

## Thirty-Two Dollars and Nineteen Cents

By Diamond Patrick

“Will you be depositing this into checking or savings?”

“Savings, please.”

“Great. I’ll just need to see your ID.”

The man pulls out a wallet from his back pocket. It is thick and the corners are worn so that a couple cards stick out through the leather, faded over in a dingy grey residue. He slides his driver’s license across the counter in my direction. *Alfonso Marchesi*, it reads. A small, younger version of the man standing in front of me looks up from the plastic card. The man on the other side of the counter is tanner, wrinklier. He scratches his black mustache, which is noticeably absent from the ID photo.

“Thank you, Mr. Marchesi,” I confirm.

I search his name in the database and pull up his account. Picking the check off the counter, I noticed it isn’t endorsed.

“Sign here, please,” I instruct, sliding the check back across the counter, pointing at an X-marked line.

He sighs and slides it back to me, looking over his right shoulder.

“On your way home for the evening?”

“Yeah,” he nods, not making any eye contact with me.

“I’ll be off work, too, here in—” I check the clock. “—in about three minutes.”

There isn’t a response.

“Ready for the weekend?”

“I have to work,” he shrugs.

I decide to not try to engage the man further.

In the mornings, the men and women who come are of a different kind. They are the elderly, or the leisurely, or the pristine-clean. They are those who can afford to wait until the bank opens at eight in the morning. By no means do they have to stand in a line amongst those with grimy hands, with sweat-stained clothes, with those still paying their dues. In fact, they do not have to wait in lines at all, it seems. When they come, the bank is bright and open. The whole world is theirs, and they think we owe it to them. Not many have gone through the rite of passage to consider themselves a successful member of society; they are still working while the sun is up. No, these morning people have done their time, and this is their reward: clean, quiet banks.

“Here’s your receipt, Mr. Marchesi. Would you like to know your balance?”

He shakes his head and takes the receipt from my hand.

“Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“No, thank you,” he says quietly.

“Alright, you have a good evening, sir,” I smile.

As he walks away and crumples the receipt into his front pocket, I look at his account balance anyway. Including his recent deposit, his account reads \$531.92.

The clock is a minute away from seven, and so I decide to start packing my things. As I do, I wonder how long the man will work before he is allowed to become a morning person. I

wonder how long / will work before I am coming into the bank at ten-thirty to deposit a check rather than at seven to count the cash boxes.

Before going home, I stop at the grocery store to buy a jug of milk since I ran out this morning. The inhabitants of the grocery store are similar to those that come to the bank in the evenings—business dressed or paint-splattered or hair-frazzled. And I walk among them down the aisles.

In line in front of me is a scrawny woman. Anyone could tell by her features that she was, once, aesthetically attractive. At some point, though, time and work had wrung her dry and taken the vitality out of her frame. Three children played hide and seek between her legs as she unloaded her cart onto the conveyor belt while balancing a drooling infant on her hip. The man paying for his transaction in front of her gave her children a disapproving grimace before chortling in the mother's direction.

"Some people just can't control their kids, am I right?" he murmurs.

The cashier blushes and doesn't meet the man's eyes.

"Alright, that's enough now," the mother hushes embarrassedly. They ignore her and continue laughing and squealing with one another.

"Did you find everything alright?" the cashier asks robotically.

"Yes, thank you," she smiles.

The cashier gives the woman her total and she swipes her card on the pin pad.

"Okay, your balance now comes to thirty-two dollars and nineteen cents."

"What?"

The cashier repeats himself.

"I—I thought there was more on the card. Um, I—uh."

She starts shuffling through her purse.

"Hold on, I am so sorry," she pleads.

Slowly, she shovels everything back into her purse.

"What if I take out the cereals? Or maybe—"

"What was the balance?" I interject.

"Thirty-two dollars and nineteen cents," the cashier says curtly.

"Here," I pull out my card.

"Oh my God, no, please, you don't have to," the woman starts.

I swipe my card on the pin pad. The clerk clicks a few buttons and the Balance Due reads \$0.00. The children continue running around, obliviously.

"It's no problem, really. Don't worry about it," I smile.

She doesn't say anything to me. Her hands are shaking, though, as she places each of the brown bags in her cart. The clerk begins scanning my jug of milk.

"Thank you, so much," she whispers, turning in my direction just before she pushes her cart towards the exit

As she walks away, I watch her wipe at her eyes. One of the children asks her why she is crying; she responds that it is nothing. And I decide that I prefer the men and women who come to the bank in the evenings.