

A Tisket A Tasket

Brynn Osborne adjusted her holster and sighed. "Why couldn't they make one of these things that didn't gouge? You can bet your sweet ass that if it gouged a guy in the stones they'd be introducing a new model in days." She glanced at her partner to make sure she hadn't said that out loud.

Dollar nodded slightly.

Brynn smiled. He wasn't the sharpest boy on the block but at least he wouldn't get in the way. She had the feeling she should check for a pulse every so often; just for safety's sake.

She hated these things anyway. It was bad enough that the family had to come and identify the body but for police to show up at the funeral was just too much.

Still the death was suspicious. Barry Davidson had been found naked on the lawn outside the Women's Natatorium with five gunshot wounds in his back.

Now a nude man near a women's swimming facility would be enough for most policemen but it was the string of missing girls that landed it smack in the middle of detective's radar.

Brynn studied the man standing by the coffin. He was old, but not the kind of feeble old that wind up in nursing homes or on television flogging HMO's. He was just venerable.

Policemen are event motivated. If you say "Naked girl running north on X and so street" you will get twenty-five cars ready to check out. If you say "domestic disturbance in the projects" twenty-five cars will be 10-7 out of service.

Detectives are curious. They want to know why things work the way they do. Brynn was just twenty-nine and she had a gold shield. There were men in their forties who didn't. And they all wanted to see her fuck-up.

She nudged Dollard with her elbow and his head snapped up. She ignored the obvious. "I'm going to have a word with Mr. Davidson. Just wait here and try not to snore."

She stood up and gathered her coat about her legs. Dress code for detectives said that winter casual was slacks for field work and skirts for inside. She never bothered with the last part. No one tried to get a hand up your pant leg.

Davidson looked up as she walked over. He was a large man with heavy brows and a full beard that was shaped to his chin like a spade. The glasses he wore were old fashioned, granny glasses like something John Lennon would

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have worn in the seventies.

She got closer and saw that they had red lenses like something from that Dracula movie. This was getting a little weird.

"Mr. Davidson?"

"Yes, my dear? I've been expecting you. Your friend seems to be sleeping peacefully. Let's not disturb him, shall we? There's a coffee shop, hard by the funeral parlor. I think something hot would take the chill off our conversation, don't you?"

Brynn stared. This wasn't what she was expecting. But it seemed to be exactly what Mr. Davidson had in mind. She didn't like being lead.

"Mr. Davidson, I know this is an awkward time but I do have some questions and I need to ask them, if you are up to it?"

"Of course you do, my dear. I shouldn't wonder that this seems curious and it will be much more so when the results of the autopsy come in. Let's just take a little walk and we'll get everything in order before the evening shadows get long."

Brynn watched as he stood up. He was taller by a head and a half and his shoulders were wide enough to have to turn to get through a door. He wore a battered trench coat and good leather gloves. His boots were old but well cared for and he kept them polished like glass.

He put his arm around her and she wasn't offended. It seemed natural and as she adjusted to his touch she began to feel warm and comfortable. That did seem strange and she shook herself and Davidson noticed her reaction.

He pulled his glasses down on his long, finely chiseled nose and one yellow eye looked over the rims at her. She should have been creeped-out but it just made her more willing to walk with him.

"You have nothing to fear from me. I want you to know everything. That way, when I've gone you can take whatever measures you think are necessary."

Now Brynn was at full alert. "Are you saying that you know something about the death?"

Davidson held the door for her and nodded, "and the missing girls. But let's settle in a booth and get something to warm the inner man first, shall we?"

Brynn felt for her gun and Davidson smiled at her. "Won't do a thing for you, but you won't need it either."

"Mr. Davidson, this is getting very creepy. What are we doing here?"

The waitress arrived and Davidson ordered hot tea. She

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snapped that she didn't think they had any and Davidson assured her they did. She stomped away and Davidson pulled off his gloves.

"I've become quiet familiar with the menu here. I waited for Barry here, each night."

"Look, Mr. Davidson, if you are making a statement I should caution you. . ."

"Oh there's no need of that. I'll be leaving later and I'm taking your Officer Dollard. He'll do fine for what I have in mind. And yes, I killed Barry. He was always an impulsive young man."

Brynn pushed back from the table clawing at her gun. Davidson took her hand in one of his and she recoiled when his hair covered palm touched her skin.

He covered his lips with a hairy finger and after the waitress had placed their tea on the table he smiled at Brynn.

"I'm afraid I've had to make this speech before, so if you will let me ramble on I can explain things quickly and leave you here to sort them out." Brynn nodded behind glazed eyes. Davidson went on. "I'm sure by now a clever girl like you has come to the conclusion that things are not as they should be. Barry was my son. He brought me years of joy and I hated to have to kill him. But he would not listen. He liked the ladies."

"So you killed him to avoid the scandal of a trial?"

"Hardly. I am an old man. I have over the years learned many things. This case getting to trial would have been far too revealing. No, I killed him because he wouldn't listen. We're an old English family and I am afraid very traditional. A father's word is still law."

Brynn sat back against the cushions. "You killed your son because he wouldn't obey you? Is that right?"

"Yes."

She put her elbows on the table and covered her eyes with her hands. "Mr. Davidson, I have to caution you that anything you say can be used in evidence . . ."

"Dear lady, you won't get a conviction against a werewolf."

Brynn's head snapped up.

"Oh yes, we've been shape shifters for almost two hundred years. Trouble with immortality is that they don't mention arthritis. I couldn't run the poor things down anymore. And Barry, poor boy would not take the homeless and the mentally ill like I told him. He was like a rat terrier; he had to play with his food. I do admit that a young girl is so much tastier than an old bum. So many of

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them are alcoholic, you know. But people miss the girls. They have families and I knew it would come to no happy conclusion so I shot him."

Brynn nodded numbly.

"It was hard to find the pure silver in your fair city. When you make out your report you might mention that. I don't think any of The Brethren will come back this way but there are rogues."

Again she nodded.

"There's a brave girl. Now I'll just run back and bite Dollard. He'll be asleep by now and it won't take much effort on my part. That's the shame of getting old. You have to compromise on your principles. But Dollard won't be much of a loss now will he? He can run down the homeless for me and make my life so much easier. And I'm sure he will be easier to control than Barry. Now, don't put up a fuss. This is on me. You just sit here and finish your tea. I'm sure you'll want to think about what you'll say in your reports."

Mr. Davidson worked his way free of the booth, placed a crisp fifty dollar bill on the table and pulled on his gloves. Then he gave Brynn a kiss on the cheek and walked back over to the funeral parlor to collect Dollard.