

# SIX DEAD BODIES DUCT-TAPED TO A MERRY-GO-ROUND

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CHARACTERS

WINSTON                      50s. Grizzled truck driver  
TOBY                            Mid-20s. A soldier.

SETTING

The play begins in a Reno truck stop parking lot, then takes place inside the cab of Winston's truck.

COSTUMES

Winston wears a greasy, faded mechanic's jumpsuit. Toby wears camouflage fatigues and carries a large green duffel bag.

TIME

Fall, 2009

*(Lights rise on WINSTON leaning out the open door of his truck's cab, eavesdropping on TOBY, who paces anxiously, talking into a cell phone. He doesn't notice WINSTON watching him.)*

TOBY

Come on, pick up. Pick up, Kelsey... no, I DON'T want to leave another message... uh, hey. It's Toby. Message number three. I'm still in Reno... uh, I guess I'll just try to find another way home, and see you when I get there. Give me a call when you get this.

*(pause)*

This really sucks, Kels. Call me.

*(He hangs up and puts the phone in his pocket, chewing the side of his thumbnail.)*

WINSTON

You need a ride, soldier?

TOBY

Yeah... I guess.

WINSTON

You're not a cop are you?

TOBY

Sorry?

WINSTON

I said where you headed?

TOBY

California. San Jose.

WINSTON

Well, it's a little out of my way... I'm going to Los Angeles...

TOBY

Yeah. Don't worry about it.

WINSTON

No, no, I can get you there. I'm just thinking out loud what route to take.

TOBY

If you could even get me close...

WINSTON

Hop in.

*(TOBY crosses around the front of the truck and gets in.)*

TOBY

Thanks.

WINSTON

Name's Winston.

*(pause)*

You're not carrying any guns are you? I don't mean to pry but I've got some materials in the back that, uh, don't mix well with firearms. Company policy.

TOBY

Don't worry about me.

WINSTON

So. You like music, officer?

TOBY

Yeah, I guess.

WINSTON

Yeah to the music or yeah to the officer?

TOBY

What are you getting at?

WINSTON

Nothing. I thought you said you were a cop.

TOBY

I'm not a cop. I'm an Army corporal.

WINSTON

What about before the service?

TOBY

Construction.

WINSTON

Good. That's good honest work there.

TOBY

I guess. I'm ready to get back to it, ready to get back anyway.

WINSTON

Coming home from Iraq?

TOBY

Afghanistan.

WINSTON

How was it?

TOBY

Awesome. It was great. Really fun.

WINSTON

Wow... really?

TOBY

No.

*(pause)*

It was... It was cold. I didn't expect that. Really cold I mean. People were burning so much garbage in Jalabad to keep warm, the air turned black. I couldn't hardly breath.

WINSTON

Jesus. Yeah. You wouldn't expect it to be that cold.

*(WINSTON pulls the truck out onto the highway.)*

TOBY

I coughed so hard I gave myself a hernia. But I'm home for good. I don't have to go back. I haven't seen my wife in fourteen months, so, you know... that should be fun... she was supposed to be here.

WINSTON

Hope she's all right. Or, you know, mostly all right.

TOBY

What?

WINSTON

You want her to not be hurt or anything, but something needs to have gone wrong, or you'll be pissed that she didn't pick you up.

TOBY

Look—

WINSTON

It's only human.

TOBY

Can we not talk about this? I'm sure there's a good reason why she wasn't there.

WINSTON

Consider it dropped.

*(pause)*

WINSTON cont.

Listen, you seem like a trustworthy guy so I'm happy to drive you... but there's something I need you to do for me.

TOBY

Whoa. Easy, dude. I'm not going to polish your knob or whatever. I don't need a ride that bad.

WINSTON

Aw hell, that ain't what I mean... Why would you think THAT? I look like some sorta sexual deviant to you?

TOBY

Oh, I just... you know, you hear stories... about truckers...

WINSTON

Happily taken for the last nine years, thank you.

TOBY

I'm sorry.

WINSTON

Jeez, like I'm some kind of weirdo.

TOBY

I said I'm sorry. Just a misunderstanding.

WINSTON

Okay. Forget it.

*(pause)*

Glad we got beyond that.

*(pause)*

Know what I'm hauling in the back of this truck?

TOBY

No.

WINSTON

It's a 'body bus.' I'm taking a load of cadavers to UCLA. Dead bodies. For research.

TOBY

That doesn't scare me.

WINSTON

Does me. I ain't never hauled so many bodies.

*(pause)*

Actually, I've never pulled this gig before. Not bodies, never. I used to haul gas for BP. Bigger truck, less money. Go figure.

TOBY

How's that?

WINSTON

The point is... I've never had an opportunity like this before.

TOBY

Opportunity for what?

WINSTON

I've got this idea... Listen. We'll stop in Sacramento on the way to your place. There's a park on the west side, just off the railroad tracks... Sam Combs Park. We'll just stop there, drag the bodies out of the back—

TOBY

Are you kidding me? Pull over. I'm not fooling around with any dead bodies, no way!

WINSTON

What are you talking about?

TOBY

Necrophilia! I'm not doing it.

WINSTON

Sex with dead bodies? That's where your mind goes first? What is with you son? Is this what post traumatic stress is like? The first thing you think of when a corpse comes up is having sex with it?

TOBY

Then what are you talking about?

WINSTON

We're just gonna haul them out of the truck and duct tape 'em to a merry-go-round.

TOBY

Um... what?

WINSTON

I got this new digital video camera. My wife and me... we need money. We figured we'd be able to do something with the camera... you know... amateur, uh, videos.

TOBY

Oh.

WINSTON

Yeah, so that's not panning out.

TOBY

If she's not a hell of a lot better looking than you—

WINSTON

We've been keeping our eyes open for opportunities. That's what this is, man. That's exactly what this is. We'll film it and put it on the internet and charge people to watch it. Five bucks a pop, maybe ten. You get a couple thousand people... that's millions of dollars. That's a lot of dough.

TOBY

Man, I have heard some bad ideas but this—

WINSTON

You need a ride... I'm not asking why... and I need a hand. Where's the problem?

TOBY

No way, man. Sorry.

WINSTON

Someone's gonna help me. If that someone isn't you... I gotta let you off.

*(pause)*

Your wife call you back yet?

TOBY

No.

WINSTON

Don't suppose she's schtupping the mailman, do you? What do you military boys call that... when a guy moves in on your girl while you're out killing the bad guys...

TOBY

A Jody.

WINSTON

Yeah, a Jody, that's right. I mean, for all you know, she could be banging someone—

TOBY

Shut up!

WINSTON

Just trying to make conversation.

TOBY

*(pause)*

You ever try to actually move a body before?

WINSTON

Nope.

TOBY

They're heavy. Like bags-of-concrete heavy.

WINSTON

So what? A stiff's a stiff. You look strong... is it the hernia?

TOBY

No, surgery was over a month ago. Look, what if... what happens if we get caught?

WINSTON

Listen, if you see blue lights, just run. Don't worry about me.

TOBY

Who are these people anyway? And how would you like it if someone roped your dead body to a seesaw?

WINSTON

Merry-go-round. See-saw wouldn't work... we're making a movie. We need some action.

TOBY

That makes sense. There wouldn't be any up and down with two stiffs on a teeter-totter.

WINSTON

*(laughs)*

We don't have much of a special effects budget.

TOBY

Winston, I can't go do this. I... I see what you're saying, and I can picture it, and I can even see a bunch of idiots paying to watch it... God help us... but it's just so, so lame... I mean... disrespectful.

WINSTON

What, to them? They don't give two shits at this point. They donated their bodies to science. Science. There's nothing we're going to do that's worse than what those doctors down at UCLA got in store. It's a chop shop down there. We're just gonna drag 'em, strap 'em, spin 'em, film 'em, and toss 'em back in the truck. Good as new.

TOBY

We should keep their faces covered, though... don't you think?

WINSTON

Maybe.

TOBY

I mean, if a family member sees it... they've got detectives for that sort of thing.

WINSTON

Oh yeah... hadn't thought... but will people pay to watch it if they can't see the dead faces?

TOBY

That's a risk we're going to have to take.

WINSTON

“We” are?

*(pause)*

I can live with that... hell, that's good... anonymity. Yeah. Like “we're all faceless in death... all the same.” Puts a good spin on it.

TOBY

Speaking of spin... how are you planning to get the thing started, I mean how you gonna get it spinning?

WINSTON

I got a rope in back. I figure I'll wrap it around the base and then tie the end to the bumper. When I say action, you hit the gas and let 'em fly.

TOBY

This is insane. This is a really, really stupid idea.

WINSTON

Oh come on... it'll take an hour, two max. You'll be home before the sun's up.

*(TOBY looks out the window, then pulls out his cell phone. He looks at it intently.)*

TOBY

You need money that bad?

WINSTON

This trucking thing may look glamorous, but it barely covers rent. Mona is... well, Mona can't work any more.

TOBY

Your wife?

WINSTON

Not actually married, but for all intents, yeah, she's my life.

TOBY

What's wrong with her?

WINSTON

A year ago she was driving home from work. Started fooling with her earring. I don't know, got stuck in her hair or something. Anyway she looked down for a split second and then, out of nowhere there was this kid. Just a little guy. Chasing a ball or something. She couldn't stop so she jacked the wheel over, flipped the Chrysler, hit a tree. Her spine snapped like a dead branch. The little guy was ok, thank God, but she's a paraplegic now, can't walk.

TOBY

Wow. I'm sorry.

TOBY cont.

*(pause)*

I thought you said you guys made, uh, videos...

WINSTON

Well, yeah. We still “do it,” if that’s what you’re asking.

TOBY

How is it?

WINSTON

None of your goddamn business.

TOBY

Sorry.

WINSTON

So what if my old lady’s a cripple, we’re doing great. How’s your marriage, huh? What’s shaking with Miss San Jose? Been having troubles? Not picking you up is pretty cold.

TOBY

We got married a couple of months before I left.

WINSTON

Pregnant?

TOBY

No, no, I loved her.

WINSTON

You can have both of those.

TOBY

That’s not what I’m saying... I just mean, I love her, like crazy... she sent me this care package, for my birthday. It wasn’t anything special, you know, of value. But there was this... mug, and it looked just like this other one she’d given me when we were dating. Nothing big, but it was my favorite, until one day, she was drinking coffee, standing in the kitchen, and the mug slipped out of her hands, and smash! We both looked up at each other and yelled Mazel Tov!

*(pause)*

That was it. I knew. I mean, I’d known before, but that was the... the whatever-moment.

WINSTON

I know what you mean.

TOBY

So she sends me another mug, just like it, only she’d painted “Mazel Tov, Toby” on the side in gold glitter.

WINSTON

I get it.

TOBY

I don't know where she is. I talked to her a week ago and everything seemed fine.

WINSTON

I was just kidding before, you know.

TOBY

About the dead bodies and the merry-go-round?

WINSTON

No, that's on. All that Jody stuff. I didn't mean to say... Lighten up, brother. She'll call. Girl like that? She'll call.

*(pause)*

It's not always yellow ribbons when you get home, you know.

*(pause)*

I'm gonna stop at this exit up here.

TOBY

I can't.

WINSTON

Can't stop?

TOBY

The merry-go-round. I can't do it. I'm sorry. You can just let me off when we stop.

WINSTON

It's all right... I'll still take you home. It was a stupid idea anyway... you were right.

TOBY

Funny, though.

WINSTON

Yeah.

TOBY

Maybe we should just pretend that you were joking. Trying to trick me into going along with you.

WINSTON

*(pulling over)*

Yeah, I can't believe you bought that.

TOBY

You sure got me!

WINSTON

Like I'd do that. You're crazy. I'm going to use the head.

*(TOBY shakes his head just as his cell phone goes off. He checks the caller ID... he looks up at WINSTON, scared. WINSTON smiles, then gets out of the truck and exits. TOBY gets out, stretching as he answers.)*

TOBY

Kelce, thank God, are you okay?

*(pause)*

No, no, it's all right, I got a ride. Some weird trucker.

*(pause)*

Something bad... okay, hey calm down. Whatever it is, we'll work it out.

*(long pause; his jaw drops; starts biting the side of his thumbnail)*

Holy shit! No, no, no, no, no. You can't tell me this NOW. I can't hear this now. Just stop. You can't tell me this now... A better time? Hmm, I don't know let's see. Maybe when you found out? Maybe during the nine months you were PREGNANT. Or, you know, any point during the last fourteen months seems like it would have been a better time to tell me you had a frigging baby!

*(long pause)*

Would you stop crying? I'm the one who should be upset for Christ's sake! Okay, okay. I'm sorry. Please... stop crying. Calm down. Hey, I'm sorry... How would you feel? I mean, how do I know it's even mine? No I don't really mean that. I don't know what I mean. I don't mean anything. What am I supposed to think? What do you want me to say?

*(pause)*

What if something would have happened? I never would have known. How is that better?

*(WINSTON enters. TOBY turns away from him. WINSTON gets back in the cab of the truck, muttering.)*

WINSTON

I can take a hint.

TOBY

It's fine. Forget it. I'll see you when I see you.

*(TOBY gets back in the truck. WINSTON pulls out. After waiting as long as he can, WINSTON can't hold back any longer.)*

WINSTON

Well?! What'd she say?

TOBY

I'm a father.

WINSTON

Well I'll be damned... congratulations, Mazel Tov... there might be a cigar in the glove box... um... so wait, are you... are you THE father?

TOBY

She said she didn't tell me because she didn't want to make it harder. On me.

WINSTON

It would have.

TOBY

That's messed up, though, right? You don't wait till the night your husband's getting back after fourteen months and say "oh yeah, I almost forgot, we have a kid, SURPRISE!!!"

WINSTON

Yeah, I get where you're coming from but think about the other side. Must have been pretty hard on her to go through all that by herself.

TOBY

She made it hard. I would have been happy, if she'd told me. I could have helped her. I could have talked to her about it at least.

WINSTON

Talk, pshaw, some help. And think how you woulda felt. Knowing you were missing the whole thing. Knowing you couldn't do squat when it came down to it. And worrying. That's the sort of worry that sucks you dry, leaves you with nothing. I can tell you from experience. It means she loves you. Making that kind of sacrifice? That's what it means.

TOBY

What if it's not mine?

WINSTON

Then it wouldn't have mattered and she would have told you from the get-go.

TOBY

I know it's mine but... it feels wrong. SHE was wrong.

WINSTON

Maybe she was. But a wrong thing ain't always so wrong when it's done for the right reasons. She did it to protect you. Love's a pretty damn good reason to go and do something stupid.

TOBY

I guess so.

*(long pause)*

I'm going to do it.

WINSTON

That's the spirit.

TOBY

I mean the dead bodies, the video... let's do it.

WINSTON

You serious?

TOBY

Let's do it, Winston. Let's go duct tape these bastards to a merry-go round. How I'm feeling right now... it'd be weird NOT to tape corpses to playground equipment.

WINSTON

Mona's gonna shit when I tell her! We're gonna be rich.

TOBY

We should buy some antiseptic to spray it down afterward.

WINSTON

Good idea.

TOBY

You got a title yet? You gotta have something catchy, you know. Something that'll get people's attention, without giving too much away. Like "Circle of Death" or... "Cadaver Carousel!" Something that gets across the essence of the thing... "Life After Death," no... "Joy in the Afterlife," no... how about "The Fun Never Ends?"

WINSTON

I've already got the perfect title.

TOBY

What?

WINSTON

I'm gonna call it "Six Dead Bodies Duct-Taped to a Merry-Go-Round."

*(TOBY stares at him, then nods and looks out the window as the lights fade.)*

TOBY

That works, too...

*(End of play.)*