

## **Delusional Shoplifting**

by Kalin - Sunday, January 31, 2010

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So this one time when I was about 13 I went into a hardware store to buy a cd rack for my music collection. I stood in line at the checkout for about 5 minutes as two or three people had purchases to make before me. I paid for my cd rack and told the cashier that I didn't need a bag since it was only one item, and I also didn't need the receipt because I'd just throw it away on the way out anyway, so she threw the receipt in the garbage and started helping the next person in line.

I left and got more than halfway across the parking lot before I heard someone yelling behind me. I turned and saw a security guard racing toward me. "You! Kid! Stop!" he yelled. "Get back here!" He seemed to be getting more and more angry.

I stopped and just watched him, still wondering if he was even talking to me, figuring he'd run right past me toward someone else that I hadn't seen. But no, he stopped as he came closer. "You just stole that!" he accused. "You can't just walk out of there without paying! What, do you think I'm blind?"

"Huh?" I said, just feeling nothing but intimidation as this big man pointed a big round finger in my face.

"You just walked right past the register, without paying," he yelled. "I was standing right there and watched you grab it off the shelf and just walk right past the register. You think you can just get away with that? Come on; you're coming back into the store."

And all I could think to say was, "Huh?" But I started walking back to the store as the security guard stuck right close to me.

*Am I going insane? I wondered. Am I like one of those multiple personality klepto maniacs?*

But I tried to tell the man that I had stood in line for a good five minutes, and had paid for my purchase with like seven bucks cash.

"Yeah, sure," he said. "I'll believe that when I see the receipt. If you didn't steal that, then tell me, why didn't you grab a receipt? Why don't you have a bag?"

"ugghk", was all I could reply before gathering my thoughts. "I didn't need those things," I said.

And he scoffed and fell quiet as we walked back to the hardware store.

The walk seemed to take forever, and I kept thinking that we would get back to the register and I would recognize the same woman cashier but she would have no recollection of me. I would go to jail, and it would take some time for me to convince them that I had no recollection of stealing, and they'd force me through intense psychological evaluations and finally realize that I had a mental disorder that caused me

to do horrible things and block them out of my mind. I would be institutionalized for ever and ever after that.

It felt like a dream.

We went back inside and there were still three or four people standing in line and the same woman, working by herself at the checkout. I walked up to her and the security guard followed, rolling his eyes, as though to humor me as I tried to fake my way out of the blame.

“Did this kid just buy this?” asked the security guard.

And for a moment I thought for sure the woman wouldn’t remember me, but she took a quick look at me and said quickly, “Yeah, he was here like two minutes ago,” and turned back to the next person in line.

“Did he pay for this?” asked the security guard.

The cashier turned back and rolled her head. “Yes, of course!” she snapped.

“Does he have a receipt?”

The cashier grunted, “It’s in the garbage, right there.” She pointed at the trash.

The security guard looked down, at that moment actually being closer to the garbage than the cashier. “Do you think you could find it for me?”

“You want me to go through the garbage for a seven dollar receipt?”

“Could you?” asked the security guard, suddenly speaking far more politely.

And the cashier muttered under her breath, turning away from her customer to dig through the garbage, “You have got to be kidding me,” she said, barely loud enough to be heard.

But fortunately she found it quickly as it was still sitting on top. The security guard looked at it for no more than five seconds, and set it back on the counter. “Okay, cool,” he said. “Sorry ‘bout that,” he said, like someone might say when they brush against you on the bus. He then promptly turned and walked away, and before even taking two steps he started whistling.

That was what I remember most about the story: that he started whistling to himself immediately afterward. He had just had a full-on delusion. He had *Stood there and watched me walk right past the cash register*. There’s no way to confuse something like that. But somehow he found these delusions so normal and acceptable that he could walk away whistling afterward.

At the time, being about 13, I did not realize it was a common strategy to lie to a suspect to trick them into admitting something. The idea that he had made up the story as an intimidation technique never crossed my mind.

And I stared at the back of the security guard as he walked away whistling happily, bobbing his head slightly to the tune playing in his mind. It took me a few seconds before I could move, and the other customers had to shuffle around me. I came out of my daze when I saw the cashier grabbing the receipt to throw it back in the garbage.

“No!” I stopped her, grabbing the paper before she could drop it. “I wanna hang onto that.”

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