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BY XAVIER TOBY

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It's not my damn baby

Staples, you big out of control American office superstore chain you.

Before arriving in the USA, I didn't know it was possible to combine awful customer service with outrageous platitudes, then deliver the lot without irony.

I wanted to print out my second book for proofing.

At 10am I was told it'd be ready by 2pm. At 3.30pm this became 4pm. At 5pm there was a problem, so at 6pm I visited the store. Stood at a counter for seven minutes, and then the combination of his accent and my accent made the middle ground a battlefield of misunderstanding.

Turned out I was in the wrong store.

"Thank you for shopping at Staples. Is there anything else I can help you with today?"

Okay, so you haven't helped me and I didn't buy anything, but thanks anyway.

So I called the correct store, was put on hold, transferred to nobody, disconnected and put on hold again for fifteen minutes, all the time being told all the different ways that Staples provides a premium customer experience.

So I visited the correct store and the woman behind the counter ignored me while loudly announcing passive aggressive statements to nobody.

"Fine, I'll do it myself. Even though it's not my job."

"So then, where does he think it comes from?"

"It's not my damn baby."

Another lady appeared, asked a wall what it needed, and I realized she was talking to me.

Twenty minutes later it was done.

"Thank you for shopping at Staples. Is there anything else I can help you with today?"

In New York, NY, United States

F%&K your stick figure family

If you've been nowhere near a road in the last four years, there are these stick figure stickers people attach to their rear windows. In an effort to show how special and different their family is through the use of a two-dimensional, mass-producible, cartoon form.

Apparently stick figures were chosen due to the rapidly growing obesity rates around the world.

If the stickers were actually an accurate representation of the size of most families, it's doubtful one family member would fit on the back of any car.

Last week I ran into a guy I hadn't seen since high school, and he proudly showed me his brand new 'people mover'.

So I asked him, 'If your car is a people mover, what the hell does every other car do?'

I suggested that he should call a 'people mover' what it really is. A car for people who don't properly know how to use contraception.

On the back of his car was a 'My Family' sticker.

He informed me that you can now get these stickers for all sorts of families, and relationships, and situations.

So after spending ten minutes summarising his life achievements to that point, this guy asked me, 'If you had a car, which stickers would you put on the back?'

I told him I had no idea, as I didn't have a wife, children or any pets.

So he suggested that my personal sticker would just be a picture of me, with a thought bubble with a pretty girl in it, and surrounded by used tissues.

Then he laughed, and drove away.

In Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

I sneezed one complete hot chip out of my nose

You know that feeling you get when you're about to sneeze?

Well I got it. While I had a hot chip in my mouth. While sharing a bowl of them, with a friend at a pub.

So I had to decide. Spit it out, or try to beat the sneeze with a quick swallow.

I went the swallow, because what's the worst that could happen?

Then the worst happened.

The chip made it to the base of my throat. Then I sneezed and the chip flew up my throat, through my sinuses, and forced its way out of my nose.

This was no shoestring french fry either. It was so big and long it was basically a potato wedge.

And it came out of my face completely intact.

Then landed beside the bowl of hot chips, but my sneeze did cover the chips in a fine film of snot spray.

So what to do with the remaining chips?

In a previous and more naked situation, I'd decided never again to ingest any of my already expelled bodily fluids.

However, those chips had been barely touched by that snotty mist.

And I was hungry.

And I didn't want to pay for another bowl of chips.

So I ate 'em.

My friend saw the whole thing, was justifiably disgusted and when I refused to buy more chips he left.

Leaving me with the whole bowl to myself.

Which had been my plan all along.

I won't be trying this trick again though.

It happened three weeks ago, and my nose still hurts so much that all I can fit through it at the moment are skittles.

In Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

I was asked to leave a shopping centre for wearing a hood

Last week, I was asked to leave a shopping centre for wearing a hood.

Let me be more specific.

I was asked to leave the Canelands Shopping Centre in Mackay, Queensland, for wearing a penguin suit.

It's a onesie and the hood was actually my beak, eyes and head.

So I'm a comedian, and for about an hour I'd been promoting this comedy and history walking tour I do, which also involves me using a megaphone to shout at strangers.

Then a woman from Lend Lease (centre management) told me, "You can't wear hoods in the shopping centre."

I replied, "Yes you can. Look at me, I'm doing it right now."

"It's against the rules. I can show you where it says so if you like?"

I didn't know if this rule had been created to victimise people wearing hooded tops, certain religious groups, or both, and couldn't think how to ask.

"No, I believe you," I replied. "That a rule that stupid exists, but what about hats?"

"Hats are okay."

"Well then, this is a hat."

"No, it's a hood," she said.

"What about babies? In those little jumpsuits with hoods. Do you kick them out too?"

"Of course not."

"So I'm a baby penguin," I said.

She frowned. "No, you're a grown man dressed a penguin. Which isn't funny, but is very sad."

Just before I left the centre I used my megaphone to yell, "Penguins are people too!"

Then added, "Equal rights for all the penguins. Despite their race, religion or sexual orientation!"

In Mackay, Queensland, Australia

Snow and the City, with Bonus Frostbite

Daylight saving started in New York City on Sunday March 8, where I now reside.

Completely unlike Australia, where the days are already getting longer when the clocks change, in New York the streets are still covered in snow, and the top temperature is often below freezing.

Seeing a city covered in snow is bizarre, especially for an Australia who's barely seen snow before.

To begin, complete colonies of snow flakes silently drift and float down from the sky to the ground.

Cars and buses then drive, skid and honk through the slush with the same haphazard and darting ferocity as usual. As most of the snow quickly turns to a brown, black and urine-yellow slush.

Bags of trash poking through some of the still pristine white snow, however, become sacks of Christmas presents waiting patiently to be delivered.

Snow is also surprisingly adept at destroying secrets.

Days after snowfall any abandoned or neglected cars are obvious, as they remain covered. Buildings with lazy caretakers still have icy entryways, and due to the melting mess it's as if the city has suddenly sprung a million leaks.

For walking on the soaking and frozen sidewalks, canvas shoes are not recommended. As what looks like concrete, the road or a step is often ankle-deep slush.

Also, your feet shouldn't be numb and toes still purple after being submerged in hot water for over an hour.

According to the emergency room doctor, amputation won't be necessary.

He smiled broadly while explaining that there may be some lasting tissue damage, as what I had was indeed frostbite, but barely.

The official diagnosis was 'superficial frostbite' and a big laugh from himself, the nurse, and half the people in the waiting room. All followed by an even bigger bill.

In New York, NY, United States

The Apple Store Head Explosion

Why is the Apple Store still a thing?

All the staff in that same shirt with hipster flourishes like partially shaved hair, knitted bangles and non-prescription glasses. They're like a really smug cult.

Then there's really only four things for sale. iPhone, iPod, iPad and laptops. Which you can get at about a hundred different stores. In the same shopping centre. For the same price.

Despite all the amazing things they can do, every Apple i-thingy also isn't yet waterproof, meaning they can be destroyed by something that's so abundant that it falls from the sky, and we've got it on tap.

It's such a scam. It's like having a flying car that melts when it rains.

So I took my water damaged iPhone into the Apple Store and the genius up the back told me it'd be cheaper to get a new one.

So I told him about the time I had sex with a real girl and his head exploded. It was filled with green Skittles, which was a surprise. I thought it would've been filled with loneliness and disappointment.

Then I bought a secondhand iPhone 3 on eBay for like \$80.

A week later, the tattoo with eyes making my coffee noticed it and exclaimed, "Is that an iPhone 3? More like third world. Do you go home and plug it into your Atari 2600 to recharge? Then download all your music onto a cassette? I've got a cassette cover for my iPhone 6. Ironically."

To which I replied, "You do know cassettes are the new records?"

Which made his head explode, and it was filled sarcastic dust and beards.

That night, he slept with a girl I really liked. Which hurt.

A week later, the Apple Store "Genius" slept with a girl I really, really liked. Which hurt more.

I'm still rocking the iPhone 3 though.

Now I'm not entirely sure, but does that mean I win? Anything?

Kinda feels like it, but only very, very slightly.

In Every single stupid Apple Store in the history of ever

My Worst Ever New Year's Eve

It was twelve years ago.

In the month before, I'd broken up with my second serious girlfriend.

In the week before, I'd been involved in a team kayak race that finished on NYE in Swan Hill.

At 9pm on NYE I got chatting to a girl in a pub. My teammates left. I stayed. Then the girl left. Alone.

At 8pm I'd loaned my drivers licence to a 16-year-old teammate.

By 9.30pm I'd been refused entry. Everywhere.

Moments after my ex-girlfriend phoned to tell me that so far she'd pashed 17 boys, and three girls, my mobile phone ran out of battery.

I walked around looking for my teammates, and then listened to the countdown. Alone.

I spent the next seven hours walking around Swan Hill looking for the campsite.

I repeatedly found a racecourse, football oval and farming equipment dealership.

At 3.30am I started trying to open car doors, in an effort to borrow one.

At 3.43am I opened one, and couldn't start it.

By 4.23am I'd hailed over 50 taxis. Unsuccessfully.

At 4.32am a guy started walking beside me. He told me that he had four kids, to two different women, and picked oranges 363 days a year to afford the child support, as well as food and alcohol for himself. He was very skinny, and very drunk.

At 5.13am I started walking towards oncoming traffic. All the cars drove around me. None stopped. Some tooted.

At 7.03am I found the campsite. It was next to the racecourse.

In Swan Hill, Victoria, Australia

About Author

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Writer and comedian. 'Mining My Own Business' his debut non-fiction comedy book is available now through: <http://uwap.uwa.edu.au/>

People he's not related to even say that it's worth reading. Promise.

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