

Theft and Retribution

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Une série d'incidents fâcheux s'ensuivent après le vol de pansements dans la salle d'examen d'une clinique médicale.

When I was five years old, I stole a nickel from my Mother's purse. The resulting punishment was to instill in me a lifelong—though slightly aberrant—conscience regarding theft.

The alarm went off at seven-thirty Saturday morning, the only morning this single mother of two sometimes has a chance to sleep in, but I had a nine-thirty appointment at the local lab for my annual blood test and ECG. Reluctantly, I crawled out of bed, went down to the kitchen and put the kettle on for tea. While I drank it, I made a shopping list for my weekly trip to the grocery store. The band-aid on my hand reminded me I'd used the last one when I cut my finger making the kids' lunches, so I added them to my list.

My dog, Peppers, got a rather abbreviated version of his Saturday morning walk; then I climbed into my old Toyota and rattled off down the lane. The weather was cool so I was wearing my good wool jacket and the kid gloves I'd bought that week—50 percent off, only \$20—they went perfectly with my jacket.

Driving to the lab I decided that if I skimmed on the groceries, I could treat myself to lunch at Mocha, Mocha, the new upscale café on the Danforth. Anyway, I completed the blood test, had the ECG, and as I was putting my top back on, I noticed a large wicker bowl of band-aids perched on top of a white cabinet. Before I could prevent it, the five-year-old kleptomaniac in me reached out, grabbed a handful, and stuffed them in my purse. When I got outside I counted them. Twelve! My sense of delight was all out of proportion.

I smiled all the way to the grocery store at Pape and Danforth. I smiled while I parked the car in the metered lot behind the store and got my ticket. Then I went back to the car and discovered I had locked my keys inside.

Damn! I would have to take the subway and then the bus over to Parliament and Gerrard, where my son was working Saturdays at The Wine Rack and borrow his set. Which I did. After waiting 20 minutes for a returning bus, someone informed me the buses had been re-routed for some unknown reason. By then, I was just too hungry to wait, so I took a cab back to the store. I paid the fare, \$7, walked into the store and immediately realized I had left my new gloves in the cab. I no longer felt like treating myself to lunch.

After shopping, I went home and made myself a tuna fish sandwich, then went out in the backyard with the dog and began to rake the leaves. Suddenly, I noticed the back gate was open and Peppers was no longer with me in the yard. I ran out into the park looking for him just as the Animal Control man was leading him to his van. I caught up to them before he put the dog inside. As we had more than a passing acquaintance—Peppers being a happy wanderer—he agreed to let me take the dog home. However, not before he gave me a ticket, \$23, because he'd had to clean up Peppers' poop.

I stood in the park, the ticket clutched in my hand, and looked up at the heavens. "Oh, for God's sake, it was only 12 band-aids!"

Postscript: Cost of 12 store-bought band-aids—\$1.59. Cost of 12 stolen band-aids—\$50.

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