

Minimum Wage

Brianna

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Brianna pulled on her mask, rolled up the car window,
pushed open the door of her '98 Corolla.

'Still sticks,' she thought, 'ever since that night he kept
kickin' at it when I was backin' down the driveway with the baby.'

She walked through the parking lot, gathered up
a few stray shopping carts on her way to the store.

'How lazy can ya be?' she asked no one,
'cart corral's right over there.'

She pushed the carts to Louise who had cleaning duty that morning,
walked into the store between the shiny automatic doors,
squeezed a circle of hand sanitizer onto her palm,
took her post behind the customer service counter.

First customer asked for a rain check for a buy-one
get-one-free hungry burger soup. "Dan likes his own can for supper,"
she said blankly, "that with a few beers and a shot.
On a good night he'll fall asleep before wantin' anything else."

"Next guest," called Brianna. "Cashier sent me here;"
said the young mother, toddler in each hand, baby in the cart.
She handed two plastic bags to Brianna, "My card was declined."
"I'll take care of it with the manager," Brianna replied, "we've been there too."

An old man, white-haired man, stood patiently at the lottery counter.

“One dough-for-a decade ticket, please,” he placed eight quarters on the counter.

Brianna smiled invisibly under her mask, finding something reassuring in an old man buying a dough-for-a-decade lottery ticket.

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