thought it probably shifted like this because it hadn’t been touched in ages. At this point I was so nervous and creeped out, I just wanted to get out of there. When I flushed the toilet it was so loud. I have never heard a toilet flush louder than that one in my life. The waves of the water echoed in the small bathroom and the soundwaves bounced off of every wall. With the cobwebs above my head, the loud flushing water that won’t go away, and being in the complete dark, I ran out of the bathroom and never went back in. That was the final straw; I could not work there any longer. I had enough.

I told my boyfriend about how I wanted to leave my job and find another one, and he told me that the place he was working was hiring. He was working at Marple Sports Arena and they were looking for girls to be party hostesses. At first, I did not want to work there. I already knew my dry cleaners job, and it was pretty easy. I got anxious at the thought of having to learn a whole other job, when I was not even sure if I was going to like it. Also, the fact that I would be working with my boyfriend made me a little skeptical. Don’t get me wrong, I would have loved to work with him. I was just afraid of annoying him. If I did not understand the job and I asked him too many questions, he could possibly get frustrated with me. And for all I knew, work was a time for him to get away from basically everyone he knows and focus on something just for him. However, I figured that he would not ask me to come and work at the place where he was working if he did not want me there. So I decided to at least try the other job and see where it went.

After I told my boyfriend that I would possibly want to try being a party hostess, he told his boss that I was interested. The head of the party department, Patty, then called me and asked me to come in to get a feel for what the job was. When I went to Marple, Patty told me everything that I would be doing for the job. She told me that I would be working with parents and kids, and I would take the kids to their next activities throughout the whole party, help them if they needed it, help set up for pizza and cake, and then clean up everything afterwards. She also informed me that the party parents/guardians usually tip the hostesses at the end of the party, which was pretty nice to imagine. Getting tips on top of my hourly pay would definitely be better than only working at the dry cleaners. She then told me a requirement for the job is that I would need to work almost every weekend, of course unless I had to take off of work for an outside reason once in a while. That worked for me; however, I was still working at the dry cleaners. I would work almost every other Saturday at the cleaners, and we were closed on Sundays. I did not know if that was going to work with my boss at the dry cleaners, so I decided I needed to ask her about it. When I confronted her, I told her that I may start working at Marple, and if it would be okay for me to work every Friday at the cleaners so I could work Saturdays and Sundays at the other job.

She looked at me and said to me almost like it hurt “eeh no im sorry. It just wouldn’t be fair to the others if they have to work all Saturdays and you don’t have to.” I never thought about that part, but understood this point. I mean if it were someone else in my shoes I would probably be mad that they did not have to work Saturdays when I had to all of the time.

So then I had to make a decision. Do I stay here that the dry cleaners, or leave the cleaners and go work at Marple. This decision took me a few weeks to ponder about, and both options had positives and negatives. One positive for staying at the cleaners was that I already knew everything about the job, and it was pretty easy. I could also get my homework done there while getting paid and have time to myself when I got home. The negatives were that I was bored with the job, the place had dust crawling all over it, the back was dark and creepy, and I was completely alone. The positives about going to Marple would be that I would get to interact with other people for the majority of the time, I would be working with my boyfriend, and I would most likely get tipped after every party I would host. After I jostled these positives and negatives time and time again for about two weeks, I decided that I wanted to leave the cleaners and work at Marple.

For the next few days, I worried about the phone call I knew I had to make to my current boss at the dry cleaners. I was afraid that she would be mad that I was leaving and that she wouldn’t understand my point of view. I did not want to end things on the wrong foot. I started playing out scenarios in my head about how the phone call could turn out. I would tell my boss “I think I am going to take the job at Marple, and I am calling to give my two weeks in.” If she got mad at me and started yelling at me or saying mean things to me on the phone, I would take it and just apologize. However, I was hoping for the best and her not to get angry and go with my decision.

When I finally got the courage to call her, I picked up my phone, dialed her number and waited for her to answer. Once she did, I told her everything that I planned out in my head. She surprisingly wasn’t mad at all and completely understood. She said “oh okay! So I will just put you on the schedule for the next two weeks from today and then after that I won’t schedule you anymore, correct?” I said “yes, if that is okay!” She said “Yes that’s fine, no problem. I’ll do that right now and I’ll see you the next time you come in.” I said “great, thank you so much!” I hung up and I could not have been happier. She did not get mad at me and I finally felt free; I never had to go back to that old, dusty, creepy place. I was now fully committed to working at Marple Sports Arena.

When I got to Marple on my first day, I was trained by a girl who has been working there for a while. We went through all of the steps that I would need to go through when I hosted parties on my own. It turns out that the job was not as hard as I worried myself that it would be. There was a job sheet hanging in the back of the café that I could look at whenever I am unsure of what to do at any time. After hosting a few parties, I got the hang of things. I felt stupid for not wanting to try this job because I was afraid of learning everything new and not liking it. I was then still very happy with my decision, and I knew that I made the right one.

Also, I just recently heard that Southwest dry cleaners was closing down. I’m not sure if this is a rumor or not but I heard it was being turned into a bagel shop. I thought to myself, “Could you imagine if you did not get another job and you still worked there? You’d be shit out of a job!” Then I thought that maybe that was why they never cleaned the dust, didn’t fix the back toilet, and didn’t really mind that I was leaving; because they were shutting down shop soon enough. Either way, I am very happy with my decision to leave that place and I will never, ever, in a million years, work at a dry cleaners again.