

THE RESURRECTION MEN

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

HATT, (male) an experienced body-snatcher

FITZ, (male) an inexperienced body-snatcher

KNOX, (female) a student of anatomy

SETTING

An old church graveyard. Night. The Age of Enlightenment.

A late winter in the early 1800's.

SYNOPSIS

Medical advancement in the 19th century ushered in a new-found interest in detailed anatomy, but constrained by new laws, scientists are willing to pay a pretty penny for fresh bodies-no questions asked. A pair of amateur body snatchers, Fitz- a softhearted-desperate father- and Hatt- a cynical veteran of Waterloo, attempt to seize on the opportunity in an old church cemetery in the middle of the night. "The Resurrection Men" is a new macabre comedy asking if there's a price to pay for progress, who gets the bill?

AT RISE:

A graveyard. *Old, worn headstones and crosses scattered at the feet of an even older, gnarly tree. A wooden cart is parked at the edge of an open grave.*

HATT, a grizzled middle-age man is nearly waste deep in the grave, digging. As he slings dirt from the pit, he experiences a sharp pain in his shoulder, the result of an old war wound. He clutches at his shoulder joint, massaging the pain, then grits his teeth, and continues to dig.

A church bell peals from somewhere beyond the mist, counting the early morning hour. One. Two. Three.

HATT stands up in the grave, checking his pocket-watch.

HATT

Oh Ffffuck. Goddamnit... fuck.

He peers into the darkness, shrouded in fog, but can see nothing. He rubs his arm and chest, inhales, then plunges his tool back into the dirt.

VOICE OFFSTAGE

Mr. Hatt...

A dirty man called FITZ appears from the fog, doing up his pants.

He sniffs his hands, then wipes them on his leg.

He jogs to the grave.

FITZ

(whispering)

Hey. Hatt.

Hatt ignores him. Keeps digging.

FITZ

Hey. Hatt.

(louder)

Hatt.

HATT

Shhh! Quiet, Fitz!

FITZ

Hey. Hatt.

HATT

What, goddamnit, what? What?

FITZ

There's a priest back there.

HATT

What?

FITZ

There's a priest back there.

HATT

A priest?

FITZ

Yeah, a priest.

HATT

Where?

FITZ
Back there.

HATT
What do you mean?

FITZ
There's a priest--

HATT
Yeah, goddamnit. And?

FITZ
Well, what's a priest doing up in the middle of the night?

HATT
This is a church graveyard.

FITZ
Yeah, but in the middle of the night.

HATT
What was he doing?

FITZ
Just walking. Slow like. Wandering or somethin'.

HATT
Maybe prayin'?

FITZ
Maybe. I thought it was a spirit, at first.

HATT
Walking slow, huh?

FITZ
Like, thinking, maybe. Or maybe praying, right. I thought it was a spirit.

HATT
Uh huh.

FITZ

What if it was?

HATT

What?

FITZ

A spirit. What if it was a spirit, Hatt?

HATT

A spirit?

FITZ

A spirit. Not just walking. Haunting.

HATT

And so what if it was a spirit? Our concern isn't spirits. Our concern is the bodies what they left behind.

FITZ

Right. But... But spirits might not like it what we're doing.

HATT

They wouldn't, I expect.

FITZ

Neither would Priests.

*Hatt tosses Fitz his spade, left in
the grave.*

HATT

So we best keep digging, huh? The longer we're here, the more time for spirits or priests to wander by. Not to mention a copper. And we're behind time. Making me do the work, are ye? And you said digging was your specialty.

FITZ

I said *shoveling* was my specialty. Which translates well to digging.

HATT

So shovel. So dig.

FITZ

I had to piss. A man has to piss, you know?

HATT

Right, but a man can piss when the job is done. On with it.

Fitz slinks into the grave and starts to dig, slowly.

Hatt climbs out and peers out into the mist, massaging his chest and shoulder.

Fitz stops digging.

Hatt looks back at him.

Fitz starts digging again.

Hatt looks away.

FITZ

We should be about close now, wouldn't you say?

HATT

Pretty close, yes, I think.

Fitz stops digging.

FITZ

What'choo looking at?

HATT

Nothing.

FITZ

You're looking for that priest?

HATT

I'm just looking. Keep up digging.

FITZ

Do they really dig to six feet? Is that the law?

HATT

No, it's not the law. Just needs to be deep enough so animals don't catch the scent and dig 'em back up again.

FITZ

I don't think we're nearly six feet down.

HATT

Most is less than six. Most is four feet down about. With the Black Death they dug 'em real deep- more of a pit- and they piled in many bodies. One on top of another.

FITZ

(shudders at the thought)

One on top of the other? Oh.

Now that would be a find for you, eh? Like a diamond mine.

HATT

Plague bodies would be of no use. Be glad those days are past.

FITZ

I am glad. Dark days, they were. If it's not six feet we might be nearly there.

HATT

(jumping back in)

Aye, we might be near. But we must go faster. We're behind schedule.

FITZ

Are we?

Hatt pulls his pocket-watch from his waistcoat and checks it.

HATT

Did you not hear the bells?

Fitz nods obligingly. He turns to the headstone. Touches it.

FITZ

Mr. Hatt... I...

HATT

Hah?

Fitz shakes his head, turns away. He shutters audibly.

HATT

What? What is it?

FITZ

What? What's what?

Hatt mimics his shutter.

FITZ

It's nothing.

HATT

Alright then.

FITZ

Well I just-- Agh, fuck me.

HATT

You're taxing my nerves, Fitz.

FITZ

Ah, right. I'm sorry.

Hatt forces a flask into Fitz's shaking hands.

HATT

Drink. Then dig. It'll be worth it.

FITZ

I'm grateful to you, Mr. Hatt. Very grateful, indeed. It'll be worth it, right. I don't know what I was gonna do before I met you. We might not have made it through winter.

(passes the flask back)

You got family?

HATT

No.

FITZ

Oh. No one? No wife or no little ones or...?

HATT

No.

FITZ

Oh. Well, as I say, I'm grateful for the work. It's good work. Not honest work, but good work.

HATT

Work is work. A man does what he's gotta to make a living.

FITZ

Don't I know it.

HATT

Aye, you do. And I suppose shoveling fresh earth beats shoveling shit.

FITZ

Bloody right it does. Shoveling earth beats shoveling shit.

HATT

So keep shoveling, goddamnit.

FITZ

Not that I wasn't grateful to be shoveling shit. Any job is better than no job. Sure, there's the smell. But a good bit of fabric over the nose did help. Soaked in whisky. But in the end, shoveling is shoveling. It's the pay what distinguishes one job from another. A ha'penny a day for shoveling shit. That's no living. No living at all.

HATT

That's fucking insulting, that is.

FITZ

It is, isn't it? Insulting. Fucking insulting, aye. And what to show for it? A lad I knew, Morgan was his name, worked with me shoveling shit. Long days. Hard hours. And what did he get for it? Kicked in the head by a horse, he was. Died there in the street. In the shit.

Fitz is stuck in the horror of the memory. His thoughts are getting the better of him.

HATT

You're taxing my nerves, Fitz. Put you mind on your work.

FITZ

Poor Morgan. And what of his poor family? I don't know. Might have died too, in time. Folks got mouths to feed. Need clothes on their backs. A roof over head. Right, Hatt?

HATT

(grunts)

FITZ

I say isn't that right, Hatt? A man does what he's gotta, you said.

HATT

What are you doin'? What's wrong with you?

FITZ

What?

HATT

You keep stopping. Asking my approval. Why?

FITZ

I'm not--

HATT

Are you delaying me? Hah? You're not working for the sheriff or something, are ye?

FITZ

No, Mr. Hatt! No! I'm working for you.

HATT

Are you now? Working, you say?

FITZ

I am! And I'm grateful. It's just, well--

HATT

Just? Just what?

FITZ

No, just, I'm--

HATT

Hah?

FITZ

(almost whispering)

Well, it's a fuckin' dead person, you know!

Beat

HATT

No shit. That's the point.

FITZ

You aren't bothered by seeing, by handling a dead person?

HATT

I've seen plenty of dead people. And in worse states than this.

FITZ

Even so--

HATT

And it's different when you see them die. Alive one moment and then suddenly their skull is open and they're gone. Instantly. Like they was never there. Or they die slow. Weeping, bleeding, hoping, until their breath slows to a stop and they see nothing. Gone. Leaving just... an empty vessel.

FITZ

Oh. France?

HATT

Waterloo.

FITZ

Ah. Right. War-- war is a hard thing.

HATT

You don't say.

FITZ

I've seen death. Plenty of death in the world, war or not. But even still... in the ground already, laid to rest, and here we are pulling 'em back out...

HATT

Agh. That's what it is. You're scared.

FITZ

No. Not scared. Not-- well, I'm not afraid of the law or anything like that. I mean, a bit I am, honestly, but it's more the...

HATT

What?

FITZ

It's the... The violation!

HATT

Violation? Oh we don't do nothing like *that* to the bodies!

FITZ

What? No, not that! No, *desecration* is more what I'm saying--

HATT

Fitz, I told you, it's for science. The surgeons and the students, they need the bodies for, for anatomy. To dissect--

FITZ

I know that. But the dead, I mean, they belong in the ground. It's supposed to be their final resting place. It's where I'd want to be once I'm dead.

HATT

Once you're dead you don't want to be nowhere.

FITZ

You don't know that. A spirit may want to be where they chose to be, and where their families can come. Until the resurrection. Don't you read the bible?

HATT

No, I don't read the bible.

FITZ

Well, you ought to. This life is plenty of work, but don't forget about the next one. Your soul, I'm saying.

HATT

The earth is hard enough without having to dig through your superstitions.

FITZ

I don't know about any a-that. I'm not a priest. I just-- it's a dead body, Hatt. That's all.

HATT

I thought I explained pretty clear what we're--

FITZ

You did.

HATT

So I'm wondering how you confused what I explained as we're standing in the middle of/ a fucking a graveyard--

FITZ

I didn't confuse nothin', Hatt, it just feels different now we're here. It feels... I don't know.

HATT

(exasperated)

Look, if that's bothering ye, we're just calling them forth a bit earlier than they planned, yeah?

(to the grave)

You in there! The great and glorious morning has arrived. Our lord is come to grant us paradise and all that, so up you come!

FITZ

Oh, that's blasphemy, that is. And us in a church graveyard, that's not helping us.

HATT

None of this is helping us. Never mind priests and spirits. I told Knox we'd have this body to the University by half three.

FITZ

Knox?

HATT

The surgeon.

FITZ

Ah right.

HATT

And here's the most important bit: They're paying us well for it. I don't care what they do with the bodies when they pay three pounds for each one.

FITZ

Uh huh. That.

HATT

You want that money, don't you?

FITZ

I *need* that money.

HATT

Aye, that's the issue, there. You *need* money. And this is good money. Them surgeons and professors have a lot of money up there at the University and we can have some of it. Lotta folk would kill for three pounds for one days work. Er, night's work.

FITZ

Three pounds per body?

HATT

That's right.

FITZ

Pounds, not schillings?

HATT

Fucking pounds.

FITZ

Fucking pounds. Like a week's worth of shit-shoveling. Why does it pay more to break the law than to abide by it?

HATT

No point abiding by laws what are unfair against you. Who's got time for worrying about the dead and what they want. To hell with your soul and the next life. Plenty to worry about with *this* one, hah? So what do you want, hah?

FITZ

Right, right. Fucking pounds. Not schillings. Not ha'pennies. We split that even?

HATT

Well, as I told you, as I did all the arranging with Knox-the Surgeon- I take a bit more. A full pound to you. That's good money for a few hours work.

FITZ

Aye, that's bloody good money.

HATT

If ye've got the stomach for it.

*Fitz finds his resolve, nodding.
Hatt tosses him his spade and takes
a gulp from the flask.*

HATT

That's the spirit.

FITZ

Don't say "spirit."

HATT

Violations and desecrations be damned. There's money to be made.

*Fitz digs. Hatt takes a lantern to
spy into the distance. He rubs his
bad arm and shoulder.*

FITZ

You did arrange it with the surgeon, that's true. That's business dealing, that is.

HATT

Right it is. That's why I get paid another pound.

FITZ

It's fair, it's fair. And I still come out way ahead. A pound for one night! A few ghostly hours. That'll pay the rent on my room *and* some coal for heat for my poor little Charlotte.

HATT

That the crying wretch what was clutchin' at your knees when I hired you?

Fitz stops digging.

FITZ

Aye, my sweet little Charlotte. But she does cry a lot. Can't blame her.

HATT

Can't blame her, aye.

Beat.

FITZ

Hey, you think one day I could do the deal making? With the surgeons?

HATT

Might be.

FITZ

Wow. Then it'd be two pounds per body for me. For me and Charlotte. What a different life that would be.

(beat)

Or! I could *not* do the resurrecting and just the arranging. Hey Hatt, how do you make the arrangements? Do the surgeons and the professors place an order of a kind?

HATT

Keep digging. Stop delaying.

FITZ

I'm not delaying. I'm wondering.

He makes a show of shoveling.

HATT

The body must be fresh. That's the vital thing. Once the rot sets in, it's no good.

FITZ

So this one...?

HATT

Buried a day and a night ago.

FITZ

The earth hardens quick.

HATT

In the cold, aye. In the warm months this one might already
be too long in the ground.

*Fitz leans in to look at the
headstone.*

FITZ

This one.

(looking at the headstone)

What's it say?

HATT

Why?

FITZ

Curious.

HATT

Curious? Your making this worse on yourself.

FITZ

What's it say?

HATT

You can't read it?

FITZ

No. Can you read it?

HATT

Course I can fucking read it.

FITZ

Right. So?

HATT

(sighing, then slowly)

In... mm...mem... o...rye off... Alright, I can't fucking
read it.

FITZ

Oh. What about the name?

HATT

Jesus.

FITZ

Jesus?

HATT

No! I was... Christ. The name is....
(reading)

A...gat... Agatha.

FITZ

(reverently)

Agatha.

Pause.

HATT

In the end, we just get a rock with our name on it.

FITZ

Some of these headstones are so worn, they don't say nothing anymore. They now only mark that *someone* once was.

HATT

And these is the lucky ones, really. The ones what had families to bury them and money enough for a marker. Some just go into a hole, no trace left at all.

FITZ

Aye. Like the plague bodies.

HATT

Like the plague bodies. Aye.

Pause.

HATT

Goddamn it. Stop distracting me. Come on. We're close.

(checking his pocket-watch)

Don't want to keep Knox waiting and wondering.

FITZ

What time is it?

HATT

We're late. Keep working.

FITZ

How late? What time is it?

HATT

I don't know.

FITZ

What do you mean, you don't know? You just looked at your time-piece. What's it say?

HATT

...I don't know.

HATT

It don't say nothin', alright? Cuz it don't fuckin' work.

Beat.

FITZ

It don't work?

HATT

No. It's dead.

FITZ

Why would you wear a dead timepiece?

HATT

Fuck off with your questions.

FITZ

Why would you wear a dead / timepiece, Hatt?

HATT

Because I like it. It's a beautiful timepiece, it's real silver, and I fuckin' earned it. That's why.

Beat.

FITZ

You took it off a body.

Pause.

FITZ

You took it off a body?

HATT

Yeah.

FITZ

You're robbin' the bodies? You're robbin' the bodies, Hatt? You took that silver timepiece off some poor sod's--

HATT

No, I took this silver timepiece off some *rich* sod, I did. Cuz guess what, Fitz. He don't fuckin' need it.

FITZ

Right, but stealing off the bodies. That's grave robbing on top of body snatching. Violation *and* desecration--

HATT

You think it's better these things rust and rot underground? The dead shouldn't have more than the living, I don't care how fancy they was.

FITZ

I don't like this, Hatt. It's bad enough to be unearthing a dead person but then to be stealing their time pieces and what not-- things of personal importance and meaning--

HATT

Listen to me, Fitzzy. I hired you. Yeah? I may not have a fancy waistcoat or expensive clean boots or none of them high-class wares yet but make no mistake, you work for me. I have the connection to the surgeon, I know how its done and I made the deal. So don't you question how I do it.

FITZ

Right, right.

(beat)

But stealing trinkets off the bodies seems awfully low.

HATT

Low? LOW? Don't you call me fucking low! You know what's low? Hah? Getting kicked in the head by a horse while you're shoveling its shit. Or dying in the gutter of hunger and cold. Or trampled in the mud bleeding out of bullet holes. If you ain't high-born you're cannon-fodder. Unless you show some guts. If I was low, I couldn't hire you, could I? I couldn't lift you outta the gutter, isn't that right?

Fitz nods obligingly.

HATT

Don't you forget that. Cuz you can go back to shoveling shit if you want.

FITZ

No.

HATT

I'm tired of you questioning everything, and delaying because you're scared of the body or the spirit of the body, or what not. I am your boss, and I say dig!

He slams his spade down into the dirt. CLUNK. The sound of wood.

They both look down.

HATT

There it is!

FITZ

Oooh. Oh god.

Hatt uses his spade to scrape dirt off the top of the unseen coffin.

A single bell chimes in the distant church.

They both stop. Hatt checks his dead pocket watch.

HATT

Goddamnit. That's the half hour. Fetch that hammer and wedge from the cart, Fitz.

Fitz jumps out of the grave and goes to the wooden cart.

HATT

Quickly. She expected us by now. I've never been late like this--

FITZ

(coming back)

Wait wait wait. What?

HATT

What?

FITZ

Wait. What?

HATT

What?

FITZ

She.

HATT

Hah?

FITZ

The surgeon-scientist... She?

HATT

What?

FITZ

Knox-

HATT

Yeah.

FITZ

-is a *woman*?

HATT

(increasingly frustrated)

Goddamn it, Fitz, what's it matter to the likes of you? It's a new time. The "age of enlightenment" they say.

FITZ

What's 'at mean?

HATT

...I don't know. They're cuttin' living people open, fixin' 'em and stichen' 'em back up again. Things what was supposed to kill you, now sometimes... they won't. It's no longer to God or fate to decide if it's your time. That's what they need bodies for. Women too, it seems. If they come from means.

FITZ

I'll be damned. I'm shoveling shit for a meager near-nothin', meanwhile upper-class women are going to university and becoming surgeons. What an odd world it is.

HATT

Right. But. You ain't shoveling shit no more.

FITZ

Right. Right! A woman scientist. Does that mean we're working for a woman?

HATT

Working for a woman, aye.

(trying to motivate Fitz)

Hey, hey. Maybe someday, your little lady can be a surgeon or a professor or a scientist, hah?. If you work hard enough, hah?

FITZ

My Charlotte? A scientist? That would be something indeed. If I work hard enough?

HATT

Work hard enough, aye. So enough talking.

He gestures to the coffin.

Fitz shakes his head and tries to hand the hammer and wedge to Hatt.

FITZ

No. You.

HATT

Your first time. You do the honors.

FITZ

I don't want to.

HATT

I said--

FITZ

Come on, Hatt. No. No.

Hatt grabs Fitz and pulls him into the grave.

HATT

Go on, do it, Fitz. It's a dead body, it's not gonna grab ye.

FITZ

No, I--

HATT

(poking him)

Do it. Do it. Do it!

FITZ

I'll do it! I'll do it! Bloody hell.

(taking breaths)

Right. Yeah. Pound per body.

*He hits the wedge with the hammer
and pries open the unseen casket.*

He immediately recoils.

FITZ

OH JESUS CHRIST!

Pause.

Hatt peers into the grave.

*Fitz breaths hard. His eyes glued
to the grave.*

FITZ

Bloody hell.

Long pause.

He finally looks at Hatt.

FITZ

Did you know?

Hatt stares at Fitz.

*Fitz looks back at the grave. Tears
welling up in his eyes.*

FITZ

Hatt, did you know?

HATT

Goddamnit, Fitz. Look at you.

He offers the flask, but Fitz slaps it away.

He stares into the grave.

Pause.

FITZ
A little girl...?

HATT
Yeah. Well--

FITZ
Did you know?

HATT
What does it matter?

Fitz doesn't reply. He struggles to calm his breathing.

HATT
No. I didn't know. I'm just as surprised as-- alright, yes, I knew. This is the surgeon's request.

FITZ
A child?!

HATT
Yes. So, aye, I knew.

FITZ
You couldn't warn me?

HATT
No. Look at you. You'd have run into the church to confess, wouldn't you? To save your soul or some daft fucking notion. And then I'd have to...

(beat)

Look at the coffin. That didn't make you wonder? It's small.

FITZ

I DON'T KNOW COFFINS, HATT! I'M NOT AN EXPERT ON COFFIN SIZES BECAUSE I NEVER / TRIED TO DIG ONE UP BEFORE!

HATT

Hey! Quiet, quiet! Fitz! Shut your gob, goddamn you, you're gonna get us caught. What, are you trying to wake her up?

FITZ

Don't say that!

HATT

You stop with the yelling. I don't want to talk about this again. This is the job. You don't want the money for you and your Charlotte, then go on home. But hold your tongue either way. You won't be doing her any help in a jail cell.

Beat.

FITZ

(quietly)

Doing who any help?

HATT

Huh?

FITZ

Charlotte or Agatha?

HATT

Who the hell is Agatha?

Fitz points emphatically at the grave.

HATT

My god. Sure, right. Whichever. Either. Both.

Hatt goes to the wooden cart and retrieves a large piece of canvas and a length of rope.

*He jumps in the grave to cover and
bind the body.*

*Fitz snatches the rope and canvas
away.*

FITZ
(whispered shout)

WAIT!

HATT
(whispered shout)

WHAT?!

FITZ
I don't...

HATT
Hah?

FITZ
That's someone's daughter.

HATT
Goddamnit, they can still come set flowers at the headstone.
Far as they know, nothing's changed.

FITZ
Bloody hell. This is awful. I shoveled horse shit ten hours a
day but *this* is awful.

*Hatt jumps out of the grave and
grabs Fitz.*

HATT
That's why it pays more! I've had enough/ I'm gonna break
your jaw if it keeps yappin'--

FITZ
Stop it!

Hatt does stop.

HATT

Someone's out there.

FITZ

What?

HATT

Shush, quiet.

FITZ

Oh my god, it's the spirit. Come to torment us for what we're-

HATT

Quiet!

Hatt grabs Fitz's face to quiet him.

They freeze, peering in the thick darkness.

HATT

Listen here, Fitzy. You follow my lead. Whoever that is, if they get close, we may have to bash 'em.

Hatt retrieves the spades and hands one to Fitz.

FITZ

Bash 'em?

HATT

That's right. On the head. Good and dead.

FITZ

Have you gone fucking mad? We're killing people now?

HATT

If we have to.

FITZ

Hatt, have you killed people?

HATT

I told you, I fought against the Little Colonel, you dolt.

FITZ

Not soldiers, not war! People! Innocent people!

HATT

Quiet down! If it's a copper...

FITZ

What if it's a priest?

Beat. A light from a lantern draws near.

FITZ

Jesus save us.

HATT

Wait... Not a copper. Is it...

FITZ

A gentleman?

A gentleman appears with a lantern.

HATT

Evening sir. Or morning might be more accurate.

KNOX

You're *late*, in either case.

Hatt relaxes at the sound of her voice.

HATT

Knox? My god, we was ready to bash you.

KNOX

At least then you'd be putting that spade to use.

FITZ

She's wearing trousers.

HATT

Shut your gob.

KNOX

I thought you might have been hauled away. What is taking so long? You're the better part of an hour past the time to meet.

Hatt pulls out his pocket-watch and looks at it.

HATT

Ah. Yes. So we are.

KNOX

It's dangerous dragging this out, you know?

HATT

Right. Right, m'um. Course. We just reached the coffin.

Knox approaches the grave and points her lantern inside.

She sighs.

KNOX

(quietly)

There you are. Weren't you beautiful.

Beat.

HATT

See? We was just--

KNOX

So why the delay?

HATT

Well... We kept stopping because, well...

FITZ
There's a priest.

KNOX
A priest?

HATT
That's right. A priest.

KNOX
What do you mean, a priest?

FITZ
A priest. Wandering around. Haunting, like.

KNOX
In the middle of the night?

HATT
Fitz saw him.

KNOX
A priest?

She peers into the dark.

FITZ
Or a spirit.

KNOX
What?

HATT
Nothing.

KNOX
Let's just get on with it. You've been out here long enough.

*She stoops into the grave. Examines
the body.*

KNOX
Good. It's not too late for embalming.

FITZ

For what?

HATT

It's the potions what they use to preserve it.

FITZ

Potions?

KNOX

Chemicals. To forestall decomposition. Come, help me.

Hatt dives into the grave.

HATT

Fitz, toss the wrap and the rope.

FITZ

Now wait. Wait.

KNOX

Why? What's the matter?

HATT

Goddamnit, Fitz, not now.

FITZ

Not this one. We can--

KNOX

What's going on?

FITZ

Miss Surgeon, er Doctor-- Professor ma'am--

KNOX

(demanding)

What?

FITZ

Not this one.

HATT

Fitz--

KNOX

Why not this one?

FITZ

It's a little girl.

KNOX

Precisely.

FITZ

A little girl. A child.

KNOX

A child is what I require.

FITZ

You're going to take a child from her final-- and, and cut her open and fill her with potions- chemicals- No. You can't. It's not right. / It's not--

HATT

Hey, I told you to stop it with this shit!

KNOX

Alright. Listen to me, Mr....

HATT

Fitz. He's new at this.

FITZ

I was a shoveler. Not a--

KNOX

What we do in the anatomy lab is extremely important work--

FITZ

I'm sure, but / even still--

HATT

I swear to God, if you / don't shut your hole--

FITZ

I'm trying to reason with you / both about--

KNOX

Reason?... Mr. Fitz, I'm sure you've heard of the Plague?

FITZ

The Plague? Aye. The Plague.

KNOX

Right, the Plague. The Black Death. And you know what it was?

FITZ

People... people got sick.

KNOX

Sick? Indeed. A person would feel a fever. And come on with a cough. A right violent cough. Quite soon, it becomes a labor to breathe. Like other illnesses, yes, like tuberculosis, but this would come on so suddenly. Worsening rapidly. Hours. And within a day or two, still struggling to breathe, now there's a swelling. A hot, pulsing swelling in the face, in the hands and feet. Horrible, painful boils appear, on the neck, under the arm, the groin... And then, quite soon after, the skin starts to blacken. The fingertips, the toes, traveling up the appendages. Towards the heart. The pain becomes excruciating. And Death soon follows. Men, women, children. Any age. Healthy or maimed. It doesn't matter.

Both Fitz and Hatt are unnerved.

KNOX

Do you know why this happened?

FITZ

No.

KNOX

It must have seemed like a curse. Within days, a person went from upright with the onset of the fever to piled onto a cart and tossed into a pit with so many others. Surely, it was a curse. A pestilence from God or devils. Like in the Bible. Moses calling forth a Destroying Angel. Some said it was a punishment, others said it was a mercy. Which it was depended on the status of the infected, you see, either believer or unbeliever.

A short suffering before paradise or the first taste of damnation. A living Hell in any case. What do you think it was, Mr. Fitz?

FITZ

I don't know. Seems it was a curse of a kind.

KNOX

It was a bacteria. Do you know what that is? It's something so small, so infinitesimal we cannot see it. Shared, at first, with rats and flea bites, but soon it could come in through our noses and our mouths and it enters our lungs, and then our blood, and travels throughout our whole bodies and it kills us from the inside out. Invisible, but deadly. The purple, blackening skin? Not the result of a hex, nor the wrath of an angry God. This was because of internal bleeding. You see, the veins inside were rupturing, breaking, dissolving as the disease caused decomposing in the body before it was dead. Because of a bacteria. A germ. Imperceptible to our naked eyes, but very, very real.

(pause)

Not a curse from gods or devils. Just biology.

FITZ

If you can't see it, how do you know?

KNOX

Study. That's what the corpses are taken for. So we can understand ourselves. The dead are useful to the living. You see? And I need a dead little girl, so that I can understand how to treat living little girls.

She takes the canvas from Fitz.

He's left holding the rope.

KNOX

(to Hatt)

We're in the midst of a scientific revolution, Mr. Fitz. A revolution of thought. And you get to play a small part. Here.

HATT

You see, Fitz. I've been telling you. It's all for good in the end.

FITZ

If its for good then why is it against the law, huh?

HATT

You said that didn't bother you.

FITZ

It all bothers me! Everything about this bothers me. So, why? Tell me, Knox. You may be a woman, but you are a scientist--

KNOX

I beg your pardon--

FITZ

--so call it a philosophical query. How can a thing be against the law and be good?

Hatt lifts the wrapped little body from the coffin and tosses it out of the grave. It hits the ground with a soft thud.

FITZ

Oh god! Be careful with her!

Knox glares at Hatt.

HATT

She can't feel nothin'.

KNOX

The dissection of bodies isn't illegal.

FITZ

What?

KNOX

It's the acquisition of cadavers that is the problem. Supply doesn't meet demand.

FITZ

Supply?

KNOX

Convicted and executed murderers and rapists. Those we can legally have.

HATT

And there's not enough murderers and rapists.

KNOX

Oh, there's plenty. It's convictions that are lacking.

*Hatt and Knox begin to bind the
body with the rope.*

KNOX

The law and morality don't always align. That's why we pay what we pay. No questions asked.

HATT

No questions asked. So stop asking questions.

FITZ

Wait. Wait! Please! Yes, I understand, it helps science to be able to have the bodies and learn-- but, not this one.

(physically trying to stop
them from tying the body)

I'll help, I'll help on another one, but please just leave her in peace. Let her sleep--

KNOX

It's not sleeping.

Hatt shoves Fitz away.

FITZ

It's a person!

KNOX

It's not a person! A person can move, can think, breathe, feel, yearn. This can do nothing. It is a corpse.

HATT

Pardon him, ma'am. Pardon him. The graveyard, the night, it's gotten to his head is all--

FITZ

It's not my head, it's my heart. / It's my stomach!

KNOX

His medieval thinking is an obstacle, Hatt.

HATT

I'll sort it all with him / after we're done tonight--

FITZ

Is science more important than what's holy? Those bodies had souls. They may be just flesh and bone to you but they still have souls even if they've gone somewhere else. Doesn't that frighten you?

HATT & KNOX

No.

FITZ

(To Hatt)

Oh aye, because you're a thief, a criminal who don't read his bible and / who'll *do anything* for money

HATT

You don't read the bible either because / you can't fucking read.

FITZ

(to Knox)

And you're a godless scientist / who'll *pay* anything.

KNOX

Godless? God is found *through* science.

FITZ

Nothing is sacred to either of you, that's plain to see.

KNOX

These bodies are more sacred to me than to anyone, you unlettered luddite! You can't comprehend what these mean to me, what miracles they give us. Far more divine than story-book water-to-wine or snakes nailed to posts, they teach us the truth of life itself.

(beat)

You don't know what these means to me. The barriers that I've had to overcome just to be allowed in the classroom with them. Christ, we push and push the wheel of progress, endlessly uphill, but we can't move an inch without having to drag you fucking troglodytes along with us!

HATT

Me? I'm not a... that.

FITZ

Would you donate your body? Would you, Hatt? Let them strip you naked, take your important trinkets, and slice you up?

HATT

If I'm dead, do I give a shit?

FITZ

What if... What if she were someone you knew? That would change things wouldn't it?

KNOX

I did know her.

Beat.

KNOX

She was my brother's daughter. Typhoid.

Fitz is stunned. Even Hatt is a taken aback.

KNOX

(almost to herself)

You weak-minded men...

(to Hatt)

He's a liability. You're going to get caught with his panic and his moralizing. Not to mention the noise. Why did you bring someone who is so averse, so unequal to the task?

HATT

I needed a worker. And he needed work. You shoulda seen him.

KNOX

Seeing him now, I can only imagine.

(to Fitz)

Why would you want to--

FITZ

I don't want to! I don't want to do this. But I have no choice! I have no choice... For my Charlotte...

KNOX

Ah. Yes. Well, for six pounds per body, maybe you'll find your peace with it.

This knocks Fitz from his despair.

FITZ

(softly)

Six?

He looks at Hatt, who looks away from him.

KNOX

I'll take the cart.

HATT

I can do that, ma'am.

KNOX

No. I'll take it. Fill the grave in quickly, and then come to me for payment.

(to Fitz)

However you feel about it, those wages can go far for you and yours. Perhaps far enough to bring you comfort in making a profession of it. But beware, Mr. Fitz, knowledge is fatal to superstition.

Knox pulls the cart behind her and exits, her lantern disappearing into the dark.

Pause.

HATT

You heard her. We fill this in, and then it's finished, and you can leave this place and go home to your Carlotta.

FITZ

My Charlotte.

HATT

Charlotte, aye.

FITZ

Not without my payment.

HATT

Well, o' course. But not if you don't help me fill this in. Wouldn't want your phantom priest to see you, hah?

FITZ

Six pounds.

Pause.

FITZ

You're a liar.

HATT

What did you say? Call me a--

FITZ

A liar. You're a thief, a criminal, and a liar. You told me three pounds. And even that we wasn't gonna split even.

HATT

I told you I arranged--

FITZ

What did you arrange? The surgeon knew that girl. She's her fucking niece. You did nothing.

HATT

Fitz, you better start shoveling that dirt. That's what I hired you to do. Now that takes no brains and no heart. Just. Shovel.

FITZ

And you knew, you *knew* how bad I needed money. Not for me. For my girl. To eat, to not freeze to death out in the streets. You don't care?

HATT

Bloody hell!

FITZ

You don't care if we wind up in here with no markers on our graves. You'd probably dig us up yourself and send us to the lab! You have no one. No one who depends on you. You have no need of more but you take anyway because-- because you're empty. No soul. An empty vessel.

HATT

I offered you a kindness, but I don't give a ha'penny fuck what happens to you if you're gonna get in my way, slow me down, question everything and make every shovel full a goddamn walk to Calvary!

FITZ

What you got me into, put me through. You owe me. You owe more money, Hatt.

HATT

You made me look / like a fool.

FITZ

All of that money. I want all that money, Hatt. All six pounds.

HATT

I'm not giving you more money. You hardly did even what we agreed on.

FITZ

You don't deserve it and I need it. You're going to give me all of it.

HATT

I'm not giving you more.

FITZ

The whole six pounds.

HATT

Knox was right. You're a liability.

Hatt moves menacingly towards Fitz, spade in hand.

FITZ

Get away, Hatt. Are you a murderer too?

Hatt keeps advancing.

FITZ

Get away! No! Don't!

Hatt raises his spade, and tries to bash him. Fitz catches it and they wrestle. It's messy. Hatt struggles against the pain in his body.

In the scuffle, Hatt loses the spade. Fitz holds him as he tries to get back to it.

Hatt hits Fitz. As he crawls through the dirt towards the spade, Fitz gets a hold of the rope left behind by Knox.

Hatt obtains the spade and raises it to bash Fitz, but a sharp pain in his shoulder causes him to hesitate, and Fitz gets the rope wrapped around Hatt's neck. They struggle, but Fitz doesn't relent.

Hatt's struggle weakens and slows until he stops moving.

Pause.

Fitz finally loosens the rope, and gets up, stunned. He looks down at Hatt's body, lying still.

He stares at it for a while.

The church bell breaks the silence, startling Fitz.

One. Two. Three. Four.

He looks at the open grave. Convenient. He stoops down to push the body in, but then stops. He stands up again.

FITZ

No questions asked...

Fitz loosens the rope from Hatt's neck, and begins to bind his feet.

He pauses, looking at the body.

Fitz reaches into Hatt's waistcoat pocket and pulls out the pocket watch. He admires the time piece for a moment, it's silver sparkling in the light of his lantern.

*He puts it into his own pocket
carefully. Then he continues to
bind Hatt's feet, leaving a length
of rope to drag the body.*

FITZ

Six pounds. Six fuckin' pounds. No questions asked.

The lights fade.

END OF PLAY.