

Approx. 1204 Words

Skulls
By
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“Lay it on me, Dan. Why am I really here? You and I both know, I don’t do Missing Persons. All my cases involve actual bodies, not hypothetical ones. Why waste my damn time here in B.F.E-Wisconsin?” Donkirk looked over his shoulder checking to see if any of the local law enforcement were in earshot before whispering “In a place where people are born with banjos?”

Agent Donkirk Kingsley wasn’t one for small-town dramas. He was the agent that showed up after a string of murders. He’s the person they call after a city starts to panic when a confirmed serial killer was afoot. There needed to be a high body count before he even rolled out of the bed. Otherwise, he felt his time was wasted on the lazy. Something that he didn’t like to think of his colleague as. Yet he was standing before a fellow agent rolling his eyes.

“Donnie, it’s not as plain as what you think.” Dan attempted to explain through his frustration, struggling not to raise his voice.

Dan didn’t have bags under his eyes, no it was a fucking full set of luggage. If Donkirk had to guess, his friend hadn’t slept a full night’s rest for about 72 hours. Donkirk knew that look all too well.

Dan ran a palm through his hair before reaching into his jacket pocket for a smoke.

“ We got a body.” The stress on the latter struck Donkirk in a manner that caused him to narrow his eyes and thinned his lips before he could utter an argument Dan continued. “We have a massive body, Donnie...” Sweat poured down his brow in autumn cool.

Donkirk kept his visage still as thoughts crossed his mind. This time of year, here in B.F.E Wisconsin. Dan was sweating in the cool crisp air... ‘Rona is that you?’ He thought to himself as he casually took a step back. He had no desire to be awake let alone in a small town; and certainly, he did not want to get sick.

“Elaborate. Because a Massive Body... still is singular... One” Donkirk snipped.

“Get in the car.”

They were driving to their makeshift headquarters. A large warehouse some forty minutes away from the supposed crime scene. They rode in silence partly because Donkirk went back to sleep, it was a late flight and an early morning; and the agent was barely a person let alone a morning person. All the while Agent Daniel Rigs wasn’t sweating due to a virus. He was sweating nervously. Each mile into the next town was a dual ragged breath. One half he’ll finally be able to explain precisely why they called out Donkirk, the dreaded flipside was that he had to explain what he was going to see. The long hours trying to put the evidence together, in a way

that would make sense and there was no need for imagination. Dan didn't have the facts for a court let alone a grieving family. What he did have was something that was up Donkirk's alley. So he gave his colleague the call.

The SUV pulled into a large warehouse on the far side of silos in a desolate sunflower field. Daylight was still on their side. It was barely 10 am. Dan was painfully aware of the value of time. Once the night fell all coherency would dissolve into a fevered dream. As he slowly pulled into the makeshift parking space, there were several agents outside looking disgusted, mortified, but most of all, hopeless. To Donkirk the agents appeared no more than 25 years of age at most. This was their first case, possibly. He found it to be a normal visage in most events. It didn't stop Donnie from feeling some form of sympathy towards them. He had a feeling that it might be many of their last day or last assignment.

"Try not to judge the place... this is all we had to work with here. It was part of the shared mill for the farmers or something to that effect."

It was something of a miracle that Donkirk heard him; he was transfixed on the field surrounding their headquarters. He was engulfed by the sea of sunflowers and that curious spot absent of flowers. There was an echo left in his psyche of the moment he perceived it... her... It was a memory seared into his skull, the color of those accursed flowers, their absences of smell, their core that could absorb light... Sunflowers were a poison to his memory. Dagenhart.

Dan led the Donkirk inside to a room full of monitors. All focused on an empty cell. Donkirk tilted his head at the peculiar sight.

"Dan... Why are there human-sized cages spread out in an old mill? With Cameras pointed at each one." Confusion littered his face. The Camera 9... was focused on a single... skull? Donnie narrowed his eyes looking at the screen.

"A goddamn paper mache skull? Daniel JACKABOB RIGS... If this-" Donkirk raised his voice his exhaustion seeping through, but Dan interjected.

"Hit the lights, Thomas. All Cells. Donnie, shut it and pay attention."

"... your middle name is Jackabob?" Thomas's brow raised.

"If you don't shut the fuck up, and turn off those lights." Dan hissed.

Donkirk grumbled staring at the monitors; confusion giving way to annoyance and impatience. He heard him tell the other agent to cut the lights... the cells were lit- Backup lights? No. Lanterns? There weren't any vintage lanterns when the lights were on before but more importantly there weren't any covered bodies. Sporadically, each of the cells held one single body that was covered from face to ankle... and a lantern hanging by some thin-sheer fabric over their faces. But it was the skull that had his attention the most.

There it was. Just moments ago there was this cheaply made Michael's, , Pinterest's, first attempt to make a skull with wire and paper mache, now it was something different altogether. Before it was something akin to a mock-human skull. A valiant attempt by a first-time DIY. Now it sat before the camera the shape of a Deer Skull with the lower jaw fixed agape. The skull was not alone, it was being worn. A yellow cloaked person wore the Deer Skull as if it were a mask. It wasn't a cloak; the longer he stared at Camera 9. There weren't any sleeves for arms. It didn't appear fitted at all. It just was there, nothing to cling to except the skull on top of it. The cloth it was made from appeared embroidered with emblems and sigils, some recognizable but the majority unknown to the unwitting agent.

Donnie started to feel sick the longer he stared at the screen. Was... was the bottom jaws chattering? Did it have cadence? Donnie started to reach for the volume for the room when Dan slapped his hand away from the knob.

"You don't want that sound in your head, Donnie... Trust me. " He turned back to the agent, "Thomas, lights up!"

"What in the name of the gods was that?" Donkirk asked, inhaling sharply. "Where are the bodies... Da-"

"Settle the fuck down.... I'll tell you everything..."