

Putting the Fun in Funeral

by Nathaniel Tower

The funeral was a blast. One helluva time. We all had the time of our lives. Well, all of us except Dominic. It pissed me off that Dominic didn't have fun. After all, he *was* the center of attention. The whole day was about *him*, and we spared no expense in the arrangements to make sure that *he* had a good time. It pisses me off even to this day to think that the stupid bastard didn't give any indication whatsoever that he was having a good time.

It's not every day that dozens of flower arrangements are presented in your honor. Very seldom does a string quartet play your favorite songs in your memory. I don't remember anyone ever booking a church and a reception hall just for me. Certainly no one has ever spent hours deciding what would be the most comfortable resting place for me. But the dumb bastard didn't even smile. He just laid there, a worthless lump of what looked like a man crafted out of silicone. Perhaps it wasn't even him. Perhaps the selfish asshole had simply thrown a mannequin in the box to dupe us all.

There were a lot of good times though. Nearly everyone I or Dominic had ever met showed up. At least everyone of consequence. I suppose there were lots of people we had met that didn't show up. None of these absences really took anything away from the overall success of the event.

The guest list had been narrowed down to about four hundred before the invitations had been sent out. Many thought the invitations were an unusual touch, but I thought it was much more personal than a tiny black and white ad in the cluttered newspaper. I wanted to make the guests feel welcome.

Of the four hundred invited, all but one came willingly. That person was none other than the esteemed guest of honor. It didn't bother me that he hadn't seemed excited at first. I figured it was just his new sense of modesty that he should have developed a little sooner.

Everyone there knew that Dominic was there because of me. But no one talked about that. It wasn't important. Enrique almost brought it up, but he decided that it was best not to and ordered a scotch on the rocks instead. Had it not been for what I did, the whole party never would have gotten off the ground in the first place. People from all over the country weren't going to show up for a party that was just for the hell of it. It had to be a real occasion. I gave us the occasion. There were only two or three thank yous uttered all night. It really made me realize that manners just aren't the same today. It was almost enough to ruin all the fun. That and the fact that Dominic didn't even have a good time.

Everything about the event was more or less perfect, all going off without a hitch except for a few expected tears here and there. I'd imagine that Dominic would have approved. I never thought to ask him what he would want at the event. I had to base the amenities of the party on what I knew my longtime friend would want. If anything, I gave him much more than he ever could have asked for. His tastes were pretty simple, and simple just didn't cut it for this once-in-a-lifetime event.

The affair started out with pretty standard stuff. We had the visitation on Friday night. Most people thought Friday night was a little odd, but I thought it was a good way to get things going. We found a nice country club in the suburbs. The view from the windowed room was spectacular, and before the daytime hours expired, the lighting inside was excellent.

For appetizers, we served crab-stuffed lamb shanks with a balsamic vinaigrette glaze, lobster and feta ravioli with a five-cheese sauce, goat cheese covered mushrooms, and a delicious asparagus dish. People were hesitant at first, not wanting to eat so close to the casket, but as the sun went down and the evening went on, people started to warm up to the idea. Sean had wanted to serve a more formal meal, but I thought that was in poor taste. Can you imagine eating at linen-covered tables, a wide array of silverware glistening in the candlelight, with a corpse resting just a few feet away going hungry? It almost sounds nauseating.

After much deliberation, I decided the full open bar was the best bet. It didn't make much sense to charge people for drinks when you aren't even serving a full meal. Besides, I think people would have felt guilty paying for drinks. As long as they were free though, people had to drink.

I had decided to save the dancing for Saturday night after the big show, but there had to be some entertainment at the visitation. So we hired a string quartet and gave out attendance prizes. The most coveted prize of the evening was the little Labrador puppy. The ladies really went wild with their “awwww”s when they saw him. Luckily, Carl won the puppy. He needed it to help him with the ladies.

There was some debate about who would take the body home after the visitation ended at the reasonable hour of ten. I contended that since Jerome had the biggest vehicle that it made the most sense for him to take the body. Jerome argued that he didn't feel comfortable with the body in his house with his wife, and he didn't want to leave it in the car over night for fear of vandals, so he claimed that I should have to take it home, even though the casket obviously wouldn't fit in my car. Our compromise in the end was that he took the casket and I took the body. I covered it with a soft blanket before placing it gently in the back seat.

The funeral itself was pretty dull in spite of the presence of a brilliant string quartet and the elaborately decorated church. The comedian didn't hit it off with the guests, and no one seemed in the mood for blowing bubbles as we hauled the casket down the steps to the Mercedes hearse. The caravan of Hummer limos was a nice touch that livened up the crowd and ensured transportation to all four hundred guests to the burial.

At the burial, which was located at a beautiful cemetery in a well-forested area that overlooked the river, people seemed to enjoy the motivational speaker and the string quartet. They even played “Blackbird”—his favorite song (I think)—as the casket was lowered into the ground. The videographer did great work on this scene, and

the photographers got a few quality shots as well. It was so beautiful that at least half of the guests got teary eyed.

After the burial, the pall bearers and immediate family stayed for pictures while the other guests took the Hummer limos to a swank little restaurant on a bluff. Grant, who was a little jealous I hadn't picked him as a pall bearer, said everything went perfectly.

At four the Hummer limos took everyone to the country club for the highlight of the whole celebration. We spared no expense. Elaborate centerpieces, extravagant meals, top-notch entertainment. We hired a six-piece rock band that was working on recording their debut album for some record label.

Before they played we had a delicious dinner. I was a little drunk on limo champagne and long island iced teas, so I don't remember all of the courses of the meal, but it was a four course meal, probably with a filet mignon or something like that for the entrée. After the salads I gave a toast. I don't remember exactly what I said, but I really made people tear up. A couple women from the immediate family table even bawled.

The band really rocked, playing almost till midnight, and the dance floor was packed most of the night. Other than my quick visit to the toilet to vomit, I really had a blast, and by the end of the evening I was really proud of myself for bringing all of those people together for such an extravagant event.

The only gaffe of the whole affair (other than a few missed notes by one of those string quartets) was when a woman about Dominic's age came up to me (I thought at first to thank me or ask for a dance) and told me to go to hell.

It sure was a classy event. Although it wore me out, I'm looking forward to the next time. I'm sure I'm not the only one.

