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## The Assault of the Labels

**CASE 1.** You have purchased an outrageously expensive cooking pot possessing a magical coating of important modern material that guarantees your utensil will never scratch if properly cared for. The only problem is that smack in the middle of the magical cooking surface is a LABEL reminding you of the cost of this item and includes some code markings known only to mice.

In your determination to remove this alien presence, you have tried peeling, hot water, hot soapy water, hot special soapy water, scraping with plastic thing, scraping with wooden thing, scraping with fingernail, scraping in general, and you have managed to remove only 4/7 of the label. Moreover, you have left a recorded history of scratches etched on the "unscratchable" cooking surface, and the store will consider this a used item so you cannot return it.

**CASE 2.** You have purchased a new sport shirt. The moment it grazes the back of your neck you begin suffering. Some person, who clearly does not possess a neck, has installed a piece of coarse, edgy cloth containing unimportant data in the precise position to create the maximum irritation. When you try to remove this patch of woe either you leave remnants at the corners – whose sole purpose in life is to dig deeper into your flesh – or else you have just cut a nontrendy hole right through the collar.

**CASE 3.** You have purchased object *X*, which comes inside package *Y*. Only there is a very important instruction *Z*, such as "Do not use in a lighted room or around pets." Unfortunately, plastered over the most crucial part of the, let us say, manufacturer's *warning advice* is a label with the price, plus the omnipresent little code letters. When you peel off the label, the upper 10 microns of the instructions peel off with it; i.e., you have torn it to shreds.

What is a helpless modern person to do in the face of this all-out attack on our civilization by these pitiless, "progressive" manufacturers?

**Case 1: Utensils, hard surfaces – various technologies to the possible rescue.** Undoubtedly there exists a substance extracted from a tree bark in the Brazilian rain forest that removes everything in a jiffy with no side effects. But until then, we have only: soaking and steaming, cooking oil or rubbing alcohol, or GOO-GONE®. (Hey, what is all this? All I wanted to do was buy something to cook dinner with.)

**Case 2: Clothing – noncurrent technology to the absolute rescue.** Every home needs a seam-ripper, something that has been around in one form or another since probably The Fates (you remember those Greek-mythology women who worked with a lot of thread). If you know what a seam-ripper is, then you know why everyone needs one. A strange fact is that this object, of immense practical value and costing less than a dollar, is extremely hard to find. A fabric store is your best bet.

You can remove any label with one of these in any article of clothing without strain. It never needs sharpening and you need no instructions. Just slip the end under a thread and watch it cut through delicately, firmly, accurately, wherever threads may be lurking. Seam-rippers also deal with thread "pulls" and in general keep them under control (probably through fear).

A seam-ripper is not only useful – perhaps you will take it wherever you go -- but you will notice immediately how beautiful and sophisticated is its design. An agreeable item in every respect. Clotha (one of the Fates) has been recommending it for eons.

**Case 3:** *Labels on packages – nothing to the rescue.* Wanting fervently to believe that there must be a “prime remover” for lifting off labels without spoiling any immortal words or pictures that may lie hidden underneath, I went directly to the source. I spoke with seven different label manufacturing experts whose job it is to actually produce these sticky devices.

Every one of these specialists was extremely polite and friendly and patiently explained that unless a surface has been specially treated like certain magazines, once one of these nonremovable labels has been stuck onto paper or cardboard, especially after 48 ours (a magic number in label-world), THE LABELS WILL NEVER COME OFF.

That is, they won't come off without utterly destroying whatever they're stuck to, SO GIVE UP. The positive message here is DO NOT WASTE YOUR TIME.