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Graverobbers Wanted: No Experience Necessary

Jeff Strand
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Stumbling from one odd job to the next, Andrew Mayhem is certain that the right career opportunity will present itself eventually. It will be the one, in his opinion, that offers the greatest reward for the least effort. Perhaps that is why, when a beautiful woman offers him and his friend, Roger Tanglen, $20,000 to rob her husband's grave, he accepts with only the slightest hesitation.

Such is the absurd world of Mayhem, and the unconventional mind of the author. Graverobbers Wanted is both a comedic delight and a dark journey that the reader will gladly take, step by enthralling step.

Mayhem and Tanglen accept the bizarre proposition, but things start going wrong from the beginning. The first omen comes early on; the corpse they are supposed to exhume begins firing a gun from inside the coffin, an event for which they definitely had no contingency plan. Although they find the item they were asked to retrieve, it never makes it into the hands of the corpse's widow. Mayhem, Tanglen, and the widow are immediately abducted by a psychopathic serial killer with a sense of humor. He engages Mayhem in a twisted game, and Mayhem can't refuse; five lives hang in the balance. Thus, the gruesome, suspenseful, and riotous game begins. Mayhem deftly unravels the clues, and learns what is behind the tangled plot into which he's been led. It isn't easy, though, and Mayhem faces obstacles at every turn, not the least of which is finding a reliable baby-sitter. He handles each challenge in his own inimitable way, which is to say, with the utmost irreverence. The reader will barely finish chuckling at one sarcastic line before the next comic bit occurs.

Mayhem's sardonic commentary moves the story along at a quick pace, and mitigates the revulsion one might ordinarily feel when reading such graphic accounts of murder and mutilation. Strand uses humor to this end so effectively that it almost comes as a surprise to discover the victims really are dead at the story's end. Dead they are, however, and each one suffered an extraordinarily horrid death. More sensitive readers should be forewarned that, while an enjoyable book, Graverobbers offers more than its share of gore. Strand's voice and storytelling ability improve considerably with each new effort, and Graverobbers is his best adult effort to date. A sequel, Single White Psychopath Seeks Same, is to be released in March.
DAWN WILLIAMS (January / February 2001)

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