

How Should People Seek Revenge On A Machine?

The guy in front of me put his dime in the coffee machine. The cup dropped, the machine whirred, but nothing came out.

He muttered, then started to walk away looking dejected and embarrassed. That's the way many people react when a machine doesn't come through: as if they have been outwitted. They feel foolish.

"Aren't you going to do anything about it?" I asked.

"What's there to do?"

What a question. If he had gone in a bar and ordered a beer, and if the bartender had taken his money but not given him a beer, he'd do something. He'd yell or fight or call the police.

But he let the machine cow him. "Kick it." I said.

"What good will that do?" He said.

"You'll feel better," I said.

He came back and got in position to kick it, but I stopped him.

"Not like that. You are going to kick it with your toe, but you can hurt yourself that way. Do it this way."

I stepped back and showed him the best way. You use the bottom of your foot, as if you're kicking in a bedroom door.

I stepped aside, and he tried it. The first time he used the ball of his foot. It was a weak effort. "Use more of the heel," I suggested. That did it. He gave it two good ones and the machine bounced. He had big feet.

"With feet like that," I told him, "you could knock over a sandwich machine."

He stepped back looking much more self-confident.

Somebody else who had been in line said, "I prefer pounding on it. I'll show you."

Leaning on it with his left hand, he put his forehead close to the machine, as if in deep despair. Then he pounded with his clenched fist.

“Never use the knuckles,” he said, “because that hurts. Use the bottom of the fist the way you pound on a table.”

“Why just one fist?” someone else said. “I always use two.”

He demonstrated, standing close to the machine, baring his teeth, and pounding with both fists, as if trying to break down a bedroom door with his hands.

Just then, another guy with a dime stepped up. Seeing us pounding on the machine, he asked: “Is it out of coffee?”

We told him it had shorted a cup.

He hesitated, then said: “Sometimes it only skips one, then it works OK.”

“It’s your money,” I told him.

He put in his dime, the cup dropped, the machine whirred, and nothing came out. All he said was “Hmm,” and started to walk away.

“Why don’t you kick it?” I said.

He grimaced. “It’s only a dime.”



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