

Annoying Corpse

Mr. Nader was morbidly still in his rocking chair throughout the vengeance of Rambo. He didn't even blink when Rambo pierced the villains' bodies with his razor sharp dagger and his serenity was not disturbed when the blood of the ruthless mercenaries splashed all over the widescreen television screen. Judging by his frozen expression, his daughter Jennifer, the only one in the room with him at the time concluded her father was dead. She extended her entire torso, leaned over the couch to catch a rare glimpse of death in action.

"The movie is over," she whispered in his father's ears.

The old man's gloomy silence was reassuring.

"I said the movie's over." This time she shrieked in a higher pitch tone.

Mr. Nader didn't respond.

"Ana Maria, Where are you?" she shouted.

A few seconds later, their Cuban housemaid rushed inside.

"Yes Ms. Jennifer?"

"Call 911, hurry up. Call 911."

"Why? Do you feel sick senorita?"

"Not me, father, look, he's gone."

"To where? I don't understand."

"He's dead."

Ana Maria burst in laughter and her oversize breasts convulsed in tune with her melodic glee.

"Why are you laughing? Don't you see my father is dead?"

"He's not dead, that's how he lives senorita." Her response sounded sarcastic to the young woman.

"Don't you argue with me and do as I say. Call 911 and report it immediately."

"I'm an illegal alien senorita, they don't respond to my emergency calls." Her breast went through another rhythmic motion.

"Do as I say." She ordered.

“Si señorita.”

“Where is my mother?”

“She had a massage therapy session this afternoon. Usually she’s back by now but today it took longer. She must be getting it good this time.” She grinned.

Jennifer grabbed her cell phone and pressed her mother’s speed dial.

‘These boots are made for walking, and that’s just what they’ll do one of these days these boots are gonna walk all over you.’ Mrs. Nader’s phone vibrated to this jolly ringtone. Both women’s attention diverted to the crystal bowl on the coffee table. Ana Maria fished the phone out of the bowl and paraded it in the air as she walked out of the room, “she’s getting a massage alright.” She mumbled.

Once a week, Mrs. Nader forgets to take her phone when she leaves the house. During this time she cannot be reached by any means. According to Ana Maria’s recollections, in recent months, this scheduled loss of memory happened on Wednesday afternoons. During the four years of her employment at the Nader’s family, she’d learned of a few younger men who triggered Mrs. Nader’s loss of memory.

When the phone stopped singing, Mr. Nader wheezed and his right eyelid jerked like the sleeping alligator in the swamp, “Hum.”

“Well, I’ve got to go daddy. I have things to do.” She sighed in disappointment.

“Hum.”

That day, contrary to his daughter’s high hope, Mr. Nader didn’t die. A couple of hours later after she left, Mr. Nader came out of his routine daily hibernation to add more time to his eighty two years of age. Staying in this state of limbo is how he lived so to speak for the past few years. Although his persistence in clinging to his uneventful life was considered unreasonable by his loved ones, no one in his family had the heart to confront him. His grave was dug deep and ready to embrace its rightful owner yet Mr. Nader was basking on the brink refusing to surrender to inevitable and no one in his family had the grit to nudge him over.

His belated demise finally arrived in a lovely spring morning. When flowers blossomed and the air was inundated with intoxicating aroma and the singing birds sang in harmony with the melody of life, Mr. Nader’s heart stopped pumping blood and he went into a cardiac arrest. There was no time or need to rush him to hospital as his close friend Dr. Jenkins, a prominent physician happened to be at his side that morning on a house call.

He didn’t die alone. Ana Maria, his maid and only confidant was holding his hand at the time of his departure from the material world. His wife of the last thirty five years was also at his deathbed at a distance of course. She had cancelled her prior engagement on a whim the last minute probably to witness her husband’s passing. Jennifer however arrived only after she was given assurances by Dr.

Jenkins that her father was clinically deceased. Mr. Nader's only sister, Carol and her husband were also called in after the fact.

An hour later in the presence of fresh corpse lying in the bed waiting for proper procedure to be carried out, the Nader family ordered in lunch from a French bakery, the only Bistro, the entire family agreed upon after half hour of bickering in these somber moments. Mr. Nader did not get involved in the family feud.

The widow ordered the tender breast of chicken with mushroom sauce served with steamed broccoli containing not more than 630 calories. Jennifer ordered the Marinated chicken breast, melted Swiss with a hint of Dijon mustard on a sourdough roll. And Carol settled with a Tomato Basil Soup and Chicken Pesto salad. She refrained from ordering the high calorie bowtie pasta only after her husband tactfully pinched her ass under the table reminding her of the unwanted consequences of a high calorie meal.

Twenty five minutes later, as the family was enjoying the hearty meal in presence of a corpse, they witnessed Mr. Nader's disgusting display of defiance to death. His failed heart suddenly kicked into action and pumped blood to his male organ and gave his mast a final rise under the white shroud to form a perfect sail for his ship of life to embark on a journey into the turbulent ocean of death. The perplexed audience experienced a mélange of eerie emotions including but not limited to horror, repulsion and utter embarrassment by the obscene gesture demonstrated by the ill-mannered corpse. Although the physician on sight promptly provided the scientific explanation behind this spectacle, his clarification failed to alleviate the survivors' shared repugnance. The morbid revolt lasted about one hour before the culprit organ receded to its original state. Mr. Nader finally lost his lust for life and retreated to eternal peace.

Despite the unconventional nature of his posthumous exhibition, Mr. Nader's family unanimously believed Mr. Nader's resilience and spirited grand finale overshadowed his entire lackluster life. Although his death had a technical glitch, it was final and a done deal by all accounts.

Mr. Nader was a very organized man. Since in the last few years of his life, he had nothing to do but to prepare for his death and arrange for his funeral, thoughtfully he left no unexpected challenges for his survivors. He even wrote his obituary to run in local newspaper and a humorous eulogy. He also had an elaborate will prepared by his attorney that did not leave any one of his family members and friends unrewarded. His good fortune was generously distributed among his loved ones. When the executor of his will distributed his wealth, every recipient was pleasantly surprised as they received more than they expected. Ana Maria received Mr. Nader's favorite Rolex watch and cuff links collection that worth well over fifty thousand dollars. "I like to wear this Rolex even when I'm dead." Mr. Nader once told his maid. Although Ana Maria conveyed Mr. Nader's wish to his family before the funeral, his wish was overruled by his survivors. The maid had no say in the matter.

On the first year anniversary of Mr. Nader's passing, his entire family came together and went through an elaborate preparation for weeks to throw a lavish banquet to commemorate a loving husband, a great father and a remarkable friend. Mrs. Nader not only arranged a caterer to provide a range of hot and cold dishes, salads and desserts, she prepared her late husband's favorite, the crawfish etouffee. In addition to two hired professional banquet staff, everyone in the family volunteered for a task to ensure the party's a success. Jennifer was responsible for the coat room and coffee. Carol was in charge of music and dessert. Charles Atkins, the former business partner of Mr. Nader's tended the bar and served a range of alcoholic beverages. Dr. Jenkins was the announcer and the entertainer in chief.

The party was going well and nothing was out of ordinary until Dr. Jenkins noticed the turnout was one hundred percent plus one. Later in the night among the large number of guests, there was one uninvited visitor, the man whose departure was the very reason this party's guests were to celebrate tonight. That night Mr. Nader appeared unannounced with unkempt hair and dressed like the Mahatma Gandhi himself. The corpse mingled with guests indifferent to their utter astonishment, shook hand with some with his grown fingernails like lobster claws. The party crasher seemed a little pale and confused. Although his unannounced visit was discourteous, no one in the family considered his sudden appearance an effort to ruin their lovely evening yet how could it not?

The uninvited guest sat in his favorite Oriental redwood chair with his legs crossed totally oblivious to the fact he was dead and had no longer a place among the living. He fished an unfiltered Camel through the layers of the white shroud in which he was wrapped and meticulously lit the cigarette. He puffed as if there was no tomorrow and discharged the toxic fume in the air as if he had no regard for the health hazard of the secondhand smoking.

Jimmy his youngest nephew walked up to him and asked, "Would you like a drink, a glass of Sangria uncle?"

"With a double shot of Rum on the side please," the corpse responded.

When Jimmy departed to fill the order, the cadaverous eyes of Mr. Nader's scanned the crowded room. He felt a little dizzy as if he had a jetlag after a long overseas flight. His wasn't sure if his vertigo was caused by the nicotine or death.

"And you decided to pop in willy-nilly?" Charles Atkins, his former business associate bluntly asked Mr. Nader while standing by his chair looking down on him. His absurd question was uncalled for, Mr. Nader thought.

"Where is my wife?" Mr. Nader asked as he was fixing to get out of his chair.

"Is that your father?" Mark, Jennifer's boyfriend asked her pointing his finger.

"This is so embarrassing." Jennifer sighed. "My father is making a fool out of himself," she continued.

"Mary, where the hell are you?" Mr. Nader raised his voice.

The situation escalated when the emaciated corpse called upon all guests, “party is over, you’ll have a good night.”

Ana Maria rushed out of the kitchen to see the cause of commotion.

“You sit down and relax, let me go get you wife.” Dr. Jenkins said, “you should not move in your condition. That’s my professional advice.” He knew his former patient too well to reason with him.

Ana Maria stormed back to the kitchen, “your husband is in the leaving room asking for you,” she told Mrs. Nader. The Doctor followed the maid.

“We don’t have anything to say to each other,” Mrs. Nader shrieked.

“Mary! He was your husband for thirty five years, I think it’s better if you come out and talk to him,” Doctor reasoned.

“He was, was. The marriage contract is automatically dissolved after one spouse is deceased.”

“The old people who refuse to die are annoying and the ones who return from dead are nothing short of obnoxious.” Dr. Jenkins rolled his eyes.

“Be reasonable Mom. At least see what he wants,” Jennifer said.

“I don’t have time for this tonight. I have more than fifty guests to tend to,” she flung her hands in the air and opened the oven door to check on her Crawfish Etouffee.

“What do you want me to tell him?” Mrs. Nader asked Dr. Jenkins. “How dare he shows up tonight after one year? Just make sure he doesn’t create a scene for now.” She was furious

“Well, first of all we have to contain him to avoid an embarrassment. Let me think.” Doctor Jenkins pensively said.

“Don’t you have a tranquilizer in your medicine bag? Sleeping pill or something?” Charles asked.

“He hasn’t eaten for a year and he’s drunk. These drugs don’t work on empty stomach and they always react to alcohol.” Doctor said.

“We have a crisis at hand, this is a fiasco,” Carol’s husband shrieked.

“We’ve got to do something Doctor,” Carol said.

“I know what we should do. We should have an intervention for Daddy,” Jennifer suggested.

“Intervention? He’s not alcoholic; he’s not on drugs; he’s dead.” Mrs. Nader said.

“I say we as a family should confront him, to make him understand how his return is hurting everyone around him,” Jennifer explained.

“He must have unresolved issues, some loose ends perhaps.” Carol agreed.

“If intervention works on alcoholics and drug addicts, it should work on the dead too,” Jennifer continued.

“That’s not actually a bad idea, who better than his family and friends can put a closure on his life.” Doctor Jenkins argued.

“But the purpose of an intervention is to get the troubled individual to go into a rehab, to get professional help. Last year we did the same thing for my cousin Francisco.” Ana Maria intervened.

“Did it work?” Carol asked.

“He got angry and cussed everyone.”

“Did he get help?” Mrs. Nader asked.

“He broke the aquarium with the bear bottle, left the house and never returned.” Ana Maria said.

“This is exactly what we want Daddy to do. He’s dead now, he must act like one.”

“As long as we can control his temper, maybe we can convince him to go away. Everyone he knows is here tonight. We should take care of this without creating a scandal for the family.” Mary said.

“Don’t worry, Charles and I will sit on his sides, we can contain him. We can’t turn him loose like that.” Dr. Jenkins said.

“Oh, what have I done to deserve this?” Mrs. Nader sighed, “Alright. Ana Maria you make a plate for yourself and for Mr. Nader and take him on the porch and have dinner with him. You were the only one in the family he talked to the last few years anyway.” she ordered.

Before carrying out the order, Ana Maria went to her room and grabbed Mr. Nader’s favorite Rolex with a pair of matching cuff links to accessorize the corpse for meeting.

“Good idea. We’ll take care of him after dinner,” Charles said.

Right after dinner, Dr. Jenkins clanged his glass and hurriedly toasted late Mr. Nader, a great man who was now conversing with his maid on the porch.

“Unfortunately the party cannot go as long as it was planned. The Nader family has an emergency to tend to the detail of which I am not at liberty to discuss. On behalf of the entire family I apologize for the abrupt ending of this lovely evening. Thank you all for coming and have a wonderful night,” Dr. Jenkins announced.

It was around 11 pm when most of the guests left the house. Nader family and a few close friends remained eager to face death. Mrs. Nader released Ana Maria of her duties for the night and the next few days.

“I’ll stay with my sister this week. Call me whenever you need me,” Ana Maria said.

“Take me with you,” Jimmy said.

“If that’s ok with your parents, you can stay with me for a few days.”

Carol uncharacteristically gave her son permission to take a siesta for a few days at the maid’s family. Jimmy was so excited and looking forward to stay with the Marquez family. He had a big crush on Adriana, Ana Maria’s niece for so long and this was a rare opportunity to get close to her.

After Ana Maria and Jimmy left, Mr. Nader was escorted inside and was seated for intervention. All participants sat at the table and the meeting started. The gold watch sparkled on Mr. Nader’s bone. The cuff links he wore as earrings. The meeting overall was productive. There was no bickering about the past, no emotional outburst or finger pointing. In the course of intervention, Mr. Nader only smiled while everyone was drawn into an abyss mesmerized by the sharp contrast between their own state of livelihood and death in flesh sitting across the table. After the confrontation with death was concluded Mr. Nader quietly left the house of mortals and so did everyone else in the meeting.

A few days later, the mysterious death of the entire Nader family and close friends was the shocking news headline.