

The Resolution Exchange

By: JD Devine

Marcellus had always been content with his mundane job as a clerk at the local paper. One day, he would work his way up to an editor. No one got there without hard work. He worked over forty hours a week filing papers, doing everything needed to make his dreams come true. He had little, but it was enough for someone with no family. Marcellus watched his coworkers' resolution tokens being traded around him as he kept his in his pocket. He would not risk trading his before turning it into the resolution booth.

He watched as two guys in his department fought over a trade. When you were born, you got a token not knowing what it was. Some believed powerful families got powerful tokens. Marcellus had faith in the divine to give him what he needed. He was too low-born to even entertain the trading going on around him. He was going to the booth to finally cash in his coin, whatever it was. He would not be disappointed—every year for the past five years he had followed through with his resolutions. He learned to read, learned Spanish, learned to draw, last year learned Italian, this year he learned how to cook. If his coin did not have any value, his resolutions had made his life better.

The line snaked around the corner of the resolution exchange. People were shouting and pushing around him. He had no need for any of that—let the greedy worry themselves. The coin hummed in his pocket. It was coated, and he had no idea what material it was made of. Platinum was the highest value and had lots of monetary value; it could be sold for riches or turned in for the highest level of determination to have dreams come true. There was copper, steel, and least valuable was nickel.

Unlike the chaos around him, Marcellus remained resolved in whatever he had. The line moved slowly but he remained calm, and finally, he was next. His heart pounded—he had finally completed five straight New Year's resolutions to be able to turn this token in. For some people, it could take decades to achieve the five years once they turned eighteen. Marcellus did it on his twenty-third birthday a few months ago.

"Next!"

Marcellus was startled, but it was his turn to walk into the booth. The door chimed as he stepped through, and a waft of honeysuckle filled the air. The booth was warm and inviting with cedar planks and beautiful flowers along the walls. He placed his hand on the machine.

"Marcellus," the machine said, "you have earned the opportunity to cash in your resolution token for money or the knowledge and determination to make your dreams come true. Place your token in the slot and the coating will be removed for you to see what material it is made of."

Marcellus pulled out the coin and looked at it for a moment. He thought about his parents and how much he missed them. His father had passed down this token but never completed the five-year resolution exchange. He kissed it and whispered, "This one is for you, Dad." His parents had died in an auto accident when he was ten years old. His grandmother had raised him until she passed last year, always cheering him on and so proud.

Marcellus put the token into the machine, and it started to come to life. Clings and clangs echoed with lights swirling. After a few moments the noise stopped, and his token came out into the tray.

"Platinum," the system said.

Marcellus was in shock as he picked up the now shining token, thinking of all the possibilities. If his father had completed his resolutions, he could have received a platinum token. Now it was up to him to make it count. The back door to the booth opened to the exchange. There was an expensive car, pictures of nice homes in fancy places he had never seen. A woman sat on the floor crying with her coin. Two men fought over a token. Marcellus could not believe the chaos among all the elegance.

"He has a platinum token!" a man shouted. Security guards surrounded him as people shouted for trades. They protected him and guided him into an office.

The quiet was so nice Marcellus took a deep breath, and his posture relaxed. A woman dressed in a nice pantsuit walked in and sat at the desk. Her bright red hair piled high on her head and glasses too big set on her beautiful face. She smiled at Marcellus with genuine warmth.

"Marcellus?" she asked, looking up from her paper.

"Yes, ma'am." His eyebrows pinched together.

"You have some choices today. I am not here to give you any guidance, just to let you know of your options."

"Thank you," he smiled back at her.

"First you have a cash option," she said, flipping to the next page. "15.3 million dollars if you sell the coin outright. That will give you lots of money, but you will have no determination left in life."

Marcellus thought who would need determination with that much money.

"Second you can trade it and receive a steel token of determination. It will leave you with what you currently have before all of this," she said, waving her arms around the office. "You will also get the knowledge to help pursue your dream with a certificate showing you have the knowledge and skill. It will happen instantly. You will get no money."

She sighed while flipping the page. "Last option is you keep it, get no money or knowledge, just extra determination—a lot more than you have now."

Marcellus rubbed his fingers over the token. It hummed with energy, and he wished it would tell him what was best. He thought about what he really wanted and the editor job. He thought about the money and having no determination at all. He thought about having all the determination and no knowledge. He thought about all the resolutions he completed to get here today.

"I'll take the second option."

"Really? You are the first I have ever known not to take the money," she said, standing to lead him through a door.

Everything seemed to happen so fast for Marcellus. He went into the knowledge chamber where magic wrapped his body and filled him with the knowledge to be an editor. He exited and was handed a certificate of completion. She walked him out and handed him a silver token.

"I have to know why you chose option two," she said, her head tilted to the side.

"Without determination everything in life will cause a roadblock. Money while having that kind of obstacle is a miserable life to me. I have no money and I'm content. Determination without knowledge is another obstacle. I learned in five years that I love to learn new things." Marcellus chuckled and she nodded and smiled as they continued to walk. "Determination with knowledge will make me successful and I may never make the kind of money in option one, but I will be happy."

Marcellus stepped out the door and looked down at his certificate and smiled. He would be an editor, and he would build himself a comfortable life just as he always dreamed. ♦♦♦

Authors With January Birthdays

J.D. Salinger, author of *The Catcher in the Rye* | Jan. 1, 1919

Binyavanga Wainaina, author of *How to Write About Africa* | Jan. 18, 1971

Edgar Allen Poe, author of *The Fall of the House of Usher* | Jan. 19, 1809

Edith Wharton, author of *The Age of Innocence* | Jan. 24, 1862

Virginia Woolf, author of *Mrs. Dalloway* | Jan. 25, 1882

