



Warning: This story may offend you. If it does, take heart... being a server in a restaurant is not easy. In fact, it is anything but. So, the next time you go out to eat, thank your server. Thank them by being pleasant. Thank them by not being on your cell phone the entire time they're trying to take your order. Thank them by not treating them as if they are your little bitch. Thank them by leaving at least a 15% tip (*unless they really do, honest to god, it's not just you, suck... then it's negotiable.*) Face it... all waiters don't suck. Many of them are wonderful, kind-hearted, loving people, that just can't come to believe that they've actually learned...

## How To Hate The Human Race

By C. Brandon Redding

Obviously, someone's never been a waiter. That's usually the first thought I have after an initial table approach. It usually goes something like this. "Hi... welcome to \_\_\_\_\_. (Insert name of restaurant here.) My name is \_\_\_\_\_ (try using your real name... it keeps from confusing yourself later down the line) and I'll be taking care of you this \_\_\_\_\_ (insert time of day here: afternoon, morning, etc.) Might I start you all out with a..."

And that's usually where it happens. The guest has officially become like every other table before them. Granted, I'm not even halfway done with the spiel that I'm required to say to them upon greeting them, but they're ready for their water, bread and impatience. And thus, my work day has officially begun.

### **Facts About Waiting Tables:**

The average waiter makes \$2.13 per hour on their shift. Unless they happen to open the restaurant in the morning, in which case they make \$5.15 for that first hour, and \$2.13 for each hour thereafter. Come time for a paycheck, with a work week of roughly 30 hours, a waiter will walk away with a \$5 or \$10 check... and that's on a good week. Most weeks, the check they receive will be voided out, because supposedly they made "too much" money to warrant receiving that pesky \$2.13 an hour. Too bad they still end up paying taxes on it. I know what you're thinking right now... they still make tips. Which is true... but bad days do exist, and to know that you're working for free (or the bare minimum at times) can be frustrating.

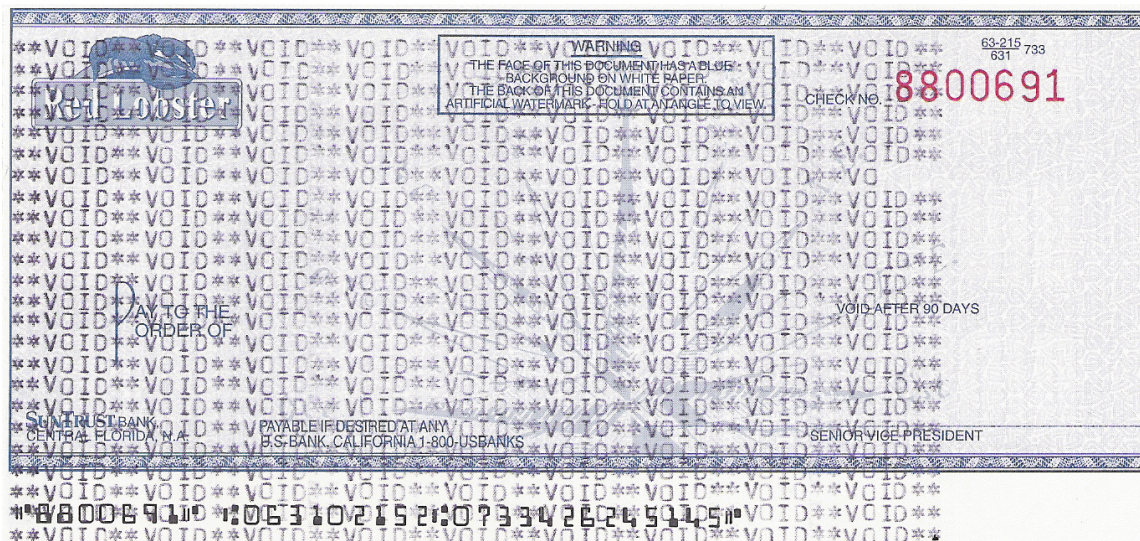


exhibit a: Voided waiter's paycheck

I sometimes question just why I became a waiter. It's not by any means something I intentionally set out to become at some point in life, nor is it anything I can see myself doing longer than the immediate foreseeable future. In fact, before I started, I was such a shy person that I never thought myself capable of approaching complete and total strangers in order to say hi to them, much less actually interact for any length of time, carry on witty banter and provide

service related to foods and beverages, all within a thirty to forty-five-minute span. It's amazing what a few years in the business will do for your personality. And people thought I was mean before. I'm quite certain my heart over the last few years has corroded into a block of cement. All the better for playing the part of the whipping boy... at least in certain patron's minds.

Red Lobster is a good job. The money is decent. The hours... they could be better, but I'm not working through the middle of the night. After a year of servitude at the Student Health Center, I was in search of a change of pace. Working with the sick and wayward students of the university populace rewarded me greatly. Two bouts of strep throat, an icky after effect of antibiotics called thrush, a reputation around campus that I was mean, and the noted celebrity of being "*that guy who works at the health center,*" even though I was the only guy that worked at the health center. Following my stint with the Health Center I realized that there simply came a time and a place to put an end to certain things, and as my bank account would attest to, the time had come to give up my comfy desk job and find something that would pay the bills.

*September 18*

*I started a new job a few days ago. I'm waiting tables, which is a nice change from the Health Center. I hadn't realized how much I missed the interaction that comes from waiting tables. I think quite honestly it was largely responsible for doing away with the shyness I have felt creeping back on me of late. It's about time I challenge myself again, which it certainly is. I've learned to balance again though (both literally and figuratively) which is good.*

*I have so much school work to catch up on right now though. I've been working none stop since Thursday night, and have a busy week ahead of me both school wise and work wise. What's that I hear... a nervous breakdown? Nah... don't have time!*

The first couple of weeks at the restaurant, as with any job, were about adjustment. Adjusting to new co-workers. Adjusting to a new work schedule. Adjusting to being on the lower end of the totem pole. I quickly began to make relations with the co-workers I was spending so much time with, which eventually evolved into drunken nights that end at 4am, hangovers throughout Sunday lunch shifts, happy hour breaks between weekday shifts, and more drinking after work until the wee hours of the morning. If you ever meet a waiter that tells you they're not an alcoholic, they very well may be lying to you. Servers don't experience your everyday run of the mill alcoholism... they experience the kind that only seems to emerge after a shift at work. Otherwise, they rarely touch the juice. For the few that don't indulge themselves, well they are some of the few that somehow manage to retain some essence of their soul after stepping into a restaurant environment.

### **Statistics From My First Night Waiting Tables**

*Number of tables assigned: 2*  
*Number of tables I took the entire night: 6*  
*Number of times I dropped a glass: 0*  
*Amount of Sales for the night: \$437.56*  
*Amount of tips for the night: \$51.54*  
*Amount I tipped out to the bar: \$3.00*  
*Number of times I talked to a new person: 7*  
*Number of times I was asked how I was doing: 5*  
*Amount of time I spent on the floor: 3 1/2 hours*  
*Amount of time I spent at work all together: 4 hours*  
*Number of times I spilled a drink on a co-worker: 1*  
*Number of times my phone rang: 2*  
*Number of times my phone rang and it was my ex: 1*  
*Number of times I received a text message: 3*  
*Number of times I had to bring out extra condiments: 8*  
*Number of times I had to take out and reinsert my tongue ring: 1*  
*Number of times I checked out my cute coworker: 4*  
*Number of alcoholic beverages I served: 5*

*Number of times I wished said alcoholic beverage were for myself: 5*  
*Number of times I wished I was off work: 3*  
*Number of lobsters I killed: 0*

## **The Good Days**

My first week was filled with several good experiences. I think that is the case with any waiting job. You're deceived that first week into thinking this is how it will always be. I recall that on my second day of waiting, I received my first \$45 tip. It was an eight-top table, my first big group on the job. Things ran smoothly, the food was good, they seemed to have a good time. Their tab ended up being around \$150. Any waiter will tell you that if you have the chance to grat a table (*grat=automatically add gratuity to the check, usually done with parties of 8 or more, unless the group looks questionable and prone to bad tipping, in which case you grat with 6 or more*), do it, because the chances of getting screwed over are quite high. This party was my first experience with the entire grat system, and the \$20 tip I was expecting was fine (*how naïve I was then.*) To my honest surprise, despite the grat being on their check, they left me an additional \$25. Not a common occurrence... one that I can't even recall happening since then. All in all, that day ended up being a near \$100 day for only about 4 hours. One certainly can't complain. Those are the good days.

## **The Bad Days**

*October 13*

*To the broke \*#@ches that came in tonight and left me a 5 cent tip... this is for you!*



*Don't come out to eat if you don't have any money. Thank you, and have a nice day.*

This all seems pretty self explanatory.

### **On Why We Don't Convince Friends To Work In A Restaurant**

A few weeks into the new job at, I was texting back and forth with an old co-worker of mine from the trenches of my first restaurant job. Richard and I had come to know one another after working together on and off for a couple of years at a local salad buffet, a job I think we were both disenchanted with from the moment we got it. He went on to become my roommate's ex-boyfriend, and a personal friend of mine, one of the few good things I can say came from my time there. Anyway, through our texting, I'd learned that he was no longer working at the salad bar, and was looking for a job. I suggested that he apply at the restaurant I was now at, and was completely caught off guard by his response:



*"No. If I waited tables again, I'd wind up pulling my pants down and s#!\*ting on someone's plate!"*

-Richard

Well I'll be damned if the boy doesn't seem to have the same idea that seemingly half of my co-workers have. Well, maybe not the part about the bodily excretions. Still, it leaves me wondering just how we could go about putting a spin on this new lunch special? I wonder if people would notice a difference?

## **The Day I Killed My First Lobster**

*November 4*

*I just thought I would take a moment to admit that it has become official... I am now a lobster killer. I had to sell my first live lobster today, which is something I've managed to get by without doing for the last couple of months. I didn't pick it out myself. I'm not to that point of execution yet. But nonetheless, because of me a poor lobster was struck down in it's prime and sentenced to a boiling hot pot. It just seems the tad bit inhumane to me... but customers do love their lobster. (Sidenote: To date I have inadvertently been the cause of 4 lobsters being sent to the steamer. None of those lobsters have been touched by me personally, as I am terrified of lobsters, and will find anyone, male, female, gay, straight, customer, etc. to pick the lobster out of the tank for me and take it to the kitchen, because let's face it... I still have no desire to touch the cockroaches of the sea.)*

*In other news, I also started my first fire today. If you catch the paper that certain food is wrapped in on the line at just the right angle under the heat lamps, it goes up like a blow torch, and you find yourself struggling for something to put it out with. Fun times, fun times.*

## **10 Reasons For Being Late To Work**

Being a waiter, you will not be on time. There are plenty of reasons for it. Your car wouldn't start, your clothes were in the dryer, you overslept because you're still hungover from last night. Managers tend to never be interested in the reasons why we're not on time for work, but we always have to have a good excuse for them, just in case they ask. Below are but a few of the many excuses given to management for being late for a shift.

10. "I overslept." (*Or in waiter speak, "I was up so late last night trying to figure out a way to get out of work that I didn't get enough sleep."*)

9. "My alarm clock didn't go off." (*Which means it really did, but the thought of coming to work made me want to pretend like it didn't.*)

8. "I was too busy making out with my girlfriend/boyfriend that I forgot I actually had some place to be." (*That one stands on it's own.*)

7. "I was stuck in traffic." (*It doesn't matter that it's Monday morning and it's 11am. There really was a milk truck accident on the freeway. What, are you calling me a liar?*)

6. "I ended up having to work later at my other job." (*Granted, the last time they probably worked at their other job was two weeks ago, but that's beside the point.*)

5. "I had to wash my clothes... (*because when I got off work last night I got so wasted that my clothes smelled like cigarettes and liquor. Silly me, I passed out before I was able to put them in the dryer.*)

4. "Work... am I supposed to work today?" (*Schedules can be so radically different from week to week that at times you barely remember your own name, much less that you were supposed to work*)

3. "My mommy told me not to talk to strangers." (*Okay, that guy was just weird.*)

2. "I'm not late today... I'm just early for tomorrow." (*It does make sense... somewhat.*)



1. "Remember that time I came to work sick, running a fever, and was highly contagious? *(Of course they don't... managers don't pay attention to whether you're healthy enough to work, just that you show up. So, go ahead, come in sick... they'll regret it when you manage to pass whatever you've got to the rest of the waitstaff.)*

## **The Unpleasantries**

What is it about waiting tables that gives people the right to treat you worse than they'd treat their own stepchildren? In the months I've been on the job, I think I've been called every name under the sky, both directly and indirectly, by customers. Of course, considering most of those customers names were Bubba, Shaquanita, or Ethel (she was French) I tend not to pay them too much attention. I value people with both teeth and proper etiquette. But just in case you were ever wondering, it is not okay to ever refer to your server as "boy", "fag", the "n word" *(which I won't actually say, because I hate that word, even when used in literature)*, "stupid", "insubordinate", or a "son of a bitch". Not that I hold grudges by any means. But this is after all why God makes some people beautiful, and others fat, disgusting, bigoted morons. I wonder what Richard's up too... I think I may send him over to serve some lunch specials.

## **On Judging People The Wrong Way**

I had an interesting situation happen to me at work right before the Thanksgiving holiday. It was around 4 o'clock, so the restaurant was pretty dead, and only me and a couple of other waiters were on the floor. I'm sat this table, and it's a woman and her two kids, all of whom look like they just stepped out of the trailer park (no offense intended). I proceed to wait on them, considering this seems to be the norm, not really thinking anything about it until they

start to order. 3 King Crab legs (at \$30 a pop), 3 appetizers, drinks and dessert. All in all, their tab came to be around \$130. Since I'd already had an iffy feeling about them, I told my manager about it, just in case they decided to try and pull the *"we're gonna run out the door when the waiter's not paying attention game."* So anyway, it comes time for me to take over the check, and when I do, they sit there for a while. I went over to ask if they needed any change or anything, and she proceeds to tell me that she doesn't have enough to cover the meal. The sad thing is that I had honestly wanted to be wrong about them. I didn't want to think that people could be so classless that they would do such a thing. She even seemed really nice. I sent my manager over to the table and she talked to them, got their driver's license info and everything, as the woman said that she was going to go to the bank and come back. Yeah right! I wonder how many times a manager has heard that through the years. So, the family left, I was left with their big mess to clean up, and -\$135. A couple of hours go by, and I'd pretty much gotten over the whole thing, when my manager comes over to me and says that the woman actually came back. Not only did she come back though... she left me a \$40 tip! So now I'm just torn... the tip was incredibly awesome, and I am glad that she came back, because it gave me the tiniest bit of faith in people.

### **Why Not To Let Your Manager Read This If You're A Server**

Always the glutton for punishment, I decided to go into work early one day last week, as I planned to work a bit on the essay I had to write for a Creative Writing class. Before I knew it, I was surrounded by several co-workers, who found the piece all too familiar, and quite close to home.

The next thing I knew, my essay was being passed from server to server, before finally ending up in the hands of our assistant manager. Heather is not blind. In fact, of all the managers we have, she is the one that is quite aware of the situation at hand, as she herself was once a server for some time. The appropriate thing to do in a situation like this would be to deny, deny, deny. There are never happy hour breaks between work. Of course, we all love our jobs so much that we'd never write an 11 page rant about it.

The thought of if I needed to be in search of another job quickly came to mind. Instead, Heather simply walked over to me, handing me back the paper and smiling to me.

"That was some funny @#\*!," she said to me before heading back to her meeting with the district manager. Oh Heather... it's people like you that make me realize I don't hate the entire human race... just most of it!