

M-6 Motel
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I was thirteen when he brought me here, renting room number five for our special night. I walked away before midnight. He didn't.

He said not to say anything to my mom or he'd have to hurt her. He said what he was going to do would be good for me, prepare me for the world.

I hated the creep. I wished my mom would have gotten rid of him before he plunked down the thirty-eight dollars to the old half-blind clerk who was so drunk he couldn't get off his stool. He just reached back and grabbed the key off a hook and tossed it on the counter.

The creep drank glasses half-full of Wild Turkey whiskey as he sat in the one tattered chair in the room and told me to take off all my clothes. He said dance and twirl around. He sat there wide-eyed with a dirty little smile, wiping his liquored lips with the back of his thick hairy hand. Then he drank more whiskey.

When the bottle was two-thirds empty he told me to go into the bathroom and take a shower while he watched, sitting right on the toilet, smoking a cigarette, and drinking big confidence building gulps straight from the bottle, whiskey running down his chin and down his neck and then squirt out of his nose as he choked on it.

He sat staring at nothing for a minute, then his eyes rolled up and his head tipped backwards. His hand holding the cigarette dropped to his side. He didn't move except for the rasping, gagging labor of his breathing.

I scrambled out of the shower and put my clothes back on. I returned to the bathroom to see if he was still passed out. I took the cigarette from his hand and gave it a couple puffs to get it burning hot. Unrolling a bunch of toilet paper and I stuffed it into the waste basket. I took one last drag and dropped it into the waste basket and set it beside him. With a little poof the paper ignited as I poured the remaining whiskey over the bum's lap. I grabbed an old magazine from the main room and threw it into the fire, then sat down on the edge of the tub to watch.

It wasn't long though, and the smoke and heat was so bad I had to leave. He never moved. I walked out by the road sign and stopped and leaned against it and watched for a while until room five exploded in flames. When the fire spread to the next room began walking back to town, wondering if that old motel had was made out of paper.

So here I am ten years later looking at that old sign and the charred foundation of that retched motel where they found only two bodies the next day. The authorities declared it a smoking accident.

Thirty-eight bucks for a night of cheap thrills. The old black and white TV only got in three channels and the phone didn't work. And, just like the creep told me, I never told my mama.