

Blunters Blunders:

Encounters with the Clinically Depressed

*These excerpts brought to you by
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Writing from a quarter-century of experience*

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Excerpt, Chapter 2: Socially Awkward or Socially Apathetic?

It was Saturday afternoon, several hours after I'd made my planned trip to the pharmacy only to discover its unfortunate lack of weekend hours. I had run out of my anti-depressants and was holding it all together only by a fraction of a hair, as if a hair could be split into fractions. Trying to distract myself from my increasingly morbid thoughts, I decided to take a drive to nearby Lake Oswego and purchase a new book, thus calming my frazzled nerves with the feel of the road, smooth beneath my worn front tires, and distracting my morbid sensibilities with uplifting fiction.

Following a short perusal of the "Summer Sale" selection outside the Deseret Book storefront, I entered and made my customary beeline for the fiction section, followed in short order by Bestsellers shelving unit, whereupon having made my selections I immediately brought my merchandise to the counter. A woman there chatted on her cell phone several moments before calling another store clerk to the register.

"How are you," the ruffian asked. For he was a ruffian, wearing a brown t-shirt and blue jeans, making apparent the store's casual regard for employee attire on Saturdays.

"Good." My voice lacked enthusiasm and my face a smile; I did not make eye contact. In every respect I believed myself to be giving off my best *do-not-bother-me* vibes. I was not feeling bull-dog vicious, more like rattlesnake cautious—leave me alone and I'll leave you alone.

"I've seen you before," he chattered merrily, "in fact lots of times." *Does my lack of eye contact not clue you in to the fact that I don't want to converse? Is it so hard to complete a simple business transaction without excess language?* I thought. I felt myself begin to coil, rattle tail poised to give warning.

"Do you have a rewards account?" I gave him my phone number, still not looking at him, voice crisp. The vibes were rolling off me in waves now. Do. Not. Bother. Me.

I waited for the total, as he scanned my items. "So, where do you work? Are you working now?" The cell phone woman had hung up but remained statuesque behind the counter, watching our interaction with interest. I happened to know she was a member of my ward, probably waiting to see which side of my personality I would show today, as I'd had both friendly and curt interactions with her in the past, the latter when she pried for personal information during business transactions. Aware of the audience but feeling totally indifferent toward societal

standards of politeness, I further averted my gaze and replied, tone hushed, venom seeping through what little constraint I managed to muster "It's none of your business. Sorry."

"Oh, sorry," came his confused reply. Had he finally caught a whiff of the rising animosity in the air?

It was time to end this interaction before I made enough of an impression that it got back to the Bishopric via the cell phone interloper. Thus, my parting strike: "Can I have a bag please?"

And *that* is how a simple business transaction should be completed.