

# SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT

It was much colder than usual on this fall night. The wind was brisk as the leaves were dancing about in a chilling fervor. The half moon gave off just enough light to cause a suspicious shadow to the cautious eye. I was working alone as I often did, but tonight for some reason, I just didn't seem to be comfortable.

I guess it started when I went back to the back and found a pair of scissors lying on one of the autopsy tables. At first I didn't pay much attention to it, but when I came back to the front and sat down at my desk, I thought to myself.. "Now wait a minute. I just finished cleaning off those tables and I'm the only person in this building. How did those get up there?" I shook it off as just a case of not paying attention and went about my business.

When you work at the morgue by yourself, it really doesn't take much to get your creative mind running around in the twilight zone. I guess the scissors were just enough to get me off guard and feeling a bit on edge. I put on some lively, rag-time music on the stereo and turned it up. I was not going to let a pair of scissors get at me tonight.

The phone rang. It was a nurse at a hospital reporting a suicide that we needed to bring into the morgue. I took down all the information and called our ambulance service to go pick up the victim. I went back to the back to get set up for the victim's arrival. On the way, I picked up those scissors and put them on the shelf with the other instruments.

Everything seemed to be back in order. The scissors where they belong, the music keeping me company and I was all set up for a new visitor to arrive. I came back up to the front and began to do some writing while I waited for the ambulance.

Then I heard what I thought was a door shutting in the back. At first it made me jump a bit, but I quickly came back to Earth and realized that the back door is often not closed tight and the ambulance people probably were just helping themselves to the admitting room.

I went to the back only to find that noone was there, the back door tightly secure. My nerves began to jump out of my skin as I scrambled for some explanation that would

help settle my nerves. Just then a gust of wind crashed against the building, bringing with it a chorus of creepy creeks, thumps and eerie whistles.

"That's it!" I exulted. "It's just the wind!"

I gathered myself and as I was heading back to the front, I rebuked myself. . . "Come on, Smith, you need to pull yourself together. You'll be a bundle of nerves by midnight if you don't get it together!"

I no sooner got settled into my typewriter than I heard the howl of the ambulance pulling into our facility. I made my way to the back to greet them and take care of the poor soul they were delivering. As we were taking an inventory of the young man's belongings, one of the attendants complained because the man's left arm was held up over his face, rigormortis not permitting us to lower it, making it quite difficult to check his shirt pocket for belongings. We both wrestled with it and were able to finish our job. I put the man in the cooler, and made my way back to my typewriter to continue my creative endeavors.

After awhile, two police officers drove up. They were from ID and, as is often the case, they were here to take pictures and fingerprints of our suicide victim for their records. After a brief chit-chat with the guys, I went with them to the back to get the body out for them so that they could do their work.

Once they got set up, I excused myself and was headed back to my typewriter, when one of the officers called to me..."Hey, Smitty, could you help me get this guys arm down before you go?" I made a u-turn and went back to help. As I was helping him pull on the right arm, I looked down at the watch on his left arm. Then I realized... it was his LEFT arm that the ambulance attendant and I had wrestled with just an hour earlier.

I remember clearly, because his watchband had pinched my hand as I was trying to pull his arm down. Now I'm standing here trying to get his RIGHT arm down so that the officer can take some fingerprints - his left arm laying quietly at his side.

This was too much for me now. I was in a confused panic. If I told the officer, he'd think I was nuts... and maybe I was. I went over the incident again and again trying to see if I might just be making a simple mistake. But with each review, I was certain that there was no mistake about it.

My heart was beating - no, throbbing - in my throat as I scrambled to keep my

composure as I worked with the officer. The wind seemed to be pounding against the walls. The eerie noises were swirling through my head.

For the first time since I started working here, I was absolutely frightened and wanted only to get out of the building. My imagination was taking over as I could no longer retreat to reality. You always pray that the job won't get to you like this when you're alone at night with death all about you.

The officers finished their work and were headed out the door. I had gotten through this without revealing my true fear to them, but I was anxious to find a reason to keep them from leaving me alone. I offered them a soft drink, but they seemed equally anxious to head on out. Reluctantly, I saw them off and went back to put the man back in the cooler. With each step, I could feel the fear within me beating louder and louder as if to be war drums calling its' army against me. I quickly rolled the young man into the cooler and was ready to make my feverish tracks back to my typewriter when I was stopped cold in my tracks by the man towards the back of the cooler. He was a street person... a John Doe who had been staying with us for the past few weeks. There was no one around to call family.

I could feel my heart taking a stranglehold on my airways. Breathing was almost impossible. I looked closer... in his hand was the pair of sizzors that I had just put away! Now I knew I had lost it. As I stood frozen in my fear, I thought to myself....

What else would a creative writer like myself be doing on an uneventful Halloween night than sit here writing a story like this!?

HAPPY HALLOWEEN