

The Graveyard Shift at 7-eleven

by Dan Lukiv

PROLOGUE

June 29, 1995:
 "Just stay relaxed," my new boss
 Says, his mouth half full of
 Burrito-bits.

I

June 30, 1995:
 A greasy-haired man
 Without shoes, pants,
 And underwear—
 Just a plaid shirt and red
 Socks—
 Asks for Export A,
 Grips money in a
 Yellow-fingered fist
 And grins as if
 He knows something
 I don't.

"Cat got your tongue?"
 He asks before leaving, and
 Then he holds a door open
 For a short lady—
 A librarian?—
 Who becomes so shaken
 That she drops her wallet
 That spews out change
 That he squats
 To retrieve.

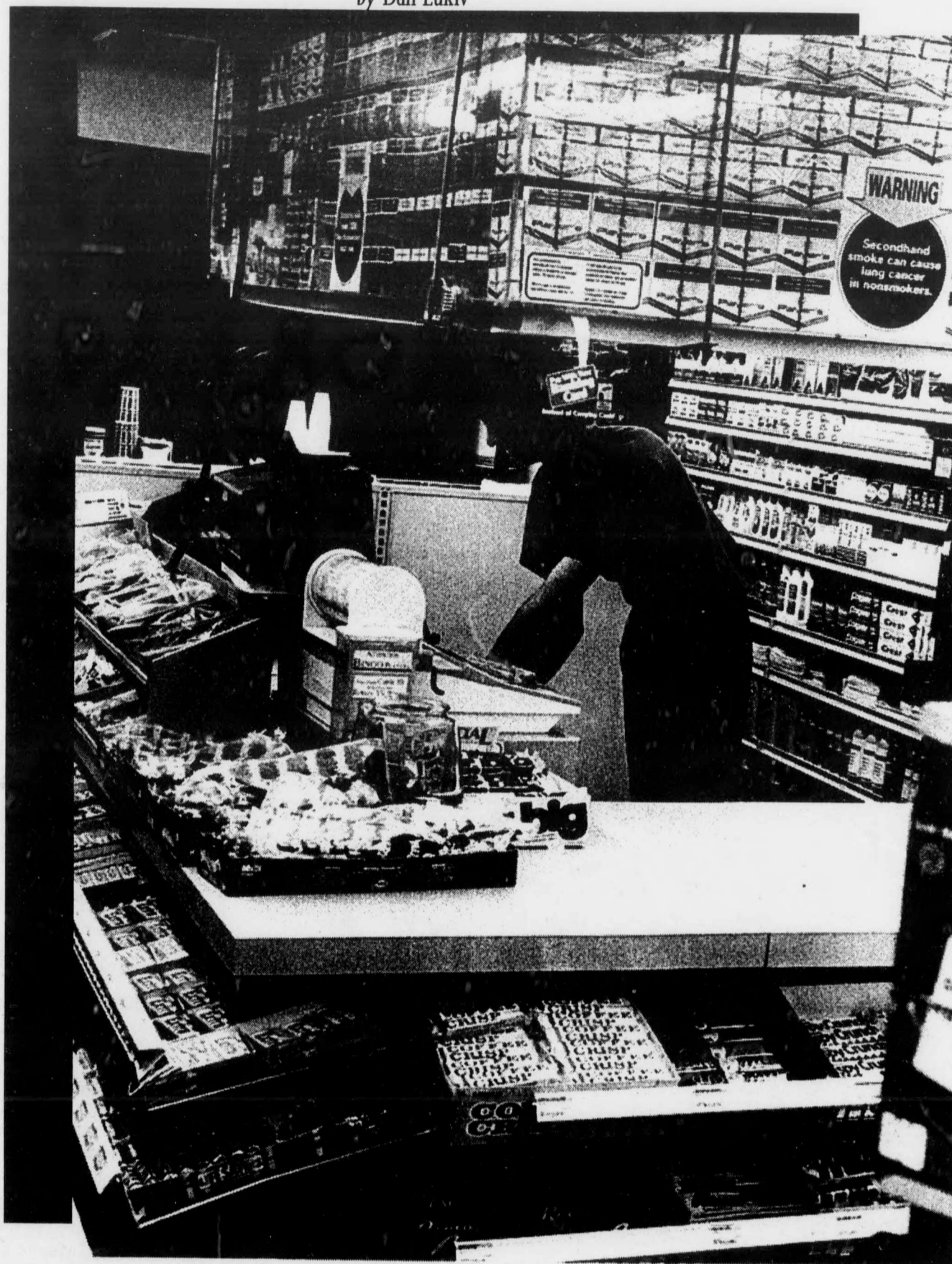
Like a manikin,
 She can't seem to move,
 Refuses the change
 That he drops into her hand,
 Or take her eyes off him.

He leaves,
 Shaking his head
 And chuckling to
 Himself.

II

July 3, 1995:
 A thick-necked man leans
 Across the Windex-clean counter,
 Grabs my shoulders,

And—
 He has an Iroquois cut
 (An orange and black strip
 Of bristles):
 This is not an
 Afterthought—
 And he says,
 "Phone the police!
 I take
 Psycho-chemical drugs,
 But they aren't
 Working!
 I feel violent!
 I'm going to do something
 Terrible!"
 His eyes look as if they belong
 In a Van Gogh
 Self-portrait.
 He runs outside;
 I phone the police while he
 Blocks people from
 Passing into or out of the store.
 Nobody argues with him.
 And then,
 Within four minutes,
 Four officers (RCMP)
 Reluctantly wrestle him,
 In front of the doorway,
 Into handcuffs.



distracting clerk photo by the lovely and talented Mike Dean

III

July 6, 1995:
 A bald, scrawny man
 Kicks a "regular" gas pump,
 Yells at it—
 I can hear cursing
 Through double-pane-glass—
 And then,
 Waving a aqueegee,
 Like a Ninja warrior with his
 Nunchaku,
 He enters our temple of Submarines
 (He has only one earlobe),
 And yells,
 "Don't phone the police!"
 He smashes the squeegee
 Through counter-glass.
 He attacks the cash register,
 Coffee pots,
 And freezer-windows:
 \$10,000 damage in three minutes.

IV

July 12, 1995:
 Another man,
 Vacant,
 Like a basement without

A house,
 Pulls out a five from worn-out jeans,
 Pays for two liters of Coke,
 Looks at his change,
 And says,
 "How much do I owe you?"
 "You already paid," I say.
 "You must be mistaken," he says.
 We argue;
 My partner,
 Burt, and he
 Argue;
 Burt gives up:
 The customer pays him from
 Another five,
 And after that he pays me
 From a ten.
 He leaves,
 But he returns empty-handed,
 Six minutes later,
 And wants to buy more Coke.
 We ignore his pleas for one hour;
 Finally,
 He leaves.

EPILOGUE

November 15, 1995:
 This was the graveyard shift

At 7-Eleven,
 But I wrote it in the present
 Because,
 As a bored dog catcher,
 Now,
 I often relive drama
 That was burned into my
 Brain.

But what I really want to be,
 I think,
 Is a composer,
 Not bad-tempered,
 However,
 Like Beethoven,
 Or moody,
 Like Rachmaninoff,
 Or funny-looking,
 Like Paul Williams,
 Or short-lived,
 Like Mozart.

By the way,
 I rented "Amadeus" last Monday night,
 And I loved the music,
 But I thought it was terrible
 That Mozart wrecked
 Salieri's life.