

Episode 18

Cultural Analysis 文化解析

(in the form of a dialog between a younger brother [B] and an older sister [S] who are college students in the US)

B: Gee, sis, thanks for asking me to help with this final discussion.

S: Well, you're the only brother I've got, so I guess I'm **stuck with** (跟...綁在一起) you. Our topic this time is **etiquette** (禮節) for being a good guest. Do you know anything about being a good guest?

B: Hmm. If you're talking about the party in the dialog at Cooper and May's house, I have to say the character Andy is an example of how *not* to be a good guest.

S: Really? I thought you would like him. He sort of reminds me of you. A joker.

B: Ahh, sis, you underestimate my charm with women. Andy is totally insincere when giving compliments. You can see right through him. "The very picture of celestial beauty"—give me a break! I had better lines than that in grade school.

S: Oh, and I suppose you could do better?

B: OK, you tell me. What do women want to hear?

S: Well, women want to be praised for their ideas and their personal qualities, not just their appearance. And they want a man who will listen to them, not just talk. I mean, why can't more men see that?

B: I don't know—I was too busy listening to you. . . .

S: Wise guy. Listen, there are other rules to keep in mind when attending parties. For starters, when to show up. Do you think it's rude to show up at

a party early?

B: You know me, I go late to everything. But I guess it's a bad idea to show up early. Your host might not be ready yet. Maybe they're in the bathroom, or maybe they didn't buy the potato chips yet, or—

S: Right you are. If a party is at someone's home, it's probably good to arrive either on time or a few minutes after the scheduled time—this is called being “fashionably late.” But for a dinner party, try not to be more than 15 minutes late. And if the party is a professional one, like an office party at a hotel, it's best to arrive on time. Now, how about bringing a gift? Let's imagine that you have a girlfriend (hah!), and her parents invite you over to their house for dinner, what are you going to bring?

B: You mean, besides my good looks and charm? Probably a bottle of wine.

S: Not bad. Let's say they don't drink alcohol. What else could you bring?

B: You tell me.

S: Well, you might bring some chocolates, or a package of good tea or coffee. Whatever it is, it should be presented nicely. If you buy a bottle of wine, ask for a gift bag. OK, last question: When is it appropriate to leave a party?

B: When the police come over because the music is too loud?

S: Grow up. We're talking about a civilized party.

B: OK, I'm **stumped** (被難倒). When do you leave?

S: Be sensitive about your hosts' schedule and take a cue from the other guests. If you're one of the last people there and the conversation is **fading away** (漸漸消逝), it's definitely a good time to say something like, “Well, I've really had a wonderful time, but I need to go.” Be sure to thank the hosts before you leave—and say something nice about the party. And if you need to leave the party early, don't interrupt everyone—just say goodbye to

a few friends, thank the hosts, and leave quietly.

B: Wow, sis, you're pretty smart about this stuff. Maybe you can help me write to Nana?

S: Nana?

B: Yeah, that young woman in the dialogue—the one Andy likes. She must be pretty good looking. According to the dialogue, she doesn't really have a boyfriend yet.

S: Good luck. What do you want to tell her?

B: I'll tell her I admire her personal qualities besides her appearance, and I really want to listen to her, and bring her parents some wine in a nice bag, and not stay too late, and—

S: I've created a monster!

