

A 'CREEPIE'

THE VIEWING

by Sandy Bernstein

I heard familiar voices approaching as I lay in my casket. I tried to open my eyes but couldn't. Ellie's voice rose above the others. She was my best friend. I could only imagine her staring down at me with tears in her eyes. She was talking about my first husband.

"I remember Wally's band," she said softly, "Wally and the Walruses. It was the early 70s and Maggie was just eighteen when she ran off and went on the road with them."

"What happened?" A man whose voice I didn't recognize asked.

"She married him of course," Ellie quipped. "But Wally overdosed a year later."

"How tragic," he replied.

"It wasn't long before she found someone else though.

"Didn't she always," said a raspy voice. Doris?

"She was only married three times," Doris snickered in that snide way of hers.

Four, if you count the Count. Ellie was the only one who knew about him. There was an awkward silence as I pictured the trio: Doris, refined and smug, Ellie, elegant and trendy and still a looker at 75. And the man. . . hmm, he sounded young, yet older than dirt. Who was he? Ellie sobbed quietly. I wanted to comfort her.

"Then came Earl, the mad scientist," Doris said with a snort. "He dissected rats in the basement. Claimed he was trying to cure cancer. And her third husband, George. The skirt chaser. I felt sorry for Maggie in those days. If you ask me, George got what he deserved when he contracted VD," Doris sniffled.

Doris cry? I'm surprised, she never liked me.

"Luckily they'd separated by then," Ellie said. "Finally there was Lenny, the love of her life. Strange how he disappeared before they could marry. What a shame, he was a nice man."

"And normal too," Doris said, "a baker."

"No, a banker," Ellie corrected.

"To bad Maggie didn't find her forever man," Doris added.

She sounded sincere and sad.

"Wasn't there another?" The man asked.

"Before Lenny?"

"No," Ellie replied tersely.

The voice was beginning to sound familiar.

"His name was Raul," the man said matter of factly. "Everyone called him the Count. Claimed he was a descendant of . . ."

"Oh, you've got to be kidding," Doris laughed. "Not that strange little fellow with the pasty face and toothy grin. Don't tell me she married him?" She howled and walked away.



I heard their footsteps as the trio left. I could tell the room was empty now, I could feel it. Raul, I thought. He was my fourth husband. No one knew but Ellie. We weren't married for long. He was an excellent lover. I recall the last time I saw him. He bit me behind my right ear. I still have the mark. Come to think of it, I felt strange that night, like I died and came back. I remember floating into a dark void feeling the blood drain out of my body. Somehow I found my way back from the brink of no return, but it wasn't the same. I wasn't the same.

"That's right my dear," a sultry voice replied, reading my thoughts. "We were interrupted, so you didn't quite die. Open your eyes," he said.

I did. "Raul? How can it be?" I asked, staring into his piercing dark eyes.

He was still as handsome as ever.

"I returned to finish the job a few years later, well, years measured in mortal terms anyway. By then you had found someone else. Only I didn't realize it until too late that you were not alone in the bed we had so magnificently shared. Another was hidden beneath the sheets."

There was a lustful longing in his voice.

"Lenny? You mean poor Lenny is. . ." I gasped in horror.

"Not so normal," Raul whispered with a bit of a snicker.

Huh? I always wondered what happened to him. He disappeared without a word. "What happened? I mean, where is he now?"

"No longer with us," Raul whispered with a bit of a snicker. Floating around somewhere on the outer fringes of reality I would guess, trying to sustain himself."

Raul extended his long pale hand. "Shall we?" He asked. I smiled and grabbed his cold flesh as I climbed out of the casket.

"Ah, your friends would be delighted to know you are finally with the man you were meant to be with," he chuckled, revealing a toothy grin of sharp pearly whites. "You're wrong Doris," I thought, gazing at Raul with wonder and lust. "I did find my forever man."

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