

Dyeing to Meet You

Simon, funeral parlor hairstylist and makeup artist, meets a good girl just like his mother always wanted, but there is only one problem - she's already dead.

FADE IN:

EXT. SAMSON & KIRBY FUNERAL HOME - MORNING

SIMON, a heavy-set young man with smudged glasses and a receding hairline trudges to the entrance of a Victorian-era home with a discreet sign identifying it as Samson & Kirby Funeral Home. He hesitates on the sidewalk in front of the house. He straightens the ugly, frayed tie knotted loosely around his thick neck. Simon licks his fingers and then smooths his brown hair back from his forehead. Straightening his shoulders, he rings the doorbell and waits.

The door opens to reveal MR. SAMSON, an older gentleman with silver hair slicked back and dressed in an elegant black suit.

MR. SAMSON

Good morning. Can I help you?

SIMON

(nervous)

I'm Simon Featherstone. I'm here about the part-time position for a hairstylist and makeup artist. I know I'm a little early, but...

MR. SAMSON

(loud booming voice)

Better early than never, as we like to say in the funeral business.

SIMON

(confused)

Sir?

MR. SAMSON

The sooner they die, the sooner I turn a buck. Not in this for my health, son. I need to eat just like every other working man.

SIMON

(Laughs awkwardly)

Good one, sir.

MR. SAMSON

Come in, son. Let's not let the flies get inside. It's never good for business to have flies.

Simon follows Mr. Samson inside and shuts the door behind him.

INT. SAMSON & KIRBY FUNERAL PARLOR PREP ROOM- 2 WEEKS LATER

Simon is busy placing curlers in the hair of a deceased old woman with an eye-startling blue rinse. She is on a steel table and her body is covered by a sheet. He takes a sponge and dabs makeup on her face. He whistles softly while he works on her.

MR. SAMSON

Simon, I just got a call from St. Stephen's Hospital. I need to pick up a body from the morgue. Some poor girl has been on ice for over a month now while they tried to identify her. No one's come to claim her, so they're defrosting her, so to speak. I get a nice little check from the State to bury her, so I'm off to do my civic duty. I should be back in about an hour with the body.

SIMON

I'm finishing up Mrs. Baxter. She'll be ready in plenty of time for her viewing this afternoon.

MR. SAMSON

(stern)

Make sure you don't forget to put shoes on the body this time. The families don't like bare feet in a coffin. Never did understand why a dead person needs shoes. Last I checked, corpses don't walk.

SIMON

Don't worry. I won't forget this time. I've got her shoes right here.

Mr. Samson leaves and Simon returns to the body. He removes the curlers from her hair, then picks up a comb to style it.

SIMON

I bet you were a real pip in your younger years, Mrs. Baxter. May I

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

call you Marjorie? (beat) What's that? (beat) Marge? Okay, Marge. You can call me Simon. Can I give you some advice? I really don't think the blue rinse is flattering to your skin tone. You're already sporting an undertone of blue and it really makes you look a little...oh, I don't know...a little bit like a blueberry. (beat) Don't get upset. I'm going to add a nice hint of peach blush and matching lipstick to counter the blue. You'll be simply stunning. Like a fruit salad in a dress and sensible heels.

Simon hums under his breath as he grabs a dress, bra and panties hanging on a clothing rack nearby. He dresses Mrs. Baxter, taking his time.

INT. SAMSON & KIRBY FUNERAL PARLOR PREP ROOM - NEXT DAY

Simon unzips a large black body bag and reveals a girl in her early twenties. Her skin has a noticeable gray pallor and her shoulder-length dark brown hair is stringy and matted. A sad look crosses Simon's face.

SIMON

Who did this to you? (beat) You don't know? Well, don't worry about any of that right now. I'm going to clean you up and make you beautiful again.

Simon fills a large rubber tub with water and using a sponge gently washes the girl's face and arms.

SIMON

Don't you feel better? Personally, I prefer hot baths after a long day, but that's not really an option here, is it? (beat) Marie. (beat) That's what I'm going to call you. Jane Doe seems so impersonal. Marie was my mother's name. Beautiful woman, my mother. You remind me of her. Same coloring and fine features. Mom always had high hopes for me. My dad was a barber, but he died when I was a

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

baby. Mom wanted me to be a dentist, but I wanted to be a barber like my dad. Bad thing is, I don't really care for people. Makes it kind of hard to work in a barber shop. This work suits me. (beat) I bet you were a model or actress. (beat) No, I'm serious. Marie, you are a stunning young woman, and I'm lucky to have you in my life.

Simon hums softly under his breath while he finishes washing the body.

SIMON

There you go, Marie. All clean.

MR. SAMSON

Simon?

Simon, startled, looks up as Mr. Samson walks into the room. Mr. Samson gives Simon a quizzical look.

SIMON

Sir?

MR. SAMSON

I thought I heard you talking to someone. You know the dead don't talk back, right? Or at least they shouldn't.

SIMON

(nervously)

Uh, no sir. I was, uh, mentally going through my grocery list. I must have accidentally spoken out loud.

MR. SAMSON

I do that myself sometimes. Mostly so I won't forget Mrs. Samson's favorite snacks at the store. That woman can gulp down a bag of cookies in ten minutes flat. My Barb has quite the appetite. Scared to sleep in the same room sometimes when she gets a certain look in her eye. Makes me feel like a leg of lamb.

(exaggerated shiver of fear)

SIMON

I'm partial to chocolate chip cookies myself. I can't keep them in the house.

MR. SAMSON

Barb likes anything with sugar. (beat) Don't spend too much time on Jane Doe. The State pays me to bury 'em, not make them pretty for a pine box and a hole in the dirt.

SIMON

She won't get a funeral or a headstone?

MR. SAMSON

Simon, I'm in the business of making money, not making the dead feel good. Feeding Mrs. Samson costs me a pretty penny. She needs a new bathroom with a heavy duty porcelain throne and a bigger shower stall. I can't afford to put a Jane Doe in a satin-lined casket. Not with my profit margins.

SIMON

I understand. It's a shame no one knows who she is. No family to stand by her grave and mourn her. (beat) I'll finish cleaning her, then I'll come back in the morning to prep her for burial.

MR. SAMSON

Remember what I said and don't waste too much time on this one. I've got to take lunch to Mrs. Samson before she gnaws her way out of her bed. I'll see you tomorrow.

Mr. Samson leaves. Simon combs the girl's hair.

SIMON

Sounds like Mrs. Samson might be a bit on the chunky side. You, my darling, have the body of a goddess. I admit I took a peek under your sheet. Your curves are perfect. Now don't blush. You're so

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

old-fashioned. I find your shyness enchanting. (beat) What? You're a nice girl? (beat) Mom said a nice girl is the best kind of girl to marry. I knew as soon as I saw you that we had a connection. (beat) I'm thinking about giving you a highlights to add some life to your hair. What do you think about a hint of blonde to frame your face? Too bold? (beat) I'll defer to your good taste. I'm going to trim your dead ends, and I don't want to hear any argument about it.

Simon gently pushes a stray hair off her face. His hand caresses her cheek. He reaches over to the rolling table holding his tools, picks up a pair of scissors and begins to trim her hair. He smiles dreamily down at her as he works.

EXT. HEW N. HARDY'S MEMORIALS - AFTERNOON

Simon walks around several granite headstones on display outside of a small building. He stops in front of a small red granite one carved into the shape of a heart. He spends several minutes looking at it. Satisfied, he walks inside.

INT. HEW N. HARDY'S MEMORIALS - CONTINUOUS

Simon walks in the door and stops to let his eyes adjust to the change in lighting. There is a battered metal desk in the room with a MAN seated behind it.

SIMON

Excuse me. Could you tell me how much the heart-shaped headstone costs?

MAN

Give me a second and I'll look it up.

The man pulls a large 3-ring binder from a desk drawer and flips through the pages. Finding the listing he wants, he looks up.

MAN

That particular headstone is sixteen hundred dollars. It doesn't include engraving the name and dates. That'll run you another hundred dollars.

SIMON

Gosh. That much? That's a bit steeper than what I expected.

MAN

The headstone is made of India Red granite which makes it pricier than the others. I have some cheaper flat headstones that are less than five hundred bucks if you're interested.

SIMON

No, I want the red one. She only deserves the best. It will take me a few days to come up with the money, but I'll be back to buy it.

MAN

It's one of our more popular markers, so I can't promise I'll have one in stock.

SIMON

I'll be back. Thanks for your help.

INT. SIMON'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Simon sits at an old wooden desk and types on a computer. In between typing, he takes bites of a limp sandwich sitting on a paper towel next to him. A grizzled gray cat leaps onto the desk and tries to eat a bite of the sandwich. Simon swats the cat away.

SIMON

Go away, Smoke. I already fed you tonight. I swear you're going to eat me out of house and home.

Reaches over and scratches behind cat's ears.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I know, boy. I miss Mom, too. I hate to do it, but I'm auctioning off her diamond ring to pay for my girl's headstone.

Simon turns back to computer screen and looks at a listing he created on an online auction site. He takes another bite of his sandwich and doesn't notice large crumbs fall across his keyboard and chest. He grabs a soda sitting on the desk

and slurps it noisily.

SIMON

(frustrated)

Come on, people. You can bid more than a couple hundred bucks. That's a two-carat diamond ring, not a bauble from a bubble gum machine.

Simon types in a bid on his mother's diamond ring.

SIMON

Let's see if this motivates HotToddyTim to up his bid.
(beat) That's more like it. Come to Papa, HotToddyTim. Marie needs a headstone and Smoke needs some kitty chow.

INT. SAMSON & KIRBY FUNERAL PARLOR PREP ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Simon pulls the sheet back from the body and starts to apply makeup to the girl's face.

SIMON

I have good news, sweetheart. I found the perfect stone for you. You remember Mom's diamond ring?
(beat) Yes, the one I promised to give you on our wedding day. Don't be angry, but I auctioned it off to pay for your headstone. (beat) Marie, don't cry. It had to be done. What have I always told you?
(beat) That's right. Only the very best for my girl.

Simon brushes an imaginary tear from girl's face. He leans down and kisses her blue-tinged lips.

MR. SAMSON

(angrily)

What in the hell are you doing, Simon?

Simon leaps back and bumps into the tray holding his makeup and hairstyling equipment. It falls and the contents scatter across the room.

SIMON

(fearful)

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

I, uh, I thought I saw something on her neck. I leaned in to get a closer look.

MR. SAMSON

(Gives Simon a long, hard stare.)

You sure that's all you were doing, son? I don't put up with any weird hanky panky. Samson & Kirby is a respectable business, not a place to cater to some freaky fetish.

SIMON

No, sir! I'm not like that at all. I respect the dead.

MR. SAMSON

Well, I'm watching you. I even get a whiff of anything weird...

SIMON

You won't. I promise.

MR. SAMSON

I want that body finished this morning. Too much time wasted on it already. I've got to pick up Mrs. Vickers from Shady Acres Nursing Home. She passed last night in her sleep. Prepaid funeral, so no muss and no fuss. I want this body done before I get back. Understood?

SIMON

(Nods head.)

Yes, sir.

Mr. Samson gives Simon one last look, then shaking his head, leaves. Simon quickly picks up his scattered tools and places them back on the tray.

SIMON

I'm sorry, darling. We're like Romeo and Juliet. Star-crossed lovers. (beat) I brought you a surprise. (beat) Of course, I should have. You're my best girl, so you deserve the best in life!

Simon walks over to a black duffel bag lying in the corner. He unzips the bag and pulls out a blue dress and matching

heels. He holds them up.

SIMON

It was Mom's, but I'm pretty sure it will fit. The blue will bring out the color of your eyes, too. Do you like it? (beat) Good. I need to get you dressed and ready to go. I can't afford to lose this job.

Simon dresses the girl. He hums the tune "Only You." He pulls her body upright, holds her close to him and sways to music only he can hear.

EXT. PEACEFUL VALLEY MEMORIAL GARDEN - THREE MONTHS LATER

Two workers in khaki-colored uniforms rake leaves from between gravestones. WORKER ONE stops and looks up the hill. He sees Simon laying flowers at the foot of a heart-shaped headstone. WORKER TWO stops raking and also looks up the hill at Simon.

WORKER ONE

I see that guy here every week. He brings a bouquet of daisies every time. What's his story?

WORKER TWO

I talked to him last week. He lost his wife in some kind of accident.

WORKER ONE

Ah, that's too bad. Young guy like that...it's gotta be tough. Working here among the dead makes me appreciate life's little things. I'm glad I've had so many years with my wife. Louise is a good woman. She makes a mean brisket, too. I brought some leftovers in my lunch if you want some.

WORKER TWO

Sure do. If your wife ever leaves you, I'm marrying her. I love her cooking.

Worker One playfully punches Worker Two on the arm. They return to raking leaves.

EXT. PEACEFUL VALLEY MEMORIAL GARDEN TOP OF HILL -

CONTINUOUS

Simon stands in front of a red granite heart-shaped headstone.

SIMON

I've got to get back to work,
darling. You know Mr. Samson
doesn't like it when I take too
long for lunch. I forgot to tell
you that I got a raise today.
Business has been picking up and
I've been working extra hours. I'll
finally be able to trade in my old
beater car and get something that
doesn't need wire and duct tape to
hold it together. What was that?
(beat) No, I'm not going to buy a
sports car so I can pick up women.
Marie, you know you've always been
the only girl for me.

A moment later, Simon turns and walks slowly down the hill.

CLOSE ON OF HEADSTONE.

The heart-shaped headstone reads "Marie Featherstone,
Beloved Wife of Simon."

FADE OUT.