

**(U) Ask Zelda: Peeved by Purloined Pop**

FROM: "Zelda," Dispenser of Advice on Workplace Issues

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(U) The article below is unclassified in its entirety.

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Dear Zelda,

I work in an office with a shared fridge. I often bring in sodas and keep one in the fridge at a time, but recently my sodas have been disappearing. The first time, I thought it could be an honest mistake (they may not have noticed my mark on the can), but it's happened several times now, and the cans are marked. I hate to think that someone at work would intentionally steal someone else's food, but it's getting equally difficult to imagine that someone here isn't suspicious that their personal soda supply keeps magically restocking. What should I do?

Signed,  
Thirsty

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Dear Thirsty,

It appears there is someone thirstier than you in the office! Most of us have experienced this at one time or another -- if not missing a soda, perhaps a frozen entree or leftover lasagna. To give the parched pilferer the benefit of the doubt, perhaps his/her last office had a benefactor who kept the employees stocked with sodas out of the goodness of his heart. But even the most naive (or dense) person should catch on eventually.

Since you aren't allowed to set up a nanny cam in the office, here are a few things you can try.

- **Make a more noticeable mark on your soda can.** A small, discreet mark can be overlooked. Put a sticky note with your name and "DON'T TOUCH" on the top, which they have to see when they open the can. Or splash "TERRY'S SODA" across the cans in big pink letters with some tempera paint before bringing them in to work. The innocent can't miss it and the guilty can be easily spied with your soda in their possession. If you don't have any paint handy, tape a brightly-colored piece of paper with your name on it around the can.
- **Put a sign on the fridge** alerting the guilty party that items in the fridge belong to the individuals who brought them in and are not up for grabs. You might use humor: "This is not a magic ice chest that replenishes itself. Bring in your own sodas."
- **Switch to a different flavor of soda** until you find one that the pilferer doesn't like.
- **Don't put your sodas in the communal fridge.** Keep your soda stash at your desk and buy

a large cup of ice at the cafeteria each morning to cool your drink.

If you've tried a few of these suggestions and your sodas are still being stolen, then declare war! Shake up your soda real well before you put the can in the fridge (labeled with your name and a warning). Do some recon (checking the fridge at different times of day) and shake the can each time you're in there. Then sit back and wait for someone to yell when they open it.

*Zelda*

Editor's note: As promised in **last month's "epithet" column**, Zelda has selected a **winning caption**. In fact, Zelda has selected several winners. Here's what she decided:

**Best caption to illustrate the article:**

"Who approved THAT project name?"

**Zelda's favorite (but it wouldn't fit in the thought bubble):**

"Deborah's coarse language has made me feel uncomfortable and disenfranchised as a mission partner. I hope I have the courage required to talk to her or my supervisor about this and have my concerns addressed."  
*(This one made Zelda howl!)*



**Honorable Mention:**

"No excrement, Sherlock! So what's your bright idea?"

**Best off-topic caption:**

"OMG, fashion faux pas! That shirt does not go with those pants. Who dressed you this morning?"

**Most ironic:**

"I wish she'd clean up her %\$#@\* language."