

EULOGY FOR A STRANGER

by

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EXT. CITY MORGUE - DAY.

Josh stands outside looking at the city morgue.

INT. CITY MORGUE, BODY ROOM - DAY.

Josh and a MORGUE TECHNICIAN stand at a table. A sheet drapes a body. It's the room where the bodies are stored.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
You ever see a cadaver before?

JOSH
I've seen them at funerals.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
That should qualify you. Those are spit-shined and polished. This is a bit different. Ready?

Josh looks a little green.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Better not lock your knees.

JOSH
You're not helping.

The morgue technician pulls the sheet back. It's the bum.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Is this him?

Josh stares at the body. The technician turns to catch him.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Come to daddy.

Josh faints.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
(to corpse)
Don't take it personally.

INT. CITY MORGUE, TECHNICIAN'S OFFICE - DAY.

The technician waves some smelling salts under Josh's nose. He comes to, disoriented and still looking faint.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Drink this slowly.

Hands Josh a cup of water.

JOSH
What is it?

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Embalming fluid. It's all we have.

Josh blanches, looks like he's going to get sick.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Just kidding. It's water.

JOSH
You're kind of sick.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
It's my humor. Knocks 'em dead
every time.
(beat)
So, is that your guy?

JOSH
Yeah.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Didn't expect anyone to come
looking for that one? You know
him?

JOSH
Sort of. What's going to happen to
him?

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Depends. We dispose of the ones
that aren't claimed.

JOSH
Don't you try to identify them?

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
We follow the standard routine,
but if the person didn't have a
record, no fingerprints on file,
stuff like that, we won't get far.

JOSH

So, they go unidentified. The police don't even look for relatives.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN

How can they? They're not going to spend time tracking someone down unless there's a crime or something obvious. Besides, most relatives, if there are any, probably don't want to see these people. There are reasons they're on the street. The family probably buried them a long time ago.

Josh thinks for a moment.

JOSH

Only a relative can claim someone?

MORGUE TECHNICIAN

Well, there has to be some sort of relationship the law recognizes or something. They may be dead, but we don't just give 'em away.

He can tell what Josh is thinking.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN

It's none of my business, but was there something going on between you two... an attachment? I mean, it's okay if there was.

JOSH

No. No! Our paths crossed. That's all. I just hate to see him disposed of.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN

Whatever you say. Well, I gotta get back to work. Unless there's something else.

JOSH

No. Nothing.

The technician gets up. Josh leaves.

EXT. CITY MORGUE - DAY.

Josh stands outside the morgue. There's a small city park nearby. Josh sees an OLD LADY sitting on a bench. She looks lonely. Josh watches her—the wheels are turning in his head. He turns and heads back into the morgue.

INT. CITY MORGUE - DAY.

Josh walks up. The technician is doing paperwork.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Back to see some more bodies?

JOSH
What if a relative showed up?

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
We'd need some sort of proof, but they could claim him.

JOSH
I was thinking: Could you hold him awhile?

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
We're not a long-term storage facility—more like a mini fridge than a deep freezer.

Josh pulls out his wallet and takes out some cash, holding it out for the technician.

JOSH
Could you... put this one on ice?

The technician eyes the cash.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN
Things happen pretty quickly in these cases.

Josh sweetens the bribe.

MORGUE TECHNICIAN

Maybe I can see what I can do.
Just a few days though.

(winking)

We are the city government, the
model of efficiency. Paperwork
never gets misplaced.

He pantomimes hiding some of the documents he's working on
and takes the cash. He hands Josh a bag.

JOSH

What's this?

MORGUE TECHNICIAN

His personal belongings. Nothing
of value. But... do what you want
with it. We'd just throw it away.

Josh pulls out his camera phone.

JOSH

Oh, can I take a picture?

MORGUE TECHNICIAN

We don't usually provide
souvenirs.

(beat)

Better let me take it.

INT. JOSH AND MARK'S CONDO - DAY.

Josh comes in. He quickly stashes the bag with the bum's
stuff in the coat closet. Mark is watching a football game.

MARK

How's mom?

Josh gives him a dirty look. Mark watches the game out of
the corner of his eye while he talks.

MARK

Okay, no danger of that. You'd
think she'd stop calling you. Why
didn't you turn your phone off?

JOSH

Just forgot.

MARK

Pretty basic. It seems you forgot a lot of things.

(beat, distracted by the game.)

What are they thinking? Run the ball! You're not a passing team. You want to win this game!

JOSH

You really care who wins?

MARK

How can you say that? We do have an investment on the line.

JOSH

How we doing?

MARK

We're ahead. Course, if this game continues like this, we may only break even for the day.

JOSH

Better than losing.

MARK

It's more fun to see our stash grow. With a little help from my favorite bookie, we should have quite a bit set aside for our own practice. Hard to beat the ROI when you're winning.

JOSH

(half-heartedly)

Go team.

Mark measures him up.

MARK

That bum still bugging you?

JOSH

Shouldn't it?

MARK

Look, he probably was already having a heart attack already. We could have as easily found him facedown in our garbage cans. You gotta get over this—a little professional detachment.

JOSH

There was nothing professional about this.

MARK

It's not what you're making it out to be either. Bums die.

Josh turns and walks down the hall.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Josh sits on his bed, staring at the bag of personal belongings. He dumps it out, spilling the odds-and-ends a bum would find on the street.

He sifts through the pile—a wallet-size photo catches his eye. It's of an attractive teenage girl. He also sees a small present—the paper is old and faded, with some tears revealing the box underneath.

He puts the photo and present on his night stand and rakes the rest of the stuff into the trash can.

INT. JOSH'S OFFICE - DAY.

Josh is just shuffling papers around on his desk. He pulls his phone out and looks at the picture. Mark pops his head in the door. Josh flips the phone shut quickly.

MARK

Got the draft?

Josh stares at him.

MARK

The Fusion deposition list.

JOSH

Oh, a, it's not done yet.

MARK

Not done. What've you been doing?

JOSH
Working.

MARK
Apparently not fast enough. Get a
move on. We've got a deadline.

Josh plays with his phone.

JOSH
I've got a lot of deadlines.

EXT. JOSH AND MARK'S OFFICE - DAY.

Josh wanders around. He notices more homeless and lonely,
forlorn people than usual. He stands in the shadows and
studies them. Josh pulls his phone out and dials.

JOSH
Christine. Josh. Something's come
up. Can you cover for me?
(beat)
I don't know. Awhile.

EXT. JOSH AND MARK'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY.

Josh has his tie loose and his sleeves rolled up. He's a
bit tentative—at first but less so as the day wears on—as
he approaches people to see if they've seen the bum. He's
always shows the photo to people carefully. Reactions vary
from shock to indifference to morbid curiosity.

MONTAGE
—Josh approaches a MIDDLE-AGE
WOMAN:

JOSH
Excuse me, ma'am.

The woman looks at him warily.

JOSH
I don't mean to bother you, but
are you from around this
neighborhood?

MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN

Yes.

JOSH

Great. I'm wondering if you might have seen someone. He's actually a homeless person.

MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN

I don't know any homeless people.

JOSH

Okay, but maybe you've seen him around. Unfortunately, he passed away on Sunday.

Josh shows her the picture.

JOSH

Have you ever seen this man?

MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN

Get away from me!

JOSH

It's okay. I just want to know if you've seen him.

The woman is repulsed. She pulls out pepper spray and takes a shot at Josh, who barely avoids being hit.

JOSH

Whoa!

He's backpedaling as the lady takes another shot.

MIDDLE-AGE WOMAN

Police! Police!

-Josh approaches a YOUNG GUY:

JOSH

Hey, gotta sec.

YOUNG GUY

Sure.

JOSH

You from around the neighborhood?

YOUNG GUY

Yeah, I hang here.

JOSH

I was wondering if you've ever seen this guy. He's a homeless person who died yesterday.

Josh shows him the pic. The guy looks at it and then starts to smile and get a more animated.

YOUNG GUY

Man, that's good crazy. Is this one of those shows?

JOSH

What?

YOUNG GUY

You know, hidden camera. Is someone trying to punk me?

JOSH

No...

YOUNG GUY

(interrupting)

Greg, this has gotta be you. I'm on to you.

At this point, sometimes a bum is seen in the background watching Josh. Josh will come to know him as FRANK.

-Josh approaches a TEENAGE GIRL:

JOSH

Excuse me. You from around here?

TEENAGE GIRL

Who wants to know?

JOSH

Name's Josh. This may seem a little weird, but I'm looking for someone.

TEENAGE GIRL

Aren't we all.

JOSH

Maybe there's a chance you've seen him.

TEENAGE GIRL

Is he cute?

JOSH

I don't think you'd think so. He's kind of old.

TEENAGE GIRL

Old guys can be cute.

JOSH

And he's kind of dead.

The girl's eyes brighten.

TEENAGE GIRL

Really.

Josh holds up his phone.

JOSH

I've got a picture.

TEENAGE GIRL

Let me see.

He shows her the picture. She's fascinated and actually takes the phone out of Josh's hand.

TEENAGE GIRL

Cool. You got anymore of these?

JOSH

What?

TEENAGE GIRL

Pics of dead people.

JOSH

No. No, it's my only one.

TEENAGE GIRL

I've got a few.

JOSH

(reaching for the phone)
Um, I've got to be going.

—Josh approaches a MIDDLE-AGE MAN:

JOSH
Excuse me, sir.

MIDDLE-AGE MAN
Yes.

JOSH
I was just wondering if you might
have seen someone.

MIDDLE-AGE MAN
Haven't seen anyone.

JOSH
I don't mean right now. Maybe you
can identify him—a homeless guy in
his fifties or so.

MIDDLE-AGE MAN
Not much to go on.

JOSH
I've got a picture.

Josh shows him the picture.

MIDDLE-AGE MAN
(unfazed)
These homeless people—they all
kind of look the same, don't they?