

## The Bank Robbery

By: Brandon Fries

The alarm was blaring, alerting everyone within earshot as I scrambled to my feet. Looking around, the place was desolate. Not a soul stirred this bright Saturday morning, but off to work I went.

"Fuck me! I'm going to be late."

Mornings have always been hard for me. I had always wanted to be a morning person. There was a romanticism that surrounded the morning. The serenity. The peace. Fresh opportunities all dewed up, waiting for someone to pluck from the earth.

I'm not that man.

I'm forty-eight and I truly believe that my mother ruined this for me in High School.

"Rise and shine!"

"Don't just lie there, it's a beautiful morning. Get up and do something."

The curtains would split open, revealing the waiting morning.

But the coffee waits for me. This is my goddess. It makes or breaks my morning.

A simple cup of coffee. Normally, that's all it takes.

The perfect bean.

Expertly roasted.

Finely ground.

Mixed with water.

Magic.

I do a drive-by before deciding my course of action. I hate a crowd. It complicates everything.

I used to think my mornings as a youth were hard. The stressors were all different back then.

- Did I finish my homework?

- Would Ginny talk to me?

- Could I run the mile in time for the coach to stay off my ass?

Life changes as you get older.

But I digress. I'm just a man trying to make a living. I need to buy things to survive. Shelter. Food. It all costs something.

And coffee is my answer. I pull into the driveway and pull forward. The speaker lights up with a bright, cheery girl. I'm sure she has other things to do and puts on this little dance for me as part of the corporate training.

I fumble around with my phone, hoping I put enough money on my card to pay the bill.

"It's a great day today, how are you?"

"Doing good—or well. Anyway, I'm—doing."

"What can I get you today?"

Give me it all. The morning hasn't been going according to plan, and I need all of it. Every last piece. Don't worry, I'll take good care of it. I'll make sure of that.

I move.

Slowly forward.

The exchange is coming up.

My phone won't register. The damn wifi here sucks.

I'm idling.

Slow.

The pressure mounts, heading into the abyss.

There's a moment when everything just clicks. Imagine starting up your dream car and hearing all cylinders fire up at one time.

The murmur of the engine.

Time slows down.

Everything.

Works.

I gave a speech that day. Mr. Cardella's class. Spanish.

I was a horrible student. I goofed around and that was the year when I became the "class clown."

It was a poor attempt at it—but I gave it a valiant effort.

"Thanks for coming." She says.

I was distracted. Just for a moment, but that's all it took to shake me.

Damn, this coffee is going to taste great. Just the lift I need this morning.

It's better than the "Malteada de Burrito's" presentation—also known as a "Burrito Milkshake." A burrito. Milk. Blender. It was the perfect recipe, and the class was in a frenzy. I used the extent of my Spanish to get through it. And yes. I took one, big—

Drink. The sweetness of the cream coating my tongue. The bitterness of coffee biting the back of my mouth. The heat caressing my cheeks.

"Ah! Just what the doctor ordered."

The smoky smells drifting upwards and plunging themselves deep into the recess of my head. Smells have a way of connecting old memories and resurfacing at the most inopportune times.

My ears ring as I drive off, which is normal, but the pitch gets higher.

The waves of laughter were loud and bright.

The audience got what I delivered to them.

I shake it off. Inching forward, noticing the red and blue lights bouncing off the walls.

Screeching in all directions.

I stop the car and look to the left. They surround the local credit union.

The phone rings.

I make a left.

Back to work.