

When Beauty Meets Morbid

By Debra Ann Elliott

Joe hovered over Michelle, doting on her like a lost puppy. He'd fantasized about this very moment when he'd have her all to himself. Now she was there and his alone. In high school Joe had always worshiped Michelle Collins, but she was a cheerleader and he was a science geek. The two didn't socialize, not in high school anyway. Not anywhere really, except here in the morgue.

She lay on the metal table, her perfect and pristine form unaware the science geek she made fun of all those years ago was about to tear her beautiful body apart. The corner of his pencil thin lips curled into a smirk. Finally, after twenty years he had her right where he wanted her. Joe gathered the necessary instruments to perform his duty, after all he was the town's only mortician.

He washed her in the sterile solution before proceeding. The morgue reeked of death, but Joe savored the smell. It was "her" smell. Next came the daunting task of organ removal. His mind was clouded. Joe needed fresh air. He needed a cigarette.

Joe grabbed a fresh, starched white sheet and placed it over his high school crushes body before exiting the morgue. Once outside he lit up the strong menthol cigarette and took a few puffs. He snubbed the rest on the brick wall and went back inside to finish Michelle Collins.

She was still lying on the table. Of course she would be, he thought. She's dead as a doornail. He shook his head. "Michelle, Michelle, Michelle... why did it have to come to this?" He half expected her to answer.

If only she had agreed to dinner, she wouldn't be lying on the slab of cold steel. And he wouldn't have had to kill her. *Why did it have to come to that?* Beads of perspiration formed on Joe's brow. He probed her insides until he had removed all of her vital organs. He threw them in the metal bucket at the foot of the table, except for her heart. Joe had a special place for it prepared.

He held up her cold, dead heart. His face grew dark and a morbid laugh escaped his mouth. "I told you one day Michelle you would be mine."

Joe took her heart and placed it in a formaldehyde filled glass jar, sewed her up and went home with her pickled heart in a jar. It was like carrying moonbeams around....

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