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Block 3

Expertise

What Was the Total Again?

“Well, there’s one, there’s two. Ooh! A nickel, so that brings it up to seven, right? Now what was the total again?”

You wouldn’t believe how often I encounter situations like this. It’s times like these that prompt me to go to the nearest hard surface, and bash my head against it repeatedly. Now, you’re probably saying, “Well, that can’t happen *that* often.”

Well, it does. If I didn’t work at Kmart, I probably wouldn’t notice this epidemic. Of course, half the people who walk in are penny-pinching old ladies that will demand to see a manager if the coupon for ten cents off of hemorrhoid cream is two months expired.

The worst part is, at work, I can’t bash my head against the register. Apparently, it looks “unprofessional.” So I’m forced to deal with these sweet, adorable, little old PAINS IN MY ASS, and smile like a jackass while doing it!

Thus, I have become an expert at dealing with the elderly without murdering them, or, best of all, myself.

You can almost sense their arrival. It’s accompanied with the overwhelming scent of lavender perfume, the shuffling paper sound of coupons and this week’s ad, as well as the muffled jingle of an overstuffed coin-purse.

Generally, they have a cart filled to the brim with frumpy old lady clothes, some form of pills or medication, and at least one pack of toilet paper. As I begin to ring up the items, they demand to double check that EVERYTHING is ringing up on the exact sale price. Not one item goes unasked about.

In the midst of the scanning, the elderly woman scans her purse, digging and rummaging, batting her hand through the contents for any and all coupons. Even if the coupon is for something completely unrelated, she will attempt to have it scanned. If one doesn't work, she will fight tooth-and-nail to try and get us to give her the coupon amount anyway.

After the long, painful process of ringing everything up, she demands to hear the total once, then twice, then three times, and then, if I'm REALLY unlucky, a fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh time. I figure that it's a combination of alzheimer's and deafness. They finally manage to get the total price. Then, I am fairly confident that there is an unwritten law stating that "All persons over the age of fifty shall pay their bill in exact change".

I get to see this lady pull out that overstuffed coin-purse, dump everything out onto the counter, and start counting away.

"There's one, and two, and three, what was the total again?" she asks.

"Thirteen dollars and ninety-four cents," I reply, the urge to bash my head creeping up on me

"Thank you. Now here's thirteen dollars, and here's a quarter... Where is it? I could swear I had another quarter in here."

Jeez, this will take forever.

"Well, I can't seem to find it," says the old lady after pouring out the entirety of her coin purse and handbag. "I guess I can just give you these two dimes and a nickel."

A nickel is the choice torture instrument of the elderly. Most people think pennies, but this is not the case. I have never seen old ladies carry enough pennies to pay in exact change. Nickels are another story. They seem to have an endless supply of nickels.

"And here's another five nickels, which brings it up to seventy-five cents. Now what was that total again?"

“Thirteen dollars and ninety-four cents,” I strain myself to say calmly, just about ready to ring her neck.

“Okay, well, here's another nickel, and three pennies, and a dime. Now where's that other penny?”

Smack. Smack. Smack.

“Ah, here it is! Now, you needed thirteen ninety-four, right?”

“Yes,” I say.

“Here you go. Thank you!”

“Here's your receipt, thank you for shopping at Kmart. Have a nice day!” I say with false cheeriness, while breathing a sigh of relief as she begins to walk away.

She stops. Crap !

She turns around, and says, “Excuse me, sir, I think that I was overcharged on this item. On the receipt it says that I paid two ninety-nine, but it is advertised for two forty-nine.”

“Oh, are you sure you have this week's ad?”

“Yes”

Yes! I know what to do here to get rid of her now.

“Okay, well, I can't help you here. Now that you are checked out. However, she can do a price adjustment for you at the service desk.” I say, pointing toward the service desk.

“Okay, thank you, sir”

“Have a nice day!” *Not.*

At this point, as she walks toward the service desk, I run to beat her there, and ask to go on my break. *Well, she's somebody else's problem now.*

I sit back in the break room for about ten minutes when the person from the service desk walks back and says, “I need a break too, there was an old lady that wanted a price adjustment for fifty cents and refused to believe she had last week’s ad!”

I chuckled and continued to eat my lunch and watch the episode of *CSI* on the TV. Best have as much fun as I can with the last five minutes of my break before I get out there and do it again.