

OPEN DOOR SIDE

RAY

Don't want to take any chances. *(after a pause, he turns to face Stella)* Come often to the vet without your cat?

STELLA

I guess it does look odd. No, I'm here for a job interview. Vet assistant. Animals are very comfortable around me.

RAY

So you said.

The Receptionist enters the waiting room and offers Ray a booklet.

RECEPTIONIST

Since you are waiting, I thought you may like to look at some of the options for handling Penny's remains after she is put to sleep. They are on the back page.

RAY

Thank you.

Ray places the booklet, unread, on top of the carrier. The Receptionist exits.

STELLA

There is something wrong with Penny!

RAY

There's nothing wrong with the cat.

STELLA

Is it an allergy issue? A landlord who won't allow pets? You know, I had to pass up this great apartment near the park because I couldn't take Roscoe with me.

RAY

I believe this is not

STELLA

Why can't your mother take care of her anymore?

RAY

If you must know, my mother passed away unexpectedly last week. I had to settle her affairs before my flight back to California today. The cat is the last item on the list.

STELLA

Can I ask you what you do?

RAY

I work in the tech industry. Never did share my mother's obsession for books.

STELLA

I see.

RAY

All my life she tried to draw me into reading. I remember her leaving books on my bedside table. The Hardy Boys when I was young. Later, some classics. There were also books by John Irving, Stephen King. Even James Patterson. I guess she thought that if she could just find the right book, we'd have something in common. But my mind was always elsewhere - on numbers and coding and such.

STELLA

How long have you been in California?

RAY

Four years. Long enough for my mother to take in a kitten, which grew into this cat. God, I never thought she would end up a cat lady. She signed her Christmas cards "Jane and Penny." As if she were the cat's mother, for God's sake.

STELLA

You know, you must have more than one cat to be considered a crazy cat lady. I think the count is twelve, if I were to check my pet owner's manual.

Stella looks for a smile - there is none.

STELLA

Your mother was obviously a good caregiver to Penny. Don't you think she would have been devastated to see you put her to sleep?

RAY

This cat has done nothing but roam the apartment, crying. It would lie on my mother's bed for hours with its dreadful meowing. It wouldn't eat. Barely drank the milk I gave her. A pitiful existence.

STELLA

You don't give cats milk to drink, by the way. That's only in cartoons.