

## Peace and Happiness at the Forgotten Motel

The front of the building looked weathered, beaten up and housed the check-in office. After a moment to look out over the entire motel, the couple stood just below the first step. Each cabin stood alone spread out in semi-circle formation bright and colorful.

"You folks lost?" The old man asked. "Hardly anyone shows anymore."

"No sir." The man answered. "A fellow at the gas station told us."

"Yep, that'd be Joe alright. He's still trying to send me business. Told him I retired two years ago."

"Do you still rent out cabins?" The lady asked.

"Yes. If someone shows up and wants a one, I still keep the place up, but usually no one does. I only use one through five, but mostly number three, Cathy's Place." The old man began the story.

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Back in the sixties the main road passed right in front, but by the end of the seventies they completed the interstate. People still traveled a lot and good ole Joe would send them my way.

One day in the mid-seventies a group of bikers pulled in on a Friday night and wanted the whole place for a couple of days. About thirty bikes, probably around fifty people. When I said I couldn't accommodate them all at once, the man asking laid a thousand bucks on the counter. Well, the rooms only rented for nineteen ninety-five a night. I picked up the cash and said okay. The guy said he would give me that much for each night they stayed. Well, I sent the missus to her sisters for a few days and turned on the no-vacancy sign.

They stayed Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, each day giving me another thousand bucks. One continuous party, let me tell you. On Monday most were gone. A few stragglers remained, but were all gone by noon. The last guy to leave came into the office handed me another five hundred bucks in crumpled bills and five small bags with a white powder inside to pay for the clean up, he said. I watched as he got on his bike with a woman and drove off.

I started the clean up to get a couple done before anyone pulled in, so I'd have a cabin available. Basically, the bikers used the rooms. Well, you can imagine. I stripped the beds, flipped the mattresses, cleaned out the bathrooms and turned each cabin rather quickly.

When I opened the door to cabin number five, I heard a noise inside. I thought maybe they left a dog behind and entered slowly, but when nothing moved, I opened the door all the way. At first I didn't comprehend what I saw.

In the corner of the room sat a half naked young woman. Her hair all matted and covered in a shredded t-shirt. I quickly stepped back outside, but the parking lot empty.

When I approached her she asked if she could use the bathroom, said she'd been there all night. I could hear her run the water, first the toilet, then the shower. I waited for her to come out, not quite sure what else to do.

In what appeared to be a long time, she finally came out, buck-naked. I quickly retrieved a towel and wrapped it around her. She sat on the edge of the bed, somewhere off in her mind. The towel slipped free, but she made no move to cover herself.

I made it to cabin ten before I decided to call it a day and slowly went back to cabin five. She still sat there inside, but she had stripped the bed and cleaned the bathroom. Silent and naked, she helped me make the bed. When we finished, I directed her toward the house. She asked if she could use the shower. I showed her to the bathroom, gave her fresh towels.

About an hour later she came out on the porch wrapped in the towel and sat in the chair. I asked if I could get her anything to eat, but she shook her head. We sat there 'till the sun went down. I suggested we go inside. She curled up on the couch and I left her there.

The next morning she was already up and on the porch wrapped only in the towel. I made some toast and coffee. She drank the coffee, nibbled on the toast. I brought her one of my shirts, but she shook her head.

After breakfast, I went to clean the other cabins. She followed along and together we finished the last of them. Most of the time she kept the towel wrapped good, but sometimes it fell free or slid down. I asked her to put the shirt on, but she shook her head.

Later that night, I explained the misses would be home the next day and it might be awkward having a naked woman sitting on the porch and all. She nodded.

Well, the misses came home in the morning, saw her on the porch the towel loose about her and quickly walked into the house, looked at me, set her things down and went right back out to her. My misses was a God-fearing, good-hearted woman, who wouldn't have a cross word for nobody.

I sat right here in my rocker. The misses sat down beside her and I swear within moments, the girl sobbed hysterically, fell into the misses' arms for a long time. The misses finally got her to go inside. We sat in the living room while she told her story.

Said, she just turned twenty and recently moved in with her boyfriend, who was involved in a drug deal with those bikers, and who burst into their apartment and immediately started to beat the boyfriend. She said finally this big guy walked in had the boyfriend brought to him, but talked too softly for her to hear. She could see the boyfriend shake his head no, but a few more punches to his face and body and a steel blade across his neck, he agreed to what the big guy said. The big guy handed the boyfriend something, but she didn't know what. The next moment she was dragged out and handed to another guy, put on the back of his bike and they drove off.

That night she was brought out into the group and pushed from one guy to the next, her clothes were torn from her body piece by piece. Later that night the guy. Well, you know.

The next day she was sold or traded to another guy, but his woman intervened and told her not to move, said she'd gut her if she did and pulled her man away. I believe to this day he was the one gave me the clean up money and stuff, probably thought I'd take care of the girl he left behind.

The misses held her 'till it got out of her system. Looked at me and said we'd have to take care of her for a while.

Later that night, we had a few checkins and the next day, she finally told us her name was Cathy and helped me clean up. Actually she did most of the clean up. It went that way for the next few months.

She cut down a pair of my pants and tied one of my shirts around her. The misses got her one of those sport bras and some underpants from up at the general store.

Later that week, I went to see a guy over in the other county, who put me in touch with some people he knew. They gave me three hundred bucks for the white stuff the guy gave me. I put the money aside to give to Cathy.

Cathy worked hard for the next few months, helped me do everything even helped me fix the roof on one of the cabins. I started to put some money aside for her, because she wouldn't take any from me.

Cathy's the one named the units, mostly based on the stories I would tell about what happened in each one. Number three became her favorite place. She said, it had a nice homey feel to it and talked the misses into redoing the interior, with new curtains, paint and such. Cathy would spend the night there if it wasn't booked, almost like it was her place. The misses said she needed her privacy once in a while.

What we thought was her twenty-first birthday, she told us she was leaving. I arranged for a new identity from the same fellow in the other county, a driver's license, social card and birth certificate, a packet he called it, even gave me a discount. Cathy used a variation of our last name as her new name, said she was going to start over. The misses had told people a niece come stay with us.

On the morning she left, I gave her two hundred bucks I had put aside for her. The misses convinced her to take it. I hid the other three hundred in her suitcase. We hugged and she walked to the road and caught the bus. The last we ever saw of her.

Going on five years now the misses passed on and I lost interest in the place. Didn't rent any cabins for nearly a year, but a couple of friends convinced me to keep it going. Thought, I might as well do something.

One day, a delivery truck pulled up with a package for me. Inside an envelope was a letter and check. The letter said they represent me and here is the first royalty check for \$13,475.00. I read the letter several times and still didn't

understand, so I called the number on the letter and asked what the hell this was all about.

The feller explained to me those are proceeds from a song written by me. Well, I still didn't understand, so he explained how monies are paid every time someone recorded the song. When I told him I didn't write any songs, he said it didn't matter, the original material listed me as the owner and that was all he needed to know.

When I hung up, I still wasn't sure I knew what he was talking about, but he assured me the check was legit. A week later, another package arrived with one of those disc things. After hearing the song, I called the feller and he told me it was a very popular country song recorded by at least two people so far and he was sure there would be others. The song has a gut wrenching bluesy sound to it. Someone sure had to have lived it, to write those words. I looked at the disc and on the front were the words: *Peace and Happiness at the Forgotten Motel.*

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The old man rocked back in his chair. "Cathy wrote it. I talked to the feller who sent me the check again, said she's been writing songs for quite awhile and doing quite well at it, but this one she put my name on, told him where to find me and to make sure I get the checks regularly."

The couple nodded.

"As the feller said, only someone who lived it could have wrote it. Boy, she sure lived it. Always wondered about her after she left. I think the missus was heartbroken to see her leave, us not having kids and all, but the missus always said, Cathy would be fine."

The old man got up from his rocker, leaned on the post, pointed to cabin number three. "There is a plaque on the wall in Cathy's Place about a million copies sold."

He turned back to the couple.

"So you folks think you might want a cabin for the night?"