

The Clean Up Crew

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FADE IN:

INT. HOTEL. LOBBY - NIGHT

Small pools of light over the Information Desk.

JULIE (30s) reads a book. Behind her, an open door that leads to an office. The office light is on.

Two men approach her. She glances up, no longer alone.

GUS (30s) and RICK (early 20s) walk up with smiles. Julie's nose goes back in her novel.

JULIE
Guys are early.

GUS
It's Friday. What's eating you,
Julie?

JULIE
Management.

Gus cranes his neck over behind Julie to see an open office.

Julie reaches somewhere under the counter. Her finger presses a buzzer.

OFFICE -MINUTES LATER

Typical hotel office. Plants, framed motivation poster on a wall, a corkboard filled with employee schedules and notes.

A framed newspaper article on another side of the wall. A headline reads 'Haunted Hotel Scares Up Service'

Gus and Rick, seated across from CASSIE, (mid 20s). A desk and a computer between them. Rick glances over, his eyes fix on a clock behind Cassie. Ten to Three.

CASSIE
On time. That's the only thing
saving your butts right now. Always
on time.

RICK
We're in trouble, Cass?

Cassie puts the computer to a random screen saver. Gives the men her full attention.

CASSIE

I don't like being here, guys. I work days, not the graveyard. So if I get a bit short with you, it's nothing personal. It's only business.

GUS

Okay. What's that got to do with us?

CASSIE

I'm your new supervisor.

She lets it sink in.

CASSIE

I don't crack whips, I don't break backs. I'm no slave driver. And this is the quiet shift, so the skeleton crew is laid back. I understand that.

Stands up, walks around the table so it no longer is a barrier between them.

CASSIE

That said, I've done some checking and double-checking on the books and charts.

Lightly sits on the desk, faces them.

CASSIE

So explain this to me. You two are the highest paid employees on this shift. What do you two do, exactly, I have no idea.

GUS

Maintenance.

CASSIE

Aside from cleaning the pool? What is that? House cleaning is in afternoons. I don't get it. There's one room in specific. The one you two always "clean" about this time. Room 445?

GUS

Didn't you talk to Ben? Is he on days now?

CASSIE

He quit.

RICK

He did what?

GUS

He quit?

CASSIE

Is there an echo in here? That's what I just said. And he didn't say anything to anyone other than those two words. Best to my knowledge.

GUS

Okay. See that story on the wall over there? How this place is haunted?

CASSIE

What about it?

GUS

Well, it's true.

CASSIE

Right. That just brings in the tourists. Besides, the ghost supposedly is in room 127. Samuel Vandercook, homicide detective, 1945 or something. I read that thing a hundred times myself.

GUS

Sam's in 445 if we get there on time and clean up right. He'll be calling on the help phone any minute.

CASSIE

Sam the ghost.

GUS

Every Friday morning. Rest of the week, it varies in minutes, but Fridays are a lock.

CASSIE

Hotel never checks out 445, let alone 444 and 446. They usually go unoccupied. So there's only one place where the mess comes from. Sure isn't a ghost.

RICK

You think we make the mess?

CASSIE

I think there is someone up there. I think he, or she, is a friend of yours. I think they call you to come up every Friday morning-

RICK

Wait a minute-

CASSIE

-fool around, play cards. Maybe there is a mess to clean up.

GUS

It's not like that.

The service phone rings. Gus and Rick eyeball it.

Cassie glances to it, picks it up on the third ring.

CASSIE

Front Desk. How may I help you?

Listens.

Nods.

Hangs up.

CASSIE

Poker time.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hall lights dimmed down. Soft lights near each door except three.

The triangle of darkness awaits up ahead.

Wearing painter's overalls, painter's hats and safety goggles: Gus and Rick. Cassie behind them.

Gus pushes a mop and bucket with him.

Rick, with a crossword puzzles magazine stuffed in his pants pocket, has a cart full of supplies, a folded up plastic poncho and extra pair of goggles.

Cassie doesn't carry anything but a clipboard and ball point pen. Her attire hasn't changed from the office.

Cassie glances over to Rick's cart.

CASSIE

So thoughtful.

RICK

I'm a gentleman.

She catches up, takes the lead.

CASSIE

So, Sam Vandercook should be in room 445, in the bathroom, blood in the tub and sink.

RICK

And ectoplasm around the seat.

CASSIE

Then he should lift it from time to time.

RICK

We aren't making this up, I swear to God.

CASSIE

Where does the blood come from? Even on a night shift, you guys walk around with blood all over, someone would notice. And if was that much blood in the bathtub, someone would call the cops.

GUS

I'm sure they would. Except that we're the only two that clean the room at night.

RICK

And the three rooms never get rented out.

GUS
Especially 445.

RICK
The police were called many times
over the years to 187 though.

GUS
Yeah. If the blood isn't cleaned up
right before sunrise, the blood in
the tub refills and if it crosses
out of the bathroom, it seeps into
the floor, sprinkles down in 187.

RICK
The green goop too.

CASSIE
Do you two know how ridiculous that
sounds? How can anything seep
through a room on the fourth floor
to a room on the first without
going through two floors? And in a
room which isn't directly
underneath it?

GUS
Psychics were even brought in over
the years, witches, Ghost Trackers,
all kinds like that and they can't
explain it. I don't even try.

RICK
Gus is right. Better just to follow
the rules, work the job, go with
the flow.

GUS
And don't let the books fool you.
We're underpaid.

CASSIE
Overpaid. And for goofing off. I
don't believe in ghosts, haunted
houses any of that stuff.

She stops at the dark triangle of rooms.

CASSIE
Overpaid. I bet a little shave-off
could buy some new lights for these
three rooms.

RICK

Lights are fine. They just don't
work in-

CASSIE

Save it. Here's 445. Time to crash
the party.

INT. ROOM 445 - NIGHT

The door opens; lights from the hallway flicker and pour in.

CASSIE

They still need to be replaced.

Gus and Rick look inside the room. Cassie brushes past them.

CASSIE

God said, let there be light.

With the flick of a switch, the light reveals nothing out
place.

RICK

One of these days, we should see
what room four-four-four and four-
four-six look like.

GUS

No one's died in either one of
them.

RICK

Not yet.

Gus and Rick stop at the closed bathroom door..

GUS

(takes out a quarter)
Flip you for it.

RICK

Heads.

Gus flips the coin. Before it lands on his wrist and he can
uncover the result, Cassie opens the door to the bathroom,
goes inside.

INT. BATHROOM.

The light turns on by itself.

The entire room is a four color scheme: pale white, chalk white, light grey and deep black.

His back to Cassie, SAM (late 30's) is dressed like a cheap private eye from the 1940's.

Sam stands in a stream of dark crimson, in front of the blood filled tub. He hears Cassie enter, but doesn't turn around to look her in the face.

SAM

News travels fast.

GUS (O.S.)

We got here as soon as we could.

CASSIE

You guys go all out.

SAM

Hotel's policies, I swear to God.
Someone stubs a toe, you give them
free breakfast.

Sam lights a cigarette. Wiggles out his match. Cassie catches a brief glimpse of a scar on his wrist.

SAM

Fella loses a toe, you make sure
there's no blood on the carpet
before the heat shows up with the
papers.

Sam takes a long drag off the cigarette.

SAM

This one lost his head.
(pause)
What are you doing in here anyway?

CASSIE

Just doing my job. What are you
doing here?

SAM

They don't pay you enough. Rick and
Gus, I expected one of them. Not a
woman.

CASSIE
(light sass)
Sorry to disappoint. There's no
smoking -

SAM
Things will kill you. Yeah, yeah.
Heard it before. Put your best foot
forward please.

Cassie shrugs, comes closer. She gets a better look at the
dead body in the tub. She puts her hand over her mouth.

SAM
Rick and Gus should have filled you
in on a few things. Like when they
told you about me. But you're
better than them right? Got
something to prove, and even though
they respect you, you treat them
like a pair of fools.

Cassie casually lifts up the toilet seat with her spare hand,
catches her breath.

SAM
Flush when you're done.

CASSIE
(nervous)
I'm alright.

She isn't. Her knees buckle on the turn to the right, her
dinner drops down into the stool.

SAM
Stinks worse than the stiff. I'd
like to tell you now that there's
good news and there's bad news, but
sadly, it's all bad.

She looks up to him. Standing over her is a half decomposed
zombie-ish like man, and he's dressed like Sam. He is.

ROOM 445 - MOMENTS LATER

Cassie screams, rushes out of the bathroom and rams right
into Gus, who catches her.

CASSIE
Oh my God!

From the main room, Sam looks like a normal looking man in his late 30's. Sam watches the trio as he stays in the bathroom. He never leaves the confines of that space.

SAM

Hey, she going to be okay?

RICK

We told her the room was haunted, but she's our new supervisor, transferred from the day shift.

SAM

New supervisor? She's in charge over you guys?

RICK

Yeah. We told her, a two man job is fine, she wouldn't listen.

SAM

Well, it don't shock me in the least. You and Gus have your moments, but it's obvious you guys ain't doing something right.

RICK

Hey...

SAM

You two have been in this room more than the stiffs. You and Gus should have told her about me.

GUS

We did.

SAM

Well she sure as hell wasn't asking for my autograph.

What's her name?

RICK

Cassandra. Everyone calls her Cassie.

SAM

Cassie.

(pause)

Listen, Cassie. I...dammit, Gus. Turn her around.

CASSIE
I'm not looking at him!

GUS
As long as we are out here, from in there, he looks like anyone else.

RICK
He's not going to hurt you.

CASSIE
There's a dead body in there!

SAM
And he ain't gonna hurt you either.

GUS
You'll have to give us a minute.

SAM
She can't leave.

GUS
I know.

CASSIE
What's that supposed to mean?

RICK
Means what it means. It's part of the rules.

CASSIE
A dead body without a head is in the bathtub! And a ghoul zombie standing in the same room!

SAM
Zombie? Ghoul? Listen, you dumb broad, I'm a phantom, dead for half a century or so, but I don't eat human flesh and I sure as hell don't rip people's heads off.

(to Rick)
This ain't gonna take all night, is it?

Sam walks up to the bathroom door, slowly closes it.

SAM
(from behind the door)
Better hurry.
(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)
Remember the last time the clock
ran out.

MINUTES LATER

A tearful eyed Cassie seated on the bed. Gus next to her.

A pencil rested behind his right ear, Rick relaxes in a nearby recliner, with a magazine dedicated to crossword puzzles in his hands.

CASSIE
So let me get this right. The
rules. First person in the bathroom
and talks to Sam has to be the one
to clean up the blood on the floor
and drain the blood in the tub
without assistance.

GUS
Yes. In the bathroom, Sam looks
like something out of Dawn Of The
Dead, but from out here, he looks
normal.

CASSIE
He mentioned a time limit?

Rick is about to answer the question. He changes his mind,
and goes back to the crossword puzzles.

Cassie's eyes go wide.

Gus hands her the poncho and the spare goggles.

Takes his hat off, puts it on her.

Cassie's speechless. She frowns in disgust.

BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Cassie's hands squeeze out the mop, blood and soapy water
drain in the bucket.

Seated on the toilet, Sam, posed like The Thinker only with a
lit cigarette in his hand, observes.

SAM
It's not the kind of thing you talk
about.

CASSIE
Did it really happen?

SAM
Time is of the essence. You have
less than two minutes.

CASSIE
I'm sorry. I looked at the books, I
thought Gus and Rick were screwing
around on the job. Who would make
up a story like that?

SAM
You're doing good. Now to pop your
cherry.

CASSIE
What did you just say?

Sam laughs. She can't stand to glance back to him.

CASSIE
Least you can do is put a towel
over your face or something.

She goes to the tub, kneels down. Turns away her head as her
elbows go into the tub of thick blood and beside one headless
corpse.

SAM
If it makes you feel better, I
think they were screwing around. I
give out the do's and the don't's.

CASSIE
Do's and -

SAM
(breaks her off fast)
Gus gets a little nausea, his world
gets turned upside down for a few
hours. He got lucky, caught a
break. He's an alright guy, don't
get me wrong, but I'm just saying,
you know, I can't have crazy
mistakes like that. It's a huge
pain. You know?

CASSIE
Bet they didn't have to drain the
tub.

SAM

Yes, they both had their turn.

CASSIE

Even Rick?

SAM

Even cross word puzzle man Rick. You know he actually asked me what's a eight letter word for reflecting light that starts with an 'r'? In the middle of cleaning up this mess. The nerve.

CASSIE

Well, it's going down. I don't...think I should have done this. The police...

SAM

What part of this don't you understand? Even if Gus and Rick took turns cleaning the mess, what do they do with the dead bodies?

CASSIE

I'm not going to have to...

SAM

Hell, no! Sweet mother of mercy! I'm not a sadist, woman! "Drag the body out". Did I say anything about taking the body out of the tub?

CASSIE

No.

SAM

Do you want to?

CASSIE

No. Not really.

SAM

Glad to hear it. Now, you're doing good. Now, when that tub is completely drained, take the mop and bucket out. Not one drop of blood should remain in the room.

CASSIE

What about ectoplasm?

SAM
The what?

CASSIE
Green stuff. You know. Ghost
residue, slime?

Sam gives her a blank look. Cassie changes the subject.

CASSIE
Who is he?

SAM
Who do you think he is?

Now she looks back to him.

CASSIE
Can I go now?

SAM
I'm sure it's okay.

Cassie pushes the mop and bucket out of the bathroom.

ROOM 445 - CONTINUOUS

....and she hands them over to Gus.

CASSIE
Wipe that smirk off your face.

GUS
I'm not smiling.

CASSIE
Deep down inside you are.

Rick rolls up his unfinished crossword puzzle magazine,
stuffs it in his back pocket.

RICK
You get it all?

CASSIE
Yes. I got it all.
(looks down at bucket)
Wait.

(MORE)

CASSIE (cont'd)
If he's a ghost and the guy without
the head is a ghost, then this
blood should disappear by the time
we leave the room if not shortly
after, right?

RICK
Uh, no. The blood kind of seeps
through a time line or other
dimension or something like...

CASSIE
Speak English.

GUS
Think of it like red ectoplasm.

RICK
Red goo.

CASSIE
So it comes out of the clothes,
shoes?

From inside the bathroom: an otherwise silent Sam checks his
shoes.

GUS
Of course. Now are you absolutely
sure you got it all?

CASSIE
Yes. I just said I did.

GUS
Even I missed a drop or two.

From inside the bathroom: Sam inspects his left shoe more
closely. He has a bad thought, He glances to the tub.

Cassie's hand reaches for the door knob.

CASSIE
So what? We travel back in time to
when the murder happened? Go to
hell? Go to the moon, what?

GUS
Well, no, nothing like that, thank
God.

CASSIE
So why the time limit if there's no
danger? What a cheat.

GUS

Cheat? Isn't the penalty bad
enough?

Glances back to Sam.

Back to Gus and Rick.

CASSIE

If I'm understanding this right,
and this stuff goes into 187, that
room has to be cleaned. And because
the hotel has guests who book rooms
to see some freaky stuff it may
make a profit. Correct?

(pause)

That's it?!

Inside the bathroom: Sam gets up and stands in front of the
tub, just like we first met him.

Gus gives Cassie a blank stare.

CASSIE

Not that I would be looking forward
to going to hell or the moon or
anything.

Gus leans in, whispers something in her ear. Her face goes
pale. She swallows.

Cassie backs up, and goes back to the bathroom. The door to
the bathroom slowly closes.

CASSIE

Give me your shoes!

SAM

It's too late, Cass.

To her horror, the blood rises in the tub once more, a small
stream of crimson flows towards Sam's feet.

SAM

You have to do it all over again.
You can't leave this room until
it's done.

An unseen force TAPS the sink.

SAM
This room.

FADE OUT.