

How Much?

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Jane was at the gift shop near the exit of a theme park. She'd spent all day playing, eating snacks, and drinking sodas. Now, it was time to spend the last of her allowance on a few nice things to take home with her. If she had money left over, maybe she'd even go ahead and buy something small for her little sister.

Jane looked over the items on the shelves. There were so many cute things! There were hats with her favorite characters on them, plush dolls from the coolest movies, and all sorts of pretty jewelry items, too. Maybe she'd get her sister a pencil or a keychain, but that was only if she had enough money.

She sighed. "There are so many things, but so little money."

She only had twenty dollars left, which seemed like a lot to her, but she didn't see much in the store for less than seven dollars, and those were small items. What could she get her sister?

There it was. Her sister's favorite character was a pink lizard with goofy eyes. It was from 'A Lizard's Tail.' Jane looked at the price of Pokey the Pink Lizard. It was \$6.95. "About seven dollars," she said, "that gives me thirteen more dollars for myself."

It didn't take her long to find two more things she liked, a keychain for \$5.95, making about thirteen dollars, and then a pen set for \$6.95, making it twenty. Very pleased with herself, she took her purchases up to the counter and waited in line. Adults and other children were standing nearby, and she thought they were a little envious of how well she'd shopped, but maybe she was just imagining things.

When it was her turn, she put the three items on the counter and waited for the cashier, a kindly old man, to scan the three items in and hit the total button. "That will be \$21.04." The old man announced.

A strange, sinking sensation ran through Jane's gut. "Twenty-one dollars? I added, and it should be twenty."

"Plus 6% sales tax." He informed her helpfully.

"But I only have twenty, and..." she pulled a quarter, a few nickels, and a dime from her pocket.

"You're still sixty-four cents short. Would you like to put back one of your selections?"

Hearing that was like a punch in the face. "No, I want them for twenty dollars."

The man glanced around the store to see no one else in line and sighed. He dug a pen set out of the drawer. One pen was missing. "I can give you this pen set for a dollar off. It's missing one pen."

"Deal!" Jane said excitedly. It wasn't perfect, but it was certainly better than not getting the pen set.

"Young lady, always leave a dollar to spare for every ten dollars you spend. It will pay for tax."

"I'll remember that in the future. Thank you, sir!" Jane smiled and completed her purchase, and remembering to pay for tax was not something she forgot.

