

Cat Food

By Tara Ruddy

He scraped it out of the tin at one in the morning and put the filthy bowl on the floor. They came running. He threw the tin on the floor with the rest of them. His only friends were his cats and he had hardly left the house except to stalk Ciara's house in the early hours of the morning. To say he had let himself go would be an understatement; his beard was down to his belly and his hair down to his ass. Anxiety prevented him from going into town to buy clothes. He didn't really care anyway. The house was piling up with clutter and rubbish and he could hardly get through the rooms. His days were spent sleeping and his nights, watching porn. That would all change after tomorrow. Tomorrow he would finally have her. He would catch her when she came home from work and bring her here. The attic would do for now and then she would fall in love with him like all the rest of the women who developed Stockholm syndrome that he'd been googling. It had been planned for months but he'd had to put it off due to nerves. He was staying up all night tonight as he worried he wouldn't wake on time.

Ciara sat at her desk and refreshed her Facebook newsfeed again. Still nothing new. It was almost six o'clock and time to go home. She brushed her long blonde hair away from her face and sighed. She looked over at Aisling and sighed again;

"She's so skinny, that bitch. I can't wait till I lose another few pounds." She thought.

She was perfectly thin herself. After what felt like forever, everyone in the offices started to leave and Ciara packed up her stuff and walked out the door. She drove home but when she was almost at her door, William grabbed her arm and shoved a wet napkin against her face. She became more and more limp until finally she passed out. He scooped her up and carried her to his van, roughly laying her down in the back seat. As he was about to take off, his windscreen shattered;

"Let her out now!" A man screamed

William panicked, drove over the man and drove the five miles back to his house. He

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hoped that he had killed him. Carrying her up to the attic was nearly impossible. On finally getting there, he laid her down on the bed and handcuffed one of her hands to the headboard. The attic was the only room in the house that was spotless clean. He had done that for her. He would do so much more too. When the chloroform wore out she woke up.

“Where am I? Who the fuck are you, you freak.”

He didn’t answer her. She was in shock, that’s why she was being mean.

“What have you done to me? Let me go. Now!” she screamed.

He put a layer of tape over her mouth. For now, he would do the talking.

“I’ve been thinking about you ever since we met in Madden’s. I couldn’t get you out of my head ever since. You looked so helpless. I decided to help you. This is for your own good.”

He locked the attic door and went downstairs. He didn’t like seeing a human being so distressed. He would let her get used to her surroundings. He already had her salad prepared for the following day; Lettuce, tomato, and chicken. That’s what she liked to eat. He just had the tin open when he heard it; loud banging on his front door. He scraped it out of the tin and put the bowl on the floor for them. Then they broke the door down and swarmed the house. Uniforms, guns, screaming and police radio noises. It took them three minutes and twenty four seconds to find her. He calmly waited watching the cats eat. After the following day in court, he had to walk past the other prisoners’ cells to be brought to his. The abuse didn’t stop until it was time for lights out. Tears stung his eyes as he lay in his cell. The accusations were all wrong; he wouldn’t hurt a fly. He had done it for her. He had wanted to make her happy. The door opened and another prisoner entered and sat on the opposite bed;

“Are you a rapist too?”

“God, no, I... I... brought a girl to my house, that’s all. I won’t be here long.”

“Did you know her?”

“Yeah, but she didn’t remember me, that’s all.”

“That’s nothing, dunno why they brought you in here for that. I’m in big trouble.”

“What did you do?”

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“I grabbed a girl down an alley and tried to rape her.”

“Why did you do that?”

“Just felt like it.”

William reflected that he could never do that to someone. He was going to protect Ciara, not harm her.

Ciara sat in her sitting room with Aine and Rachel.

“... and he was so gross, I could hardly believe it. He freaked me out so much. How will I ever get over it?” She brushed her hair out of her face and cried.

The End

Tara Ruddy bio: Tara Ruddy is an Irish writer. She studies Philosophy and abandons novels.