

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

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Sullivan

The other cats at the shelter that I'd seen were great, but I didn't feel a real connection with any of them. Not surprisingly, there were a ton of black cats. People are so superstitious. I'd already decided to get this really black one named Midnight since I figured no one would adopt him. He even made me feel a little superstitious. He was so black that I could barely see him in the back of his cage. He had these piercing green eyes.

Then I saw Sullivan. His cage was on the top row at the end. It was an instant attraction. I felt a little shiver inside of me. He took a lick of water from his bowl and then looked up at me. His eyes were a pale hazel color. But instead of the usual slit-like cat pupils, his were big and round. They looked dilated too, even though it was day time. There was a consciousness in his eyes that I'd never seen before in a cat. They looked like human eyes. A little unfocused, almost drunk, but there was something undeniably human in them.

He reminded me of a talking cat I saw on a youtube video. "Heh-woah, Heh-woah," the cat said to the camera. It sounded like *Hello*, but it was chest-y and muffled, like the way people with hearing aids sound. Sullivan had the same white face and short-folded black ears. He had black paws and the rest of his body was white.

I wondered if Sullivan might also have an enhanced ability to learn speech, since he seemed to be the same breed as the youtube cat. It seemed far-fetched, but I wondered if he might be the youtube cat. He had such a distinctive look. I couldn't imagine that there were many cats out there that looked like that.

Sullivan took another lick from his bowl, circled his cage a few times, and then curled up in the far left corner against the metal grill. I looked at the information tag again. He was five years old. A Scottish Fold, American Shorthair mix. Neutered. There was a hand-written note scribbled at the bottom of the card. "Abandoned by owner."

When I read that, I shivered a bit. Why would a person abandon their cat after five years? I wondered if it had something to do with Sullivan's human eyes. They even freaked me out a little. I knew it was a silly thought, but I wondered whether his human eyes meant that he had a human-type consciousness. Maybe the cat on the video hadn't merely mimicked his owner, but had spoken on his own accord. The thought was a little scary, but it excited me more than anything. How amazing it would be to find out that mythical, talking animals really existed? I imagined Sullivan telling me about his life as a cat. We could be confidants. Of course I didn't really believe it. It was just a silly, childish thought. I do have an overly active imagination.

I turned around and called the older, Hispanic lady who was in charge. She was standing near the door with a vacant smile on her face.

"Excuse me. Do you know why the owner abandoned Sullivan?" She came over to me, looking concerned and eager.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

"Yes, he was brought to the shelter one week ago by a friend of the owner. They said they were looking after the cat, but the owner never came back for him. So they brought him here."

"Strange that they would abandon him after five years."

"Yes, this doesn't happen very often. But he is a good cat. He doesn't give no problems."

I thought about it for a moment. True, I was unsettled by the fact that Sullivan's owner had abandoned him. But there was a yearning that I couldn't ignore. I knew if I didn't adopt him, I'd regret it for the rest of my life. I'd always wonder what became of him, and if he'd been adopted by a nice family. I suspected that he might never get adopted. The thought of him being euthanized was too much for me.

"I'll take him," I said.



I filled out the paper work at the front desk, and then sat down in one of the waiting room chairs. A teenage girl wearing leopard print tennis shoes and a hot pink sweater was sitting next to me. She had a white rat in a plastic aquarium on her lap. The rat had red eyes, and was leaning against the side of the aquarium glass lethargically. It seemed to be having difficulty breathing. I smiled at her sympathetically. I'm not a fan of rats, but I felt bad that her pet was sick. She kept bending her head close to the plastic to check on it. I almost asked her what was wrong, but then figured she might not want to talk about it.

After about twenty minutes, the Hispanic woman brought Sullivan down in a brown cardboard box with handles. It reminded me of a giant Happy Meal. "Here he is," she said, smiling. She was holding the handles with her right hand and supporting the underside of the box with the other. A part of me couldn't believe it was really happening. It seemed that I was being entrusted with a creature too special for my own capabilities. I kept waiting to be found out, interrogated to see if I was fit to care for such a wondrous animal.

I took the box from the lady. "Congratulations! Did you want to say hello before you leave?" she said.

I did. "Sure," I said trying not to make eye contact. Then I put the box on the ground, undid the handles and slowly peeled them apart. I didn't open it too wide, concerned that Sullivan might jump out and bring attention to my lack of experience. I leaned over and peered into the box and there was Sullivan looking right at me with those beautiful pools of consciousness. I slipped my hand in the box and patted his head.

"Hi buddy," I said. He seemed to like that because he closed his eyes and raised his head up a little higher. "Bye little guy," I said feeling an ache in my chest. I closed the box up, and picked it up, carrying it the same way the Hispanic lady had done.

"Thanks so much," I said.

"No, thank you," she said with a smile. She opened the glass door for us, and I walked through with Sullivan.



I put Sullivan on the back seat of my car, and drove straight to my apartment. It was only a five minute drive, but I felt guilty for putting him through such an ordeal. I heard him meow a few times, and I figured he was probably scared in the dark, little box. I thought about taking him out, but decided that it might be even more overwhelming for him to be loose in a strange, moving car. I went over the speed bumps through my corner really slowly.



When I got inside my apartment, I put the box down in the center of the living room. I turned the lights on to make the transition as comfortable as possible for Sullivan. I sat down on the rug, undid the hooks on the box, and fully opened it. Sullivan poked his head out the top, and looked at me. He seemed unsure about what to do, so I said in my most encouraging voice, "It's ok boy, you can come out." Sullivan took a look around the room. He seemed to linger on the navy blue cat bed that was next to the sofa. "That's your bed," I said. "And there's food in the kitchen and your very own litter box too." I'd stopped at Pets R Us the day before and bought everything. I reached out and patted his head again, hoping that a friendly touch would make him more comfortable. He closed his eyes, and pressed his head against my hand. After about a minute of that, he opened his eyes again and then hopped out the box.

I followed him around the apartment as he explored. He mostly sniffed things -- the TV stand, the book shelf, a patch of rug in the corner of the living room. He wandered in the kitchen and ate a little of the dry food in his bowl. He walked over to the litter box and sniffed that, seeming to make a mental note of its location. Then he walked back into the living room and crawled under the couch. He stayed there for the rest of the night, despite my coaxing. I even tried reaching under the couch to pet him, but I couldn't get him to come out. I watched some TV, ate a frozen pad thai dinner, and then went to bed. "Good night Sullivan," I said before leaving. I felt a tinge of sadness. He was just a regular cat after all. As I lay in bed, my thoughts going in and out of consciousness, I resigned myself to love him anyway. It wasn't his fault that I'd placed such high expectations on him. I got up and opened my bedroom open just incase Sullivan wanted to sleep on the edge of my bed.



That night, I had a dream that I was sitting in my bathtub which was filled to the top with pink tinted bubbled bath. Sullivan was sitting on the closed toilette seat cover, watching me. I called to him, using the kissing sound traditionally used for dogs. Screaming "Geronimo!!", Sullivan leaped off of the toilette seat, did a double somersault in the air, and dived into the tub. I woke up just as his head popped out from underneath the bubbles.



It was already morning. I looked around to see if Sullivan had come in the bedroom while I was sleeping. He hadn't. I found him underneath the couch where I'd left him the night before. He was on his side, sleeping.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

"Hey Sully, Sully," I whispered. I wanted to wake but not startle him. He opened his eyes for a moment, then closed them again. I got down on my stomach, and reached my arm under the sofa, stroking the soft fur on his back gently. He didn't wake up, so I went in the kitchen and refilled his bowl with food. I was glad that he'd eaten during the night.

I dressed myself for work. I hated leaving him in the house all day. I wished I could stay home to help him transition into his new environment. I had bought some yarn and a pack of small, foam balls for him to play with. I put them on the floor, in front of the sofa and hoped that he would play with them while I was out. Then, feeling as guilty as a mother leaving her newborn baby for the first time, I went to work.



Mondays are always a slow day at Speedy Rent a Car, and my boss, Mr. Moss, had gone out to run some errands. So I spent most of the morning listening to music on this new streaming website that I found. I worked at the front desk- mostly photocopying, answering phones and typing inventory data into spreadsheets. I thought about Sullivan often, wondering what he was doing and if he was ok. I imagined him sitting on the windowsill in the living room, watching the cars pass on the road below. I hoped that he come out from underneath the couch. I wondered if his previous owner had abused him, causing him to fearfully retreat to dark, out of reach places. I would have to retrain him to trust human hands again. One day he would be comfortable enough to sit next to me on the couch.

Jeremy came into the office. He was the on-call mechanic who did repairs to the cars whenever we needed him to. One of the Honda Civics needed new spark plugs and an oil change, so he was there for the day.

"Sup boss?," he asked.

"Not a thing, listening to some music. You ever heard of Groovestream?"

"Can't say that I have, no. What is it?"

"A music streaming site. You should check it out."

"So what's new man? Haven't seen you in a minute."

"Not much, just surviving man. Just adopted a cat from the animal shelter, trying to do something good, ya know?"

"I hear you. That's cool. So what kind of cat is it?"

"He's an American Shorthair, mixed with Scottish fold. He's wicked cool man. His eyes look like human eyes. Freaked me out when I first saw him. I thought for a minute that he was going to start talking or something."

"Heh, that would be some crazy shit. Like that cat on the movie Hocus Pocus. Or that story, you know, they teach it in primary school. About a cat named Martin or something?"

"Right, haha. Yea, turns out he's just a normal cat though. Likes to sleep under the couch a lot."

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

"Well, I'm headed out. You can tell Mr. Moss that the Honda is done. I'll give him a call later today."

"Will do. Later man."

I did remember the story about Martin. I'd had nightmares the night my fourth grade teacher read it to us in class for Halloween. How had I forgotten? After a few failed attempts, I finally found it on the internet. It was called "Wait Till Martin Comes." As I read it, the same fear that I'd felt as a kid came surging back. "Shall we do it now?" the first cat asked. "No", said the other cat. "Let's wait till Martin comes." Three talking cats, each bigger than the last. My mind came up with horrible images of what they would have done to the old man.



I couldn't stop thinking about Wait Till Martin Comes for the whole day. I knew it was crazy, but by the time I got back home, I'd worked myself into a bit of a panic. Sullivan's eyes were now a frightful thing to imagine.

When I opened the door, a rank sent was in the air. Sullivan was perched atop my dining room table, staring at me. The drunk look was gone from his eyes, replaced by a focused and authoritative glare. I had the urge to leave and call animal services. But it was all craziness I told myself. My imagination was getting the best of me. I remembered my mother's words to me a few weeks before. I had missed the family reunion for the second year in a row. "Men are not built to live alone, Ross. It'll drive you nutty," she said. Instinctively, I knew she was right. It was why I'd decided to adopt a pet in the first place. I thought it would be a good in-between step before attempting to make myself a more social person.

"Hey Sully," I said walking over to the dining room table. I stretched my arm out to pet him on the head. Still staring at me, he took a few steps back, so that he would be out of my reach. "Ok, buddy, I understand," I said, backing away from the table. I stood there for a few moments, afraid to take my eyes off of him. He stood up, sniffed the spot that he had been sitting in, and leaped off the table. I watched him disappear underneath the sofa.

When my heart rate slowed down, I decided to investigate where the terrible scent was coming from. I figured Sullivan would probably stay under the couch for awhile anyway. I made a mental plan of action in case he attacked me. I would just have to restrain him. I'd seen someone on Animal Planet grab a baby lion cub by the loose skin on its neck. "It doesn't hurt them, and it forces them into a submissive mind set," the man said, holding the limp cub in the air. I figured the same would apply to a regular cat. I would only do that in an extreme situation though.

I followed the scent to a patch of rug next to the television. I knelt down and put my nose close, inhaling the full strength of Sullivan's pee. I'd never known how bad cat pee smelt. The scent was skunk like in its potency and rankness. I tried scrubbing the spot with hot water and dish detergent, but it didn't help.

I got myself a frozen burrito from the freezer. As I waited in front of the microwave, a sinking, desolate feeling came over me. I didn't like Sul-

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

livan. He had creepy eyes and he was going to ruin my rug. I imagined that he had other strange quirks too. Maybe he'd shit on my bed, or shred my clothes. I'd never be able to leave my bedroom door open again. I was beginning to feel like adopting Sullivan was a mistake. I refilled his bowls with fresh water and a half a cup of food, then took my burrito on a plate to the living room.

I ordered Hocus Pocus on Pay-per-view and sat down at my desk. I didn't feel comfortable sitting on the couch while Sullivan was under there. I was afraid he might attack my legs.

I figured Hocus Pocus would put me in a good mood and maybe take suck some of the darkness from my imagination. I also hoped that if Sullivan was indeed a conscious cat being, that maybe this movie would appease him and signify a truce between us. I wanted him to know that a talking cat and a human could live together peacefully.

"It's Hocus Pocus, Sullivan. It has a talking cat in it," I said, halfway hoping that he would come from underneath the couch. It was the scene where the witches were turning the boy into an immortal, sentient cat. The witch, the actress Bette Midler, zapped the boy with a blue lightning bolt that came out the tip of her index finger. Then she and Sarah Jessica Parker and Kathy Najimy chanted the spell as they swayed from side to side in unison. "Twist the bones and bend the back..." Thackary Binx sank to the floor moaning in pain as he turned into a black cat.

Sullivan meowed underneath the couch. It was deeper than the meow I'd heard him make in the car. More alpha. I tried to take it as an encouraging sign. He was getting comfortable in his new environment and so his true characteristics were coming out.

I heard him meow again. He poked his head out from under the couch, and looked at me curiously. He flicked his tongue out a few times, as if tasting something on his mouth, then crawled out from underneath. He walked over to the desk, letting his side rub against my leg, and then laid down at my feet. He rolled over on his back and looked up at me. I got down from my chair and sat on the floor next to him. "You want me to rub your belly?" I asked him, stroking the feathery white fur on his stomach. He purred and closed his eyes. Maybe I had judged too quickly, I thought. It seemed that things could still be good between me and Sullivan.

"You know, if you're a talking cat, it's ok. You don't have to be afraid to tell me. I won't get freaked out, or send you to some crazy government lab. I'm an open-minded person," I said as I continued stroking Sullivan's belly. I didn't expect any kind of reaction from him. He was just a regular cat. It was really just a precautionary thing in my mind.



Sullivan stayed there beside me for the rest of the movie. We even played with his yarn. It was the most fun I'd had in a long time. I dragged it over the rug, trying to make it look like a snake. Sullivan loved chasing it around. He even caught it a few times between his paws. He was pretty quick.



Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

After a few months, Sullivan and I were still getting along. He stopped peeing on the rug. I found out that cats pee as a territorial act, especially when they're in a new environment. I got some enzyme spray from Pets R Us and it took the scent right out.

I no longer suspected that Sullivan was a magical, talking cat. He was pretty typical. He liked sleeping under the couch, especially during the day. He was a messy, although consistent litter box user. I had to end up buying an enclosed one which prevented the sand from getting out when he scratched around in there. The soft balls were his favorite toy and at night he liked to chase them around the house, using his paws to keep them rolling. He didn't like getting his fur combed, and this was the only time that he tried to scratch me. It was all just regular cat stuff.

Sullivan was a good conversational piece too. I posted a picture of him online and a lot of my high school friends commented on the photo. As a result of that picture, I got invited to an impromptu happy hour gathering at the Green Parrot with some of my old classmates. It was a good night. We drank, ate fries and reminisced about high school. I fit right in too. No one seemed to remember that I was an outcast in high school. Or if they did, it didn't seem to matter anymore.

I met Shayla that night at the Green Parrot too. She's a bartender there at night, and a singer-song writer by day. She said she liked my energy. That she could sense I was a creative soul. And she was right. She gave me her number and we started dating. She has these awesome, golden dreadlocks that are almost to her butt. She's real smart and laid back too. She was a premed major at Rutgers, and even got into med school at Wake Forest University. But she gave it up to be a singer. I really respect that about her.

I even got promoted to manager at Speedy Rent-a-Car. My boss's wife is a cat lover, and one day we got to chatting about our cats in the store. She has a Persian named Queen Sheba. The next day Mr. Moss came in, slapped me on the back and said, "You want to be a manager?" Of course I said yes.

Life was good.



A few weeks after my promotion, Mr. Moss had to go away on a business trip. It was up to me to take over at Speedy Rent a Car. I had to get to work an hour earlier than normal to open up the shop. On the first day of my take over, I slept through my alarm. By the time I slinked into my clothes and scarfed down a bowl of cornflakes, I only had fifteen minutes to get to work. I rushed out the house, and forgot to feed Sullivan. I remembered on the drive over, but it was too late to turn around.

I arrived at work five minutes before a woman showed up, looking to rent five cars for the week. It was a good thing I was there because she seemed like the type to file a complaint.

After being to work for about an hour, the phone rang.

"Good Morning, this is Speedy Rent-a-Car where a fast car always awaits."

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

"You forgot to feed me," the person said in a faint British accent.

"Who is this?"

"If you don't know who this is, then you're an imbecile."

I thought it was someone playing a prank, but I couldn't ignore the coincidence. I hadn't fed Sullivan.

"Sullivan?"

"No duh. Now come home and feed me. My stomach is burning like a mother."

"I'm really sorry, but I can't do that, Sullivan. Things are pretty hectic at work. What if you just climb up on the shelf and knock the food down? I won't be mad if it makes a mess."

"Well, I suppose I can manage that. But I'm still mad. You need to make up for this."

"Ok. Whatever you need, Sully."

"Don't patronize me. And it's Sullivan, not Sully. And the thing that I want is for you is to break up with that stupid, rope-head girl. She's clouding your judgement. And she stinks. I can't even stand laying in your bed anymore. "

"Shayla? You can't be serious. I think I'm falling in love with her."

"Tough cookies Ross. If I so much as smell her on you, it won't be pretty."

The phone clicked in my ear.

I sat at my desk in shock for a good while. When my brain started functioning again I tried to make sense of what had happened. Could it have been a prank? Some people are really good at playing off of what you say. But then the person had initiated the part about Shayla. He didn't call her by name, but he did refer to her as the 'rope head girl'. That was a very specific detail, an obvious reference to Shayla's dreadlocks. Only someone who knew that I was dating Shayla could know this detail about her. There was no other explanation. Sullivan had called me.



After work, I met Shayla at this Japanese place called Shumai. Shayla was wearing a white flowery dress that had spaghetti straps and she'd used a colorful scarf to tie her locks into a loose pony tail that went down her back. She looked beautiful, but I couldn't get my mind off of Sullivan. "If I so much as smell her on you, it won't be pretty." I was afraid for Shayla and myself. When she leaned in to hug me, I hesitated, not wanting her scent to get on my clothes. But I didn't want to make her feel as if something was wrong. And I really needed a hug. I wrapped my arms around her waist, lifted her off the ground, and kissed her right there in front of everyone.

"What was that for?" she asked, smiling but surprised.

"I missed you today. I've been missing you a lot lately," I said. That was the moment that I knew I was in love with her. Sullivan would have to accept Shayla or he'd have to leave.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

We sat in the corner next to the window, far away from the table of about fifteen high school students who were being especially loud. We ordered Sake bombs, Miso soup, a couple Boston rolls and a Teriyaki chicken to share.

"Sullivan has been freaking out lately. Acting really aggressive toward me. I don't know what to do." I wanted to confide in her, but I was afraid to tell her the whole truth. We'd only been on three dates and I didn't want to tell her anything that might put her off from me. It was hard enough for me to accept that Sullivan was a talking cat, even though I'd actually spoken to him. Shayla would think I was crazy, and she'd be totally justified.

"What about Catnip? My friend Jennifer gives it to her cat at night. It relaxes them."

"Yea, maybe I'll try that."

I'd heard of Catnip and figured it might be a good idea. I'd buy a nice can of soft cat food, and put a few pinches of catnip in it. Maybe if Sullivan was relaxed he'd be more open to discussion about Shayla.

I told Shayla that I was going to turn in early so that I could stop by the Pets R Us and buy Sullivan some Catnip. She wanted to come by my place later, but I told her that Sullivan had peed on the carpet and it was really rank. I gave her a kiss, and asked if we could do something together the next day. We made a plan to go to a spoken word poetry thing at this place called the Blue Martini.



After Pets R Us, I stopped to the mall and bought myself a new pair of jeans and a t-shirt. Then I stopped by my gym, took a quick shower, and changed into my new clothes. I thought it would be better if I didn't smell like Shayla when I got home.



I found Sullivan sitting on the top of my desk, in front of my computer. He was watching a youtube video of a cat barking out the window at some dogs. Sullivan was chuckling. It was a deep and hearty.

"Come check this out Ross. It's a riot!"

I stood next to him, and watched the rest of the video. It was pretty funny. When the cat realizes that his owner was watching him, it starts meowing again.

"I brought you a treat."

"What is it?" He asked without taking his eyes off the computer.

"A can of Friskey's Pate Chicken and Tuna Entrée."

"Put it in the bowl."

"And Sullivan? We need to talk, ok?"

"Fine, fine. Whatever." He was watching a video of a grey cat named Nora playing the piano with its paws. It was quite remarkable.



Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

I went in the kitchen and put the can of food into Sullivan's bowl. Then I sprinkled a couple pinches of catnip on top. I waited in the kitchen for a few moments, hoping that Sullivan would come in and eat. When he didn't come, I decided to go in my room.

"I'll be in my room, so whenever you want to talk just call me," I said.



About an hour had gone by when Sullivan came into the room. I'd gotten caught up reading a book I'd bought a few days before. It was called *The Smart Man's Guide to Getting and Keeping a Woman*. I thought it might have useful information pertaining to me and Shayla.

"I'm ready to talk now," he said, slurring his words a bit. I assumed that he'd eaten the food and catnip.

"Did you like the Frisky's? I wasn't sure what flavor to get."

"It was acceptable. Feel free to get some real tuna fish the next time."

"I'll remember that. So, I wanted to talk about a few things."

"Let it out then."

"So today was the first time I've heard you talk. I guess I want to know why you hid that from me. I remember telling you once that it would be ok to tell me."

"So I deceived you a bit and I'm sorry for that. But I had to see if you were legit. Just because someone says they're open-minded, doesn't mean it's really true. But, you've proven yourself over the months, so I thought today was as good a day as any other."

"Fair enough," I said. I didn't want to push the issue any further. It didn't seem right to question him about the origin of his speech. We would have to broach that topic another day.

"Secondly, I want you to reconsider your feelings about Shayla. She's my girlfriend and I love her. I think I might even want to marry her one day. So breaking up with her is not really an option."

"No, it's not *an* option, it's the *only* option. I understand that you have feelings for the female. She does have a lioness type quality about her that could be deemed attractive if you like that aggressive type. Personally, I like mine submissive. But you're my human, plain and simple. I won't share you. Why do you think I left my previous owner? She got married to some pancake faced dumbo named Bill and got herself knocked up. She couldn't take care of herself, much less me."

"Wait, I thought you were abandoned? The lady at the shelter told me you were dropped off by a friend of your owner."

"Oh you mean Freddie? He's just a homeless man that I bribed to bring me to the shelter. I wanted to make it look authentic. I gave him a five dollar bill that I found on my owner's kitchen counter."

"So did your owner know that you could talk?"

"Of course not. You and Freddie are the only ones that know. I'd never tell that silly bat anything of importance. She's never been able to keep

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

her mouth shut. Anways, back to what I was saying. If you don't get rid of Shayla, I won't have any choice but to kill her.

I felt an intense heat rise up in my chest. I had an urge to get off the bed, grab Sullivan by his tail and swing him against the wall. I took a few deep breaths. It was clear that things weren't going to work out with Sullivan. But I was going to have to play things cool.

"You're right Sullivan. I was being an idiot. Women come and go, but a cat and his human should stick together. Shayla isn't nearly as loyal as you are."

Sullivan hopped onto the bed and lay down next to my leg. I stoked his head, fighting the urge to choke him.

"I'm glad you've come around," he purred.

"Hey, how would you like to go for a walk tomorrow morning? You've been stuck in this house for months. It's probably been torture for you."

"It would be nice to get out, feel the breeze in my face and run in the open. Sure, you've got a date."

"Great. I'll come get you around six. We'll have plenty of time before I have to get dressed for work.

"Splendid. If you change the sheets I'll sleep in the bed with you tonight."

"That would be great. I'll do it right now."



I pretended to sleep, but I spent most of the night awake planning what I would do the next morning. One thing I was sure of was that Sullivan would no longer be a threat to me and Shayla.

I called Mr. Moss early the next morning, around 5:30am. He was still in Chicago, so I had to call him long distance. But I didn't mind spending the money. I told him that I'd gotten food poisoning and I'd been throwing up since the night before. I asked if it was possible for Mrs. Moss to open up the shop. He's a fair and understanding man, so he said yes. "Get well soon because we need you at Speedy!" he said.

The carrier was in my clothes closet, nestled far in the corner out of sight. I got a towel, folded it and placed it in the bottom of the carrier. Convincing Sullivan to get inside would not be easy, and I thought if I made the box more comfortable, I'd have a better chance.

Sullivan was still asleep on my bed, curled into a furry heap.

"Sullivan," I said. He opened his eyes, rolled on his back and stretched.

"Are we going now?" he asked, hopping from the bed and stopping at my feet. He looked up at me. His eyes still looked cloudy with sleep.

We walked down the hallway. The carrier was in the living room.

"So, there's been a slight change of plans. I'm going to take the day off, and I thought we'd spend it going around to all the different parks. How

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

would you like that.”

“It sounds splendid,” he said.

“So I just need you to go in your carrier until we get to the car. The neighbor has an allergy, and I don’t want any problems. She usually leaves for work around this time.”

“Well, for the sake of keeping the peace, ok.”

“I put a towel in there for you. And some food too.”



I couldn’t believe how easily everything was falling into place.

“Ok, let me out now,” Sullivan said as I put the carrier on the backseat of the car. I closed the door and hopped into the driver’s seat.

“Aren’t we in the car? You can let me out now, Ross,” Sullivan said. His voice was a little shaky. He was getting nervous. I thought about all the nasty things that he’d said about Shayla and smiled.

During the car ride, Sullivan started to freak out. He threatened me, and even threw a few profanities. “Let me out of this mother fucking box, Ross! When I get out of here, I’m going to slit you and that mophead’s throat. I have very sharp claws!”

Then he attempted to get out of the box by throwing himself up against the grilled metal door. I could hear him thumping up against it. Every time he hit the grill he let out a pained meow.

“You’re going to hurt yourself Sullivan,” I said. I was starting to feel a tiny bit sorry for him. He wanted to kill Shayla, but it was only because he was attached to me. I’d never had anyone need me like that before. Shayla didn’t even need me that much. I realized that his cat instincts probably had something to do with it. It was in a cat’s nature to be territorial. Sullivan had the misfortune of having his cat instincts magnified by his higher-level consciousness.

After a while Sullivan got really quiet. He stayed like that for the rest of the trip.



“Hi, when’s the next available charter to Orlando? I’d like a round trip ticket for myself and one way for my cat. I’ll need to return tonight.”

Sullivan gave a helpless meow. I had the carrier at my feet. I knew he wouldn’t say anything for fear of people finding out that he could talk.

“Next flight is in an hour. Return flight is at 8:20. That’ll be five hundred twenty six dollars, and thirty two cents. I’ll need documentation that your cat is up to date on all vaccinations,” the woman said.

I gave her my credit card, and Sullivan’s papers from the shelter. She handed me the tickets.

“You can take your pet over there,” she said pointing to a desk at the far end of the counter.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

The flight over was great. I had a window seat, and spent the entire forty minutes looking out the window at the big white clouds. The man sitting next to me slept the whole time. The flight attendant even gave me an extra pack of blue chips. I'm always amazed that such a big, heavy thing can actually get up and stay in the air.



When we landed, I got Sullivan from the pet pick-up area. I was about to look in the carrier to check on him, at least make sure that he was still alive, but I decided it was best not to. Truthfully, I was afraid to look in his eyes. I imagined the hatred in them.

I sat down on one of the chairs in the baggage collection area where there weren't any people around. I wanted to have a talk with Sullivan.

"I just want you to know that I don't hate you Sullivan. But you threatened to kill Shayla and I just can't tolerate that. I wish that you could have accepted her. We could have been a happy family. You're special. And I've never had anyone be as loyal to me as you, not even my own mother. Not even Shayla. But I think things went too far, and so I can't be your human anymore. Not that you'd want me to be after today."

I heard a sniffing coming from the cage. "I do want you to be my human. I'm sorry for everything I said. I didn't mean it."

I leaned over in my chair so that I could look inside the carrier. Sullivan was lying down with his back up against the far wall. His head was resting on his paws. He turned to look at me, and his eyes were so sad looking that I thought about opening the cage.

"I'm sorry Sullivan. It's too late for that now."

I picked the carrier up and walked through the revolving door that lead outside.

I flagged down a cab. He was a short and dark, and had an African accent. He was wearing acid wash jeans and seemed to have been transported from a bad 80s music video.

"The animal will have to go in the truck," he said.

"But he's in a carrier."

"I'm sorry, no animals allowed on the backseat."

He lifted the hood, and I put the carrier in the trunk. "Sorry buddy," I said, before the cabbie shut it.

"I'm going to the animal shelter on South Conway Road."



The taxi pulled up in front of the shelter. It was called Conway Animal Shelter. It was a run down two-story building, painted a toxic ooze green. The sign had graffiti written on it in red spray paint. A word insert triangle had been drawn between Animal and Shelter, and the word Fucking was sprawled in the red ink above it. Conway Animal Fucking Shelter, it said.

I told the cabbie to wait and got Sullivan from the trunk. "Can I borrow you pen," I asked. He grabbed a little black mesh pencil case from

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

off the front seat, and handed me a blue ballpoint through the window. I walked to the entrance. The sign on the white wooden door said "Open". I thought about going inside, but didn't know what the procedure would be like. They may have wanted me to take Sullivan out of the carrier myself. So I left him outside the door. I pulled a FoodMart receipt out of my pocket. I wrote:

Sullivan

Male

5 yrs.

American shorthair/Scottish fold mix

Neutered

A good cat, but I have allergies.

I put it on top of the carrier.

"Bye Sullivan," I said.

"Fuck you," he replied.

I got back in the cab.

"The nearest bar please," I said.

We drove off.

