

**Unit**

**840 words**

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“And the good thing about that,” the gal agent was saying, “you can work it however you want.”

Dick thinking work what, one bedroom has a window, the other doesn't. Jamie saying she liked the view of the mountains, but yes maybe the other room was better for sleeping in on the weekends.

“Or we can look at a full 2-bedroom,” the agent said, “not a problem.”

“This'll do the job,” Dick said, “don't you think Babe?”

Jamie tilted her head like she wasn't sure and opened a kitchen cabinet again and stared inside.

Dick felt he'd already used his considerable negotiating skill to shave \$400 off this place, from \$2000, by simply pointing out that the basketball court was down below. What he was afraid of was Jamie would agree with his bs about it being too noisy, and pass up the best deal they were going to find.

Which she was doing now, giving him the let's see

some more places first look.

“How about you, where do *you* live?” Dick said to the agent.

“Actually I’m almost your neighbor, I live in Norton,” she said.

She had a decent way about her Dick was thinking, he wondered did she live by herself over there and would have asked if Jamie wasn’t here.

He said, “Norton’s the more mature one in the complex, a guy in the parking lot said.”

“Tenant-wise? Yes and no,” she said. “What are you folks thinking?”

“We’ll take it,” Dick said.

“Honey are you sure?” Jamie said.

“Excuse us a moment,” Dick said, and they went in the windowless room and huddled by the closet.

“What?” he said.

“It’s just I feel like you’re smothering me. Plus the living room looks out on the pool, and that gigantic screen with sports all the time.”

That was the best part, in fact Dick was thinking forget paying for any other TV, just watch that. He said, “What we’ll do, I’ll take care of the first two months myself. You don’t like it after that we’ll move.”

“You mean break the lease? We can do that?”

“Don’t worry about it . . . So if there’s nothing else?”

“There’s a lot else,” she said, but Dick gave her a peck on the forehead and they went down to the office.

Jamie asked where the ladies’ room was and said she’d be right back. The broker gathered a bunch of paperwork. “So where are you all from originally?” she said. “I know you’re over in Sparks, but before that?”

“Ojai,” Dick said. “Ventura County. If I told you my house burned down twice would you believe me?”

“I mean I know that’s wildfire territory,” she said, “but that’d be pushing it.”

Dick said, “Do you live by yourself? Over there at Norton?”

“Why?”

“There have to be a why? Seem like an okay question.”

“I do.”

“Nothing personal, but *how* you said it just then, it reminded me of a high school teacher. She gained a little weight, and these two girls who meant well, they asked was she pregnant, and she said no, why.”

“I’m sorry but I’m making no connection to that. Zero . . . I will need to run your credit and verify income--is it

both of you on the lease?”

“Or how’s about this,” Dick said. “You don’t do any of that and I pay the year up front, and we make it twelve.”

The agent said I must say, that’s a bit different, and she called her boss and they settled on fourteen.

“You look like something’s wrong,” Dick said.

“Really?” the agent said. “Why?”

“See there it is again. That teacher, she was exotic. We were intimidated. I ran into her as a grown-up at a Lakers game.”

“How was that?”

“Dumb. She fake remembered me but she didn’t. Even though she gave me a semester award for a paper. Just shows you.”

“What was the paper?”

“You know something, you’re transitioning. You’re all, this military uptight business. Now you’re all, who what where?”

“Speaking of which--what happened to your friend?”

“Yeah there is that,” Dick said. “The paper was on alien abductions in Santa Barbara. I interviewed a guy, even though I don’t believe in that stuff.”

“But your teacher did?”

“Nah I don’t think so. She liked that I let the guy talk,

I didn't get in the way. She wrote some nice comments. I saved them, though she spilled something on my paper, like salad oil."

"Hmm, well, she must have been reviewing it while she was making dinner, so maybe it wasn't inappropriate."

"Jeez, never thought of it that way. Though I have no clue what you just said."

The agent leaned forward and looked around. The hall, the lobby, the parking lot. "So," she said.

"So," Dick said.