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about 670 words

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Return Policy

by Mehmet Ekmekci

Stop obsessing over his crooked glasses. He's a customer. He will leave you shortly and you will, in all probability, never see him again.

Why is he wheezing? You're wondering if it's that hot inside the shop. You feel stellar. No sweating, no general discomfort. But this short, bald, bulky old man glows like a cold bottle of coke left outside for too long on a hot summer day. You could count the drips if you wanted to.

"It says here I would get store credit, is it so?"

Stop reading the form already and sign it.

"Yes sir. It still hasn't been 60 days since you made the purchase. You get full credit eligible to use within the year."

My God, his glasses. You want to reach out over the counter and correct them. But you can't. You already got into trouble with Linda two times in the past. She doesn't appreciate your stingy comments to the customers. "They should enter the store with a smile and leave with a smile. Always!" she says. You keep nodding everytime she says it, but you never believe it. It's an old electronics store in the middle of the desert. "Why should anyone smile while driving all the way here?" you often find yourself thinking. Around the store there are three highways which connect the area to the city. Nobody would show up here unless they had no other choice.

You wanted to be away from the city with minimal human contact. The medical school is kicking your ass so you need the extra time to focus. Yet you need to make the ends meet. Linda has owned the store for a whopping 38 years and she doesn't know how to run a job ad on the "internets". Nobody else reads the newspaper from your age group but you. So here you are.

The older man is trying to hold his fedora at his armpit. You wouldn't want to be that hat. The old man's pools of sweat are forming darker areas around his neck and arms. You can't see his back but you can assume that the situation is alike. You still hear him breathing as loud as he can. It's been a few minutes since he started his overwhelming reading journey. All the physicists of the world fear no more. All the nations of the planet, fighting with each other, now you may stop. We discovered the

strongest of all super powers. You sir, are now around ninety percent sure that you have the ability to slow down time.

"Would you like a piece of cloth for your glasses?"

You're afraid he can't hear you. He also doesn't realize how his glasses are now foggy. You can't be sure yet, but he may have fallen asleep. Looks like he also has super powers.

"Sir? If you'd like, I can read it for you." you say. Anything is better than this silence, right?

You see him raising his head. You can't see his eyes due to the droplets.

"I'm afraid I need to discuss this with my wife-" he says as he's nodding "she expected for us to get our money back."

"I understand sir."

"Can I come back next week? She's with her sister now and she'll be back on Thursday."

"I'm afraid our return policy won't allow a visit next week sir. Your 60 days will run out on Friday."

You want to help the man. You also want this to be over. You know that Linda would get angry if you broke the rules. Your eyes are begging the old man to leave and come back later. You need to study for the test. In quiet.

"Let me read this again..." says the old man. Here we go again.

You're wondering where Linda hid that gun. This could be a great time for you to end it all. No customers. No tests. Finally at peace.