

**O** will not be returning to Greggs. I'm in there one sunny morning and I buy a cheese and onion sandwich, some water and other sundries, but it turns out its card machine isn't working.

I stand there for a moment or two as the queue grows behind me. I keep checking my pockets for change, just in case some coins have magically appeared, but it's rare this kind of magic occurs. Two Greggs servers in Greggs uniforms keep pressing buttons, but the machine remains inactive.

"Are you in a hurry?" asks a nice Greggs lady, and I reply "sort of", even though I'm definitely not. But if I'd replied "no", I'd sound brusque, and all the people behind me would think, "Oh, well, you might not be in a hurry to eat your cheese and onion sandwich, but I am." Also, I don't want to spend all day in Greggs. Not again. And that's when the lady looks at my bag, then looks at how much I owe Greggs – £3.80 – and says, "Just take it."

Just take it? Just take £3.80-worth of Greggs produce? "Really?" I say. "Because I can just leave it?"

"It's OK," says the lady, smiling. "Just take it."

What kind of dark trick is this?

I risk it, promising to return with the cash in case they put a spell on me or something, and hurry away, stunned by the decision. The lady clearly did the maths, and realised that by allowing me to leave with £3.80-worth of Greggs produce, she was not only saving me time, but also saving her other customers time, and guaranteeing my brand loyalty for life. Fostering the brand loyalty of Greggs must be incredibly important to this woman. I would be amazed if she hadn't done a course on it in a hotel somewhere.

Well, it was worth every second. I stop looking over my shoulder for security guards, and walk away certain that thanks to this lady I will be a Greggs customer forever!

# Danny Wallace is a Man

LIFE LESSONS FROM OUR AWARD-WINNING COLUMNIST

## NEVER LOOK A GIFT SANDWICH IN THE MOUTH



But I simply cannot let this bill stand. I will return later with £3.80 in cash and hand it straight over.

In the end, I forget, so the next day, when I'm walking past Greggs, I check my pockets for coins and walk in, determined to pay.

The lady, however, is nowhere to be seen. It's a kid in a Greggs hat staring at his phone. I can't just walk in and start a conversation about the events of yesterday with this clown. Tell you what, I won't buy a sandwich today – I'll pop back later.

On my way home, I pass Greggs

### I REALISE I AM NOW FIRMLY IN GREGGS' DEBT. GREGGS OWNS ME

again, but still that lady isn't there. I decide not to pop in for a coffee. It's still too raw. The feeling, I mean – I'm not saying Greggs doesn't heat its coffee.

Two days later, I am yet to return to Greggs. I pass it twice a day, but now I don't feel I have earned the right to take my place alongside its proud customers any more. What if they know? What if they were behind me in the queue? What if they watched me waltz off with my cheese and onion sandwich and bet themselves I'd never return?

I realise with a heavy heart that not only will I suffer considerable reputational damage because of this woman, but now I am also firmly in Greggs' debt. Greggs owns me. Greggs has me where it wants me. I'm in its hot pocket.

None of this sits well. I wish she hadn't let me off the £3.80. I'm starting to really resent her decision.

Another day passes, another day in which I have not built up the courage to buy another cheese and onion sandwich. I see people pop in and slap their cards against a now-fixed machine, and walk off with their cheese and onion sandwiches, absolutely thrilled. It's not like I've ever really loved its cheese and onion sandwiches, but in my mind those sandwiches have become the greatest delicacy known to man, and I worry now I will never taste another. Sure, I could go to a different Greggs, but what if word has spread? This is no way to live. I need to settle my debt and clear my conscience. Today me and Greggs will part on equal terms.

I stride in with £3.80 in correct change in my sweaty hand.

"Hi," I say, bravely. "I owe £3.80!"

"What?" says the man behind the counter.

"Just a white coffee please," I say.

Where is that woman? What does she do, just move around the Greggs shops handing out free sandwiches and moving on? That's not a job! The fact that she made my life so much more convenient has really inconvenienced me. Does that woman have absolutely no respect for the Greggs bottom line? What about the people who rely on Greggs for their wages? Would they be happy with her handing out free products willy-nilly? What does she think will happen to the Greggs share price if everyone adopted this carefree attitude? She might not give much thought to the wallets of the Greggs fat cats and their Christmas pasty-bonuses, but I do.

So that is why I will not be returning to Greggs, nor will I be making any further efforts to repay the £3.80. This has been a hard lesson for us all. I pay for my coffee and leave, kissing goodbye to those cheese and onion sandwiches, never, ever to return.

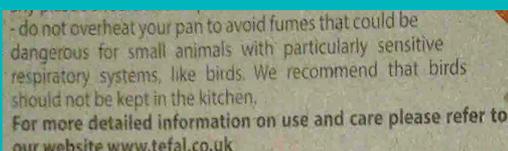
From now on, I'll just send my wife in.



## IN OTHER NEWS

### TWITTER UPDATE

Keith Burrell has bought a saucepan, and I bet that's the most boring sentence you'll read today. But wait! Because it's a Tefal, and on the back was something that really stood out. Tefal officially recommends you don't keep birds in your kitchen.



### THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

Sunshineman was in Leyton the other day, when he was forced to take this last-minute diversion. As far as anyone knows, he is therefore still in Leyton.

