

The Customer is Always Wrong

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THE VOICE OF VALUE VAULT

Store 236 contains content that may not be suitable for all audiences. Listener discretion is advised.

SCENE 1, INT. STORE

Through the sound of rain, we hear a door open and a bell jingle. The door closes, and the rain is replaced by cheerful muzak. Footsteps as FIRST CUSTOMER approaches the register.

FIRST CUSTOMER

I need to return this.

AUBREY

...and a good evening to you too! I can help with that. Do you have your receipt?

FIRST CUSTOMER

Here.

Paper crinkles, and the receipt is slapped onto the counter.

AUBREY

Sure. Counter's fine. No need to put it in my hand.

The bag crinkles as AUBREY opens it, before gasping.

AUBREY (cont'd)

Oh! Oh my god. Um, ok. Uh, unfortunately, this is not returnable.

FIRST CUSTOMER

What? Why not?

AUBREY

Because it's underwear. And it appears to have been worn.

FIRST CUSTOMER

So?

AUBREY

...so it wouldn't be sanitary for us

to take this back.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Well how was I supposed to know that??

AUBREY

Our return policy is listed on the receipt.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Oh yeah? Where?

AUBREY

Right here at the bottom. "Most items can be returned within 21 days with original receipt, certain items, including medications, perishable foods, and undergarments, are not returnable, please see shopvaluevault.net for a full list of non-returnable items."

FIRST CUSTOMER

This is ridiculous. You should tell people if they can't return an item!

AUBREY

Again, the policy was listed on your receipt.

FIRST CUSTOMER

But you should have *told* me!

MORGAN

(calling from their register)

I *definitely* did.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Excuse me?

MORGAN

I remember you.

Foosteps as MORGAN approaches FIRST CUSTOMER

MORGAN

You told me you weren't sure those were going to fit but you were gonna take them home and try them, and, well, I advised you that undergarments are nonreturnable, so if you weren't sure, you should probably not be buying them.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Well, they *don't* fit! What am I supposed to do now?

MORGAN

(under their breath)

I dunno, eat the cost, buy new ones, pay more attention in the future?

AUBREY

Sir, I understand your frustration, but I'm sure you can also understand that taking back soiled undergarments is a health hazard.

FIRST CUSTOMER

W-well that is not my problem! What kind of a store doesn't take back items that don't fit?

MORGAN

(under their breath) Probably

all of them when it's your gross, dirty pants, right?

The muzak shifts to another cheerful tune

AUBREY

(through gritted
teeth)

Thank you, Morgan, I've got this.

(to the customer)

They are right, though, it's a standard practice for stores to be unable to take back items like undergarments and bathing suits for

sanitary reasons.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Unbelievable. I want a manager.

AUBREY

Certainly, let me just grab her -

FIRST CUSTOMER

Now.

FIRST CUSTOMER slaps the counter

FIRST CUSTOMER

I want a manager *now*. Get her, NOW.

FIRST CUSTOMER continues yelling over AUBREY and slapping the counter

AUBREY

(in a much higher
customer service
voice)

Sir, I am getting her, if you'd just
give us a moment.

JUDE arrives, slightly out of breath

JUDE

Yes, hi, manager, that's me, uh, how
can I help?

FIRST CUSTOMER

This associate is being completely
unreasonable. And the one over there
keeps making rude little comments!

JUDE

Well, I'm sure the second thing is
true, and I am sorry about that, but
-

MORGAN

It's what I do best.

JUDE

(sighs)

Morgan I swear to god...

FIRST CUSTOMER

Don't interrupt me! I purchased an item from your store, it not what I need, but somehow, I'm not allowed to return it! How is that fair?

JUDE

Aubrey, what was the item?

AUBREY

A six pack of boxer briefs.

JUDE

Ah.

A beat of silence

FIRST CUSTOMER

Well??

JUDE

W-Well it's...it's underwear, sir.
We can't take that back for sanitary reasons, it's company policy.

FIRST CUSTOMER

That's what she told me!

JUDE

Oh. Ok. Great.

(beat)

What was the issue?

FIRST CUSTOMER

The problem is that these don't fit me! I tried on all six pairs, and none of them fit!

AUBREY

(to herself)

So glad I touched those.

FIRST CUSTOMER

So what do you expect me to do with them now?? I want my money back for

this defective product!

JUDE

Was there something else wrong with it, or -

FIRST CUSTOMER

It doesn't fit me, I - weren't you listening??

JUDE

I was, I was, but something not fitting you doesn't make it defective, it just makes it...the wrong size? Look, sir, I'm sure you are a reasonable person -

MORGAN

What gave you that impression?

JUDE

(a bit more loudly)

- and I'm sure we can come to a resolution that works for everyone. How can we make this right?

FIRST CUSTOMER

You can take this *shit* and give me my money back!

JUDE

Again...dirty underwear, cannot take that back, but, I have this coupon here, \$5 off your next purchase of \$20 or more, would that help you buy a pack in a different size maybe?

FIRST CUSTOMER

NO!

FIRST CUSTOMER grabs the bag and slaps the counter as he does. Between each of these lines, the bag crinkles and a pair of underwear is flung at an employee

FIRST CUSTOMER

THAT!

JUDE

Hey!

FIRST CUSTOMER

IS!

AUBREY

No!

FIRST CUSTOMER

NOT!

JUDE

Sir!

FIRST CUSTOMER

GOOD ENOUGH!

MORGAN

That's the grossest thing I've ever
seen.

JUDE

Sir, I'm going to need you to calm
down.

FIRST CUSTOMER

NO! I AM DONE BEING CALM! THIS IS
OUTRAGEOUS!

KEN

Hello, sir! Please stop throwing
things at my coworkers!

The bag crinkles, and another pair is thrown at
Ken. He yelps.

MORGAN

Oh god, right in his face.

FIRST CUSTOMER

STAY OUT OF THIS.

KEN

...ok. Ugh!

JUDE

Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Fine! Ask me then! But I'm not leaving until you give me my money back! It's my money! You can't keep it! That's stealing! If you don't give me my money back, I will destroy this place! And then I'll call the cops and tell them about your corrupt business practices!

FIRST CUSTOMER knocks over a display. Items clatter to the ground.

FIRST CUSTOMER (cont'd)

I will call every news station in this town!

More items are knocked to the floor in the background of the next few lines

KEN

Uh, guys, he's getting really scary.

MORGAN

Yeah, what do we do?

FIRST CUSTOMER

I'll call the mayor's office! I'll call the Better Business Bureau!

AUBREY

I have a taser in my bag.

MORGAN

Nice!

JUDE

Aubrey, no!

MORGAN

Aww.

FIRST CUSTOMER

I'll call the FTC! I'll call the VA!

AUBREY

I'm not gonna actually taze him, I'm just gonna threaten him with it!

JUDE

No. Gift card, get me a gift card.
How much was his purchase for?

AUBREY

Five dollars and thirty cents.

JUDE

(sighs)

Ah, Christ, seriously? He just knocked down our entire snack display over that?

MORGAN

Jude. This is retail.

JUDE

Whatever, just let me have the register. Uh, sir? Sir, here, please take this.

The muzak shifts into something jazzy.

FIRST CUSTOMER

That's not my money!

JUDE

I know, I know, but it's the best I can do for you. The system will not let me process a return for a non-returnable item, so I can't get *your* money back, but I *can* give you a gift card. It's for 10 dollars and

sixty cents, twice what you spent,
that way you can buy two packs next
time and hopefully find the right
size, ok?

A tense silence. FIRST CUSTOMER breathes heavily.

FIRST CUSTOMER

Fine. But I am telling everyone about
what goes on around here!

JUDE

Yes, you've made that very clear, now
please take this card and go, I
really don't want to have to call
security.

FIRST CUSTOMER sighs before yelling across the entire
store.

FIRST CUSTOMER

This place is full of liars and
thieves! I hope you're happy with
yourselves! Ripping off hard working
people! Shame on you! Shame on all of
you!

FIRST CUSTOMER opens the door, and the bell jingles as he
leaves the store. The rain has become a thunderstorm, and
we hear his wet footsteps as he crosses the parking lot. He
mutters to himself

FIRST CUSTOMER

Fucking unbelievable.

FIRST CUSTOMER opens his car door, gets inside, and closes
the door. He pulls his seatbelt across himself and clicks it
into place.

FIRST CUSTOMER

What ever happened to customer
service? The customer is always

right!

FIRST CUSTOMER (cont'd)

A gift card. Fucking ridiculous. Ow!
Why are these edges so sharp? They
can't even get gift cards right.

FIRST CUSTOMER mutters to himself, before a chittering sound
cuts him off.

FIRST CUSTOMER

What the?

We hear a small snarl

FIRST CUSTOMER

Who -

The snarling gets louder and is accompanied by the sound of
tearing fabric

FIRST CUSTOMER (cont'd)

What is that sound? Who - oh my god!
Oh my god, what the hell is that??
No! NOOO!!

Hard cut. The Store 236 theme plays.

SCENE 2: DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT

A low, spooky theme plays and swells as the dialogue goes on

VOICE

This place is beset with monsters.
Imbecilic, obnoxious, entitled.
Aubrey calls them "basic," but I do
not get that one. If it is a
reference, it is not one I
understand. Every day we open our
doors, and every day they come. Rain
or shine, day or night. The worst of
humanity converges upon this place,
besieging it from all sides with

their cruelty and greed. Eventually
they will destroy us. Unless we
destroy them first.

SCENE 3: INT. STORE

The low music cuts abruptly before changing to bouncy
muzak. SPONGE CUSTOMER is attempting to get a spaced-out
Jude's attention.

SPONGE CUSTOMER

Miss? Allo?? Are you listening to
me??

JUDE

(snapping out of it)

Huh? Oh, oh, uh, oh, I'm so sorry.
Uh, how can I help you?

SPONGE CUSTOMER

I asked you where the sponges are.

JUDE

...aisle 7. Right under the sign that
says cleaning supplies.

(under her breath)

And sponges.

SPONGE CUSTOMER

(snippy)

Thank you.

We transition to a voiceover. JUDE is giving an interview to
a documentary crew. The camera beeps

JUDE

(interview)

I'm Jude. I'm the assistant manager
here at Value Vault Store 236. Uh,
well-

JUDE sighs

JUDE

Well, I'm not the assistant

manager, because they don't pay me to be, but I'm also not *not* the assistant manager because someone has to do the job, and, well, I'm here, so...
It's a lot, um...I'm here most days, open to close, and anytime there's a problem, it is *my* problem.

A door opens. We hear the same bouncy muzak in the background.

MORGAN

Oi, Jude. Dumpsters got left unlocked again so the raccoons had themselves a tea party. You want me to send Ken clean it up?

JUDE

(sighs)

Great. No, I've got it.

The door closes

JUDE (cont'd)

(interview)

That's Morgan. They're...mostly harmless once you get to know them. Not that they get any nicer, you just learn not to take it personally.

The camera beeps again

MORGAN

(interview)

Are you lot from corporate or something?

DOCUMENTARIAN

(interview)

Oh, uh, no, we're not from corporate.

MORGAN

(interview)

Because you have to tell me if you're from corporate. I know my rights. You're not gonna trick me into saying a bunch of anti-corporate shit and then use it against me later.

DOCUMENTARIAN

(interview)

Erm...we're not from corporate.

MORGAN

(interview)

...alright then.

JUDE

(interview)

Morgan doesn't take any shit. Which can be a really good thing, but...

We transition back to the store, cheerful muzak again playing

RANTING CUSTOMER

And another thing! Everything here is some kind of knockoff! Where are the name brands? Where are the high-end products? Where are the...hello? Hello, are you even listening to me?

MORGAN

Huh? Oh, god no. I tuned out like 90 seconds ago and was just going to wait for you to realize how ridiculous you sound. I mean, high-end, brand name products? You do realize we've got the word 'value' in our name, right? You're not in a department store.

Muzak cuts

JUDE sighs

JUDE

(interview)
Yeah it-it-it does mean I have to put
out a good number of fires.

Muzak returns.

RANTING CUSTOMER
Excuse me??

JUDE
Ok, sir, I'm just gonna ring you up
over here. Morgan, go organize
something please.

Muzak cuts

JUDE
(interview)
Nat's our newest team member.
She's...she's doing a really great
job, you know? She learns quickly,
she's always on time, no complaining.
It-
(JUDE sighs)
It's just that, um...

A new upbeat muzak plays

CARD CUSTOMER
Excuse me, dear.

NAT
(clearly startled)
OH MY GOD.

Muzak cuts

JUDE
(interview)
Yeah, she's scared of...literally everything.

Muzak returns

CARD CUSTOMER

Oh! I'm sorry, I was just going to ask where the greeting cards are.

NAT

(breathing heavily)

They're um...aisle 2...all the way down...second to last aisle.

CARD CUSTOMER

Thank you, dear.

NAT exhales

Muzak cuts

JUDE

(interview)

We're working on it.

Camera beeps

NAT

(interview, nervous
rambling, imagine
them wide-eyed)

Hi I'm, uh...I'm Nat. I'm new here. I just graduated high school in the spring and this is my first job. I go to the local community college so I figured I'd pick something close to home so I could work and take classes. It's a good job! I get a lot of hours right now, which is good since I have textbooks to buy, and they work around my class schedule, which is super helpful. The hours aren't too bad, and everyone's really, uh...nice?

DOCUMENTARIAN

(interview)

Is...is that a question?

NAT
(interview)
I...don't know.

Muzak returns

KEN
Hey, Nat. You know what you need?

NAT
Balloons?

KEN
Balloons!

Balloons squeak together as KEN pulls a bunch from behind his back.

KEN
Wait, how did you know?

Muzak cuts, the camera beeps

KEN
(interview)
So I just look at the camera then?

DOCUMENTARIAN
(interview)
Uh, no, you look at
me.

KEN
(interview)
Oh, ok, yeah. Got
it. Ok. Hm.

DOCUMENTARIAN
(interview)
Uh, you're still looking at the camera.

KEN
(interview)
You don't - you don't want me to
look at the camera?

DOCUMENTARIAN

(interview)

No, you look at me?

KEN

(interview)

Oh at YOU. D'oh! Right. Got it, sure.
Uh, hey! I'm Kendall, but everyone
around here calls me Ken. I've worked
here...wow, like two years now?
Already? It's great. I've got the
best team, everyone's super awesome,
and I get to spend all day blowing up
balloons for people, which is
basically the best job ever. Ok, I
mean, balloons isn't my *official* job
or anything, but Jude usually lets me
work the balloon counter 'cause she
knows how much I like it, I mean, who
can be mad when they're buying
balloons?

JUDE

(interview)

Yeah, I let Ken do balloons because
he loves it for some reason, and no
one else wants the job. Those
customers are the *worst*.

Chill muzak plays

BALLOON CUSTOMER

Are you an idiot?? I said I wanted *maroon* and *gold*, not *red* and *yellow*! These are for a graduation party, and the school colors are maroon and gold. I've told you that a hundred times!

KEN

Ok, I totally hear you, but like I said, I've only got eight colors, and red and yellow is the closest I've got. When you placed the order you-you said that was okay.

BALLOON CUSTOMER

(laughs)

Oh, no, no, no, no, no, it is most certainly *not* ok, alright? And I am not paying for *these* when they're not what I wanted!

AUBREY

(in a high pitched, customer service voice)
Excuse me, sir! Is there a problem here??

Muzak cuts

JUDE

(interview)

Aubrey's my lead cashier, and she's really good at it. Aubrey is also who I usually send to deal with problem customers. She's got a very, uh, *specific* way of handling them.

Muzak returns.

BALLOON CUSTOMER

(laughs)

Is there a problem? Yes there's a *problem*. I told this *moron* a hundred times that I wanted maroon and gold balloons, ok? And he keeps trying to give me red and yellow.

AUBREY

Ken, is that what happened?

KEN

I mean...yeah, but I don't have
maroon and gold.

(MORE)

KEN (cont'd)

I told him that when he placed the order yesterday, and he said it was fine then. Uh, look, I have the order form right here, and -

AUBREY snatches the order form.

AUBREY

I see! Sir, is this your signature?

BALLOON CUSTOMER

Uh, yeah, but -

AUBREY

So you approved the colors!

BALLOON CUSTOMER

Te-technically, but -

AUBREY

Excellent! Then everything seems to be in order! And since that's the case, I'd be more than happy to take over this transaction to expedite your experience!

AUBREY presses buttons on the cash register and scans the balloons.

AUBREY

Your total today is \$16.96! Cash or card?

BALLOON CUSTOMER

Cash. Here.

Coins clink as BALLOON CUSTOMER pays AUBREY.

AUBREY

Excellent! That's one - two - three - four cents back to you! And here's your receipt! Let me just carry your balloons to the door so that you can leave!

AUBREY gathers the balloons, which squeak against each other

BALLOON CUSTOMER

Uh, that's not necessary -

AUBREY

Don't be silly! I'm happy to do whatever is necessary to end this interaction as quickly as possible!

Footsteps as AUBREY walks to the door. She opens it, and the bell jingles.

AUBREY

Thank you for shopping at Value Vault, out you go!

The door closes. We hear a gust of wind.

BALLOON CUSTOMER

(muffled, from outside)

No! Goddammit, get back here!

AUBREY

(in her normal voice, much lower and more deadpan than the CS voice)

God, what an asshole. You ok, Ken?

KEN

Uh, yeah! All good! Thanks Aubrey!

Muzak cuts, camera beeps

AUBREY

(interview)

Listen, you gotta fight crazy with crazy. These people come in here thinking they can behave however they want, and they *never* expect someone to give it back to them. That's why I whip out the voice - it throws them off just long enough for me to get the upper hand. Plus I'm not allowed to use a spray bottle. Anymore. Corporate said that was "too far."

JUDE

(interview)

No, no, no, corporate didn't confiscate that, I did, I-I just told her that so she wouldn't, um...murder me? Anyway, she's really effective, and she's been around the longest, uh...except for Oliver, but he mostly works in the stockroom.

OLIVER

(interview)

I'm Oliver.

(long pause)

Is that it? Because I've got some, like, boxes back there.

DOCUMENTARIAN

(interview)

Uh, sure. That's fine.

OLIVER

(interview)

Cool. Thanks, man.

JUDE

(interview)

Hm? Oh, yeah, he was *definitely* stoned, but it never impacts his work so I really don't care. But, honestly, the way things are around here, it's a miracle we're not all stoned all the time.

Bouncy muzak plays

RAG CUSTOMER

Hey! Your rags *suck*! I tried like... nine of them, and not one could get all of this barbecue sauce off of my son's face.

JUDE

(heavy sigh)

Ohhhh my god...

SCENE 4: INT. BREAK ROOM

A door is unlocked, opened, and then closed

JUDE

Ok everyone, we've got two weeks left until Halloween, so we've got to really start pushing the remainder of the seasonal merch - the Christmas shipment comes in on Friday and we need room for those boxes.

AUBREY and OLIVER groan

JUDE (cont'd)

I know, I know, I know, but we don't want a repeat of last year, remember? When we stacked those Christmas boxes on top of the Halloween boxes until they reached the ceiling?

OLIVER

Some of my finest work.

AUBREY

Yeah, that was impressive.

JUDE

Uh huh, sure, until they fell on me and dumped their contents everywhere.

(sighs)

It took me 45 minutes to untangle all the tinsel.

MORGAN

You heard the lady, Oliver: to the ceiling again, tinsel on top. Let's see if we can make it an hour.

JUDE

No. Christmas boxes in, Halloween boxes out, Jude doesn't get wrapped in tinsel. Got it?

MORGAN

Ugh. Well, there goes my favorite Christmas tradition.

AUBREY

(aside)

We'll make it happen.

JUDE

I heard that.

AUBREY

No you didn't!

KEN

Guys, am I the only one that's excited about the Christmas merch?

MORGAN

(overlapping)

Yes.

AUBREY

(overlapping)

Absolutely.

OLIVER

It's a never ending maze of red and green, man.

KEN

Oh come on, guys! It's the most magical time of the year!

AUBREY

It is October 17th.

KEN

Yeah? And you started decorating for Halloween in August, I can be excited about Christmas in October.

The others boo him. The writer agrees with Ken.

JUDE

Ugh. Moving on. Customer complaints. Morgan, we had 16 against you in the last week alone. Care to explain?

MORGAN

Eh. Not really. Thanks though.

AUBREY

Damn, is that a record?

MORGAN

Nah. One week I got 27. Been chasing that high ever since.

JUDE

They are not the only one getting complaints. Aubrey, we had three different people say that your demeanor is, and I quote, disconcerting.

AUBREY

Oh, good! Means it's working.

JUDE

(sighs)

Oh, god. Just...maybe stop telling people you're going to steal their bones.

AUBREY

No promises.

JUDE

Ok. Nat?

NAT

Yeah?

JUDE

I know you're new and still getting comfortable, but if you could try to avoid yelling in the customers' faces anytime someone startles you, that'd be great.

NAT

I'll try.
(sighs)

JUDE

All I ask. And Oliver, you work in the stockroom, not on the floor. Next time someone says they're having trouble finding something, please just get one of us instead of telling them that the real question is whether or not they can find themselves, ok?

OLIVER

You got it.

JUDE

Thank you. Ok, store opens in 10, someone needs to dry mop before we open the doors, and -

AUBREY

Not it.

MORGAN

Hey, hang on, what about Ken?

JUDE

What about Ken?

MORGAN

You didn't read his complaints.

JUDE

That's because Ken didn't get any complaints.

KEN

Woohoo! Two weeks in a row

MORGAN

(grumbling)

Ugh. That's because all he does is
hand out balloons all frickin' day.

JUDE

Oh, would you like to hand out balloons?

MORGAN

No thank you.

JUDE

That's what I thought. Morgan,
Aubrey, you're on registers, Nat,
please grab the dry mop then I'll
have you on the floor keeping shelves
stocked, and Ken -

KEN

Balloons??

JUDE laughs

JUDE

Yeah, bud. Balloons.

KEN

Awesome. You're the best, Jude!

MORGAN

And what exactly will you be doing?

JUDE

Same thing I do every day. Pretending
I get paid enough to wrangle the five
of you.

Chairs scrape against the floor as the associates leave the
table, open then closing the door. NAT goes to get the dry
mop and MORGAN sneaks up behind her.

MORGAN

Hey.

NAT shrieks and drops the dry mop

MORGAN

(laughs)

Ahhh, sorry. I did that on purpose. I wanted to see if you yell at everyone or if it was just customers.

NAT

(catching jer breath)

Not everyone. Just...everyone around here.

MORGAN

What are you so afraid of anyway?

NAT

Uh...I don't know. Making a mistake? Getting yelled at?

MORGAN

Huh. I'm afraid that's sort of inevitable, mate. You're human. You're gonna fuck up, customers are gonna yell at you, and usually, those two things won't be connected. You're gonna have to get over that. You gotta find a way to cope so it doesn't get to you.

NAT

Yeah, I'm...I'm trying.

MORGAN

Well, lucky for you, the rest of us have had plenty of practice at it. You'll figure out what works for you. Come on. Let's go enjoy the store while it's quiet for...seven more minutes.

NAT laughs

SCENE 5: INT. STORE

Quirky muzak plays

MORGAN

I'm not really sure what you'd like me to tell you. You're asking for something we don't have, and I can't give you something we don't have.

SKELETON CUSTOMER sighs

SKELETON CUSTOMER

But you had them last week!

MORGAN

Yeah. And this is this week. That is usually how the passage of time goes.

SKELETON CUSTOMER

Can't you just check the back or something?

MORGAN

I mean, I could, but it's all the way back there, and I know I won't be able to find what you want, so I'm not going to.

SKELETON CUSTOMER

So you're not even going to try?

MORGAN

Nope. The back isn't some Narnia land with an endless supply of whatever stupid thing you're looking for. It's approximately three boxes of softlines overstock, a bunch of merch that's out of season, and one person trying to count everything between edibles.

SKELETON CUSTOMER

But-but-but-but you haven't even looked, how can you possibly know?

MORGAN

Because I'm here all day, every damn day. I'm pretty sure I know better than you do.

SKELETON CUSTOMER

This is outrageous. I *demand* you go and check the back.

MORGAN

Nyeh. Those demands are going to go unmet.

JUDE

Hi, is there a problem here?

MORGAN

Well this customer won't go away for one thing...

SKELETON CUSTOMER

This employee is being absolutely ridiculous. I came in looking for one of those solar powered little dancing skeleton that shakes its booty, and you had them last week and I just wanted to put on my windowsill. But today, I can't find even one.

JUDE

Ah. Yeah, that was a seasonal item, and those tend to go pretty quickly. We always recommend that if you find a seasonal item you like, you buy it that day. There's never any guarantee they're going to stick around, and once we're out, we're out.

SKELETON CUSTOMER

But can't you just check the back?? You must have more somewhere! I asked your employee to and they flat out refused!

JUDE

You know, I was actually just in the back inventorying our remaining seasonal stock, and we are definitely out of those skeletons. I am so sorry about that. Like I said, they're a seasonal item, and they tend to be pretty popular.

SKELETON CUSTOMER

Well then you should've ordered more!

JUDE

We don't order them, ma'am, we just get whatever corporate sends. You could try the store across town. They're a bit bigger than us so they might've gotten more.

SKELETON CUSTOMER sighs

SKELETON CUSTOMER

Fine. I guess I'll drive 15 minutes out of my way since you're not adequately stocked. I appreciate you at least trying to help me.

(to Morgan)

But *you!* You are so uncaring!

Footsteps as SKELETON CUSTOMER storms off. The door opens with a ding, then closes.

JUDE

Well, she's got you there.

MORGAN

...Jude?

JUDE

Yeah?

MORGAN

You do inventory on Fridays, and it's Tuesday today. You weren't in the back checking the seasonals, were you?

JUDE

No I was not. Got her to leave
though, didn't I?

MORGAN gasps

MORGAN

You lied to a customer just to get
them to leave? Oh my god, that is
something *I* would do.

(beat)

I've never felt closer to you, bab.

Muzak cuts, camera beeps

JUDE

(interview)

I know Morgan seems harsh, and they
are, but it-it comes from a very
valid place. Retail has always been a
tough world, but customers are
definitely getting worse. I mean,
it's like as soon as they walk
through our doors, they lose all
sense of decency. Like basic societal
norms just go flying out of their
heads anytime they're -

OIL CUSTOMER

Hey! Do you sell motor oil???

Beat

JUDE

Uh, this...this is a value store.

OIL CUSTOMER

Yeah? Do you sell it or not?

JUDE

No. No, we don't sell motor oil. And
even if we did, I would strongly
advise *against* putting something that
costs ten dollars or less into your
car's engine.

OIL CUSTOMER

Ahh, who needs you!

JUDE

(interview)

Yeah, also common sense. That-that
seems to be in short supply too.

Eccentric muzak plays

AUBREY

Alright, ma'am, your total today is
nineteen dollars and thirty-seven
cents. Will that be cash or card?

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

Ehh, card.

AUBREY

Ok, great. You can tap whenever
you're ready.

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

I don't have one of those tap cards.

AUBREY

Ok. You can insert it then.

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

No chip either. I don't trust 'em.

AUBREY

...right. Go ahead and swipe.

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER swipes her card

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

Wha - ? Why is it asking for my signature??

AUBREY

To make sure that you're the
cardholder. It's for security
purposes.

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

Uh huh. More like you're gonna take it and learn how to copy it yourself.

AUBREY

I can assure you that's not the case. We don't actually look at the signatures, it's just there in case of a fraud claim.

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

Likely story. You're trying to steal my identity!

AUBREY

Ma'am, I have a sneaking suspicion that if anyone were to steal your identity, they would give it right back.

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

What did you just say?

AUBREY

Here are your options: you can sign the pad and complete your purchase, you can pay with cash instead, or you can leave. Personally, I'd prefer the third option, but it's really up to you.

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

Ugh. Fine.

Cash register dings

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

But if I see even one suspicious transaction on my card, I am coming right back here to deal with you personally!

AUBREY

(highest the voice
has been)

Ma'am! Are you threatening me??

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

Uh, I, we-

AUBREY

Because I can assure you that not only does our corporate policy state that threats will not be tolerated, but you are picking a fight that you will not win! So if you'd like to keep all of your bones, I suggest you take your very sad assortment of frozen dinners and exit the store as quickly as possible!

Bags crinkle as they're handed to SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

Wha-, uh, you can't talk to me like -

AUBREY

I'd also make a run for your car once you're outside.

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

Are you threatening *me*??

AUBREY

Certainly not. But I did happen to notice that the raccoons are gathering outside the front door, you've got five boxes of their favorite food in your bag, and they're damn quick.

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER gathers her bags

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER

Ugh. I am *never* coming back here!

Footsteps retreat over AUBREY's line

AUBREY

Glad to hear it. Thank you for shopping at Value Vault! Have the day you deserve!

Door opens, bell dings, then door closes. SUSPICIOUS
CUSTOMER mutters to herschel from outside

SUSPICIOUS CUSTOMER
Hey! Damn raccoons! Give that back!

AUBREY
(interview)
Told you. Crazy with crazy.

JUDE
(in the background)
Aubrey, we talked about the
bones thing!

AUBREY
(calling back to her)
Sorry, Jude! I'll stop with the
threats tomorrow!
(whispers to the
camera)
No I won't.

SCENE 6, INT. STORE

Calm muzak plays

AUBREY
And three...two...one...store's
closed!

AUBREY clicks the music off

AUBREY
Morgan, lock the door.

MORGAN
On it!

Footsteps, then the turn of the lock

KEN
Another great day, guys, good work!

MORGAN

Eh, not my best actually. I only got three customers to storm off, and that might be a career low!

AUBREY

Yeah, and I only threatened one person with bone theft -

JUDE

Aubrey...

AUBREY

- which I obviously won't be doing moving forward, so I guess it's good that I made that one count.

JUDE shuffles papers

JUDE

Well, lucky for all of you, Nat and I got a jump on cleaning and restocking since we weren't too busy this evening. You three break down your registers, I'll go get the daily inventory from Oliver.

OLIVER

Got it here.

JUDE

Oh, great, thanks. Uhh, everything look ok back there?

OLIVER

Oh yeah. The circle of box life moves ever forward.

Cash registers ding, drawers open, bills are counted

MORGAN

Well, kid, you survived another day. How do you feel?

NAT

Um, ok I guess? I didn't have to talk to a lot of customers, so that was good.

MORGAN

Eh. Suppose so.

Coins clink as MORGAN counts them

MORGAN

Oi, Aubrey, my register's off. Is corporate gonna make a thing of it?

AUBREY

Depends, how much is it off by?

MORGAN

Uh...69 cents.

AUBREY

Ha. Nice.

OLIVER

Nice.

MORGAN

Ugh. Grow up.

AUBREY

You grow up.

KEN

W-wait, I don't, I don't get it, what's the joke?

AUBREY

I'll tell you when you're older. And no, Morgan, they only make a thing of it if it's more than \$1. You're fine.

MORGAN

Cool. Jude! Registers are good!

JUDE

Perfect, thanks. Just put your count sheets in the organizer outside the manager's office.

MORGAN

Ugh, but that's all the way back there.

KEN

Oh, don't worry, I'll take them!

MORGAN

(gasps)
My hero.

AUBREY

Thanks, Ken!

Footsteps

JUDE

Alright, I'll just hit the lights and
we are good to -

LATE CUSTOMER knocks on the window

LATE CUSTOMER

Are you guys open?

MORGAN

Do we...look open?

LATE CUSTOMER

Please? I only need the one thing!

MORGAN

Oh, you only need one thing? Well in
that case...still no. Get out of
here.

JUDE

Wha-, uh, what they mean to say is
that we are closed now, but we will
be back at 9AM tomorrow. The grocery
store down the street should still
be open though.

LATE CUSTOMER

Ugh. Fine.

Camera beeps

JUDE

(interview)

Retail is difficult. The work is hard, the hours are long, and the customers are...disagreeable, to say the least. But we've got each other, and that counts for more than you might think.

Crickets and other bugs chirp outside

JUDE (cont'd)

Goodnight, everyone. Get home safe.

AUBREY

Will do.

KEN

Night, Jude!

Footsteps, car doors opening. Inside one of the cars, something is set down and starts clicking rhythmically.

JUDE

Hey, Morgan?

MORGAN

Yeah?

JUDE

What's that?

MORGAN

What's what?

JUDE

That. The little thing you just put on your dashboard.

MORGAN

Oh, that. Solar powered dancing skeleton.

JUDE

Uh huh. And where exactly did you find such an in-demand seasonal item?

MORGAN

Stashed in a bouquet of fake flowers
over in aisle 6. Can't imagine how it
got there.

JUDE

Truly a mystery for the ages.
(laughs)
Good night, Morgan.

MORGAN

Night!

SCENE 7, INT. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT

A low, spooky theme plays and swells as the dialogue goes on

VOICE

Another day comes to a close. Another
day where, despite their best
efforts, we survived. We will not
always be so lucky, of course.
Defense can only work for so long. I
fear it is past time to return to
more...

Music abruptly cuts

VOICE

...aggressive measures.

CREDITS

Bouncy muzak plays

THE VOICE OF VALUE VAULT

Thank you for joining us for today's
installment of Store 236.

This episode, The Customer is Always
Wrong, was written and directed by
Mel Nichols, with sound design by
Sam Stark, and vocal cuts by Maddie
J. Cooper.

It featured Hera Alexander as Jude,

Lindsay Zana as Aubrey, Kirsty Woolven as Morgan, Oz Zeno as Nat, Michael E. Freemantle as Ken, Harley Ronan as Oliver, and Interiority as The Documentarian.

With SockX, Cass Scott, Quill Turner, Wendy Merritt, Bryan Sfara, Tania Gabbidon, Lauren Tucker, Kasha Mika, Katrina Pecina, and Nancy Sandland as the customers, and additional voice work by Amy Young.

Store 236 was created by Mel Nichols. The show is produced by Interiority, with additional story development by Hera Alexander and Amy Young, production assistance by Julia Lynn Sepúlveda, scoring by Amy Young, and graphic design by Jon Stollberg.

If you enjoyed today's episode, you can rate and review us on your favorite podcatcher, follow us on Bluesky and tumblr at store236pod, or support us at patreon.com/store236.

If you didn't, the raccoons will be stealing your dinner.

Thanks for listening.