



## TIME TO EAT

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**M**r. Frank pulled the bus into the restaurant's parking lot. "Finally! I'm starving," said Drew to anyone who would listen.

"Make sure that your travel suits are on as we go in," Coach Dunn reminded the team. "Remember that you're representing the Eagles. Also, stick to your \$10 meal limit."

Once all of the players and coaches had piled off the bus, Mr. Frank drove it around back, out of the way of the other customers.

Coach Dunn thought that it was always interesting to see who rushed to the front of the line. They would all get their food quickly. In fact, they often came to this restaurant and it never ceased to amaze him how quickly they prepared the food orders.

"I will take a #1 with no pickles but with extra tomatoes," said Learie.

"What drink would you like with your combo?" asked the lady at the register.

"Sweet Tea."

"You got it."

"Thank you."

"My pleasure," she said. "I'll gladly serve the next guest."

A similar conversation repeated itself over and over again until all of the players and coaches had their trays of food and had found their seats. Actually, there was one player who didn't have his food, or at least the correct food that he ordered. Drew approached the lady at the register.

"Hey, this isn't right," announced Drew. "You got my order wrong"

"What seems to be the problem?" she asked.

"I ordered a spicy chicken sandwich, and this isn't a spicy sandwich at all," Drew complained.

"I'm sorry about that. Did you order the deluxe or just the regular?"

"I ordered the deluxe but that doesn't even matter right now because what you gave me isn't even spicy. Never mind all the pickles, tomatoes, lettuce, and whatever else makes it deluxe."

"I understand. I'm sorry for your inconvenience. Let me retake your order and we'll get it out to you as soon as we can," she said.

"Okay," said Drew shaking his head as he walked away from the counter.

Just a few minutes later, tray in hand, the lady from the register walked Drew's food over to him.

"Sorry about the delay, and the mess up," she said. "Here's a coupon for a complimentary ice cream cone as a small token from us to you. We regret that your dining experience wasn't what you expected."

"Yeah, thanks. I'm sure you guys didn't do it on purpose," Drew replied. "Finally, I'm starving! I absolutely love these spicy deluxe sandwiches!"

It tasted as good as it always did.

Just then, Demetrius sat down at the table next to them and began talking loud enough for everyone to hear.

"You should have heard Bobbi just now in the bathroom. He was complaining that he's never had a worse sandwich here than what he ate tonight. It was kind of funny. He wasn't throwing up or anything.

That would have stunk if he'd had a reaction. You all know that he is a mental midget when it comes to hot sauce. He's a ketchup guy, you know. Anyway, he was complaining that his sandwich didn't taste right. He was like 'you guys played a prank on me and emptied one of those hot sauce packets on my sandwich when I wasn't looking. I was sweating bullets eating that thing'. It was so funny. I don't know what he was talking about but it sure was funny."

Drew interrupted, "Wait. Bobbi said it was too hot?"

"Oh yeah, you know how soft he is. Always cheese or veggie pizza because the pepperoni is too spicy," chuckled Demetrius.

When Bobbi came out of the bathroom, all eyes were on him.

"What?" Bobbi asked confused.

"Caliente," Demetrius joked.

"Oh, okay. I get it" as Bobbi gave his roommate the evil eye.

"Hey, Bobbi. Your sandwich was too spicy?" asked Drew.

"Alright, I get it. You guys are having your fun with me," said Bobbi.

"No, seriously. I'm asking for real. Was your sandwich actually spicy?" Drew asked again.

"My mouth was dying but I fought through it like a champ," said Bobbi. "I wasn't going to quit or give up like that gold dude Mr. Frank was talking about earlier tonight."

"I don't think he had your taste buds and bad food in mind when he was saying not to give up," joked Demetrius.

"Seriously though, back to your sandwich," said Drew. "I got an absolutely plain sandwich and I raised a stink at the counter. I blamed them. What was your order number?"

"Let me check," said Bobbi as he looked through the crumpled-up napkins and straw wrappers on his table. "Here it is. Number nine."

"Bobbi, that's a six," said Demetrius looking over Bobbi's shoulder. "Seriously, and you're the one with a 4.0-grade point average?"

“My order number was a nine,” said Drew. “You took my food. Serves you right. No wonder it tasted spicy. It was exactly that – a spicy sandwich. Just like Demetrius said, how are you a 4.0?”

“Man, I don’t know. Let’s just forget about it,” Bobbi requested.

“Except, that I gave the lady up at the counter a hard time. I thought that they messed up the order but all along, we were the ones that had messed things up.”

“Oops,” said Bobbi.

“Oops is right. I kind of feel bad,” said Drew.

James was never shy about inserting himself into a conversation, so he decided this was as good of a time as any.

“You could always apologize. I’ve been told that is what I should do when I make my girl mad.”

“Oh, you’ve been told, have you?” Antonio asked his roommate. “I’m not sure you’ve ever listened to that advice. Plus, if you had, you’d probably always be apologizing for something.”

Walking past Antonio and James as they bantered back and forth, Drew approached the lady from the register as she was putting away the broom and closing the storage closet door.

“Yes, sir. How may I help you?” she asked.

“Uhhh. Yeah, ah. I think I messed up with the spicy chicken sandwich. Sorry about that” apologized Drew

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“One of my teammates had it all along. I just assumed that you must have screwed up. I didn’t even think that it’d be my fault. Sorry about that,” Drew said.

“I understand,” she said. “I’m just glad that we were able to get you a replacement sandwich quickly enough. Does your friend need the sandwich that he ordered or is he okay?”

“Nah, he’s good. Though it was a bit too hot for him.”

“Okay, well we just want to make sure that you have a good experience here. We take pride in our food and our service.”

“I guess the customer isn’t always right,” Drew said.

“None of us are right all the time. We realize that but that doesn’t stop us from still trying to serve you and find a solution to the problem if we’re able to,” she said.

“When you waited on me the second time, did you know that I was the one that had made the mistake?” Drew asked.

“We don’t worry about who’s to blame,” she said. “Life can be pretty miserable if we’re always pointing fingers or playing the blame game. Instead of determining who is to blame, we try to take responsibility for things. It might not have been our fault, but we can be responsible for doing what we can to make a situation better. In your case, it was easy to make another sandwich.”

“Thanks for that and sorry once again,” Drew said as he turned to walk away.

“It’s our pleasure to serve you,” she said.

Drew turned back toward the lady as she said that.

“Can I ask you a question?” he asked.

“Sure, what is it?” she wondered.

“You keep saying words like ‘serve’ and ‘our pleasure’. I don’t hear people at other restaurants talk like that. Why do you guys say that stuff?” asked Drew.

“Good question. Obviously, we think we have the best chicken around but more importantly, we feel like our job is to serve. Whether we’re a new employee, a cook, someone who sweeps the floors, the manager, or the owner – no matter our role or title, we want to treat our customers like friends. We want to be kind to everyone.”

The lady continued to explain to Drew what made the restaurant different than all the others.

“You see, every life has a story. Every customer is a person. We want to go the extra mile and make someone’s life a little better today. If I had worried about who was right and who was wrong about your chicken sandwich, then I wouldn’t have been trying to make your day better. I would just have tried to get my way or be right. In general,

we've found that the best leaders are those who serve. People tend to follow them with their hearts and buy into what they are selling."

Drew was still listening to the lady and she could tell that he was interested in what she was saying.

"It might be weird or different, but I hope that it makes sense," she continued. "I might have gone a little deep on you, but I get excited talking about this stuff. I don't just work here because I want to collect a paycheck. There are plenty of jobs out there for that. I truly enjoy the people I work with but also the people – the friends, if you will – that I get to interact with every day, like you and your teammates."

"That's cool. Thanks for sharing all of that. I never really thought of any of that stuff before." Drew said.

"By the way, what kind of ice cream cone do you want with that coupon I gave you earlier?" she asked Drew.

"Seriously? Even though you know that I was the one that screwed up?" Drew said with some confusion. "Here, you can have that coupon back. Use it for someone that deserves it."

"It's not about deserving or not. We gave that to you, and we expect you to use it. You're not going to refuse us the joy of being kind to you, are you?" She asked with a sly smile.

"So, will that be chocolate or vanilla?"

Drew smiled.