Fuzone presents…

MR MIDNIGHT

#61 – Who Was In That Coffin?

I manually copied this book from the real book itself. It took days and sometimes even weeks for me to do this.

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# Chapter 1

It had just been another ordinary school day. You know what I mean – too much work, too many hassles, and a head full of headaches!

But now, as the sun went down on all that stress, I was having some fun.

My name is Nicholas Low, by the way, and I’m into jogging. Jogging lets me work off all the pressure – it never fails!

And I always jog, twice a week, with the same two friends, at the same time, in the same place.

There’s Yee Wei Wah – he’s one of the fastest runners in our school, and no wonder. He’s so handsome, girls are always chasing after his. *Ha ha!*

And then there’s Kyna Sim. She lives in the same apartment block as Wei Wah and me. She’s the only girl we know who doesn’t give us any trouble. She’s very cute, and her glasses make her look even cleverer than she is. She wears them wherever she goes, even when she’s jogging.

(I wear glasses too – but only when I’m watching TV.)

We always jog along the same track beside a fast-flowing river in the nature reserve, not far from our apartment block.

So there we were, pounding along the grassy path, pumping lots of fresh air into our lungs, when Kyna cried out, “Did you hear that?”

“What?” I asked. All I could hear were my heartbeats throbbing through my brain.

“It sounded like a car,” she called.

Wei Wah looked puzzled. “Who’d bring a car down here?”

As we rounded a bend in the river, I caught sight of the old bridge looming above the water. We pass it every time we go jogging, and I never give it a second glance. Nobody uses it anymore, not since the highway was built.

*But today was different!*

I could see the top of a black car that had stopped in the middle of the bridge, its engine still running. Two men were peering over the rail. It was too dark for them to see us on the shadowy track, but we could make out their shapes by the dying light of the sun.

They disappeared, only to return a moment later, and I could tell by the way they moved that they were carrying something heavy.

And that’s when the weirdest thing happened.

They lifted a long wooden box onto the rail and pushed it over.

“Oh yuck, they’re dumping their trash in our nice clean river,” complained Kyna in disgust.

The box went sailing through the air. It struck the water with a huge splash. A moment later we heard the car speed away.

We raced over to the bank, peering through the reeds as the current carried the box toward us.

And that’s when Kyna let out a scream. “It’s not a box – IT’S A COFFIN!”

# Chapter 2

Kyna was right. There was no mistaking the shape of the coffin. The broad top where the dead person’s head and shoulders would be, tapering down to where their feet would rest. And with the richly polished wood and gold handles…hey, what else could it be?

“People don’t throw coffins away!” Wei Wan blurted out. “They’ve got bodies in them!”

“And they don’t throw them off bridges,” I added, my eyes goggling at the sight of the coffin bobbling along in the river.

We scrambled among the reeds on the riverbank, keeping pace with the coffin, taking care not to fall into the swift water.

“Do you think it will come in close enough?” I asked.

Wei Wah darted a puzzled glance at me. “Close enough for *what?*”

“Close enough for us to pull it out,” I answered, as my running shoes sank into a patch of mud. “I mean, we can’t just let it float away!”

“But there’s a body in it!” Wei Wah shouted. “I don’t want to see a dead body! And if the water’s got inside, the body will be soggy!”

“Nicholas is right,” argued Kyna. “If we can reach it and drag it ashore, we should. There must be a law about throwing coffins off bridges. It’s not fair to the dead.”

As though in answer to our wishes, the coffin suddenly swung toward the bank. I heard a sinister sucking sound as I stepped farther into the reeds. The next moment, I felt the ground giving way beneath my weight. Thick black mud oozed around my knees.

“Be careful, Nicholas!” screamed Kyna.

I tried to balance myself in the mud, reaching out for the nearest gold handle. My fingers were within millimeters of grabbing it.

*Too late!*

The coffin was swept from my grasp, and went sailing back out into the middle of the river.

I almost joined it. My arms flailed helplessly, and my shoes were trapped in mud and waterlogged debris. Kyna seized my just in time as I toppled toward the surging water. She dragged me onto solid ground.

Wei Wah’s shout split the night.

Without warning, the lid of the coffin had popped open. We screamed out in shock, expecting at any moment to see a grisly corpse go floating down the river.

*But it didn’t.*

Water rushed into the open coffin. For a moment, the coffin wallowed in the surging river. Then, one end rose up in the air, and slowly, majestically, the coffin slid beneath the surface – a wooden *Titanic*, going to its doom.

The swirling current spun the lid in crazy circles as it vanished downstream.

But something was still missing…

“WHERE’S THE BODY*?*” yelled Wei Wah.

# Chapter 3

Kyna gaped at the spot where the coffin had sunk. Her voice sounded like a guitar string that needed tuning. “It must still be in the coffin.”

“Either that,” I speculated, “or the coffin was empty.”

“Nobody buries empty coffins,” scoffed Wei Wah. “There are *always* bodies in them.”

Kyna show him an impatient glance. “*Derr!* But this coffin wasn’t buried. It was tossed off a bridge.”

“Well, I don’t get it,” grumbled Wei Wah.“If there was no body in the coffin, why throw it away?”

Kyna shrugged. “Maybe they thought the coffin was bad luck.”

Wei Wah fired her a scornful stare. “Hello! Show me the coffin that’s good luck!”

“Well, you know what I mean,” Kyna snapped back. “Or maybe it was the wrong size. Like it was too small for the body. Or the body was too big for the coffin.”

“*Huh?*”

Wei Wah and Kyna were always starting arguments. I held up a hand for silence as I pulled out my mobile phone.

“Nicholas, what are you doing?” Kyna asked. “Who are you calling?”

“The police.”

Wei Wah’s eyebrows shot up. “Why?”

“Because we saw a coffin dumped in a river.” I punched in the emergency number. “That’s police business.”

“Only if there’s a murdered body in it,” he retorted.

“Maybe there was, and it’s still inside, and now it’s at the bottom of the river.”

I heard a voice in my ear. “Police emergency. Hello? Who’s calling, please?”

“I want to report a sunken coffin,” I began.

# Chapter 4

It took a while to convince the police that (a) it wasn’t a hoax call, (b) I wasn’t a loony, and (c) I really had seen a coffin being thrown into a river.

The first police officers arrived a few minutes later.

“Well, where’s the body?” one of them demanded.

“There isn’t – wasn’t – one,” I replied, and told them everything we had seen.

They heard our story in skeptical silence, and we walked them back along the river. When they saw the coffin lid snagged in some debris around the next bend, they moved into action.

More police cars and vans arrived, and police divers entered the river. Then I called my parents, and they called Kyna’s and Wei Wah’s parents. And then the newspaper reporters and TV news crews arrived. Soon the peaceful riverbank was as crowded as a shopping mall.

The senior police officer surveyed the scene, then continued questioning us.

“Did you get a clear look at the car?”

“We just saw the top of it,” I said. “It was black.”

“And big , and long,” added Wei Wah.

“What make of car was it? What model?”

“It was up on the bridge, and we were down here,” Kyna explained. “We couldn’t see much of it, sir, just the top.”

“Can you describe the men you saw?”

“It was too dark for us to see their faces,” I answered. “We just saw their heads and shoulders.”

“But there were definitely two of them,” Wei Wah told him.

“Definitely,” agreed Kyna. “Only two. Unless there were others in the car who didn’t get out.”

A shout from the river sent us running to the water’s edge. The divers were hauling the empty coffin ashore.

“Looks to be brand new, sir,” one of them called. “But there was no sign of a body down there.”

“A *body*…” My mother looked at me and shuddered. “Nicholas, I don’t think it’s safe for you to go jogging anymore. Not with the dead bodies everywhere.”

Dad rolled his eyes. “Didn’t you hear what he said – there *wasn’t* a body down there.”

“But there *might* have been,” she argued.

Then another officer rushed across. “Sir, we’ve checked on stolen coffins. There was one report of a burglary at a funeral company this morning. An undertaker said someone broke in overnight and took a coffin.”

The senior officer snapped out orders. “Get him to identify this coffin, see if it’s his. And tell those divers to search the next part of the river. I want that body found!”

But it wasn’t.

And after the police took our statements, we were free to go home.

And so that was the end of our Big Adventure.

Well, at least that’s what I thought as I waved good-bye to my friends.

“See you at school tomorrow!” I called.

The truth was, it was only just beginning…

# Chapter 5

Dinner was… well, torture! Mum kept on about jogging not being safe, while Dad kept on about people who steal coffins from undertakers.

“If those men had seen you, Nicholas” – Mum pointed her chopsticks at me like an accusing finger – “Who knows what they might have done!”

“If those men had seen Nicholas, they wouldn’t have done anything,” Dad scoffed. “Anyone who steals a coffin is either playing a practical joke or they’re loony.”

“But some loonies are dangerous,” Mum insisted.

“Dangerous loonies don’t drive big black cars,” Dad retaliated.

“Do you know what I think?” I began. “I think –“

“I think those men were dumping the coffin in case they got caught with it,” Dad went on.

“But their fingerprints would be all over it,” Mum interjected.

“That’s why they dumped it in a river,” Dad countered. “Do you think fingerprints are waterproof?”

“How would I know?” Mum looked blank, then turned to me. “Anyhow, Nicholas, I think you shouldn’t go jogging without your father being there.”

“*What?* I don’t want to go jogging!” Dad protested. “When I come home from work I want to relax, have dinner, and watch TV. The last thing I want to do is get all hot and sweaty jogging!”

*Oh boy!*

Anyhow, as I finished my rice in silence, I decided the whole thing had been some kind of sick joke. There *hadn’t* been a body in the coffin. And there *wasn’t* a body in the river.

I helped Mum clear away the bowls and plates, then went to my bedroom to finish my homework. I had to sets of multiple-choice questions I’d been dreading, but I couldn’t put them off any longer.

No sooner I had closed the door than I wrinkled my nose.

*What was that awful smell?*

I sniffed the air.

The smell of damp drifted up my nostrils.

*Damp. And decay.*

And when I took a step toward my desk, I almost went skidding across the room. My foot had touched something – *wet!*

I looked down.

A little pool of water had gathered on the tiles.

I took another step.

*Another* little puddle of water!

How did water get onto my bedroom floor? I mean, it had been as dry as bone before dinner.

When we’d come back from the river, I’d showered after my jog and dried myself thoroughly in the bathroom for dinner. So the water on the floor hadn’t come from *me!*

But who else could have left it there?

Not Mum, that’s for sure. There was no way she’d come in and mopped the floor – she’d been cooking in the kitchen. And anyhow, she mops the floor only on Sunday.

So where had it come from?

*Maybe my room was leaking!*

When I kneeled down for a closer look, I gasped.

There weren’t just two little puddles on my floor, there was a whole trail of them – like a trail of wet footprints.

I stared at them in disbelief.

Who – or *what* – *had dripped water all over my room?*

# Chapter 6

Wet footprints?

In my bedroom?

*Nicholas Low*, I told myself, *get a grip!*

Nobody – repeat, NOBODY – could have been in my room while we were having dinner. It was impossible.

*Totally* impossible!

It was all that talk about bodies and coffins and rivers. I was imagining things. The water wasn’t there at all. And neither was that stink of damp and decay.

But when I took another step forward, the tiles were still wet and slippery. And that horrible smell still filled my nostrils.

So it wasn’t my mind playing tricks. Which meant that something, or someone, was haunting me.

*Nicholas*, I thought, *don’t let yourself get spooked.*

You’ve got homework to do. So – *do it!*

I made my way across the slippery tiles to my desk. Even my chair had water on it, as though someone dripping wet had been sitting on it.

I wiped it dry with an old tee shirt and sat down. I reached for the multiple-choice questions and picked up my pen.

Now, for the first question...

“*Nicholas... go back...*”

I froze.

I thought I’d heard something. A soft sound, nothing more than a whisper behind me. The back of my neck tingled, as though a cold hand had just touched it. And that cloying damp smell had just grown *stronger!*

I swung around in my chair.

Nobody was there.

“*Nicholas… go back… you must go back…*”

This time I was sure! It *had* been a whisper! And I could tell it was a *man’s voice*, sounding thin and strangled. And he *was* in my room talking to me! And yet –

– and yet the room was brightly lit. There was nowhere anyone could hide. And I couldn’t see any mysterious shadows, any ghastly shapes, anything weird like that. But I knew *he* was there!

My eyes darted around, probing every corner. “Where are you?” I asked. “What do you want?”

No answer.

I leaped up and flung open my cupboard, but nobody was hiding inside. I kneeled down and peeked under my bed, but nobody was there either.

My heart was pounding. I got to my feet, casting my gaze around the room. I thought I heard a sound. A movement.

Then the light flickered off and on. Now I *knew* I wasn’t alone!

“Who are you?” I asked through gritted teeth, fighting the urge to scream. “Where are you?”

When the voice came again, it was even softer, as though from a distance, as though it was leaving.

“*Nicholas… you must go back to the river…*”

# Chapter 7

“Nicholas, I saw you on TV last night,” shouted my classmate Nurin Batrisya on the bus to school the next morning.

I had just climbed on board with Kyna and Wei Wah, and suddenly I was the center of attention. Everyone stared at me.

“You were down by the river with the police,” Batrisyia went on. “One empty coffin, but no dead body. How exciting!”

“It was nothing, just a practical joke, that’s all,” I told her, heading to the back of the bus.

“No it wasn’t!” Batrisyia shook her head. “It was a sign from the dead! Who was in that coffin, Nicholas? You’ve got to find out and tell us!”

*A sign from the dead!* The words sent a shudder through my body.

More questions followed me as I made my way down the aisle:

“What did the coffin look like?” called Tristy Marta.

“Do you think the body is still there?” Qaiser Mikhail wanted to know.

“It must be! How can a dead body swim?” shouted Hoiye Tang.

Soon the whole bus was in an uproar.

I fell into a seat beside Kyna and Wei Wah. My shirt was sticking to my back, and I couldn’t stop shaking. All those questions had made me remember my invisible visitor the night before!

Kyna leaned closer, staring at me. “Nicholas, you don’t look very well,” she said. “Are you OK?"

“Something happened,” I mumbled. “Last night… in my room…” I stopped, unable to speak. My heart felt like it had caught in my throat.

“What happened?” Kyna demanded, her eyes now wider.

I swallowed. “There were wet footprints all over my floor… and a funny smell… and I heard a voice…”

“Whose voice was it?” Wei Wah asked urgently.

“I don’t know,” I admitted hopelessly. “I couldn’t see him.”

Wei Wah stared at me in horror. “Well, what did he *say?*”

“He kept whispering the same… about going back to the river!” I could hear his voice again, echoing around in my head. “He said, ‘You must go back to the river.’”

Kyna stiffened in fear. “But why did he say that?”

Our eyes met. “I don’t know…” I hesitated. “Maybe it’s like Batrisyia said… it was a sign from the dead.”

“But how can the dead send signs?” Wei Wah protested. “They’re dead.”

“Maybe they can,” I countered. “Maybe… maybe what I heard in my room was the man who’d been in the coffin. That’s why my floor was all wet. He’d come from the river to ask for my help!”

“But, Nicholas, the coffin was *empty,*” Wei Wah reminded me. “There wasn’t any dead man inside.”

“Then who was in my room?” I challenged, locking eyes with Wei Wah. “Somebody was there. He even turned my lights off and on!”

Kyna scowled. “Nicholas, are you sure you didn’t have a nightmare?”

“Of course I’m sure,” I snapped. “I’d just started my homework when he spoke to me. And what’s even more weird, he knew my name!”

Wei Wah was silent for a moment. When he looked at me, his expression was grim. “Nicholas, there’s only one thing we can do. We’ll have to do what he wants. We’ll have to go back to the river!”

# Chapter 8

“No way!” I growled. “It’s bad enough hearing some weird voice in my room, but to go and do what he said – that’d be cuckoo!”

“But maybe it’s important,” Wei Wah persisted. “Don’t you want to find out?”

“I do.” Kyna agreed.

No matter how much I argued, my friends finally convinced me. I *had* to go back to the river, and they would come with me!

The only question was, *how?*

You see, we’d all been grounded.

“My mum thinks we were lucky those two we saw didn’t murder us,” I told my friends in the school cafeteria at lunchtime. “She’s banned me from jogging for life.”

“Same here,” Kyna said. “After what happened yesterday, my mum told me I couldn’t go jogging ever again.”

“So how can we all go back to the river?” Wei Wah asked gloomily.

But by the time we returned to our apartment block after school that day, we had worked out a plan.

“We haven’t been banned from going out, have we?” I said on the bus ride home. “We’ve only been banned from jogging, right?” My friends nodded. “Right. So, we won’t jog down to the river. We’ll *walk* there.”

Kyna looked at me and grinned. “We’ll just say we’re going for a walk. We just won’t say *where*,that’s all.”

“That’s pretty neat,” Wei Wah said with a nod. “And we *are* going for a walk, so we won’t be telling lies, will we? We’ll be telling the truth, or most of it.” He hesitated. “Well, *half* of it.”

“That means we won’t wear our jogging stuff,” cautioned Kyna. “Just wear whatever you’d wear if you were going for a walk. OK?”

“OK,” I agreed.

“OK,” Wei Wah said, and gave her a thumbs-up sign.

Within half an hour, we were back downstairs, dressed in jeans and tee shirts, looking as though we were going for a stroll to the burger restaurant.

We thought we were being so clever!

*If only we’d known the fate that awaited us…*

# Chapter 9

We made our way through our estate until we reached the street that bordered the nature reserve. As we entered, the late afternoon sun was sinking behind the treetops.

Soon, tall stands of vegetation surrounded us, a barricade of trees and vines. Shadows slanted across the path. The sound of the rushing river grew louder.

It looked the same as it did whenever we jogged – quiet and peaceful, the kind of place you could escape your stress. So how come the flesh on my arms was prickling now? And why could I feel flutters in the pits of my stomach?

“Nicholas, did the dead man say exactly where he wanted to meet you?” Wei Wah asked.

“All he said was I had to go back to the river,” I snapped, trying to control my nerves. “And I didn’t say he was dead. I said *maybe* he was dead. Anyhow, he was invisible.”

“Sorry, I was just asking a question,” Wei Wah grumbled, giving me a curious stare.

Kyna surveyed the darkening forest. “Well, this is where we always jog. We come down through here and then run along the riverbank.”

“Let’s do what we always do,” I suggested. “Then he’s sure to see us.” I paused, trying to keep fear out of my voice. “That’s if he’s even here.”

“He’ll be here,” Wei Wah grunted, still staring at me. “Otherwise why would he go to your room and tell you to come back?”

When we reached the river, my gaze swept over the frothing current fringed by tall reeds. *Did the water look deeper and blacker today?* I wondered. *Were the reeds thicker and darker today, as though they had a secret to hide?* A shiver traced my spine as we started walking along the path. In the distance, the old bridge loomed against the sunset. A sinister atmosphere seemed to hang over the place like a morbid cloud.

*Nicholas Low*, I thought, *you’re spooking yourself!*

I forced myself to keep walking and forget my fear. *There’s nothing to worry about. Nothing weird is going to happen.* As a famous person once said, you have nothing to fear except fear itself!

Kyna stopped suddenly and looked around. Her voice was a ragged whisper.

“I’ve the funniest feeling.”

“What about?” I asked, flashing her a smile I didn’t mean.

“I’m not sure,” she said, folding her arms around herself. “It’s almost like, well, you know – like there’s death in the air.”

“But nobody died down here,” argued Wei Wah. “All we saw was a coffin being dumped in the river. We didn’t see a body, and the police didn’t find one.” He glared at Kyna, then at me. “You two are terrible. Kyna, you’re as scared as Nicholas!”

“I’m not scared,” I lied. “And neither is Kyna.”

“I’m not scared,” Kyna said. “I just want to go home.”

“You’re spooking yourselves,” Wei Wah scoffed.

I was about to laugh and tell him we weren’t spooked when I heard a rustling sound in the reeds behind me.

Wei Wah’s scream pierced the twilight. “*Nicholas! Look out!*”

I spun around as something sprang out of the reeds and flew at me.

# Chapter 10

I caught a glimpse of rotting flesh, of sunken eyes, of a face contorted with agony. The strange creature, draped in the torn, mud-streaked remains of a white shroud, landed in front of me. Its withered hands pressed against my chest. The smell of decay was suffocating.

Kyna screamed.

*It was a corpse, dripping with water.*

And when it spoke, I recognized its voice at once. I’d heard it in my room the night before.

“Nicholas, you must stay!”

I tried to escape its long, bony fingers, but they clung to my shirt with immense strength.

Wei Wah had picked up a branch from the side of the path. He wielded it like a sword.

“Keep away!” he yelled.

One of the creature’s arms left its body, flew through the air, and seized the branch. With a screech, it hurled the branch far into the swirling river.

Wei Wah staggered back, his eyes wide with terror.

“*You’re a ghost!* Only a ghost could do that!”

Kyna let out a squeal. The creature’s arm flew back and rejoined the body.

“No, he’s *not* a ghost,” she blurted out. “He’s got a *body!*”

“But not a body as you know it,” the creature told her. “I am one of the eternally damned!”

“Who are you?” I demanded, my gaze locked on the strange form in the tattered shroud. My stomach twisted itself into an icy knot. “Were you in that coffin when it was dumped in the river yesterday? Is that why you came to my room last night?”

“Nicholas, that coffin was mine!” the creature shrieked. “It was meant for me! Those two men took my body out of it when they stole it.”

Wei Wah stared at the hideous thing before us. “Why did they do that?” he asked.

“They were gangsters. They wanted my coffin for another purpose.” The creature grew more demented. “I heard them talking about it. They were going to murder someone and seal their victim’s body in my coffin. So the person they killed would be buried as me, under my name, and nobody would know that a murder had been commited.”

“I don’t understand,” Kyna said. “If the gangsters need your coffin for someone else’s body, why did they throw it off the bridge?”

“Because after they stole my coffin, they got a phone call. The person they were going to kill had left town.”

“And so they didn’t need your coffin anymore?” I asked.

The creature eyed me bitterly. “Exactly. And they knew they had to get rid of it quickly. That’s why they came down here and threw it off the bridge. They thought it would sink and never be found. But by then, it was too late for me – the damage had been done.”

“What damage?” Wei Wah asked warily.

“They’d left my human body back at the undertaker’s, but my spirit was in the coffin. And because they had separated my spirit from my body *before* I could be buried, I was damned.”

“What do you mean ‘damned’?” Kyna asked in a trembling voice.

“When a spirit is wrongly separated from its body, it takes a form of its own. And because my coffin was destroyed, my spirit has nowhere to rest… NOWHERE!”

# Chapter 11

I gazed at the shrouded form, the face distorted by rage, the eyes sunken in the rotting flesh of the creature’s cheeks. The stench of damp and decay hung in the air between us.

My question escaped through numb lips. “If you’re a spirit, and this body isn’t yours, whose is it?”

“Those like me who are damned are taken to a special place in the Other World. It is called Punishment, a place full of corruption and decay where our spirits are housed. That is where The Punishers give us the decomposed remains of others in which to live. We are sentenced to spend eternity like this – as spirits attached to rotting bodies that were never our own.”

“But that’s not fair, is it?” Wei Wah burst out indignantly. “It wasn’t your fault that your body and spirit were separated.”

“Fair or not, it doesn’t matter. The Other World has its own rules. If your body and spirit do not arrive together, The Punishers will house your spirit in a corpse of their choosing. That is what I was told. And that is what they did.

“I still don’t understand why you came to my room last night,” I said. “Why did you ask me to come back to the river?”

The creature’s eyes glittered in its grotesque face. “Because, Nicholas, you are the only one who can help me now.”

“*I am?*” I cried. My throat tightened. “*How?*”

“I told The Punishers what had happened to me. How those men stole my coffin. The Punishers did not believe my story. They said that no corpse had ever had its coffin stolen, not in a thousand years. They said I had to prove it was true. And you’re the only one who can help me do that.” A bony finger jabbed at my heart. “You must get my coffin back. Bring it back here. Let me return to it. Let The Punishers see that I spoke the truth.”

“But it’s too late,” I argued. “The police took it away as evidence. They’ll never give it to me. No way. Anyhow it’s ruined. It’s been in the river. And by now, your human body has probably been buried in a new coffin.”

“You must do as I say,” shrieked the creature. “Do you want me stay like this forever? My spirit living in some else’s corpse? Hiding in the reeds? Stinking like this river?”

“You’re crazy!” snapped Kyna. “Even if Nicholas could get a coffin, how could he bring it here? He can’t drive a car!”

“And he can’t put a coffin in a taxi!” Wei Wah added. “And there’s no way Nicholas can carry it by himself, not all the way down here!”

“Then you must help him, both of you!” shouted the creature. “I will hold you accountable.”

“But you haven’t even told us your name,” I protested. “If we don’t know your name, how can we be sure we bring the right coffin? Maybe the police have lots of coffins they’re investigating.”

“Lam. My name is Lam. And I will be waiting here. Always. Until the end of time I will be here. The Punishers won’t let me stay anywhere else.”

“I still think you’re being crazy,” Kyna argued.

The creature ignored her. It leveled its eyes directly at mine. “Nicholas, if you know what is good for you, you and your friends *must* bring my coffin here.”

“And if we can’t?” I challenged him.

“Then I will take all of you with me.”

“Where?” demanded Wei Wah.

“To The Punishers. I will destroy you all, and my spirit will take over your bodies. Then I won’t be damned. *But you will be…*”

# Chapter 12

We burst out shouting at him, but our protests were wasted.

Lam’s spirit rose from the ground and flew back into the reeds. We saw the grass thrashing wildly as the spirit headed for the river. A moment later came the sound of a splash as it flung itself into the surging current.

None of us spoke.

It were as though we had been handed a death sentence.

Kyna broke the silence.

“That is so sick,” she said bitterly. “We shouldn’t have come down here. It’s all your fault, Wei Wah.”

“My fault? *Why?*” he growled.

“It was your idea to come down today,” she snapped. “If it hadn’t been for you, we’d be safe at home –“

“Hey, what are we arguing about?” I stepped between them. “If we hadn’t come down to the river, he would have come to my room again.”

“Lam is mad,” Wei Wah snarled, kicking a stone to one side. “How can we get his coffin back? The cops will never give it to three kids. Anyhow” – he kicked harder, and a second stone went sailing into the reeds – “I don’t trust him.”

“Neither do I,” said Kyna, crossing her arms. “All that stuff about Punishers. I mean, do they really punish people like that in the Other World?”

“How would I know?” I responded with a shrug. “I’ve never been there.”

“And I don’t want to go there,” Wei Wah said. “Not if it’s full of Punishers and people like Lam. It sounds dumb, if you ask me.”

We retraced our steps along the path and out of the nature reserve. I never wanted to see the place again!

“What are we going to do?” Kyna wondered out loud.

“Well, we can’t call the police,” Wei Wah grumbled. “They’d just laugh at us.”

“I think we have to be very clever,” I began, as an idea formed in my mind. It wasn’t a great idea, but at least it was a starting point. “The reason I wanted Lam’s name is so we can track down the undertaker’s the coffin was stolen from.”

“Why?” asked Kyna.

“I want to find out what happened to Lam’s human body. Has it been buried already? Or have they delayed his funeral until the police return the coffin?”

“But that coffin was ruined in the water,” Kyna pointed out. “How can they use it for a funeral?”

“I know, but hey, what if Lam’s relatives can’t afford to buy a new one?” I reasoned. “See, what I’m thinking is, if Lam’s body *hasn’t* been buried, we could bring his spirit back to the undertaker’s and he could be buried with his body. Then his body and spirit would be united again.”

“That’s smart,” agreed Wei Wah enthusiastically. “It’d be easier to take the spirit to the to the coffin than the coffin to the river!” Then he hesitated. His voice quavered. “But what if the funeral *is* over? What if Lam’s body has *already* been buried? And what if Lam’s coffin *isn’t* with the cops anymore… what if it’s six feed under?”

“Then we’re back to square one.” Kyna shivered.

“I don’t want to think about that.” I checked my watch as we walked through the streets leading back to our block. “Look, it’s almost dinnertime. Why don’t you guys come back to my place for dinner? Then we can make some phone calls and trace that undertaker.”

“Isn’t it too late to do that?” Wei Wah asked with a frown. “Most companies shut at five o’clock, don’t they?”

“I think undertakers are always open,” I said. “I mean, a lot of people die at midnight, or in the early hours of the morning, so undertakers have to have someone on duty to handle the inquiries.”

We walked on in silence, and just as we reached our block, Wei Wah turned to share a doubtful glance with Kyna and me. “I still think Mr Lam’s spirit isn’t being honest with us,” he said.

“About what?” I asked. “About The Punishers?”

Wei Wah shrugged. “About everything. He gave me the creeps, and not just because he’s ugly and spooky. His whole story didn’t make sense. All that stuff about gangsters and killing someone.” He let out a sigh and jabbed the elevator button. “There’s more going on here than meets the eye.”

# Chapter 13

“Did you have a good walk?” Mum asked when she met us at the front door.

“Jogging is more fun,” I said. “Walking takes forever!”

“Yes, but it’s *safer!*” she said as she headed back to the kitchen. “I’ll cook some extra chicken wings for your friends.”

After our delicious meal, we took the phone book and went to my room. The list of undertakers and funeral directors covered four pages. I put my mobile on speakerphone and punched in the first number.

A moment later we heard solemn music playing and a deep voice said, “Greetings is grief. You have reached A-Class Funerals. All our consultants are busy at present. Your call will be attended to shortly.”

“Yuck,” whispered Wei Wah.

The music stopped, and a sugary voice, falsely friendly, oozed over the speaker. “Good evening. How can I assist you in your time of sorrow?”

I cleared my throat and tried to make my voice sound older. “I’m calling for a friend whose uncle has just passed away, and someone told me I should call your company.”

“How nice of them.” The sugary voice was dripping with glee. “We are very proud of our reputation.”

“Well, they said you recently did a great funeral for a Mr Lam. Did you bury him?”

“My dear sir,” said the voice, “ I don’t bury anyone. I’m a consultant. Now, what was the name of the departed?”

“Lam. L-A-M,” I added, spelling it out.

We heard the flipping of pages.

“We have a Lim. Would that be the deceased?”

“No. I’m sorry to have troubled yo.”

“Well,hat about your friend’s uncle?”

“He’s feeling better now,” I said, and cut the call.

Then Wei Wah rang the next company. “Excuse me,” he began, “did you have a coffin stolen yesterday?”

“I beg your pardon?” spluttered a woman’s voice. “You sound like a kid. Is this some kind of practical joke?”

And the line went dead.

It was a few calls later that Kyna got lucky. “I’m calling about Mr Lam’s funeral,” she began.

“Mr Lam’s funeral has been delayed” said a man after a short silence.

“That was because his coffin was stolen, right?”

We heard a gasp on the line. “Who is this?” the man demanded.

“It’s true, isn’t it?” Kyna pressed on.

“We had a robbery, yes. It was very… unfortunate.” The man hesitated. “Are you a reporter?”

“No. But I saw what happened to the coffin.”

There was another sharp intake of breath and a long silence. Then was back on the line. “I’d like to met you,” he said sweetly. “Why don’t you come down to my office tomorrow? Then you can tell me everything you know.”

# Chapter 14

“FOO’S FUNERALS” said the sign outside a brick building in a quiet back street in the warehouse district.

We had made our way to the undertaker’s after school. Kyna ad worked out which buses to take, and we knew we could be home in plenty of time for dinner.

Wei Wah pushed open the front door, and we stepped into a narrow lobby that stank of disinfectant.

Well, I thought it was disinfectant, but Kyna pinched her nose and whispered, “*Poo!* I think that’s embalming fluid.”

“You mean the stuff they us on dead bodies?” I croaked.

Wei Wah went across to the counter and pressed a bell. A moment later a door opened and a man stepped out. He was wearing a white uniform, the kind I’d seen orderlies wear in hospitals.

His long face reminded me of a grumpy horse. His ears poked out from the sides of his head. Tufts of gray hair sprouted from his domed scalp like weeds around a gravestone. Hair protruded from his nostrils.

“Are you Mr Foo?” Wei Wah asked.

The man nodded, looking us up and down as though sizing us up for coffins. “You’re the kids who called me last night?”

“I’m Wei Wah, and these are my friends Kyna and Nicholas. We saw your coffin being tossed into the river.

Foo stroked his pointed jaw with a hand the color of marble. “By two men, if I’m not mistaken.”

“How did you know that?” I demanded sharply.

“The police told me.”

Instinct warned me he was lying.

Foo’s eyes narrowed. “Do you think you could recognize these men again?”

“No,” said Kyna.

“I don’t think so,” I offered.

“Easily,” Wei Wah claimed.

I gaped at him. *There was no way Wei Wah had seen their faces!* I wondered what he was up to.

“It was getting dark,” Kyna explained. “They were up on the bridge with a long black car. The sun was behind them, so their faces were in shadow.”

“But I got a clear look at them,” Wei Wah boasted. “I’d know them anywhere!”

“Is that what you told the police?” Foo asked in a low tone.

Wei Wah shrugged. “Sure.”

Foo stiffened. He beckoned us to follow him.

I nudged Wei Wah, whispering, “Why did you say you could recognize those men when you know you can’t?”

“You’ll see,” was all he said.

Foo led us down the hall and unlocked a door. We stepped into a freezing cold room with tiled walls.

“Hey, why have you brought us in here?” I asked suspiciously.

Kyna shivered and wrapped her arms around herself. “Is this where you keep dead bodies?” she asked through chattering teeth.

Foo ignored Kyna and me. He turned to Wei Wah with a grim smile.

“You said you could identify the two men,” Foo reminded him.

He crossed to a bank of refrigerated cabinets and pulled out two drawers. Each drawer was big enough to contain a human body. They slid out noiselessly on rollers.

“Is that them?” he asked.

Our screams echoed off the steel cabinets and around the tiled walls. Wei Wah’s face was drained of blood.

There, stretched out inside the two drawers, were two men is business suits. Both had neat round holes in the center of their foreheads.

Both were very, very dead.

# Chapter 15

Wei Wah gawked at the two bodies. His lips worked soundlessly before a question finally came out.

“Are they the men who dumped the coffin?”

Foo rounded on him savagely. “I thought you said you could recognize them.”

Wei Wah shot him a sheepish glance. “I said that just to see what you’d do.”

“Well, I hope you’re happy,” Foo snarled.

A question crawled up my throat like a cold, fat insect. “Someone murdered them, didn’t they?” My stomach rolled, and I clamped my jaws together.

“They weren’t murdered,” said Foo with a sneer. “They were silenced.”

“*Silenced?*” echoed Kyna.

“They were causing problems.”

Wei Wah pointed at him. “You’re the one who killed them, didn’t you?” he accused the undertaker. “They stole your coffin and you shot them!”

Foo eyed him harshly. “You kids have trouble written all over you.” A gun appeared in his hand. “I think it’s time you were silenced too.”

We shrank back against the wall. The tiles were as cold as death to my touch.

“You can’t do anything to us,” Wei Wah blurted out. “If we’re not home in half an hour, our parents will call the police.”

“And did you tell your parents you were coming to see me?” Foo asked with a mocking smile. “No. Of course you didn’t. The police will never think of looking for you here.”

Kyna swung her schoolbag at the undertaker, but he caught it with his free hand and tossed it into a corner.

“Try anything like that again and you’ll be the first to die.” He leveled the gun at Wei Wah. “Now, kid, tell me exactly what you know.”

“But I don’t know anything,” Wei Wah said.

Foo’s finger tightened on the trigger. “Last chance. Five… four… three…”

# Chapter 16

“Don’t shoot,” I yelled, my heart racing. “We’ll tell you everything we know.” I took a gulp of air and went on, “Those two men stole your coffin because they were gangsters.”

“They were going to kill someone and put his body inside it,” Kyna continued. “And everyone would think the dead person inside the coffin was Mr Lam, and no one would ever know that a murder had been commited.”

“Then they got a phone call that said the man they had to kill had left town, so they didn’t need the coffin anymore,” I added hastily.

“And that’s why they dumped it in the river,” Kyna concluded.

As Foo listened to our story, he looked more and more bewildered. His eyes widened in disbelief, his eyebrows riding high into his forehead.

Without warning, he rocked with laughter.

“Who told you all that rubbish?” he demanded.

“Mr Lam did,” Wei Wah said.

“WHAT?” the undertaker roared.

His sneer was gone, his laughter evaporated. He took as step forward, his gun centimeters from Wei Wah’s nose.

“You’re lying, boy. Lam couldn’t have told you anything. Lam is DEAD!”

“It’s the truth,” Wei Wah cried out. “He told us he wanted his coffin back.”

“But the police have it,” snapped Foo.

“But Mr Lam needs it – so he can show it to The Punishers.”

“What Punishers?” Foo shouted in confusion. “What are you talking about, boy?”

“We met Mr Lam’s spirit down by the river,” Wei Wah explained. “Because his body and spirit weren’t together when he entered the Other World, his spirit was sent to The Punishers. He told them his coffin was stolen, but they didn’t believe him. That’s why his spirit wants Nicholas to bring back his coffin.”

“His spirit even came to my bedroom to ask for our help,” I went on. “It left wet footprints all over the floor.”

“And it looked hideous because it had a spirit body made of other people’s decomposed corpses,” Kyna said. “It smelt horrible.”

Foo flew into a rage. “Do you kids expect me to believe that?” he screamed. “A ghost that wants its coffin back? I’ve never heard anything so crazy!”

He took one step across the room and pulled open another huge drawer.

Inside was the body of a small man, his face peeking out from beneath a shroud.

“That’s Lam,” he roared. “He’s not down by the river. He’s here, body *and* soul!”

# Chapter 17

I took one look at the dead man’s face. His flesh had not rotted, and his eyes were not sunken, but there was no mistaking the resemblance to the creature we had seen at the river. My flesh crawled.

“Mr Lam’s body might be dead, but his spirit is still alive,” I said.

“Nicholas is right,” confirmed Kyna. “We saw it!”

“I don’t believe you. I think you’re all nuts,” growled Foo. He waved his gun at the body in the drawer. “That’s Lam! He’s dead! He can’t talk to anyone!”

“That’s what you think,” said Wei Wah firmly. “His spirit talked to *us!*”

“Well, if it did, it told you a pack of lies.” Foo fixed us with a menacing gaze. “If you really want to know what happened, I’ll tell you. Lam was an old friend of mine. We were both in prison many years ago. That’s where we first met. I was losing money running this place, and he had lost a fortune gambling. So we decided to get rich – rich enough to live the rest of our lives in luxury.”

“How?” I wanted to know.

“We robbed a diamond warehouse,” said Foo with a sly grin. “We stole only the best diamonds, a handful of them, worth two million dollars. We hid them here. We knew they’d be safe. After all, an undertaker is the last person anyone would suspect of a diamond robbery.”

“Very clever,” said Wei Wah sarcastically.

“But then Lam tried to double-cross me. He hired those two gangsters you saw on the bridge. The idea was they would eliminate me so he could keep the two million dollars for himself. But they double-crossed *him*. They decided to kill both Lam *and* me, and help themselves to the diamonds.”

“What happened?” I asked.

“They made Lam tell them where the diamonds were hidden, then they killed him. They wrapped his corpse up in a shroud so he would look just like another dead body and broke in here in the middle of the night.”

“Where *were* the diamonds hidden?” asked Kyna.

“The safest place in the world,” smirked Foo. “In a coffin with a false bottom.”

Wei Wah snapped his fingers. “And that’s the one they stole?” he guessed.

“Exactly. When they brought Lam’s body in here, they stole the coffin.”

“Then why did you call the police?” Kyna asked, frowning. “I mean, if the coffin had stolen diamonds in it, why did you report it missing?”

“I didn’t. The robbery happened shortly after midnight. When my assistant arrived first thing the next morning, he saw the broken window and the smashed door and he knew there’d been a robbery,” explained Foo. “He knew nothing about the diamons. As soon as he discovered that a coffin was missing, the idiot called the police and reported a theft.”

“What happened then?” I questioned.

Foo smiled smugly. “After the two men had taken the coffin away and searched it, they found it was empty.”

Wei Wah frowned. “But you just said the diamonds were hidden in it – beneath a false bottom?”

“They had been,” Foo said with a grin. “But, you see, I didn’t trust Lam. I thought he might try to double-cross me.”

“You said he was your friend,” I cut in.

“There’s no honor among thieves, surely you know that,” Foo said with a smirk. “That’s why I’d taken the diamonds out of the coffin without him knowing. When I arrived at work the morning after the robbery, I saw his body in the shroud and heard that the coffin had been stolen. I put two and two together and knew *someone else* was after the diamonds. So I switched them to *another* hiding place. One that nobody would ever think of.”

“So when the two gangsters didn’t find any diamonds in the coffin, they got rid of it?” I asked.

“They dumped it in the river – and that’s when you saw them. Then they came back here looking for me.”

“And that’s when you killed them?” Kyna guessed.

“It was either them or me. They gave me no choice. I shot them and put them on ice,” he said with a grin. “In the end it worked out well. Lam is dead, the two gangsters are dead, and I get to keep two million dollars’ worth of diamonds.” He shrugged. “The only problem I have now is what to do with you kids.”

“What do you mean?” Kyna blurted out.

“Well, now that you know the truth, I can’t very well let you leave, can I?”

“What are you going to do with us?” Wei Wah asked.

“What do you think?”

With his gun in one hand, Foo pulled open three more drawers. “One for each of you kids. Who wants to be first?”

# Chapter 18

None of us moved. My mind was desperately searching for a way out. Escape – we had to escape! *If only one of us could get out and call the police* –

I think the undertaker read my mind.

He stepped to the door and locked it, pocketing the key. Slowly he paced back toward us, his eyes scanning us like a predator about to strike.

Steadying the gun, he grabbed Wei Wah by the arm and dragged him across to the nearest drawer.

“Let me go!” Wei Wah yelled.

“Why should I? You’re the one who lied to me,” Foo snarled, “so you can go into the freezer first. It won’t take long before you’re frozen stiff.” He laughed at his own joke. “A stiff who’s frozen, get it?”

Foo scooped Wei Wah off his feet and held him over the open drawer. Wei Wah was kicking and shouting.

“Nicholas! Do something! Help me!” Wei Wah wailed.

I lunged forward, but Foo’s gun swung in my direction. I skidded to a stop, staring at the little black hole in its ugly snout, expecting a bullet to come blasting out of it any second.

A heartbeat later, I wrinkled my nose.

My nostrils were suddenly filled with a familiar smell.

*The stench of damp and decay!*

It was growing stronger, and my stomach heaved. I covered my nose and mouth. Beside me, Kyna was gagging.

Foo looked around, startled.

“What’s that hideous smell?” he demanded. “Where’s it coming from?”

Despite the revolting stench, I laughed.

“It’s Mr Lam!” I told him. “His spirit is here…”

# Chapter 19

“Lam is DEAD!” Foo screamed.

Suddenly the drawer containing Lam’s body began to vibrate.

Foo stared at it in horror. He dropped Wei Wah to the floor and clutched his gun with both hands.

“What’s happening?” he shrieked.

We raced across to the drawer. The body inside was jerking and shaking like it was coming back to life.

“Mr Lam’s spirit is in this room,” Kyna said. “It wants to be united with his body!”

“It’s a trick!” Foo roared.

“*It’s NOT!*” screeched a voice.

We wheeled around to find something materializing by the door.

At first it was no more than a shadow in the air, then, slowly, it became a shape growing clearer, thicker, recognizable.

And as it did, water pooled on the tiles beneath it. Water that stank of death and decay.

Until at last, hovering before us, was the creature from the river – the same rotting flesh, the same sunken eyes, the same decomposed body in the mud-splattered shroud.

Foo’s agonized cry became a howl.

“My good friend Foo,” said Lam’s spirit.

The undertaker’s jaw went slack. “Lam? No, I don’t believe it!”

“You thought I was safely out of the way,” the spirit taunted. “But I’m not. I will never leave you until I get what I want!”

“You’re DEAD!” Foo wailed, emptying his gun into the hideous creature.

The bullets passed through the spirit’s face and shroud as it hurled itself across the room. Its long, bony fingers clutched Foo’s white uniform.

Horror stretched Foo’s face, distorting his features into a mask of fear. He staggered back, but the spirit did not release its grip.

“Keep away!” the undertaker cried. “Leave me alone! I didn’t do anything to hurt you!”

“You should have listened to these kids,” Lam’s spirit told him. “You should have believed them. My spirit can’t be destroyed.”

“What do you want?” Foo asked, his lips trembline.

“The diamonds!” The ghost of Lam replied, its fingers curling around the undertaker’s jacket, pulling the fabric taut. “You tried to *hide* them from me!”

Foo’s fear vanished. “You tried to *steal* them from me!” he retaliated. “You double-crossed me!” You sent those two gangsters to take the coffin!”

“I want to know where those diamonds are!” Lam’s spirit shrieked. “Or you’ll join me in eternity.”

I stared at the two enemies, one human, one supernatural, and my chest tightened until I thought my ribs would be crushed. Kyna grabbed my wrist, her face drained of color.

But Wei Wah fearlessly stepped forward.

“Mr Lam, you lied to us!” he accused the spirit. “All that stuff about The Punishers! You don’t want your coffin back! You just want the diamonds!”

Lam’s spirit flashed him a menacing look. “Be quiet, kid. This has got nothing to do with you.”

My anger flared when I heard that.

“That’s not true,” I yelled. “You came to my room, you begged for my help, but you were lying the whole time.”

“I said be quiet!” the spirit screamed. “I did need your help! I needed you to help my spirit move from the river. Because you agreed to help me, we established a bond between the living and the dead, and that let me follow you here!”

“I told you Lam wasn’t to be trusted,” said the undertaker with a laugh. He tried to shove the spirit aside. “You’re not getting anything, Lam! And if you kill me, you’ll never find those diamonds. You wouldn’t know where to look! Not even these kids do!”

For a moment, Lam’s spirit was still. Then, slowly, deliberately, it lifted a hand to the undertaker’s face. A long, bony finger ran down the side of Foo’s cheek like a knife, leaving a straight line of fresh, wet blood. The undertaker howled in pain.

“That’s what we in the Other World call the ‘kiss of death!’” the spirit told him, as Foo struggled to free himself.

Again the finger traced a scar down the undertaker’s face. Blood dripped onto his white uniform.

“How many more kisses do you want, my old friend?”

Foo’s hands tried to protect his face, but Lam’s long finger sliced across them like a blade.

The undertaker fell to his knees, screaming in agony. “I’ll talk! I’ll tell you where they are!”

“Where?” the spirit hissed.

Foo pointed to the drawer containing Lam’s body.

“In there!” he whimpered. “I stitched them into the flesh of your body!”

# Chapter 20

Wei Wah, Kyna and I stared down at the undertaker. He cowered on the floor, blood streaming down his cheeks and hands.

Lam’s spirit swept down and dragged Foo across to the freezer drawer.

“Show me!” the spirit demanded. “Show me where the diamonds are!”

We edged closer as Foo scrambled to his feet. He reached into the drawer and pulled back the shroud to reveal Lam’s frozen body.

With a trembling hand, he pointed to a series of lumps in the corpse’s frozen chest.

“The diamonds are in there!” he croaked.

My gaze was fastened on the lumps. Each was the size of a golf ball. My stomach gave a sickening lurch.

“Get them out!” ordered the spirit.

I heard Kyna gasp as Foo dug into his uniform pocket and produced a small surgical knife. His hand was shaking wildly.

“Hurry!” the spirit screamed.

Wei Wah moaned a feeble protest. “But that’s your body in there…”

“Do you think I care?” Lam’s spirit snapped. “I want those diamonds!”

Scarcely able to breathe, we watched as Foo lowered the surgical knife to the corpse’s flesh and sliced it open.

I thought I’d throw up as he parted the flesh and poked his fingers inside. Kyna rocked on her feet, and Wei Wah gaped, his skin whiter than any ghost.

The undertaker pushed his fingers in deeper. A moment later, a glitterying diamond rolled out from inside the gruesome corpse.

“The others!” yelled the demonic spirit. “I want the others too!”

Foo wiped perspiration from his brow with the back of his hand. Again he brought the knife down to the corpse’s chest. He drove its tip into the frozen flesh.

Without warning, the corpse jerked.

“IT’S ALIVE!” cried the undertaker.

# Chapter 21

The knife dropped from the undertaker’s grasp.

It clattered to the floor as Lam’s body stirred.

Our screams echoed around the tiled room as the corps sprang upright, its eyes casting around with a menacing glare.

Its hands appeared from beneath the shroud.

Too late, the undertaker tried to back away. The corpse’s hands seized him and hurled him across the room. His skull crashed into a wall with a sciekning CRACK.

I looked from the living corpse to Lam’s spirit.

“You said your spirit and body should not be separated,” I said in a shaky voice.

“I don’t care about the next world or any other world!” the spirit screeched. “I only want the diamonds!”

“You will never have them…”

The corpse had spoken.

Kyna let out a fresh scream as the corpse’s mouth twisted into a smile. And again we heard it speak, “I will bring you back inside me, spirit, and together we will pass into the next world.”

The corpse’s hands closed around the grotesque spirit and pulled it into the drawer. The spirit wailed defiance.

It was the chance I’d been waiting for.

I leaped into action. With all my strength, I rolled the drawer back into the wall, hearing it shut with a resounding clang.

Wei Wah darted across to where Foo’s body was sprawled. He searched his pockets for the key.

We sprinted from the room, Kyna slamming and locking the door behind her.

# Chapter 22

As the bus rumbled to a stop outside our apartment block, I let out a sigh. “I never thought we’d see home again.”

Wei Wah grinned. “We’re late for dinner, but at least we’re safe.”

“You’re right,” I agreed, then hesitated. “I suppose one day the police will find all the bodies in that freezer, and I guess they’ll work out that Foo shot those two gangsters.”

“And they might even find the diamonds inside Lam’s body,” he speculated. “But they’ll never know we were there.”

“No, you’re wrong,” said Kyna, her face bleak.

“What do you mean?” I asked her.

“They *will* know we were there. Don’t you remember? Mr Foo threw my schoolbag into the corner. I forgot all about it. IT”S STILL THERE!”

Two days later, the police came to our school.

Kyna’s schoolbag had been found floating in the river near the bridge.

“How did it get there?” she wondered out loud.

The police also told us that when they went to ask the undertaker more questions about the stolen coffin, he was nowhere to be found. His staff said he had vanished.

“Not a trace of him,” the senior officer said. “We searched the place from top to bottom. Nothing.”

“What about the freezer where they keep the dead bodies?” Wei Wah asked. “Did you look in there?”

The policeman shot him a suspicious glance. “Of course we did. There was nothing there either. It was empty.” His eyes were piercing. “Why do you ask? Do you know something I don’t?”

We didn’t give Wei Wah a chance to answer. Kyna and I dragged him away before he could say another word.

MR MIDNIGHT #61

Who Was In That Coffin?

END

I hope you enjoyed the story, readers.

Look out for the next story at <http://readmrmidnight.weebly.com/>!