



## **At Your Local Grocery**

Why do you treat me like this? Why do you yell? I am not the CEO of this company. I am a store clerk. Trying, always trying. To make a buck or two, to feed my family. To feed the many mouths of my babies, they do not understand why I am away for so long.

I am not the CEO of this company—I am a pawn, a nobody—just trying to pay my rent and ensure that my babies get a meal or two... Nothing more. They need school supplies, clean shoes without holes where their toes peek through. My babies are constantly growing. No matter how much I beg for time to...slow down. So that their childhood doesn't pass me by.

I'm always running faster than I have the strength. I am far too weary to take this verbal diarrhea from you. I've worked a 12-hour day. Only to end my second shift at minimum wage, to hear you shout at me—like a toddler crying for gum—because the price of your ice cream wasn't a dollar or two cheaper.

I am not the CEO of this company. I also have a word or two for HIM: Please pay me a buck or two more to feed my family so that I can stay home a moment or two longer... before their childhood passes me by, and my home is empty, because when they are grown... and gone.

I cannot hug their little bodies and kiss their tear-stained cheeks. Put colourful Band-Aids on their boo-boos. Kiss their skinned knees and hold them in my safe, warm arms... until the boogie man creeps out of their closet, or slithers out from under their bed, on the floor.

Please, Mr. CEO, pay me a buck or two more, allow me to chase away the boogie man, and tell my babies that everything is going to be ok. Mommy is here now... I don't have to be away for so long... Please, sir, Mr. CEO, do not allow all this time to pass me by in this store—Scanning item by item, only to feed the small tummies of my sweet babies.

Please help me quickly, before I'm no longer their favourite person, their hero walking home to kiss them all goodnight. To ensure that they all had something to eat, I lay my weary head down on my own pillow, before I wake to start the work all over again, only to have another person watch my own sweet babies. Who doesn't love them like their own, and who gets to raise them in a way that I wouldn't?

Because I am stuck here—day after day, hour by hour—behind this counter at quarter to nine, only my second Shift of the day, just in time to hear one man's displeasure, over a dollar or two of ice cream. I take a deep breath and remember my sweet babies waiting long hours at home to kiss their momma goodnight.

I cannot risk losing this job by telling you just how I feel about you, customer. So, I just nod and smile, return your change with apologies to make things better... for you. But... How can I change the price of your ice cream? When I cannot change the dollar for me?

