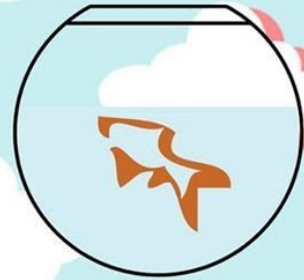


The Parrot, The Goldfish & The Ticket Machine

A Short Story



Hello John Johnson

Waiting to buy a ticket for the train. These silly machines don't accept coins for some reason, or rather they do but that feature is simply unavailable. Personally, I think it's all one big conspiracy to con extra money from the passengers.

You're crazy, Eric! There's no conspiracy.

That very well may be true however my logic is indisputable. See if you can follow it below:

There exists a passenger, let's call him John and John needs to take the train to work. He forgot his main credit card at home but isn't bothered because he has some cash on his person.

Here are the ticket prices and John's available funds. Forgive me if this is starting to sound like a third-grade arithmetic problem.

John's Funds:

Cash: \$20 (divided into notes and coins)

Adult train ticket: \$5

Youth train ticket: \$2.90

Minimum Opal credit purchase: \$10

He arrives at the train station and goes to the machine to buy a ticket. The machine reads, "Card only"

"Shit, damn machines!" John exclaims anxiously, aware that he is on a deadline and can't afford to find another machine that may or may not accept cash.

Suddenly, John remembers that he has his secondary credit card with him, though it only contains \$4. Don't ask me why John is so broke, let's assume it's because he believes money is evil and regularly unloads it to charities supporting the Jew fish.

So, forced to choose between trying to find another machine, not purchasing a ticket at all and ergo fence hopping or choosing to purchase a children's ticket what does this unfortunate passenger do?

If you thought secret option D then you are incorrect. It's actually **secret option E** - calling his wife and requesting she transfer additional funds onto his secondary credit card so that he can afford to buy the adult ticket and get to work reasonably on time, albeit a little humiliated having to ask *a woman* for help.

I kid, I kid you sensitive kid.

Realistically though if John's wife was unavailable to take his call, or his father was on the toilet (without his phone) or even if his brother, sister, aunt, third grade teacher and driving instructor were in prison then John would be forced to buy a child ticket.

Thank you for that drawn-out, laborious and completely unnecessary explanation, Eric. Where does the conspiracy part come in?

I thought you would never ask! You see, John being unfairly forced to buy a child ticket in order to keep his wife from leaving him for Rick, the less than attractive, 75-year-old park bench inspector, is now at risk of getting a \$150 fine from Jackson, the train ticket inspector with whom Rick plays squash every Sunday. A la the train company has now made \$150 instead of the \$5 that they would have made had the machine accepted cash in the first place.

\$150 is equal to 30 train journeys embarked on by John, during which the odds of the ticket machine once again not accommodating his cardless needs is high, resulting in John again being forced to buy a child ticket because his pediatrician was mauled by shiatsu, which again causes him to be penalized by Jackson, which leads him losing his wife to Rick, which results in John losing his job for throwing his wife's shiatsu at a co-worker, which gets him arrested, which grants him a court date.

Being jobless and a pediatrician means John develops a drinking problem. Waking up hungover on the day of his scheduled court appearance he realizes he is running late. So he sprints to the train station and to John's relief the machine reads, 'Cash and Card Accepted'. He exhales a breath of unexplainable joy. After all, he's an alcoholic with a meaningless life.

10 minutes into his train ride he notices Jackson looking at him and writing a ticket, "What is this for?" John yells furiously at Jackson. "I have the correct ticket!"

"Yes, indeed. You do have the right ticket" replies Jackson.

"But this is for all those \$150 penalties you forgot to pay because you were drunk".