**Infectious Rebellion (Second Draft)**

I was only two hours into my eight-hour shift, as an Acme cashier today, and I could feel my fatigue taking a toll on me. My stomach churned, and rolled, my body felt weak, and my head was pounding. I wasn’t sure how long I could last as I stood behind the old creaky register as the belt slowly pulled groceries toward me my head began to swirl, as my name badge slowly scratched at the back of my neck. There were so many sounds pouring into me all at once; from the same old music blaring from the static sounding speakers, to the belt groaning under the stress of its own weight. The worst part was the constant exchanges with the customers always going the same exact way.

“How are you doing today?” I asked

“Alright, how about yourself?” They retorted

“I’m doing fine, but I can’t wait to get home”

“Yeah this place is always busy”

Then the conversation always boiled into silence as the beeps reminding me that I had scanned an item went on, and on slowly encroaching into my mind, and driving me crazy. As all these factors set deeply into me my body finally decided to rebel against me, as I felt a pressure rising from my stomach into my throat. Panic set in quickly as I realized what was about to happen, and I quickly darted toward the bathroom. Even though the bathroom was only a short jog, if that, away from my register, it felt like I had to climb the entirety of Mt. Everest to get there. The wind blew my name tag into my face bringing me slightly back to reality, before I finally reached the door. I quickly tore the door open slamming, and locking it behind me as I got on the floor allowing my guts to spew themselves out into the toilet. There was a moment of pure relief, as I sat against the wall feeling defeated. I took my badge into my hands seeing how surprisingly clean it was, as I thought to myself “What am I going to do now?” Knowing well that my managers would not allow me to leave easily.

Now let me explain the circumstances to you. I had a perfect track record at my work, and did not want to tarnish it, even though they essentially forced me to come into work this morning. When I tried to call out for being sick they were insistent that I would be fine, and should come in regardless. They even promised that they would let me leave if anything had happened. Unfortunately I knew this was a lie, and they would try to keep me here for as long as they possibly could because they only thought about the profitability of the store. So now I sat there defeated wondering, “Should I stand up against the authority of my management?” or “Should I act like nothing happened and get back to work?” This was a tough question for me to ask myself, because I knew I may have lost my job if I even thought about leaving. This may not seem like a huge issue, but earlier in my career I signed up for an expensive phone bill I would not be able to pay if I had lost my job, and there was no way I could make my parents front that kind of money for me.

I sat for what felt like an eternity, even though in reality it was only about 5 minutes. The oppressive green tiled walls of the bathroom made me feel claustrophobic, the glaring white of my name badge was the only thing convincing me that I still existed in the real world. It was at this point that I stood up, and finally made the choice. I was going to get to go home no matter what the costs. I slowly meandered out of the bathroom, and saw my manager Tracy waiting there for me. Her eyes full of concern as they looked at me in the sorry state that I was.

“Are you alright?” She asked

“No not really.” I blurted out

“What happened?”

“My stomach finally gave out on me, and I had to throw up.”

“Want me to call Laura for you?”

“Yes if you could.”

“Alright, I’ll do my best to get her here quickly, but in the meantime just take a seat on the bench.” She told me as she walked away toward the phone

I was a bit afraid to speak to Laura, who was my store manager at the time, because she had a reputation that preceded her. Since she was out new store manager not a whole lot of my co-workers had an experience interacting with her, however, she had a reputation of being mean, almost tyrannical. That she did not want anyone to leave, and that you always had to do whatever she said. This all mixed with the fact that she also had a dangerously short tempter made her a scary woman that no one wanted to deal with. At this point she had been here for two or three months, and I only interacted with her a few times prior, but I knew this time was different, and I was scared.

I then moved across the smooth, yet dirty tiled floor until I reached the bench, plopping myself down onto it. My heart began to race as I tried to think of what to tell Laura, our store manager. After about five minutes of waiting Tracy finally came back to tell me she would not come to me, but instead I would have to find her in the seasonal section of the store. I used what little strength I had left to get up, and thank her before moving my heavy body over to seasonal to find Laura.

When I had finally reached the seasonal section of the store, I saw her standing there watching as one of my co-workers was working hard to stock the isle, but she only had a cool icy stare as she watched him struggle. My legs tensed up, and my heart began to beat a little faster. She already knew I was sick today, and she wanted me to stay no matter what, so she was already mad at me. Which made this next part even worse for me because I knew this may end in some sort of screaming match already. This is when I finally steeled my nerves and walked up to her.

“What do you want?” –She barked at me

“I would like to ask if I could leave early today, I’m not feeling too well.” I told her

“Why should I let you leave, there are plenty of people here who “Don’t feel too well””

“Because I just threw up in the bathroom, and I need to rest before I get any worse.”

That line seemed to infuriate her more than I had ever seen before.

“Well that is too bad, there is plenty of work that needs to be done, and I will not allow you to leave yet.” She screamed into my face

“Well this is clearly a health, and safety violation, I will call OCEA if I need to!” I screamed right back.

This seemed to take her off guard mostly due to the fact that from what I have heard no one has stood up to her before, but I was going to hold my ground, no matter what she said. The shock quickly wore off as I saw her face twist back into her angry expression.

“I told you to get back to work now! If you don’t I will write you up!” She screamed

This is the point where I broke, and was not able to take it anymore. I quickly grabbed my name badge and ripped it off of my neck, and even though I was feeling more exhausted than ever before in my life I mustered every bit of strength, and courage that I could before finally speaking again.

“Well if you won’t let me leave I will just excuse myself, and leave anyway!” I shouted

I then began running towards the time clock to punch out regardless of her tyrannical demands. My heart raced faster than ever before not believing the words that came out of my mouth. However just because I felt like I was done with the conversation does not mean that she was as continued to scream at me demanding that I return before she fired me, or told corporate about my actions. I ignored her protests as I fumbled with my badge and the machine, before quickly clocking out for the day and walked right out the front door. The day outside was beautiful. The sun shone onto my face and the wind gently blew in my hair as I finally felt free for the first time since I began working for this prison of a store. I felt no obligations, almost at peace. I made a quick phone call to get myself a ride home as I sat on a bench with only one more thought on my mind.

“Will I ever come back here again? Or is it all over from here?” As I pondered this question I felt my stomach roll over, and over again telling me I needed to go. However, I could feel on things in the depth of my stomach, even amongst all the churning, and it was that I knew I would come back here, even if I did not want to.