

Chapter 4

CANDY CRASH

(JOHN CANDY)

[Infiltrating the private interment of late comic John Candy.]

As soon as I entered the imposing, dimly lit, all-marble mausoleum, I continued walking with feigned confidence straight ahead toward a small chapel where another service—delivered all in Spanish—was concluding for a hairdresser named Gilda Gutierrez. Out of the corner of my eye, I took note of stanchions and a red velvet rope that had presumably been erected to keep the Gutierrez *familia* (and me!) out. Knowing full well that I'd stand out like a Kardashian at Kmart if I dared step anywhere near this VIP area, I decided instead to slide into one of the chapel pews and drop to my knees for Gilda. As the sole Caucasian in the congregation, I stood out here too, but none of the Gutierrezes seemed to give a shit.

I remained there on my knees with my eyes closed in silent prayer long after every member of the Gutierrez family had exited the chapel. (Her passing had no doubt impacted me the hardest.) When a member of Candy's security detail gently touched my shoulder and explained the chapel had to be cleared for the next service, my Hail Marys for Gilda turned into desperate prayers for my own ass.

"I'm still praying," I told the man, with my eyes firmly shut.

"You have two minutes," he answered coldly, clearly on to my game.

At that point I casually glanced back over my shoulder and spotted a small gathering of people outside the mausoleum waiting for me to vacate the premises. The first two faces I spotted: Danny DeVito and his wife Rhea Perlman. Though diminutive in size, this Hollywood power couple was hard to miss. And they looked even tinier standing beside their late friend's gargantuan coffin. Yes, the rumors were 100% true. That thing was HUGE! But with all eyes on me, there was just no way I could get away with taking a photo with the small camera I'd concealed in my jacket.

I knew what I was doing was seriously reprehensible, and I'm not sure I've ever felt like more of an outsider. I was now actually holding up John Candy's service from starting, and the guard had understandably run out of patience.

“Okay, sir, you’re going to have to come with me ... NOW,” he said firmly, grabbing my arm and pulling me to my feet.

As I got up, I quickly made the sign of the cross I’d learned in Catholic Mass (modified in my frenzied brain to “Father, Son and Holy *crap!*”), and tried my best to avoid making eye contact with the DeVitos as I was carted off to a small, dark holding office.

“We know you’re the same guy who was trying to get into the church,” said a second taller guard. “Who are you?!”