

Newsworthy

Two guys walk into a bar.  
One of them's a dead man.

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INT. DIVE BAR - MIDDAY

The kind of joint you only walk into if you know somebody, with nuts in a bowl on the bar that everyone knows not to eat.

A weathered, ex-marine looking OLD MAN sits at the bar, the 20oz beer in his hand half empty. He stares up at the TV.

In waltzes a YOUNG GUY, 30s, dirty like he worked all day. He sits at the end of the bar, grabs some nuts from the bowl.

YOUNG GUY  
(to bartender)  
Hey Jim. Pint of lager? Thanks.

He sees the old man staring up at the TV. He glances in the same direction - The news is on, volume is low.

YOUNG GUY  
(to old man)  
Anything interesting?

OLD MAN  
Same shit, different day.

YOUNG GUY  
Figures.

OLD MAN  
All they ever talk about anymore is who wore what, who said what, Facebook, twatter...

YOUNG GUY  
(smirks)  
You mean twitter?

OLD MAN  
...the fuck cares? This ain't news. There ain't nothing worth reporting in this damn town, they gotta report garbage to fill up airtime.

YOUNG GUY  
You're not from around here, are you?

OLD MAN  
(glares)  
Not originally, no.

YOUNG GUY

Where are you originally from?

OLD MAN

Someplace that mattered. Where news was actually worth reporting because stuff actually happened.

The bartender slides a pint to the Young Guy, acknowledges it with a head nod.

YOUNG GUY

Like what?

OLD MAN

The fuck I look like? The internet?

YOUNG GUY

I'm sorry.  
I've just lived in this town my whole life. Nothing interesting ever happens unless it's on the big screen. No offense, but you look like you've seen your share of shit and it'd be refreshing to hear something real for a change, ya know?

JIM THE BARTENDER

(chiming in)

What about that guy from the 70s, the one who hijacked an airplane or something? Made off with a couple hundred thousand? What's his name...

YOUNG GUY

D.B. Cooper?

JIM THE BARTENDER

Yeah! He lived near here I heard.

OLD MAN

Horse shit. D.B. Cooper was too clever to have come from any sort of shithole this far west of the Mississippi, let alone this shithole.

YOUNG GUY

I gotta agree with the old man, I highly doubt D.B. Cooper lived near

(MORE)

YOUNG GUY (CONT'D)

here. Nah, this seems more like a witness protection town.

JIM THE BARTENDER

Now that you mention it, it wouldn't surprise me if there were a couple wise guys in hiding around here. My neighbor says he works waste management, but I never seen him leave his house, other than to walk around the block. Wise guy...

YOUNG GUY

Fuckin' wise guy....

An awkward pause. Jim goes back to milling around the bar, the young guy swigs his beer. The dull noise from the TV hangs heavily in the air like the cigarette smoke.

OLD MAN

Ever hear of The Gravedigger?

YOUNG GUY

The who?

OLD MAN

The Gravedigger.

YOUNG GUY

Can't say that I have.

OLD MAN

Of course not, 'cause the news out here is bullshit.

YOUNG GUY

So who is he?

A doorbell RINGS.

INT./EXT. BERGEN FUNERAL HOME - MIDNIGHT

A large, ornate door opens to six BURLY MEN in suits, the biggest one front and center.

BIGGEST BURLY MAN

You Bergen?

AZRAEL BERGEN, 50-something, a meek and timid man compared to the mass of humanity standing before him.

He nods, wiping sleep from his eyes.

## BIGGEST BURLY MAN

We got a situation we were told you could help us with.

He steps aside.

A blue tarp tied with twine lies on the porch. It's stained with blood.

Azrael sighs.

INT. BERGEN RESIDENCE - MINUTES LATER

Light spills into a darkened bedroom. EZRA, 23, stirs in his bed. Azrael jostles him awake.

INT. BERGEN FUNERAL HOME - EMBALMING ROOM- LATER

The twisted corpse of a man lies on the slab. Azrael slowly and methodically cleans him.

Ezra sits at a desk just outside, filling out the death certificate, plot purchase, and obituary for "William Marley, loving husband and devoted father." He logs the expenses.

EXT. CEMETERY - EARLY MORNING

Azrael and Ezra finish shovelling the last piles of dirt onto the new grave. They place some old flowers from another grave to finish it off.

EXT. BERGEN FUNERAL HOME - MORNING

The kind of place my mother would die to get into. Literally.

At the top of the steps, they notice a brown paper bag. Azrael reaches in and pulls out a wad of cash. He fans it, counting as he goes.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Azrael and Ezra Bergen. Responsible for nearly half the men in the Oak Ridge cemetery. Not necessarily for their deaths, but for something they so desperately needed in life. Anonymity.

INT. BERGEN FUNERAL HOME - DAY

A legitimate viewing is taking place. An old woman,

someone's grandmother maybe, obviously loved. Azrael and Ezra are overseeing.

In walk four BURLY MEN, clearly out of place. One signs the guest book. Azrael runs over to them, one whispers in his ear. They all leave.

Ezra watches from the corner of his eye.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Back in those days, the mob controlled most of the town. Everyone knew who they were without knowing who they were. Azrael was one of their many pawns. They had a good slave-master relationship.

INT. BERGEN FUNERAL HOME - OFFICE - EVENING

Ezra sits behind the desk, staring at a pile of cash paperwork in front of him.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Ezra just fell into the family business. I always thought he had the better part of the gig though. His job was to make people disappear. And he was good at his job.

AZRAEL (O.S.)

Ezra! Come in here.

Ezra snaps back into reality. He gets up from the desk and enters -

INT. BERGEN FUNERAL HOME - EMBALMING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Azrael stands over the slab, a naked beaten body staring coldly back at him.

AZRAEL

What's his story?

EZRA

(gives him a once over)

Trevor Jones. Construction worker. Killed in a bus accident. No kin.

AZRAEL

(defeated)

That works for me. Write it up.

Ezra turns to leave.

AZRAEL

I don't think I can do this anymore.

EZRA

Do what?

AZRAEL

This. All of it. Death. Since your mother...it's too much.

(beat)

Do you think you're ready?

Ezra nods.

Azrael takes off his rubber apron and sets it on the slab. He wipes his brow, then places his hand on Ezra's shoulder.

AZRAEL

It's all yours, kid.

(beat)

Don't muck it up.

INT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK - DAY

Marble walls and pillars. The type of place the Rockefellers probably own.

Ezra, in a suit, tie, and slicked back hair sits down at a BANKER'S desk.

BANKER

How can I help you today, sir?

EZRA

I'd like to open a business account.

BANKER

Wonderful! What type of business?

EZRA

Sole proprietor. It's a landscaping company. We have a big contract with the local cemetery.

BANKER

Oh, must be Oak Ridge, that's not too far. My whole family is buried there. It's nice. And what's your name?



EZRA

Trevor Jones.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

In addition to handling the family business, Ezra also handled the books. He could bury just about anything, including shady business dealings.

EXT. CEMETERY - EARLY MORNING

Ezra shovels his last pile of dirt onto a fresh grave.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

It was an opening he couldn't pass up. An opportunity to make more money off the mob's money.

He picks up his shovel and heads towards a brand new BMW.

INT. BERGEN FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Another funeral. Another old soul. Ezra stands in the back quietly.

JAMES RANDOLF, 50s and dressed like "The Most Interesting Man in the World," enters the funeral home flanked by four large BURLY MEN. He says a prayer by the casket and signs the guest book. He approaches Ezra.

MR. RANDOLF

Ezra Bergen?

Ezra acknowledges with a smile.

MR. RANDOLF

You sure your name's not Trevor?  
You look like this guy I know.  
Trevor Jones. You heard of him?

The smile fades.

MR. RANDOLF

Must be having a senior moment.  
From a distance you look just like him.

Ezra nods.

MR. RANDOLF

So, tell me, how's the funeral business? Keeping busy, I hope.

EZRA

We get by.

MR. RANDOLF

It must be good. I see you got a brand new BMW out there. Looks good. Must get you a lot of pussy.

A LITTLE OLD LADY overhears, and turns to scowl.

MR. RANDOLF

Speaking of pussy, how's your father?

EZRA

He's enjoying retirement.

MR. RANDOLF

That's good, that's good. Gives you a chance to branch out a bit. Tell me about that new business venture of yours.

EZRA

Landscaping. Grounds keeping for the cemetery.

MR. RANDOLF

New management, new perks, eh?

He nudges Ezra, then gets close enough to strike the fear of God in him.

MR. RANDOLF

Listen kid, nothing happens in this town without my knowing or my say so.

(beat)

Next time, check with me first.

(beat)

It's a good thing you got going here. Hate to see anything bad happen to it.

They leave. Ezra stands alone.

LITTLE OLD LADY

(weeping)

Excuse me sir, do you have any more tissues?

He grabs some off the end table, right in front of them, and hands them to her.

INT./EXT. BERGEN RESIDENCE - MORNING

Two SUITS stand on the front porch, FBI badges in hand in plain view. The shorter of the two KOCKS on the door. Ezra answers in his robe, clearly not expecting anyone.

SHORT SUIT

Mr. Jones?

EZRA

(shocked)

I'm sorry, who are you looking for?

TALLER SUIT

We're looking for a Mr. Trevor Jones. We understand he has a grounds keeping contract with this funeral home.

EZRA

Yeah, we uh, we do. But I haven't seen him in a while. Haven't had much work for him lately. Is he in trouble or something?

SHORT SUIT

We just want to ask him a few questions regarding his business practices. We got a tip he may be here this morning.

He pulls out his business card.

SHORT SUIT

Next time you see him or need his services, give us a call, will ya?

EZRA

Yeah, sure.

The suits turn to leave. As they're heading down the steps, Ezra notices a black Cadillac drive by slowly, the driver glaring at him.

Ezra shuts the door as casually as he can.

INT. BERGEN FUNERAL HOME - OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ezra frantically shovels papers into a briefcase. Ledgers, files, you name it, he grabs it.

He rips open a file on his desk labeled MARK HENRY. Inside is a death certificate, plot purchase, made-up history and

identity for MARK HENRY. In it's place, he leaves a file labeled EZRA BERGEN.

He leaves through the -

INT. BERGEN FUNERAL HOME - EMBALMING ROOM

- where a stiff is laid out on the table. His face is bashed in completely.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Everyone said he got what was coming to him, stealing from the mob and all. Everyone thought James Randolph did it, or at least had a hand in it, but nothing was ever proven. It never is with the mob.

INT. DIVE BAR - AFTERNOON

OLD MAN

That's the kind of shit that was newsworthy in my day, where I'm from. Not this watercooler gossip.

YOUNG GUY

Huh...did they ever find him?

OLD MAN

Kind of hard to find someone who's already dead, isn't it?

YOUNG GUY

Yeah but he can't be dead. He's too good at hiding things.

The Old Guy shrugs.

YOUNG GUY

And all over a little threatened tax evasion. That's what, five years? Ten years?

(beat)

Damn.

(beat)

Well, I'm closin' out.

(to bartender)

See you tomorrow Jim.

(to old man)

Thanks for the story, old man.

He leaves.

OLD MAN

I'm going to cash out too.

He slides his credit card across the bar. The name on the card reads MARK HENRY.

EXT. DIVE BAR - DAY

The Young Guy gets into a van parked across the street.

INT. VAN - MOMENTS LATER

It's a surveillance set up. A GUY WITH HEADPHONES looks up.

GUY WITH HEADPHONES

Well?

YOUNG GUY

It's him. It has to be.

THE END.