

THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT

Written by

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INT. FUNERAL HOME - VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

The viewing room is bland apart from the sparse decoration of framed paintings and photography, vases adorned with plastic flowers neatly sat on side tables, and a sofa against one wall.

A coffee table sits in front of the sofa, with a box of Kleenex on top along with a couple of lit candles.

On the other side of the viewing room is a closed casket, the sure sign of a messy aftermath.

A large portrait of the man who died sits next to the closed casket. A floral wreath sits atop the casket, amongst other flowers and beautiful bouquets.

A clock somewhere TICKS loudly.

An old man, MORT (80s), naps soundly on the sofa. He SNORTS a SNORE.

The door to the viewing room opens, and two gentlemen walk inside.

OSCAR FERGUSON (40), sporting a beard, with his hair neatly slicked back, walks in first, dressed in a suit.

Behind him, SAM GARFIELD (22), boyish with his clean-shaven face but with a hint of roughness around the edges, follows behind Oscar. He SMACKS on gum.

Oscar walks over to the Mort and taps his shoulder.

OSCAR

Alright, Mort, your shift is over.

Mort SNORES himself awake, SMACKS his lips. With a tired GRUMBLE, he shuffles out of the viewing room.

Oscar and Sam face the casket.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Well. Here he is.

SAM

What's his story?

OSCAR

Not much info was given to me. The family was pretty quiet about a lot of stuff.

SAM

That doesn't sound suspicious at all.

OSCAR

Hey, we all have skeletons in our closets.

SAM

Yeah...

(beat)

Closed casket, huh?

OSCAR

Don't get any ideas.

SAM

Is it that bad?

OSCAR

Dunno. Wouldn't be able to snoop around anyway. The family requested that the casket remain locked shut.

SAM

Weird.

OSCAR

Family also requested that somebody stays with the body at all times.

SAM

What for?

OSCAR

Religious reasons, I don't know. Anyway, that special somebody is you.

SAM

You mean I just sit here?

OSCAR

Whatever you want to do, as long as you don't leave, not even for a smoke or bathroom break, so hopefully you pissed and puffed before you got here. Remember, we do four hour shifts here. You're up at 3:00 AM. I'll give you a wake-up call fifteen minutes beforehand.

Sam looks at the clock. It reads 11:00.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Good?

SAM

Easy enough.

Oscar turns to leave.

SAM (CONT'D)

Aye, wait...

Oscar turns back.

SAM (CONT'D)

Does any...you know, like, weird stuff happen here?

OSCAR

I don't believe in that.

SAM

Then what's the craziest thing you've seen?

Oscar SIGHS.

OSCAR

It's late.

SAM

Just entertain me, for a little bit. This is gonna be a long and, I'll admit, kinda creepy four hours here.

Oscar rolls his eyes, walks to the sofa. Sam sits down with him.

OSCAR

I've seen it all. Bloated bodies. Suicides from skyscrapers. Green guys--

SAM

Green guys?

OSCAR

The guy was literally green from decomposition, covered in some sort of mold.

SAM

How long have you been working this gig again?

OSCAR

Well that was when I was a mortuary transport technician. A taxi cab driver for dead bodies is what I liked to call it. I've been in the funeral industry for ten years come January.

SAM

Got any advice for a rookie like me?

OSCAR

Don't do anything with the bodies. And I mean anything.

SAM

Alrighty then.

OSCAR

You ever seen a dead body before this job?

SAM

No. Well, not a fresh one. To be honest, dead bodies kinda freak me out.

Oscar looks at Sam, perplexed. Then, he laughs. Sam laughs too.

OSCAR

Okay, that's a story to tell. What happened?

SAM

Well, I mean, they don't scare me...

(beat)

I was six. It was my great granddad's funeral, and I went into the chapel by myself to look at him, and he talked to me.

OSCAR

(disbelieving)

Yeah right.

Sam stares, then smirks.

SAM

My uncle came out from hiding behind the casket after I screamed and ran away. Really fucked me up.

OSCAR

Bite your tongue with that kind of language. At least around guests.

SAM

Sorry.

(beat)

Anyway, I've never had anything supernatural happen to me before. That would be the closest thing to it.

OSCAR

Well that wasn't actually your dead great granddad talking to you, so...

SAM

I think it'd be pretty cool to see a ghost. I'm sure this job has plenty of opportunities for that.

OSCAR

Like I said, I don't believe in that.

Sam smirks. Oscar looks at his watch.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Well, that was exciting. Enjoy the other three hours and fifty-eight minutes!

Oscar stands to leave.

SAM

You sure you don't want to stick around?

OSCAR

This is your shift, not mine.

Oscar grabs the door to shut it.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

Remember, you're not allowed to leave.

SAM

Oh yeah? And who's watching?

Oscar motions from his eyes to Sam's in a playful gesture.

OSCAR

And if not me, the big man
upstairs.

(beat)

Or downstairs. Who knows?

Oscar shuts the door.

Sam sits on the sofa, alone. He sets his cell phone on the
coffee table.

The clock in the room continues to TICK loudly.

tick...tick...

Sam takes in a DEEP BREATH as he stares at the casket, lets
out the breath.

Tick...Tick...

He closes his eyes, takes another DEEP BREATH, releases it.

TICK...TICK...

He opens his eyes. The casket sits on the other side of the
room.

Sam stands and walks to the casket. He observes the portrait
before he examines the casket. As Oscar had mentioned, the
casket is, in fact, locked with a metal padlock.

Sam pulls on the padlock, just to entertain its security.

He looks behind him at the closed door, then back at the
casket. He glances at the portrait; the MAN in the photo
watches him with the permanent expression captured in the
photo.

Sam SIGHS, thinks as he SMACKS on his gum in contemplation.
Then, he reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a thin case
and opens it.

Inside the case are lock pick tools.

He attempts to pick the padlock, struggles.

CLICK. The padlock pops unlocked. Sam takes the lock off.

The casket creaks as he opens it, curiously cautious of the
corpse contained inside.

BRRINNNGGGG!!!

The casket SLAMS shut as Sam spins around to his cell phone. It RINGS on the coffee table. It's Oscar.

He walks to his phone and answers it.

SAM
(into phone)
Hey?

OSCAR (V.O.)
How's it going, sleepyhead?

SAM
(into phone)
Fine, I guess. What's up?

OSCAR (V.O.)
Just giving you that wake-up call.
I'll be there in fifteen.

Perplexed, Sam looks at the clock. It reads 2:45.

SAM
(into phone)
I, uh...wha...?

OSCAR (V.O.)
Sorry if I woke ya. Anyway, just a
heads up. I'll see you in a bit.

Oscar hangs up.

Sam looks at his phone in confusion, then at the casket.

The clock tick, Tick, TICKS--

SILENCE. Deafening silence.

Sam stares at the casket, then at the clock. It has stopped at 3:00 on the dot.

DEEP, HEAVY BREATHING emits from within the casket.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
(gruff; from inside the
casket)
Say...it...

Sam's eyes grow wide. He drops his phone in shock at the voice from within the casket.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
Say it...

Sam shakes his head.

SAM
Fuck this.

He walks to the door and turns the knob--

It won't open.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
You...can't...run...

He tries to pull the door open, but it won't budge. Sealed shut, locked tight.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
There's...no escape...

SAM
What the...What the fuck!?

He continues his attempts to open the door, even presses a foot against the wall for leverage to pull the door open.

No luck.

He backs away from the door, looks at the casket.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
Say it.

Sam walks cautiously toward the casket, reaches out...

He grabs the casket lid, lifts it up--

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
DON'T LOOK!

Sam drops the lid, jumps back.

SAM
Okay! Okay...

Sam breathes heavily.

SAM (CONT'D)
What's going on?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
Say it.

SAM
Fuck me. Is this really happening?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Yes.

Tears well up in Sam's eyes.

SAM

Who are you?

No response.

SAM (CONT'D)

What do you want?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Say it.

SAM

What?! Say fucking what?

No response.

Sam struggles to think.

SAM (CONT'D)

Uh...okay? My name is Sam Garfield?
I'm twenty-two years old, and I
moved here from Austin--

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

NO!

SAM

Then what?! I don't--I don't know,
I need some sorta hint or
something!

Sam BREATHES heavily. He BURPS, covers his mouth and turns
away from the casket.

SAM (CONT'D)

Damn it, I'm so close to vomiting
right now.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

October 26th, 2019.

SAM

What about it?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Say it.

SAM
 (frustrated)
 Say what?!

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
 YOU KNOW!

SAM
 I don't! I--I--I was in college? I was 18, about to turn 19. I was a student, and worked at some crappy hotel. That's it.

No response. Sam calms down slightly, wonders about the silent response when--

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
 There's more.

Sam thinks. Hard.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
 Tell me.

SAM
 I'm thinking!

Sam continues to think, BREATHES heavily. He looks at the clock. It still reads 3:00.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Are you doing this?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
 Say it.

SAM
 I don't know...I--I need something else. A name, a day, a place, anything!

Beat. Sam sweats.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
 Jamie Peters.

SAM
 Who's that?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
 You know.

SAM
 No. I don't.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Yesssss...

Sam thinks. A moment passes by. He thinks harder...

...and STIFFENS up.

SAM

What about her--?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Say her name.

SAM

Shit--what about Jamie Peters?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Say it.

He GULPS.

SAM

Okay, now I'm really going to vomit.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Tell me.

SAM

No.

Silence.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Tell me.

Sam sweats even more.

SAM

No.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

TELL ME!

SAM

Why!?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

You must.

SAM

This is fucked up--

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
SAY IT!

SAM
Alright! Alright!

Sam attempts to calm his shaky breathing.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
Sit.

Sam looks over at the sofa. His face drops, defeated.

He reluctantly sits down, prepares himself with one more DEEP BREATH.

SAM
It was October 26th, 2019. A Friday night, I think. Maybe Saturday. Fuck, whatever. There was a party happening. A Halloween party. I don't know whose house it was, someone just invited me to go along. There was booze, of course, and I got pretty fucked up, and...and...I can't remember--

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
(hisses)
LIES.

SAM
I can't! I blacked out!

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
You know.

Tears well in Sam's eyes. He GULPS.

SAM
Why are you doing this to me?

The dead body remains quiet. Sam waits for a response he's not sure he'll get. He blinks his tears away, SNIFFS.

SAM (CONT'D)
Okay, okay...I remember seeing Jamie Peters. We sat next to each other in our psychology classes but didn't really talk except to shoot the shit. Fuck, anyway, she was dressed as Cat Woman. She and I kept making eye contact but we never talked.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Later that night, I saw her on the couch, having a good time. Maybe too good of a time, spilling her drink and shit...I saw her stand and walk away...So I followed her. She stumbled up the stairs and tried the hallway bathroom but it was locked. She went into one of the bedrooms and used the bathroom in there...I remember peeking into the bedroom at one point and seeing her passed out on the bed. And that's it, I swear. I don't remember anything else.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Yes you do.

SAM

No, I don't.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

You do.

SAM

I don't, I swear to God--

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

HE IS NOT HERE!

The lights shut off. The candles flicker as something ominous suddenly weighs down upon the space. A RUMBLE GROANS throughout the room, ALIVE.

SAM

Shit! I'm sorry!

Sam is on the verge of tears.

SAM (CONT'D)

I don't know anything else! Please! Don't do this to me.

Silence. It lasts a moment. And it's telling.

SAM (CONT'D)

Fuck. Okay...I--I walked into the bedroom...and I--I--

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)

Say it.

SAM

I can't...

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
Say it.

SAM
Why are you doing this me?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
Say it.

SAM
Who are you?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
(booming)
SAY IT!!!

The candles blow out, and everything--

CUTS TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

The sounds of CREAKING and GROANING, ghostly and horrific. It sounds as if the entire room is trying to tear itself apart.

SAM (V.O.)
OKAY! I RAPED HER! I FUCKING RAPED
HER!

Sam CRIES, from fear, from guilt.

SAM (V.O.)
I fucking raped her...

The lights slowly fade back on.

Sam continues to SOB.

SAM
I--I was drunk...

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
That is no excuse.

SAM
I wasn't thinking clearly!

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
You knew what you were doing.

SAM
Why is this happening?

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
Jamie Peters thought the same
thing.

SAM
Fuck!

The Dead Body begins to LAUGH.

THE DEAD BODY (V.O.)
Look inside...

Sam looks at the casket. He stands and slowly walks toward
it.

Sam grabs the casket lid and lifts it up, looks inside--

There's nothing.

KNOCK

KNOCK

KNOCK

...from outside the viewing room door.

Sam walks to the door. He stares at it, then at the handle.

Light spills out from beneath the doorway from the other
side. A shadow stands on the other side of the door. A DEEP
BREATH correlates with the movement of the shadow. Someone is
standing there.

Sam reaches for the door handle with shaky breathing.

He grabs the handle. Takes a breath. Turns the handle.

He YANKS the door open!

HOLD ON: Sam, as he suddenly SCREAMS in absolute TERROR at
whatever's outside the viewing room. He stumbles backward and
onto his ass, still SCREAMING hysterically. The viewing room
door SHUTS BY ITSELF, muffling Sam's SCREAMS that ECHO
through the empty hallway and funeral home.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.