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about 300 words

An Unlikely Encounter

by Ariel C. Williams

“Nothing can be as terrible as this.”

I struggled to remove the weighted blanket off my shoulders. The rainbow streamers hanging from the ceiling vent had just stopped, indicating that my air conditioner was done working for the day.

Raoul promised to fix it two weeks ago. Every time I reminded him of it, he sprouted off a Jamaican one-liner about every little thing working out fine. The first three times, I let him slide because he’s cute. Not to mention, he’s saved me from eviction more times than I can count. But today isn’t the day I want to die under this blanket. I’ve got to work.

Before my feet could hit the floor, Mark ran up wagging his spotted tail. He loved me more than anyone. With the recent blow of closing my business for a daytime job, God knows I required as much love as possible, even if they manifested in sweaty doggy kisses.

“Mark, I love you so much. Yes, I do,” I said in the typical mommy-puppy voice heard across dog parks in this town. He jumped on my lap and attacked my chest and neck with licks and fur.

“I’d love to play with you, buddy, but mommy has to leave. Trust me, this isn’t by choice. More like, if I don’t leave now, you won’t eat tomorrow.”

Though he was an animal, Mark and I were adjoined souls. He sensed my uneasiness about attempting something new.

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