

Magick & Misery

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Discarded Refuse

Doc felt his pulse quicken as the garbage truck trundled closer to his house. All sorts of people dreamed of committing murder and disposing of the body in the weekly trash, oh yeah, and getting away with it, but only he had the smarts and luck to pull it off.

It didn't hurt that Doc's house was on his Friday pickup route, either.

He didn't have the brains to be a professor or a scientist, sure, but he was clever enough to break away from the gang life before it got him killed. Smart enough to bag his cheating wife's pretty boy. She'd be next, when the time was right. Doc had also been sharp enough to take out a great life insurance policy on her. He wouldn't be hauling garbage for much longer.

His partner stopped the truck at each house and Doc climbed down from the railing, dumped the trash into the back, worked the machinery and swung back up. Four houses worth of work brought the truck to the end of his own driveway. The three neatly stacked cans gave no evidence of foul play. He jumped down from the truck and, as he lifted the first can, cast his eyes up at the bedroom window. The curtains were still drawn. Iris was still sleeping.

The first can really *was* household trash, as was the second. The third looked no different, but Doc grunted with the effort it took to lift it. The lid flapped open and the smell of newly-dead meat clogged his nose. He choked down the rising vomit and tumbled the can's contents into the back of the truck. The dead loverboy thumped in amongst the rest of the waste, and Doc smiled. It was all downhill from here.

Doc had known what was going on from the way Iris answered the phone the night before. She didn't sound businesslike at all, or like she typically sounded when speaking to a friend. If anything, it reminded him of the way she talked to him when they were dating. So he picked up the other line.

"He's leaving soon?" Of course it was a man.

"Yeah. He's meeting some guys from work at Taylor's." How many other times had this clown come over while he was at Taylor's watching the game with the guys and having a few pitchers? He went almost every Thursday, after all, and came home late.

"Will twenty minutes give him enough time to clear out?"

Clear out, Doc thought. *Cocky sonofabitch*. Already an idea was growing in his mind.

"Oh," he heard Iris gasp into the phone. Doc figured she was probably playing with herself. "It'll be plenty. You hurry."

Doc quietly hung up, yelled to Iris that he was going out, grabbed his coat and left the house through the garage. He grabbed a length of fishing line from his workbench on his way out and posted himself along the side of the house.

Iris's new man was nothing if not timely. He showed up twenty minutes later, just as Doc was stubbing out a cigarette. Doc waited until the bastard was halfway to the house and then began making scared-girl noises.

"Iris? What's going on?" Loverboy was immediately concerned.

"Mmmph! Mmph!" It was all Doc could do to keep from laughing and blowing the whole thing.

Loverboy followed the sounds of Iris's supposed voice around the side of the house, where Doc promptly garroted him from behind. He twisted and tried to scream, but twenty

minutes wasn't nearly enough time for Doc to cool off, and his rage made him more than a match for the other man. Once he was sure the pathetic sap was dead, he dragged him into the garage and wrapped him in thick, black plastic sheeting.

Then he had called his friend Mick for a ride to Taylor's and strolled down the block to meet him. A few hours later he weaved drunkenly back to the garage, wrestled Loverboy's carcass into the garbage can and rolled him out to the curb with the rest of the trash.

Iris was distraught when Doc came home from work Friday evening, as she had been that morning and the night before. She didn't want to talk about it, however; Doc had offered to listen several times. He wasn't bothered, though.

Doc knew there was no way in Hell Iris could have kept a long-term affair secret from him. That meant that, most likely, the only people who knew about it at all were himself, Loverboy and Iris. All he had to do was wait a few days, just to make sure the cops couldn't link Loverboy to Iris, then he could dispose of her without arousing suspicion.

Doc ate his supper in silence, thinking to himself. Then he cleaned up, read for an hour or so, climbed into bed and thought some more, until he fell asleep.

The next day was Saturday. Doc woke up late in the morning, padded into the bathroom to take a piss and then out into the kitchen. Iris was in there, wiping down counters and making breakfast on autopilot. She hadn't made any coffee. That was ok with Doc; Iris's coffee sucked. He started a pot and went outside to collect the morning paper.

The bottom-front page contained a story about Lewis Hayes, a junior partner with a well-known investment firm. No one had heard from him since Thursday night. The usual pundits put forth the usual ideas: Hayes had run off with embezzled company funds, or, like so many other yuppies, had been on the meaningful end of a coke deal gone wrong. Or both. Doc knew better. Hayes was a dead ringer for Loverboy. No wonder Iris was in a funk. Young, handsome, well-paid and moving up in the world. Doc chuckled and went back inside to get his coffee.

In church on Sunday, as the preacher droned on, Doc sat next to his wife, going over everything again. The more he thought it through, the more he figured it was Iris's time to go.

She had stepped out on him with an investment banker; hell, a freakin' *kid* right out of college; probably only a couple times. If anyone else knew about it and had tipped off the cops, they would have already come by the house searching for leads. That wouldn't have bothered Doc; his bases were covered and Loverboy was safely interred in the landfill. However, it would have made disposing of Iris rather inconvenient.

As it stood right now, his best bet was to buy her a bus ticket for that Thursday, to visit her sister or something. Then he could kill her that night and put her out with the trash. On Friday morning he'd go to work and dispose of her. He could tell the police he woke up in an empty bed; they would no doubt check to see if she had purchased any tickets. It would look like Iris had run off and either gotten lost, murdered or abducted.

"Amen," Doc muttered under his breath.

"You know, honey," Doc began as he pulled out of the church driveway, "You've been a bit down lately. Maybe a change of scenery would be good for you."

"Maybe." Iris stared, glassy eyed, straight ahead.

“I think you should go see your sister for a week or two. Take your mind off whatever’s bothering you.”

“Sure.”

Doc decided there was no time like the present, and altered their homeward course. Soon, they were at the bus station. He fished out his wallet and peeled off a ten and a pair of twenties.

“I should be able to drop you off Thursday night, after work. Go ahead and get a ticket. I’m gonna check out that record store across the street.”

Iris nodded, took the money and went in to buy her ticket. Doc jogged across the street and looked occupied. It wouldn’t do for anyone to see him taking Iris to buy her “getaway ticket.”

Soon he saw Iris shuffling back to the car. He slid back in behind the wheel, started the car and drove home.

“Hey, Doc,” Tim called when he walked into the break room on Monday morning. “This is funny.” Doc poured himself a cup of thin coffee and wandered over. Tim was standing with Josh, Doc’s usual partner.

“My dad wrestled a homeless dude last night,” Josh grinned.

“That’s kinda messed up,” Doc raised an eyebrow and sipped his java. “Was it for one of those camera crews that make guys fight over a sandwich or something?”

“Naw, man. My dad was walking to the store to get cigarettes and the dude jumped him. He probably lives in there,” Josh jerked his head in the direction of the landfill. “Dad said he looked and smelled worse than anything.”

“Well, I’m glad your dad’s ok.” Doc sucked his coffee down and pitched the cup into a rusty, dented garbage can. “Let’s take out the trash, huh?”

By the time Thursday night came around, Doc was nearly out of his mind from waiting. He had gone to work each morning, collected trash all day and came home every night. Iris had dinner on the table and Doc washed it down with three beers while watching television. Then he lulled himself to sleep by rehearsing his plan over and over again.

The can with her in it would be one of the last he’d ever have to toss.

Thursday night *did* come around before too long, and Doc was ready. The household trash was all bagged up in the garage, and the third can was empty and inviting. Most importantly, Iris was at the sink, washing dishes. She seemed a bit perkier this evening, Doc thought; probably because she was leaving that night.

Doc drained his beer, turned up the television a bit and uncoiled the bit of fishing line he had pocketed earlier that evening.

Iris resisted on instinct as Doc looped the line over her head and around her neck; reflexively, but weakly.

“I killed him, you know,” he whispered in her ear and yanked back on the line. She fought harder after that, and made noises like a small, scared animal. He pulled harder, and the line dug painfully into his flesh as well as hers. A trickle of blood oozed around the fishing line as Iris’s hands dropped from her neck to her sides and Iris herself dropped to the ground.

Doc checked her pulse. Nothing.

He went, whistling, to the garage to fetch some of the thick, plastic sheeting he’d used to wrap up Loverboy. He returned to the kitchen, spread the plastic out onto the floor and was about to roll Iris’s body onto it when he heard loud, slow knocking at the front door.

“No freakin’ way,” Doc cursed as he wrapped Iris haphazardly in the plastic and dragged her into the garage. After looking himself up and down for signs of his crime, he made his way to the door and eased it open.

A smelly, leprous vagrant shoved himself through the doorway. Doc yelled angrily as the man grabbed for his throat. He threw a punch, but his fist sunk into his attacker’s chest and the man kept coming. The invader’s silence unnerved Doc more than his smell, or the attack itself.

Doc fell backwards into the foyer, and the bum landed on top of him. Particles of rotten meat pelted his face as his attacker breathed heavily. Doc gagged and turned his head to vomit on the carpet. He had never hauled anything in his life that smelled as bad. He struggled for oxygen, felt momentarily relief and struck out at the man’s face. As he connected with wet, mushy flesh and the brittle bone beneath, he realized the guy looked familiar.

“Lewis Hayes?” Doc gasped. The creature muttered something that sounded like ‘Iris.’

“How the—” His dead wife’s rotting lover tightened his grip, and Doc passed out.

The Lewis-thing began to feast.

