

Indica

Leafy Community is large enough to hold 350 trailers. It's the kind of place where you drive by one trailer and the decoration outside makes you think there is a sweet retired couple living there with their shih tzu, Molly, and two cats, Herman and Fluffy. About two trailers down another home makes you assume the man of the house (whether boyfriend, husband, or fiancé) is about a half a bottle of Jim Beam in at about 11 a.m. and the woman of the house is cooking lunch over the stove with a black eye and a hand print tattooed on her arm from two nights ago. It's a toss up of what kind of neighbor you are going to live near in the park.

64 Redwood Lane sits my double wide. It's a nice set up. Two bedrooms. One Bath. Kitchen. Dining room. Living room. Family room with a fireplace. I thought that was a nice touch. A real fireplace. Not like those ones that you push a button and *poof*. Fire! The kind you actually have to work to get going. You go outside, fetch the wood, and put it in with hope that it will ignite. More than anything it's for the atmosphere. Because Lord knows I'll never go outside in the snow or freezing cold to fetch some wood. That's what John, my boyfriend, is for. Ha! Should have chosen a different one. He sure as hell ain't going to get the wood. And that second room, which is filled with useless sports memorabilia, is supposed to be our game room. Like that's going to happen.

John and I have a quiet relationship. We talk when we need to. I do my thing and he does his. Basically we act like we've been married for 35 years and it's kind of getting to me. Most nights I'll sit on the couch while him and his "boys" play Grand Theft Auto or Madden for hours on end. I usually find something to occupy my time. Sometimes I clean. Most of the

time, I go on the Internet and research Do-It-Yourself projects that I'll never get around to doing. Again, lack of motivation. I'm just as guilty as the rest of them.

About 2 p.m. I finally got myself bathed and dressed. It wasn't like I had anywhere to go. I worked part-time as a pet groomer. Thursday through Sunday. The rest of the days I sat home and tried to access different parts of my mind where I had a telekinesis superpower that allowed me to do the dishes with my mind. But...seeing as that is physically impossible, I could only dream of a world where this could be done. I should just invent a robot to clean for me. Ro-Maid-Bot would be her name. But, again, that's impossible for my mental capacity. I'll just groom bitches for the rest of my life.

I walked into the family room and then I remembered. *Oh yeah, that dick did yell at me this morning over a stupid fucking shirt when he has twenty hanging up that are ironed and clean. But of course, he wants the one that is in the bottom of the laundry basket. If that's the case he can go fucking clean it himself.* I always talk to myself. Sometimes it's out loud and then I look like a crazy person. And other times it's in my head and my facial expressions have people staring at me like I was released for the day from the mental hospital for good behavior. But surely they knew I had to go back and that knowledge allowed them to sleep at night.

I kept walking until I ran over the cat. I looked down as she reassembled her limbs that I kicked like it was the winning field goal for my football team. I got that blank stare from her that I interpreted as "feed me". Maybe she's just wondering when I'll go back to the institution too. I'm in a world full of critics.

I finally made it to the couch. The couch is a second hand couch from the Salvation Army. When we first got the couch, I vacuumed it like crazy and basically poured a bottle of

Febreze on it to get the smell out. It wasn't overwhelming. It was that smell that your imagination makes more obvious than it really is because you know that it belonged to someone else, like it's full of cat piss or cigarette smoke or something. I believed the cat piss smell came from the couch but it may have come from the nearby litter box. The lamp had been left on from the night before. I don't think we ever shut it off. The room was so dark and cave-like. We had an overhead light that was only used for the things we needed to see clearer.

I put a pillow on the coffee table and put my feet on the pillow. I was maximizing my comfort. The coffee table and end tables are that hard wood that you can't buy anymore. The kind of wood your grandparents' furniture is made of. The furniture you can't wait to raid the house for when your grandparents either croak, God forbid, or they move into a home and can't take it with them. I bought them from a Jewish man that I was able to talk down the price for with my mother's help. She's the master negotiator.

At around 5:30, I've done nothing but bathe, get dressed, and clean out the DVR from all the shows that I recorded and I know my boyfriend won't watch with me. Dancing With the Stars shows another promising season. Animal Cops sends me into tears. And reruns of Golden Girls have me laughing. I don't understand how a show about older women could be so enjoyable to women of all ages. It's like watching your grandmother interact with her friends...if my grandmother were Betty White.

As I took the last gulp of my Diet Coke, I heard the keypad to the front door beep. We have a keyless entry. It scares me. If someone were to get the code to the house, they could have a free for all. Our neighbors are known thieves. Joanne, the elderly lady from across the street told us this. She is a sweet older lady. Like Betty White. Like my grandmother. I'll send

her a Christmas card and maybe some Christmas cookies (if I learn how to bake).

John came through the door and tossed his book bag on the kitchen table. He peered into the living room and saw me sitting there with the cat attacking my feet. I should have worn socks but I wasn't in the mood to find any after my shower.

“Hey,” he said as he walked over and planted a welcome home kiss on my forehead.

*Shit.* I forgot I am supposed to be mad at him for this morning. I turn into my cold bitchy self and I knew it would start a feud but I had to say it, “Your shirt is hanging up in your closet. You're welcome.” I didn't even say hi. Nothing was friendly about my greeting. I knew this would piss him off and force him to apologize. But who was I kidding. I was dating a stubborn Irish man. No apologies ever came from him. No matter how hard I tried. It was impossible.

“Wow. You're really going to start this shit? I had a meeting today.”

“I'm sorry the laundry wasn't done. You know I had work the past few days and I don't do laundry until Monday. You didn't have to be a dick about it this morning.”

“You groom dogs! How tired can you be?”

My eyes turned red. I bit my tongue because I knew I'd end up crying and he'd end up not giving a fuck.

He picked up the cat and started to pet it. The man who hated cats when I first met him wanted to get a cat. We got a female. I heard males spray everywhere to mark their territory. Maybe that's why the couch smells so bad. The owner's before could have been animal hoarders or something and couldn't afford to get the cats neutered so they just let their house go to waste. Maybe the previous owner of the couch was on an episode of Animal Cops I watched today. I'll have to keep an eye out for my couch next time.

He walked away with the cat and sat at his computer looking at his favorite websites. I

heard the sound on his computer go up. He was in his own world playing an old version of Grand Theft Auto that he pirated off one of those sites where the ads are for female escorts and the downloads could potentially give your computer viruses. But he was a computer nerd so he knew all the tricks to get around a disaster like that. I turned my TV show up to block out the sound of gunshots and hookers from the video game.

About an hour had passed and I knew I had to be the one to talk first. I can't stand silence.

“Babe,” I said in a quiet tone.

“Yeah,” he said back in the way that I knew he was too involved in his game to give a shit what I was about to say.

I walked over to him and started rubbing my hand on the back of his hair. I like the feeling of short hair when I rub my hand in the opposite direction and watch it quickly spring back into place. Then I knew it was time, “I'm sorry.”

“I'm sorry too, babe,” he said.

“No I'm sorry. I was a bitch.” We always played this bullshit back and forth sorry thing and none of us really meant it. The arguments were always too stupid to argue over anyway. I quickly turned the conversation to something else, “Are you hungry?”

“Yeah.”

“What do you want to eat?”

“I don't know. What do we have?”

It was this stupid communication that drove me mad. “Want me to order a pizza?” Take-out is a primary part of our diet.

“Sure.”

“Half-Bacon?”

“Yeah. Cheese fries too.”

“Ok.”

After the pizza, we both sat in the living room. It was close to 9:00, which meant time to watch television. I sat on one end of the couch with my legs in a pretzel position. My boyfriend lay on the other side with his feet on top of me. He never gave me any room on the couch. Secretly, it bothered me. But I didn't care enough to tell him to give me some space. That passive aggressive style irritated the hell out of him. He always complained that I let things build up inside of me too much.

John had the remote and started searching through the DVR for a show of similar interests. We found the new episode of Weeds. A couple weeks prior, John called the cable company to fix something. They ended up giving us a couple premium channels for free. Now we could watch our favorite shows instead of pirating them and watching them through the computer like he did with his video games.

I picked up the cat and put her on my lap. She lay on her back and put her paws in the air trying to swat at my fingers. Occasionally, she would pull my hand closer to her and bite my fingers. It never hurt. It was as though she knew her own strength. While I was messing around with the cat, John had gotten a blunt from the kitchen counter. I sat there watching him. He cracked open the blunt and dissected the insides throwing whatever was left into a plastic grocery bag. Then he started grinding the weed, rolling the Vanilla Dutch, making sure not to drop a piece. He licked the paper of the blunt so it would stick back together. Such precision was involved. The lighter went to the paper as he swirled it around watching it ignite. He put it

to his mouth. Inhaled in. Exhaled out. Such poise. Such progression. I sat there. Still watching. Still waiting. Still letting the cat use my hand as a scratching post. The years of experience he had in this art form. The connoisseur of cannabis.

He passed it to me. I pinched it between my thumb and index finger. I inhaled. I exhaled. Life slowed down. My limbs felt loose. I had done this many times before. The relaxation involved in smoking was therapeutic. I didn't have to worry. I saw things clearer. I judged things better.

The episode of Weeds was still showing on the television as I floated to the kitchen. I stood there with the pantry door open in my underwear and oversized shirt that belonged to John. I reached my hand for the Doritos. Then I looked to the left. Goldfish. I thought for a second. It didn't matter what I ate. It didn't matter who I was. I stood there analyzing my life. What am I doing? I follow the same routine. Work, home, sleep.. I shook my head. This was too much thinking. I grabbed the Goldfish and turned around. The cat sat there staring up at me with that blank stare again. What did she know? Was she judging me? I scooped her up in one hand, put the Goldfish under my arm and leaned down to get a Diet Coke from the package on the floor. Again, I glided back to the living room.

I finished my diet coke in one gulp and my stomach was in knots from the massive amount of Goldfish I consumed. I looked around. The ceiling fan was shaking side to side every rotation it made. I couldn't bear to be in that room anymore. My life lived in that room. My world was in that room. I left the Goldfish on the floor. I left my soda on the end table. And I left my cat asleep on the couch.

The walk to the bedroom seemed like a mile. I felt like someone was following me. Like Big Brother was watching me and judging me. This paranoia never occurred to me before. Who

have I become? Was this the life I wanted to live? I couldn't understand the feeling rushing through my body.

I felt scared and helpless. Then I was overcome with anger. John was the reason for this. John was the reason I was a dog groomer living in a trailer park where my friends never visited. John was the reason I spent my days alone and weekends wishing I had somewhere to go.

Still in my underwear and shirt, I ran like a bat out of hell through the front door to the woodpile sitting next to the shed. I grabbed the wood that could fit under my arms and reached down for a handful of leaves. I scurried back into the house leaving a trail of fallen leaves and a log of wood that became too heavy. By the time I had gotten back into the family room, John was passed out from the high. I kicked aside the decorative gate that was in front of the fireplace and dropped the wood and leaves on the ground. I pushed back the glass doors to the fireplace and shoved my nosey cat to the side. On the coffee table that I loved so much sat ashes, crumbs, and a lighter. I arranged the wood and leaves in an unorganized form. I lit a leaf with the lighter just as John had lit the weed. I swirled it around and then placed it under the logs and among the other leaves. I sat with pretzel legs and watched as it went up into flames slowly.

I turned around, got up, and headed back to the bedroom. I got my gym bag and stuffed it with clothes, a pillow, and a blanket. I grabbed my keys and my purse and went to my car.

I burned my memories that night. I drove until the sun came up. I drove until John would give a fuck. I drove forever.