

A FORTUNE TO KILL

by

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FADE IN

INT. BANK - MIAMI - DAY

Esmeralda, a wizened old Gypsy, hobbles into the Bank lugging a Boombox, Jazz blasting!

EMPLOYEES and CUSTOMERS turn to the commotion. Esmeralda steps into the Teller Line.

CARLOS, (25), the Security Guard, rushes over.

CARLOS
Damn, lady! Turn that thing down!

ESMERALDA
Can't do that, no no no.

CARLOS
Fine, I'll do it.

He reaches for the Boombox.

ESMERALDA
(shouts)
I told you no!

Carlos jumps back.

CARLOS
Ah, Jesus, what are you, a mental patient? Turn that damn music down.

Carlos grabs the Boombox. Turns up the volume.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Shit!

Esmeralda tries to yank the Boombox out of his hands.

ESMERALDA
Keep your claws off me!

CARLOS
Let go!

The doors to a nearby OFFICE swing open, revealing Mercy (25), sexy but with a hard edge. She sees the tug of war between Esmeralda and Carlos.

MERCY
You let go!

She slaps Carlos's hand. He releases the Boombox, looks at Mercy, and backs away.

Mercy takes Esmeralda's arm.

MERCY (CONT'D)
Esmeralda, where's Mr. Chang?

Esmeralda shakes a bank statement in Mercy's face.

ESMERALDA
They're liars! Liars!

Mercy snatches the bank statement. Reads it.

MERCY
Don't worry, I'll take care of it.
Can you turn down the volume?

ESMERALDA
(vigorously shakes her
head)
No, no, no.

MERCY
Maybe you should go home, then.
It's annoying people.

ESMERALDA
(surprised)
Living people?

MERCY
Yeah.

ESMERALDA
Huh.

Esmeralda makes for the exit, but turns to give Carlos a last dirty look.

Mercy surveys the Turner Bank lobby. Watches the Employees smirk and sneak meaningful glances.

She sighs, enters the Office, and to the sound of someone clapping inside, shuts the door.

INT. OFFICE - MIAMI - DAY

Donald Turner claps as Mercy enters the Office.

DONALD

I'm impressed, my love. You could have a long career as a bouncer.

MERCY

I'd rather a long career as Mrs. Donald Turner.

DONALD

I can't believe you married me.

MERCY

Neither can your family. Or your friends. Or your employees.

She goes to him and mashes her lips against his. Pulls a handkerchief out of his coat pocket and wipes the smear.

DONALD

Leave it on.

MERCY

To remember me by?

DONALD

No, to piss off my employees.

MERCY

Why? They already hate me.

She goes to the window, which overlooks a PARKING LOT, a CHINESE RESTAURANT and a POLICE STATION.

Donald embraces her.

DONALD

They don't know you well enough to hate you.

MERCY

Oh, thanks.

DONALD

You know what I mean.

Mercy leans into him.

MERCY

I wish you could have lunch with me today.

DONALD

Me too.

MERCY
 (with a fake pout)
 That merger is more important to
 you than I am.

DONALD
 I'd say you're neck and neck.

MERCY
 How about lip and lip?

They kiss.

DONALD
 Mmm, you have the most delicious
 lips. I love your lips.

MERCY
 How do you feel about tongue?

She sticks out her tongue.

INT. CUBAN VOODOO SHOP - MIAMI - DAY

Mercy unwraps a bloody slab of raw cow's tongue.

Jazz plays in another room.

Mr. Chang (60) hands Mercy a knife.

MR. CHANG
 Big and juicy, right?

MERCY
 Yeah. Too bad I'm not going to cook
 it.

MR. CHANG
 Yes, too bad. How many names you
 bring?

MERCY
 Twenty five.

MR. CHANG
 Twenty five! Hoo, good thing we got
 big tongue.

MERCY
 Is that a lot?

MR. CHANG
Seems a lot. Most people not have
twenty five enemies.

Mercy opens her purse and removes twenty five scraps of
paper. A name is written on each scrap.

MERCY
It's just the employees of the
Bank, and his family, and a few
friends who talk shit about me.

MR. CHANG
What kind of talk shit?

MERCY
The usual talk shit.

Mr. Chang nods and hands Mercy a knife.

MR. CHANG
Give a minute.

He walks over to a beaded doorway. Pokes his head inside.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)
(shouting over the Jazz)
Esmeralda, you okay?
(pauses)
Okey-dokey.

He returns to Mercy and watches her slice the tongue from tip
to base.

She presses the scraps of paper into the slit.

Mr. Chang hands her a needle and thread.

Mercy sutures the tongue.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)
Curious, Miss Mercy. You not
Santeria.

MERCY
Nope.

MR. CHANG
But you know Santeria Rituals?

MERCY

Google knows Santeria Rituals. But
I'm from New Orleans, Mr. Chang.
Magic's in my blood.

Mr. Chang re-wraps the sutured tongue & sticks it in a paper bag.

MR. CHANG

This powerful magic, Miss Mercy. If
they lie about you, their tongues
shrivel like old man's penis.

MERCY

They better shrivel, or I swear
I'll rip them out.

MR. CHANG

Tongue or penis?

MERCY

Both.

Mr. Chang covers his mouth and crotch.

MR. CHANG

I never talk bad about you, Miss
Mercy.

MERCY

(laughs)
Never, Mr. Chang. We're friends.

He hands her the package.

MERCY (CONT'D)

Where should I take it?

MR. CHANG

Everglades best bet. Throw tongue
deep deep deep into the swamp. You
know Everglades?

MERCY

Yeah, more or less.

MR. CHANG

Good. Should work.

MERCY

You think?

MR. CHANG
Never know for sure.

MERCY
Yeah, I hate that about Magic. Just to be sure, let me get an Azabache stone.

MR. CHANG
Ah, guarantee to repel envy.

MERCY
Yeah, give me the biggest Azabache stone you got.

Mr. Chang reaches under the counter and hands her a black stone attached to a silver chain.

MERCY (CONT'D)
How much? For everything.

MR. CHANG
No charge. One hand wash two, right?

He opens the door and steps respectfully aside.

MR. CHANG (CONT'D)
Say hello Mr. Turner for me, okay? Tell him thank you.

MERCY
I will.

MR. CHANG
And watch careful - alligators eat you alive.

MERCY
All my life, Mr. Chang.

She fastens the Azabache stone to her Jaguar key chain.

EXT. TAMiami TRAIL - EVERGLADES - DAY

A Jaguar speeds West, then veers off the road to pull into a rest stop.

Mercy gets out with the blood-soaked paper bag. Walks through the parking lot to the edge of the swamp. High heels poke into the mud.

She prepares to toss the tongue, but stops to answer her Cellphone.

MERCY

What is it, Rey? What? No! Oh my God, no!

She lowers the cellphone. Bursts into tears. Glances at the paper bag just as an alligator lunges and rips it from her hand.

It swallows the cow's tongue.

Mercy screams and backs into the swamp. The alligator takes a step toward her. She rips the Azabache Stone off her Jaguar key chain and throws it.

The alligator blinks. Backs off the trail. Disappears into the swamp.

Mercy rushes through the mud, through the parking lot, into her Jaguar. She peels out of the parking lot and speeds toward the city.

She passes a distraught family laying flowers at a Cemetary.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Mercy falls to her knees by the grave, convulsed with tears.

Donald Turner's FAMILY, FRIENDS & Employees observe her with destain.

The RABBI (60's) reads the eulogy.

REY BARRIO (50's), a thin man with an angular, shadowy face, talks through the side of his mouth to FRANK (25).

REY

What a total whore.

FRANK

You sound like you envy her.

REY

Shut up, Frank.

Mercy weeps with total abandon.

A short line of attendees wait their turn to shovel dirt onto the coffin.

FRANK

I think we should ditch the plan.

REY

You ditch the plan, Frank, I'll put you in a ditch.

FRANK

Don't get all Mafia on me, Rey, I'm just thinking...

(he gestures to Mercy)

...with our new boss over there, everything's changed.

REY

Nothing's changed.

FRANK

How can you say that?

REY

I have a plan.

FRANK

You have a new plan?

REY

I have a new and improved plan.

Giggling, a WOMAN (21) shovels dirt onto the coffin.

Mercy snatches the shovel out of her hands.

MERCY

Stop it! You're just doing this because you hate him. You all think it's a joke.

WOMAN

We all think you're a joke.

Mercy raises the shovel, as if to strike her, then tosses it aside, sobbing.

REY

Can you believe that shit?

FRANK

I can't say.

REY

Yeah, right. You did a PEEPING TOM on her.

FRANK

I did, but it was inconclusive.
 Anyway, I knew it was a lost cause
 when she hooked up with the old
 man. I can't compete with his kind
 of money.

REY

You can't compete with my kind of
 money.

Rey takes out a handkerchief. Wipes his neck and forehead.
 Drops it.

Mercy backs away from the grave.

Scans the hostile crowd.

Faints and collapses onto her husband's coffin.

Unaware, the Rabbi drones on.

FRANK

I think we should help her out. Or
 bury her.

REY

You know my vote.

Frank pulls Mercy out of the grave. Drags her to the grass.

FRANK

Mrs. Turner, you okay?

MERCY

(barely audible)
 Oh, Donald.

She throws her arms around Frank and kisses him.

The Rabbi, appalled, stops speaking.

Mercy ends the kiss.

Frank helps her stand.

MERCY (CONT'D)

(in a daze)
 You...you're not Donald.

FRANK

No, I'm not.

MERCY

I shouldn't have kissed you.

FRANK

(touches his lips)

No. But thanks.

(to the crowd)

She thought I was her husband. Said his name right before she kissed me.

Rey takes Mercy's arm.

REY

Mrs. Turner, it would be best if you let me take you home.

Mercy tries to pry her arm away. Rey won't let go.

REY (CONT'D)

It would be best if we don't make a scene right now, Mrs. Turner - for the sake of the merger. You do understand what the merger means, don't you?

Mercy relaxes. Smiles. Nods her head.

MERCY

Yes, Rey. Of course I do. You're right.

Rey releases her.

She shoves him aside and faces the crowd.

MERCY (CONT'D)

You can all go to Hell! When I inherit the Bank I'm going to fire all your sorry asses!

She drags Frank to her Jaguar.

REY

(to the crowd)

She's just upset, that's all. Trust me, your jobs are secure.

Mercy and Frank reach the Jaguar.

MERCY

You had my back, Frank. I won't forget it.