

A soft, golden halo hovered and moved a shivering dance above the flame of a slim candle that burned gently and true. It lit, but only faintly, the figure of a man sitting on a chair. He was bound and gagged with his head resting on a table. The man was wearing glasses with very thick lenses, and sitting on a chair just away from the table was another man who was also bound and gagged. The outline of three men could be made out standing next to the two bound men. It was the same bedroom that Donny Campbell was in before. The three men were wearing Snow White masks. Donny Campbell revealed himself by taking off his mask, and the other two followed by taking off theirs. Donny threw his mask onto the bed and looked from the two bound men to his accomplices.

‘You go now. I have to be with them alone.’

They looked from Donny to the two gagged men, and as they turned to open the door they were stopped by the sound of a cockerel calling. It had a thin artificial sound. It called again. They looked at Donny and then down at the man slumped over the table. And again the electronically measured cry of the cockerel call sounded. The man looked at them through the thick lenses of his glasses. All three of them looked at the man. The cockerel sound was coming from a plastic watch on his wrist. The two accomplices looked at Donny. He nodded towards the door, gesturing for them to leave, and as they did one of the men stole a last look at the man wearing the glasses and the watch on his wrist.

Donny checked the contents of a hypodermic syringe. He walked over to the man who was seated away from the table and stood behind him.

The man was silent. He had been beaten and was resigned to his fate. He jolted

forward as Donny shoved the needle into the back of his neck. The man winced in pain. Donny leant over him and looked into his face as he spoke.

‘Ten seconds and counting.’

The man gasped quietly and gurgled before lurching forward as he fought for breath. He spluttered, but gave in as his death came swiftly.

Donny turned to the other man, who was watching him with eyes that were hardly visible behind the thick lenses. Donny dropped the syringe onto the table and picked up a knife that had a long thin blade. The man was sweating heavily and his mouth worked against the gag that restricted movement and muffled words he was trying to form.

Donny stood behind him, and leaning close to the man’s face he spoke into his ear in an even tone.

‘Now, if you did not wear those glasses of yours, you wouldn’t be here...’

Donny looked around the room.

‘Here, in my boudoir.’ Donny stopped talking and looked at the man. The room was still. Donny nodded at the other man as he said, ‘You see, you and your friend, Mary, over there, are a couple of queens who should know better. I can’t allow any talk, which would cause a break in security.’

‘Too many people – too many questions.’

He turned and flicked a switch on the sound system. ‘River Deep Mountain High’ by Ike and Tina Turner began to play. Donny raised his voice over the music.

‘Good song, isn’t it?’

The man did not respond. His weak eyes stared forward at a place people can only guess about.

Donny spoke quietly. ‘Maybe you should take your glasses off?’

The man breathed desperately.

Donny continued in an even tone. 'You could pretend I was someone else. Your mother, maybe?'

He rammed the knife into the side of the man's neck. The man propelled himself across the table, but immediately weakened.

Donny watched him die and then turned up the volume on the sound system that was on an old chest of drawers. Donny looked quickly from the two dead men to the chest of drawers as if suddenly remembering something. He opened one of the drawers and carefully took out a video camera. He inspected it, weighing it in his hands as if it was a very precious thing to him, like a guarded secret that only he knew about. He placed the camera on the table and pulled at the man who was slumped across it, shifting him into a seated position. Donny took a knife from his pocket, flicked it open and cut at the flex that bound the man's arms and the gag in his mouth.

The gag fell away and Donny looked impassively at the thin bladed knife sticking out of the man's neck, taking a detailed note of the blood that had gathered around the handle and how it had run in a small stream down his neck and over the collar of his shirt. A fine spray of blood had shot out when the knife was pushed in, leaving small flecks on the side of the man's neck, over his jaw and up that side of his face, peppering the frames of his glasses and completely covering one of the lenses.

Donny put his fingers into the man's mouth and pulled out a golf ball. He examined the ball before putting it in his own mouth. Donny smiled as he picked up a remote control and turned to a small television that had a built-in video. He picked up the camera from the table and pointed it at the man. The man's face appeared on the television's screen. Donny leant forward so that his own face also appeared on the screen. Letting the golf ball drop from his mouth onto the table he watched the image

of his face and the ball bouncing.

Donny put the camera on the table and cut the flex that bound the other man. He dragged the dead men into sitting positions against the table with their heads resting on one another's shoulders. They looked like two drunken friends sleeping off the effects of a heavy night on the tiles. Donny positioned the man's glasses on the bridge of his nose and stepped back to inspect the two men. He looked at the knife in the man's neck and the frozen expression of pain and anguish set in a final response to the man's time here on earth.

Donny tucked a plastic sheet that he had previously spread out on the floor under the two men. He took a torch from under the bed and shone it in the men's faces, looking closely at the wound around the knife and the expression on the other man's face. He picked up the camera and filmed with one hand while shining the torch with the other, and all the while the image of what he was filming played on the screen over his shoulder. He held the torch in various positions and at different angles, trying to capture a grotesque portrayal of what he had created.

Donny played a selection of music, but mostly from a CD of disco love songs from the seventies and eighties that came free with a newspaper he had bought.

After satisfying himself he turned the music off, fell onto the bed and pointed the remote control at the television.

Donny lowered the volume as the music started and a flurry of images lit up the room. He watched the screen with an intensity of a research academic filing new information, but the objective scrutiny gave way to lust as he pushed his hand down the front of his trousers and masturbated while watching a collection of images he had taped over a period of time in the room. The first one was of Donny standing behind a man who was dead and slumped in a chair. Donny was stripped to his waist holding a

cheese wire around the man's neck. Pumping up his body he pulled on the ends of the wire with all his might, rocking the wire deeper into the flesh and finally into the bone. For a short while the only sound was a grunting noise made by Donny in his efforts to sever the man's head before the music began to play, which was 'Feels Like I'm In Love' by Kelly Marie. The music changed to a children's song that was once popular at wedding receptions as it brought all age groups to their feet and dance the familiar steps in time with the simple song.

The dead man's head was almost severed from his body, and then it dropped forward held only by strands of flesh, veins and sinew. Donny stepped back, striking a bodybuilder's pose he flexed the muscles in his arms. The picture on the screen dissolved and lines flickered before another image took its place. Donny frowned as he tried to remember the night he had filmed it. A young man was sitting upright on the floor with his hands tied behind his back. He was still alive, but only just. The shot changed to a close up of the young man's face, and then a hand came into view holding a severed penis with blood running from where it had been cut. The penis was forced into the man's mouth and a few seconds later a lit cigarette was pushed into the penis.

Donny looked at the image as The Beach Boy's song, 'You're So Good To Me' played. He continued to watch the screen with a transfixed stare as the music changed to The Real Thing's, 'You To Me Are Everything.'

Donny fast-forwarded the videotape to the most recent recording, stopping it as the two men on the floor in front of him appeared on the screen. 'Feel the Need In Me' by the Detroit Emeralds was playing. Donny dropped the remote control and picked up a pair of pliers. He gripped the lobe of his left ear between the teeth of the pliers and masturbated furiously, and just as he came he let out a roar of pain and pleasure as the

steel make contact through the flesh of his ear. He jumped from the bed, pulling his jeans together and holding his ear. Looking down at the blood on his hand he kicked the dead men, but his energy was spent. He sat on the bed taking deep breaths as he cupped the bloodied ear to the side of his head.

Donny leant back against the wall with his eyes tightly shut. Turning his face he pushed his cheek against the wall and whined as he held his ear.

He slowly opened his eyes. They were flat and extinguished, but they opened a little wider as he looked at the pattern on the wallpaper, studying the little blue pools of water in the separate little islands. The wallpaper was old and stained, with the white having browned over the years and the blue faded to a pale shade of its former colour. It was the same paper Donny looked at as a child, because it was the same room he visited when he was a child. After his uncle died Donny bought the house from the Housing Executive and left everything pretty much as it was, especially the bedroom. He did not live in the house, but it was a place he came to for various reasons, either to get away from things or to bring people back for his pleasure.

Tonight he had his pleasure, and now he would go through the feelings that he always did and think about himself and his life. He did not feel fear, but there was an unpleasant sensation that was a constant and it made him feel uncomfortable. His breathing calmed and his eyes focused more clearly. His ear throbbed and he touched it lightly with his fingertips. Donny slid down the wall with his face pressed against it, feeling relief and comfort from its coolness. It soothed him as he looked at the little blue pools of water and the clumsily painted little islands that were replicated in the print of the aged paper.