

COD 37 SCENE 3.1 (PM)

INT. CABIN: GROUND FLOOR, MAIN ROOM. NIGHT.

AS OWL MAN AND HERON MAN EXPLORE THE BASEMENT, CHARLIE LAUNCHES INTO A RAMBLING, PERSONAL HISTORY, TALKING RUSS'S AND PACO'S EARS OFF, HOLDING THE TWO AUTHORS CAPTIVE, IF NOT EXACTLY SPELLBOUND.

(cont'd)

CHARLIE

Call me Chip, Russ. You too, Paco. That is yer name, ain't it? Paco? 'Course, you don't look like no Paco I ever seen. Anyways, I'm done with puffed-up names like Charles, even Charlie. Them names is too dang formal for me. I feel better bein' "Chip," from way back. Fact is, my first cousin, Renard, on my pappy's side (Renard means "fox" in French, you know), why, one time he-

PACO

Sure, Chip, sure. But didn't you just tell us you're the local yokel for ghouls in these-here parts? The ghost-and-ghoul repository, as it were?

CHIP

Well, I don't wanna brag none, but yeah, folks is always comin' up to me with them spook-tales, wantin' me to listen to their dang stories.

RUSS

Say, Chip, you must know a lot of the local spooks by now. Their real names, stories, histories and all?

MUFFLED SOUNDS ISSUE FROM BASEMENT. THUMPING MOSTLY, SHARP NOTES ON OCCASION, ONE SHATTERING OR SPLINTERING SOUND. PERHAPS AN INVECTIVE OR TWO.

PACO

Uh, Chip?

CHIP

Yessir?

PACO

Shouldn't we go check on our two colleagues down in the basement?
I don't like the sound of all that bangin' 'n' hollerin'.

CHIP

Oh, I don't rightly think that's necessary, Paco. Not yet
anyways.

PACO

What do you mean, "not yet," Chip? I thought you come over here to
warn us boys. Thought it was "dangerous."

CHIP

Oh, it's dangerous, all right. But we haven't got to the best part
yet. Now *that's* when yer gonna hear some downright blood-curdlin'
screams, like they call 'em-'blood-curdlin'. Now this here, if you
ask me, it's all jest prelude. Just you wait.

PACO

About a million years ago, Chip, Russ had a question for you. Did
you notice? Did you happen to hear him?

CHIP

Oh, sorry. Got distracted a bit. Shoot, pardner. I'll answer it if I can. I mean, like I said, I *did* come to help you boys.

RUSS

Very well, Chip. Tell me, then, have you actually ever seen one of them spooks yer talkin' about? I mean, in person? Got any bloody tooth marks on yer neck? Stuff like that? Evidence?

PACO

Yeah, Chip. Answer that one, if you can!

CHIP

Oh, I get it. Now it's two-against-one, eh? The two big-shot authors, Russ and Paco, both gangin' up on the poor, miserable, defenseless character—that would be me, Chip, good ol' Charlie, I, Charles Oglesby III, who practically have to beg, threaten, or steal my way into the vaporous field of your all-so-fleeting awarenesses. Is that the way you writer-boys play the game? Seize the advantage to avoid the fight? No matter the cost? Huh?

RUSS

Thank you, Chip, for your most honest expression of how you see Paco and me—"we" being your two pro-bono progenitors, I might add. And just how do you see us? I'll tell you how you see us: *like two bloody idiots, apparently!* Jesus, Chip, where do you dig up such cockamamie nonsense anyway?

CHIP

Dig up what?

RUSS

Cockamamie nonsense. Cockamamie means—

CHIP

I know what cockamamie means, Russ. I was askin' about the nonsense part.

RUSS

Oh, that.

RUSS TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND IS ABOUT TO LAUNCH AN ETYMOLOGICAL BARRAGE AGAINST THE OAK-LIKE PALISADE OF CHIP'S MENTAL DEFENSES, WHEN THE DOOR TO THE BASEMENT BURSTS OPEN, AND THE HERON AND THE OWL TUMBLE INTO THE ROOM AND ONTO THE FLOOR. BOTH MEN ARE EXHAUSTED, SHAKING, AND BREATHING HARD. HERON MAN IS BLEEDING AROUND THE FACE, HANDS AND ARMS. OWL MAN APPEARS UNINJURED.

Unhhhhnnnnhh. God, what was that?

RUSS

Owl! Heron! What happened down there? What was it?

CHIP

I told ya, Russ. Had to be one of them spooks. But whatever kind it was, I'll bet you four silver dollars to one it wasn't no trophy-like lookin' thing, 'less you get it stuffed and hang it above your fireplace! Now, that'd be some trophy!

WITH THE OWL AND HERON'S DRAMATIC RETURN TO CENTER STAGE, PACO LEAPS INTO ACTION. CHIP REMAINS SEATED WITH AN "I TOLD YOU SO" LOOK OF SMUGNESS ON HIS GNARLY FACE, WHICH ROTATES SLOWLY, TURNING AND NODDING LIKE A BOBBLE-HEAD DOLL, SO THAT EVERYONE PRESENT CAN SEE HIS VERDICT. RUSS IGNORES MR. BOBBLE-HEAD, THEN CALMLY REACHES INTO HIS DUFFLEBAG AND REMOVES WHAT LOOKS LIKE ENOUGH MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO STOCK A METROPOLITAN E.R. SURGERY. HANDS SOME STERILE GLOVES, GAUZE SWABS AND ALCOHOL TO PACO.

PACO

Thanks, Russ. Well, Heron, it looks like you took the brunt of the attack. Mr. Owl here don't have nary a scratch. Hold on now, Heron, this is gonna sting a bit.

PACO SOAKS SOME GAUZE IN ALCOHOL, STARTS SWABBING THE FACIAL LESIONS. HERON MAN FLINCHES.

HERON MAN (flinching)

Ouch!

PACO

Almost done here, Heron. We'll have you buttoned up in no time. Russ, since you're up, would you please bring the Heron some water, plus that medicinal bottle of Macallan you got stashed in your dufflebag, while you're at it?

THE SCENE CLOSES, AND AFTER WHAT SEEMS ODDLY LIKE A CELEBRATORY, FIVE-PERSON TOAST, OWL, RUSS, CHIP, AND PACO SURROUND HERON MAN IN A TIMELESS SCENE OF BATTLEFIELD MEDICS STRUGGLING HEROICALLY AGAINST THE DAILY CARNAGE, ALTHOUGH MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE BLOODY DAMAGE IS ATTRIBUTABLE NOT TO MUSKETS AND SWORDS, BUT TO SPOOKS.