

WORK THOUGHTS

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Paying Attention – Supply & Demand

I pulled into the crowded parking lot, found a vacant spot, and headed for the darkened glass doors of *Dillard's* Department Store. In a hurry to complete my errands, I walked quickly, mentally rehearsing the most efficient path to my destination. Maybe I'll stop for a quick lunch, I thought. My stomach was calling me.

Just as I began to enter the store, my eyes caught the slow movements of an elderly woman. She was struggling with a large purchase, an oversized handbag, and several keys held in an uplifted hand. Something about her expression elicited a response from me.

Are you okay? I asked. No, she offered, looking confused. Oh, I presumed aloud, you've lost your car? Yes, she said, briefly looking at me. Perhaps you parked in a different lot. No, I parked in this lot. You did? You recall entering the store through the ladies' shoe department. Yes, she repeated, I parked in this lot, but my car is gone.

I moved beside her, and together we looked toward the parking lot. What kind of car do you drive, I asked, trying to imagine her as a driver. It's a gray Lincoln with four doors, she answered. With that, I walked back to the parking lot. Right away I spotted a gray car, but I wasn't sure. Moving closer, I searched for some identification. Inside the front window, I discovered white lamb's wool seats.

White fuzzy seats? I called out. She nodded, barely relaxing her worried expression. When I got back to her, she handed me her package, and together we walked back to the gray, four-door Lincoln with white, fuzzy seats.

She wanted her package placed in the back seat. I helped her into the driver's seat and closed the door. She made no eye contact with me, and there may or may not have been an audible thank you. Nevertheless, I felt her appreciation. I liked that way she and I had matter-of-factly negotiated the *find*, without any talk about feeling helpless or forgetful. *Together* we had solved a problem with efficiency and dignity. She had maintained a sense of control, and I was feeling good about assisting her.

Walking away, I wondered if she might be a grandmother or maybe someone's great aunt. Would a niece be waiting for her at home? At that moment, I felt a surprising wave of emotion. I remembered my great Aunt Florence who taught me about independence and dignity and the rewards of work and money management. As I approached my original destination, I thanked myself for *paying attention*. Whatever our life's work may be, we can trust that a ready *supply* of efficiency, dignity, a sense of control, and really paying attention will forever be in high *demand*.

For more information about developing the efficiency and performance skills of your employees, call **Performance** Employee Assistance and Business Services at 337-436-9533.



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