

I Love My Job...Yep

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If you've ever worked at a restaurant, you may enjoy this. This is a very early piece of work. I stumbled upon it in the archives of an old blog. Thought it would be worth re-sharing.



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I approached the table and went through the motions as politely and cheerfully as possible. The menus were stacked haphazardly at the edge of the table which implied a slight hint of impatience, as if the concept of them being just at the edge, exactly in my peripheral, would serve as an indicator of their rushed readiness. They had reached the winter stage of their life as they looked up at me. A tight smile had formed upon their faces, a forced pleasantry in an attempt to be cordial. I was more than cordial when they asked me the price of coffee. They winced as I gave my answer and eyed each other with a knowing look. It was a sad day for them indeed as they regarded our restaurant to be the last place in town that didn't charge an arm and a leg for a cup of coffee. She spoke first.

â Fine, Iâ ll take a cup of hot water with lemon.â She said it in a way as to suggest that she was well aware that it was the most annoying beverage to request, as it had the basic preparation of hot tea, minus the price, which equaled a lower gratuity. I smiled and nodded my head slightly, and looked expectantly to her husband.

â How much is your Strawberry Lemonade?â He asked as I mentally screamed.

â The same as coffee, sir.â I replied.

â Iâ ll have a cup of hot water with lemon as well.â He said. Before I could even attempt to ask what they wanted for lunch she spoke.

â Weâ re ready to order too.â She said gesturing to the stacked menus. She said it in a rushed tone as if she wanted to thwart me from running off to fetch their hot waters. It came from a place of fear, as if once I left their table theyâ d never see me again, and it would be ages before they would receive their food. Itâ s always nice to know that even strangers lack confidence in my abilities.

â Excellent, what would you folks like for lunch today?â

â You still have that all you can eat soup?â he asked. It always dumbfounds me that people still use the expression â all you can eatâ in polite conversation. Yes, we are a glutton friendly restaurant, but do we have to speak so crudely? â All you can eatâ evokes the image of an overweight man shoveling spoon after spoon of food into his mouth as he wipes the sweat from his brow. Why people want to draw that comparison when theyâ re ordering, I donâ t know.

â Yes we doâ .

â What kinds of soup do you have?â she asked. Clearly the stacking of menus was a tad premature, for if she had bothered to glance at the menu she would have seen that we have three soups available on a daily basis. They never change. The fact that I have to now list them for her, virtually eliminates all the time they were planning on bypassing when they shoved their Goddamn menus to the corner of the table. I listed the soups for them with a giant smile on my face.

â Well, Iâ ll start out with the chicken soup.â She said, a subtle hint that she would indeed be getting her moneyâ s worth of the â all you can eatâ soup, since she was very likely going to *start out* with the chicken, meander her way through the vegetable, and maybe finish up with the potato.

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“ Sounds fantastic. Would you like to have the salad as well, or just the soup?” I asked to clarify, as many of our patrons become confused with the different “ all you can eat” options we have for them.

“ I just want soup and the bread.”

“ And for you sir?” I asked.

“ Same.”

“ Excellent, so you both just want the soup?”

“ And the bread.” She said urgently, as if I could *ever* forget to bring bread to a table.

“ The bread is still included, right? They didn’t *change* it or anything?” he snickered. Look sir, I just work here. Your sarcasm has no currency with me. It’s not as if upon hearing your frustration I’ll march back into the kitchen, and storm the manager’s office and say “ Look Frank, we gotta stop nickel and diming these here folks, they’re good, hardworking people! They don’t deserve it! From now on, a cup of Joe’s a quarter! And that’s final!” It should be noted that my interaction with “ Frank” is done in a 1940’s New Jersey accent, because that’s clearly their frame of reference when it comes to how things would be handled in “ the good ol’ days.” But seriously, I don’t make the financial decisions here, so the snide remarks about upping the prices are clearly a conversation you’ll need to have elsewhere.

“ Of course sir, the bread is included.” I say as he smiles, almost victoriously.

The woman looks down at the sparse supply of sugars and sweeteners, and her eyes narrow. She picks up the caddy with the same vigor as an eagle swooping down and snatching up a mouse in its gnarled, geriatric talons. She hands it to me with the intent of replenishing the Sweet N’ Low, since it obviously pairs nicely with hot water and lemon.

After a few minutes, I bring them their hot water. I thought of bringing them a glass of regular ice water, but feared that it would give them more fodder against my generation. They’d comment at what a waste the ice water was, as they weren’t going to drink it since they explicitly asked for *hot* water. Back in World War II, they had to ration the water, and here I was, being so cavalier with it.

This job is making me ultra paranoid.

I placed their bowls of soup in front of them. I saw as her eyes darted to the tray to make sure that I had, in fact, remembered the bread. The small victory was short lived as I soon realized that I had forgotten to bring the Sweet N’ Low. Damn. Maybe she won’t remember.

“ How much is it for the dipping sauce for the bread?” he asked. Great.

“ A boat is around 3.50 I believe.” I say as he recoils in shock.

“ Well damn, I don’t need it to be the size of a boat, I just want a little bit.”

“ A boat is the smallest size we have for the dipping sauces.”

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“ I don’t want a *boat*! I just want tiny bit.” He persists, forming a small circle with his fingers. Again sir, it’s not as if I personally came up with the dipping sauce *size* terminology. Cut me some freaking slack.

“ I can get you a small ramekin if you’d like.” I say, knowing full well that this is what he wanted all along because he knows he won’t have to pay for it this way. I suppose I just wanted him to admit to what he was doing. I am well aware that I am being petty, but all the small injustices can add up quickly at a place like this. He nods his head and reaches for his spoon.

“ Yes, bring me a small ramekin of sauce.”

“ Not before you bring me my Sweet Nâ Low.” She pipes up. Oh. My. Lord. My smile, for the first time falters.

“ Oh of course, Iâ m sorry! I forgot.” I say. Yes, Iâ m sorry that there isnâ t a Sweet Nâ Low dispenser located next to the soups in the kitchen. Iâ m sorry that in my haste to get your hot waters with lemon prepared so quickly, I forgot to grab the step ladder and grab the Sweet Nâ Low box from the top shelf! Iâ m so *freaking* sorry!

“ Can we get some cheese on our soup?” he asks stirring his soup with his spoon. He holds up the spoon and lets it drip back into his bowl, disappointed at the watery consistency. Cheese is the answer!

I reach for the cheese grater and make it snow over his soup.

“ Just tell me when, sir.”

“ I hope you have enough cheese! You could be here all day!” Says the wife as she snorts out a laugh at her own cheese joke. I laugh and play along and pretend that my soul isnâ t dying. You know, I may have underestimated these folks. What, with their quick witted joke about the cheese? How delightful, and might I say, original, since I have *never* heard a joke of this caliber before. Not even once. Nobody has ever observed, and then joked about the amount of cheese that their fellow tablemate has requested. Ever.

Okay seriously? How much cheese does this guy want? Nearly half the block is gone, as a small pyramid of cheese has formed on the surface of his soup.

“ Thatâ s enough.” He says. Finally.

“ Iâ ll have the same amount.” She says. Awesome.

I finish up the block of cheese on her soup. I turn to go back to the kitchen to grab the sauce and the Sweet Nâ Low and notice that in the time that Iâ ve been dealing with these folks, Iâ ve been double sat. Both tables have stacked their menus in neat piles at the edge of their table and are looking at me expectantly.

In the end, their tab was 11 dollars. They left me a dollar. I canâ t even buy a cup of coffee with a dollar. I expected as much, so I guess this makes me partially responsible.

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