

MADHOUSE

By Shirlie Barrie

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ISBN 1-931000-52-2

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CAST: one female

****If performed for contest, where additional props may not be used, STEPHANIE may push a chair or table, representing the body.***

A Hallway. A body in a body bag lies on a collapsible wheeled cart. STEPHANIE (16) paces impatiently. SHE looks off.

STEPHANIE

Come on, Mr. C., come on. What's taking you so long, you old fart? ***(SHE looks at the body and talks to it.)*** Gosh, you're a huge son of a gun. Big as well as mad. But wouldn't hurt a fly, the orderly says. Well, not now you wouldn't. I would. If there was one buzzing around here right now, I'd splat it flat against the wall. I'd catch it in my fist and pull off its wings. I'm not a violent person. Not really. It's just that my life is so the pits.

Mom could have come. She's the one who wants to keep this stupid business going. I thought - I thought the one good thing about Dad dying was that finally we were going to get to live in a real house and be, like, normal or something. But oh no! And she needs help and being the oldest I've got to take responsibility yadda, yadda, yadda. My dumb dad couldn't even hire decent help. I mean, Mr. C. is like about 104 and his eyes are so bad he can't drive at night. So I get stuck driving him up here to the nuthouse. And then he takes forever. Chat, chat. Gossip, gossip. Oh my gosh! Glenna, my friend Glenna, is supposed to call me at ten. Mom'll blab where I am and it'll be all overschool tomorrow. One more nail in the coffin of my weird-dom.

It's true. My whole life people have made fun or been scared or – Grade One. Billy Matthews used to torment me. “Undertaker’s Kid,” he always called me. And then he started following me home from school. “Pee-Yew. What’s that stink?” I’d run and he’d be right after me. ***(Sing-song)*** “Undertaker’s Kid! Sleeps in a coffin!” Day after day, didn’t matter how fast I ran or how hard I cried – though I didn’t let him see any tears – he was right behind me. Then one day – “Sleeps in a coffin! ***(SHE***

coughs) Cough, cough, cough.” He was having a great old time and I – I got mad! I just stopped dead. Turned around. He almost ran right into me. He’s like two inches away from my eyes and I say, “Ever seen a coffin?” “No,” he says before he can catch himself. “C’mon then,” and I start across the road. He doesn’t move. “Scared?” Well of course he follows me then. In the side door, through the chapel and into the show room. I take him right up to the really expensive oak casket with the puffy silk pillow. “See that? You chase me home one more time, my Dad’s gonna put you in there and screw the lid down. Tight.” Couldn’t see him for dust he was out of there so fast. Bet he hasn’t said two words to me since. Worse luck. ‘Cause Billy Matthews is only the most gorgeous guy in the whole school!

One date I’ve had in my miserable life. One! Last year. Sean. He comes and picks me up and Mom and Dad are, like, almost normal. We have a really good time at the party. He drives me home and we’re parked outside and I get this feeling like he’s gonna kiss me. You know? And all of sudden the garage door swings up and Dad backs out the wagon. Pulls up right beside the car and says, “Hey, Sean. Want to come out on a call with me?” Sean goes white as a ghost, mumbles something about his curfew and that was the end of that.

Dad thought it was funny. I could have died. **(pause)** That’s such a dumb expression. Dad was the one who died. **(leaning down)** You died, too. I just suffered horrible, insupportable, never-ending, humiliation. Every guy in the school had a real good reason for not asking me out. Maybe you know what I’m talking about – being crazy and all. Sorry. Mentally ill.

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