

## Bad Luck Granny

Her perfume was heavy and the kind of scent that reminds me of church. I wondered if she'd sprayed it on with a crop dusting plane. It also appeared as if she had put on her makeup without the aid of a reflective surface, the end result being a clown's mouth and darkly penciled-in eyebrows. She looked up at me and smiled as she bent for another item in her cart. I smiled back politely, trying my best to stifle a laugh. In my mind I saw her surrounded by Hamburglar and the French Fry Guys.

As is usually the case when you are in a hurry, this sweet old lady was *cartoonishly* slow. Even the cashier had emptied the conveyor belt and was less than patiently awaiting the careful placement of each following item. Her impatience somewhat upset me. I wondered if she had somewhere else to be. After all, only those of us standing in line were really affected by the elderly woman's slow motion progress. The cashier would still be standing there long after we'd all gone.

As granny finally lifted her last remaining item to the belt, I heard the guy behind me sigh and whisper, "Thank God", under his breath.

"She'll have coupons", I whispered back to him.

Sure enough, she dug a fat wallet from her worn tan purse and began sifting through, stopping to hold each one up to the cashier and ask, "Did I purchase this item?" The cashier would look through the miles of receipt tape and inevitably answer no to each inquiry. Though it may seem like an exaggeration, this went on for a full 10-minutes. I soon began to wonder if there was any bottom to her wallet.

After what seemed an eternity of *couponing*, she began counting small bills to pay her tab. The total of her purchases – after coupons were deducted, of course – came to \$74.83. I remember the total well. How could I not? The cashier had to repeat the total multiple times as the lady counted out money.

"How much is it again?" "Seventy-four, eighty-three" "And how much have I given you?" "Twelve dollars."

Upon reaching the \$63 mark, the sweet little thing found the bottom of her wallet. It was there, under the crumpled and outdated coupons, and just shallow enough to leave her shy by \$11.18. Of course it was. My quick run into Wal-Mart had literally been extended by nearly 25-minutes in the checkout lane. My temper was near boiling.

"Oh! I don't seem to have enough. How much less would it be if you take off the

cat food?”

From behind me I heard a quartet of groans in perfect unison. In front of me the sweet little old lady whom I was about to strangle, was considering not feeding her cat this week. The cashier began digging through her bags for the cat food.

“You know what? Wait a minute. It’s only eleven-bucks short. I’ll cover that for you.” I said. The tension from behind me seemed to lift immediately. I could feel it dissipate.

“Oh you sweet thing. I couldn’t let you do that. I just didn’t bring enough money. This nice young woman can remove some items from my bill.”

“No ma’am. I insist. Your cat needs to eat too.”

“That’s nice of you, young man. But I couldn’t possibly ...” Her words were cut short from a man standing somewhere behind me.

“Lady! Let him pay! Or I’ll pay. Or we can all beat up the cashier while you make a run for it! We just don’t want to be in Wal-Mart all night!” A little ruder than I’d have chosen to be, but apparently he made an impression.

“Well, ok.” She replied after a moment of consideration. “I wouldn’t want to hold you all up.”