

The Money Vault

by

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During the hurricane while some of their associates had been busy digging down supermarkets and grocery stores, Dexter and five of his friends had stolen the vault from the local parish council bank. They had used the cover of darkness to do it and it took the six of them to load it onto a hand cart and take it to his house. They had used an electric torch to cut a hole into it and got the grand sum of thirty thousand dollars.

“You said nearly a million would be there, Dex,” Roland said.

“What the hell am I going to do with this little money?” Bertie Brown shouted and threw it on the floor and was gone.

“Dex, you know what, it’s you alone in this. Don’t call my name. If Jabez dead I don’t know anything about it,” David Johnson said and stormed out of the room.

The others had followed suit. Dex was left with a vault weighing in excess of five hundred pounds. The next week Tuesday, Jabez died. There was consternation in their village. Jabez had been the watchman at the bank. On the night of the hurricane somebody had knocked him out. He never regained consciousness.

Somebody was knocking on Dex’s gate and he went out. It was Reta, his girlfriend and Jabez’s daughter. He let her into the house. She was dressed in a pair of blue shorts and a body hugging white blouse. She was wearing a pair of leather slippers. At twenty she was a year younger than him. She was about five feet five inches tall and had a slim body with small breasts.

“You heard that my father was dead and you didn’t even come down to my house to see me.”

“I was planning on doing that this evening.”

They were in the living room now.

“What happened to your friends? I hardly see them around anymore.”

“They are around. Maybe they’re just busy, that’s all.”

“As far as I know none of those guys work, how come all of a sudden they are so busy?”

“Why are you so interested in my friends? What about us?”

“I won’t be able to go back to evening classes. With you not working, how am I going to manage?”

“I’ll get you something to drink.”

He got up and went into the kitchen.

When he returned, he didn’t see Reta. He saw her coming towards him and she jumped on him and began to hit him.

“You stole the bank’s vault and killed my father.”

Dex threw her off him and grabbed her by the throat and began to squeeze. She fought him, but he kept on squeezing until he felt her body go slack. He felt for her pulse, but there was none. He drank some of the lemonade he had made and tried to relax as he thought about his next move.

Dex pushed Reta’s naked body into the river. The current would take it downstream. He tied her clothes together, he would bury them later. He was glad that nobody had come asking for her. He would say that he hadn’t seen her. He felt foolish for having left the door open with the vault for her to see it. It served her right for sneaking about in people’s house.

As he sat on the sofa that night Dex began to think. His mother was due on the island in six weeks time. He had to get rid of the vault. If he got it down to the river the current wasn’t strong enough to carry it downstream.

That morning, Carline, Reta’s sister came by looking for her.

“Dex, have you seen Reta? She told me that she was coming to look for you, yesterday.”

Dex shook his head. Reta sometimes stayed with him, especially when her father was on night duty and like how his mother was away.

“I was coming down there to look for her,” he told her.

“But where could she be? It’s only your house I can think about. Are you sure you don’t have her in there hiding?”

“Why would I do something like that, Carline?”

“Okay, if you see her tell her that mummy wants her to go somewhere for her.”

Dex told her that he would give Reta her message if he saw her.

She asked him if he had heard about her father and he told her that he had heard the shouts and was planning to come down there from yesterday. However, he had to be fixing up the house for the impending arrival of his mother. He told her he would be down there later today.

Two days later there was consternation in their village when Reta’s lifeless body was found several miles down the river.

Dex was down at Reta’s home and he, too, was crying at the news.

“They strangled her. The police said it doesn’t look as if they raped her,” Carline cried.

Dex looked at Bertie Brown. He saw the look of fear and hatred on the young man’s face.

Bertie had helped him kill his uncle and now his cousin was dead. As Dex looked at him, he knew he had to kill him before he broke and talk. He knew that the youth was suspicious that he was the one who had killed Reta.

Dex went back home. He thought of ways of killing Bertie. There was a bigger problem, he thought and that was getting rid of the vault. He would threaten all of them, to go to the police and turn state witness against them. Although he was the one who had hit Jabez in the back of his head with the big piece of stick they were all there and saw him do it. Actually, he had just meant to knock out Jabez so that he wouldn’t interfere with what they were doing. That the man had died was something that Dex never expected, although some of the guys had warned him that he had hit him too hard.

It took a week for him to gather the whole crew together. It took a certain amount of persuasion and threats. Finally that Saturday at midnight they were able to dig a hole and bury it in his gully.

Dex then went about planning how to kill Bertie. After Jabez’s and Reta’s funerals, he kept a close eye on the youth. All the other guys had returned to various parts of the island. He and Bertie were the only ones still around.

He knew that Bertie's family only had a pit latrine. All he had to do was to hide out in his yard and when he came out to use the latrine, he would use a big stone to hit him in his head. He had to make sure that he was dead. He would probably use a piece of iron.

On Monday night he hid behind a tree, but nobody came out. He was there between ten o'clock and two o'clock. Tuesday night he overslept and didn't know what happened Wednesday night.

On Friday night at last he got his chance. At about one o'clock that morning, Bertie came out. Dex made one swing of the steel club and heard when the bones in the man's neck crack and he pitched forward without a sound. He threw down the club and crept away.

He was in his bed an hour later when he heard the shouts. "Murder, they've killed Mister Luddy!"

People were running up and down the road and shouting.

Mister Luddy was Bertie's father. Jesus Christ! It wasn't Bertie he had killed!

Dex put on some clothes and went down there.

"What have we done to them, why they want to kill off our family? First, it was Jabez, then Reta and now Luddy. How are the people in Keswick so wicked?" Miss Pearline, Mister Luddy's wife, cried.

Police had yellow taped the area. He went over to Bertie and asked him about what had happened.

"It's so we found him, the whole of his head bashed in," the youth stated.

"I must find out who killed my father, though," he vowed.

Dex stayed until the police had finished their on the scene investigations. They had found the steel club. He had used newspaper to hold the club as he had found it in Bertie's yard. He had thrown away the newspapers in some bushes.

He was with the family the whole time, playing dominoes and other board games. He kept a keen eye on Bertie. As far as he knew the police hadn't questioned him. He knew that it would be foolish to try after Bertie again so soon. He had to think that maybe his chances had gone.

The police had questioned him about Reta. He had denied that she was his girlfriend. He had told them that he had seen her five days before her death.

At last Luddy's body was released for burial. Dex was at the grave, helping to make the vault. He had been at both Reta's and Jabez's grave diggings and had helped to make their vaults. He was at the set-up and funeral after all through his association with Reta, he had been a member of the family.

Dex was thinking of what to do. None of the other guys had resurfaced, not even to attend Luddy's funeral. That the police hadn't spoken to him again meant that Bertie hadn't gone to them as yet. He thought he still had time to get him before he went to the police.

The best thing he thought was to engage him in conversation to find out just where his thoughts were. There was another complication and that was his mother's impending arrival in the island. She would get suspicious of his actions if she saw him leaving the house so late at nights.

She was still suspicious that he had something to do with Watson Chang's murder. He and two men had held up the Chinese man one night a year ago. It was the other two guys who had shot Watson though. His mother had questioned him about his whereabouts that night. Things, however, eased up after the police killed Wally and Juby, his two accomplices.

However, he didn't like how his mother used to curse him and accuse him of taking after his father. His father, Castley, had been a well known Spanish Town bad man who had been cut down in a hail of bullets from gangsters ten years ago.

He had told her about all the deaths. Was she suspicious about his role in them? What about those guys? Suppose one of them cracked and went to the police about Jabez's death? Maybe the only reason why Bertie hadn't cracked was because of his role in Jabez's murder.

"I just can't understand what's going on. How they kill off so many people?" Bertie asked.

This was a week after Luddy's funeral and they were talking down at the dead man's house.

"I heard that the police have questioned lots of people, but nobody knows who killed Luddy," Dex replied.

“It’s the same man who killed Reta, killed my father. I feel that a serial murderer is on the loose.”

A chill ran through Dex, but he showed no emotions.

After that conversation, he was convinced that Bertie knew that he was the killer.

That night he thought of new ways to kill Bertie. If Wally and Juby were still alive, he would just have to tell them about it and they would do it for free. Why not go to Naddy? He was one of the gang members, although he hadn’t taken part in Watson’s murder.

Two days later Dex went to Naddy. He explained to him the predicament he was in.

“You have to tell me about this man. Where can I find him most of the times? Right now it’s pure big money I charge, but through is you, I will take half price. I have to get half the money before I start working.”

Dex had the money on him and gave it to him. It was his mother’s money. He wondered what he was going to tell her when she returned and found the money missing.

Dex went home feeling okay. He would soon get rid of Bertie Brown. He had told Naddy that he was doing work at a construction site in Spanish Town.

He was busy over the next few days as he scrubbed down the house before his mother came. He had found a new girlfriend. He was at home that Saturday evening when he heard gunshots. He knew that the shots came from the direction of Bertie’s house. Then he heard police sirens and then shouts.

Dex ran to have a look.

Several policemen were already yellow taping up the area so Dex had to keep his distance.

“It’s Bertie, gunmen just shoot him,” a man said.

“Is he dead?” Dex asked.

“I don’t know, they’ve gone with him to the hospital.”

Bertie’s three sisters and younger brother were all crying. Miss Pearline must have gone with him to the hospital, Dex thought. Then he heard the police siren again.

A police car came down the road.

“The guy got away. It looks like it’s a bogus license plate, he has on the bike. They can’t trace it.”

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