

The Receipt

My grandmother never trusted a machine to count her money. At the market she sold cheese from a wooden crate, and she kept the day's sales in a school notebook. Every line had a name next to it: *Dona Lúcia, 2 queijos, pagou depois*. "Pagou depois" meant paid later, and most of the time it also meant a story she could tell you about that person.

This year I asked a machine to build me a receipt generator. It took four seconds. The receipt was clean and had the right totals, and it held nothing at all about the people on it.

So I kept the receipts, but I also kept her notebook. It sits by the register now, open to the first blank page after her last line, and at the end of each day I write in it by hand: who paid later, whose son is sick, who brought coffee.

The machine can add up the numbers. The notebook remembers the people. My handwriting is worse than hers, but the column continues, and one day someone will read my lines the way I read hers.