Alakazam

Lizzy Coyle

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/echo

Part of the Creative Writing Commons, Fine Arts Commons, Illustration Commons, and the Photography Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/echo/vol2018/iss2018/11

This Fiction is made available online by Journals, part of the Furman University Scholar Exchange (FUSE). It has been accepted for inclusion in The Echo by an authorized FUSE administrator. For terms of use, please refer to the FUSE Institutional Repository Guidelines. For more information, please contact scholarexchange@furman.edu.
Alakazam
Fiction • Lizzy Coyle

Geoff always kept $3.50 in his front left pocket. Jeans, khakis, cargo shorts with the black, plastic buckle. Didn’t matter. Always front left pocket. He used the $3.50 to buy a croissant, TruMoo chocolate milk, and a newspaper every morning. As he sat and ate his breakfast and read his paper, he would deposit another $3.50 into his front left pocket to prepare himself for his lunch. On his lunch break, he would leave his cubicle, walk down three flights of stairs—37 stairs to be exact—turn right, and then walk 2 blocks to Clive’s diner. He bought a BLT every day. It cost $3.50 with tax. As Geoff ate his BLT, he placed another $3.50 in his pocket for his dinner.

For dinner, Geoff would stop in Ingles. He had a pattern. He would enter the store and go immediately to the far-left side of the store to pick up a small bag of lightly salted kettle cooked potato chips. He then crossed to the far-right side of the store to the deli section. The butcher then sliced one piece of Wisconsin Cheddar and three slices of Rosemary Ham. The butcher wrapped up each slice separately and handed it to Geoff. Geoff already had a loaf of bread at home, so he walked to the front of the store to the cash registers.

“How are you doing today, sir?” The cashier asked. Her nametag read “Gabby.”

“I’m doing fine, thanks,” Geoff said. He stuck his hand in his front left pocket to dig out his money.

“Your total is $3.50,” Gabby said. Geoff handed her the money without counting it. He didn’t need to.
“Sir, you are twenty-five cents short,” Gabby said.

“No, I’m not,” Geoff said as he reached in his front left pocket to search for the missing quarter. There was nothing there.

Gabby lifted up three one-dollar bills and a quarter. “See?” she asked.

Geoff could not articulate what he was feeling. His face got very hot and red, he started to feel sweaty, and his hands could not stay still. “Well, I had another quarter earlier today. I don’t have any more money. That was it.”

“Looking for this?” someone asked.

Gabby and Geoff both turned their heads. A small, old man had appeared behind Geoff. He was wearing a velvet burgundy suit and a black top hat. He was holding a quarter.

“Please give that back to me,” Geoff said. “I believe it fell out of my pocket.”

“It didn’t fall out. I summoned it out. With magic! Alakazam! The mystical Archibald has done it again!” the old man said.

“Sir, how many times do we have to tell you? No more coming in here and messing with our customers. You need to leave immediately,” Gabby said.

The old man looked slightly offended. He slid behind Geoff and made his way toward the glass sliding door. “Alakazam!” he shouted as he threw down a handful of peanut M&Ms and then ran out of the door.

“That was weird,” Geoff said as he handed Gabby the last quarter. The old man had dropped it on the ground. “Have a nice day, Gabby. See you tomorrow.”

Geoff took his grocery bag and made his way out of the store.

The old man was standing by some shopping carts, attempting to light a cigarette. As Geoff walked by him, he dropped the cigarette and ran toward Geoff.

“Wait, wait,” the old man said. Geoff paused impatiently because he didn’t know what else to do. He patted his pockets to make sure the old man hadn’t taken anything else.

“I kinda fucked up my trick back there. I was supposed to throw down this handful of disappearing dust instead of peanut M&Ms,” the old man said, fisting an overflowing handful of what looked like lint from a washing machine. “See?” he said as he threw it down.

Instantly, they were surrounded by a world of gray. Two sets of coughs worked their way out of the cloud before it settled. “I haven’t actually ever tried the stuff before. Just bought it. Offline. On Amazon. My grandson helped me,” the old man said through his coughs.
“I really must be going,” Geoff said as he tried to side step the old man.

“No, no, wait. I’m sorry about the powder stuff. Listen, I need an assistant. For my magic act. You are just the right height. And I have a good feeling about you.”

Another feeling came over Geoff that he was having trouble describing. It was similar to when he was a child and his toothbrush was in the wrong section of the toothbrush holder, or when his day-of-the-week underwear was not in the correct order.

“I do not think I care to be an assistant to you,” Geoff said. He attempted to side-step the old man, but the old man was quicker than Geoff realized. Geoff ended up bumping into the old man.

“Tell me this, Stretch. You got any enemies? Cause I don’t trust a man without any enemies. Means he isn’t genuine and he lies to himself. Nothing worse than a liar.”

“Sir, do you realize you have not even introduced yourself to me?” Geoff asked. His mother had instructed him as he grew up that introductions are important in getting what you want.

“Sure I did! While we were inside! I said ‘Alakazam! The mystical Archibald has done it again!’ Don’t you remember, kid? It just recently happened,” Archibald said.

“That does not exactly qualify as a legitimate introduction,” Geoff said. He made another haphazard attempt to circumnavigate Archibald.

Archibald stuck out his hand. “I’m Archibald. My friends called me Archie, but they’re all dead now. So, I guess it’s just Archibald.”

Geoff did not enjoy physical touch. Memories from holidays as a child mainly consisted of being fondled by random adults who seemed to flit in and out of his life with the sole purpose of squeezing his cheeks tightly, hugging him with too warm bodies, or covering him with too wet kisses.

Handshakes were not usually a problem, as Geoff was a business man, but Archibald’s hands were frighteningly yellow. Whether from old age or jaundice or peeling callouses, Geoff did not care to find out, but Archibald grabbed his hand anyway and gave it two, big pumps.

“So, what do you say about being assistant? I know most of the time magicians’ assistants are nice, fine ladies with tight asses and sets of breasts to knock a man dead, but I’m in a bit of a pinch, and you are tall enough to maintain control of the ladder,” Archibald said.

“I still do not think I care to be your assistant. For one, I do not know anything about you. Or magic, actually. And I have a job. So, no. Now, I really must get going,” Geoff said. He hadn’t missed an episode of Jeopardy in months, and he was not planning on letting a senile old man stop him.
“You don’t have to know anything about magic! And it’s a weekend gig, so it won’t interfere with your desk job. Come on, Stretch, whaddya say?”

“Still no. I need to get going,” Geoff said, finally sidestepping Archibald.

“What? You have to get home so you can watch Jeopardy and eat a sad ham and cheese sandwich? Why don’t you get out of your own way and live a little?”

Geoff paused and turned around, preparing to say that his sandwich was not sad. But Archie was gone. All that was left was a little cloud of dust.

Geoff got into his car and put his grocery bag onto the passenger seat beside him. He made sure the radio volume was on eighteen before pulling out of the parking lot. He drove home the usual way, passing the usual buildings and landmarks going his usual speed. As Geoff pulled into his apartment complex, he parked in the spot he normally parked in and carried his belongings inside. He unpacked his groceries and prepared to make his dinner so he could eat it while he watched Jeopardy. He pulled the bread out of the pantry and unwrapped the deli meat and cheese. He arranged the meat and cheese on the slices of bread, just as he liked. Grabbing a knife out of the drawer, he prepared to cut it, but paused. Though he normally cut it horizontally, Geoff cut the sandwich diagonally. It was not the worst thing that had ever happened to him, he thought to himself.