

Mama Mia

Randy's hand shook just a little, knowing the deadline he was up against. He jammed the key into the deadbolt and twisted. He had less than an hour to get his apartment cleaned up spick and span, ready for his Mama's biweekly visit.

Spick and span. Mama came to check on him regularly – make sure he ain't gettin' himself in no trouble, she'd say – and she expected the place to be spick and span when she arrived. Spick and span.

Randy took a deep breath and pushed the door open. He jumped back and nearly stumbled as he found himself staring straight at Wanda. Her thin pale face and tousled dark hair illuminated by the hall light and framed in the doorway made her look like one of those famous paintings he'd seen that time on TV. Randy sighed as he smiled.

“I knowed your mama was comin' so I thought I'd help you tidy up.” Wanda's big brown eyes never looked up from the piece of carpet that she seemed to be studying, the one right in front of her shoes. “I hope you don't mind I let myself in.”

Just then Randy's cat wandered over to weave around his ankles, trying to trip him up, expecting to be fed now that he was home. Randy had really wanted a puppy, but the animal adoption people said he couldn't have one on

account that he was at work so much of the day. So his mama told him to get a cat instead.

Randy pushed past Wanda and into the kitchen to open a can of Fancy Feast. Wanda traipsed along behind him, detailing all that she had accomplished in her past ninety minutes of toil.

“I got off work early,” she said. “So I used the key you give me that one time – that time I fed your cat while you was away. I used it and let myself in. I hope you don't mind.”

Randy said nothing. He listened, but he was too busy scraping the last bits of cat food out of the can and into the bowl to really pay attention to what Wanda was saying.

“I cleaned up the front room,” she said. “And the kitchen and bathroom too.” Wanda bent forward to pick up a bit of cat food that had spilled onto the floor. “And there's a pie in the oven. Apple. I remember you said it was your favorite. It's not from scratch or nothin', it's frozen ...”

“You've got to go,” Randy said.

Wanda stopped talking and stiffened. For a second it looked to Randy as if she might continue, her mouth was still hanging slightly agape, but then she returned to studying the bit of floor in front of her shoes.

“You've got to go before Mama gets here,” Randy said. “She don't want me keepin' company with women.”

'Specially pretty ones like you. So you got to go. Real quick like.'

Wanda stood frozen in place for a moment, then she lifted her head and strode over to the small wooden table near the front door. There she deposited the key. "Goodbye Randy," Wanda said and shut the door behind her.

"Who was that woman I passed in the hallway, dear?" Randy's mother asked as he opened the front door to greet her. "She looked like she was coming from your apartment. Do you know her?"

"It's nobody, Mama. She just feeds the cat sometimes. How was your trip?"