

Alchemy

by

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*It's payday at MARCUS' pawn shop "Lofi Buy & Lend". He stands at the counter with his jumpy new shop assistant TEDDY.*

MARCUS

So that's ten hours at twenty-five an hour, minus your lunch break, so that's nine hours, plus your store opening bonus.

*TEDDY starts to count on his fingers.*

TEDDY

Gimme a sec-

MARCUS

Ten hours is two-fifty, minus twenty-five is two-twenty-five.

TEDDY

And the store opening bonus?

MARCUS

Is ten. Two-thirty-five.

TEDDY

Two-three-five... Can I get cash?

MARCUS

You can get cash.

*MARCUS leans down below the counter and returns with a wad of bills. TEDDY'S eyes follow his movements, trying their best not to bulge when they see the money. As if to appear casual, TEDDY turns from the counter and leans against it.*

TEDDY

How'd I do today?

MARCUS

It was your first week.

TEDDY

Did I do good, or bad, or...

MARCUS

It was your first week. Too soon to tell.

TEDDY

Good I'm asking, right? Because I care.

MARCUS

And now I know that.

*Marcus holds out Teddy's pay and taps the boy's arm so he turns around.*

MARCUS

Well?

*Teddy hesitates.*

TEDDY

Say I left it with you.

MARCUS

Harder to spend if you do.

TEDDY

I don't wanna spend it.

MARCUS

You don't eat? You don't pay rent?

TEDDY

Say I left it with you and you took it to Errol.

*Marcus shifts his feet.*

MARCUS

Errol?

TEDDY

Yeah. And he-

MARCUS

He what.

TEDDY

He does that thing.

MARCUS

What thing.

TEDDY

That thing that- that turns it into *three*-three-five.

*Pause.*

MARCUS

You don't want to deal with Errol.

TEDDY

But I wouldn't be. You would.

MARCUS

What makes you think I want to deal with Errol?

TEDDY

You're friendly, right?

MARCUS

Errol and I talk, Errol and I have lunch. Occasionally, we play cards. The thing that keeps us friendly is that he keeps his business out of mine.

TEDDY

That's not what I've heard.

*If Teddy regrets this outburst, he does a good job at hiding it. Marcus stares into his young employee.*

MARCUS

...you may as well speak your mind.

TEDDY

I've heard- I mean I *know* you deal with Errol. I've seen you two. And I'm not asking for a seat at that card table, I just want to throw mine in with yours. I'll even pay you for it. Twenty-five percent of what I make.

MARCUS

Twenty-five percent of an extra hundred? You may as well just work through lunch...

TEDDY

You still haven't said no.

*Silence.*

MARCUS

Tell you what, Teddy. You come in next week, you sweep the place and dust the shelves, you remember my coffee order and you don't ever bring up Errol in my fucking place of business again ... let's see where we're at next payday.

TEDDY

Okay. Okay, I can do that.

MARCUS

You're on your phone too much. Else the week was fine.