



Mark Platt

Jill Druschke says this \$149 jacket cost her a 250G per year job. Now she wants payback



EXCLUSIVE

By AL GUART

A Manhattan woman slipped on her climb up the corporate ladder after returning a jacket to a Banana Republic shop.

Jill Druschke, 28, was in training to become a highly paid vice president of a major financial firm when she bought a boucle jacket and matching dress at a Banana Republic store near her home last Nov. 4.

But the freckle-faced Druschke's climb at AXA Financial ended when she decided to return the \$149 jacket during a lunch break to a Banana Republic located at Rockefeller Center three days later.

"I got it home and decided I didn't like the buttons, so I decided

to return it," Druschke told The Post. "Next thing I know, two security guards take me by the elbow to a room downstairs."

Druschke said she was told the ink on her receipt didn't match the type used by the chain and was accused of forgery. Police came and asked whether she was a shill for a ring of thieves before she was charged with forgery, possessing a forged document and petit larceny.

"A detective told me, 'Things aren't looking good for you. You'd better tell me the truth,'" she said. "They wanted to know whether I was returning it for someone else and getting \$10 to do it."

Druschke was led out of the store in handcuffs to the Midtown North Precinct, where she was fingerprinted and photographed, and then driven to The Tombs in

downtown Manhattan to be arraigned.

"I was in a skirt and heels in there with people who were not there for the first time," she said.

Druschke, an NASD license holder (qualifying her as a stockbroker), informed her boss of her arrest while awaiting arraignment. She was quickly put on paid leave for 30 days, then fired from her \$85,000-a-year job. She also lost a \$100,000 bonus and the firm's \$72,000 sponsorship to attend NYU's Stern School of Business.

No one would hire her with the charges pending and she had to move out of her Manhattan studio and rely on relatives in Wisconsin and Chicago for support, she said.

Meanwhile, bank records showed she did spend \$247 at Banana Republic. On March 9, the Manhattan District Attorney's Of-

fice dropped the charges.

Still, discussions over reparations with Banana Republic have proven fruitless, said her lawyer, Joseph Tacopina.

"Their callousness and carelessness was egregious," Tacopina said. "All this could easily have been remedied with a simple phone call. Now she's lost 10 years of her life, and I intend to make Banana Republic pay."

"We don't discuss these types of issues," said Banana Republic spokeswoman Kimberly Terry.

Druschke said she's still having trouble getting work in a field where an arrest for financial misdeeds frightens prospective employers.

"I'm hoping to get some vindication from this case," she said. "I need people to know I didn't do it and I'm not a criminal."