

SHORTCHANGED

Written by

Sam McLane

2317-201 Evermore Way
Wilmington, NC 28403
(210) 287-2847
samuelamclane@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

MATT DORMAN (late 20s), kind of frumpy, inches forward in line like a robot. At the counter, a tired-looking BARISTA takes his order.

MATT
Hey, uh, vanilla latte?

BARISTA
Name.

MATT
Huh? Oh, um, Matt.

BARISTA
What'll it be, Matt.

MATT
(beat)
Vanilla latte.

BARISTA
Cool. That'll be \$4.75. Cash or card.

MATT
Uh, cash.

Matt pulls out his wallet. He has *barely* enough cash to pay for the coffee. He hands the money to the Barista, who opens the register and starts counting out Matt's change.

BARISTA
I'm, like, five cents short. Is that okay?

MATT
Oh, um...

Matt looks at the long line of caffeine addicts behind him.

MATT (CONT'D)
Yeah. That's fine, I guess.

The Barista hands Matt his change, minus a nickel.

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

A bland, blocky building situated on an equally boring street. It looks like a cardboard box with windows.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MATT'S CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

Matt sips his coffee as he idly scrolls through his phone. He stops on an article for a new show that just dropped on Netflix.

DANIELLE (O.S.)
 Birthday.

Matt spills coffee on himself and nearly drops his phone as his coworker, DANIELLE -- pasty, stern -- pops into his cubicle unannounced, waving a white envelope labeled "SHANNAH".

MATT
 Danielle! Jeez, almost gave me a heart attack!

DANIELLE
 Almost.
 (waggles envelope)
 Birthday.

Matt takes the envelope.

MATT
 Who's it for?

DANIELLE
 (deadpan)
 My guess is the name on the card.

He turns it over.

MATT
 "Shannah"? Who's Shannah?

DANIELLE
 Probably the one having the birthday.

MATT
 Do I need to sign it, or...?

DANIELLE
 One dollar.

MATT

What?

DANIELLE

(like he's an idiot)
We're all putting in one dollar for
a bowling gift card.

MATT

Bowling?

DANIELLE

Yeah. The one with the pins?

MATT

All right, all right. Here, lemme
check...

Matt dumps the contents of his wallet (all coins) onto his desk, much to Danielle's chagrin. He slowly adds up his change, then chuckles awkwardly.

MATT (CONT'D)

You're not going to believe this,
but I'm a nickel shy. Mind if I get
back to you?

Danielle swipes the card from his hand. She glares at him, then storms off.

MATT (CONT'D)

(calling after her)
I'm sure I could find one lying
around somewhere!

Matt returns to his desk and begins the tedious task of scraping his coins back into his wallet.

MATT'S CUBICLE - LATER

Matt types away at his computer. He cocks his head when he hears the gratingly familiar tune of the "Happy Birthday Song" being sung.

Matt pokes his head out from his cubicle and catches GARY, his heavysset coworker, passing by.

MATT

Yo, Gary. Where's everybody going?

GARY

Didn't anyone tell you? We're doing
Shannah's birthday.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)
 (giddy)
 There's gonna be cake!

He takes off down the hall.

MATT
 (calling after)
 I wasn't invited?

CUT TO:

INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Matt's career-driven wife, KATIE, sits on the couch while she works on her laptop. Matt enters and flumps down beside her.

KATIE
 (not looking up)
 So, how was your day?

MATT
 Uh, not bad.
 (beat)
 It was Shannah's birthday.

KATIE
 Who's Shannah?

Matt rubs his eyes.

MATT
 I have no idea.
 (beat)
 How 'bout you? How was your day?

Katie finalizes something on her computer.

KATIE
 Aaaand done. Just finished. Wanna watch something?

MATT
 Um, yeah, actually. Saw a thing for this new show just came out. It looks pretty--

KATIE
 Ooh, was it that new serial killer documentary?

MATT
 Oh, um, no actually, it wasn't that. It was--

KATIE
 Because I have been *dying* to watch
 that one with you.

Matt looks at his wife.

MATT
 Um... Okay, sure. We can watch
 that.

KATIE
 Great!

She grabs the remote and flicks on the TV.

KATIE (CONT'D)
 It's less about *how* he kills them,
 and more about what he does with
 the bodies *after*, y'know?

Matt looks a little squeamish.

MATT
 (forced)
 Right. Sounds fun.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING - THE NEXT DAY

A HIPSTER DOOFUS standing in front of Matt is taking his
 sweet time ordering.

HIPSTER DOOFUS
 And could I get an extra shot of
 vanilla with that? Thanks.

Matt steps up to the counter.

MATT
 Vanilla latte.

BARISTA
 Name.

MATT
 Matt.

BARISTA
 Okay, Matt. What'll it be?

MATT
 Vanilla latte.

BARISTA
Ooh, sorry. Just ran out of
vanilla.

Matt eyes the Hipster Doofus.

MATT
Just black is fine.

INT. MATT'S CUBICLE - LATER

Matt sips his black coffee, recoiling in disgust. Suddenly, a white envelope is SLAPPED onto his desk.

DANIELLE
Birthday.

MATT
Jesus, Danielle! What the hell?! We
need to get you a bell.

DANIELLE
Yeah, that'd be swell.
(taps envelope)
Birthday.

MATT
Another one?

DANIELLE
Nearly 17.7 million a day, last I
checked.

Matt flips over the envelope.

MATT
"Melvin"? We have a Melvin?

DANIELLE
One dollar.

MATT
What's it for this time?

DANIELLE
Laser tag.

MATT
Laser tag? Who are these people?

DANIELLE
You gonna pay, or what?

Beat.

Matt looks at the card. At his black coffee.

MATT
You know what? No.

DANIELLE
No?

MATT
Yeah, no. I'm not paying the
entrance fee to this party. Have
fun without me, though.

Danielle snatches the envelope.

DANIELLE
Whatever.
(under breath)
Prick.

She leaves in a huff. Matt returns to his computer -- big, self-satisfied smile plastered on his face.

BREAK ROOM - LATER

Matt stands at the vending machine. He hears Gary down the hall.

GARY (O.S.)
Yeah, I'll be there! Just gonna
grab some SunChips real quick!

Matt looks at the vending machine -- only one bag of SunChips left.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Matt rounds the corner, bag of SunChips in hand, just as Gary enters the break room.

MATT
Ooh, sorry, Gar. Last bag. Better
luck next time.

OFFICE KITCHEN - LATER

Matt opens the fridge and finds a birthday cake with the name "MELVIN" written in icing. Checking to make sure no one's looking, he grabs himself a messy handful and scarfs it down.

INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Matt sits down next to Katie, looking pleased with himself.

KATIE
(on her laptop)
How was your day?

MATT
My day?
(beat)
My day was all right.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING - THE NEXT DAY

Matt waits patiently in line. When it's his turn, he strides up to the counter and leans against it.

MATT
Matt.

BARISTA
Na-- Oh. Uh, what'll it be?

MATT
Vanilla-- No. *Mocha* latte.

BARISTA
Okay. \$4.75.

MATT
Here's a five.

Matt hands him the money. The Barista counts up his change.

BARISTA
Might be a few cents short, is that okay?

Beat.

MATT
Actually, I think I'll take correct change this time around.

BARISTA
Okay. Just be a few minutes.

They head to the back. Matt takes pleasure in watching them go.

Looking around the store, Matt spots a stressed-out MOTHER towing a baby carriage waiting in line behind him. She has heavy bags under her eyes and keeps checking her watch.

Matt looks conflicted. The Barista returns.

BARISTA (CONT'D)
Just gotta count this out.
Shouldn't take too long.

Beat.

MATT
You know what? Forget it. No big deal.
(gestures to Mother)
And give the coffee to her. Thanks.

He exits.

INT. MATT'S CUBICLE - LATER

Danielle enters and finds two crisp dollar bills on Matt's desk.

INT. GARY'S CUBICLE

Gary hangs his coat over his chair and finds a fresh bag of SunChips on his desk.

INT. DIFFERENT CUBICLE

A cupcake with a lit candle sits on a desk. In the background is a nameplate that reads "Melvin".

INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Katie closes her laptop before Matt sits down.

MATT
How was your day?

KATIE
Finished that project I've been working on.

MATT
Hey, that's fantastic!

She shrugs.

KATIE
How was yours?

MATT
Honestly?
(beat)
Pretty great.

They cuddle up together. Katie turns on the TV.

KATIE
Wanna finish that documentary?

MATT
Y'know, I was thinking maybe I
could pick the show tonight.

She hands him the remote.

KATIE
It's all yours.

Matt smiles. They watch in contented silence for a while.

MATT
Oh yeah, by the way, I'm gonna
start going to a different coffee
shop.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END