

Bottle in a Vase

by Steele Diamond

I woke up and rolled over to look at my clock. Realizing I was not in my bed, I looked around the dark room for any clock. There on the ceiling, the time was displayed in red digital numbers. 5:30 am.

I stayed at a friend's place. By friend, I mean some no-name I met at the bar. I wish I was better at remembering names.

No-name would probably make some guy a great trophy wife. I could see enough of her face in the dim light to see she was in fact beautiful. Her nakedness was barely covered and I felt proud that she had invited me over. I was always lucky in my forty plus years, to be able to maintain a younger looking me. As a result, I usually ended up going home with younger women. No-name was twenty three. Or was it twenty four? I didn't remember. But she was cute. Tight body. An ego booster for sure. She had said she just finished school at State and was looking for a job. That is about all I remember of our conversation, except that I told her I knew someone who knew someone that might be hiring. Which was true. I would put in a word for her. Which was also true.

I know most of them had their reasons for taking me home. I was lucky, but not stupid enough to think most of them didn't think they were getting something out of the deal. I never took them to my place. Not at first. If they turned out to be psycho, I could always leave their place. If they were at my place, it is almost impossible to get rid of a psycho woman. It is also very difficult to explain to the cops why there is a naked, psycho woman running around your house, that is young enough to be your daughter. How I learned that is another story.

As I lay next to no-name, the room began to slowly fill with light. Without moving my head, I looked around the room. I saw nothing that impressed me. Except, the vase on the pressed board, Wal-Mart nightstand, behind no-name, next to the bed. Not really blue, but blue tinted glass. The vase intrigued me. It was seven or eight inches tall. Maybe two inches wide. Inside the vase was a

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small red bottle. It had a wire bale on the top, to hold a now missing swing top. I couldn't tell if it was old, or just made to look old. Based on the quality of the table, I guessed it was made to look old. At that moment, though, I had a feeling of de ja vu'.

I had dated this woman before. Katie. She had a very similar vase with a bottle in it, on the nightstand next to her bed. Only her vase and bottle was, in fact, old. I was with her when she got them. It was at some curio shop up in San Francisco. Haight-Ashbury area. She liked the vase so much I bought it for her, with the bottle, she also liked. The shop owner said I reminded him of Graham Nash. He said he sold Graham Nash the vase that he in turn gave to Joni Mitchell as a gift, when those two lived together. That vase was mentioned in the song, "Our House." Don't know if any of that was true, but it was a good story.

Katie used to love "The Doors". Her alarm on her cell phone was "Riders on the Storm." I would wake to that each morning I stayed over. It became my favorite Door's song. It still is. Often, that blue vase with the bottle in it, was the first thing I saw, when I woke up with Katie, to that song.

Katie was a good woman. We dated for a couple of years, until she left San Diego, for Phoenix. I guess I should have been more sad when she left. But it always seemed to me to be a relationship of convenience. As many of mine were. I'm not afraid of commitment. I just see no reason for it yet. But I loved Katie.

Her family lived in a suburb of San Diego. Her father and I got along real well. We both liked muscle cars. About a year after she left, I called her father to see if he wanted to have a beer. We met at a bar on the beach. He told me Katie had died of pancreatic cancer a couple of months before. That news made me sad. I was almost glad I didn't know when it happened. I choose to remember Katie as a free loving, flowing, left over sixties hippy.

On this morning, laying next to no-name, looking at her faux blue vase, with a not so old replica of a red bottle in it, I could almost hear "Riders on the Storm" in some distant corridor of my mind.

No-name's whisper broke my thought. "Are you awake?" I looked down at her face and saw her looking at me. I kissed her.

"Yeah."

"What are you doing?"

"Just thinking."

"What are you thinking about?"

"Jim Morrison."

"Is he your friend that's hiring?"

