

Poison Pie

Dave adjusted his work trousers for the tenth time.

"I've definitely lost a bit of weight," he thought.

Tapping his fingers on his toolbox, he considered stopping for a coffee.

It was 11 am and there was still no sign of his partner, Dave was starting to get irritated. It was always the same with Vernon—he talked the talk but he didn't actually put any graft in. When they first came up with the idea of working together, Dave had high hopes for the partnership. Pulling in their own jobs and keeping a decent profit instead of working for someone else who took it all.

Dave was the skilled man, but Vernon was the one who'd said he'd get them the jobs and manage the office side of things.

At first, it had gone like a dream, Vernon had got them a couple of tasty jobs in and they'd both been quids in.

Dave had been happy to take on the bulk of the practical work; after all, it was his forte, but now Vernon was doing less and less, and he was having to step in and sort out any messes that his partner had created.

This job was the most recent balls-up.

Vernon had arranged everything; he'd taken the money, and apparently, it'd be a piece of cake. The problem was that none of the materials had been sorted properly, there weren't enough of the things that had been delivered, and some stuff hadn't shown up at all.

Vernon was claiming the supplier was at fault, but Dave had spoken to them himself.

He knew exactly what was going on.

Vernon had skimped on the order, and Dave suspected he was creaming off the top. Annoyed by how much the job had overrun Dave had insisted that Vernon get off his lazy arse and come and help.

Vernon had agreed but hadn't bothered turning up most days until gone 10 am, today was his latest so far. Just as Dave had poured himself a cup of coffee out of his thermos, Vernon walked around the corner and took a seat next to him on the pallet.

"Bloody hell mate, you're not stopping already are you?"

Dave clenched his hand around the coffee and bit his tongue with difficulty, fucking cheek.

"I've been here since 8."

Dave glared at his partner.

"Unlike some people who rock up at nearly lunchtime."

Vernon shrugged.

"I went to the office first, answered some emails, and followed up on some leads."

Dave took a swig of his coffee to avoid saying what was in his head, hell as if, he was thinking. More likely you were sitting around at home doing sweet FA.

Slamming the lid back on his flask, Dave got up and headed back to work.

The job involved putting together a job lot of flat-pack desks for a company that was moving into the warehouse and then painting them up.

Dave wouldn't have minded, but because Vernon had messed up the ordering, they were now behind and losing money by the hour.

It wasn't Vernon that faced the wrath of the customer either. Oh no, Vernon kept well out of it and left Dave to take the flack. Vernon had followed Dave into the warehouse and was now hanging around like a spare dick.

"Looks good, Dave," Vernon announced as though Dave should be grateful for the compliment.

"No thanks to you." Dave retorted. "Any chance I'm getting the rest of what I'm owed on this job? I've got shit to pay, plus I ended up paying for the materials you missed off."

Vernon's face took on a sly look that Dave was becoming familiar with.

"I thought we'd already split it? There isn't as much to share out now because of the job overrunning, and then there's the rent on the office, and I had to get some supplies too." Dave clutched the screwdriver tighter in his hand and then turned back to work to stop himself from jabbing it into his so-called partner.

"You know full well that there's still five hundred quid to come to me, and you're just lucky that I'm not asking for more for my time since I've been down here every day from 8 in the morning until gone 6 at night."

Vernon's weasely face was starting to irritate Dave, and he wished he'd just fuck off out of it and leave him to get on.

Vernon appeared to know that he'd overstayed his welcome, and with an overly cheerful farewell, he bustled off to do whatever it was he did all day, while Dave did the real work.

At the end of the week, Dave stopped off at the supermarket to pick up a few bits.

The desk job was nearly done, and the customers had been so impressed that they'd asked Dave to carry on and do the rest of the work to get the warehouse looking more like an office. This time Dave had asked them to send him the deposit and planned to take charge of the ordering himself to make sure there were no more cock-ups.

Putting down a four-pack of beers, a large pack of crisps, and a ready meal on the counter, he waited while the cashier scanned them.

He passed his card over the reader and packed up his shopping.

"Sorry, sir, that card was declined."

Dave frowned.

"Shouldn't have been love; I just had some money paid in."

Dave tried again a couple more times, but with the same outcome.

Handing over his emergency credit card he scowled.

Getting home, he cracked open a beer and checked his online bank account: £10.50.

Pressing the number for the customer, he was relieved when they answered.

"Sorry Dave, Vernon called earlier and said that I was supposed to send it to him so he could sort the materials. I transferred it straight over."

Dave managed to assure the customer that there wasn't a problem before hanging up.

Pacing around the room, he could feel the anger burning.

He was already owed £500 on the desk job, and now he wasn't even getting part of this one.

Dave picked up his mobile again, crushing the beer can as he popped another one and waited for Vernon to answer. Before Vernon could say a word, Dave gave it to him with both barrels.

"Where's my fucking money, Vernon? The customer was supposed to send it to me so I could sort the materials and get my share, but apparently, you told him to send it to you?"

"I thought that was how we worked it, Dave? Sorry mate."

Dave took a deep breath.

"Vernon you know full well what we agreed. I just had my card declined in the shop. I'm owed off the last job, and now I've got nothing off this one either."

"I'll sit down later and work out what you've got coming from that last job. As I said, it overran, and there won't be as much as we'd hoped."

Dave was so angry at this point that it felt like acid was running through his stomach.

"I think we better talk about this Vernon. I'm not carrying on with this."

"Yeah, let's meet up. I've got to go now, but how about tomorrow at the site?"

Dave agreed before hanging up and flinging his phone onto the sofa.

The next day, Vernon was, of course, late.

Dave had done his homework, though.

Before going to the site, he'd gone down to the office and found that Vernon had locked the desk drawer where he kept the bank statements; so he'd jimmied it with a screwdriver. The cheap wood had splintered as he'd cracked it open, but Dave didn't give a shit. Pulling out the statements, he'd seen what was going on. Vernon had been transferring money out of their work bank account and into his personal one. The account was currently looking good; the customer had been as good as his word and had transferred the deposit over the day before, and Vernon hadn't had the chance to dip his sticky fingers into it yet. Dave shoved the most recent bank statement into his pocket and snatched up the spare bank card that came with the account.

He was getting his bloody share this time. His next stop had been the bank, where he made sure the whole amount was transferred to him.

Vernon siddled in an hour late.

Dave had busied himself prepping for his next job and barely looked up until Vernon was right next to him.

"So what are we going to do about you creaming off the top?" Dave had greeted him and was pleased to see the colour leak out of Vernon's face.

"I don't know what you're talking about." Vernon stuttered out.

"Oh, I think you do. I had an interesting visit to the office first thing. I forced open that locked drawer and I checked the bank account. It seems like a lot of money is going your way, Vernon."

"What have you done?" Vernon's face was leached of all colour at this point, he looked like he was going to pass out.

"I've taken what I'm due, mate. I've also made sure that I've got the deposit for this job, and I'll happily sort all the materials and then pay you your share at the end."

Vernon's hand was trembling. "They'll fucking kill me."

Dave narrowed his eyes. "Whose going to kill you? What the fuck have you been up to?"

"The gambling got a bit out of hand. I've had to pay off some debts." Vernon closed his eyes.

"This can't be happening. You've got to give it back."

Dave snorted. "No fucking chance." Dave turned around to face his partner and was shocked to find he was now holding Dave's screwdriver.

He brandished it in his shaking hand. "Give the money back, Dave."

Dave shook his head. "No fucking chance. Now fuck off Vernon. We're done. This is my job, and I don't want you anywhere near it."

As Dave turned back to his toolbox, he felt a movement behind him and stepped to the side just in time to avoid being stabbed.

Dave saw red.

Picking up the heavy hammer, he spun around and lashed out.

Vernon collapsed to the floor, and the screwdriver clattered down beside him.

Dave stared in horror.

Vernon's head had cracked open like a boiled egg being hit with a spoon, but instead of yellow yolk oozing out, it was blood and brain.

Shit.

Dave could hear the blood pounding in his head. Looking around the empty room and then back at Vernon, he started to panic.

If he called an ambulance, would they believe it was an accident?

The police would arrest him, and he'd probably end up in prison.

Hefting the hammer from hand to hand, a plan started to take shape.

What if he just got rid of the body?

Vernon wasn't married; he didn't have a girlfriend, and his family lived in Cornwall, miles away.

Decision made, Dave started to think about where he could put him.

The wasteland outside might work. He could bury him deep, clean up the mess in here, and no one would be any the wiser.

Dave pulled off a length of plastic sheeting and bent over Vernon, he could see that he wasn't breathing and that his eyes were fixed and staring.

Hastily wrapping him up so he didn't have to look at him anymore, Dave cringed when he saw the state of the back of Vernon's head. He must've hit him really hard or more than once. He'd been so angry, he couldn't remember.

Tucking the plastic around him and using silver tape to secure it meant that he didn't have to see his dead face any more; it also meant that he stopped leaking blood and brain all over the place.

Rolling Vernon to one side, he picked up a shovel and headed out to the yard.

Behind the pallets was a large bit of scrubland. Dave found a good spot and started digging.

It took him over two hours to make the hole deep enough. Then he had to move Vernon out of the warehouse, roll him into the hole, and cover him over.

Dave looked at the spot.

It looked like a freshly dug grave, for fucks sake. Dave dug up some squares of grass and weeds and planted them over the top until he was satisfied that it would pass a cursory glance. His back and legs were killing him; his hands were sore, and he was hungry and thirsty. He couldn't stop now, though. He still had the warehouse to clean up and the hammer to sort. Filling up a bucket with hot, soapy water, he scrubbed the floor until he was sure that no stains were left. The hammer was a bit more difficult. Hair and blood were stuck on its round nose, and no amount of cleaning seemed to move it.

He was reluctant to throw it away, though. It was one of his favourites.

Dave decided to bury it at the bottom of his toolbox for now and then think about chucking it later. Taking one last look around the area, he felt satisfied that he'd cleaned it up as best he could.

Next, he had to sort out Vernon's car. It couldn't just sit here, but what to do with it?

Dave decided that he'd drive it up to that park off the local council estate and burn it out.

If anyone found it, they'd think it was a joyrider. Picking up his toolbox, he headed out to his van and stashed it in the back. Getting in Vernon's car, he set off towards the park. He'd put on a cap he'd found in the back and pulled it down low to cover the top half of his face.

The area was deserted, and Dave quickly chucked the cap back in the car and did the deed before setting off on the long walk back to the site to get his van. By the time he'd got back and double-checked that he hadn't forgotten anything, it was pitch black out.

Dave got behind the wheel of his van and set off home.

His whole body ached with exhaustion, so after a soak in the bath, he went straight off to bed.

"Why did you do it, Dave? I thought we were friends?"

Vernon's face leered at him in the darkness of his bedroom. He was pale under the blood spatter, his hair was tufted around the gaping hole in his head, and Dave could see the white of his skull in places.

Dave screwed his eyes shut, counted to ten, and then opened them.

Vernon was still there.

Silently staring down at him with a disapproving expression that suggested that Dave had let him down. He closed his eyes again, and this time, when he opened them, Vernon was gone.