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Part-Time Job Or Hell-Dog In Disguise?

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PART-TIME JOB OR HELL-DOG IN DISGUISE?

by Christine Ambrose

I've spent an average of 20 hours per week—more on school breaks—in the same crevice from hell for just over two years now. What do I mean by "the crevice from hell?" I mean the second floor, right-hand side of the escalator at J.C. Penney's Longridge Mall: the bedding and bath department. I work there. Actually, it's not really that bad. Although there are moments. I'm just getting sick and tired of neatly folding and stacking towels into their cubes only to watch some old lady unfold and stuff them back as soon as I'm finished. This procedure also occurs with area rugs, bath mats, etc. All for $4.45 an hour. Sometimes, when I'm feeling kind of nasty, I attempt to remedy this problem by following directly behind (and hopefully annoying) the customer and fixing whatever he or she unfixes. I have to be careful when I do this, though. If a customer ever caught me doing this, I could get into big trouble. You see, here at Penney's the policy is simple: kiss the customer's butt!—(smooch )—no matter how conniving, vicious, weird, or revolting he or she may be. For instance, on more than one occasion I've had to handle the return of a used toilet seat. Yuck! I've also had to handle returns of used blankets and shower curtains. This is really disgusting, believe me.

Penney's security actually caught a man shoplifting a toilet seat once. I find it hard to see the logic in this stunt. First of all, it's kind of tough to conceal something as big as a toilet seat under your coat or up your sleeve or whatever. Secondly, the thing was marked down to $9.99. Is it really worth risking arrest over smuggling a clearance toilet seat worth $9.99? Can you imagine the conversation this guy must have had in the clink afterward?

"And no two are ever the same..."

Mom's words echoed in my ears and I watched the wet snow fall on my new black boots.

"The drone of voices lulled me back to my childhood where everything began. She was always herself and I was always her sister. She got the top bunk and top grades and high-class friends. Her smile was so bright in her prom photo with the captain of the football team. My smile was so fake as I posed with a "friend of the family." I was always the dandelion next to the rose, until she pricked herself with her own thorns for reasons I'll never know. She sat so pretty on her Cover Girl pedestal. But now I stand six feet above the Sleeping Beauty, and still they are bringing her flowers..."

Edie Torre
PART-TIME JOB OR HELLDON IN DISGUISE
by Christine Ambrose

I've spent an average of 20 hours per week--more on school breaks--in the same crevice from hell for just over two years now. What do I mean by "the crevice from hell"? I mean the second floor/right-hand side of the escalator at J.C. Penney's Longridge Mall: the bedding and bath department. I work there. Actually, it's not really that bad. Although there are moments. I'm just getting sick and tired of neatly folding and stacking towels into their cubes only to watch some old lady unfold and stuff them back as soon as I'm finished. This procedure also occurs with area rugs, bath mats, etc. All for $4.45 an hour. Sometimes, when I'm feeling kind of nasty, I attempt to remedy this problem by following directly behind (and hopefully annoying) the customer and fixing whatever he or she unfixes. I have to be careful when I do this, though. If a manager ever caught me doing this, I could get into big trouble.

Breaks--in the same crevice from hell for just over two years
Langridge Mall: the bedding and bath department. I work there.

Secondly, the thing was marked down to $9.99. Is it really worth $4.45 an hour--more on school breaks--in the same crevice from hell for just over two years now. What do I mean by "the crevice from hell"? I mean the second floor/right-hand side of the escalator at J.C. Penney's Longridge Mall: the bedding and bath department. I work there. Actually, it's not really that bad. Although there are moments. I'm just getting sick and tired of neatly folding and stacking towels into their cubes only to watch some old lady unfold and stuff them back as soon as I'm finished. This procedure also occurs with area rugs, bath mats, etc. All for $4.45 an hour. Sometimes, when I'm feeling kind of nasty, I attempt to remedy this problem by following directly behind (and hopefully annoying) the customer and fixing whatever he or she unfixes. I have to be careful when I do this, though. If a manager ever caught me doing this, I could get into big trouble.

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Fellow inmate: "Hey man, whadya get busted for?"

Toilet seat smuggler: "Aah, I lifted a toilet seat."

The clincher of this J.C. Penney working experience would have to be the weirdos I am forced to wait on. These are the type of people who tell me the details of their intimate and personal lives while I'm standing there, ringing up their bed and bath supplies. One conversation I had with a middle-aged woman went like this (no kidding!):

She says: "I'm buying these towels for a family friend. He's single, you know. Do you believe I had to get two different colored wash cloths because he won't wash his face with the same cloth he washes his "hoo-haah" with?"

I say: "Oh."

Maybe she's right.

Way back in 1987, during the first month I worked there, there in that cornerstone of hell known as the J.C. Penney bed and bath department, I remember I was crouched in a corner straightening a sheet display where no one could see me. A woman, oblivious to my presence, walked by softly singing to herself:

"There's more for your life at Sears!"

"And no two are ever the same..."

Mom's words echoed in my ear--and I watched the wet snow fall on my new black boots. The drone of voices lulled me back to my childhood where everything began. She was always herself and I was always herself's sister. She got the top bunk and top grades and high-class friends. Her smile was so bright in her prom photo with the captain of the football team. My smile was so fake as I posed with "a friend of the family." I was always the dandelion next to the rose, until she pricked herself with her own thorns for reasons I'll never know. She sat so pretty on her Cover Girl pedestal. But now I stand six feet above the Sleeping Beauty, and still they are bringing her flowers...

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