

BODIES

BY

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EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK-NIGHT

Dog paws zig-zag the sidewalk, jerking along a pair of nice dress shoes and slacks. A set of cute, female shoes bring up the rear.

JEFF (20s) and ASHLEY (20s) round the corner of their neighborhood block. Jeff thumbs away on his cell-phone as best he can.

He's jerked forward again and glowers at the small dog...

JEFF

I can't concentrate with this dog yanking me everywhere.

He TUGS back on the leash. Ashley scrolls through pictures on a large DIGITAL CAMERA.

ASHLEY

I can take a turn.

JEFF

Right when we're getting home...

Ashley smiles

JEFF (CONT'D)

Any good pictures?

ASHLEY

A few. Nothing that will fit the show.

(beat)

Becca said Peter was going to propose while they're in Europe.

Jeff looks away from his phone for the first time.

JEFF

Are you serious?

ASHLEY

Apparently.

(to the dog)

You hear that, Buckley? Your parents are going to get married.

Jeff snorts.

The couple turn up a driveway where a large tree obscures the view of the front door. The dog suddenly rushes forward, dragging an unprepared Jeff along with him. He drops his phone.

Ashley retrieves the phone as she rounds the corner to the porch.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Here you—woah...

She FREEZES. Jeff stands, mouth agape, as the dog sniffs and bustles around a large, dark HUMAN SHAPE lying on the welcome mat.

Ashley retreats behind Jeff and stares at the nondescript figure...

A human BODY, featureless and smooth, chest struggling to...breath? It remains otherwise motionless as the dog sniffs, licks, and clambers around.

sniffs, licks, and clambers around.

JEFF

Go inside, give me some light.

Ashley steps over the human frame and yanks the dog through the front door. Jeff kneels next to the body and begins checking its vital signs.

Light seeps onto the porch. Ashley reappears in the doorway.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Help me get him inside.

She's disappeared.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Ash! Where are you—

The body WHEEZES and deflates further.

Ashley returns, stirring a brownish green concoction in a cereal bowl.

JEFF (CONT'D)

What the—

ASHLEY

This will help. Maybe.

JEFF

No, we need to get him inside. It's too cold out here.

ASHLEY
Just hold him up!

Jeff hesitates before lifting the body into a slack sitting position.

Ashley brings the bowl near the body's blank face, where the mouth would be...

There's only a fleshy, slightly pink surface.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Oh. Nevermind then...

She drops the bowl to the ground and Jeff lowers the body to its crooked prone position. They pause, still kneeling.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Well. Thanks anyways.

JEFF
No problem. Gimme a hand?

Jeff stands and extends his hand to Ashley.

As soon as their skin meets the body COUGHS, WHEEZES, and STIRS, making the couple jump a few steps back.

They study the body as it struggles to sit up. Not a bad job.

Ashley steps forward to help.

ASHLEY
He's perfect for my art show.

INT. / EXT. CAR-DAY

Jeff drives, white knuckled. Ashley studies him. He avoids her gaze, but shoots regular glances into the rear-view mirror.

The Body takes up the middle seat in the back, shoulders slumped.

ASHLEY
What is it?

JEFF
Why'd you bring it along?

ASHLEY

He wouldn't stay put. Followed me out the door.

JEFF

So what are we going to do with him while we're eating?

ASHLEY

I don't know. Leave him in the car?

Jeff gives the Body another long stare. Jeff frowns.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

That's why you're in such a bad mood? Really?

JEFF

It's nothing.

It's quite obviously something. Ashley keeps staring. Jeff relaxes a bit.

JEFF (CONT'D)

This patient won't open up. I've tried everything in the books, all of them, but he won't budge. Now I feel stuck and...it's been a crummy day.

Ashley reaches over and squeezes his leg.

ASHLEY

You need a break. Have you tried some sort of creative outlet? Art keeps me from going crazy.

JEFF

That's not even the same thing. You can't just paint away a chemical imbalance—it's an improper wiring of the brain, not some artistic itch. I need something concrete.

Ashley looks away for the first time and stares out the window.

ASHLEY

If everything else has failed, why not?

Jeff squeezes the wheel again, staring straight ahead.

The Body slides sideways in the back seat, coming to a complete stop in a sloppy, horizontal position.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Jeff and Ashley sit on different couches. The body joins Jeff on the smaller of the two, hands on thighs, staring straight ahead. Jeff's glazed eyes are fixed on the TV.

Ashley works at an easel, studying the Body occasionally.

DING DONG. The dog YELPS and bolts circles around the front door.

Jeff quickly sits up and turns to the Body, checking its posture. Ashley tosses him a black WIG. He tugs it onto the body's bald head, giving it a perfect widow's peak.

Ashley opens the front door.

A SQUEAL blows her back as a giant WEDDING RING is thrust into her face. Both belong to REBECCA (20s), a cute, tan girl. Rebecca is already inside, embracing Ashley, dragging a man, PETER (20s), along with her.

The body stirs, but doesn't turn around.

Jeff does turn around and rolls his eyes. Hard.

INT. LIVING ROOM-LATER

Ashley and Jeff sandwich the Body on the couch while Rebecca and Peter ooze into each other on the love seat, hands entwined.

REBECCA

And he dropped to his knees...a Spanish guitar player began a slow, perfect song...and then...

Peter nods his head vigorously, smiling.

Rebecca and Peter trail off into each other's eyes and their collective memory. Ashley is on the edge of her seat while Jeff stares at the TV, face blank.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

It was wonderful. Let's leave it at that.

JEFF

(sotto)

Please do.

REBECCA
(to Ashley)

You ready for your show??

ASHLEY
Yeah! I think so. I'm trying to finish a new
Dracula piece before Saturday. Come see the rest.

Rebecca gives Peter a huge, wet kiss before following Ashley down the hallway.

Peter slides down on the couch, smiling to himself. He comes to and addresses Jeff.

PETER
You two joining the club soon?

JEFF
The marriage club? Probably not.

PETER
You're missing out.
(to the body)
So what's your name, man?

The Body stares at him blankly.

INT. OFFICE STUDIO—CONTINUOUS

The office bursts with paintings and photographs on easels, the floor, everywhere. Each features one of the classic Universal Monsters in various stages of married life.

Rebecca crouches near a posed photo of Frankenstein holding hands with his bride, at the alter.

REBECCA
I love this one. Where'd you find Frankenstein?

ASHLEY
Craigslis. Perfect fit, right?

REBECCA
Karloff reincarnate. And the
performance artist on the couch? Craigslis?

Ashley's gears turn after a moment's hesitation.

ASHLEY

Performance artist...

8.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

No, we found him while walking your dog, actually. Jeff doesn't love him but-

REBECCA

That's not surprising...

ASHLEY

-But he's such a good model it's worth having him around for a day. I think he'll be a big hit at the show.

REBECCA

Absolutely.

(re: photograph)

Speaking of hits...will you and Jeff be acting out a scene like this anytime soon?

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jeff sits, expressionless as the Body while Peter drones on.

PETER

Believe me, I never thought I'd pop the question before you. But what's more perfect than a quaint Spanish village on a cool summer day?

PETER (CONT'D)

What about you, Dracula? You know what I mean?

INT. OFFICE-CONTINUOUS

ASHLEY

I dunno, we just haven't got around to it!

REBECCA

But after three years? Don't you think it's time?

INT. LIVING ROOM-CONTINUOUS

The simultaneous conversations continue, GROWING IN VOLUME while losing clarity.

All the while, the Body rises from its slouched position, gaze shifting from Jeff and Peter to the office down the hallway.

The noise grows, DEAFENING...

SMASH CUT:

INT. LIVING ROOM—CONTINUOUS

The door clicks shut. The Body moves—perfect posture, more alive than we've seen before. He bustles around, picking up empty glasses.

Ashley slumps back onto the couch with Jeff.

JEFF

Promise you'll never propose to me in some stupid Spanish village.

ASHLEY

(drama queen-y)

But what about the setting, the culture!? Love is in the air!

JEFF

As well as growing pollution, economic turmoil, terrible music, and countless annoying tourists.

Ashley drops the act. She's actually stunned. The Body slows its pace, hands full of empty glasses.

ASHLEY

Where would you prefer?

JEFF

I don't care. Just not Spain.

Jeff points the remote at the TV, turning the volume back up. It's Grey's Anatomy. Ashley scoots closer, working for Jeff's attention. He puts his arm around her, but it's all mechanical.

ASHLEY

Is there a specific time frame you

JEFF

Someday. If you wanna talk marriage, when are

Izzie and Derek gonna get together?

The Body stumbles and falls, glasses CRASHING to the ground.

INT. ART GALLERY-NIGHT

Ashley's big night. The turnout is strong, guests milling around, eating horror themed snacks from a half-empty table.

The Body pours blood-red punch into glasses, dressed as a faceless Dracula once again. Spilled punch spots the white table cloth.

Ashley stands nearby with Jeff, fidgeting, biting her nails, but planting a huge smile on her face whenever a guest approaches.

Jeff, meanwhile, busies himself with his phone.

ASHLEY

It's going pretty well, don't you think?

JEFF

Hm?

(looks around)

Yeah, it's great.

ASHLEY

(re: phone)

You mind putting that away? Please?

JEFF

Sorry, I just gotta follow up about a patient.

ASHLEY

Are they going to die or something? I could really use a wingman here.

JEFF

They might, yeah.

Ashley's face falls.

ASHLEY

Right. Sorry.

Jeff smiles.

JEFF

I'm kidding, they'll be fine. I just need to ask

Greg one more thing.

Ashley elbows him in the ribs. Playful but serious.

The blow affects the Body, sending its arms flailing. It swings a ladle full of punch at a guest, splashing all over her dress.

The guest GASPS and hurries away, patting her dress and mumbling angrily.

Jeff and Ashley exchange a wide-eyed glance.

INT. ART GALLERY-LATER

People wait in line to congratulate Ashley. Jeff slumps nearby, back on his phone. He's joined by the Body, who's sprawled on the spotted punch table. It looks like a murder scene.

Two cute YOUNG MEN (20s) approach Ashley.

SKINNY YOUNG MAN

Great show. I loved the way you really captured the essence of isolation.

LARGE YOUNG MAN

Yeah, their lives are still horror movies, even though society believes that wedlock equals happiness.

Jeff takes notice and joins the group.

SKINNY YOUNG MAN

Your wife is really talented, man.

JEFF

Thanks, but we're not married.

The Body stirs at the table. Ashley shifts her weight and opens her mouth to comment. She's cut short by an onslaught:

SKINNY YOUNG MAN

Easy assumption, given the surroundings.

LARGE YOUNG MAN

Then what inspired the exhibit? Your fear of marriage?

SKINNY YOUNG MAN

Are you making a statement by avoiding marriage?

JEFF

It's none of your business, dude. Maybe I know we'd end up like one of these pictures.

THUD.

The group turns to the punch table. The body lies on the floor, covered in blood red punch.

EXT. BACKYARD—DAY

A shovel hits dirt, scoops, and throws it aside. Ashley digs.

Jeff reaches for the shovel and Ashley hands it over after a Moment of hesitation.

Jeff plunges the shovel deeper into the dirt.

The Body lies nearby, pale and motionless, looking exactly like when it first appeared on their porch.

EXT. BACKYARD—LATER

Jeff glistens with sweat, breathing deeply. He wipes his brow.

He and Ashley each grasp an end of the body and drop it into a large empty hole.

Jeff and Ashley stare at the fresh, dark earth.

They touch hands, grasp, squeeze...

...and release.

Jeff and Ashley walk off frame in opposite directions.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END.