

CHAPTER TWO

{The thought swirled about my brain:
"Are they all capable of MIND-READING!?!"} }

"Good Heavens, DAN, don't be alarmed by that." Answered The BARON, quite graciously, as he poured me a cup of that steaming brew. "You always take two teaspoons of sugar, am I correct?" He benignly spoke, handing me the cup and saucer, as that playful smile continued to dance across his werewolf visage.

"Y-Y-Y-Yes!" I stammered, more than a bit unnerved. "Thank you, BARON."

The BARON, paying no attention to my distress, continued, in a nonchalant way, as if he were merely discussing the weather. "Mental Telepathy is an olde 'Talent', one which the 'CHAPPIES AND MONSTER-LOVERS' of Yore shall remember of us. Why, its use was fairly commonplace on our show, back in AD 1978."

The BARON then returned to the business at hand.

"DAN, this young Gentleman to your left is our resident Grave Robber, ROBIN GRAVES. Of Cockney descent, he minds our Fang-mily Cemetery."

"I am o' Cockney Descent, quite right, 'owever, don't you worry none, 'cos I've been de-scented for quite some time!" rejoined ROBIN, with a charming smirk.

"Yes," said I, "but your accent still reveals your British lineage." He tipped his cap to me in a politely dapper manner, while The BARON continued his Introductions.

"DAN, this Gentleman to your right is a Very Olde Friend of The Von WOLFSTEIN Fang-mily."

Here he paused to cast a studious glance at His Friend, and, as that curiously whimsical smile again spread across the BARON'S Countenance, he announced:

"DAN, This is TIMOTHY; TIMOTHY, This is DAN JOHNSON."

As we exchanged handshakes I gazed into TIMOTHY'S Eyes. There were no outward signs to set him apart as anything special, yet, his eyes held the SECRET to a Different STORY. As TIMOTHY welcomed me, I realized that he, too, was an AMERICAN!

How did he ever get to be mixed up with this Motley Band of BOGEYMEN?!

Again, the BARON seemed to intercept my thought, replying: "TIMOTHY'S full name is Timothy Francis Meyer Herron, B.G.G. He is what you could call, for

want of a better concept, My ALTER-EGO. Not only does he aid me in Chronicling THE Von WOLFSTEIN Saga, but, he is also an ARTIST of High Degree, and, a Mystical Foole Of GOD, which I find indispensable, considering some of the more unsavoury characters with whom we have to deal, from time to time.

And, yes, DAN, you'll be free to ask more of him presently."

The BARON stepped off onto a new tangent.

"When my Illegitimate Step-Son, A. GHASTLEE GHOUL, first sent me word of you, I pondered the potential of an Article in such a Prestigious MONSTER MAGAZINE as SCARY MONSTERS, or, even, for your very fine employer, Cheryl Duran, at MONSTER NEWS ON-LINE. I finally decided to contact you for the sake of THE CHAPPIES AND MONSTER-LOVERS Everywhere."

"As These Others, My Stalwart Friends, have all played MAJOR ROLES in THE BARON Von WOLFSTEIN Story, I chose to have them present to each impart their unique 'Take' on The Matter. Their Experiences are certainly as valid as mine."

Struck to the core by The BARON'S simple magnanimity, I gushed, "Gosh, BARON, that's very generous of you. Your Spirit is even nobler than Your Title. You must take Friendship very seriously, to entrust so much of this Interview to them!"

He waved away my compliment, stating: "GOD only looks at the HEART."

"Well, that being said, let's begin this Interview, shall we?" I said, still agog.

"Excellent idea, DAN. Have a seat, won't you?"

The BARON motioned me towards a magnificent chair, unlike any I'd ever seen. The chair was a masterpiece!

Covered with a fabric of a plush, velvety brocade, its timeworn appearance dated it as being several centuries old. The patterning on that exquisite cloth was intricate needlepoint, obviously hand-sewn. It reflected the fact that the artisans who'd created it took immeasurable pride in their work.

Along with its ornately carved legs and arm-rests, the intricately sculpted replica of The Von WOLFSTEIN Family Crest, mounted atop the back cushion, fashioned of the same exotic wood, altogether completed this perfect testament to The BARON'S noble standing.

I was almost embarrassed to sit on a furnishing of such regal quality, but, the BARON reassured me that it was OK to use it.

"Please, DAN," He affirmed, "you're kind Presence is worth more than a thousand such chairs, by my estimation."

As I took my seat, this thought danced about my mind, like an excited five year old on Christmas morning: "How amazing, to have the chance to hear the BARON and his closest friends 'HOLD COURT'!"

I relished the chance to listen to them fill in the little-known and long-lost gaps in The Monster Family Chronicles, ever since we'd first made contact.

When they'd kindly consented to sit down with me to discuss their days in the TV Limelight, this was the moment I'd been waiting for.

So, sit back, kids and get ready, 'cos The BARON and Friends are comin' at ya!

Thinking that I could easily take their information, one by one, I started with ROBIN GRAVES.

"MISTER GRAVES, if I could 'dig' a bit into your personal history... well, just how did a Limey like you ever get to CASTLE Von WOLFSTEIN?"

"You can call me ROBIN, DAN." He spoke, as an easy smile spread across his Beatle-ish face. "Yeah, just 'ow did a Bloke like Meself ever get to this particular 'NECK' o' the Woods, as t'were?"

"Wull, Blimey, thet all depends on who you ask."

"What do you mean, ROBIN?"

"The BARON, 'e'll tell you one thing, but, TIMOTHY, well, 'e'll will give it an 'ole diff'rent slant." emphasized ROBIN.

"Most intriguing; do go on." I fired right back.

"Wull, it's like this, The BARON says that I was brought out 'ere to be The Grounds-Keeper for CASTLE VON WOLFSTEIN, Cemetery and all, whereas, TIMOTHY tells me that I was an answer to prayer, to 'elp The BARON 'SAVE FACE', is 'ow 'e puts it!"

"I guess that I'll have to record TIMOTHY'S more esoteric version of your arrival and purpose a bit later, ROBIN. But for now, I'm only interested in first person accounts, so, what do YOU remember?"

ROBIN sat down beside me, in the Antique chair that was the exact match of mine, and began his story.

ROBIN GRAVES' STORY

"All o' me life, from the time I wuz a wee tyke, I wanted to be an Explorer. Didn't matter to me if I was walkin', flyin', or, diggin'. All I knew wuz I wanted to uncover me own share o' the Mysteries o' LIFE!"

"But, bein' borned dirt-poor, I 'ad to dream big dreams."

"I left 'ome whilst I wuz still quite a young'n, 'opin' to make a diff'rence in this ol' world; even started me career as a Digger, innocently enuff."

"A coupla blokes wot wuz friends o' mine said thet if I'd 'elp 'em, they'd reward me 'andsomely. So, I took on the job wif their 'elp."

"Ow wuz I s'pose to know that they wuz Grave-robbers. I was told that we wuz 'untin' buried treasure."

"Jus' so 'appens thet t'wuz buried in an aulde Cemetery..... Righty-oh!" ROBIN, breathed a sigh of regret here, in remembrance of being played for a fool.

"So, s'real late one night 'n' 'ere we are diggin' somethin' furious! Suddenly, we 'it sumpthin' SOLID. But,... it sounded 'ollow, too. When we cleared away the last o' the debris, sez I to Meself, "Gud Lor' luv me! Either this is wun 'uge Treasure Chest, or, else, we're knockin' on someone's coffin!" Thet wuz when I fin'ly caught on to the true nature o' me so-called 'friends' business!"

"First time wot I'd e'er seen 'uman remains, 'n' these two blokes starts pryin' the gold 'n' jewels right offa thet skel'ton."

"Just when I thot thet I was goin' to be... UNWELL, all o' a sudden, th' Constabulary arrives to bust things up!"

"Course, them Bobbies nabs me, but, those other two blokes, them cowards wot's got me into this mess, they made a fast exit."

"Later on, down at the gaol, sez I to th' Chief Constable: 'Alright, 'ow'd you catch on to us?'"

"E looked at me in a guarded sort o' way, 'n' sez, to see if I'll think 'e's DAFT: 'Do you believe in GHOSTS?'"

"Dunno," sez I, "ne'er really paid it much 'eed. Why d'you ask?"

"Because a report was filed, 'In Person', by the GHOST Of THE DECEASED Whose Grave you and your friends desecrated with your plundering."

"Aaww, d'you 'xpect me to believe that?" was me retort."

"It doesn't matter to me if you do or not." Sez 'e. 'Ere 'e took on a real steely-eyed look, 'n' then, 'e goes on wif 'is bloody tale:

"That particular GHOST happened to be a Great-Uncle of mine. I knew him well when I was a lad. So, you see, young Master Graves, I was properly astonished to see the old Gentleman appear before me with his agitated confession, and, then, just as abruptly, vanish into thin air.

That was when I dispatched my men to check it out, and, as per the poor spectre's woeful tale, we turned up with you."

Enthralled by this unexpected twist to his story, I asked ROBIN, "Did you get locked up for your part in the crime?"

"Ohhh, yeah!" He exhaled deeply, wincing at yet another obviously distasteful memory. "I endured the privilege o' spendin' sev'ral luvly days in 'Er Majesty's Fine Accommodations. Thet is, 'til sumpthin' else tot'lly STRANGE 'appened to me!"

ROBIN leaned in closer to me, his voice dropping to a whisper, but, with an urgent intensity...

"Y'see, I wakes from a nap in th' ev'ning, to find another wun o' 'Er Majesty's Subjects standin' in me cell... an odd-lookin' aulde bloke."

"Thinkin' thet 'e musta been tossed in for some bit o' mischief, I starts up a friendly conversation wif 'im. But, 'stead o' answerin' me, 'e pull a GOLDEN SHOVEL outta nowhere, an' 'ands it to me."

"Start digging!" Sez 'e. Thet wuz all 'e said. The Oddness o' this makes me thinks I must still be asleep 'n' dreamin'.

"Why not?!" I thinks. 'Might's 'well 'umour this Bloke.' So, DIG I did! 'Fore I knows it, I'm up to me shoulders in dirt. 'This shovel's unbelievable, practic'lly digs by itself!' I 'xclaimed to me weird cell-mate."

"But, as I looked 'round me cell, I realized thet The Odd Bloke was gone!"

"Jus' 'POOF!', 'e'd vanished!"

"Jus' further proof that I MUST be dreamin', thinks I to meself, so's, bein' wot it's it's a pleasant dream, 'n' all; gettin' out o' thet gaol, I keeps right on a-diggin'."

"Course, it's dark, but, thet don't stop me."

"This Golden Shovel seems to be glowin' just enough for me to see me way."

"I 'ad no sense o' time...'n', deep as I was, the dirt never got in me way... I never tired; th' shovel seemed to 'ave a mind o' its own, 'n', to do all the work!"

"I fin'ly reached the surface, only to 'ave this aulde CASTLE in front o' me. To complete th' fact that I knew I wuz dreamin', me odd cell-mate wuz there, too, standin' kinda casual-like, right next to me, outside the 'ole wot I've jus' spent 'ours a-diggin'!"

"Then 'e sez to me:

'Splendid work, ROBIN GRAVES, welcome to your new HOME! The BARON has been expecting you. My name, by the way, is CARLYLE. I apologize for not introducing myself to you back there in the prison, but, we have work to do, for time is of the Essence!'"

"I'll wake up now, any moment!' I thought. CARLYLE beamed at me, 'Oh, no, ROBIN, you cannot awaken, for you've not been asleep."

"Naw, thet's impossible!" I was gettin' a bit riled up by this time! 'Yer tellin' me that I dug meself outta thet prison, 'n', all the way to... to... to... WHERE AM I?!"

"You're at CASTLE Von WOLFSTEIN, in Transylvania." CARLYLE replied, in a kindly voice.

"At's BLUDY IMPOSSIBLE, 'n' you know it!' I bellowed!"

"Goods Heavens, ROBIN, No!' CARLYLE remarked, with a good-natured chuckle. 'Not Impossible; I merely employed the use of a MAGIC SHOVEL."

ROBIN stopped his re-telling at this point and lapsed into a momentary silence. He seemed uncertain as if he should proceed. "Thet'll do for starters, I 'xspects. Don't want to 'og all o' your time."

"Thank you, ROBIN." I demurred, "If your life after arrival at CASTLE Von WOLFSTEIN is anywhere near as weird as your life leading up to it, then, all I can say is 'WOW'!"

"You don't know th' 'alf o' it!" He genially replied, giving me a funny look that spoke volumes, as he picked up his cup of tea. Wearing that bemused expression, he took a sip.

(End of Chapter II)