

The Mortician's Assistant



Jenny Winters



An "Adult TV" Novel



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For information address
Reluctant Press
P.O. Box 5829
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413
USA

Call toll free (800) 359-2116

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The Mortician's Assistant

By Jenny Winters

By the time I got to my seat, the nerves were jangling like never before. I almost wished that I'd turned down the invitation, but that would have been professional suicide. Here I was, waiting my turn to be applauded by my peers as I held up that coveted statuette and thanked everyone I could think of.

It seemed hours ago that I'd sat in the salon and made small talk as my hair had been styled into this glorious up do that looked so casual that it might fall out at any moment. It couldn't, but then that was the skill of the hairdresser.

To tell the truth here, I loved dressing up. I always had, and the opportunity this time was too good to miss. I bought really extravagant lingerie to make sure I felt really good and special. It's hard work being a girl like me. Image is everything, and I can't let anyone guess what's underneath.

I could feel my penis struggling against the rigid elastic inside my panties. No one knew I had one, and that's the way I wanted it to stay. Of course my partners knew, but they were sworn to absolute secrecy. Thus far my faith in their discretion hadn't been betrayed.

The dress, wildly impractical, came from a couture house wanting to push its designs to a wider audience in the industry. I couldn't have afforded something so extravagant, so I was delighted when they asked me to wear it for them. I loved it and I hated it at the same time.

It was a silver sheath, with a draped neckline over my generous breasts, a tight bodice that clung so tightly to my hips and thighs that I could hardly walk. The matching stilettos were so high, and my knees were so tightly held by the dress...., you can guess what I mean.

I walked up the red carpeted stairs thanks to my escort who held my hand. He stood to the side as I paused in front of the sponsor's background and turned left and right, waved, and pouted as the photographers called and clicked away as they always do on these occasions. He took my hand as we progressed into the main hall. I knew I'd need him again when I had to go and receive the award.

I was made up like never before, well, maybe that's not quite true, but it doesn't matter. It was fun to allow someone else to do it. It's usually me doing it for other people. I had the lot; the nails, the eyelashes, the lips all perfect and my newly bleached statement silver hair..., it was like a fairy princess dream.

Did I say that I was wearing about a million dollars of jewellery too? Of course none of it was mine. It was all loaned by goodness knows who, but they wanted it to be seen. I had a diamond bracelet, long drop earrings, necklace and even a couple of rings, all sparkling white glittering diamonds, with an occasional ruby to emphasise the shape and movement.

Pity that I had to give it all back as soon as the ceremony was over. They'd made that quite plain, with a guard waiting to relieve me of it all.

This was my moment. They called the award, played bits from the all the nominees, and then the envelope. My name! I clasped my hands to my face as if in shock, pretending I hadn't got the nod a few days before.

Almost in a dream I walked to the front, unexpectedly in awe of the occasion. I hugged the hosts and then curtseyed as I received my award. I stepped up to the microphone and made my speech. It was really short I promise, and then in a daze, I returned to my escort and to my seat.

I sat down with a sigh. It's funny how things work out, because I never planned or expected any of this.

I suppose if this is to be a true memoir, I'd better start at the beginning. I'll not bore you with the where or even the when, and we'll skip over the early years stuff because there's nothing the least bit interesting in those days.

It was when I went to High School that I started to get interested in performing, and all things theatre. It was the time of all those space exploration movies, with monsters and special effects before computers took over.

It was latex and putty, false ears and beards, wigs and hideous colours everywhere. I did flirt with some of those effects, but it didn't hold my interest for long. It wasn't real life. It wasn't Tony Curtiss in 'Some Like It Hot' chasing Marilyn Monroe, and you never saw a monster walking down the street.

I was lucky in those days too although I didn't realise it at the time. My father was away with the services and rarely came home. When he did it was

lockdown time because he and mom didn't get along any more. We didn't argue, but then we didn't talk either. He didn't understand my world; theatres, costumes and above all the makeup they used. It was like I was from another country.

I remember when I was probably fifteen or so. I got into the school's makeup and costume store. I had most of the day, and I changed into an old lady, with a stick and a grey wig. All my friends knew what was going on, but they were sworn to secrecy.

I hobbled through the corridors, stopping teachers and telling them that I was searching for my great nephew. Of course, I couldn't remember his name, or which class he was in. I said that I thought he was about thirteen and he wore a uniform just like the kids who were passing us in the corridor.

It was amazing. They were polite and wanted to be so helpful. Of course, I pretended to get more and more confused by their questions. I acted like my memory was a sieve through which thoughts fell away. Then someone gave me away, and I got hauled off to the head teacher, still in my old lady dress and wig. I think I got away with it. And that was my last bit of female impersonation for some years.

My parents finally split when I was about sixteen. We moved house several times and I never seemed to fit into the new schools here and there. Eventually, I'd had enough and left home when mom got a new man in her life and he didn't seem that keen on me being around.

It wasn't the best of decisions, but then there were no alternatives. I had dreams of going to study makeup and special effects. I wanted to be the guy who created those memorable moments that you see on your screens. The course fees were impossible. I needed to earn and there wasn't anyone offering paid training places.

That was when I was at my lowest. I couldn't get a job anywhere. I had no qualifications for anything; it was so bad I thought I couldn't even get arrested.

But all things change.

It wasn't a job that I ever wanted. I never thought of it. If you'd met me a couple of years before I'd have said never in a million years would I do that. But there I was. I'd been head-hunted for my skills.

I was the mortician's assistant in the best funeral home in town. I hated it, but it was money and where I come from that was in short supply.

What were my skills, I hear you ask. Well, I was a bit of an artist. I did the makeup and hair for school plays when I was there, and then I went on to do the same thing for the amateur theatre here in town. I wasn't the greatest hairdresser around, but I was pretty good at faking it, with lots of lacquer, and colour sprays which washed out.

I was really good with the makeup. As a kid, I'd frustrated my parents endlessly. I spent lots of my money, and some of theirs on all kinds of supplies. I learned about latex moulding and prosthetics. I studied all those YouTube videos on contouring and shading, and practised on myself and anyone I could persuade to sit still for long enough.

I think the whole school thought I was weird, but I was really obsessed. I managed to fail all my exams, even art. It was a pity that they didn't accept the things I could do and mere sketches of my creations didn't get a good mark.

Did I say that home wasn't home anymore and that I was out and on my own in the world, with no means of supporting myself.

So that was me; school was over, and I needed a job. The funeral director was a smooth talking, oleaginous sort of guy. He was the only one in our small town, but by clever management, and shrewd investment, he built up a good size business in the surrounding state. He got the celebrities, such as they were, and that's where I came in.

He knew me for some years. He was one of the directors of the local theatre and when he saw what I could do with the living, something must have clicked. If I could do it with the living, why not use the same skills on the dead?

I wasn't attracted when he approached me with the offer, but there was nothing else on offer, so what choice did I have? I hated it at first. I was so squeamish. The sights and above all the smells lingered with me long after I'd left the funeral home. I never felt really clean.

But you can get used to anything, and soon I was able to put aside my distaste, and that's when I started to learn my craft and incidentally, get a little better paid.

We got all sorts of people through the business. There were of course, a lot of elderly people. There were also the drug overdoses, the accidents and the suicides, the tragic cases of terminal illness, and people who sadly die young.

It's part of the human condition for their nearest and dearest to want to say a last goodbye. They come to the Chapel of Rest to see them. Sometimes they have an open casket wake, or funeral. That's where I come in. They want their deceased to look as natural as they did in life.

You guessed; it was my job to make sure that they looked as good as they could. Hairdressing on a corpse is a special skill. You have to prop them up and secure their posture otherwise you get in all kinds of a mess. That's the hard part. The easier part

is that they don't complain when you jab a hairgrip into their scalp, or bind their up-do too tight.

The makeup was different. Sometimes they'd send in a photograph. They wanted mother to look like she did thirty years ago in her favourite picture. That wasn't too bad. Padding, my fine artistic skills, and a bit of fakery won through. Have you ever tried to fix false eyelashes on a corpse? I have; the answer is superglue.

The worst were the accident victims. I did my best, but some had to be closed casket funerals. I could fix most things, even gunshot wounds, but when the head was crushed or blown off by a shotgun, no one could make that look pretty.

Word got round, and soon I started to get a few private commissions for live events. That's really where the story starts.

Let me tell you about the live events. I worked with lookalike actors and tribute acts. They weren't always that good, even with my skills. Madonna was far too heavy and not very athletic, and Katy Perry was a few years beyond her best.

The Sinatra impersonators were okay as long as they were slim. Elvis was so regularly requested, from his swivel hipped youth to the bloated rhinestone figure of his Las Vegas years that I could make almost anyone into a passable imitation.

It didn't pay too well, but it kept me busy. Given the starting point of some of these people, it stretched my skills too. I got word of mouth recommendations and for a while business was brisk and good. I was still working in the funeral home in the day, so my income was decent. I even got myself a beat up Ford to carry all my supplies.

You can tell there's a 'but' coming. Here it is; but the performers started to learn what I was doing and the products I was using. They decided that they didn't need me anymore, and although they didn't have my skills, they did reasonable transformations on their own. My income dropped and to tell the truth, I was getting bored with too many of the same character.

My troubles started with politics. No, I don't mean that I started to run for office or anything like that. I didn't get a handout from an 'uncle' in the business either.

It started with Evan Charles. I'd heard of him slightly; a small town guy with more ambitions than scruples and lots of connections. I can almost hear you saying that it's not unusual in a politician, but we'll skip the usual jokes, and I'll tell you what happened.

'Mr Charles wants to see you.' A bulky guy in a black suit came through the door to my workroom in the funeral parlour without any preamble.

'I'll get to him as soon as I can.' I replied. 'When did he die?'

'Don't be clever.' He snarled. 'He's not dead, but if you keep being that cute, maybe your time will come soon. I said he wants to see you, so get out of that overall, get your coat and come with me.'

'Does my boss say it's okay?' I asked politely.

'Your boss doesn't matter. Get moving.'

I wasn't used to this at all. I felt threatened and afraid. For the first time, I became conscious of the bulge under the right arm of his suit.

'Is that a gun?' I couldn't help myself; I had to ask.

‘I told you not to get clever.’ He replied, pushing me roughly.

‘Alright, I’ll get my coat, don’t hassle me.’

‘Just keep moving. Mr Charles doesn’t like to be kept waiting.’

He escorted me to a green Ford. The driver was sitting at the wheel and the engine was running. He opened the back door for me to get in, and as I was bending, he shoved me roughly so that I sprawled across the seat.

He slammed the door behind me and got into the front. The car set off with a jerk which sent me sprawling again. I got seated, and saw that there was a petition between me and the front seats, like in a police car. I panicked, and when the car slowed at some traffic lights, I tried the door handles. Nothing happened; I was stuck there.

The petition opened. ‘Put this bag over your head.’ My escort said. ‘Then pull the neck cords so you don’t see where we’re going.’

He handed me a black cloth bag. I looked at it and then at him.

‘Are you sure you’ve got the right person.’ I asked. ‘I’m a mortician, not a hoodlum; even on my day off, I’m not a hoodlum.’

‘Put it on.’ He snarled.

I did as I was told. It was really claustrophobic in there, and as the car followed the turns and humps in the road, I could feel motion sickness rising in my throat.

‘That’s all I need.’ I thought, swallowing hard against something in my throat.

I don’t know how long or how far we drove. It could have been a long way out of town, or only a lot of

times round the town. I knew that the car was going down a ramp, and when it came to a halt, the engine switched off and I heard the front doors opening. My door was pulled open immediately after that.

‘Keep the bag on.’ I was told.

‘But I can’t see.’

‘That’s the idea.’ His hands took my shoulders and he propelled me across what smelled and sounded like the concrete floor of a parking garage.

‘Here’s an elevator.’ He said, holding me firmly as we got in.

I could feel it rising, and when it stopped, I was again propelled, but this time it was along a carpeted area which I sensed was a corridor. I wondered what I could have done to deserve this. I wasn’t anybody. No one would pay a ransom to get me back, and only a few corpses would miss me.

A door was opened and I was pushed across the floor and then into a chair. The bag was removed from my head. I blinked and saw that I was in a room like a boardroom. There were no windows.

When my eyes got used to the light, I saw that I was sitting in front of a desk.

‘You wait here.’ I was told. ‘Don’t move; I’ll be right outside.’

I didn’t move. I was somewhere between terrified and mystified. I didn’t know where I was or why I was there. All sorts of fears flittered through my mind.

The door opened and a portly man with obviously dyed black hair and a really expensive suit came and sat on the other side of the desk. He looked me up and down without speaking, and then took a folder from a drawer and opened it.

'You're the makeup guy.' He said gruffly. 'I'm Evan Charles, maybe you've heard of me?'

'I do corpses. I can see that you're not one of mine.' I said through chattering teeth. 'I could do a really good job for preferential rates, if that's what you want.'

'Funny too; they tell me that you can do lookalikes as well, and that you're really good.'

'That's true.' I replied. 'I used to do a lot, but the demand's dropped off since the internet shows everyone how to do it themselves.'

'But you're better than that.' He said, pulling a photograph from the folder.

I looked at the picture of a distinguished man of middle years, with grey wavy hair, and a patrician look about him in the way he posed for the camera.

'Could you do a lookalike of him?'

'I probably could.' I looked again, thinking I might have seen the man in the picture somewhere before. 'It would depend on what I have to work with.'

'I have someone in mind.' He said. 'He's about the same size.'

'Then I probably could make that someone into his double.' I replied, but it would need a few more pictures and maybe I'd have to do some try-outs to get it right. He'd need to study the guy's body language to get it right.'

'Okay.' He pulled another picture from the folder. 'What about her?'

I looked at a picture of a younger woman; say about thirty, full bosomed with good teeth and an expensive looking blonde hairstyle. The picture shouted good health and a big personality.

‘Again, it would depend on who the double is to be.’ I replied. ‘She’s not going to be easy if you want it exactly right. You’re looking at a couple of hundred dollars’ worth of her hairdressers skills.’

‘I hadn’t thought of that.’ He said. ‘I should have known; girlfriends may be cheap, but they don’t come cheap. You know what I mean?’

‘I don’t have a girlfriend.’ I replied. ‘I don’t think I could afford one.’

He laughed. I didn’t get the joke; it was the truth.

‘You could get a wig?’

‘I could, but to look that good, it wouldn’t be cheap.’

‘That’s not a problem.’ He paused. ‘How long would you need to do them both?’ He asked. ‘

‘Do you want them to be together?’ I asked, getting rather intrigued at the request, despite my fears.

‘That’s the idea.’

‘In that case, I’d need to work with them individually to get them right. When I know that I’ve done that, I’d know what to do and what I’d need. Doing them both together would take most of a day, assuming that I’ve everything prepared.’

‘Can’t you speed it up?’

‘I bet the Pope said that to Michelangelo when he was painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.’ I replied.

‘I don’t care about Michael or any other guy. I asked if you could speed it up.’

‘It’s not an exact science.’ I replied. ‘It takes as long as it takes if you really want a body double. As with any journey, it depends on what the starting point is.’

'I'm not asking about travelling; I asked how long?'

'What I mean was that it's easier if there is a general resemblance between the double and the man in the picture you showed me. Of course the same goes for the girl too.'

'Okay, I get that.' He was silent for a few moments. 'Is the girl easier than the guy?'

'Yes if she's the same general shape.' I replied. 'Women are expected to wear makeup; men aren't. That makes it easier.'

'So you could do these two?' He asked.

'If the people weren't too different to these photos, then I could do something workable with them.'

'So not exact?'

'No one could guarantee that.' I said. 'You asked for an opinion, I can only give you my best advice.'

'Okay; don't leave town.' Mr Charles said. 'My guys will take you back. Not a word to anyone about this, and I'll call you when I'm ready.'

'It's going to cost.' I said.

'You do what you're told. You don't send me a bill.' His face reddened with anger.

'I mean I'll need to buy the right supplies.' I said calmly. 'You can't do this work unless you have the right equipment. It would be like sending your gunman to fetch me and forgetting to tell him to take the car.'

'I like a wise guy.' He smiled. 'I'll send you an account to use. Now go home and keep quiet.'

'If you want me to do this, I'll need to meet the couple myself. I need to see what I've got to work from. I can't simply buy the right things blindly.'

'I understand.' He said. 'I'll fix it for you to meet them, but remember, not a word.'

Life seemed to return to normal after that. I couldn't forget it, but it faded from a daily sweat, to a weekly fear. Then I got a call.

'Make sure you're ready to be picked up from work on Thursday at six.' There was no preamble; I knew who it was.

This time, it was only an anonymous sedan with a driver; no escort and no threats. I wasn't told to put a bag over my head either. We pulled into the Pine Lodge car park. It wasn't the best hotel in town, but it wasn't the worst either.

'You want room 404.' My driver said. 'Give me your mobile. The boss said no pictures allowed. I'll pick you up later.'

I handed him my phone; I guessed that there was no point in arguing. With that, he drove away without telling me how he'd know when to pick me up. I shrugged and went inside, took the elevator, and knocked on the room door.

'You're the makeup guy.' The man opened the door. 'I'm your subject. They gave me these photographs to show you. That's who I'm supposed to be.'

'I looked him up and down. 'Are you the right height?' I asked.

'How do I know, I've never seen this guy before.' He said. 'They said that they picked me because I was a good match though.'

That was a great start. I looked him up and down, holding the pictures as I walked round him.

'You're the right shape.' I said reaching for the small sketch pad I usually carry. 'I'll have to do some-

thing with your nose and chin, but that's not too difficult. You need to get some grey into your hair, and get a decent cut. The guy in these photos didn't have a ten dollar haircut.'

'I can do that.' He said.

'I've no idea why they want me to do this.' I hoped he would tell me.

'If I told you, they'd have to shoot us both.' He shook his head. 'Believe me, the less you know, the better.'

'Do you know when whatever I don't know about has to be done?' It made sense to ask.

'I think as soon as you're ready, they'll go ahead.'

'I need to make a couple of sketches.' I said. 'You can keep still and tell me anything I need to know.'

'You'd be better knowing nothing and then forgetting the nothing you don't know.' He said keeping still as I sketched.

'I suppose that makes some sort of sense.' I replied. 'Normally, I'd want to make a cast of your face and build a prosthetic on that.'

'I don't think they'd like you to do that, and there's probably not time anyway.'

'I don't work well under pressure, and I can't do my best work if I'm not given time.'

'Hey, don't tell me that. I didn't want to get mixed up in....', He paused. 'Whatever this is; but I guess we're both stuck with it.'

I was beginning to get bad thoughts about what could happen to me from being mixed up with this. I didn't know what was planned, but I knew I wouldn't like it if I did.

‘I think I’ve enough.’ I said closing my pad. ‘How do I call the car?’

‘You go back to the lobby.’ He said. ‘I call the car, and when you see it, get in.’

‘I didn’t get your name.’ I said as I started to open the door to leave, and held out my hand.

‘I didn’t give it.’ He said, looking at me with contempt. ‘And I hope you don’t stink like that when we meet next time.’

I waited in the lobby. I knew what he meant. I’d spent so much time with the deceased that I’d got used to the smells. I didn’t realise how much it lingered on my clothes until then.

We drove in silence back to my apartment block. I guessed that this was their way of telling me that they knew where I lived.

If I’d any doubts left about that, they were dispelled the next evening. I’d not long been home and showered to get the smell of the day off my skin. Someone was knocking on my apartment door.

‘I’m the girl in the photos.’ She said with no other words of introduction. ‘I mean that I’m the one you’re going to make into her.’

She was the right size from what I remembered of the photographs. Her lips were full, probably from some filler, and her tight dress was so low cut, it hid little of her generous breasts. Her makeup was perfect, and her hair owed a lot to the hairdresser’s art; long, bouncing and a shade of chestnut that nature never owned.

I stood back and gestured for her to come in. ‘Do you have a name?’ I asked.

‘You can call me Gina.’ She said.

There was something not quite right about her. Maybe it was the way her hips moved.

‘Okay, Gina. I guess that’ll have to do, even though we both know it’s not your name, and you’re not really a girl, are you?’ I said.

‘What gave me away?’ She asked with a panic rising in her voice.

‘Well, you did just now.’ I replied. ‘I know this isn’t a time for me to be clever, but there was something about the way you walked in.’

‘Damn it; I know I should have worn higher heels.’ She grinned at me as if it was all a joke.

‘I don’t have the photographs.’ I said. ‘They wouldn’t let me keep them, but I guess I can work with you. You’re the right height and shape as much as I can remember, and they’re paying for a decent wig.’

‘Do I get to keep it?’

‘I have no idea.’ I replied. ‘They don’t know that they’ll have to pay for it yet, or how much it’s going to cost. I guess they want the best though. You’d never look right with a cheap wig.’

‘Thank you.’ She said; her voice quivered as if she was frightened although I had no idea why. ‘I wondered about being a blonde like she is, but I figured it would be too much work.’

I could see the panic fading from her face. ‘What’s your role in all this?’

‘I’m not sure.’ She replied. ‘I don’t think you’d want to know anyway. It’s something political with a lot of money behind it.’

‘Okay, so we won’t talk about it.’

‘That suits me.’ She settled on my couch and leaned back. ‘You wouldn’t like to offer a girl a drink, would you?’

'If there was a girl here, maybe I would.'

'Don't be mean. I can do most of the things that girls do.' She pouted. 'And I've already been paid in advance.'

There was no mistaking that look in her eye. 'I've only got some awful red wine.' I said. 'I try to buy better quality, but this is chateau anywhere, and barely palatable.'

'You do live the good life.' Her face said she understood irony.

'With my job, it's the quickest way to sanity.' I replied, without explaining what I really did each day.

I handed her a wine glass, half filled with red. She took a big gulp.

'You weren't kidding; this really is awful.' She patted the couch next to her for me to sit. 'Think of me as a present from your employers.'

Her hand walked, finger by finger across my thigh and upwards. I couldn't help it even though I knew I shouldn't, and even though despite the evidence of my eyes, I knew she wasn't really a girl. She snuggled herself closer, and her perfume hit me. It wasn't cheap like the wine.

She handed her glass to me. Picture this; I was sitting on this low couch next to her with a wine glass in each hand. She turned to me and using both of her hands, undid my belt and then the button at the top of my jeans. The zipper came down and her hand was inside.

You can guess what she found in there. It was growing, and getting bigger as her nails scraped along its length. Then it was out and poking through the gap between my underwear and my jeans which were rapidly becoming less of an obstacle.