
ETHICAL DILEMMA 1 No such thing as a free drink?

Jenna, a good friend of yours who studies at the same university, has been complaining for some time to you that she never has any money. She decides that she needs to go out and find a job, and after searching for a while, is offered a job as a bartender in the student bar at your university. She gladly accepts and begins working three nights a week. You are pleased too, not only because it means that Jenna will have more money, but also because it means you will continue to see her regularly—after all, you are a regular customer at the bar!

Jenna enjoys the extra income that the job brings. She also seems to enjoy the work. You are rather pleased with developments since you notice that whenever you go up to the bar, Jenna always serves you first regardless of how many people are waiting.

After a short while, though, it becomes apparent that Jenna is not enjoying the job quite as much as she did. Whenever you see her, she always seems to have a new story of how the bar manager has mistreated her. She tells you how she has been getting the worst shifts, always getting chosen to do the least-popular jobs (like cleaning the washrooms), and being constantly reprimanded for minor blunders that seem to go uncensored for the rest of the staff.

This goes on for a short while and then one day, when you are in the bar having a drink with some of your other friends, Jenna does something that you are not quite sure how to react to; when you go up to pay for a round of four drinks for you and your other friends, she discreetly only charges you for one drink. While you are slightly uncomfortable with this, you certainly do not want to lose the opportunity to save some money, or even worse, to get your friend into any kind of trouble by refusing. And when you tell your other friends about it, they think it is great fun and congratulate you for the cheap round of drinks! In fact, when the next one of your friends is due to go and buy some drinks, he instead asks you to take his money, so that you can do the same trick for him. Although you tell him to get his own drinks, Jenna continues to undercharge you whenever it is your turn to go to the bar.

This goes on for a number of visits. You are happy to get the cheap rounds at the bar but you are not 100% comfortable with what is going on. You decide to at least say something to Jenna when no one else is around. However, when you do end up raising the subject she just laughs it off and says, 'Yeah, it is great isn't it? They will never notice, and you get a cheap night out. Besides, it is only what this place deserves after the way I have been treated.'

QUESTIONS

1. Who is wrong in this situation—Jenna for undercharging you, you for accepting it, both of you, or neither of you?
 2. Confronted by this situation, how would you handle it? Do nothing, or ask Jenna to stop undercharging you? If you take the latter option, what would you do if she refused?
 3. To what extent do you think that being deliberately undercharged is different from other forms of preferential treatment, such as Jenna serving you in front of other waiting customers?
 4. Does the fact that Jenna feels aggrieved at the treatment she receives from her boss condone her behaviour? Does it help to explain either her actions or your actions?
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