

Stag Night

A Story of the Macabre

By

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The guys had arranged my stag night as I knew they would. They had been talking about nothing else for weeks, where we would be going, what we would be doing, how great it would be, et cetera, et cetera. To those of you who may not know, a stag night is a fellow's final fling before he ties the knot and settles down to a life of domestic bliss with his loved one. It's a night where pretty much anything goes. The more staid ones may start in a fancy restaurant where a couple of restrained drinks might be quaffed before hitting the bars, clubs, and so on, where the real high-jinks begins. The object of the exercise is to get the husband-to-be so drunk he doesn't know William Shakespeare from William Shatner. They say that if you can remember your stag night, you never really had one. Sometimes, the real daring ones might end up in a brothel, where all the guys club together to give the poor sap a final 'happy endings' send-off. As if sex-in-marriage is a contradiction in terms. I doubt that will be the case with Janice and me. Everyone came, even some of my friends from the old neighborhood, whom I hadn't seen since high school. I never counted how many turned up, but there couldn't have been far short of twenty. The only two who didn't show were my fiancée's brothers, Ted and Stephen (never Steve or Stevie or Steevo, always Stephen with a 'ph.'). I knew they wouldn't be sharing the evening with me. They didn't like me, and the feeling was mutual.

We, or rather, my buddies, decided to skip the meal part and head straight to the bars and clubs. The food would just make it all the harder for our bodies to absorb the alcohol. As this was the whole point of the exercise, eating seemed futile and a waste of valuable drinking time. So, we started in Hooper's Bar, the no-frills hostelry at the beginning of the strip. That much I still remember and can vaguely recall the next few pubs we hit. After that, it gets a

bit hazy. I seem to recall lying on my back on the floor of some establishment, staring up at the ceiling and wondering why I couldn't see through the roof to the sky beyond. I was sure I had x-ray vision, just like Superman. Alcohol doesn't usually have that effect on me, and I wonder if one of my so-called friends spiked my drink. I wouldn't be surprised. On stag nights, anything can happen, and I've heard of poor souls who've been stripped down to their jocks and roped to a lamp-post. Another guy I heard about was leaving on his honeymoon with his new wife straight from the reception. When they arrived at their hotel suite and opened his overnight case, one hundred and fifty condoms fell out! I hope he got a chance to use them. I don't know what his new wife thought. Maybe she made a daisy-chain with them; who knows?

Anyway, we had a great night, so they told me later. Apparently, I excelled myself and have now become known as the guy who can sing one song to the tune of another, which I did for a large part of the evening. Off-key and unmelodious. I'm glad my intended wasn't there. She would have been mortified, I'm sure. Speaking about my intended, I suppose I had better tell you about the girl I'm due to marry. She's a sweet, gorgeous, and very loving girl called Janice. She has a petite upturned nose with three freckles on the bridge. How cute is that, eh? She has long, auburn hair, always, and I mean *always*, tied up in a ponytail. I keep telling her that we aren't living in the nineteen sixties anymore. Ponytails went out with bobbysoxers, but she will insist on having it in that style. Well, why not? It's her hair. Janice and I have known each other for about three years and were due to tie the knot some time ago, but it had to be postponed due to a family tragedy. I'm afraid to admit that I was partly responsible for that.

You see, Edwin Falkner, that is, Janice's father, invited me around for a 'pep' talk. I assumed it would be the usual blathers, you know, 'she's my only daughter, so you better treat her right, or else, blah, blah, blah.' But unfortunately, it wasn't quite like that. Mr. Falkner confessed that he did not like me, had never liked me, thought Janice could do much better and did not believe me suitable son-in-law material. But then, as if all this was not bad enough, he insulted me by asking how much it would take for me to get out of Janice's life. Get out of her life? What was he talking about? I love Janice more than I've loved any other girl. That stung; it really did. Well, one thing led to another, and before I knew where I was, I was sticking a knife through Falkner's eye. I think it was his left one, but I'm not sure. Seeing as I had already started, I kept plunging it right through his skull into his brain. The blade made a sort of squelchy, sucking noise as I drove it in. Then his blood started spurting out from his eye (it was the left one), and he just stood there for a second or two before collapsing, trying to absorb what I had just done to him. He was probably dead before he hit the den floor. It was here that he kept his collection of hunting knives and where we were having our little tête-à-tête.

I didn't even have time to wonder what I would do next when in walked Janice's mother, Greta. She was talking as she came through the door, holding a tray with cups and a coffee jug, and kept on talking even after she must have seen her husband lying in his own blood. It was the kind of reaction with which you may be familiar. Your eyes see a particular event, but it's so unusual to your normal routine that your brain has trouble processing what you've witnessed and maybe takes a few seconds to catch up. I couldn't give Greta time to scream, so I quickly pulled out the knife from Falkner's face and used it on her. I think I got lucky with this one. I panicked, unsure where I was thrusting the blade, but must have hit a vital organ or a main artery or something. Again, she collapsed like a sack of potatoes, blood

spurting out everywhere, with cups, coffee, jug, and tray all crashing over the den floor. Someone was going to have to clean up the mess, but it wouldn't be me. It was quite strange because, even in death, her eyes stayed open, staring at me, accusing me of sending her to an early grave. I've often wondered. If she hadn't appeared at that minute, would I have gone after her, anyway? Probably. I couldn't just kill her husband and expect to walk away without repercussions now, could I?

And then there were the boys, Ted and Stephen, Stephen with a 'ph.' When I mentioned earlier that I knew they wouldn't be at my stag night, it wasn't just an educated guess. I knew both of them were in the house, presumably in their bedrooms. We all muttered a brief, grudging greeting when I passed them in the hallway as I arrived. Well, I was now warming to my work, so I went after them. Fortunately, they were in separate rooms. I don't think I could have taken both of them together. I don't remember doing it, but I must have somehow extracted the knife from Greta's body, dripping with her gore as it was. Ted was the first. I had no idea whose bedroom was whose; it was just pure chance. He looked up as he saw me coming in, assuming it was Stephen. I don't know what caused him the greatest shock, seeing me or seeing me covered in his parents' blood. This time, there was a scream, but I think it was from me as I lunged after him. He was quick; I'll say that for him. But he wasn't thinking straight. Can't say I blame him. He lifted a bronze statuette, I think it was some sports prize or other, and threw it at me. It nearly got me, too. Then he hefted another, but by this time, I was over at him, driving my knife (well, it was my knife, now) into his body. Had he hurled both objects at me together, there was a good chance that one might have struck me, slowing me down, giving him more time to mount a decent defense or even a counter-attack. But it was no use regretting what might have been. This time, I was more selective about where I thrust the blade. It was through Ted's neck, the jugular, I

think. Isn't that where Dracula always inserts his fangs? His blood surged out, splattering the walls, the floor, the ceiling, his bed covers, his display shelves, everywhere, especially me, with his life's precious fluid. He moaned and writhed about for a bit, so I drove it in, again and again. I'm not sure how many times, but after a while, he stopped moaning. And writhing.

This only left Stephen. Stephen and his 'ph.' I was glad I had left him till the end, as unintended as it was. Saving the best 'til last, as they say. I didn't particularly like either brother, it's true. But where I might have tolerated Ted, even for Janice's sake, I loathed Stephen. Whether it was because of his superior airs and his upper-class pretentiousness, I can't say. Always looking down his nose at me, feeling so smug, so knowing. Of the four deaths I caused that evening, Stephen's was by far the most satisfying. Satisfying because, unlike Ted, Stephen offered no resistance, cowering into a corner of his room, sheer terror on his face as he must have known what was about to happen. With Stephen, I took my time. Janice was spending the night with one of her friends, a 'sleepover,' I think they call it. So there was no need to rush. I had all the time in the world, well, not quite, but you know what I mean. Very slowly and deliberately, I tore a strip from Stephen's bedsheet, which I then stuffed into his mouth. He was too afraid to even think about trying to spit it out, not that I would have let him, anyway. Once I was sure that he couldn't cry out, or at least not loud enough for anyone to hear, I set to work. I would start with his eyes, but then I knew I wanted him to see what I was doing to him. No, I would save his eyes until the end. So I started on the rest of his anatomy. The ears were first, if I remember correctly. I sliced them off one at a time, and then I cut into his nostrils. The tears and snot and blood were mingling together, making a small pudding across his face. Then I started on his fingers, one joint at a time. After I had finished with his hands, I set to work on his feet. I'm not going to dwell on

the rest. Let's just say that he wouldn't have been a pretty sight to whoever found him. I'm only disappointed that he collapsed unconscious with shock half-way through my artistry. If I'd known he was going to do that, I would have started with his eyes, after all. So he never made the slightest sound when I plucked his eyeballs, one at a time, out of their sockets.

Drenched in the blood of four people, I couldn't go out as I was. I stripped off all my clothes, underwear, everything, then stood under the shower for at least twenty minutes, washing and scrubbing every last trace of blood off me. After I had toweled myself dry, I took all my clothes, shoes, including the brushes and towel I had used, and wrapped them in a plastic refuse bag. Ted was about the same height and build as I am, so I took some of his clothes to redress myself. The only things that didn't fit were his shoes. He must have had tiny feet, and they pinched like crazy. Still, it was only until I got home, then I would take all the clothes, his and mine, and make a nice little bonfire. Just before I left, I made sure I hadn't left any bloody hand or shoeprints anywhere. As a frequent visitor to the house, it didn't matter if they found any non-blood finger marks. In fact, they might have found it curious if my fingerprints weren't anywhere in evidence.

Naturally, the police interviewed me, but I must have given a passably good performance of a grieving soon-to-be (or, rather, never-to-be) son-in-law. I think it was Janice's standing by my side, squeezing my hand tightly in hers, that helped convince them of my non-involvement in this horrendous crime. My best stroke of luck was Janice not knowing where I was. She didn't know that her old man had summoned me over to her house. He didn't tell her what he was about to do, as I expect he realized what her reaction would be. I never mentioned it either, as I intended to tell her about it later. I gave them a half-assed alibi as to where I was at the time which they bought. I told them I was out looking for wedding

rings in jewelers' shop windows. I must say, I don't understand why they've never been back. Hell, I would be suspicious of myself if I were in their place. Four members of the one family brutally slain by a person or persons unknown. You'd think they might have made a bit more effort to solve the case. But I guess that's just typical of our local law enforcement officers. Rumor has it that they couldn't find their own asses with both hands and a GPS tracker. Whatever the reason, they haven't bothered me again, and I am certainly not going anywhere near them. *'Don't tempt fate,'* my old grandpa used to say. *'He's just awaitin' for someone to trip up, and then he'll have 'em.'*

This all happened just over a year ago. The grieving process is almost over, and it is why we have finally fixed a date for our wedding. Life is slowly getting back to normal. Or, it was. Janice tells me I've been talking in my sleep, mumbling things, things she can't quite make out. She thinks it sounds as if I'm calling out her folks' names. She believes this must be the way I am expressing my grief for their loss. I'm beginning to think otherwise. If it continues to go on like this, I might yet blurt out things I would prefer her not to know. Not now, not ever. I love Janice, I truly do, and it would be a shame if anything bad were to happen to her, especially now. She told me the other day she is expecting our child. It will be a boy.

The End.