

Polite Diner
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INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

JAMES is sitting by a table on his own with an almost finished Chinese meal of rice and chicken in front of him. The dozen or so other diners have more friends. Oriental music plays in the background.

JAMES

(thinking)

Wow, I can barely eat another bite. I don't want to offend the waiters by not eating everything though... I don't want to be perceived as even more rude, now that Ben and Dan are filing a lawsuit against me... They'll probably win, too.

JAMES finishes his meal and he sighs with relief. A Chinese WAITER (20s) and wearing a smart suit enters the room and approaches JAMES.

WAITER

You've enjoyed your meal, I see?

JAMES

Oh very much so. Yum yum...

WAITER

I'm glad to hear that and I hope you have a great rest of your day. Bye for now!

The WAITER collects JAMES' cutlery and leaves the room.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Five CHEFS and one HEAD CHEF, all Asian and all wearing white aprons cook various meals in woks over grills. The room is well lit and spotless. Finished meals on trays are sat on tables.

The WAITER enters the room and addresses the HEAD CHEF.

WAITER

James has eaten his plates clean!

HEAD CHEF

You know what this means?

WAITER

It's his way of politely saying he wants even more food and he's too embarrassed to ask?

HEAD CHEF

Right.

WAITER

It's just that he looked really full,
he even looked like he was in pain
and about to cry, it doesn't make
sense!

HEAD CHEF

How long have you lived in China,
exactly?

WAITER

All my life, sir.

HEAD CHEF

Then you must know Chinese etiquette
very well. If he eats everything?
It's his way of saying he wants more.
How clear do I have to be? Give him
more food.

WAITER

Yes, chef.

The WAITER takes a meal and leaves the room.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

JAMES wipes away a tear with his hand as he gives another
huge sigh of relief. The WAITER approaches him with his new
meal.

WAITER

Like the food, eh?

JAMES

Oh very much so, very much so.

WAITER

Well, here's even more of it.

The WAITER places the tray on JAMES' table.

JAMES

I'm sorry?

WAITER

You look like you're about the cry.
Would you like a tissue?

JAMES

Maybe a small one.

The WAITER gives JAMES a tissue, which he uses.

WAITER
May I ask why you're upset?

JAMES
You know what? I don't know. The food
is great, I'm very happy, it doesn't
make sense.

The WAITER chuckles.

WAITER
Ok then. Enjoy your meal.

The WAITER walks away.

JAMES stares at his food in disbelief.

JAMES
(thinking)
Ok, I just have to eat one more meal
and I can go home... How hard can it
be??

Half an hour passes and JAMES has just licked his plate
clean. The WAITER enters the room again. He approaches
JAMES.

WAITER
Wow, you really DO like this place,
huh?

JAMES
(in pain)
Oh... couldn't like it more...

He wretches.

WAITER
You're nearly throwing up in
happiness this time?

JAMES
I sure am.

WAITER
It's just in Chinese culture, being
sick is very uncomfortable and
something to be avoided...

JAMES
English people are eccentric.

WAITER
I can see! Well, let me take your
plate for you!

The WAITER does so and leaves the room.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The WAITER enters the area as everyone stares at him.

WAITER
I don't believe it, James has eaten
everything again!

HEAD CHEF
Dear God. Give him another meal. If
he eats all of that as well? We might
have to ask him to leave. He's about
to bankrupt this place, or at least
change our policy on giving no cost
extra portions...

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The WAITER strolls to JAMES who clearly has tears running
down his cheek.

JAMES
You have more food??

WAITER
I sure do, fan!

JAMES
And it's for me? Is that what you're
saying?

WAITER
(jokingly)
Yes! Now if you want any more free
food after this, I might have to ask
you to leave!

JAMES
I want to leave!!

WAITER
I don't understand...

JAMES
It was a joke! I love your food!
Please don't tell anyone I've been
rude! Please!

WAITER
A bit greedy maybe. I don't know
about rude...

JAMES throws up all over the table.

JAMES
Oh no...

WAITER
It seems like you've had too much
food already...

JAMES
It's really nice!...

WAITER
You'd like some more??

JAMES
Are you offering??

WAITER
Yes, I suppose I am... If you're
sure, I mean...

JAMES throws up again.

JAMES
(crying)
SO sure... Baaaahahahaa!

WAITER
It's just you haven't licked your new
plate clean, yet...

JAMES
(sniffing)
Oh. I will!

WAITER
Why??

JAMES
It's so good!...

WAITER
I'm sorry, but if you really do want
some more, you'll have to lick your
plate clean. They're the rules around
here...

JAMES
I'm sorry. I can't. I just can't.
(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)
You're not going to call me rude, are you?

WAITER
Again, greedy is a more fitting word.

JAMES
But not rude?

WAITER
I guess no?

JAMES
Good. That's all I wanted.

JAMES falls off his chair and writhes in agony.

WAITER
And you're still saying you want more food??

JAMES
Oh... definitely...

WAITER
It's just that company policy is not to let people die...

JAMES
How about pass out?

WAITER
It's a gray area.

JAMES
Ok, bye.

JAMES passes out and is sick again.

WAITER
I knew James was weird, but this I can't explain...