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Jack.) Be like getting married to that. He's a nice stash hidden away in that little garage, I'll tell you. Hoping to trap some little thing with it. Isn't that right, Jack?

JACK. That's my plan.

FINBAR. But you want to be careful of the old lads living on their own. They've a big pot of stew constantly on the heat, and they just keep throwing a few bits of scraps in it every couple of days. And they'd survive on that, don't you Jack? That'd do you?

JACK. It's a feast every day.

FINBAR. Aw. Dreadful fellas. And then they manage to get a girl and the dust'd be like that on everything. And your man'd be after living in two rooms all his life, and the poor young one would have to get in and clean it all out. Thirty years of old newspapers and cheap thrillers, all lying there in the damp since their mummies died and that was the last bit of cleaning went on in the place. That right Jack?

JACK. That's us to a tee.

BRENDAN. Jaysus, speak for yourself, ha?

FINBAR. Oh, they'd be desperate men. Changing the sheets in the bed every Christmas. And there'd be soot all over everything, and bits of rasher, and egg and pudding on the floor.

VALERIE. The poor girl.

JACK. Poor girl is right. So the least I can do is make sure her reception, in the Arms, is a little memory for her to have in the future, in the cold nights. Cheers. (They have all enjoyed this.)

JACK. You've a terrible warped mind, do you know that?

FINBAR. (Winks at Valerie.) Sure I'm only telling like it is, ha?

JIM. Nuala getting married. You don't feel the time.

FINBAR. No.

JIM. Mmmm. I remember, oh, it must have been twenty or more years ago, doing a job with him. Declan. Talking about what we were saying earlier. The priest over in Glen was looking for a couple of lads to do a bit of work. And he was down in Carrick in the Arms. He'd, come over, from Glen, you know? Which was an odd thing anyway. Like what was he doing coming all the way over just to get a couple of young fellas? But Declan, Donnelly, got put on to him. There was a few quid and he knocked up to

me and we were to go over to the church in Glen the following day. And I remember I was dying with the 'flu and I had a terrible high temperature. The mother was telling me to stay in the leaba. Burn it off. But like it was a couple of quid on the QT so I told Declan yeah, I'd do it tomorrow. No problem.

And then the next day it was lashing rain. I'll never forget it. He called for me in his dad's car. The smell of sheep in it like you wouldn't believe. God it would kill you. He used to put them in the car, chauffeur them around, you know? (Smiles.)

And we drove over to Glen. And the priest took us into the sacristy, and the job, of all things was to dig a grave in the yard. That day was the removal of the remains and they needed the grave for the morning. And fair dues, like, Declan said it to him. Was there no one else around the place could have done it? And the priest got a bit cagey and he was saying something about the local boys being busy with a game of Gaa, or something. And the rain was pelting down and he gave us leggings and Wellies and the whole bit they had there and a couple of shovels.

And then he put up his umbrella all annoyed, like, and he brought us out, over to a grave under a tree. It was a family one and there were two down in it already, the mother and the father and this was going to be for the boy. Well he was a man, like, a middle-aged fella. But there was two in it so we weren't going to have to go down for miles, like. So he went off to do his business and get ready, and me and Declan got stuck in. And with the rain and all, I was dying with the 'flu. My arms were sore and then my legs got sore. And then my neck got sore. And I was boiling. But we got down two, two and a half foot and we took a break. We got in Declan's car and he pulled out a bottle of poitin and a few sambos. I couldn't eat but I took a good belt of the bottle, like. Knocked me into some sort of shape. And we just sat there for a while, listening to the radio, and the rain coming down, and then we got out and got stuck in again.

~~STMT~~ Having a little swig every half hour or so, keeping it going. And we saw the hearse arrive then. And the mad thing was, there was only two or three other fellas there for the service. Of course the removal is only a short thing mostly, but to have no

one there, and for a man who's not an old man, it was funny, you know?

And then that was over and the priest came out to us. We were nearly finished. And he just cleared us for the funeral in the morning, and then he went off. So me and Declan were the only two there, then. (Short pause.) And your man was laid out in the church. And Declan went off to get a tarp to stretch over ... the ... grave, and I put a big lump of a door over it. And I was just waiting on Declan and having the last drop, under the tree and thinking we might stick the head in somewhere for a quick pint on the way back. You know?

And then I saw this, fella, come out of the church and he walked straight over to me. He was in a suit so I reckoned he was paying his respects or whatever. And over he comes, through the gravestones. And he was looking around him a bit, like he didn't know the place. And he stood beside me, under the tree, looking at the grave. I didn't know what to say, you know? And he goes, "Is this for so and so?" I forget the name. And I go, "That's right, yeah." And he says, "That's the wrong grave." And I'm like, "No. This is where the priest said, like." And he looked at me, breathing hard through his nose. Like he was holding his temper. And he goes, "Come on, I'll show you." And he walks off.

And I was all like "fuck this" you know? And I was cursing Declan, waiting for him to come back. And your man turns around, you know, "Come on, it's over here." I just, he was a loolah, you know? And I was nearly climbing into the grave myself, with the tiredness. And I was sick. So I followed him just to get it over with. And he stopped at a grave. Like a new enough one. A white one with a picture of a little girl on it.

And he says, It's this one here. And I just went "Okay, right you are Mister, I'll have it done, no problem. See you now." And he ... sort of touched the gravestone and he went off, back into the church. I was breathing a few sighs of relief I'll tell you. And Declan came back with the tarp and I said, "Did you see your man?" And he didn't know what I was talking about. So I told

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him and all this, and we just kind of had a bit of a laugh at it. And we just got out of there. Stopped in the Green Man on he way back for a few pints and that night my fever broke. But I was knackered. The mother wouldn't let me go to the burial. Declan did it on his own I think. But I was laid up for a couple of days. And one day the mother brought me in the paper and on the obituaries, there was a picture of your man whose grave we'd dug. And you know what I'm going to say. It was the spit of your man I'd met in the graveyard. So I thought first it was a brother or a relative or someone, I'd met.

And I forgot about it a bit and didn't think about it for ages until one night Declan told me he'd found out why the priest from Glen was looking for a couple of Carrick fellas, for the job. The fella who'd died had had a bit of a reputation for em ... being a pervert. And Jesus, when I heard that, you know? If it was him. And he wanted to go down in the grave with the ... little girl. Even after they were gone. It didn't bear ... thinking about. It came back when you said about Declan's girl. Yeah. (Pause.)

FINBAR. Jaysus, Jim. That's a terrible story, to be telling.

JIM. Well, you know. And we'd been having the few little drinks. From Dick Lenihan's batch, you know?

JACK. Oh Jesus. Firewater. Sure that'd put a hole in the glass, let alone give you hallucinations. (A little laugh. Pause.)

VALERIE. Do you think it was a, an hallucination Jim?

JIM. God, I don't know. I was flying like, but it was a right fluke him showing me where he wanted to be buried and me knowing nothing about him like.

VALERIE. Mm. (Nods.)

FINBAR. Are you all right, Valerie? (Little laugh.) You look a bit peaky there.

VALERIE. No, I'm fine. Just, actually, is the ladies out this way?

BRENDAN. Ah. (Short pause.) Jays, I'll tell you what, Valerie, this is very embarrassing but the ladies is busted. And with the ... (Jack laughs. Brendan chuckles a little.) I'm getting it fixed for the Germans like, but I haven't done it yet.

FINBAR. Ah, you're a terrible man, Brendan.