

Autopsy Room Four Summary

Understanding the Chilling World of Stephen King’s Autopsy Room Four

Stephen King has a unique talent for transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary and the terrifying. Among his vast collection of short fiction, few stories capture the sheer primal terror of helplessness quite like **Autopsy Room Four**. Originally published in the 1997 collection *Everything’s Eventual*, this tale offers a masterclass in suspense, claustrophobia, and the fragility of human life. For readers seeking a comprehensive **Autopsy Room Four Summary**, this article will dissect the plot, explore its deeper themes, and examine why this story continues to haunt readers long after the final page.

What Is Autopsy Room Four About?

At its core, **Autopsy Room Four** tells the story of Howard Cottrell, a successful but somewhat ordinary businessman who wakes up to discover he has been prematurely pronounced dead. The story opens with Howard regaining consciousness inside a cadaver drawer in a hospital morgue. He is fully aware of his surroundings, can hear the voices of the medical staff, and can feel the cold steel beneath him, but he cannot move a single muscle. He is trapped in a state of total paralysis, a condition later revealed to be caused by a rare reaction to a snake bite.

What makes this particular **Autopsy Room Four Summary** so compelling is that Howard is not merely a passive victim of circumstance. Throughout the narrative, King allows readers inside Howard’s frantic mind as he pieces together what has happened. Howard recalls a routine afternoon of golf, a strange encounter on the course, and the sharp, fleeting pain of a snake bite that he dismissed far too casually. Now, lying helpless on a steel table, he must listen as the pathologists prepare to cut him open, all while he is completely unable to signal that he is still alive.

The Plot in Detail: A Step-by-Step Breakdown

To fully appreciate the **Autopsy Room Four Summary**, it is helpful to walk through the sequence of events as King presents them. The story follows a tight, linear timeline, with flashbacks woven seamlessly into Howard’s desperate internal monologue.

The Awakening

Howard Cottrells consciousness returns slowly and unnervingly. He becomes aware of the dark, cramped space of the morgue drawer before he even opens his eyes. The first sensations are tactile: the cold metal, the tightness of a sheet wrapped around his body, and a strange, tingling numbness that suffuses every limb. As his mind clears, he realizes with dawning horror that he is inside a body bag. The zipper is closed. He tries to scream, to thrash, to do anything at all, but his body refuses to obey. This opening section of any thorough **Autopsy Room Four Summary**