

# The Type

by Jane Downing

It's the type of place where they scrape the contaminated bits of rice off the top and refill the rice bucket for the next patrons. She almost admires the frugality of it, the refusal to waste food when so many go hungry.

She only knows the behind the scenes infringements because her niece worked here the summer before, the token redhead amongst the Vietnamese wait-staff. They paid award wages, penalty rates and overtime which was better than any of the multinationals in town. Any wonder they had to be careful with costs and recycled the rice. And kept childcare costs to a minimum – down to the occasional dollar for the ride-on Thomas the Tank Engine on the pavement out front.

The little girls know to stay out from under the customers' feet. They never misbehave even when the Thomas the Tank Engine money is not forthcoming. She has to admire kids that age who can hold their tongues in multiple languages.

The man with the sunglasses comes on Friday nights. He doesn't order ahead like all the others popping in for takeaways. He doesn't scroll trenches in the face of his mobile while he waits for his beef and cashews and special fried rice. He comes every Friday night. She is never certain where he is looking because of the sunglasses. She knows it is at the girls still in their school uniforms, sitting against the graffiti dragon on the wall outside. Their skinny legs pulled up. Playing handclapping games.

She never digs deep into the rice bucket to make sure she doesn't get someone else's dregs on her plate. She comes every Friday night to watch the man in the sunglasses watch the little girls. Just in case.



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