

When Jimmie Cristo went away to grad school in St. Louis, his uncle Stan set him up with a job as a waiter at Renaldo's, the most expensive restaurant in the city. Jimmie had worked at La Plage, so he had some experience. He was grateful to his uncle because jobs like this were very hard to get and he desperately needed the money to pay his bills.

Most of Renaldo's customers were corporate executives impressing potential clients by running up outrageous tabs. A dinner for four often came to a thousand dollars or more.

Jimmie was assigned to work with Kenny, a veteran captain of waiters, who had been at Renaldo's for the past four years. About half-way into Jimmie's first evening, Kenny told him to add a round of drinks and a \$600 bottle of wine to the check of a high-rolling party of six. Later, he told Jimmie to slip a couple of hors d'oeuvres onto the check of an obnoxious couple who spent the entire evening snapping at one another and at the wait staff.

At the end of the shift, after the tips had been divvied up, Jimmie confronted Kenny about what he had done. "Don't worry about it," Kenny told him. "That's how we do things here. We've always done things this way."

"Don't you worry about getting caught?" Jimmie asked him.

"If a customer questions the check," Kenny explained, "we treat it like a mistake. Most of them are too drunk or too conceited to notice. Besides, it's not their money so what do they care?"

"But what about the owners?" Jimmie asked.

"The owners?" Kenny snorted. "This is their place. Whatever we add to the tab, we ring through the register. They get two-thirds and we get a third."

"And the police?" Jimmie continued.

"We pay taxes on it," Kenny responded. "The owners siphon off enough of the inventory so the books look good for the tax man."

"But it's wrong!" Jimmie persisted.

"Not at Renaldo's," Kenny said. "It's our way of doing business," he said with a smile. "Think of it this way. These rich bastards use their corporate cards to buy the most expensive food and drink in the world for themselves and their clients. Why not let them buy a little for us?"

"I still don't like it," Jimmie said.

"Nobody's forcing you to stay," Kenny replied.

- *Is the practice of padding checks at the restaurant part of the ethos of Renaldo's? Does this make it morally acceptable or is the practice immoral in any situation? Why do you think so?*
- *Does it make a difference that the customers who are cheated are rich or obnoxious?*
- *Does Jimmie have a moral obligation to quit? Why or why not?*
- *What would you do if you were Jimmie? Why?*