

The *beep-beep-beep* of the front door sounded as the last customer of the Friday night rush disappeared out into the warm summer air. My co-worker and I gazed in awe of the tornado that had silently swept through our store this evening, turning the place into a disaster of scattered sprinkles, crushed waffle pieces, and ice cream-covered counters. It was just like any ordinary Friday night at Cold Stone Creamery.

Silently, we all began to clean the store in preparation for closing. I glanced at the clock and sighed in relief. "Twelve minutes 'til close!" I announced to the others, and they, too, yelled words of joy. Gathering an armload of dirty dishes, I trudged back into the kitchen and dropped everything into the sink. It was then that I heard the familiar *beep-beep-beep* of the front door once again, only this time the beeping was accompanied by loud, obnoxious hollering. Muttering profanities under my breath, I slowly walked out into the front of the store to unwillingly greet our new customers who dared to walk in just before close. However, I immediately came to an abrupt halt when I saw what all the craziness was about.

Two monstrous men the size of linebackers were engaged in a sword-fight battle, except one carried a wooden broom and the other held an aluminum baseball bat. The thick, pungent scent of alcohol followed the men as they danced around the lobby, bounding and leaping and jabbing each other with their "swords." They hollered incomprehensible slurs at each other all the while, throwing in the occasional "ARRRRRR!" in very convincing pirate accents. I peeled my gaze away from the men for just a few seconds to get a glimpse of my co-workers. Their faces mirrored mine: big, frightened eyes, jaws nearly brushing the floors, unsure of whether to cry or laugh.

Suddenly, there was a loud shattering noise. I snapped my head back to look at the men and watched in horror as pieces of the thick, double-paneled glass that protected the ice cream leaped to the ground, collecting in small piles of crystals by their feet. The pirates finally realized the damage they had caused and glanced up to see four sets of terrified eyes staring back at them.

Brittany Coury
I Shouldn't Be Alive

"Ahhh, shhhhhit! Bro, look whatcha did!" the pirate with the broom slurred to his friend.

They started to argue as we all stood in shock, unable to move. Then, the guy carrying the bat said, "SHIT! What...what if the cops come?! We gotta hide!" The men turned and looked at us and yelled, "You gotta hide too!" Without warning, the large, bulky pirates charged at us, scooped us up and tossed us like rag dolls over their shoulders. We finally found our voices and screamed and swore at the men to put us down, but it was no use. They carried us into the back of the store to the walk-in refrigerator and freezer. The freezer door was yanked open and our bodies were dumped in the freezer. "STAY HERE!" they ordered, and we all scrambled to reach the door before they shut us in, but they slammed it so hard that it locked.

The temperature in the freezer was a whopping -10 degrees Fahrenheit and dropping. Huddling together for warmth, my co-workers and I pounded on the solid freezer door, but no one could hear us. We couldn't even hear the pirates anymore, and by now it was past close, so no other customers would be coming in for ice cream. Realizing the gravity of the situation, I started to cry. If we stayed in here all night, we weren't going to make it.

I don't know exactly how much time passed while we all snuggled together on the floor of that freezer. The bitter cold air was starting to give me headaches and my fingers and toes had already gone numb when suddenly, we heard a noise coming from outside the freezer. Minutes later, the freezer door was wrenched open, and there stood our store manager, looking both confused and relieved that we were all still alive. That night was the first night I can honestly say I was so glad to see my boss.

After thawing out and explaining exactly what happened to our manager, we finally got to go home. Walking out of the store that night, I thought to myself, *It was just like any ordinary Friday night at Cold Stone Creamery. Except this time, I shouldn't be alive.*