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# Mr. Robinson Goes to Eat



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**M**r. Robinson was not a fat man! He was not even a very fat man! He was an enormously fat man. Mr. Robinson, who was very much a man of habit; drove his Rolls Royce up to the front door of his favourite restaurant, at exactly 12:30 PM. He was always punctual, being a man of iron habits. Every day, except for Saturdays and Sundays, he would dine in this particular restaurant. Never did he miss a meal. The staff of 'The Cooked Duck', was well prepared and ready for him and his every whim - - not that Mr. Robinson ever varied from his usual habits. He always sat at his usual table and his usual chair; the chair was the only one of its kind in the restaurant. The "chair" had been made especially to accommodate Mr. Robinson's size and weight.

"Mr. Robinson, good afternoon to you sir, how are you?" With the same greeting Jeremy, the headwaiter, had been greeting Mr. Robinson for the last fifteen years.

"Fine, Jeremy. Help me to my chair, please, if you don't mind."

Of late, Mr. Robinson had been feeling his age and especially his weight and his knees that pained him no end.

Jeremy, with a flick of his fingers, signaled two waiters. Immediately they responded. Holding Mr. Robinson gently but firmly by his elbows lest he should slip, they led him to and helped him sit at his table, which was slam bang in the middle of the restaurant. Mr. Robinson derived an enormous pleasure flaunting off his wealth and self felt importance.

"Menu, please, Jeremy."

As usual, Mr. Robinson looked through the menu and as always chose the same meal he had been eating since first coming to the restaurant fifteen years ago.

The kitchen staff who had been serving him up the same meal these fifteen years had his meal all ready and waiting and the food was served to him forthwith.

After the food had been placed before him, Mr. Robinson, with the determined expression of, 'I have not been beaten yet'; tucked in. Not once looking around him, Mr. Robinson was smug in the knowledge that he was the wealthiest patron of this restaurant.

He had finished off most of the potatoes and vegetables, leaving the meat pie and the roast lamb with just two or three potatoes swimming around in the gravy. As far as he was concerned, this was the best part of the meal, when all of a sudden- - - "Hey you watch it!" exclaimed a little voice in a broad Cockney accent.

Who was that? Was someone talking to him? Mr. Robinson looked around him, but could not see anything out of the ordinary. Patrons were busy eating, and the waiters were busy as bees serving. Everybody was minding his own business.

Must be hearing things, he thought, and proceeded with his meal.

A few moments later he again heard that voice, only this time it was more insistent: "I told you before to be careful. 'Ere Don't you understand? Or are you dumb or somfing?"

Once more Mr. Robinson looked around, yet there was no one taking even the faintest bit of interest in him. He even looked under the table, which for him was quite was no small effort. Curious, he thought to himself. I really must be imagining things.

He had hardly put his fork to the plump potato swimming in gravy when again that voice! "What's the matter with you? Are you deaf, dumb or blind? I've told you already to be careful, and there you go again. You almost stabbed me with your bloomin' fork."

So that's where it's coming from, that voice, it is coming from his plate. Mr. Robinson brought his eyebrows together, perched his eye glasses better on his nose and concentrated his sight . . . and there it was. Right on top of the juicy plump potato swimming in gravy, he saw it: A worm! To him it looked like one of those worms you occasionally find crawling out of the apple just as you are about to sink your teeth

into it and it was talking! Not only was it talking, it was talking to him, Mr. Robinson.

"At last, I can see I've got your attention. Yes, it's me, now listen 'ere, you've got to get one thing right. When I address you, I demand your immediate attention".

"You're a worm and you are talking to me"?

"My Gawd of course I'm a worm, what d'you expect, a bloomin' elephant. Who else would be bloody yelling at you, 'specially when you almost cut me in 'alf. I kept warning you, but you are so bloomin' stupid or somfing, I dunno, you didn't even notice me."

It was ridiculous, of course, but Mr. Robinson . . . was not completely aware of what was going on and what he was doing . . . and answered the worm. "Look here you! This here is my meal. I paid good money for it and you have no right to be here on my plate eating my food," Mr. Robinson was really upset by this unusual turn of events.

"Now look 'ere mate, you may have paid for it, but I was 'ere long before you. Anyway, I know my rights, worms 'ave to eat also. Well, don't they?"

"Well. . . I suppose so." Mr. Robinson managed to stammer. "But..."

"Enough of your butts! You know I'm right. Look 'ere, I can see you aint a bad sort of fella, and this meal aint gonna be enough for both of us. So be a good good'un and order some more. Come on then, before this food gets too cold to eat."

Mr. Robinson was in a complete *tizwazel* (*very confused*) by this turn of events. He just did not know what to do. Common sense told him to get rid of the worm; or even better, tell the waiter to bring him another plate of food and show him that this one is contaminated by a worm. But somehow the worm seemed to have a kind of hold on him, and against all common sense he called the waiter over and said, "I can see that this will not be enough for us. . .ummm . . . me. I would

like you bring me another portion of the same. Oh and tell the chef that I would like him to add a bit more of his delicious gravy."

"Yes, sir, of course sir"

The waiter turned on his heel and hurried off towards the kitchen. Along the way he stopped and told the headwaiter, Jeremy that, "Mr. Robinson is ordering another portion of the same", which was for everybody a most unusual event

In a flash, Jeremy appeared at Mr. Robinson's side. "Mr. Robinson! All is well, I hope? It was brought to my attention that you have ordered more of the same. I thought to myself that it was a little unusual; you have never had the need for another portion our portions as you know have always been, as you yourself has mentioned more than once, grand and scrumptious. Shall I tell the chef next time not to be measly with the portions?"

"No need, Jeremy. Just this once, for some reason I feel a wee bit hungrier than usual."

Mr. Robinson was one of the wealthiest, if not the wealthiest of the restaurant's patrons, so another full portion was brought to him in very short order.

Mr. Robinson and the worm tucked in again, only Mr. Robinson took great care to keep his knife from getting too close the worm.

They divided the plate into exact halves: one-half for the worm and the other for the man. However fast and as much as Mr. Robinson ate, so did the worm. 'Where on earth did he put it all'? Mr. Robinson thought.

Whilst they were eating, and may I add, they both ate with gusto; a conversation started up between them, which at times became most heated. Sometimes, Mr. Robinson found himself almost shouting at the obstinate worm. 'He's only a worm; what does he know'? Mr. Robinson told himself. 'But he is, such a persuasive and persistent little fellow'.

After a while, one of the waiters noticed Mr. Robinson's most peculiar behavior: Mr. Robinson was talking to his plate. This waiter

called several of the other waiters. "Ere look at 'im. Mr. Robinson, 'ee must be crazy or something, he's talking to 'is plate."

"Ee's What?" The one of the other waiters asked.

"'Ee's talking out loud. Mr. Robinson 'ees talking to 'imself . Just look at 'im!"

"No he aint, 'ee's talkin' to his plate." Another waiter said.

One after the other all of the waiters gathered up together in a knot, they had stopped working and they were staring at, and pointing towards Mr. Robinson and his most unusual behavior. They had all stopped working and were just standing there looking at Mr. Robinson's very peculiar behavior.

By now many of the restaurant's patrons, noticing the waiter's interest in Mr. Robinson also started looking in his direction. It was not long before the whole restaurant was looking in his direction and wondering as to his weird behavior.

Mr. Robinson suddenly for some reason, perhaps because of the silence that had fallen upon the restaurant, looked up. He felt sure that people were staring at him but, immediately upon his looking up from his plate, everyone staring at him sprang back into action. As if nothing untoward at all was happening. Suddenly all the patrons were engrossed in their meals, and the waiters were busy going about their business of waiting upon the diners.

Mr. Robinson turned back to his meal and his lively conversation with the worm.

Jeremy, the head waiter, who had just come back from the kitchen had noticed the idling waiters and angrily rebuked them. "What's going on here? Why weren't you working? What were you all staring at?"

"Sir," one of the waiters ventured to explain. "Look sir, look at Mr. Robinson. 'Ee's behaving real weird. 'Ee's talking to his plate."

"He's what? Stop it, what's all that rubb..b...ish, he's. . . Oh dear, something must have happened to him. I'll go over and see for myself. Maybe something is bothering him. Now stop staring at him and get back to work. All of you now; that's an order."

Sheepishly they returned to their job of waiting on patrons, but even then they could not help looking up and staring at Mr. Robinson's most unusual behavior.

Even though the rational side of Mr. Robinson realized that this was ridiculous...his conversing with a worm...his other half was intrigued by this really knowledgeable fellow, and him only a worm.

By the time they had finished off their gargantuan meal they were both beginning to feel its effects: bloated and drowsy. Mr. Robinson did not even feel up to drinking his glass of wine; together they had devoured everything on the plate, Mr. Robinson struggled to heave his enormous bulk up from the table and go back to his office, when...!

"Where on earth do yuh think your goin'? You aint not goin' without me; no way you aint?"

Answering the worm politely Mr. Robinson said, "I am going back to work, of course what do you expect me to do?"

"Well yuh aint gonna leave me 'ere, that 'oi can tell yuh for nufink".

"What do you expect me to do? I cannot take you with me."

"And why the 'ell not, may 'oi ask? If you think I'm gonna stay 'ere yuh got another think comin'. You know where I'll land up; in the rubbish, that's where they'll throw me. You gonna 'ave to take me with yuh".

"But I can't...I..."

Then Mr. Robinson had the craziest of ideas. "Oh OK." He reached into the side pocket of his jacket and pulled out a matchbox. He emptied the all the matches from box of. Then, with great care, he

reached into his gravy-flooded plate, and with thumb and forefinger gently picked up the worm. The worm yelled out, "Ouch your 'urting me, take it easy, owowow."

All that could be heard next was a sort of muffled sound coming from the matchbox, which Mr. Robinson gently placed back into his pocket.

The head waiter Jeremy accompanied Mr. Robinson to his automobile, which was already parked at the curb, next to the restaurant entrance. After having said goodbye, Mr. Robinson drove off back to his office where, as usual, he worked 'till late.

It was after eight o'clock in the evening when he heard a muffled sound coming from his right hand jacket pocket. He patted the pocket from which the sound was coming and suddenly he remembered: "Oh, that damn Worm."

He pulled out the matchbox from his jacket pocket, and the moment he slid it open he heard: "Wow, 'ow long was you thinking of leaving me in 'ere. I almost choked to death in 'ere."

Having regained his breath, the Worm said out loud, "Come on then. What about it? When we going back to eat again? I'm bloomin famished!"

"Well, I was just about to phone my wife to tell her that I will be on my way home for supper." With that, Mr. Robinson reached out towards the telephone to inform his wife that he is on his way, when...

"What! No way I aint gonna eat your wife's food. The only food I'm willing to eat is the stuff they whip up in the restaurant. Anything else, no way, I won't touch it. Gawd only knows what your wife puts in it."

Mr. Robinson wanted to put the Worm in his place and tell him. "Who invited you?" But all that came out was stuttering. "B, b... but my, my wife she... she has already prepared the meal a...and I never eat out in the evenings anyway."

"I don't give a running jump when and where you 'ave or 'aven't eaten. Take me to the restaurant, I'm bloomin starvin'." The Worm was bullying the man, and for some unfathomable reason, Mr. Robinson was unable to stand up to his demands.

"No more of your pathetic stuttering. Come on, let's go."

Still stuttering and mumbling, Mr. Robinson gave in to the insistent Worm. Hesitantly, he closed the matchbox, put it back into his pocket, and closed up his office. With the Worm safely tucked away in his coat pocket, and just before he made his way towards his automobile, he telephoned his wife. She already had his meal in the stove waiting for his arrival home. He explained that something had cropped up at work, and that he would be very late getting home and would eat out.

When Mr. Robinson arrived back at the restaurant he was surprised to find that no one was there to open his car door and receive him and lead him inside. As usual, because of his bulk, it took him some time extricating himself from his car. He walked into the restaurant. Jeremy was inside the restaurant receiving the restaurant's patrons and when Jeremy saw Mr. Robinson, he was astounded. "Mr. Robinson, good evening to you sir, most unexpected I must say, you are certainly more than welcome."

"Yes, Jeremy, we . . . eh . . . I finished work rather late today, and decided to eat here again. Would you please lead me to my table?"

"Your table sir? I am truly sorry sir, but . . . emmm . . . your table is, hmmm . . . occupied."

Protesting, Mr. Robinson spurted out: "But I always sit at that table!"

Apologizing most profusely, the Jeremy the head waiter not wanting to make a scene of it apologised, "But sir, you never come to eat at this hour, and we just cannot afford to leave a table unused."

"Well, OK then. Find me another table will you, but a good one. And please, not up against a wall."

Jeremy lead Mr. Robinson to a table almost as centrally placed as his usual one. At the same time, he ordered one of the waiters to try to persuade the patron who was sitting in his Mr. Robinson's chair, to give it up for someone else. The patron refused; he was almost as fat as Mr. Robinson. Mr. Robinson was in a most unhappy mood but he had no choice but to sit on another chair . . . it was though, almost as large as his usual one. He lowered his bulk into the chair, which protested with a long "eeeeek", and immediately he took up the menu.

"Jeremy, I want my usual, but I fail to see it written down here."

"Well you see, sir, our evening meals are quite different from our breakfast and lunch meals. We have different menus for each. Is there anything, sir, you would like to order from this menu?"

After mumbling to himself about all the injustices the world had thrown at him, Mr. Robinson studiously read all that was on the menu. He chose what, to him, looked the most palatable, and in good time the meal was brought to him.

What with all the wrongs and inconveniences that had piled up of late, he'd almost forgotten the Worm. In the meantime the Worm had woken up to the smell of food penetrating the matchbox. Retrieving the box from his pocket, Mr. Robinson opened it. Immediately the Worm announced, "I'm so 'ungry, I could eat a bloomin 'orse. What's goin' on 'ere? This 'ere aint the same food I'm used to, where's the good stuff we 'ad lunch time?"

Ridiculous as may seem he found himself apologizing to the worm, Mr. Robinson told the Worm the reason for the change in menu. The Worm was too hungry to argue, and immediately set about satisfying his unending appetite, and alongside him, Mr. Robinson.

The meal was a repeat of their previous one, in that between bites they carried on a lively conversation which was occasionally interspersed by the Worm's unmannerly behavior of burping. Mr. Robinson had forgotten what a ravenous eater the Worm was, and as before, was left with no choice but to order more food. Again, Mr.

Robinson was making a spectacle of himself talking . . . or so it seemed to onlookers . . . to his plate. A most sorry sight it was; nobody could possibly see the tiny worm, and therefore everyone thought that Mr. Robinson had gone completely off his rocker. Everyone looking at the fat man talking to his plate was giggling, pointing, and laughing, but of course, not so loud that Mr. Robinson could hear. All the same, Mr. Robinson could not but help feel that something was going on about him. Every time his fat body allowed him to look around, it enabled the onlookers enough time to stop staring and to carry on with whatever they had been doing previously: of the waiters, waiting on tables and the diners eating.

Jeremy the headwaiter realized that there was a repeat performance of earlier on in the day, and he was genuinely worried as to what was happening to Mr. Robinson here in his restaurant.

"Mr. Robinson, sir, is there anything . . . I stress anything . . . that I can do to help you? May I be so bold as to mention that you appear, how can I put it, a wee bit under stress. Maybe it is your meal, or perhaps something else? Maybe I can be of some assistance?"

Mr. Robinson at that very moment had been so completely engrossed, conversing with the worm that he did not seem to notice Jeremy standing at his side and enquiring as to his well-being. Suddenly he started, "Oh, oh yes, Jeremy, it's you, what was it you wanted?"

Jeremy repeated his question and Mr. Robinson answered. "Jeremy, it is getting late and we ummm, I'll soon be finished. Therefore, be a good fellow, and bring me my bill, please. Thank you."

Jeremy did as bid; Mr. Robinson had not noticed the most unusual expression on the headwaiter's face. By the time his bill was brought to him, Mr. Robinson and the Worm had finished eating their second gargantuan meal of the day. Now, the same scene of getting up and leaving the Worm behind was about to repeat itself. Only the cocky and very assertive Worm, as before, would have nothing of it, he refused to be left behind. Mr. Robinson, not wanting to make a scene,

had no choice but again to pick up the tiny worm and place him back into the matchbox; the same box he placed gently into his jacket pocket. This process was accompanied by the Worm roundly swearing and complaining, "Stop, 'elp, yor 'urting meee," which died away into an inaudible mumble as the box closed upon him and was put back into the pocket.

Jeremy accompanied Mr. Robinson out of the restaurant to his car. It was bitterly cold outside; the pavement and the road were beginning to ice over. The moment Mr. Robinson was ensconced inside his large and very expensive car, he turned the heating on to full blast and drove off towards home.

Traffic on the roads was reduced to a minimum, because of the ice, and to save him being involved in an accident, he drive very slowly and with much caution.

He arrived home very late, a great deal later than usual, and he could not be bothered parking his car in the garage. He parked in the street outside his house. Carefully, he got out of the car, opened the gate in the fence surrounding his house and garden, he gingerly walked on the path now completely iced over, it was just a few yards to go before he entered his house. He put his right foot on the first step leading up to the front door, preparing to climb the flight of twelve steps. For years, he had been going up these steps, but the steps were so slippery that, the moment Mr. Robinson placed his weight upon the first step he . . . oops slipped! With his legs in the air he fell back onto his generously padded behind. Wow! That did hurt. He would have stayed in that position for a few moments, just to rest, but almost immediately, he felt the bitter cold penetrating his clothing. He stumbled to his feet, and clinging with all of his strength to the railing alongside the steps and without further ado, he managed carefully to haul himself up the steps. With one hand holding tightly onto the railing, he searched inside his trouser pocket until he located his keys. He pulled them out, and after fumbling for a while, found the right one and let himself into his house. The moment Mr. Robinson entered and closed the door behind him, he found waiting for him an almost exact copy of himself, only smaller.

His son in a squeaky voice called out: "Dad, dad, why are you so late? We were so hungry Dad, that we ate your food as well. Sis spilled hers on the floor. The dog started to eat it! Mum got all angry, and . . ."The words came spilling out so fast that the uninitiated would have found it hard to understand.

"Listen son, you've no idea what happened to me today." Mr. Robinson said, immediately wading into the tale of had what happened to him in the restaurant. He became so excited and engrossed with telling his tale, that he did not notice his son wasn't really taking notice of what his father had to say. So when Mr. Robinson pulled out the matchbox from inside his jacket pocket and opened the slightly crumpled matchbox (it was a miracle for sure that it had not been squashed) to prove to his son that what happened, really had happened.

His son said, "Ugh, dad, you've got a horrible worm in the matchbox." He then stuck his thumb into the box and squashed it.

**THE END**

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