

NOT IN MY NIGHTMARE - SCENE 6

INT. CABIN IN WOODS

(As the *Wordies* brace
for Paco's lecture,
the Prologean Voice
returns.)

PROLGEAN VOICE

Readers! It's me again. I know a prologue always occurs before anything happens, but I'm not going to be bound by that at all. I will break into a scene whenever I wish. By the way, a group of authors is known as WORDIES. I know you are all eager to hear Paco's lecture, so just a word of warning. Keep in mind Wittgenstein's observation that it is not whether a statement is true or false, but whether it is nonsense. But also keep in mind Lewis Carroll's observation that nonsense often has more to teach than sense, more to ponder than truth or falsity, more to weigh up in the scales of importance than meaning. Got it?

PACO

I think we are in danger of losing our readers. More than likely we have already lost them. They are silent. No feedback at all. They may have stopped reading even before the latest ... What? What shall I call it? At the very least it is the complexification that has been introduced into the script. Perhaps we should take another look at the title of the script. It's *Not In My Nightmare*. Yet, we have introduced all sorts of likely off-putting things in the nightmare that perhaps readers turn away because it has in fact become a nightmare for readers.

(MORE)

PACO (cont'd)

Or, perhaps I judge it wrongly and the nightmare is so horrific that it has stolen the voice of our readers, if indeed there are any readers left.

CHIP(interrupting)

Sorry to interrupt Paco, but I don't actually see any readers here in this here cabin...only you authors...and me, a silly old hoot telling tales. Where are the readers?

PACO (cont'd)

Well, I guess it's like hitting the head with a nail. I say that as an example of reversal, a kind of Lewis Carroll move, designed to break into thinking that's stuck in the box, or in this case, stuck in the head. Chip, if the audience is silent, making no sound, not even a cough or sneeze, and no words at all, then we have no way of knowing *where* the audience of readers is. In fact, there may be none. That is the whole point of my lecture. I'm offering the conjecture, subject to Wittengsteinian analysis, as well as Carrollean going this way or that, hurried or slow, falling upward or down, that we in fact have no audience of readers. Prove me wrong!

OWL MAN

So what, Paco. Are we so needy? Are we not having a hoot, a grand time, a ball? I don't give a damn tinker for whether we have an audience or not. Besides, as we know from the headlines, the audience's only purpose is to provide a flow of lucre, clean or filthy, so that one has a measure of the value of the thing. There is no other measure of value is there? Novel, screenplay, or a painting. The only question is how much did it sell for, how much did it gross, how much, how much? We best be satisfied with authoring for ourselves alone.

(MORE)

OWL MAN (cont'd)

And, yes, I know the admonition given to writers by the writing gurus: know your audience and always write for the audience. Well, wordies, what the gurus neglect to mention, is that the only meaningful audience is the authors themselves. I say, write for the author, author! That's the lesson my friends, that's why we hear nothing from the so-called audience. We are the audience!

(Only Owl Man is left standing as all the others are laid out flat on the cabin floor. Are they asleep?)

CABIN INT., STILL DARK.

Eyes wide open, his head rotating owl-like (270 degrees and back), Owl Man scans the pile of sleepers—once, twice, thrice. Then he shakes his head and frowns. No edible mice there, he decides; so, stepping over two of the sleepers, he quietly sidesteps to the entry door, opens it and peers outside. The earlier fog has now congealed into a lowering cloud and settled over the lake, where a fine mist is now drifting down. Chip's battered aluminum canoe still lies ajar, hauled up on the rocky "shore." Fireflies, or something similar, flit about over the dimpled water. Closing the door, the Owl leans against the frame and begins mumbling. Then he embarks on a soliloquy, as if reading from an old volume of William Shakespeare. His delivery is vaguely reminiscent of the Scottish actor Billy Connolly, and it could have been penned for the Owl:

OWL MAN

What foul Lord of Darkness hath loosed his Hounds of Oblivion upon these, my fair companions? With the slightest nip upon the skin, see what the hell-hounds have unleashed, o ye gods! This rankling, beastly slumber—how it mocks the Supreme Master, Death! Does this monster-sleep prevail here in our remote castle, this former movie-set?

(MORE)

OWL MAN (cont'd)

Or does it arise from some dank,
sulphurous circle of Dante's Inferno?
But in which circle do we find
ourselves? Lust? Gluttony? Greed? No!
I hereby banish all such unworthy
thoughts. Ay, mark how they lie a-
scatter now: Yonder lies Sir Chip,
wheezing, his shaggy head full of
curses and devilment, yet vacant
withal. Or regard our Grand Lord Sir
Russell, gentleman and chivalrous
knight, who holds the key to unlock
many noble hearts. Sir Russell, being
the heartiest of sleepers, has cast
one leg to the side. See how it
twitches? He dreams like a dog before
the fire! And there, his loyal Knight
Errant, he of the Heron Clan,
who-Wha'? Huh? (soliloquy disrupted)

A tall, bearded man has suddenly opened the door without knocking. Boldly, he enters the room, rudely interrupting Owl Man's soliloquy. He wears a black top-coat, once elegant but now tattered, black leather gloves similarly frayed, a rumpled black fedora, and, strangely enough, a pair of green rubber Crocs that squeak from the moisture on the floor. Under the circumstances—that is, the pile of sleeping WORDIES still snoring and wheezing away—the squeaky sound qualifies as "eerie."

OWL MAN (CONT'D)

Hark! Who art thou? Name thyself, or
I shall consider thee a lowly
blackguard, a knave, and apply my
shillelagh to thy shins!

UNKNOWN VOICE

I am the Prologuean Voice. You know
me well, my friend! You might as well
get used to it! And you can dispense
with all the Shakespearean blather. I
will tolerate no impudence from you.
Remember, I gave you all fair warning
in my previous Prologue. That's what
I do—offer up Prologues, always
important ones.

OWL MAN

So, you're saying you were serious that time? The one before this one?

PROLOGUEAN VOICE

I'm always serious. Or didn't you notice? What did you think a Prologuean Voice was all about?

OWL MAN

Well, I naturally assumed that—

PROLOGUEAN VOICE

Don't assume! You can get in a lot of trouble that way. In fact, I can tell you—

OWL MAN (INTERRUPTING)

OK, OK, I hear you. But what's with the Crocs?

PROLOGUEAN VOICE

You don't like my Crocs? They're comfortable, what else? I hope you don't think they reveal an overriding concern for mere style. But I didn't come here to discuss my fashion choices. I came here to issue all the usual warnings.

HERON MAN (WAKING)

What's all the racket? Ohhhhh, my head. Is that you, Owl Man? Oh no, not the Prologuean Voice again! Now what?

OWL MAN

Oh, hello, Heron Man. Did you enjoy your little nap? Perhaps you'd like to say hello to our visitor? Mr. Prologuean Voice, I'm happy to introduce you to the esteemed Mr. Heron Man.

PROLOGUEAN VOICE

Yes, hello, Mr. Heron. We've met before.

HERON MAN

We have? Where? I don't recall.

PROLOGUEAN VOICE

In a dream—where else? Now, are we going to persist in this frivolous chit-chat, or are we going to get down to business?

HERON MAN

Oh, business, by all means. (Aside: Whatever that means.)

PROLOGUEAN VOICE

It means, as you put it, that we must hear what you've been dreaming while under the spell.

HERON MAN

Spell? You mean, our sleep was induced by some ... alien agent?

In the background, pipe organ music wafts ominously through the cabin: the opening chords and runs of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor.

At this point a significant but stilted pause (musically, a "birdseye" or fermata), enters the dialogue. Owl Man, familiar with the fermata, had been bird's-eyeing the exchange with interest, wondering (1) what Heron Man had been dreaming; (2) where the Prologuean Voice had disappeared to during the interim between his last appearance and this current one; and (3) that to which this strange conversation was about to lead.