

The Necklace

Waxen rays of moonlight filtered through the gauzy clouds casting shadows across the graves. Dave was having second thoughts. He shouldn't have accepted the dare but, Mason could be quite persuasive in that forceful compelling influence that only a bully can pull off. All he needed to do was find the necklace that Mason had stashed among the statuary.

His only tools were a flashlight whose battery threatened to die out and the hand drawn map that Mason had given him. Kicking himself for not being stronger, he replayed the memory in his mind.

"Relax chicken shit. It's just a Treasure Hunt. Haven't you ever been on a Treasure Hunt?" and with that, he shoved the crumpled map into Dave's chest – the force pushing him back a couple of steps. Mason's eyes bore into Dave daring him to do something.

"Alright, fine. I'll do it." What else could he say? If he didn't agree, Mason would rearrange his face with his corpulent fists. He didn't have a chance against him.

"Good! You have an hour to find it and bring it to me. Otherwise, kiss your chances with Mindy goodbye." Mason sauntered off chuckling.

A hooting sound in the distance snapped him out of his reverie, and reminded him that he didn't have much time to find the stupid necklace and get it back to Mason. If he could, if only he were strong enough, he would shove the damn thing down Mason's throat. He moved forward, darting from grave to grave aiming the flashlight this way and that. He was farther into the heart of the cemetery than he had wanted to be and so far, he hadn't found it. Mason hadn't given him a description of it and he had never thought to ask. All he could do was hope that the necklace reflected the flashlight's beam.

The cemetery was creeping him out. He had never been afraid of them, but it was completely different at night. The darkness gave the myriad obelisks, Gothic Angels, age-worn tombstones and archaic mausoleums an eerie substance that contradicted the peaceful essence it emanated during the day. He wasn't sure if the effect was caused by the feeble moonlight that occasionally made its presence known or the pallid streams of light his flashlight emitted.

He felt as if the watchful eyes of the Gothic Angel statues disapproved of his trespassing. He couldn't help but look at them twice keeping the flashlight directed at their faces for longer than necessary, just to ease away the feeling of being watched.

Dave made one more effort to figure out Mason's basal attempt at cartography. His rudimentary writing skills left no doubt in Dave's mind that Mason was a prime example of why socially promoting kids should be outlawed. The artless drawing showed a clumsy arrow indicating to turn left at the Jacob Frankel grave.

Dave turned swinging the flashlight from left to right trying to cover as much ground as he could. A shimmer in the distance caught his eye and Dave hurried in that direction which took him even deeper into the cemetery.

After several steps continually pointing the flashlight in the direction of the shimmer, he came to a mausoleum, dilapidated with age or neglect. And that's when it happened.

He knew that red eyes are always a bad sign and, in a flash, he replayed in his mind every horror movie he had ever seen. The first thing he did was run, his legs moved of their own accord while the rest of his body wrestled with the confusion of either being frozen in terror or releasing his bowels in ardent fear. Dave shrieked like a banshee running in the direction of the shimmer, somehow not forgetting the darn necklace. After all, he didn't know what he was more afraid of – the undead or Mason.

He could see a mound of dirt where a fresh grave had been dug. Next to it was the statue of a weeping angel, kneeling on a marble base, wings spread and hands covering her face. Chest heaving, heart pounding and legs trembling Dave stood in front of the angel. His eyes focused on the glint of the tiny crystal embedded on the center of the necklace's locket.

The crystal must have been what was reflecting the flashlight's beam. Now that he had found it, he convinced himself that he had imagined the red eyes he saw. The necklace was out of reach and Dave had no choice but to climb on the marble base. He was sure he could get it and leave the cemetery before he hallucinated again.

He stepped onto the base, grabbing on with one hand and holding the flashlight with the other. The necklace was wound around the groove of the angel's fingers, so Dave had to hold the flashlight with his mouth while he held on to one of the wings and simultaneously worked the chain of the necklace off the angel's hand. The cemetery's quietude was blatantly loud. The eerie silence engulfed him until all he heard was the beat of his heart booming in his ears. His hands shook but he finally managed to remove the necklace. He shoved it into his pocket, took the flashlight out of his mouth and started descending from the base. His foot slid off, but he recovered quickly and carefully climbed down.

He did it, he had found the blasted necklace and now he was going to hurl it at Mason and show him what he was made of. He was going to stand up to him. Tonight, was the last time Mason pushed him around.

Feeling pretty good about himself, Dave took a step back not realizing the freshly dug grave was behind him. His foot slipped, his arms flailed, he screamed and she caught him. At first, he froze in surprise. Long dark hair moved in a windless night, pasty skin, high cheekbones and almond shaped red eyes captivated him, while she gripped his hand at the edge of the grave. Her cadaverous beauty was unblemished and her delicate form belied the strength she possessed.

"Stay with me" She told him, her voice an enchanting whisper that promised hidden pleasures.

"I, I can't" Dave barely managed to stutter - an involuntary whimper escaping his sweat beaded lips.

“Stay with me or death in the grave – choose.” The proposal uttered in a siren voice didn’t leave him much choice. He didn’t want to die. As much as he feared Mason, as much as he was scared shitless right now, he didn’t want to die.

“Okay, I’ll stay.” He panted, his chest heaving. She smiled – a slow almost demure smile as she pulled him effortlessly away from the grave.

“A deal has been made. It must be sealed with a kiss.” Dave still too close to the grave’s edge couldn’t back away from her embrace. His innards recoiled, his fists clenched, and his breath rushed out culminating in a blood curdling scream as her lips neared his.

Later that night, Mason woke up to the rapping sounds against his window. He hurled the sheets aside and shuffled his hulking mass to the window which he opened with unnecessary force.

“Watcha want dumb-ass?” He slurred with grogginess.

“Brought the necklace” Dave answered blandly.

“You’re late, shit face. Give it to me.” He glowered. His menacing look no less threatening in his drowsy state.

“Fine, I’ll give it to you. Let me in first.” Dave countered and Mason frowned at his sudden display of back bone. But Mason was all brawn and no brain, so he didn’t bother to think it through.

“Get your ass in here, dweeb.” He bullied and stepped aside crackling his knuckles - ready to backhand him across the room. Dave’s expression didn’t change as he leapt swiftly into the room.

The following morning, police cars were parked outside Mason’s home – the emergency lights beaming red and blue. Uniform officers kept nosy neighbors behind the barricade. Crime scene tape marked restricted areas and the flicker of flash bulbs quietly confirmed the gathering of evidence. The detective shook his head, jotting notes, sharp eyes looking for clues throughout the room – finding none.

In the end, he took one last look at the bed where the mangled body of Mason lay contorted. His eyes were open wide frozen in terror at the time of death. The gold chain of a necklace hung from his unhinged jaw and draped over his chin. The locket buried deep in his throat.