

The Businessman

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The cabin where the Bakers spent their last year was small, but suitable for their needs. It had one bedroom, a small kitchen and a bathroom that was barely large enough for the cast iron tub that Morgan Baker loved so much. It had no living room so the Bakers spent most of their time in the kitchen where Morgan cooked a wide variety of food including several different casseroles.

The cabin was placed in a large meadow surrounded by tall hills to the north and west. A small winding road passed by the cabin on the eastern side, and in the south was a long rolling pasture that stretched on for miles. The Baker's porch was perfectly positioned for a view of the field, and in the spring, when the snow melted, giving way to green grass and first buds of flowers, the sun illuminated the land in such a way that no words could describe its beauty.

But the cabin wasn't always such a serene place. In the autumn of the year when the trees were shedding their leaves, leaving the branches barren, the ambiance was rather gloomy. In the morning of these days the sun would rise slowly, and by noon there was only enough light to enclose the cabin, leaving the surrounding hills dark and mysterious.

It was during this time that Morgan Baker would go on long hikes in the woods, leaving her husband in the cabin cleaning the dishes from breakfast. And so it went that one day while Morgan was out, Alex Baker heard a loud knock at the door.

"Anyone home?" came a familiar voice from the other side.

He sat down the plate he was drying and proceeded to answer it.

"Yeah, yeah I'm coming." Alex replied.

He opened the door to see the smiling face of Jack Lychen.

“Thought you’d never answer the door. Then again it wouldn’t surprise me for you to just leave a friend standing on the porch.” Jack said with a grin, “Where’d you learn your manners?”

Alex laughed, “My manners? Where’d you learn your patience?”

Jack Lychen was the funeral director of Buffalo County. He and the Bakers had become friends immediately.

“Well, you might as well sit down.” Alex said, motioning to the chairs on the porch.

“It’s a nice day.” Jack commented, taking a cigarette out and lighting it. He blew out the match. Alex nodded in agreement.

“Morgan here?” Jack asked puzzled.

“No.” Alex replied, “She’s up at the waterfall.” He looked away to hide the tear forming in his left eye.

“That’s a dangerous place. What’s she doing up there?”

Alex blinked, “She goes up there to think.”

“Bout what?” Jack asked.

“Different things. She’s going through a lot right now. Autumn is always a hard time for her.” There was a pause between them.

“I worry about her,” Alex said solemnly. “I just hope she doesn’t do something she’ll regret.”

Jack didn’t reply. He looked away into the sun, his eyes shining with a hungry look not unlike that of a famished hyena. They sat talking for a while until finally, looking at his watch, Jack said, “Well I’ve gotta be heading out.” He waved goodbye to Alex as he pulled out of the

driveway, but he wasn't planning to go home. He drove down the road a few miles, just out of sight of the cabin. There he parked his car on the side of the road and got out.

There was a path near the road that he knew well. He followed the path up the side of the hill until he reached the apex. As he approached the waterfall at the summit he saw the familiar figure of Morgan Baker silhouetted against the trees. He approached her slowly, but when his foot snapped a stick Morgan turned towards him. Her tears sparkled in the sun.

"Jack?" She said confused.

"Morgan?" he tried to act surprised to see her.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, walking towards her.

"I'm just thinking."

"What about?" he asked. "Are you alright Morgan?"

"No...Jack I'm not." She wiped a tear from her eye. He waited for her to continue.

"This is where my daughter died, you know." She proceeded, "We were out for a walk and she wanted to see the falls. I looked away for a second and she fell over the edge. She was too close to the edge, and she fell over."

She started to sob uncontrollably.

"I'm so sorry Morgan. I had no idea," Jack said, putting his hand on her shoulder.

"Thanks Jack," she said trying to compose herself. "Why are you here anyway?"

He removed his hand.

"I...just..." he stammered, "I don't know. Business has been so slow. Non-existent actually. I've just been throwing around the idea of..."

"Idea of what?" Morgan asked. Jack looked down.

“Suicide,” he mumbled. “I know it’s cowardly, but business is so slow that I’m practically broke.”

“It’s not cowardly. I’ve been having similar thoughts. That’s actually why I’m here.”

Jack Lychen turned away from Morgan. He smiled a selfish, hungry smile.

“Maybe,” he said, “Maybe we should jump...together.”

“I don’t know,” she said.

“Well I do Morgan,” Jack argued. “Isn’t it obvious that this is why we’re both here at the same time? Doesn’t it seem strange to you that two people debating suicide would end up at the same place?”

“You really think so?” Morgan asked.

“I really do.”

“Alright then,” Morgan said. “On three.”

“On three,” Jack agreed.

They counted together, “One...two...three.”

And there, on a breezy autumn day in Buffalo County, Morgan Baker jumped to her death.

Jack Lychen stood there laughing quietly to himself.

“Well,” he said, “Looks like I’m back in business.”