

-----  
CHAPTER 3- CARLYLE AND THE BARON  
-----

"So, who'd like to volunteer to be next?" I asked.  
"How about you, CARLYLE, can I quiz you next?"

"Certainly, DAN, if it will facilitate your progress."

I put forth my eager request. "What's your story; have you always been a WIZARD, and, INVISIBLE, too?"

"One is born to BE and Become; the complexities of LIFE on Earth are not so easily reduced to pat answers." mused CARLYLE, in a professorial manner.

"Oh, no!" I thought. "Too much somber philosophizing will kill this article!"

Just as the word 'BOR-R-RING' was entering my brain, CARLYLE broke into his cackling laugh once again. The others joined in, most heartily. I was stymied as to the laughter's reason.

Then, I couldn't help but notice that I was caught in CARLYLE'S penetrating gaze. I felt as if my eyes were glued to his, and, completely mesmerized, I watched the unexplainable happen.

CARLYLE took on his fully human form. I sat there, dumbstruck, as CARLYLE'S Materialization occurred.

He transformed from a wispy vapor into substantial, corporeal existence, until he was finally as solid as you or I! Instantly, a most striking gentleman of advanced years stood before me!

It was now obvious that CARLYLE was descended from a long line of Noble Mages of England. His every feature was engraved with Mystery, Wisdom and Benevolence, neatly wrapped up in the Ideal Image of THE WIZARD.

"Testing, One, Two, Three, DAN; Testing, one, two, three." He chided me, in a jocular manner. "I shan't impart what you cannot hear. 'Twould be a vexation to me, knowing that I was boring you or your readers with the deeper Truths." CARLYLE said, amid his gentle chuckling. No longer laughing, but, smiling peacefully CARLYLE kept speaking.

"Every Life is a work in progress; some lives are merely longer, or, deeper, than others. Some Lives are GLORIOUSLY so, whilst some lives are hideously so. 'As ye thinketh, so ye becometh.'"

A hushed sigh escaped his hoary lips, as if to punctuate his personal, Inner Knowledge of this

double-edged Truth.

ROBIN whispered in my ear.

"DAN, you've just seen a sight wot most Mort'ls never see. I've only seen 'im like this a very few times Meself. CARLYLE is, after all, an INVISIBLE WIZARD, 'n' one of BARON Von WOLFSTEIN'S closest cronies, wif very good reason."

Here, The BARON interjected, "Yes, DAN, CARLYLE is mayhaps the most enigmatic of our little clan. As you've just witnessed, whilst he's not beneath having a good laugh, most people assume that CARLYLE is a tad too refined for the BUFFOONERY Potential needed to succeed on one end of the Televised Spectrum. But, he is as True as steel, and, totally incapable of being sullied by evil as well."

"CARLYLE is a quintessentially Charming Olde English Wizard, seemingly a bit on the doddering side, but, still as smart as the proverbial whip. I'm Blest to have his Illustrious Presence in my Life."

"Thank you, my dear friends, for conveying the appropriate perspective of me, necessary for this Interview." voiced CARLYLE. "You'll excuse me now, as I must see to a very important aspect of tonight's business!"

Once he said that, CARLYLE became completely cloaked with INVISIBILITY once again.

His voice was audible for a moment longer, fading as he said, "I shall return presently with a 'special guest'. Please, prepare DAN for that event."

-----

ROBIN cast a sidelong glance at The BARON, ruefully groaning, "Thet means 'e's gone to rustle up 'You Know Oo', don't it?!"

"Steady, Friend ROBIN." was The BARON'S firm reply. "I still have the SILVER SWORD OF LIGHT for our Protection. I believe that, in preparation for this little confrontation, you've got something up your sleeve, as well, do you not?"

"Aye, BARON, thet I do! I 'opes thet it's still fresh, as I've 'ad it put away for quite a long time." opined ROBIN.

"Have Faith, lad, 'twas CARLYLE that produced the object." was The BARON'S succinct rejoinder. "So, I'm certain that no amount of time will taint its freshness. 'Twould be a good idea for you to make

haste to fetch it, though, and, to carry it upon your person, so that you'll have it in readiness when the need arises."

"Aye, thet I will, BARON," ROBIN agreed as he began his exit. "I'll be back a'fore you knows it!"

After ROBIN vacated our cozy space, The BARON turned to me and continued in a forthright vein.

"DAN, don't you be nervous, either. Let's carry on with this interview shall we?"

Maybe The BARON thought that I had acquired the Gift of MENTAL TELEPATHY, but, I hadn't!

WORRIED?! Of course, I was worried!

I had no idea of what horrible thing about was to happen next. I tried vainly to re-focus, to dismiss the strange possibilities from haunting my mind, but, realizing that The BARON was now watching me intently unnerved me! It really gave me the creeps! This guy IS a MONSTER, after all!

Unable to block the whirling chaos of my thoughts, the BARON was able easily assess my mental quagmire, and, calm me down with his benign smile, and, a single statement:

"'Tis rather like BEING an Actor in a CLASSIC MONSTER MOVIE, eh, Brother DAN?!"

This allusion provoked me to laughter, nervous at first, but, then, genuine, as The BARON joined me. I simply had to trust my HOST that I was in his best safe-keeping.

Able to relax again, I got into my 'Intrepid Reporter' mode.

"BARON," I began, a bit timidly, "would you give the readers of SCARY MONSTERS who might not have been lucky enough to see your show in '78 some of your background history?"

"Ah, yes, one's personal history is usually quite fascinating, and, equally remarkable in the Telling. I should be delighted to do so!"

-----  
BARON VON WOLFSTEIN'S HISTORY  
-----

"I am the Scion of a Very Olde, Noble, and, at one point in time, Illustrious, Family."

"As oft-times happened in ancient families, a curse was set against the House of von Wolfstein. This tragic curse was imparted in Antiquity, prior to the Patronymic System being established. The fearsome notoriety of The Family Curse led the locals to choose

the family name, both as a warning and as an epithet against my Forebears."

"For generation after generation, the von Wolfstein heirs were afflicted with the misery of the Man-Wolf. Mercifully, the curse only struck one male child in each generation. If that tainted individual died without siring a son, it was then supposed that the curse died with him."

"Unfortunately, evil is invasively crafty and created an alternate method of passing the curse along the bloodline. Should the afflicted one be nearing death, with any of his nearest male kin being in close proximity, then, a simple wounding, supplied by a bite of the accursed, would ensure the curse's vile continuance."

"Hence, the Family von Wolfstein would thus be haunted by that filthy curse, quite literally, forever."

"Twas my elder brother, GUSTAV, who was so infected. This was centuries removed from the present day. The world, although in some ways simpler, was still not so different from today, where the clash between GOOD and evil are concerned."

"True to the depravity of the Disease's Nature, GUSTAV, even during his normal times, was quite beastly. He seemed to revel in his abnormal power, with its ability to control via fear and despair. He also appeared to be invincible, due to the curse's preternaturally bestowed power."

"During the Full moon's waxing to waning cycle, GUSTAV inherited the curse's full potency. Danger and death followed in his path. Horror and sorrow visited the region, every month in an unbroken, damnably unending cycle."

"There is a Cure for the Disease LYCANTHROPIC, as there is a Sovereign Cure for ev'ry curse. So, 'twas merely a matter of time and proper circumstance before GUSTAV'S hideous reign would be ceased. But, that occurred only by the Costliest Grace that I could marshal and exert."

"I had to employ ev'ry ounce of Bravery, and, ev'ry fibre of Strength at my command, in order to accomplish the Horrific Deed; the residual cost of which, you now see before you."

The BARON stopped speaking, as if mulling over some pertinent issue in a private reverie.

He looked up at me, concluding, "DAN, I regret to

inform you that to continue from this point would actually require volumes. Suffice it to say that I shall be most happy resolve this cliff-hanger incrementally, at a future juncture, if you so choose..."

"Thank you, BARON, for pouring us even this much out of your 'Private Stock' of Memories. Perhaps Dennis or the SCARY MONSTERS readers will want to know the rest of your earliest Odyssey. Frankly, I'm game anytime you are! All you need to do is Howl out a shout in my direction and I'll be happy to come back to get the rest of it, day or night, at your convenience."

"Howe'er, DAN, you'd rather that it be by DAY next time, am I right?" beamed The BARON.

"I'll admit that I'd prefer that as a less dangerous and more novel approach!" I countered, a bit apprehensively. "In the meantime, can I throw a few more questions your way?"

"Absolutely, DAN! Mayhaps we could touch on something less ancient." suggested BARON Von WOLFSTEIN. "I've a great deal of recent information to impart, the timely relevance of which pertains to your interest in our TV Show."

"Great, BARON! If I seem a bit scattered, it's just that I've never done an interview under circumstances quite like this before." Here I paused to collect my thoughts, whet my whistle with a sip from my cold cup of tea, and commenced the interview, again.