

Brad

Brad probably had seen too many movies. Because, even though he was old enough to know better, he orchestrated every aspect of his life as if he were in one. He was Indiana Jones as he wove through a traffic jam, Gordon Gecko as he negotiated business deals and Darth Vader when dealing with recalcitrant call center operators. And as far as his love life, you don't want to know.

Because he was the star of his own movie, his emotional makeup was such that he always expected things to work out in the end for him and that wonderful things would be revealed with time.

As a result, he was ill prepared to rationally deal with the dead body he found in his swimming pool when he got home one summer evening.

Rather than call the police, Brad promptly made things more complicated.

You see, it was Wednesday and he'd finally gotten Allie from the office to agree to come over for a home cooked dinner on Friday night. In spite of his being young and rich, he couldn't understand why women didn't want to go out with him. He'd been covertly and overtly courting Allie for the better part of six months. Among other things, he loved her sense of humor. Like her latest joke that he was so persistent she was going to have to take out a restraining order against him.

But his Allie strategy was finally paying off. She'd said yes and he wasn't going to risk anything ruining it. His agenda included a midnight swim-- *Fast Times At Ridgemont High* was one of his all-time favorite movies – and if the authorities got involved, they might drain the pool. Or put up yellow tape everywhere. And even if none of that happened, if word got out, he was pretty sure Allie wouldn't want to swim in the pool after a dead guy had been marinating in it.

So instead of calling the cavalry, he opened a bottle of Bling H2O and sat on the deck and thought. He'd bought the house after he'd sold his startup to a big tech company and although the house hadn't proven to be the chick magnet he had hoped it would – it never occurred to him that the house could only do so much – it was

sufficiently isolated so that he could be assured that no had seen or could see the pool or what he might do down there. That was one of the selling points when he bought the house, but he'd been thinking of midnight swims, not body disposal.

He thought back on what he'd learned about corpse handling and disposal from TV and movies and weighed the alternatives as they came to mind. If he could only anonymously rent a wood chipper. That was practically foolproof. But even if he could get his hands on one, getting it home and operating it without attracting attention would be a challenge. Plus, the shows he'd seen where that strategy worked required feeding though a small forest of tree trunks to clean out any residual DNA and he couldn't see himself doing that.

Dismemberment and disposal seemed the safest option. The only way people got caught when they did that was if the cops suspected them in the first place and started nosing around their plumbing. And as far as he knew, there was no link between him and the dead guy. No way the cops could connect them.

But the big stumbling block was the dismemberment part. Although his impromptu research over the years gave him a good idea of the *how*, Brad was pretty sure he didn't want to take on the job. He remembered a scene from *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers* that involved lots of plastic sheeting and hazmat suits and just like the wood chipper, he'd have to source all that stuff, not to mention the chainsaw, and that meant a trail back to him.

Not only that, when he really thought about it Brad wasn't sure he could actually chop up a body. Yuck!

He ran down the list of options. Acid bath? Does that really work? Incineration? No, way--too gross and someone might smell the smoke.

It really came down to one fundamental issue. Reducing the corpse in size would make transporting and concealing it at an off site location easier. But the downside was the reducing part. In spite of all the techniques he'd seen on how to do it, he'd seen enough *CSI* episodes to know that the tiniest mistake can trip you up.

That left taking the intact body to some location and dumping it, where presumably, it wouldn't be traceable back to him. The problem with that plan was that transporting and dumping a body was fraught with opportunities for observation. There's just no way to explain away a corpse in the trunk.

Brad had just started brainstorming a list of possible dumping sites when his body was electrified by the sound of the doorbell. No one ever came over without calling in advance. No way the cops could be on to him already. He decided to pretend he wasn't at home.

He checked the security camera to see who was at the door. It was just his mother. With two strange women. No wait, a strange woman and a good looking younger woman. He opened the door.

"Mom. What are you doing here?"

"Hi, hon. This is Jenny and her daughter Zoe. I've been telling her about my successful son and this *mansion* he bought and she wanted to see it. We were out at Whitford's and figured we were in the neighborhood so we stopped by. Do you mind?"

Of course he minded, but he couldn't think of a single plausible excuse so he said, "No. It's OK, come on in."

Brad's mother charged in, bent on showing Jenny the house. And her purposeful glance told him that Zoe's presence was no accident. Brad had the presence of mind to slow her down. "Why don't you show them the kitchen. I'll be right back."

He ran down to the pool and flipped the switch to close the cover. It took an agonizingly long time to close but once the body was out of sight he ran back to the kitchen while the cover slowly continued closing. Slightly out of breath, he got to the kitchen as his mother was explaining the butler's pantry. "Sorry, can I get you something? Wine, coffee?"

"Sure, how about a glass of wine," said Brad's mother. As he went to the alcove to get the wine she followed him and added, "Talk to Zoe. She's a programmer too. She's single."

“Mom, I’m not a programmer. I’m a digital entrepreneur.”

“But you like her?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t even talked to her. And Mom, this isn’t the best time. Why don’t I ask her to dinner or something and you guys just get going?”

“That’s not very nice.”

“I just don’t like having to talk to her while you and her mom are sitting there. It’s too weird.”

“Well, at least you can try to be nice.”

Brad opened a bottle of wine and poured each of them a glass.

“Mind if I show them the upstairs?” said his mother.

“No, it’s all right, whatever you like.”

They headed to the back stairs and Brad froze when through the rear window he saw that the pool cover was open. Most of the rooms upstairs offered a panoramic view of the pool area. He ran back down to the pool and hit the switch. He realized that a floating beach ball must have triggered a safety mechanism which prevented the cover from closing. He kicked the ball away and ran upstairs to distract his guests until the cover closed. “Hey Mom,” he yelled, come out to the hallway. I want to get your thoughts on my plans for the alcove up here.” As the ladies talked about the merits of paintings or sculptures, Brad checked the progress of the cover and relaxed when it snapped shut.

Brad was reminded yet again that multi-tasking wasn’t his strong suit as he tried to keep his guests away from the pool, act normal, and try to satisfy his mother’s admonitions to impress Zoe. He succeeded only in finishing most of the wine before his guests finally left. His mother’s final words were “You did yourself no favors tonight. You embarrassed me. You hardly paid any attention to Zoe. I don’t know why I try.”

Brad couldn’t explain that *a*, he had a hot date with the girl of his dreams already lined up and *b*, if he seemed distracted it was only because of the small matter of a body at the bottom of his swimming pool.

It was dark by the time they left. A mixed blessing, thought Brad. He'd always intended to wait until dark to execute any plan he came up with, but the intrusion meant he still had no plan. He finished the rest of the wine without coming up with either a way to conceal a body in his car, or a suitable disposal site.

He frantically made and discarded plans. If he wrapped the body in something, it could be traceable to him. But he couldn't just put it in the trunk without protection of some sort. It might leave something in the car or pick up some incriminating evidence from the car. He congratulated himself on his careful thinking, but at the same time grew increasingly frustrated as viable scenarios dwindled.

In the meantime, it was getting later and he wanted to get the job done and still get some sleep.

It finally came to him. He'd strip the corpse of its clothes, wrap it in a tarp or something, add some weights and drive out to the state park where there was a high bridge over the river. He'd park on the bridge, dump the body over the side and be on his way. He could toss the clothes and any personal effects far from the body. The area would be deserted at this time of night and the body might not be discovered for years down in that gorge.

The challenge was getting the wrapper. He drove to an all night Wal-Mart and bought some paint drop cloths. He'd planned ahead. He paid cash, wore baggy clothes and an oversized baseball cap and left his phone at home. He knew they had security cameras in Wal-Marts that could video him buying the sheets, but he also knew it wasn't likely that they would trace them back to that store or to him. He deemed it an acceptable risk. And with his phone at home, he could always claim he'd never left the house.

He got back just after midnight and opened another bottle of wine before tackling the task of extracting the corpse from the pool. He hadn't really thought through that part of the operation and it soon developed into the biggest challenge yet.

Physics wasn't Brad's strong suit. He remembered from *Jurassic Park* that the big dinosaurs spent a lot of time in water because it was easier for them to move around

because things were lighter in water. All technically true, but of limited use when you are trying to pull a dead body off the bottom of your swimming pool.

Of course, it was in the deep end.

Brad bent the aluminum handled skimmer trying to lever the body off the bottom. Reluctant to get into the water with the stiff, he was hoping to lift it enough to pull it up. He succeeded in moving it a few inches and levitating it not at all.

He then had the brilliant idea of trying to thread a rope around it and pulling it up. He was careful not to get the rope around the neck. He didn't know what he'd do if the head came off. He managed to slide a rope around the torso and with a little further manipulation with the skimmer pole, got the rope under the body's arms and grabbed the ends. He then tried to pull it around to the shallow end. It turned slightly and he felt he was succeeding. He gave a stronger tug to get things moving and lost his balance and fell into the pool.

Panicking, and most of all terrified of the thought of swallowing any water, he flailed his way to the edge, giving the body a wide berth. Panting, he flopped out of the pool and found himself maniacally slapping himself as if he could dry off and get any corpse residue off of his clothes.

Actually, the dunking turned out to be a blessing. Uncomfortable in his wet clothes, he pulled them off, remembering that more than one bad guy had been brought to justice after leaving fiber residue at a crime scene.

Naked, he laid out the drop cloths along the shallow end of the pool. He planned to lever the body out onto the cloths and roll it up. He retrieved the ends of the rope and, from a safe distance well away from the edge of the pool, began pulling like an Egyptian pyramid slave.

It was working! Over his shoulder as the corpse surfaced, he could see the red baseball cap it was wearing. And once again he wondered how the cap had managed to stay on. When the body was halfway out, he walked over to pull it out the rest of the way. It was infinitely heavier than he'd expected, but he managed to flop it onto the cloth. He tried not to look at the face and purposely hadn't turned on the pool lights in

order to limit his ability to see things in detail. But he involuntarily glanced at the body, face up for the first time. There seemed to be a plastic envelope or something pinned to the chest. He leaned closer and realized it wasn't a body at all. It was a CPR dummy that had for some reason been weighted down and thrown into his pool. He looked at the envelope – it was clear plastic and there was a note in it. In big bold letters it said:
Hi Brad--I'd rather be like this than go on a date with you. Love, Allie.