

Dan Liffick

Flash Fiction #2 The Room

MISS MUFFLES

A greyhound bus pulls up to the front of an old motel.

A woman in her 30s, Jane, exits the bus carrying a clear garbage bag. Inside the plastic bag is a wool blanket, clothes, and a picture of her cat, Miss Muffles.

The motel is an eyesore. A nine unit complex decorated with broken cars and food wrappers.

All that remains of the vacancy sign is the y.

Ding ding. Ding ding, Jane rings the front counter bell.

The guy behind the desk is Randy. He's watching the football game and smoking a cigarette.

"You checking in, or out?" Randy asked.

"In." Jane sets a fifty dollar bill on the counter.

Randy takes a pull from his smoke then sets the fifty in the register.

"..pow what a kick off.." The game continues in the background.

Randy retrieves the room key and sets it on the counter. He looks at Jane from head to toe.

"How much time did you do?" Randy asked.

Jane snapped her eyes wide open.

“Hey I ain’t judging, just make sure you know the rules here,” said Randy.

Jane slowly retrieves the room keys from the counter.

For a brief moment, Jane and Randy make eye contact.

“.. Offsides penalty 10 yards.” The sound of the football game fills the silence.

Jane signs her name on the bottom of the rental agreement.

“I guess I can get rid of the wool blanket and sweats now.” Jane picks up the garbage bag and swings it around her shoulder.

Randy picks up the rental agreement and looks it over.

“10 years,” said Jane. She turns toward the door to exit.

Randy is watching Jane leave when he notices something inside her garbage bag.

“Hey wait, come back, come back!” Randy runs up to the front door to motion for Jane to come back into the office.

“..first and goal inside the red zone..” The game raged on.

Jane steps back inside the office to find Randy with his arms crossed.

“Did I miss a signature?” Jane asked.

Randy points to a sign that reads:

No Animals Allowed.

“Your cat, there, in the bag, it can’t stay here tonight,” said Randy.

Jane reaches inside her bag and pulls out the picture of her cat, Miss Muffles.

“It’s a cheap motel but we have our rules,” said Randy.

“I take it you’re not a cat person?” Jane asked.

Randy takes a slow pull from his cigarette.

“Me, I love cats. But you, you’re staying in a room that already has cats. I’m not sure how well Miss Muffles will do in that environment,” said Randy.

Jane looking as though a boulder has been placed on her shoulders.

“Ok, maybe I can try up the street, can I get my money back?” Jane asked.

Randy points to a sign that reads:

No Refunds Period.

Randy goes back to crossing his arms.

“I know you just got out of prison and 10 years was a long time to be locked up,” said Randy.

Jane’s eyes start to glass over.

"I'm gonna give you a break. Miss Muffles can stay up here tonight," Randy reaches behind the counter and pulls out an animal crate.

Jane opens the crate door and sets her picture of Miss Muffles inside.

"Thank you," Jane slowly backs up and waves goodbye to her cat picture.

"No worries, she'll be safe up here tonight." Randy takes the crate and sets it near him. His attention shifts back to the game as Jane leaves the office.