

Storm

The argument was about such a tiny inconsequential thing; not worth mentioning. But it was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. It broke me. He was always ready to oppress me, to beat me into submission. I'd stumbled the narrow cactus-strewn trail for years, each thorn piercing my skin to my soul beneath. I'd acted on his every whim. And despaired as he ignored me.

I doubted he had realised what he had done. But somehow, I was no longer spineless. We argued and he stormed out of the house. I didn't know where he was going, I didn't care. I was free. I left no forwarding address.

I packed quickly; there was little in the house I truly valued. A couple of changes of clothes, my childhood photo album, and my phone. I threw the bag into my car, jumped in, and drove down the street, through the twilight town and away into the countryside. I drove for two, maybe three hours, until tiredness began to seep through my eyelids.

Clouds had gathered, and the rain began to drum against the roof. A mile or so later I spotted a hotel ahead of me. The 'Vacancies' sign was lit. I parked and as the moon peeked shyly through the silver-trimmed clouds and the rain fell, I splashed through the ever-growing puddles.

'Hello,' the receptionist said, glancing up at my dripping hair, 'a bit wet out there tonight!'

'Yes.' I agreed. I didn't want to get into a long conversation with him.

'Can I have a room for the night, please?'

'Right, that's Room 7, up the stairs and turn left,' he said, handing me the key card, 'Breakfast tomorrow from 6:30. Restaurant's closed now, but we could bring you up a sandwich?'

'No, I'm fine, thanks.'

I dragged my bag up the stairs and along the corridor. Room 7; but I could have been anywhere in the country; nothing to distinguish it, but I didn't care.

I'd grabbed a bottle of merlot before I left, and I poured myself a glass. I sipped the wine slowly, my hand shaking as I raised the glass to my lips. The storm had worsened; and as the clouds warred overhead, I watched from the window. I was at one with the storm. Despair and hope fought for supremacy over me. And as the rain torrented down the windowpane, my eyes filled with tears, and I sobbed. Sobbed for my wasted life, my missed opportunities, and yes, even sobbed for him. But my tears dried as the storm abated and the rain ceased.

I took one deep breath; it was over, and all was calm. And all was hopeful. Through the window I could see no clouds now, just the moon shining bright overhead. I glanced down at my watch; it was just past midnight.

It was tomorrow; the first day of the rest of my life.