

Better Days

by

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Cast of CharactersKAREN:

Over 30

MILES:

Over 30

Place

Karen's Motel

Time

Early afternoon

Setting: The play takes place inside the lobby of a decrepit motel. The place really needs to be destroyed and rebuilt from the ground up if it has any shot at being something more. Yellow/orange stained walls, pipes are exposed, wires are exposed, furniture is rusty and dusty and the carpet looks like it's barely keeping itself together.

At Rise: The play opens up with Karen standing proudly behind the front desk. She moves around through the course of the play, coming in front of the desk at times. Miles enters the lobby and has seen better days.

MILES: Good morning, Karen.

KAREN: Look who decided to waltz into my lobby. It's the afternoon by the way.

MILES (teasingly): It's always a morning sunshine entering your fine establishment.

KAREN: This old fleabag? (she cackles) Ha! Hasn't shined in here since the day I opened for business.

MILES: I don't bring no sunshine?

KAREN: Least of all you. Didn't think you'd show up back here. Had your room cleaned out.

MILES: Cleaned out?

KAREN: That's right. Stuff's in storage.

MILES: Thought I had until today to make payment.

KAREN: You do.

MILES pulls out a handful of cash.

MILES: What's the exact total again?

KAREN: The same total it's been for the past three years.

MILES: Right..well, I have half, will you take half?

KAREN: You must be half dumb.

MILES: Come on, Karen, we have a history and I've never not paid you the full amount.

KAREN: I have things that need fixing up in this dump. Lights keep flickering and it ain't the bulbs being loose. There's some rewiring that needs to get done. You set me back. If you paid me on time, I might be able to get this establishment in working order.

MILES: On account of my payment?

KAREN: On account of everybody's payment. You ain't the only louse who doesn't pay on time. To think if I had ya'll pay me my money, I just might pack up and leave this place. You could all live rent free and I could care less. Be on that tropical paradise I keep dreaming about, far away from you termites. That would be my greatest day, looking out the ocean, breathing in the fresh warm air, forgetting every single one of your annoying faces. Paradise at last.

KAREN (cont'd): That's what I want, but ya'll keep me locked in, cooped up in this place like I'm one of you and I'm far from any ones of you sloven sons a bitches. I cleaned out that hell room of yours and it took me two full days to get out all them empty bottles of wine and whiskey you had festering all over. I've had some characters livin' here but you are by far the one I just can't stand anymore, Miles. Had Margaret help me and she broke two nails scrubbing up the alcohol foam from that carpet. I'd say there was urine but even I have to question whether or not any man would allow himself to get that low.

MILES: You hurt my heart when you talk like that.

KAREN: Just because you've accepted your fate doesn't mean I have to. Now pay up or get the hell out of here!

MILES: Take half now and half this Friday.

KAREN: This ain't no charity. Do I look like a charity worker to you, Miles?

MILES: You won't get anybody else to take my room before Friday anyway, it's not like they be knocking down your door to stay here.

KAREN: Don't go tryin to be clever with me.

MILES: I'm just saying...

KAREN: Don't just say. The less you say the better off you'll be.

MILES: Can I have my room back, please. I'm so tired Karen. Really, really tired. I'm weak in the knees.

KAREN (cackles): Ha!

MILES: Just because I don't work much now doesn't mean I didn't work harder before.

KAREN: Before what?

MILES: Before..before.

KAREN: Hmm. You owe me for the new locks I put on the door.

MILES: You what? Why'd you go and do a thing like that?

KAREN: I already told your poor ass! You pay me for them locks or there is no way in hell you ever seeing the inside of room 305 again.

MILES: How much were the---

KAREN: Twenty-five dollars.

MILES: Twenty-five...are you outta your mind woman?

KAREN: That's the price you pay.

MILES: What a disgrace. After all this time. You know me. Why you wanna kick a fella while he's down? You know I'm doing the best I can. Out there all damn day. And when I hit big don't I do right by you? You forget all them times I bring you roses? How many times I bring you the finest ruby red roses? When I'm up, I'm up. When I'm down, you only need to wait for me to be up again, cause it's comin', you know it is, what goes down comes back up---

KAREN: And what goes up must come down, quit your playin'.

MILES: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait...

KAREN: I'm tired of hearing your blabbing.

MILES: Alright, alright.

KAREN: Alright, what?

MILES: I can cover the new locks and half today, rest on Friday, that's my best offer or else I'm a have to sleep in the park, my old Mr. Nick, my favorite talking tree in the whole wide world.

KAREN: Mr. Who?

MILES: Mr. Nick. He's there. When I was a little boy we had this old man neighbor who went by the name of Mr. Nick and he used to perch on top of his porch, which was massive and high upon this red brick structure and I used to play at the bottom of the porch and overhear Mr. Nick's conversations and he always had this deep, calming voice and many a time I'd actually fall asleep. Whenever I'm out in the park, I find this one particular tree that reminds me of Mr. Nick. I stretch out my legs and cuddle up at the bottom and I kid you not, I can still hear Mr. Nick's deep, booming voice; it soothes me like a baby being rocked by its mother and all my problems fade away, no matter how cold the night may be, I'm there, trapped in a memory that pains me to wake up from...so, do I have to go visit Mr. Nick or do I get access to my room?

KAREN: Here.

KAREN tosses a set of keys to MILES who doesn't catch them.

MILES: Now I have to bend.

MILES bends down in pain and comes back up with the keys.

KAREN: Why you in so much pain?

MILES: It's nothin'. Nothin'.

KAREN: Is that blood on your trousers?

MILES: What? Where? (he inspects his pants leg) Oh! Oh, I guess that's from..yeah, they uh, I'll be alright.

KAREN (sympathetically): Why don't you go on up to your room and have a nice hot bath.

MILES: That's music to me ears.

MILES gestures to take the stairs.

KAREN: You forgetting something.

KAREN sticks her hand out for the money.

MILES: Right, right...

MILES shuffles to the front desk and pieces together his cash to hand to her.

KAREN: All of it.

MILES: I need seomthing for food, don't I?

KAREN: I'll fix you some breakfast in the morning...give it all.

MILES: Okay, fine. With potatoes?

KAREN: Uh-huh.

MILES: Bacon?

KAREN: Yep.

MILES: Sausage?

KAREN: Fine. Now get lost.

MILES (he laughs): That's my lady of the house! (he jokes)

KAREN: Go on upstairs 'fore I change my mind.

MILES: I love ya. I do, I do, truly I do.

KAREN: There's some hot tea over there if you wanna help yourself to some.

MILES: Tea? Since when we got tea in this slum?

KAREN: Since I decided it'd be a nice gesture.

MILES (teasing): You, nice?

KAREN (wisely): Quit while you're ahead Mr. Miles.

MILES: I know it. How far ahead I am, one never knows...

MILES makes his way up the stairs.

MILES: Night lady of the house.

KAREN: Night Miles...

END OF PLAY