

To the last detail

by

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INT. DAY/ FUNERAL HOME

The cold space of a funeral home.

GABRIEL, the young employee, mid twenties, is sitting behind the desk, feeling somewhat out of place in the space, out of place in his new suit.

The bell over the door announces the arrival of a client and Gabriel stands taller in preparation. He looks up.

ELSA walks in. She is not wearing black, or sunglasses and she looks very tired. She glances around, searching for someone to talk to. She hesitates before approaching Gabriel.

GABRIEL
How may we help you?

ELSA
I am not sure.

The answer makes Gabriel even more nervous.

GABRIEL
Please, come in. Sit down.

Elsa, still nervous, sits across the desk from him. She is holding a thick folder. Very tightly.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Can I offer you something?

ELSA
No, thank you.

GABRIEL
So, please... how can we help?

ELSA
I want... need to organise a funeral.

Gabriel would like to say "obviously", but he is a professional. He doesn't.

GABRIEL
Of course.

Elsa chuckles. But her eyes do not. She is gaining time, while she is searching her words.

ELSA
Mine.

Gabriel is taken aback.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Is that possible?

GABRIEL
Yes. I think so. (Pause) it is not customary. But yes. Just give me a few moments to check with my supervisor.

Gabriel disappears behind a door.

Elsa looks around, nervously playing with the ears of her folder.

Seconds later Gabriel comes back.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Of course we can do that. Not customary, as I said. (pause)
Will you be paying yourself?

ELSA
Of course.

GABRIEL
I see.

ELSA
I have all the details here.

She hands him the folder.

Gabriel flips through it. There are lists of names, photos of flowers, caskets, colour pallets.

GABRIEL
Do you have an approximate date?

The question hits the space between them like lightning.

ELSA
You know what, I will leave this folder with you. You can work out the cost. I could come back in a couple of days.

GABRIEL
Of course.

Elsa rushes out. The bell over the door dings.

Gabriel continues to flip through the folder, in awe. Everything is organised by categories and colour coded. The

flower compositions have anemones as a main theme. There are leaflets of different organisations for in memoria donations, lists of names. There is even a CD.

There is also a photo of Elsa. She is sad, no make up, hair all messed up. A little bit like what she looked like when she walked in. No effort for a decent visual result. Just a photo, taken as fast as possible.

INT. DAY/ FUNERAL HOME

A couple of days later, the bell rings, Elsa is back.

This time, Gabriel is ready.

GABRIEL

First of all, I would like to excuse myself from my previous behaviour. It was clearly unprofessional.

ELSA

No offend taken.

GABRIEL

I have to admit your request is...

ELSA

Not customary... I undersand.

A hint of a smile. They connect over what is left of her sense of humour.

He hands over a printed piece of paper.

GABRIEL

This is our offer so far. But there is one issue. The coffin. You do not mention anything about it.

It is Elsa's turn to be shocked.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I could show you some samples.

ELSA

Ok.

INT. DAY COFFIN DISPLAY ROOM

Gabriel walks Elsa around the exhibition of coffins. It is like a corridor of coffins, all shiny and gloomy.

GABRIEL

This is a personal favourite. Top quality wood. Great craftsmanship. Comfortable lining.

ELSA

(her dark sense of humour is back)

Comfortable?

GABRIEL

Probably a poor selection of terms.

ELSA

Very well. I will take it.

GABRIEL

Excellent choice.

INT. DAY FUNERAL HOME

Back in the office, Gabriel taps in the numbers in the computer. Elsa is patiently waiting.

Gabriel prints out the offer and shows it to her.

GABRIEL

Here is our final offer. I already discussed it with my supervisor and due to the well... non customary nature of this.... this case... He agreed... well, how to say this... there will be no raise in the price... regardless of the time of the... the...

He obviously does not know how to finish his phrase.

ELSA

I undersand and thank you. How could I pay?

GABRIEL

Will you pay now?

ELSA

If I can.

GABRIEL

If you pay by credit card we can break the ammount in installements.

ELSA

I would rather not. Would cash work?

GABRIEL

Of course. If you would like to come back with the ammount.

Elsa pulls out a think pack of cash and gives it to him.

ELSA

Please count it. It is the right ammount, give or take.

Gabriel cannot help showing his amazement.

ELSA (CONT'D)

I did my research.

Gabriel counts the money.

GABRIEL

Would you mind me asking a question?

ELSA

Not at all.

GABRIEL

I see that for flowers you insist on the anemones.

ELSA

I do.

GABRIEL

But you might now that anemones are a very seasonal flower. Hard to find sometimes.

ELSA

I know. But I want anemones. Not that I will be able to place a complaint.

Is this her dark humour? Maybe not.

GABRIEL

I understand. I will make sure of it.

Elsa waits around, as if she had another question, but changes her mind.

ELSA

Thank you.

She gets up. He gets up. Not sure how to end this transaction.

Elsa nods and leaves. The bell rings.

Gabriel crashes into his chair. This exchange has taken a toll.

MONTAGE OF SCENES

Gabriel spies on Elsa. He sees her in her house, washing the dishes as her two boys play around her like crazy.

In the street, talking her baby for a walk in a stroller.

In the supermarket.

She never smiles.

Her life looks ordinary. And boring.

EXT. DAY FUNERAL HOME

Elsa is waiting for Gabriel outside the funeral home, before he opens. She is agitated. Gabriel is surprised to see her there.

GABRIEL

Goodmorning. Come in. Is there anything else we could do for you?

Elsa attacks him.

ELSA

You tell me. What the fuck is your problem?

The violence in her tone and language shocks Gabriel. He does not know how to defend himself.

ELSA (CONT'D)

What? Do you have some sick obsession with me?

GABRIEL

I...

ELSA
You what? Should I take my
business elsewhere?

GABRIEL
No I am sorry. I didn't...

ELSA
You should be. Are you sick or
something?

Gabriel is really ashamed. Elsa is out of control. She gets
really close to him

ELSA (CONT'D)
You would like to know, right? Is
the poor woman dying of an
uncurable disease? Is she going to
slit her veins open? Which story
gets you off more? Tell me!

Gabriel is almost in tears. He looks at her helpless.
She is wild.

ELSA (CONT'D)
You see me now? Take a good look.
This poor lady is a monster, who
prefers to leave her family than
continue to hurt them. And I don't
want them to have to worry about
anything about me. Ever again.

She tries to catch her breath.

ELSA (CONT'D)
And you are a baby who knows fuck
about anything. (pause) Sorry to
spoil your fantasy. Sick fuck!

She walks away and screams at him.

ELSA (CONT'D)
Stay the fuck away from me.

Gabriel wipes the tears away and unlocks the door to the
funeral home.

INT. DAY FUNERAL HOME

Bell rings. Elsa walks in and Gabriel instinctly stands up.
He is scared of her. She is calm again. Too calm.

ELSA
I am sorry I yelled at you.

GABRIEL
I was out of place.

ELSA
You were.

GABRIEL
All I see is someone who takes
care of her family to the last
detail.

Elsa smiles ironical.

ELSA
You really are a baby who know
fuck about life.

Gabriel lowers his head.

ELSA (CONT'D)
I just did not want that to be our
last interaction.

Gabriel nods.

ELSA (CONT'D)
But you stay away from me.

Gabriel nods.

Elsa walks out. Gabriel is really shacken.

From a side door another employee appears holding a box of
anemones in a box.

EMPLOYEE
Did you order these?

GABRIEL
Yes. For a client. You can just
put them in the fridge.

EMPLOYEE
They will not last.

GABRIEL
I know.

INT. DAY FUNERAL HOME

About 15 years later. The funeral home is frozen in time. Maybe the computer is a little bit fancier.

There is another YOUNG MAN at the desk.

The door open. The same bell rings. A young man LEO, in his early 20s walks in. He is wearing black. His eyes are puffy and red. He has a piece of paper in his hand.

YOUNG MAN

Goodmorning. How could we help you?

LEO

Hello. I am not sure I am in the right place. I am here for Elsa Manning.

The young man looks at him with understanding.

YOUNG MAN

Of course. Please, sit down. I will get the supervisor.

Leo sits down and looks around. He mumbles.

LEO

Mum, this is fucked up.

Gabriel, older, appears. He takes a second to take in Leo and then approaches him.

GABRIEL

Hello mr....

LEO

Manning. I am here for my mother, Elsa Manning...

Gabriel interupts him.

GABRIEL

Of course. I am aware. My condolences. Please, sit down. As you might know, your mother had taken of every last detail.

LEO

Every last detail. That is so fucked up. Sorry. (secret smile) And so much like her.

GABRIEL

I know. It is highly uncustomary.
But I am sure your mother made
these arrangements so that...

Leo interrupts him.

LEO

No reason to explain my mother to
me.

GABRIEL

Of course. I am sorry. This was
her request.

He hands Leo the folder.

Leo flips through it. Tears start falling from his eyes.

LEO

So fucked up. (he smiles
again) Anemones... really... leave
to my mother to request...

GABRIEL

We happen to keep them in stock.

Leo looks up at Gabriel. Surely he thinks this guy is a
creep. He keeps going through the folder.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Now that I think about it, I have
not seen your mother in our
neighbourhood in years. Was she
ill?

Leo is confused.

LEO

We did not even live around here.
Well, we did when we were still
babies...ages ago. Yes... she got
sick...

As he goes through the folder he sees the photo. Looks at
her.

LEO (CONT'D)

We will definitely change the
photo though. Why did she give you
this photo? She is not even
smiling! My mom always smiled. I
brought some more recent ones.

He takes 2-3 photos out of his pocket. In all of them Elsa is a bit older, smiling bright. Leo picks one.

LEO (CONT'D)

I think this one.

He holds on to the photo for a beat and then gives to Gabriel.

GABRIEL

I will take care of it.

He looks at the photo and smiles.

LEO

So, I am sorry, I am not sure what we are supposed to do now.

GABRIEL

Do not worry, as I already told you, your mother has taken care of all everything to the last detail.