

Online Shopping Horror Stories

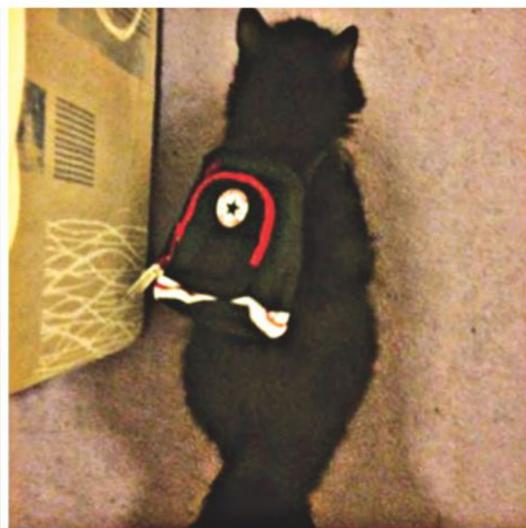
ANUPOMA JOYEETA JOYEE

Gone are the days of bargaining exclusively by threat to mamas, "Ei daam e dile den naile jai". Like every other sphere of human life, shopping has drastically changed due to the touch of the mighty internet. The venture of buying a product you can't check, from a life form on the other side of the screen can prove to be tricky. Here's how:

The most popular annoyance when checking out products online is the vendor's covertness. For some strange reason, the sellers on Facebook seem unwilling to disclose the price of the product publicly even when asked by numerous customers. Instead the customers are asked to "inbox 4 price". There is an obvious profit scheme my lack of business sense can't figure out but for a customer who merely wants to do window shopping or look through all the options before deciding, this seems like a trouble uncalled for.

Some shops are, for lack of a better word, sentient. They not only set an outrageously high price but offensively argue like an angsty teen against whoever points it out.

A friend of mine ordered a custom t-shirt for someone's birthday. Despite being told that she would need it on a specific date, the shop fired back that they did not know it was "for someone's birthday" or they would have delivered it earlier. Even



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after that inexcusable unprofessionalism, they stopped replying entirely to her queries for 9 days and then barely sent a generic apology. Another friend of mine faced almost same horror but her poster did arrive unannounced by a rude

deliveryman, days after the birthday, when she had already spent money on a backup gift. She had to pay for an 850 taka worth Tom Hiddleston poster which had a hideously disfigured picture of his perfectly symmetrical handsome face.

More often than not the delivery men are geographically challenged. Sometimes the customers have to send someone to meet them midway to collect the product which gives them no chance to check it before paying. They end up paying for a product of much worse quality than what is advertised online. My friend tried asking for a refund. Let's just say, she will never be shopping there again.

Of course there are shops where the owner is sincere and punctual, rather than inconveniencing the buyer they would be frank as to whether they can deliver quality stuff on time. The worst thing a shop can do is keep the customer waiting in anticipation and keeping their queries ticked "seen" on Facebook. A lot of variables render the rule of "buyers beware" ineffective in online shopping. Be prepared to be delivered faulty gadgets, shoes of wrong size and overpriced miniature outfits that might fit your cat but not you. If you ask me, online shopping is a gamble where there is only one thumb rule. Is it better than giving up your sanity to navigate Chandni Chowk in this heat that could fry eggs on the sidewalk? If no, then don't do it. You have been warned.

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HOW TO REACT TO STRANGERS HAVING PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS IN PUBLIC

VERONICA GOMES

Personally I have encountered countless situations where I couldn't help but overhear strangers talk about their personal lives in public. Most times, this ended in my interest being delved into the conversation so deep that it pained me to not be able to voice my opinions without coming off as a creep. Other times, I was simply engrossed in finding ways to not give away my cover. Moving on, this is a guide to help you react better to similar situations if you come across any.

MAKE IT LOOK LIKE YOU'RE BUSY WITH SOMETHING

Yes, pull out your beloved smartphone or keep stirring that already well-mixed cup of coffee; the goal is to make the person on the receiving end unaware of what you're actually doing. However, make sure you play a convincing role while you're at it. Divide your concentration equally; multitasking is hard and you wouldn't want either of your self-assigned tasks to falter.

DO NOT MAKE EYE CONTACT

Making frequent eye contact and then expecting the 'eavesdropper' to not get weirded out is equivalent to jumping off a cliff and hoping to come out of it unscathed. If push comes to shove and you need to look at the face of the stranger in question, use a mirror (the old fashioned



way) or your front camera while pretending to take a selfie, depending on your personal preference.

MASTER YOUR ULTIMATE STRAIGHT FACE

Facial expressions speak louder than words. It is important to wear your best poker face when you're out in despicable missions like these. Be it a revelation of shocking outcomes from the conversation itself or

simply the delivery of a downright hilarious joke, you have to master the art of keeping a straight face to secure the safety of your cover.

TAKE COMPLETE CONTROL OF YOUR BODY GESTURES

The only thing worse than your face reacting to their conversation is your out of control body language. For instance, slight involuntary inclination towards the

receiver in order to overhear better is eavesdropping suicide. Take charge of every muscle fibre of your being and keep suspicious non-verbal communications to a minimum.

MAKE SURE A FRIEND IS WITH YOU

Take a friend with you to act as a cover for your cover. Pretend to engage in fascinating conversations of your own. Throw in a few momentary giggles to provide the impression that you are quite engaged. This will ensure the elimination of any doubts from the receiver whilst acting as a protective shield as a result of your friend overlooking your every move.

IF ALL ELSE FAILS- ABORT MISSION:

If you fail to successfully carry out any of the aforementioned tasks and as a result get your cover blown, the only plausible option would be to make a run for it. You never know the severity of the consequences you'd face if they got to know about your knowledge of their conversation. After all, even the most irrelevant information about the death of their childhood pet lizard or personal backscratcher collection is of highest secret regard.

Veronica Gomes is a devout Coldplay and Sherlockian who is convinced her dog has secret pet parties at her place when she's not around. Email her at gomesveronica1997@gmail.com