

MODERN ETHICS

By Michael Cornetto

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

A convenience store located on a lonely stretch of rural road.

A CUSTOMER(30, male) dirty, dressed in tattered jeans and tee shirt, a criminal-looking type, exits the convenience store. Something is hidden in his hand.

He moves a small distance from the store then he stops. He scans the area. Guiltily he exposes the hidden item, a chocolate bar.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE

An alarmed CLERK(28, male), wearing an orange smock and cowboy boots, stands behind the counter. Through a large window he can see the customer in the parking lot. The customer is opening the chocolate bar.

Panic.

The clerk pulls up his pants, getting his orange smock caught in his belt, exposing a bulge in his pocket. He adjusts his orange smock so that it falls over the bulge.

CLERK

Jim!

JIM(22,male), orange-smocked, stands in one of the aisles.

JIM

Yeah.

CLERK

Watch the counter.

Without waiting for a response the clerk hops the counter and runs from the store.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE

The customer brings the chocolate bar toward his mouth as the clerk swaggers out from the automatic doors of the convenience store.

CLERK

Stop right there!

The customer stops, frozen, caught with the chocolate bar about to enter his mouth.

CLERK

Seems like you forgot somethin',  
din cha?

CUSTOMER

I'm so hungry, man.

CLERK

Well you wait right there. I'm a  
comin' over.

The clerk touches the bulge in his pants pocket through the orange smock.

CLERK

I'm gonna give you what chur due.

The clerk steps forward, the heel of his cowboy boot  
CLICKS.

The customer panics. He runs toward the road, dropping the  
candy bar as he runs.

CLERK

She-it!

The clerk slumps, discouraged. Then with renewed purpose he  
sprints after the customer.

EXT. SIDE OF ROAD

The customer runs along a wood-lined road, over-exerted,  
huffing and puffing. He stops for a moment, bent over,  
hands on his knees, struggling to catch his breath.

The customer stands. He grimaces. His stomach GROWLS  
loudly. He holds his stomach. He turns his head. The clerk  
runs toward him.

Confusion.

He scans the area. Road or Woods? Road or Woods? Which way?

A path! A snap decision. He runs to the path, then into  
the woods.

The running clerk is displeased. He shakes his head.  
Moments later, taking the same path as the customer, he  
runs into the woods.

EXT. WOODS

The customer runs down a path in the woods, huffing and  
puffing. He trips and falls, face-forward, into a large  
puddle. Mud splashes up and dirties him.

He groans.

He hears the PITTER-PATTER of a runner approaching.

Alarm.

He strains, pulling himself up from the puddle.

He futilely attempts to wipe the mud off himself as he stumbles onward.

EXT. WOODS PUDDLE - MOMENTS LATER

The clerk determinedly keeps pace. He runs down the path. His foot lands in a large muddy puddle. Mud splashes onto the leg of his pants.

He glowers but his course is uninterrupted. He speeds his pace.

EXT. WOODS FORK

The huffing, puffing, muddied customer runs past a big leafy bush into a small clearing where the path forks. He stops, frantically trying to catch his breath.

He scans the area. Right path or Left path? Right path or Left path?

He hears the PITTER-PATTER of a runner approaching.

Which way?!

Right path or Left path or the big leafy bush?

He nods.

EXT. WOODS FORK - MOMENTS LATER

The clerk runs past a big leafy bush into a small clearing where the path forks. He slows. He stops. He breathes quickly.

He is puzzled. He scans the area. Right path or Left path?

EXT. WOODS FORK INSIDE THE BIG LEAFY BUSH

Through the leaves of the big leafy bush, the customer watches the clerk from behind.

EXT. WOODS FORK

The clerk scratches his head.

Right path or Left path?

Which way?

EXT. WOODS FORK INSIDE THE BIG LEAFY BUSH

The customer smiles.

Then he grimaces.

His stomach GROWLS loudly.

EXT. WOODS FORK

A loud GROWL.

Alarmed, the clerk spins around.

He sees a big leafy bush.

EXT. WOODS FORK INSIDE THE BIG LEAFY BUSH

The customer holds his breath, nervous, frightened, as he watches the clerk approach.

EXT. WOODS FORK

The clerk cautiously parts the leaves of the bush.

The customer jumps from the bush with a primal shout. With both hands in front of him, he knocks the clerk backwards as he runs off.

Unbalanced by the push, the clerk falls to the ground with a painful grunt.

EXT. WOODS PATH

The huffing, puffing, muddied, and tired customer clumsily runs down the path. He passes a distinctive tree.

EXT. WOODS FORK

The clerk rises, a sharp pain in his side interrupting the process, he winces. He holds his side and continues to stand.

He scans the area. Right path or Left path?

He takes a step forward, wincing. He rubs his side. He takes another step. Fine. Then another step. Wince. Rub.

Then he begins to run, frowning each time he jars his injured side.

EXT. WOODS PATH BOULDER

The customer wheezes as he approaches a large boulder that stands at the side of the path.

He stops at the boulder, leaning against it for support. Catching his breath. Catching his breath. Frightened.

He scans the area. An arm-size piece of tree branch lies across the trail further up the path.

He listens. Nothing.

The customer breathes a sigh of relief.

Then he cries.

EXT. WOODS PATH

The wincing clerk, slowed somewhat by his pain, runs down the path. He passes a distinctive tree.

EXT. WOODS PATH BOULDER

He hears the PITTER-PATTER of a runner approaching.

The customer wipes his eyes. He is alert again.

He sprints away from the boulder and begins running down the path.

He trips.

An arm-size piece of tree branch lies across the trail.

EXT. WOODS PATH BOULDER - MOMENTS LATER

The wincing clerk, slowed somewhat by his pain, runs down the path. He passes a large boulder that stands at the side of the path.

Up ahead the trail is clear. He quickens his pace.

A GROWL.

He slows.

The customer appears before him wielding an arm-size piece of tree branch like a club. He sneers as he forcefully swings the club toward the clerk.

The clerk raises his arm for protection but the club knocks his arm away as it completes its arc toward his head.

The club hits the clerk's head with a dull thud. Blood spurts from an opened gash.

The clerk drops to the ground.

The customer looks at slumped clerk. Then he looks at his hands. He follows the line of the branch from his hand until he finds the blood spattered area of the club.

With a gasp of shock the customer releases the branch. The branch drops to the ground.

He raises his hand to his mouth, worried, saddened, and sick. Then he closes his eyes in grief as he turns from the body. The customer steps away from the clerk.

The clerk's hand grabs his leg and the customer falls forward, winded as he hits the ground face down. In his woozy state, the customer hears SCUFFLING.

Then he is turned over, face up. Someone blurry stands above him. The customer blinks his eyes, trying to focus.

Alarm. It's the clerk, fresh blood covering the hurt side of his face.

CLERK

Whater you? Some kind a idiot?!

The customer tries to twist away, but the clerk quickly straddles him.

CLERK

Oh no you don't!

The clerk uses his knees to hold down the customer's arms and sits on the customer's stomach. The customer kicks his legs.

CUSTOMER

What do you want from me? I'll give you anything you want.

CLERK

I want cha to lay there, real quiet like. I got somethin' for you, somethin' you're goin' to like.

The clerk reaches under his smock.

Eyes wide, the customer protests and struggles.

CLERK  
I SAID QUIET!

The customer stills.

The clerk pulls his hand out from under the smock. He is hiding something inside his fist.

The clerk moves his fist close to the customer's face. The customer squirms, trying to avoid it.

CLERK  
You forgot chur change.

The clerk opens his fist and a number of coins fall around the customer's head.

FADE OUT