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## Is It There

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Well, that sound killed the mood instantly. I scrambled over there and started lifting him back onto the table, but in my hurry I pushed something wrong, and his jaw snapped loose. Tore up some of the skin around his mouth pretty bad. I finally got him back on the table and started looking at the damage, but he was pretty messed up. I was freaking out at this point, because I knew this much damage was going to take me days to fix, if I even could. I made the mistake of glancing over at his chart, and damn it if the bastard wasn't scheduled for a viewing the next day!

Oh, sorry, pardon my language. Yes, I'll try.

Well, that just blew the lid off whatever cool I had left. I just snapped out at Cass, since this whole thing was her fault anyway. I yelled at her, saying something about... I don't remember exactly... something about how her obsession with my job was now going to make me lose it. Apparently, that was too much for her, because she just broke down into tears, cursed me for being a dumb country hick, and ran out before I could say anything.

So I stood there a while, slowly losing my grip on my patience. I had days of work to do in eight hours, I was probably gonna get fired, and the girl I swore not to run from just ran out on me. I was pacing around pretty frantically, trying to figure something out. Well, as it happened, my eyes fell across the sheet for one of the other bodies. I saw height, weight, skin color, hair color, all about the same. So I pulled the guy out, and to my surprise, he looked really similar to Mr. Roberts.

I still don't know why I did it. The logical part of my brain can keep on saying that it was easier to put makeup on the other guy than it was to fix all the damage to Mr. Roberts, but that doesn't make it right. I know I'll never be

able to make it up to the people who came to the viewing and found someone else there... all I can do is say I'm sorry. In a way, I guess it was just another thing for me to run from.

So I got him fixed up and wheeled him in for the viewing the next morning. At first, everything was cool... I mean, I thought I was gonna get away with it. But then eventually, people started murmuring at the back. That gossip, it's like a freaking tidal wave – you can't stop it, not until after it just rolls over everything. So, eventually, they called the director over to talk to him. That's when I knew I was toast.

But you know the really messed up part about it? Some of those people at the viewing, they mourned over that body. It took the people running the whole thing almost two hours to figure out something was wrong, but during that time? I mean, people cried over that body. Some of them even kissed it.

They told the funeral home people later that they thought something was wrong... but what did they do about it? They grieved over the corpse of a man they'd never met, rather than stand up and face the fact that they'd never seen him before.

Only they already had this idea worked up in their heads of how it was gonna go down, see, and they didn't want to let anything mess that up. They even lied to themselves to keep that idea going.

I mean, who does stuff like that, anyway?



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Brooke Opie Ragusa