

Ain't Nothin' Like It, Honest

by Moses Constable

The day shines with ordinary grievance as I limp my way down stairs to the complimentary breakfast that the motel I live at serves every Saturday mornings. Hank is there whistling as he slices a banana and tries desperately to hold that knife as stern as possible with his little dwarf hand. When he sees me, he shuffles over with a smile and does his best to hug me. Whenever he does, I feel like a giant gorilla.

“Miles! What a wonderful day it is, right? I mean come on, look at that sunshine.”

“Yeah, that sunshine sure is...something else,” I say.

“You bet it is! I mean I’ve seen some sunshine in my time, but it seems the sun gets brighter every day I wake up.”

This is how I start every Saturday morning. I have a bowl of Cheerios and peanut butter and strawberry jam toast while Hank chews with one side of his mouth and talks of the old sunshine from his childhood.

“Ain’t nothing like it, this sun,” he says. “You playin’ today?”

“Yeah I’ll be there like everyday.”

“You make much money doing that? Just sitting out there on the street corner playing and singing with your guitar?”

“Welfare helps, Hank.” I down the last spoonful of my breakfast. At this, Hank’s smile finally deceases. Then returns,

“You’re doing something special there, Miles. That sun keeps rising and you keep playing. It’s a beautiful thing. Ain’t nothing like it, honest.”

I nod my head, “Thanks for the pleasant start Hank. Be seeing ya.”

When I make it back up the stairs, there’s the two little white girls waiting. They smile when they see me and I know what they want.

“Can we pet your fuzzy hair again?” They ask. I struggle down to one knee and they gently pet it like it was a small dog. I give them a quarter and they run off downstairs.

I open the door to my room and just as always, Florence is there staring at me beautifully in a frame, just as she would for real so many years ago. But she’s too beautiful today, so I take it down. Sitting there watching her, I tune the old guitar my father gave me in 1962 and remember the days when he would teach me some old gospel songs and even a few rhythm and blues songs he knew when Mom and Grandma weren’t around. Our little secret. I can still smell his musty aftershave and whiskey breath when I close my eyes and pluck each string. When I open them, Flo is still smiling at me with those big ol’ eyes. I kiss my index and middle finger and press them against her hard lips.

Walking away from that picture I feel my knees are even weaker. I make it to my corner with my guitar and small amp. With Flo on my mind I decide to play her song.

“I was born by the river, in a little tent, and just like the river I’ve been running ever since. It’s been a long, long time coming, but I know a change is gonna come...”