

TWO DOLLAR MOMMY

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He left money on the ice box
two single dollar bills,
tucked under a yellow doily,
oily and dark with the passage
of so many two dollar bills

“Cold cash,” he joked,
left to pay for any little thing
two dollar woman might need today -
a newspaper, cigarettes, quart of milk
for the kids

She once heart pounded stammered asked,
“Maybe you could leave the week’s money
all at once. I could make a budget, you know,
like in the magazines.”

“You’d piss it all away,” he said.
His tone implied she would go to bars
or do things with men

Two dollar woman crossed herself
and kissed him good-bye with a heart full
of guilt for her wicked budgetary desires
and the sudden terrorhope that
he would fall into the subway tracks and
they would make a settlement and then
she would be free

She descended to the concrete street
to consult with others like herself
who wore housedresses and ankle socks
their husbands feared would inspire lust
in janitors and such

After she had talked it out, two dollar mommy
left two dollar daddy and the four penny babies
but returned again in two dollar days

Two dollar daddy punched her happy hello
and in the morning left
one dollar.

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