

Machinate

By: Angela Daley

An elder man sits at his desk; the sunlight shines in from the window behind him causing a glare on his computer. Slowly he pushes his chair backwards and strolls over to the windows. Staring down at the street below he sees dots scrambling around in a hurry to go nowhere. He continues to stare as his wrinkled hand closes the blinds. Falling back into his plush armchair he gets back into his work. Their office is located on the fifteenth floor of the building; the only floor above him is the owner's office. The numbers were starting to drive him a little mad after forty years of calculating them. He sees them everywhere, where he is in conversations with his wife and children, who have kids of their own now. Stretching his arms above his head he

closes his eyes tightly.

Lowering his fingers to his temples he gives himself a quick massage. He glances around at his co-workers before diving into the remainder of his work. They are all silently pounding away at the calculators crunching numbers, making sure nothing is out of place. But he had a very specific and important job; he was to make sure the cash amount was not out of place in a particular account. He began typing away; adding and multiplying the money numbers; when he sees what Mr. DelGatto was searching for. He checks again and a third time to make sure he wasn't making a mistake even though he knows he didn't. He worked for Mr. DelGatto for over twenty years that is why he approached him with the job assignment in the first place. The old man saves and prints the report and runs to the printer. Scanning over the report in his hands he sees the numbering again, his old heart pounds against his rib cage as the golden elevator doors open in front of him. He steps out of the elevator. His knees are ready to buckle under his body as he raises his fist and knocks softly at the large double doors.

"Come in," a voice vibrates through the solid wood doors.

"Sir."

The old man enters the office cautiously. The black carpet spreads from wall to wall meeting up with the lightwood trim. The desk is on the opposite side of the door cornered between two wall length bookcases. A middle-aged man turns to face him, holding a glass. His light hair would fall just short of his neck, but it is slicked back into a ponytail and his white undershirt contrast with his grey suit and black shoes, "Robert," He smiles and steps forwards to greet him.

"Sir," Robert hands Mr. DelGatto the report.

Mr. DelGatto's countenance drops grimly as he reads further.

"The darker lines are the winnings that are patterned. They win every Thursday at 12:01am,"

"Just before everything is reset. Good job Robert, I knew I could count on you to find this."

"Not a problem sir."

Mr. DelGatto smiles again at the elderly man, "You can take the rest of the day off," Mr. DelGatto reaches into his top desk drawer, pulls out a check book and rips off a page, "Here you go," Robert is puzzled as he counts the zeros for a second time. Mr. DelGatto chuckles, "It is a bonus. For all your hard work you have done."

Robert leaves with a grand smile stretched across his

face. Mr. DelGatto takes a seat at his desk. Shaking his head he stares at the report again, "Jonny," he says before letting out a sigh and picking up the receiver of the office phone.

The sun shines into a dark and dusty room, through a broken blind nailed to the upstairs bedroom window, onto Chuck's face lighting up his already light complexion. His dark brows frown as he groans and flips over to hide from the day. He begins to drift off to his better world when a smash from down stairs jolts him upright in bed. He snatches his 9mm from underneath his pillow and quietly leaps over the railing and silently lands on the center of the staircase. His gun rounds the corner first he sees a person dressed in all black carefully placing the shelf back on the wall.

Chuck places the gun at the bottom step of the stairs and creeps up behind him and wraps his thick biceps around his neck. He trips him with his foot and they fall to the

floor. Wrestling around on the dirty wood floorboards Chuck finally puts the person on their stomach pulling their arms tightly behind their back. The person is still thrashing trying to get free while fighting to breathe through the dust swirling around them like smoke, "Chuck. Enough, let him go," Chuck's eye close tightly as he bites his bottom lip and drops the arms with a jerk. Not facing the person he says, "You should have not come here, Tommie,"

"Hey none of that was our fault!"

"Bullshit!" Chuck charges the handsome clean cut and clean shaved man, only a foot away from Tommie he stares down at him.

"Chuckie!" Chuck turns to the other person who is wiping the dirty from his pants he pulls his hood off revealing his hardened countenance.

"Lex? Oh man, Lex!" He smiles and gives Lex a hug, "Man, let this be the day known that I took you to the ground."

"Haha, I was going easy on you because we need you functional."

Chuck's smile dissipates instantly, "I knew it. I told you guys, I'm out. I'm done, not doing this shit again—"

"Just hear us out and if you say no still then we'll walk."

"No, now get out Tommie," Tommie doesn't move, "Now!"

"Chuck—"

"No, get out!" He takes a swing at Tommie sending him flat on his back.

"Chuck!" Lex yells behind him unable to stop him in time.

Tommie gets up rubbing his jaw, "Well if you change your mind and want to change your..." Tommie takes a look around Chuck's house, "...living situation here's the place we're staying at," He throws the card at the floor in front of Chuck's bare feet and disappears out the front door. Chuck storms into the kitchen, grabs canned soup, pops it open and eats his breakfast.

A few bits into it his anger gets the best of him and he wipes the soup across the kitchen.