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Grave Grab

FICTION

Contains offensive language and gore.

“Are you almost done,” asked Donovan, the security guard, as he poked his head in the door. He was dressed in a crisp black suit and decked with black square sunglasses. It was the fifteenth time the guard had done this in the last hour, so Jarrett tried to ignore him while removing the embalming fluid lines from Becca’s neck.

The white sterile room smelt like ice and was buzzing with energy. It was almost excitement, for Jarrett at least. The media was mourning the loss of the world’s latest pop-starlet-turned-movie-actress. Today, she was his canvas.

His long-time friend and roommate, Mason, had never held a legitimate job but did freelance as a paparazzo from time-to-time. Mason, three years his senior, was sitting on a prep table across from the coffin. Jarrett had dressed him in an apron on this occasion so that he wouldn’t draw any suspicion, not that anyone normally visited or was allowed in the morgue. Somehow, Mason had still managed to get it covered in blood.

“I can’t believe you do this all day. It’s fucked,” said Mason. He grimaced as he

caught the sharp scent of the embalming cocktail.

“This was your idea,” Jarrett shot back hastily. He pushed his thick glasses back, magnifying his eyes.

Just then Donovan opened the door. “How much more is there to do?”

“Get the fuck out and stay the fuck out! I’ll let you know when I’m done,” he said as he glided across the room and locked the lab door. “Mason, help me move her body.”

“You need help? She’s gotta be 80 pounds, man, tops.”

“We don’t have much time if we want to pull this off. Set up the stereo, at least.”

Becca had overdosed on heroin last weekend and was found late the next morning. If she hadn’t died from the drugs, the six inches of vomit in her esophagus would’ve surely done her in. Needless to say, her corpse was in rough shape, and slightly eaten by her Mexican rat dog. Jarrett and Mason would benefit from her closed casket service.

The tabloids had been sounding warning bells about the star’s bizarre behaviour in public. Within the past month she had been on a late-night show and flashed the new lollipop tattoo on her vagina. “Think you can lick your way to my centre,” she had asked the host.

She had also snorted cocaine off a condiment stand in the lobby of a busy movie theatre before screening a picture she had a cameo in, and physically assaulted a baby

that a hyper fan stuck in her face as she darted through a mob of people.

Jarrett slid one of the body drawers out from the wall and lifted a mannequin from the slab. He put Becca's body in a bag, zipped it shut, and lifted her onto the drawer before closing it up again. He grabbed the mannequin and shoved it into the coffin. Despite its fashionable pose, it fit without much fuss.

"Creepy make-up, dude," Mason said over Jarrett's shoulder, who had done the mannequin up like a sadistic clown.

"Focus! I need you to place the speakers in its pits and the activator between the legs."

Her entourage was busy outside making phone calls, but inside the lab there was only an ominous hum. Jarrett grabbed the bulky security guard and told him the casket was ready to load in the hearse.

Just as soon as the death carriage pulled off, Becca's entourage scattered like cockroaches.

Both guys loaded her body into a white van that Mason had stolen, and hit the road. They had to get to the graveyard, a little place where many young celebrities who died by their own hand had been recently buried. Their route would be direct.

On another highway, not far ahead of Jarrett and Mason, the funeral director kept the hearse at a consistent speed as Donovan kept an eye on the road behind them.

He had noticed a black sedan keeping its distance. They zigzagged between various interstates but it stayed on their trail. He knew in his gut it wanted Becca.

“I think there’s trouble,” he said.

The driver eyed the rear view mirror and stepped on the gas as he tore between lanes. The black sedan fell back behind the gridlocked troupe.

He checked his mirrors and pulled in to a gas station to see if the vehicle would pass. It pulled in and parked in front of the C-store. You couldn’t see any figures through the dark tint. No one exited the vehicle.

“I guess I’ll fill ‘er up,” the driver said, eyeing the black car.

Forty dollars later and they were ready to continue on. Just as soon as they pulled back onto the street, the sedan followed. They got up to speed and headed towards the edge of town where Becca would finally rest.

Donovan, just into his third quarter and now with salt-and-pepper hair, pulled an old tin case out of his suit jacket pocket and sparked a cigarette.

“Don’t know what I’m going to do now. This is the second airhead singer to die on me,” he said in an irritated tone. “Fuck these pieces of shit.”

Just then the black car came zooming up beside them on the driver’s side. The driver cranked his speed up as well, but the black car lurched forward and tried the pit maneuver, which the driver of the hearse mastered his way out of.

“I’ve had a lot of experience transporting dead celebrities. Shit like this comes up a lot.”

The black car’s passenger window began to roll down and a large black lens emerged from it.

Snap.

Snap. Snap. Snap. Snap. Snap. Then it sped off.

Jarrett and Mason had managed to arrive at the cemetery before anyone else. They loaded Becca’s body in a nearby mausoleum and disposed of the van a few blocks away.

When the hearse arrived at Fallen Gods Cemetery, a small group was gathered at the grave, including the minister. There had already been a televised funeral that was attended by thousands of twelve-year-old girls. This small group needed much less security, by comparison.

Donovan and the funeral directory parked, removed the casket, and lifted it onto the lowering device. The minister took his place.

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die,” he began to read as the family shifted uncomfortably.

Just then there was a voice coming from the casket. It was Becca. She sounded choppy and unnatural, the dialogue pieced together from her songs, movies, and

interviews.

“They. Have. MyBody, m-m-m-my-body. They. Want. TenMillionDollars. Un. Marked. Put It In. The. Casket. Bury. It. Don’t. TryAnything. Funny. They’ll. Know. Bury. It Within An Hour.”

The crowd, consisting mostly of Becca’s management and family, gasped. Donovan ripped the casket open, revealing the deranged looking mannequin.

“SHE’S GONE!”

Inside the mausoleum, Mason removed a panel from the wall, which revealed a tunnel.

“Wow! You dug this in three days,” asked Jarrett.

“I wanna be rich.”

“Can you even fit down there?”

“Apparently I can,” Mason said as he squeezed in, Jarrett crawling behind him with Becca’s body bag in tow. Once Jarrett got it through the opening, he replaced the panel on the wall behind them.

The tunnel was a circular passage, about three-and-a-half feet in diameter, and led them six feet underground, mere inches away from where the casket would be buried. As they sat crouched, they could hear the ransom note playing above.

“I guess we’ll be hidin’ down here for a while.”

“We have to be quiet until they bury the cash.”

“When will it start to rot,” Mason asked as he nodded at the black plastic containing the starlet.

“It won’t, but in a half-day it’ll start to reek. We’ve had the bitch off ice for about six hours.”

They heard movement on the other side of the dirt. The sound of shovels followed soon after.

“They’re starting to bury the money,” Jarrett said.

“How do you know they’re burying real money,” Mason asked.

“This is a pretty elaborate heist, Mason. It’s not like that shit you pulled with Barton.”

“We were kids-”

“My brother was 23 when he got gunned down,” Jarrett snapped, cutting him off.

“It felt like we were still kids.”

“Well, you did rob a convenience store. Any two-bit crook can do that.”

“How come you never did,” asked Mason after pausing.

“That’s a petty crime. They locked you away for three years for eighty bucks.”

“I’m sorry Barton got filled with bullets. My mind will never stop thinking about that moment when I’m not thinkin’ about nothin’ else.”

Jarrett put his arm on Mason’s shoulder. “This time you’re going to get away. You know you’re just as close to me as my brother was.”

Mason wiped a small tear from his nostril and sniffled. “I should probably let some fresh air in here,”

Mason squeezed by Jarrett and Becca, climbing upwards and into the mausoleum. As soon as Jarrett knew he was gone, he unzipped the body bag to reveal a face done up like the mannequin, a slight stench wafting from the bag. He looked down at Becca and ran the backside of two fingers down her white top and onto her skirt.

“I don’t care who you were when you were alive. You’re beautiful.”

He continued looking at the body, almost expecting her to wake up. He ran his fingers through her hair. Leaning in, he kissed her forehead, causing the skin to break a bit.

Mason came crawling back into the tunnel a short while later to find Jarrett removing Becca entirely from the bag. The tunnel now had a feeling of death.

“I only want to be waiting on the perfect moment to escape. Let’s get moving, I don’t want to waste any time,” Jarrett said.

Mason began to dig, causing a bunch of dirt to fall in the tunnel and surround Jarrett's feet. Up above, the ground sank just less than an inch in the middle of the burial site. Donovan barely noticed.

They made their way into the casket. Removing the side panel, they retrieved the money. It was marked with non-sequential serials.

"SHIT! We've got it!" exclaimed Mason.

They replaced the money with Becca's body. Before he slid her top half into the casket, Jarrett looked at her face.

"An angel dressed in white, but I'm God," Jarrett whispered under his breath.

Mason placed a few small black metal devices beneath the casket. "We've got to be ready to go."

They began to climb up the hole with the money stashed in the body bag. The stack of money had been wrapped up several times in the excess bag. As Mason went to open the wall panel, he heard a metal creak coming from the other side.

A tall and slender assistant to Donovan peeked inside the mausoleum-turned-tunnel-gateway, his wavy, dirty-blonde hair falling across his face. He squinted his eyes as he shone his flashlight around the room, then shut the door and walked over to Becca's grave.

In the cemetery, it was dark, lit only by the tiniest sliver of moonlight.

Only three security guards remained at the family's wish; they feared notifying the police would lead to it being all over the news.

"These have got to be the stupidest criminals ever. How do they expect to pull off a grave grab?" Donovan said to his two other colleagues.

They were waiting for the idiots to arrive. The two assistants would take turns roving every fifteen minutes while Donovan stayed at the gravesite.

Jarrett and Mason were waiting just inside the mausoleum door.

"Be ready, Jarrett," he paused for what felt like an eternity. "NOW!"

Mason pushed a button on a small remote and there was a large bang.

Donovan jumped from the tombstone he was sitting on, staring at the grave. The casket came bursting out of the ground, shattering, with Becca's rotting face rising to look at them. Her arm fell down through a crack and pointed at the security guard. There was smoke all around.

In that moment, Jarrett and Mason made their move, and disappeared into the night.