

## Casket Thief

The floorboards creaked as Alton stepped out of the old chapel into the cemetery. The cold evening wind blew through his greasy black hair and the moon and the stars shined bright in the black sky. He felt the grass crunch under his boots. Those were not his boots.

It was a quiet night. Perfect for what he was plotting. Alton quickened up the pace. He did not have all night. He reached the first gravestone and rubbed off the moss. It read 'William J. Anderson' (1786-1830) His first victim was 44 when he passed. Alton drew out his rusty shovel. That was not his shovel. He sunk the blade of the shovel into the earth and started to dig. Dirt started piling near the gravestone. Eventually Alton hit something hard. He bent down to his knees and rubbed dirt off what he found. Hardwood. He got back up and dug around what he had hit, as he expected, he had found a casket. The wood was slowly decaying.

Attached to his back, he untied the wooden gravedigging ladder. That was not his ladder. Since he stole it, he used it for every grave. He placed it in the freshly dug earth, and climbed down to the casket. He found the handle and lifted the top of the casket off. It was heavy. Once the casket was open, a decay smell arose. There was not much left of the body. Some bigger bones remained, but the smaller ones were gone. Luckily for Alton, all the organs were long gone. This was an older corpse. Most of the skull remained but all the teeth were gone. The skull was on its side. The last neck bones were all over the place and completely asymmetrical. Alton guessed this man had died of having his neck snapped. Possibly in a war.

He found a jeweled necklace, and put it in his leather bag. Where the hands of the body should have been, the golden rings still remained. Alton plucked the rings from the casket and stored them in his bag. Other than that, there was not much riches left in the casket. Alton closed the

casket top, climbed out of the grave, put the soil back in. By morning it would look like nothing had ever happened.

This was the way of life for Alton. He was born in a poor family, and his parents had died of a rare disease when he was just a boy. After the passing of his parents, Alton was forced out of his home, onto the streets with nothing. He lived by stealing things. He was particularly skilled at stealing items from the graves.

Alton moved to the next grave, repeated the same routine, opened up the casket and found only a little bit of riches. One necklace. That was it. He repeated this same process for many more graves until the moonlight was starting to fade. One last grave, he told himself.

He reached a gravestone which was well adorned full of decorations and flowers. It read:

‘Samuel O. Preston.’ (1890-1919) This one was only twenty nine. A recent death as well. Alton did his gravedigging process for the last time this night. Once he hit the casket, and rubbed off the dirt, he found that it was a quite beautiful casket. Alton lifted the top of the casket and the strong smell of rot and decay filled his lungs. It made him want to puke. The body was almost perfectly intact. The nice clothes were still there. The best part of it all was that there was so much riches. This man had a diamond diadem on his head. Several rings on each finger, many bracelets and necklaces and even a golden pocket watch in his hands. Alton lifted the cold lifeless hands and took the pocket watch and put it in his bag. He took the other riches and added them in the bag. Alton did one last check and lifted up the shirt of this man. His bare white chest shone. It was almost symmetrical except for one little cut near the bottom of his belly. It was stitched together by poor strings but it was holding. The cut was no longer red of course, because there was no blood. Alton supposed either this man was murdered or he had taken his own life.

Alton put the shirt back down and started to close the casket, but when he slammed down the top, it bounced back up. Alton thought it was just some strange mechanism, but when he tried again, it bounced back up once again.

Alton did not have time for this strangeness. He started to climb back up. He grabbed his shovel, and was about to bury this again, but then he heard a voice.

“Put them back.” A snarling cold voice said from inside the casket. Alton jumped at the voice and looked down at the body. Nothing seemed different.

Suddenly the eyes of the dead man opened, but there was no iris and no pupil. The body started to stand up and climbed out of the grave. The man was thin, gaunt and still as white as a ghost.

“Put them back.” The body repeated. Out of pure fear, Alton reached for the diadem, and all the other riches that belonged to this man. He threw them back into the casket.

“All of them.” The cold, snarling voice said. Once again Alton emptied the bag.

“ALL OF THEM!” The cold voice bellowed. As quick as lightning, the body moved up to Alton and put his hand on his throat.

“P-please, that’s all I have.” Alton stuttered. He struggled to catch his breath.

“All your miserable life you have gone grave to grave disturbing the dead, taking their personal belongings for your own purposes. Everything you have is not yours. Your boots, your shovel, everything. You are a disgrace to the dead. I don’t pity the dead, I pity the living. You know, I was once like you, Alton Sands. I was a rich hog and all I wanted was things for myself. I was self-absorbed human scum. I became sick and I was thinking of all I had done in my life. So then I did a favor for human kind and took my own life.”

Alton had so many questions. This was too much information to take in.

“Clearly you can’t seem to do that, so I’ll do it for you, Alton.”

The body lifted Alton higher in the air above a grave that Alton did not see before. It was freshly opened with a casket exposed.

“This is your grave, Alton Sands.” The body said. “Say goodbye to your miserable life.” And with that, The disturbed body of Samuel O. Preston sucked the life out of Alton Sands. Alton’s body went limp as his spirit was ripped out of him. Before Samuel dropped Alton into the casket, he did one more thing. He ripped out Alton’s heart from his chest, which was no longer beating.

“This was never much use to you anyway.” And with that, The lifeless body of Alton Sands was dropped into his grave.