

College Material

By Scott Cody

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Thursday, June 18.

I had to work 'till the mall closed tonight. It sucked. The mall was empty, and I had to work with Wibble, that dork. I cant decide what bugs me about him the most. His hairy gut that's barely contained by his see-through white shirt, that greasy mustache on his lip, or the eye that looks off somewhere to the right while he talks to you. I think it's the eye. In that college interview training we did last spring they taught us to look at someone's nose if we cant look them straight in the eye. I can't look Wibble in the eye, and I cant look at his nose either, because when I see the nose I see that filthy mustache, so then I look down and I can see his belly button through his shirt so I end up looking at his feet. He's just so uncomfortable to be around.

One funny thing happened tonight. This really hot woman came in to try on some running shoes and Wibble waited on her. She looked like she had just gotten off work and she had on this really tight skirt, and you could tell Wibble was really nervous because he had a pen in his hands and he kept fidgeting with it. He was trying to pull this sly salesman stuff on her -- saying what shoes were good for the amount of running she does -- and it was so obvious that the most athletic thing he has done in the past year is get out of his car to pick up the change he dropped at the McDonalds drive through. Anyway, he's standing there talking to her and he turns to go to the back room and trips over the foot stool. He didn't fall but he stumbled and his shirt came untucked. That's when the hot woman looked at me and rolled her eyes and smiles. I guess it's not that funny of a story but it felt good to know customers think he's a dork too. (And it felt good to have this hotty smiling at me.)

So, anyway, I have to work with him on Saturday again. He asked me tonight if I could stay after work on Saturday to help install a new security system. I didn't want to because I don't want to work with that prick, but he said he'd pay me double-time. And he didn't really ask it like I had a choice. So I said

I'd do it. Then I realized on the way home that Jenny really wants to go to the movies on Saturday night. Well, maybe she'll go Friday night instead. I'm beat. I'm going to bed.

Friday, June 19

Dad and I just had another fight. It started because Jenny can't go to the movies tonight. She got all pissed at me because I even asked. She's taking the SATs tomorrow and she's studying tonight and I forgot about that. So when I asked if she'd go to the movies tonight instead of tomorrow and she got all pissy. She said she really wanted to go out on Saturday and I should try to get out of work on time. I said I didn't think I could, but the truth is I really didn't want to. So at dinner tonight my dad was asking me about work and I told him I had to work late tomorrow and that Jenny was pissed. He started to lecture me like I was considering blowing off work to be with Jenny. I never said that's what I was planning but he just assumed it was. He started barking at me: "how do you plan to save for college if you don't take advantage of overtime?" He told me it was ridiculous to forgo making money so that I could go spend money with my girlfriend. I don't know why he's got to start yelling at me for no reason like that. I started to argue with him telling him that I was planning on working and he told me I needed an attitude adjustment. So I just got up in the middle of dinner and came up here. I was hoping to spend the night writing, but now I'm so pissed off at him and at Jenny that I don't know if I can write.

Sunday.

Today was a pretty dull day. I played basketball in the morning, and then I worked on my short story. I still haven't talked to Jenny since Friday. I was at work most of the day yesterday. I tried to call her today but her mom said she wasn't home.

Last night was weird. The store was kind of busy until it closed. Then Wibble and I installed his new security device. I got the feeling there was something suspicious about this thing. Maybe it's stolen. I mean, why were we installing it after the mall closed? Lord knows it's slow enough on the weekdays that we could install it then. And he was all kind of secretive about it. I asked him why SecureServe wasn't installing this one like they did the other stuff and all he said was that this is not "their

type of system." I asked him what it was for a couple of times, and he pretended to ignore me. Finally, he told me that it sprays an indelible ink on any shoplifter so the cops could identify them. I guess that makes sense. The device was a big black strip, the length of the doorway, and it had these tiny holes in it. We installed it above the door, on the inside, so the holes pointed down. I figure it's triggered by the shoplifter detectors on either side of the door, but I don't know how it knows the difference between a real shoplifter and some chick with a library book in her purse.

I have to work every day this week. I'm not looking forward to it. I can't believe I'm going to spend the whole summer in this fucking store.

Wednesday, June 29.

Dad and I got into a doosey last night about college. I was writing a letter to Paul at the kitchen table -- I wasn't even working on a short story! -- and he walks in and immediately launches into his "I've worked hard all my life and I know what's best for you" speech. He said he hopes I was not still hoping to take up writing Penn State, and that one day I'll thank him for encouraging me to be a lawyer. He actually said "encouraging" me. So I said, "yeah, like the way mom's thanking you for '*encouraging*' her to give up painting?" and I said it real sarcastically, which really pissed him off. He slammed his hand on the kitchen table and yelled this old tired one: "I didn't struggle all my life so that my son could struggle as a writer." I tried to tell him I'm a pretty damn good writer and he said that will be useful when I write legal briefs. Well, I got so pissed off and so upset and we were yelling so much that I said -- screamed, actually -- "well that's gonna be really fucking hard if I don't even go to college," and I stormed off to my room. He spent about 3 minutes screaming from the kitchen that I'm going to Penn State and that's the way it is. I don't know. I think I do want to go to college. I just don't want to go to Penn State and I *don't* want to study pre-law. If I get the scholarship to Dickinson, I'll be excited about school. But I'd rather struggle my life away as an electrician than spend six years to become a run of the mill lawyer.

Jenny's worried about school, too. But she knows she wants to go to college. She is just worried she won't get in. We went to the pool together this morning before work. After being mad at me for four days, she finally forgave me (man she really tore into me on Monday). We sat at the pool the whole time

talking about college. She was doing most of the talking. She was listing what she wants to study and where she wants to go. She was talking like she knew we would be at the same college, and that we'll still be dating when we get there. That made me kind of nervous, so I didn't say much. She talked about walking to class together and pledging sororities and fraternities and stuff. I couldn't give a shit about that and I was still thinking I might not even be going to school, so I just listened to her. I will say one thing, though. She looked hot in her bikini. While she rambled, I was staring at her body. It made me pretty horny. I tried to get her to go to the storage closet with me again, but she refused. Said she was too nervous the last time. It was tough going to work that horny.

Work was fine. I don't know why, but I bought a new pair of sneakers from the store. It's not that I need them, but they're kind of cool. I just charged them to my store account.

Thursday.

Well, I found one of the great benefits of working in a sporting goods store: cheerleaders. Seems cheerleading camp is about to start at all the local high schools, so platoons of cheerleaders keep coming into the store to order the right tennis shoes. Today, Wibble was in the back office so I was the only one to wait on all these cheerleaders. It was fun.

Saturday, July 2.

So, after work last night, I went over to Jenny's. She was watching TV with her parents. We went into her basement and I gave her a gift: a new jacket I bought at the store. She just kind of looked at it strange. She said "Why'd you buy me a jacket?" and I said because I wanted to. And she said, "It's July. I don't need a jacket." I could not believe she did not want a gift. But she said she liked it, its just that I've been buying too much at the store lately. It's true, I did buy two pairs of sneakers this week and some clothes for myself. But it's my freaking money. So I told her she sounded too much like my dad. I started to storm off but realized I did not want to go home. So I apologized. For what, I don't know, but I apologized, and we spent the night watching TV in her basement. She didn't want to fool around when I tried to make a move.

Sunday.

Get this. I worked until the mall closed again last night. It was me and Jim and Nancy. When I took my dinner break, I went back and sat at Wibble's desk. I was poking around, being kind of nosy, and I found the manual for new "security" device. Turns out it's not a security device at all. It fills the air with an odorless gas that is supposed to trigger the buying impulse in people's brain. The whole thing was written in Japanese or Korean or something, and then the last page had a poorly written English translation. This device is supposed to make anyone who comes into the store to suddenly want to buy something. So this is why Wibble was so freakin' secretive. I'll bet this thing isn't even legal. But it doesn't surprise me that Wibble's using it anyway. I went and stood under the contraption. I could not tell if it was turned on or not, but I definitely could not smell anything. I considered telling Jim and Nancy what I found, but I didn't. I'm not even sure if it works. Now that I think about it, more people have been buying stuff, but that does not mean it's because of the gas machine.

Monday, July 4.

Last night, Jenny and I went to watch fire works. Then today, we went on a picnic with her family. I brought her little brother a new basketball, which he liked, but which got me a nasty look from Jenny. I ignored it. The park was really crowded. We tried to play frisbee, but we kept running into other people's picnics. I never thought about it before, but Jenny's mom is really attractive. Jenny would probably dump me on the spot if she knew I thought that. I'll bet Jenny's gonna look that good when she's old.

I've been avoiding my dad the last couple of days. I did not realize I was doing it until today. I don't know what he did for the Fourth of July. When I got home this evening, he was sitting watching TV and barely said a word to me.

Tuesday.

I did something stupid today. These two hot girls, Kirsten and Kathy, I've seen them at school but I don't know them, they came into the store and were looking at tennis racquets. I waited on them. They did not seem real bitchy like I thought they were at school. One of them, the real hot one, Kirsten, was really funny. She took one racquet and started pretending like she was playing. She was wearing these tight shorts and I could not help but stare at her legs. She kept telling Kathy how much she really wanted the racquet and how much she really liked it. But she did not have enough money, and her dad would "kill her" if she used his credit card for this racquet. So, after they left -- this is where I did the dumb thing -- I purchased the racquet on my store account and ran after them down the hall. I found them in The Gap and I handed the racquet to Kirsten and I said "compliments of Wibble Sports." Her eyes lit up and I felt great. I thought she was going to kiss me right there. She didn't. As I was walking back to the store, I started to realize how stupid that was. The racquet cost \$200.

Thursday, July 7.

Dad got on my case about money again this morning. He asked me how I'm buying all these new shoes. I told him I'm working. He said "you're working for college, not to buy three pairs of tennis shoes." I wanted to say, I'm not going to college, but I didn't. Then I wanted to say I've bought four pairs of new shoes, which is true, but I didn't. So now he wants to see my savings account balance every two weeks. The truth is, I haven't put any money into savings. I can pick up my pay check tomorrow. I've got to deposit all of it into savings.

Saturday.

Talk about a close one. Last night, Jenny and I went to the movies. When we were standing in line to buy tickets, I turned around and saw Kirsten and Kathy get in line. They didn't have dates, which surprised me. I stood with my back to them hoping they would not notice me. We made it into the theater undetected, but then Kirsten and Kathy sat two rows in front of us. So I excused myself from Jenny and went to the bathroom and did not come back until the movie started. When the movie was over, I made Jenny rush out of there.

Also, I went to the store yesterday to pick up my pay check, but Wibble wasn't there. He's scheduled to work with me tonight, so I'll get it then. I just hope my dad doesn't ask for my savings balance before I get to the bank on Monday.

Sunday, July 10.

It's 5:00 in the morning. I can't sleep. I'm excited and scared. Last night, when I got to work, Wibble asked me to come into his office. He closed the door, which he never does, and he gave me a bottle of pills. He tried to tell me they are vitamins and that they will give me more energy while I work and to take one a week. The bottle had Japanese (or Korean) writing on the label. So I asked him if these were related to his smell machine. He was shocked. He wanted to know how I knew. I told him he left the manual on his desk (I actually had found it buried in a drawer). Wibble said that the pills will stop the urge to buy and that I've been buying too much on credit and that I'm spending more than I earn. He said my pay check would be \$750 but I charged over \$1,200 so I still owe him almost \$500. So I looked at him, this fat crap, and I said, "you know what? I'm not paying a cent." And he just stared at me. I said, "and furthermore, I quit. If you try to make me pay, I'm calling the newspaper and telling them you've got a machine that manipulates people's minds to buy shoes." I don't know where I came up with that idea, but it worked. He just stared at me, dumbfounded, as I got up to walk out of his office. But before I made it out of the store, I stopped myself and walked back into his office. He was still sitting behind his desk. I closed the door behind me, and I said, "actually, the way I see it, you owe me money. I'm going to be doing you a service, and like they say, nothing comes for free." I demanded \$2,000 a month, otherwise *the Post* gets a phone call. He looked at me and said "that's extortion." I pointed out that he'll make well more than \$2,000 a month off that contraption, and it will cost him more to lose it. I walked out of there with a check. For \$2,000.

But I could not sleep all night. I feel kind of guilty. And I'm more scared that Wibble's gonna call my dad. Or that my dad will find out that I quit. I've got to continue to pretend I'm still working there all summer. I think I can pull it off.