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Subject: CHAP. #10 PG. #1

\* ALL GOOD THINGS MUST COME TO AN END \*

When operating almost any kind of business, the owner/manager will occasionally have to go out of his way to keep his customers happy. They are, after all, his sole source of income. Whether it be putting forth some extra effort to accomplish something quicker, or perhaps accepting the fact that a profit will not be earned, one must always do what is necessary to maintain a satisfied clientele. I wish I had known this rule applied to something as simple as a hustle in the county jail, because if I had I would have enjoyed a much more FULL-filling time during my last month in there.

The whole scene appeared rather harmless. A couple of guys approached me with the request that I swap one of my soups with the one they had. Unfortunately, the soup they had was of a different brand than what I had found to be a definite seller in my store. On top of that, to make this transaction a success, I was going to have to reach under my bunk, pull out a plastic bag half full of canteen items, untie the knot in the bag, feel around for a soup, hand it to them, put their soup in my bag, retie the knot, and put the bag back under my bunk. All that work without making a profit? Oh, I think not.

After sharing with me a few choice words regards my incompetence as a grocery store owner, the two customer wannabees made their way back out of my cell. Naturally, I thought the matter had been closed. However, unbeknownst to me, I hit a nerve that ignited the need for retaliation, and their form of revenge wasn't going to be carried out in the usual violent form I'm sure you're use to hearing about. Instead, they decide to execute their revenge in a more stealthy fashion.

It must have been about three days later, because my grocery store was almost empty. The time? I guess around 8:00 PM. I was just minding my own business when a guard let himself into our cellblock, and made his way into my cell. After telling my cellmates to step out into the day room, he came up to me and delivered this message:

Guard: You can either hand me over the shank that you've got right now, or I'm going to search through all your stuff and find it myself.

At this point, I wish for you to please close this book, and once again read the title. I want you to grasp the inner meaning of what that title explains, regarding my knowledge in the area of a typical prisoner's way of life. If you find it necessary, feel free to once again read the second paragraph of the preface.

(Back to my story.)

I slowly took two steps back while simultaneously raising my hands in a cautious manner -- taking on the appearance of a criminal surrendering to an officer's gun point. Even though there was no gun involved in this scene, I still felt it wise to assure my accuser that no violent tactics would be necessary in obtaining my cooperation. Then, with the most justifiably naive expression I could yield:

Me: Look, I'm not trying to be a smart@\$\$ here, or anything like that, but. . . What's a shank?

With the ability to hold a straight face (unlike many other individuals I've told this story to) he explained:

Guard: It's a homemade blade, a knife, a weapon for stabbing someone.

I immediately dropped my hands in relief and replied:

Me: Oh, I don't have anything like that. You can search through my stuff all you want.

After about ten minutes of searching through my locker and bunk area, the guard -- as expected -- came up empty handed. Now I'm not sure if his next statement was for the purpose of misleading me or what, because it certainly lead me in the wrong direction of what was about to take place.

\* FOOTNOTES \*

1.) At the beginning of each week, my inventory consisted of approximately three full trash bags.