

The Queue

The queue was outside the door.

Ten deep.

I was number eleven.

Numbers.

That's what we were.

Numbers.

Next.

The frazzled teller glared at
number one, as a
bored toddler wriggled in her arms.

Number two
hobbled to the counter.
Gnarled fingers clutched
at a walking frame,
which she'd sat on to rest her
weary bones.

Number three
threw words of frustration.
The teller grimaced,
but clung desperately to
a thin string of professional composure.

Number four hadn't
looked up from her phone.
She appeared shocked when the
teller called her forward.
A plastic smile indicated
she meant business.

Number five grunted
as he shoved calloused
hands into the pockets
of a fluoro vest.
Wild eyes scanned restlessly.
He had work to do.
A deadline to meet.

Number six fidgeted
with keys,
checked his phone,
and rushed out
to a more urgent
commitment.

Number seven
had enough.
Fury pulsed through
loaded words.
Incompetent.
Inefficient.
Profit before service.

Number eight
stood next to those words.
Nodding,
Supporting.
Hands on hips.

Number nine
shook her fists.
Stomped her feet,
and threw insults
as heavy as bluestone blocks
at a cringing teller.

Stop!
yelled number ten.
Enough.
It's not the teller's fault.
She's trying to do her job.
Silence blanketed the room.

I turned and walked out the door,
grasping compassion,
and empathy,
but recognising the value of
individual service.
What had we become?
Too difficult to witness.
Impossible to solve.