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Out of Time

by: Barry Sherwood

Detective Greg Miller arrived at the established barricade in between several police units that surrounded Larry's Laundromat. A few steps from his wagon, his closest friend and local beat cop met up with Greg as he traversed the growing crowd of residents and beatniks.

"Tom, what's the situation?" asked Greg as they moved beneath the police tape.

"According to the young couple who escaped, the perp has taken at least a dozen hostages. They stated the perp who calls himself Eli, whatever kind of name that is, appeared out of nowhere and killed someone with some sort of gauntlet. A few uniforms are looking over the body, but I got to tell you it's something else," stated Tom thumbing a nearby retrofitted meat truck.

"Out of nowhere, huh? Sounds like the couple had one too many hits off the Mary Warner," replied Greg.

"Maybe... but you should see that body. Perp tossed it out of the building just as the first unit was arriving on scene. Resembles one of those old fashion Egyptian mummies," replied Tom.

"Wait. What did you say?"

“That’s not all. When we made contact, he demanded to speak to a Detective Robert Miller. Wasn’t that your old man?” asked Tom as drops of rain smacked their overcoats.

“Maybe... but he died in the asylum just after I turned ten. He was accused of killing a bunch of people and... well, kept going on about mummies.”

“Oh yeah, I forgot. Sorry about your mom,” replied Tom.

“Don’t sweat it. It was a long time ago.”

“Hell, maybe that’s why they called you in. I still don’t understand why someone would take over a laundromat. Honestly, Larry’s isn’t even the best one in the city. Trust me, I know,” replied Tom as they both chuckled.

“Well, I best go talk with this Eli and figure out what he really wants,” said Greg.

Tom grabbed his arm. “Greg, the captain didn’t want me to tell you this, but as your friend...”

Tom said before glancing over his shoulders.

“Spit it out,” replied Greg.

“The first unit on scene said they saw Susan and Billy inside just before the perp had the windows covered up.”

Ripping his arm free, Greg’s face transitioned from shock into anger as he marched to the door. A yellow glow of the indoor lights peered out into the early evening darkness. Greg stopped as a dark silhouette of Eli appeared on the other side. His face was covered by a leather mask, leaving only his shimmering green eyes exposed.

“I’m detective—”

“I know who you are. You’re a spitting image of your father, well, thirty years ago that is,” said Eli.

“What do you want?” asked Greg.

“Your eyes share the same burning hatred as your fathers once did, yet I wonder is that because of me? Or because your wife and boy are in here too?” asked Eli.

“I swear to God—”

“Perhaps it’s fate, destiny, or unfortunate coincidence. Maybe the Universe itself is testing your resolve. I gave your father the same choice, his beloved Helen or his only son.”

“Please, whatever your issue with my father, you can have me instead,” pleaded Greg as his radio crackled with Tom’s voice.

“Jim’s in position...” whispered Tom.

“Apparently, you and I are out of time,” said Eli, slamming the door.

“No wait!” shouted Greg, pulling the door only to find it locked.

Greg’s wife screamed just as a bright blue light illuminated the windows. Giving up on the door, Greg pulled out his pistol and stepped back. He fired two rounds, shattering the door. Greg ripped the clothes down moments before rushing inside. Seeing the same pile of charred mummified corpses in the far corner he saw Eli lifting his blue glowing gauntlet into the air.

Without hesitation he fired his last four rounds into Eli's back. Only after Eli fell did Greg realize Eli was standing over the still smoldering remains of his wife frozen—a look of terror on her face.

“Billy!” shouted Greg several times as he paced the room. By his second lap around the tiny interior, officers had flooded inside and secured the perp.

“Damn, he's still breathing,” a cop shouted as they cuffed Eli.

“I'm sorry, Greg,” said Tom as he stopped Greg on his third lap still clutching his six-shooter. Tom and another officer carefully pried the gun from his hand as Greg broke down in tears. Falling to his knees Greg covered his face before hearing his son's voice.

“Dad?” Billy's face appeared in a nearby dryer inches away.

The End