

Dear Abby,

I was on my way home from work last week when I was pulled over by an officer for smoking what looked to him to be a “questionable type of cigarette.” Hovering inside my window and sniffing at my face, he asked to see the “so-called” pack of Marlboro’s I had sitting in the passenger’s seat. He held out his hand as if confiscating a butterscotch candy from a child. Absolutely flabbergasted and certainly frightened, I complied, laying the box on his palm. The officer (Ned Beaker was his name, in case his superiors are reading) probed his grimy finger inside the package and sniffed it, all the while scowling severely and sneaking unwelcome peeks at my shirt-front. After a while he pulled his head from my car, commanded me to wait patiently, and took the pack of cigarettes and my paperwork back to his squad car. And there he sat for nearly an hour, lights spinning overhead and attracting a thousand stares, smoking my cigarettes one after the other and honking his horn to Queen, ‘We Are the Champions,’ which he was playing loudly over and over again. He took numerous slugs, in plain sight, from a flask, made childish faces at the back of my car, and polished his shotgun with a pair of women’s panties on the dashboard. I watched him in my rear-view the entire time and he seemed to be having quite a happy little time. When he finally returned he handed me back my driver’s license and all the rest, including an empty pack of my own Marlboro’s stuffed with a greasy pair of pink panties. He tipped his hat and told me I’d better keep the speed down, as well as my weight, and left me shaking and badly in need of a cigarette. I sat for another half-hour crying and listening to Gloria Estefan, too upset to drive.

I am a conservative woman, Abby, and I just don’t know what to do. Somehow I feel violated and cheated by this renegade lawman. Since one pack of Marlboro Reds costs just over four dollars, and since he smoked at least twelve, I feel that I am entitled to at least three dollars in compensation. In addition to that, I feel that officer Beaker owes me (and possibly other victims as well) a very serious and heartfelt apology. His comment about my weight wounded me deeply. I’ve eaten nothing but the innards of tea-bags for nearly two weeks. Abby, what can be done? Is this man possibly a disguised member of the Taliban?

Sign Me, Smoked in Sausalito