

Cheapskate â€¦ so it goes

by Jason_Love

I come from a long line of cheapskates. Our family crest looks like the flag of Japan, only with a big, puckered rear end. Most of the elders are too cheap to even buy skates.

â€œWhy do you need roller shoes when those sneakers work just fine?â€•

The curse, as legend has it, started when a sorceress appeared as a beggar at the door of my not-so-great grandfatherâ€¦

â€œDear gentleman, would you happen to have some spare change?â€•

â€œSpare change?â€• he said. â€œYou mean money Iâ€™m not using any more?â€•

And weâ€™ve all been hoarding pennies ever since.

Whenever I get grumpy over price tags, my wife Yahaira suggests that I go to the river and kiss a frog. So it goes.

She shops to relax, which is funny because shopping has the exact opposite effect on me. I always find myself doing this math:

“If I earn x amount of dollars per year, and the bills costs $x - y$! Then y is my wife at the mall?” Talk about math anxiety.

My shrink Dr. Dan says that stinginess derives from a fear of loss and likely dates back to some childhood trauma (like being denied roller skates?). Dr. Dan went on, but I couldn’t hear him over the fact that he was costing TWO DOLLARS A MINUTE.

Yahaira gave me a book, The Tao of Abundance, whose flap read, “Coming from a spirit of abundance, we create ever-greater abundance.”

“Hmm,” I said. “Interesting. What did you pay for the book?”

The problem is that I grew up with Grandpa, whose blood is closer to the curse. All of his best lines revolve around money!

“Slow down before you fall and crack your skull. You know how much that would cost?”

“Allowance?! Yeah, if you finish your chores, I’ll allow you to eat dinner.”

“The only difference between a barber and a hairdresser is fifteen bucks.”

By age six I could calculate price-per-ounce at the supermarket and thrash the other contestants on “The Price Is Right.”

To this day I catch myself doing super-stingy grandpa things, like reading headlines through the glass instead of buying the damn paper. At the movies, I get downright violent over snack food prices: I fantasize about smashing the glass, stealing everything in sight, and showering the streets with Jujubees and Milk Duds.

“Take back what is yours! Rise!”

If you think about it—which I don’t recommend—it’s expensive just to wake up in the morning. Everything we do starts a meter: eating, driving, bathing, existing beneath a roof. The impeccable cheapskate has no choice but to hold his breath until he dies, which is also expensive.

My sister dropped in to ask why I haven’t been out lately.

“It’s gas,” I said.

Making a face, she said, “Really?! Is it that bad?”

“Yeah, over three bucks a gallon.”

And although cheapskates are exhausting, there is something to say for us. If it weren’t for cheapskates, the world wouldn’t have things like doggy bags and double coupons and buttermilk. That’s right—buttermilk could only be the work of someone tight enough to say, “Curdled schmurdled! You know how that much milk cost?”

I’m working on my “spirit of abundance”; I am. The other day I tipped a girl just for scooping ice cream—“vanilla”—and when my wife came home with a new purse for her mountain in the closet I didn’t say a word. I just marched right down to the river and started hoarding frogs.

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