

Cornelius placed the twenty dollar note in his back pocket. He thanked the cashier of the small convenience store and turned for the door, smirking on his leave. He paused. "Too easy," he said to himself once the sensor operated doors slid to a close behind him. He glanced at his watch, and then again in disbelief. His surprise was replaced with boastful self confidence. "Three minutes, sixteen seconds. That's my best so far." He smirked once more as he mounted his bike and left the store he had just robbed.

For ten minutes he rode. Out of the area to a quiet store on the edge of town. Cornelius Manne walked into the shop, a little bell jingling as he entered. "Back again, Cornelius?" The cashier asked. Hiding a smile, Cornelius answered. "Yeah, my luck is just getting better and better." He handed the twenty dollar note over and drummed the counter melodically. He was confident for a sixteen year old. The cashier took the note and opened the till. "I can't understand why shops just hand all this money over to you." He fluidly slid the note in and changed it for a ten dollar note and ten individual dollar coins. Cornelius looked over his shoulder casually. Satisfied there was no one there, he took his change and leant in close over the counter. Then he told his whole story.

"First of all, you enter the shop. Any shop. You need to scout for any young cashiers, possibly ones who look clumsy or hesitant. Most importantly of all, you need to make sure there are no older cashiers or managers around." The cashier became horrified and Cornelius flinched. "Oh God, you held up the store, didn't you?"

"No, don't be absurd, I'm much more elegant than that." Cornelius' abrasive boastfulness was softened by his charm. "So you approach this young cashier and get nine of the ten coins out of your pocket. You count them as though there were ten, and you ask the kid to swap it for a ten dollar note. The cashier, being new and young and all, should get the note out before counting the coins. After you get the note, you say something like 'hang on a minute, I think there's only nine dollars there.' The cashier should count them and sure enough, only nine of the ten coins are there. Now here's the skill: you ask them that, since you are there, you may as well swap the tenth coin and a ten dollar note for a twenty."

"But it's their own note," the cashier said looking off into the distance. Cornelius had him intrigued. "Yes, but in the confusion of miscounting the coins, they temporarily forget it is their very own ten dollar note. So they take the coin and the note and swap it for twenty dollars. You thank them politely for the transaction and walk away ten dollars richer." The last few words Cornelius stated disjointedly in a proud statement of his achievement. The cashier was grinning from ear to ear. "That's genius man."

"You know what? It's not. It's just about confidence, charm and trust. You have those three things, you can get away with anything."

"Mister Cornelius Manne, you sir are crazy." The cashier was still grinning in disbelief at the mastery he had just witnessed. "Well yes, I guess you could say I am. I should be off now then." Cornelius slid his hands in his pockets and turned to leave. "Oh, one more thing. This is for you." He withdrew from his pocket a sealed envelope.

"For me?" the cashier asked.

"Yes. It's from me actually." He put the envelope on the counter and left, the bell ringing once more to mark his exit.

Cornelius was already on his bike and far away by the time the cashier had opened the letter:

*Dear Cashier,*

*By the time you are reading this I will already be too far away for you to catch me. I have to confess, I did share my secret with you, but it's hardly a secret at all. It is, after all, one of the easiest and more used cons around the world. It is called the '10 to 20,' did you like it? Unfortunately, sharing this information with you did cost you a great deal of money. I interrupted you while you were giving me my money so you forgot to shut the till. Remember what I said about charm, confidence and trust getting you anything? I distracted you with the realism of my story and was able to simply take the money out without you noticing, it is a simple misdirection trick. I put the money into my pocket as I was getting out this very letter. I was kind enough to leave enough money for a few customers' change, but I have taken the rest. Lastly, my name is not Cornelius Manne. If you do decide to follow in my path of thievery, I implore you to use a better name than 'Con Man'.*

At this very moment, this man is still out there. He has moved on to much more intricate and delicate robberies, but he always works alone. His best method of doing so is through his elaborate stories that he conjures to absorb his target so he can use simple misdirection to rob them.

Check your pockets.