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English 250H, Section TE

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Five Below

Have you ever had a job that made you want to quit within a week? During the spring of 2019, I had the opportunity to work with my friend, Kassidy, at a newly opened retail store known as Five Below. Little did I know, this opportunity would suck. She had been nagging at me for weeks to apply nearing the end of my last semester in high school.

Since I liked Kass, I went and applied. I got the job. Unknown to me at the time, the store just had a grand opening about a week before my employment. This meant my first shift at a cash register was a very busy night with some barely functional, non-efficient store procedures. Honestly, the store was an epic mess. Children were taking things off shelves and leaving them on the floor. Half the cash registers had buggy software. The process of ringing up customers was incredibly inefficient. Someone broke a stick of bubble soap and it spilled everywhere. The store was dysfunctional. That night, three employees, including Kass and I, worked an extra hour into the late night to cleanup the store (we spent most of the time refolding the several hundred t-shirts). Meanwhile, the manager left thirty minutes before we did after telling us to finish the job. This was the first, blazing, and ultra-neon red flag that I needed to get out.

As the weeks went on, I found that my work was not respecting availability when scheduling me for work. My shifts started severely conflicting with my professional research program at my high school. As a result, I had to call off work several times over three weeks. I was blamed for missing many shifts. As a person who values my education, I put it first ahead of everything else. I’d rather do well in school and not have work experience than do mediocre in school and have some mediocre work experience. At that time, I was very involved in my research program. Since my employer wasn’t respecting my hours as a student, I decided to put in my two weeks notice at the end of my first month. My manager essentially just let me go there, so I did not have to work for another two weeks.

After having a chance to reflect over that month, I learned that I really value respect when it’s due. At first, when the scheduling issue came up, I thought I’d just suck it up and handle the workload, but my academic work suffered. It really felt like my employer was treating me as cheap high school labor, not as an employee with a life outside of a basic retail job. I learned that I couldn’t balance a healthy school-work life with an employer like that. It might’ve been okay for my friend Kass, who’s just taking graduation minimum classes, but for me it was nearly impossible.