

Conway Morgue

Aaron Hilltop
November 19, 1986
11:17 pm

The moon was the only night light bright enough to hide the horrors of the morgue. Being hired as the night shift mortician was a nightmare to most people, but I didn't seem to mind. As I waited for my new coworker to arrive, I inspected the dull room I had entered. The walls were extremely run down, the eggshell white paint chipping away to reveal the dingy yellow color underneath. The black and white checkered floor was about 40 years outdated, rotten. The corners of each tile were chipping away. I assumed the heater was either broken or turned off because I was frigid and directly underneath the vent.

I examined the clothes I was wearing and shuttered at the thought of what might soon cover my smock. I had no idea who I might be studying or how they died. All I knew was that the only thing separating me from a dead body was the huge, musty curtain in the middle of the room. Bleach washed out my brown pants to match the shirt, but the white smock was pristine, obviously never used. My fears came true when my partner walked in with faded brown blotches over her yellowing smock.

"Hi, you must be Aaron! I'm Bonnie," The most chipper woman I'd ever been in the presence of greeted me with a handshake so forceful that she shook my entire arm. "It's truly remarkable to meet you! Have you ever had a job at a morgue before? It doesn't matter! I've been one for years, so you're in great hands!" I was thrown off that she didn't even let me answer, but I've always been shy, and a new job working with dead people wasn't exactly an easy conversation location.

Bonnie began to wash her hands while telling me I should observe her while she examined the first body and verbally walked me through it. The goal was to learn as much as possible before having hands-on experience. Bonnie tried to make me laugh by suggesting that tearing the curtain open would be a “grand reveal” and counted down from three, but she was the only one giggling. I still sat there, silently, awaiting the scene behind the curtain.

“Oh my God, what happened?” Bonnie exclaimed suddenly; she gestured towards the wobbly metal table, which displayed nothing but an empty body bag. “In my 13 years, I’ve never seen a missing body, especially not when the bag is present!” Bonnie was borderline screaming now, and the whole room filled with her booming voice.

“Aaron, I hate even to ask this, but you didn’t have anything to do with this, did you?” I was speechless. This was possibly the worst way my first day on the job could be going. With all of Bonnie’s yelling and the confusion from the situation, my head began to throb. I was never the type to get nervous stomach aches, but the most insignificant thing could trigger a raging headache.

“Oh my God, Aaron, I’m so sorry. I shouldn’t have accused you of anything. God, I’m such a fool,” Bonnie must’ve seen the soreness on my face. My temples felt heavier than ever, and I was so thankful when Bonnie handed me a glass of water. “Maybe this is a sign for us to get to know each other. I saw your job application; it said you were in the Army?” she asked as she threw the empty bag in the trash near me.

“When I was young, I always wanted to serve this country by being a nurse for wounded soldiers,” Bonnie revealed like it was a statement she had said many times before. “I honestly thought up until high school that I would be an excellent nurse. It wasn’t until college that I realized that my fascination didn’t lie within healing the sick, rather than examining those

already gone.” Her origin story kept me curious but also startled me. It was terrifying to think Bonnie picked the most morbid career because it was a passion. I wasn’t exactly sure what led me here, but being a mortician was anything but a passion of mine.

During the Vietnam War, I watched my closest friends die while I was sentenced to the fate of living a life with their dying screams taunting me as I slept. Even now, the sound of a gun firing echoed through my head. It’s been years since the Vietnam War ended, but I still refused to pursue anyone romantically until I could get my mind together. No one deserves to deal with me or the baggage I silently carry.

“My family always asked me how I could love such a lonely career,” Bonnie continued, “But I’m not lonely. Aaron, I find comfort in the dead and consider them friends. I even love them.” She was sinister. I decided that staying in this room any longer would potentially be incriminating. I didn’t know much about Bonnie, but everything I did know made me panic.

As I planned my escape, I realized that I felt stiff. It was not just an “it hurts to move” type but difficult to move.

The water.

The story.

The “love.”

Had Bonnie poisoned me so I could be her next dead friend? Despite wanting to scream, I knew that making any sudden noises would be a dead giveaway to me discovering her plan. I moved my eyes around the room to see if I could spot any way to escape. I saw a wheelchair about 15 feet away from me, but I wasn’t confident I’d get to it in time. The door Bonnie entered through was across the room from me, and there was a door close to me as well, but I was sure it

was a closet. While scanning the room, my eyes fell on the body bag in the trash. I glanced closely at the tag and read it.

Conway Morgue of South Carolina
Date of Death: *11/17/1996*
Name: *Aaron Hilltop*
Cause of Death: *Gunshot to Head *suicide**
Doctor: *Bonnie Nilsen*

I looked back at Bonnie, realizing I was now entirely immobilized, as she leaned into me.

“Sometimes, I *only* talk to dead people.”

Doug Bishop
November 19, 1986
11:34 pm

I hate the midnight shift. Being a security guard for a morgue wasn't too bad, especially when I only worked morning shifts. But Bruce, the usual night guard, called in, and I wouldn't let Bruce get in trouble for not getting his shift covered.

My invisible torment became a reality when I heard Bonnie Nilsen laughing to herself behind a closed door. I figured maybe she was making herself laugh with her own commentary, or she was entertaining herself with memories to make her shift fly by faster. I stood outside her door to hear her mumbles. She was for sure talking to someone, although I couldn't hear a response. I pressed my ear against the door and listened to her whispers.

“You have the bluest eyes I've ever seen. Beautiful. Like someone took the Atlantic ocean and placed drops of the water in your eyes.” What the hell? Did she bring a date here? To a goddamn morgue? I grabbed the handle and whipped it open.

Holy. Shit.