

Dead Roses

Written by

Liza Madore

LOGLINE: A lonely mortician, reeling from the shutdown of his business, forms a bond with a deceased woman's body.

EXT. SMALL-TOWN MISSISSIPPI - CAFE - AFTERNOON

Pastel tables line a patio where people sip overpriced tea. ALBERT CREATH, 31, lonely and socially awkward, sits across from MARGOT, 40, his older sister who is worn out from work and family. She fans herself, sweating.

MARGOT

But Capron got his plea deal and I got paid, so...

(beat)

How's the business?

He avoids eye contact and shakes his head.

ALBERT

Had to shut down for a bit.

MARGOT

What? What happened?

ALBERT

Power outage made the freezers go down. Didn't catch it 'till the smell --

MARGOT

They pressin' charges?

He nods.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

Where's the body now?

He shrugs.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

Maybe it's a sign. Think how free you'd feel doing something where you're not so alone --

ALBERT

I'm not alone. And I'm not giving the business up.

Margot sighs.

MARGOT

I'll ask around, okay? Let's meet here on Sunday. I'll help you build...

He zones out.

INT. DRUGSTORE - EVENING

Albert scans the lipstick section ~~indecisively~~, then selects one named "Dead Roses."

INT. ALBERT'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Albert grabs leftover pasta out of the fridge.

INT. ALBERT'S GARAGE - EVENING

Albert plops the pasta bowl down and walks to the center of the room where a body bag lays on a large metal table.

He unzips the bag, revealing the stiff body of EDEN, 20s, deceased. She is dressed in a nice outfit.

ALBERT

Alright, Eden. Let's get some makeup on you.

INT. ALBERT'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Dripping sweat from the heat, Albert uses the "Dead Roses" lipstick as a final touch on Eden's lips. He admires his work.

ALBERT

No, no, no. This is all free of charge.

(Beat→)

No. I won't accept your money. Consider it an act of kindness from a friend.

Albert laughs, as if she had responded with a joke.

He takes off his gloves and opens the pasta. When he turns back to face Eden, she sits up on the table, looking into a small handheld mirror.

EDEN

My cheekbones have never been so defined before.

Albert smiles.

ALBERT

Probably from the embalming fluid.

EDEN

It's like you gave me botox.

They chuckle together as Albert sits cross legged on the table next to Eden, shoving pasta into his mouth by hand.

EDEN (CONT'D)

How was lunch with Margot?

ALBERT

Eh.

EDEN

You tell her about the lawsuit?

ALBERT

(mouth full)

Yeah, I guess.

EDEN

What did she say?

ALBERT

That she'd help.

EDEN

Margot says a lot of things.

Albert looks down at his pasta, then back to Eden, whose body is now back in the same position: still, stiff, and dead.

EXT. CAFE - EVENING (SEVERAL DAYS LATER)

Albert nervously checks his watch. Wait staff sweep and clear up. It's closing time. Albert texts his sister.

"ALBERT: WHERE ARE U?"

A WAITRESS approaches the table.

WAITRESS

Alright, Albert. We closed twenty minutes ago.

Albert looks at the Waitress and puts his head down on the table, ignoring her like a little kid.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

Albert's high-school bully, now a COP, stands next to Albert, who has nodded off in the cafe chair. The Cop kicks the chair, startling him awake.

COP
Hey, Stiff. Time to go home.

ALBERT
Don't call me that --

The Cop smirks and punches Albert in the arm.

COP
Come on, Creath. Still can't take a
joke?

Albert freezes. The Cop puffs his chest.

COP (CONT'D)
Don't make this harder than it
needs to be.

EXT. ALBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

The Cop walks Albert to the front door, past the garage.

COP
Lettin' you off easy tonight. Can't
waste my energy. Wife's waitin' on
me.

Albert's face remains apathetic, while the Cop walks to his car. He halts, and turns to Albert. He licks sweat off his lips.

COP (CONT'D)
How's that sister of yours? Still
married?

Albert nods.

COP (CONT'D)
You not talkin' much today. Them
bodies wear ya out?

The Cop smirks and sniffs the air, adjusting his balls.

COP (CONT'D)
You might wanna take the garbage
out, too. Smells like rot.

INT. ALBERT'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Albert sits behind Eden on the floor as he brushes her hair. Her skin is more discolored.

EDEN
She never texted you back?

ALBERT
No. But I'm sure something came up
with the kids. She's always running
around trying to keep 'em happy.

EDEN
You wish she still made time for
you?

He pauses.

ALBERT
No, I just --

EDEN
You even consider what she said?
'Bout it being time to move on?

Albert shrugs, as he and Eden stand up in front of the
mirror.

ALBERT
Here you go. Hair all done.

Eden winces at the sight of herself.

EDEN
Do you think I look bloated?

Albert chuckles. She lifts up her shirt to reveal her rotting
stomach.

EDEN (CONT'D)
No. I mean I'm bloating.

Albert's face drops.

EDEN (CONT'D)
The chemicals will only last for so
long.

ALBERT
Don't say that.

EDEN
But it's true. I'm rotting. No
amount of formaldehyde can stop --

ALBERT
Shut up!

Eden's body thumps to the ground, stiff again. Albert takes a deep breath and sits her back up against the wall. He adjusts her hair.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry for yelling.

INT. ALBERT'S KITCHEN - EVENING (NEXT DAY)

Albert sits at the kitchen table, piecing together a stack of "In Memoriam" pamphlets. He is exhausted, his eyes bugging out of his face, accompanied by large dark circles.

On the cover of the pamphlets is a photo of Eden's body all made up. Albert's phone RINGS. It's Margot. He picks up.

MARGOT (V.O.)
Al! You there?

ALBERT
Yeah.

MARGOT (V.O.)
Look, I talked to my friend in civil. He's going to look over the case.

ALBERT
It's already gone.

MARGOT
What is?

ALBERT
The business. My career.

INT. ALBERT'S GARAGE - NIGHT

A casket lies in the middle of the room, surrounded by candles and a cluster of empty chairs.

MARGOT (V.O.)
What do you mean? You haven't gone to court. It's just a temporary revoke of your license. Nothing is permanent.

In the casket lies Eden's body, bloated and rotting.

ALBERT (~~V.O.~~)
No. Some things are.

Albert enters in a black suit and tie. With crazy in his eyes, he stares in the mirror. He pulls the "Dead Roses" lipstick out of his pocket and applies it all over his mouth.

He approaches Eden's casket, and whispers into her ear.

ALBERT

Thank you for talking to me.

He pecks a kiss on her neck. Sticky decompositional residue pulls from her skin and sticks to his lips.

He closes the casket, and turns to face the empty chairs. From the distance, a police siren BLARES, getting LOUDER as it approaches.

Albert stands before the casket, hands clasped.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Thank you for coming. Eden meant a lot to me.

(beat)

She listened. Even when no one else did.

A loud BANG at the garage door.

COP (O.S.)

Hey, Stiff! Open up!

Albert turns, calm. He approaches the door and opens it a crack. The Cop stares at him.

COP (CONT'D)

Left your wallet in my car --

The Cop peeks behind Albert, his face dropping.

ALBERT

Please be quiet. She's trying to rest.

Albert smiles.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.