

Bad Necromance

By Tom Moran

Setting

A basement. The present.

Characters

MORRIS, a would-be necromancer, 30s

BELINDA HANSON, a dowager, 50s - 60s

Summary

Neophyte necromancer Morris gets called in to reanimate dowager Belinda's dead cat. But this turns out to be merely preface for Belinda's much larger and more gruesome request: to bring her daughter's dead boyfriend back to life. Morris talks her out of it, and in the process Belinda realizes that she might be able to find romance for her daughter among the ranks of the living.

Number of pages

10 (not including title page)

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Scene 1

(A basement. Couches surround a coffee table with a shoebox on it. BELINDA and MORRIS enter. BELINDA is dressed in dignified dowager fashion, MORRIS wears an awkward jumpsuit. He sets down a duffel bag.)

MORRIS

Wow, Mrs. Hanson. This place looks exactly the same.

BELINDA

As a rule, dear, basements don't change much.

MORRIS

Last time I was here must have been, what, Holly's tenth birthday party? Fourth grade?

BELINDA

I bet you never imagined coming back under the current circumstances.

MORRIS

So. Let's start with the cause of death.

BELINDA

I don't know. How am I supposed to know? She just stopped moving. I thought she was asleep, but then she wouldn't respond to anything..

MORRIS

When was this?

BELINDA

Just this morning. Thank you again for coming on such short notice, Morris.

MORRIS

You're lucky - I, uh, had a cancellation. Let me take a look.

(MORRIS opens the shoebox, pulls indefinable instruments from the bag and prods inside the box. He looks puzzled.)

MORRIS (cont.)

What's her name again?

BELINDA

Patches. Can you do anything?

MORRIS

Please give me a hand with this table.

(They move the coffee table to sidestage.
MORRIS takes occultish items from the bag.)

MORRIS

So how is Holly doing these days? She married? Kids?

BELINDA

No and no. Not for lack of trying.

(MORRIS draws a pentagram on the ground, and
places the box on it.)

MORRIS

That's a shame. She always seemed like a well-put-together girl.

BELINDA

What does that mean?

MORRIS

I mean, like, sensible. Good head on her shoulders.

BELINDA

You'd think that. But she's made some poor choices.

(MORRIS spreads a waist-high black curtain
assembly around the box.)

MORRIS

That sounds ominous.

BELINDA

Not like the drugs or the porn. But she kept
surrounding herself with idiots. Big, dumb, swarthy
men.

MORRIS

You mean like carnies?

BELINDA

You know. Rugged, sweet talkers who used her and left her behind.

MORRIS

That's a shame. I figured she was destined for better things. I sure had a crush on her.

BELINDA

Really?

MORRIS

Back then we all did. So she never found anyone?

BELINDA

Ronnie. Her last boyfriend. Wonderful man. Investment banker. Financially secure. Sound temperament. Threw up on rollercoasters.

MORRIS

You're using the past tense.

BELINDA

Yes, I am. What about yourself?

MORRIS

Me? Still single.

BELINDA

That's a shame.

MORRIS

Not for lack of trying. I just haven't met Her.

BELINDA

Her?

MORRIS

You know, Her. Capital H. Can you give me a hand here?

(MORRIS hands her a small censer.)

MORRIS(cont.)

Light this and start swinging it, and stand back.
Thanks.

(MORRIS pulls out a hefty book and recites dramatically.)

MORRIS

Rachu mantantu vespacha kaltamu Patches ranta mant
kala mant atzu vaskalla kantantu Patches velchatza
meow-meow. There, done.

(He retrieves the censer.)

BELINDA

Now what?

MORRIS

We need to give it a few minutes.

BELINDA

So how long have you been a ...

MORRIS

Necromancer?

BELINDA

Yes.

MORRIS

About a month. You're one of my first clients.

BELINDA

I see.

MORRIS

Don't worry. So far I have a 100 percent success rate.

BELINDA

Really?

MORRIS

Yep. I should note, though, that Patches is a more
complex subject than I'm used to.

BELINDA

She's just a tabby.

MORRIS

Yeah, but you need to work your way up in this job.
Mostly I've been doing pro bono work. On vegetables.

BELINDA

Pardon me?

MORRIS

You know, you're not paying attention and suddenly that bag of lettuce in the back of the fridge is looking all brown and slimy. Who ya gonna call?

(long pause.)

BELINDA

You're putting me on.

(MORRIS retrieves a takeout container from the duffel bag.)

MORRIS

I've got some week-old Moo shu pork that I just reanimated this morning. Care to take a look?

BELINDA

(nonplussed)

I just had a big plate of baba ganoush, thanks.

(MORRIS puts the container down.)

MORRIS

Every job has a learning curve, Mrs. Hanson. You would prefer I started right out on humans? Because certainly that couldn't go horribly wrong.

(Another long pause. Then a faint MEOW from the box.)

BELINDA

Look!

MORRIS

Holy crap!

(A louder MEOW and HISS and they leap back and follow an unseen object off stage left.)

MORRIS(cont.)

Still pretty spry, it looks like.

BELINDA

(aghast)

Oh my god she's a zombie cat.

MORRIS

No, no, no. Relax. It's natural for her to be a little tweaked. She'll be fine. I think.

BELINDA

What do you mean, you think?

MORRIS

Well, there are occasional side effects.

BELINDA

Oh my god I knew it! She's evil, right? (to offstage) Patches? Are you evil now, honey? It's okay, we don't judge here!

MORRIS

She's not evil! But sometimes the reanimated lettuce and tomatoes, they tend to give people indigestion.

BELINDA

Indigestion? An upset tummy?

MORRIS

Yeah.

BELINDA

But they don't, say, eat all of the fruit salad? Or rise up and slaughter their masters in their sleep?

MORRIS

Not in my experience, no. We should probably give Patches a little post-return-to-the-earthly-plane checkup before I go, though.

BELINDA

Oh, you're not going anywhere.

MORRIS

I think my work here is mostly done, Missus-

BELINDA

Hold on a minute.

(BELINDA darts off stage right, returns pulling a dolly with a human-body-sized box. She kicks away the cat setup and stands the box on the pentagram, facing upstage.)

MORRIS

Shit just got real, didn't it?

BELINDA

Morris, this is Ronnie.

MORRIS

Ronnie! You mean Ronnie is...

BELINDA

Ronnie was walking home from the jewelers with an engagement ring for my daughter when he got creamed by a Toyota Corolla driven by a carny.

MORRIS

A carny? Really?

BELINDA

You're right, they're a menace.

MORRIS

And how did you acquire the, uh, remains?

BELINDA

You really want me to tell you?

MORRIS

I'm thinking no.

BELINDA

Can you do anything for him? Please. For the sake of my poor daughter.

MORRIS

Let me take a look.

(MORRIS opens the box. He and BELINDA double over from the stench.)

MORRIS (cont.)

Oh! Bleah!

(They both cover their noses with the tops of their shirts.)

MORRIS

How long has he been dead?!

BELINDA

Oh, about ten days now.

(He slams the box shut. BELINDA runs offstage, returns with air freshener, sprays it around.)

MORRIS

Ten days?!

BELINDA

So can you do anything for him?

MORRIS

Perhaps a reminder!

(MORRIS takes a deep breath, opens the box, and makes BELINDA take a hard look. He closes lid, she sprays some more.)

MORRIS

I mean, even if I could bring him back to life, I'm not sure Holly would be too thrilled with the results. I would note he got run over by a car -

BELINDA

It was a small car.

MORRIS

A Corolla is more of a midsize. And that was before he spent a week and a half decomposing!

BELINDA

Okay, maybe you have a point.

MORRIS

Wait. Was Ronnie why you really brought me here?

BELINDA

Yes.

MORRIS

Then where'd you get a dead cat?

BELINDA

She wasn't dead. I just gave her a double dose of ketamine. I wanted to see if you were legit.

MORRIS

That makes little to no sense.

BELINDA

I wasn't about to go killing a poor cat just for your benefit! Think of how selfish you sound now.

MORRIS

Dammit. I thought I had really stepped up my game there. Maybe it's time to go back to my old job.

BELINDA

What was that?

MORRIS

Investment banking.

BELINDA

Really? You left that for this?

MORRIS

Now you sound like *my* mom. I figured this would be a little more interesting.

BELINDA

Has it been?

(MORRIS looks at the box and shrugs.)

MORRIS

Naw, I guess not really.

BELINDA

Sorry to hear that.

MORRIS

At least I can keep my food fresh longer. Reducing my carbon footprint, all thanks to Satan.

BELINDA

So it's back to banking for you?

MORRIS

It's a cushy, lucrative career, but somebody's got to do it. Sorry things didn't work out for Holly.

BELINDA

Yes, well. Say, how do you feel about rollercoasters?

MORRIS

I throw up.

BELINDA

Huh. You know, it's Holly's birthday next week.

MORRIS

Really.

BELINDA

That's Holly. With a capital H.

MORRIS

Ah.

BELINDA

And we're throwing a party here. You know, she was so delighted to see you at that last one.

MORRIS

You mean the one where she got a Teen Talk Barbie doll and we all danced to New Kids on the Block?

BELINDA

Exactly. Why don't you come join us. I'm sure she'd love to see you again.

MORRIS

You think so?

BELINDA

Absolutely.

MORRIS

Well. Capital H, you say?

(Blackout. End of Play.)