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## The Tomb

## 1

"The body was discovered Monday morning by a local fisherman on the beach known as The Tomb. The first assumption drawn is that the very vivid winter tide in its constant periodic movement, by removing and transporting the existing sand, which form the beach, unburied the body. At the time of this report the identity of the corpse could not be assessed. In a primary analysis made by the local authorities, it appears that the body is that of a male and shows an advanced state of deterioration, which leads the entities to assume that the body has been here for a period of time. As you can see, the media including our team, have congregated here waiting for a press conference to be given at any moment by the detective in charge of the case, Lieutenant Daniella Campbell."

"Jennifer, can you hear me?"

"Yes. Go ahead, John."

"Jennifer, do the police have any leads at this point in the investigation?"

"No one has ventured any leads or opinions. Everyone has been very cautious about the matter. I believe that, at this point, no one wants to make any assumptions pertaining to the discovery of the body, John!"

"If the...."

"John!? I am very sorry to interrupt you at this moment, but Miss Campbell is coming to begin her press conference, and that may give us perhaps the first impressions of this case...."

## 2

I learned about the discovery while eating breakfast. Latest high-tech is such a marvel that allows me to be in a different country and listen to the news of my native country, as it happens. Man, I love satellites! It is a pity that the body was discovered so soon. We should have buried it deeper. It has been just over one year since the "incident," but it still so fresh in my memory that it seems as if it just happened yesterday. Great news about the detective in charge of the process, though; it could not have had been planned better than that. Daniella will know what to do to conduct the investigation towards the wrong leads. What a mastermind she is! At the time, not even any of us involved knew that all was premeditated and calculated to the detail by Daniella.

Summer is supposed to be a time for fun, especially when one is at the beach. With all the activities involved and the large number of people we meet every year, The Tomb, our favorite beach, was always popular with our group of friends, friends for many years, when school came to an end and the summer vacations came about. To us, the powerful combination between the rays emanated by the king of the skies, the warmth reflected by the golden blanket formed by the beach, and the refreshing contrast sensed with a dive in

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the dark blue ocean were sufficient reasons to attract us every year to the same beach. Our group was well known among the assiduous summer beach goers and soon the *foreigners* to The Tomb would make acquaintance with us. We were in our mid-twenties, beautiful figures and attractive, not to mention, intelligent. Not only was our appearance striking, but when someone of the opposite gender (more often than not) joined us, would quickly discover that we were not just a bunch of bimbos; we also would use our intelligence to make our selections of summer partners—which changed with frequency, depending on our *appetite*; we were known as *The Sun Lovers*.

Daniella was fairly new to our group; she had been with us for only two summers. That was one of our stipulations, that no new women would join our group without a strong review of her qualities by all of us and not without a majority vote. In Daniella's case, it was different; we broke all the rules not only by going to her but also by accepting for the first time a woman over thirty. We looked at her as a very attractive woman, very athletic, and found out after having talked with her that she was also very intelligent. She was one of those feminine beach-goers who performed topless while sunbathing, drawing in, that way, a large crowd of *drooling admirers* who, ridiculously enough, would stare with their tongues hanging, behaving like animals in a jungle, disregarding the laws of good human behavior while in public. This scene was often aggravated by the married men, who everyone could tell apart, because of their most striking intellectual gestures, their dark sunglasses, very dark ones in fact, that they wore assuming that their spouses would not perceive their moves, as if their wives were stupid and did not realize why, on their last trip to the mall, he had looked for those particular sunglasses.

Because of the qualities presented by Daniella, we decided to approach her and invite her to belong to our crowd. Without reservations, she politely accepted saying that she had not thought that she was up to the standards of being a part of such prestigious group. Humility was one other factor which we looked upon favorably and, with such words, we definitely were eager to have her among us.

Besides it would be a change in our old routine.

With Daniella in our crowd and her openness toward beach attire, two more out of the five of us started also to go topless. Rapidly, we noticed a change in the amount of attention from males circling about like ravens that knew their victims were there, in their reach, if only they could reach and touch and have some reciprocity from us, hunters would end up hunted. I have to admit that it was really fun to experiment with such a power. I look back at those two summers prior to the *accident* with a nostalgic feeling and wishing that those terrific days could repeat themselves.

The marvelous hot days of summer were often spent at the beaches' restaurant balcony, above The Tomb, looking over the waterfront. There, we would satiate our thirst with a golden brew, served very cold in a frozen glass, which our good friend, the bartender, would keep especially for us under the counter in a freezer. Very seldom would we buy our drinks, for there was always plenty of eager males ready to pull their wallet strings to pay for whatever we were willing to drink. Here, across from the same ocean that bathes the different beaches of many continents, I can still taste that amazing flavor as if I were there, at The Tomb.

Oh no! We are in trouble now. The body was discovered sooner than we were expecting. Do not panic, Carol! Do not panic, Carol! Daniella warned us that this day would be here. I wonder if Patricia already learned the news; I need to ring her. Perhaps one of the other girls already talked to her, if she did not learn it herself through the news; after all, she has a satellite dish and always stays current. I am glad that it is in the open. The last year has been a devastating one, mentally. Because of the beach "incident" I have been close to a nervous breakdown. If it was not for my 'relocation' in this foreign country, I could not have taken it much longer; luckily, Daniella thought about everything, even predicting which one of us would give in, taking care to send us to friendly countries that do not repatriate citizens who have committed any form of irregularity in their own country.

I just knew it! We are doomed. I feared that the body would be discovered sooner than any of the others thought. I can only hope that the plan goes as it was laid. Daniella needs to stick with it, even though it is so soon. Too soon! It feels as if it were only yesterday. I wonder how the other girls are reacting. Need to be cautious getting in touch with them. Definitely do not contact Daniella; that is taboo. In fact, I do not know about contacting the others. Maybe through a pay phone.

Stop it, Carol! Stop it! You will end up driving yourself crazy. STOP IT!

Take it easy. Breathe. All will work out O.K. No one has discovered us up to now and just because the body was discovered does not mean that they will connect us to the murder.

Murder is such a strong word. Perhaps accident, incident, mishap, whatever word I use; I could go on and on looking for an euphemism, modifying, justifying what happened that night, but nothing else would satisfy me: it was a murder. We actually killed a man, a person, a human being, even though he was attempting to commit a crime. I still to this day do not believe how it all happened; everything went so fast, so incredibly fast! All the events leading to it rolled with such an ease, as if they were standing at the edge of a reef and suddenly just fell off, uncontrollably, out of control. Who could have known that the magnificent summer day and early evening we were having would turn out to end in such a way?

I still do not know how everything happened so fast.

That afternoon—I can still see it—like many other afternoons we were drinking a cold, golden brew. How we enjoyed the taste of oats in their liquid form, as I call it. That was always the apotheosis of our beach days. The golden brew was more pleasurable than conquering a guy's company, what eventually happened with very little effort from us, the spectacular sensation of the cold liquid slowly making its way down our throat. That, definitely, nothing could top. We played hard all day, working and developing that thirsty feeling so we could kill it, bury our senses at day's end.

Oh, *kill* sounds so related to the news story developing at The Tomb. That tragic day we killed more than our thirst.

As is also customary, we encountered ourselves surrounded by men, who eventually were trying to get "lucky"; as if it were controlled by them or depending on them, as if they had any say at all, as if it were their choice, as if we did not already know

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which ones to take. Anyway, that day we were having such a great time! The beer was flowing as if it was a river; down it kept on going down our throats; we drank as if our glasses were filled with water. And the guys kept paying. And there was laughter and singing.

I remember now that Daniella was flirting with this great looking guy.

The sexual atmosphere was at its peak. The presence of testosterone was so clear that it could overcome the ocean's scent. The mixture of those two combined made a strange aroma that almost could be tasted; it tasted like a bittersweet, tropical, exotic fruit, it was so thick it almost could be cut with a sharp object. It held such a strange combination of pleasurable senses, senses that could be envisioned in a harem, creating such a relaxing atmosphere, a drunkenness of senses, which the beer elevated to its climax.

Definitely we drank more than usual, that afternoon.

We went down to the beach; the sand was now cooling off and it felt really good under our feet. The beautiful roseate-purple from the sunset was still present in our minds, and our spirits were in high gear. We placed our bodies in the grayish sand, always with our male partners close by. Someone stroked a guitar and a fire was lit with some debris found on the beach. The ambiance was set for another wonderful night of passion spent at The Tomb. Before long, among the laughter, joy, singing, and happiness, lots of happiness, the couples started to break out and discretely move into more private spaces.

I, being no exception, had fancied a brown-headed, muscular-to-perfection hunk, all day. We patted each other, flirted, and soon found ourselves involved in touching and talking privately. The moon was bright, emanating a silvery-pale light, which added a more romantic mood to an already existing one. We buried ourselves in our blankets, which we always carried with us to the beach, in an embrace, admiring the play between the moons' rays and the surf, as if it were jumping from crest-to-crest, in a magical dance that seemed accompanied by the music played on the guitar, in an hypnotic ballet with such rhythm and precision that it made me so aware of everything surrounding us, made my senses so acute and sensitive that my imagination drifted off, and it was so pleasurable to have the sand as a soft bed, the hunk's body as my pillow, and the sky above with its millions of stars as my linen.

A singular cloud that covered the moon momentarily joined the dark smell coming from the ocean; it must have been one of those clouds saturated with an infinite number of water droplets for it brought a temporary pitch of darkness to The Tomb. At that particular moment came a scream, a horrendous shout, a single terrifying word which would paralyze most women with terror, but which, at the same time, would make them very alert, bring out all their senses and make them react in harmony. The sound came by as if connected by a single stream, manipulated by an invisible marionette master player, who, by intuition, moved in one direction, like a synapse passing information to one single base cell, which would receive the order as soon as it heard the petrifying word: RAPE! RAPE!

Rape.

The agony of the word projected by one of my friends hung in the darkness of the night, bringing silence and complete stillness to The Tomb. Even the powerful ocean seemed to stop in its routinely lunar cycle. I, as well as my girlfriends, immediately jumped and madly conducted our bodies to where the scream had come from. Understandably,

none of the guys moved. In fact, some laughter was heard and before our Amazonian grouping reached the locale where our troubled friend was, the guitar resumed its unconcerned ballad, and the guys' voices soon choired in a well-known tune.

When we reached the surroundings where the violent act was taking place and after we zoomed to try to see what was happening, incredibly enough we, as if we were puppets, jumped on the assailant. Enraged, we blindly beat him over and over until he was off Daniella, until he no longer reacted, until we felt a warmth in our hands, splashing our bodies, getting in our faces, like mad animals defending their dens. We acted as if we were revenging our species of many losses and humiliations, of many years, of many abuses and defeats by the system.

After what seemed an eternity the cloud moved away from the moon's path and clarity returned to The Tomb.

## 4

The moment is here. A bit earlier than I was expecting, but everything is well planned in my mind; there is not, however, room for mistakes. I have to be very careful while doing the press conference, though; too many cameras and journalists focusing on me and on what I have to say. Man! How the body is degraded in such a short period of time. I guess the sands do not preserve so well, after all. In any case, the forensics already identified the body; I could have told them who the bastard is; it was the same miserable man who raped my baby sister and got away with it. Not enough evidence, they claimed. Find some evidence, now, if you can! Our legal system lacks so much, unfortunately. True criminals are getting away over unacceptable alibis.

P.P., was his name.

Five years ago my baby sister, then twenty, in the prime of her youth, happy and joyful to be around, lost it all. No, I will rephrase it; got it stolen from her. She did not only lose her womanhood, but also the joy of living. It has been a long and slow process for both of us.

She came to me in tears one morning, devastated and ashamed; this was not like her at all. After she recovered her composure, with much difficulty, she started to narrate to me what had happen to her the night before. She was walking home from a friend's house, she started, sobbing, when someone grabbed her from behind, pushed her to an alley and forced himself upon her. She continued telling me, apologetically, that she tried to fight back, to apply some of the self-defense techniques which I had taught her, but he was so strong, so powerful, she continued, sobbing harder now, that anything she tried was ineffective. And then he was laughing. And then he buried himself upon her. So much shame just thinking of it, she continued, so sorry, sis; so sorry...

I became enraged and started to cry. I could not take it. My tears were not of sorrow but of rage. Ideas of killing him immediately began to traverse my mind so fast and in so many ways.

She gently put her hand on mine and looked at me, straight at my eyes.

Such emptiness.

I realized she needed me more than anyone else.

I had to be strong.



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She continued her dreadful narration of the night events.

After he finished, which was so fast, although it seemed like an eternity, he ran and abandoned her, lying there, on the asphalt, lonely, so lonely from the world, dirty, so dirty, so very dirty. She said she felt that she needed to remove the dirt, to clean, to cleanse. She felt as if the world, the entire world, had stopped, that time just stood still. She continued, saying time had then restarted slowly, in such a funny slow way, slower than it ever had been, in a slow-motion kind of way; she watched herself picking-up her purse, adjusting her ripped off dress as well as she could, covered her dignity, which she felt she was not able to feel, to find. It was lost, lost forever, she thought, and there was nothing she could have done to prevent it, and she felt it was her fault. And that was how I felt, and that made me really angry. I felt a force build up inside me, a force of revenge, an abnormal force that I had never experienced before; with so many years as a police officer, ten to be exact, with so many situations that never revolted me, I never experienced anything to prepare me for this rage.

Only my sister felt so dirty and had to wash; poor sister, I do not blame her, though. I had never been in her shoes, and I do not know how I would react. Perhaps the same way, with the same gestures, feeling the same emotions.

I later showed her the pictures of many rapists on the police web page. She identified him as soon as she came across his picture, a certain P.P. Are you sure?, I asked, she was so sure, no doubt, even though she was grabbed from behind, but the monster had raped her in the missionary position, the only position the animal knows, the one that is exclusively particular to humans, not even beasts do that, and she had then taken a glance at his face, just a glance, but sufficient. Are you sure?, and she answered Yes!, with a tear rolling down her cheek, and she was so sure, as sure as she was talking to me right then, of seeing that face that would haunt her forever, that would cause her to have nightmares for the rest of her days.

Daniella did what she was trained for and presented the situation to her superiors, who, would look into it as a matter of routine, but there was not enough evidence, as usual, and they could not pursue it any further.

He was arrested a year later after the incident with my sister, in a similar case, and he was prosecuted. For the lack of a strong case, he spent only six months in a minimum security facility and was released. I did not lose track of him; like a hawk I followed every move he made, learned his whereabouts and his habits, absorbed his customs, and breathed the same air he breathed.

That is how I ended up at The Tomb.

He liked to prowl that beach because of the quantity of potential victims lying around, and I tried various ways to get on his path, unsuccessfully; from playing volleyball to the practice of being topless—very unusual on that beach—I tried to show all of my femaleness and sexy body, in hopes that he would feel for it. But to no avail.

And then a break came.

A local group of very attractive women approached me and invited me to be part of their crowd. I had noticed them before and the attention they got from the males around the beach. I had thought of them as some icon of The Tomb. I gladly joined them, always with the idea of capturing my prey, which at this point was consuming my life. In fact, a

plan started to develop in my mind; instead of wasting time and energy trying to arrest and convict him, he who eventually would get out and apply himself to his criminal pursue, adding more victims to his list, destroying more lives. I would terminate him! The more I thought about it, the more details developed in my mind and the more determined I was to kill him. Joining in *The Sun Lovers* group made everything easier.

I can see that hot summer day now.

As usual, we worked up quite a thirst to savor the cold beer at day's end. He approached us while we were still playing volleyball and joined us, along with other guys. This was the closest I had ever been to him, and I then understood why my poor sister and many other of his victims, could not have taken him; he was very well built, almost like a bodybuilder, but more effective because of his elasticity and flexibility; besides, his size was also an asset to what he did. I can see how easily he could take any of us, if he pleased.

While at the restaurants' balcony watching the sun go down and drinking beer, more than usual, on purpose, I tried to approach him, reluctantly. He seemed excessively shy, trying to get away from my touch or my presence, but at the same time I noticed his cold eyes in a constant search around the circle, from girl to girl, as if he was choosing his next victim. During casual conversation, our eyes met and I tried very hard to portray warmth, which I could not find in any place in my body; I had to eventually look away. Even though I was touching him, there was not much response from him. I focused upon the pale-rose sunset, the effect of it in the waters below, leaving a trace of red in the waves' crest, resembling blood, the blood boiling inside my veins, anticipating the blood that soon would be staining the calm, warm sands.

I was brought to reality when I heard him saying "Goodbye". Goodbye?? I panicked! With a sudden gesture I grabbed his arm and asked him where he thought he was going. He answered that he was leaving, but he could not go, I protested, I had plans for him later in the evening, I said. But I should have anticipated his move, the move of a coward who cannot take a woman when she offers herself to him. He probably does not even get an erection because the thrill would not be there; he was no longer the hunter but would just come to collect his prey, served, without the anticipation or the stamina built-up, no rush, and so it was easier to leave, and wait for me or another woman, and just strike.

I glued myself to him as if we were only one unit, buried my hands in his hideous body, so disgusting, insisted on his staying and at the same moment we, the whole group, started down toward the beach area.

That moment seemed to have saved my plan.

While on the beach, after the fire was going down, I kept suggesting a nice quiet, dark, and isolated place where we could go. He finally accepted the challenge.

We moved discretely, at the time when all the other couples were starting to go to their separate spaces.

I needed to be careful.

All my senses were alert.

As soon as we had got to the place I had picked, I lay in the ground, he was on top of me and I screamed "Rape!", "Rape!..."

I only had time to say it twice. His strong hand was on my mouth, and I could hardly breathe. My strategy had worked well; he seemed to panic and pressed his body

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strongly against mine. That was exactly what I needed. Now, if only the girls heard me and hurried up my plan would be complete, successful, and my sister and many others would be revenged, if I survived.

They came.

I was saved and you, little sister, avenged.

### 5

Oh! Here it comes. All hell is going to break loose, now. I did not imagine it would happen so soon. I wonder if the others know about it. Good thing Daniella is in charge. She is so intelligent. I cannot get over the way she arranged for all of us to be relocated in foreign countries. I hope she can handle everything by herself. She will. She is so strong.

Oh! Everything is still so present in my mind. I still can see the moment when we heard the scream, the scream that all of us, women, fear the most: RAPE. We all ran, the other three and I, leaving our evening companions who evidently did not realize the importance of the situation, typical male, probably even intimately cheering the guy who was doing it, not moving at all, laughing, going about playing and singing, which was a good thing, for that suffocated the noise we made.

We ran as quickly as we could, with all the energy in our bodies, the adrenalin rushing in our veins. We reached the area from where the sound appeared to have come; after a fast examination of the situation, there we saw the monster covering her mouth and trying to impose himself on her. I remember the unusual darkness. It was as if the beautiful mother moon was ashamed of what was going on. It was so providential for no one, if anyone was around, could have witnessed what happen next.

Like a mad pack of wolves, a madness never experienced by me, or any of the others, I learned later, we lanced ourselves to the masculine body without any hesitation, punching and kicking him, who, caught by surprise, fell to the ground, on his side, getting off of Daniella, whom, in an instant, grabbed what appeared to be a rock, struck him in the head, enticing our strikes. We did not stop. As if we were being moved by a strange force, our blows increased more violently, until it hurt our limbs, our hands and feet, our arms and legs, until we felt something warm in our bodies, something gooey, mixing with our raging tears, rolling slowly to the sand in a strange and horrific paste.

Someone said to stop, stop it, that is enough; I think he is dead, someone else said, in a whisper, very gently. We all stopped then at once, immediately. We were all speechless, immobile, paralyzed, only moving the eyes, looking from one to another and back to the inert figure by our feet. The moon was shining again. The guitar's ballad could still be heard as well as the voices of the others around the fire. Anything that happens in the world, if it is not related to sex, is missed by most men; go figure!

We could see the blood, that gooey warm liquid we had felt, all splattered on our bodies, faces hair; it was such a gory and perturbing spectacle. Even the moon seemed to become scarlet, I could almost see a drop of blood coming out of it, right there in what would be the eye of the imaginary face we saw, and the face was not smiling and it was staring at us in such depth, I do not know whatever in approval or in accusation.



Without a word, Daniella dropped to her knees and started to dig the sand under our feet. We were quick to imitate her, in no time. We soon had a hole the size of a crevice, deep, so deep that one of us could stand up and not reach the top. We threw the unfortunate's body into the grave. There we buried him frantically and fast, and rapidly ran to the ocean to get rid of the strange scale-like-skin which had formed in our bodies, sweat, blood, tears and sand. It gave us such a primal look, straight out of the caveman's time, something with a science fiction look to it, unreal.

The contact with the water was purifying and refreshing, so... cleansing; it appeared to clean our feelings, or how we were feeling, that terrible feeling of filth, which smelled so impure, so nasty, so insecure, so unstable, that made us feel so hopeless, so abandoned, so lonely...

The next few days were of solid terror. Daniella convinced us to keep going to the beach. We discretely walked where the body was to make sure it had not been disturbed and discovered. We were in a constant panic state and only Daniella seemed in control. She told us that she was a detective and, in part, that explained her calmness and in a sense made us feel a bit better. She presented us with different possibilities, which included moving out of the country; we all choose that option for it seemed the safest and Daniella could pull the right strings to help us move.

That is where we nowadays are.

We all abandoned Daniella.

But she is so strong...

6

"John! Can you hear me?"

"Go ahead, Jennifer."

"John, Detective Campbell is coming to brief us about the case. Lets focus our attention on what she has to say."

"Ladies and gentlemen of the press, good-evening or should I said good morning considering the advanced hour. As you all know, the body of a man was discovered yesterday morning by a fisherman on the beach known as The Tomb. Due to our advanced equipment, we were able to identify the body: it belongs to a certain P.P. All we know about this individual is that he had a police record and was presently being sought by our people, linked to a rape and murder case. Our department will do all in its power to find the person or persons who did this, regardless of the victims' criminal past. This fact will not impede us from trying our best. It will not slow our efforts down. We will treat this case as we have treated all other murder cases in the past; we will look at all the clues and evidence and our people will not rest until the inhabitants of this city get answers and can feel safe and tranquil again. This is all I have for now. I will now be open to questions concerning the discovery of the body."

"As you can see, John, that is all the information we have right now about the body found in The Tomb. We are going to stay around and will interrupt the regular schedule if anything new is brought to our attention. Jennifer Jennings reporting live from the beach known as The Tomb."