

To Say Nothing about That Particular Dog: Part 3.

By SiriusDF

Thursday Prompt for November 26, 2015. Prompt Word: *Interpreting*

Charles parked the BMW next to my car in the front parking lot. He opened the release, popping open the saloon's boot. Taking the box in hand, I stepped out, thanking the chauffeur for letting me substitute proper dog food for Buddy and for the Malachite stone sculpture gifted by Mrs. Hutchinson in return for walking her Alsatian.

Due to his injured ankle, he sat in the car, watching me make repeated trips to transfer the boxes of Tesco's worst tinned dog food from the BMW to my car.

After I closed both boots, Charles opened the window and gave me a salute. "May we meet again."

The BWM rolled away, swinging around to the backside of the Museum to pick up Mrs. Hutchinson.

I should be smiling for an early afternoon end to a good day's work. But there was one thing gnawing me. Frank Hutchinson. I couldn't help but wonder if he was up to to the same sort of trouble that generated the reports filed under Case FEN...oops...Case 'F'.

Well, at least Laura Hutchinson's Alsatian will have the next four months of good dog food to thrive upon. Even though she was married to that bastard I encountered in Iraq seven years ago, I couldn't hold that against her. And she was quite generous in giving me the little stone Norse hound.

What to do. What to do. I need to chat with Barbara.

I walked over to the main entryway to the Doncaster Museum. Past the entry atrium was the main reception and admissions ticket hall. To my disappointment, the receptionist informed me Barbara had had just left for an offsite meeting with the Director and was not due back until after closing. When I told her the Curator was my sister, to my delight, the receptionist issued me a free admission ticket.

Ticket in hand, I wandered though the main hall, past posters advertising the place as family friendly, and chocked full of multimedia informative events. There were LED lit touch screens and other computerized bling placed here and there. I skipped the Archeological and Industrial Age halls and headed towards the museum's Ice Age gallery. Barbara had mentioned the Hutchinson's very generous donation, along with a new exhibit, had allowed the museum to do a complete makeover of the gallery.

Above an arched entryway, a fancy, scrolled sign with bold lettering was originally lettered Ice Age Wonders. The new sign read ***Winter is Coming***. A hip attempt at capturing the imagination of museum goers who were Game of Thrones fans. Global Warming and melting ice caps to the contrary.

Within was a large rectangular shaped room with diorama's occupying the perimeter. Each framed glass wall had skillfully painted backgrounds and landscaped foregrounds of tundra rock and arctic flora. An

average, glaciated Doncaster day from 12,000 years ago. Populated with reconstructed fauna, from woolly mammoths, woolly rhinos; lots and lots of wool coating all sorts of extinct megafauna. Though the one diorama had a pair of Arctic foxes with grins on their taxidermy snouts that seemed to proclaimed they were merely dead, not extinct.

The center of the room held the most prominent display. A raised elliptical platform of frosted acrylic, simulating ice. A few fake rocks embedded within it. A horseshoe shaped railing almost five foot tall with posts in filigreed brass, stainless steel and lit with embedded LED lights of frosted white blue ran around the perimeter. Periodically under the top railing, were framed digital prints of ice age wolves running through forested dales and icy landscapes. Renderings and forests suspiciously identical to the telly program Game of Thrones. Those telly wolves had garnered a rather rabid fan following.

Many of those same fans of Thrones have gotten a deservedly poor reputation in local pet circles for harping at dog breeders to give them 'Dire wolves' just like those computer generated effects from the show. With the results being batches of shy, irritable wolf-dog hybrids dumped into animal shelters after their owners found the hapless canines were not fit for the family home.

Get this straight, wolves are not dogs. They share almost all of the genes, but not the behavior. Dogs will do something no wolf ever does. Domesticated dogs pay attention to human social cues and most importantly 'understand' gestures. They can look straight into the human face, and track our eye movements to see what we want them to do. A near brainless Yorkie can easily pick up on Grannie's cooing and bony finger pointing to the sofa pillow to show little Poopkins where that ball is partly hidden. A quick gaze at the white of the old bat's eyes and gestures, followed by a leap onto the sofa to fetch the ball. Much to the old lady's delight at her smart doggy finding it. A more intelligent wolf or wolf-dog hybrid wouldn't have a clue from the alien gestures of a primate.

I orbited the raised floor display and at last came to the open front of the horseshoe shaped railing. Above, floated a plastic sign held by wires from the ceiling. Proclaiming in typescript lifted right from the Game of Thrones (copyright issues notwithstanding) was the title of the main attraction to the Gallery. In front of a dark filigreed crest looking identical to the show, was the name of the main attraction.

Canis Dirus: Dire Wolf
resin cast replica

A brownish skeleton supported by near invisible plastic rods. Majestically posed as if getting ready to walk off the platform towards the viewer underneath the sign was a Dire wolf. Not the real thing, but a replica.

I stood there, studying the skeletal beastie before me. The more I stared at the cast resin replica of a supposedly ice age Dire Wolf, the more it became a bone of contention.

I raised my right hand up, fingers curled in an open circle, cupping my view of the bone mount replica as if I was going to take a picture. I maneuvered my thumb to obscure the skull, studying the body structure with rising suspicion. Roughly 30 percent larger than a gray wolf's body, the mount had a

shorter, thicker backbone in proportion to its thicker legs, deep and broad ribcage. I moved my hand over the body, seeing only the skull.

Oddly, the skull had a wolf like long snout, with a forehead possessing a more upturned angle, along with a more delicate lower mandible. More importantly, the Sagittal crest over the back of the head was not as pointedly arched and prominent like a lupine's.

Smiling I lowered my hands. Imagining the mounted skeleton standing in front of me, with its bony tail now tightly curled over its back like a furry cinnamon roll, flagging side to side in a friendly wag. Man's best skeletal friend with a panting phantom tongue lolling out of the skull of an Alsatian grafted onto a sled dog skeleton.

"Brenda, you and your fellow curators have been duped," I muttered to myself.

To be fair, museums in the past had often received incomplete bones and had gotten their reconstructions wrong. The case of institutions from the early twentieth century mistakenly mounting the head of a *Camarasaurus* onto an *Apatosaurus* body and calling it *Brontosaurus* comes to mind.

Not this time. My sister's museum had become the butt of a private joke from that wealthy bankster donor. Frank Hutchinson had pulled a fast and hearty prank. Getting the museum to prominently display in cast resin, a dimensionally enlarged dog skeleton, likely a Malamute, mated with the long snouted head of an Alsatian and calling it a Dire wolf.

But why all the fuss of installing, fancy railings and accompanying multimedia presentations and effects lightning?

That's when I looked down at the stone tiling floor with its metal edge joints and my eyes popped open, like the claymation puppet Grommit.

The floor was tiled with half meter sized squares of epoxied, composite stone with embedded pebbles giving it a greenish cast. Each square lined with metal edge joints. The metal edging abandoned its squarish layout around the raised center display. A circular metal edge within the tiling ran around the outside of the platform in a large circle. Straight metal edge lines ran in a pattern, they could be barely seen running under the frosted acrylic making up the floor of the platform. The stone tiling had been cut to match up with the edging, some of which were huge. That pattern.

Oh, oh. Holy Shite. A bloody Class IV pentacle right before me. Just a coincidence. Right?

"I often wondered if that's a fake myself," said a voice to my right.

Startled, I looked over at the blue overall's clad man with balding white hair and aged face grinning at me.

It was a custodian, according to the museum ID tag pinned to his shirt front. *James Tillman; custodian.*

He introduced himself, offering his hand, "I'm James, I work here. Custodian."

I shook his hand. "Carl Banks."

"Oh, are you related to Barbara Banks?"

"I'm her older brother."

"Pleased to meet you. What do you think of our so called Dire Wolf." He rolled his eyes. "Be honest, I think it's utter crap."

"Well," I tried to be diplomatic in my reply, "It's a bit over the top in the LED and metal work. Tile flooring is odd. And the skeleton is not too realistic..."

James finished for me. "A fake. But not as bad as the disaster in the display lighting."

"How so?"

He pointed to the LED lights embedded within the railing and raised platform. "We have no friggen control over them. That's what. When they built it, contractors installed lithium batteries and controller boards into the railing. Sealed them in along with the LED lighting. Said they're controlled within by a master programmed timer to a set pattern. Go on and off at museum hours, account for leap years and the like."

"You mean they're not powered by the mains."

James nodded. "Even the lighting along the edging going underneath and that circle."

I gazed down at the Pentacle patterned edging, finally noticing the dire wolf skeleton was standing right over the center. The hairs on back of my neck were rising.

"Can you shut it off?"

"It's sealed up. A lot of good that'll do. What if the museum changes hours? Or those batteries go bad. And they will in two or three years. It'll have to be sawn apart. Railing and tiling!"

James paused and muttered. "At least the wolf skeleton is removable. Though artist did a right bock of it."

"Who was he?" I asked.

"Local bloke from the art college. Did it right at the home of the Donor. Said it was driving him insane. He sometimes came to our local pub to unwind." James shook his head, "Got pissed a lot, told rambling stories of cults and having to grind up dog bones and add it to the resin."

"Did you think it was true?"

James shook his head. "He was a complete tosser and blagger. He finally got thrown out one night for freaking out when the local postman brought his Labrador into the pub. Haven't seen him since."

At that moment, the cellphone in Jame's overall pocket twanged. He reached in and answered. "Custodial, James here....right...be on it."

He slotted his phone. "I have to go, overflowing toilets in the East wing again. Nice to have met you Mr. Banks."

"The same," I waved as he strode out. I stared at the floor for a few minutes and left. Leaving behind a few patrons wandering the exhibit who had no clue what lay under their feet. Shoulders slumping, I left the museum for the drive back home.

I need to take a break and think.

My abode is a flat in a village halfway between Doncaster and Memworth Hill. Second floor overlooking a meadowed stream. It's been my home for the last seven years. It was late afternoon when my car rolled into a parking slot. Not wanting to deal with four boxes of shite dog food tins, I got out. Climbed the outdoor steps and opened the door to my cramped, single bedroom flat. Hung my anorak on it's peg, gazing about at what passes for a tiny sitting room. I still have an old analog telly with a digital converter box. The only things of value are collected rocks in a display case, some cut leaded crystal glasses belonging to my mother. And my Egyptian kitsch.

I confess to being a nut when it comes to collecting cheap museum shop knockoffs. One wall of mine devoted to Egyptian curios sold in museum shops for less than 5 pee. Little scarabs, some tiny replica hieroglyphic Stella, Nefertiti bust, and Anubis in many, many incarnations; from feral jackal on a casket box, long eared jackal head bust and striding forth, holding his measuring scale and feather.

Between the Anubis bust and Nefertiti was an open spot to place my latest. A pricy carved Norse hellhound. I set the green Malachite sculpture of Garm atop the shelf. Felt very tired, I sat down on a chair in front of the telly. Not even bothering to turn it on and dozed off. The tiny green rock dog with embedded, red glass eyes seeming to stare at me as I fell asleep.

That's when that damn dream entered my head during a late afternoon nap.

It began with me running through a city in smoky ruins, past bombed out buildings. Eery things flying through the air. The Sun shone a faint red over a sky blanketed from a misty, ash like haze from some great volcanic eruption.

Behind me, in leisurely pursuit, was a mammoth sized beast. It could catch me anytime but seemed delighted in stretching out my terror driven run. Suddenly, it's foul breath blasted against my backside. I fell! Great fang ridden jaws grabbed my legs, half hauling me upwards. And bit!

I felt my legs being severed. I lay there, thighs bleeding out like two fire hoses while a great wolf like snout nosed them. I gazed into great eyes glowing blue, while a massive tongue the size of a sofa flicked out in a chill so cold, it burned as the canine monster licked my leg stumps. Cauterizing the

bleeding. It wanted me alive for some reason.

A black, pebbly nose loomed into my vision, fist sized incisor teeth gripped the nap of my neck as I was hauled upwards once again, swung over like an I-beam hauled around by a berserk crane, then I was flung against the beast's flanks.

It was reclining, half flopped on it's side. That wolf like snout nosed me hard, shoving me against it's belly and behind a ridged lid of folded hind leg. I found myself nude, berit of clothing and embedded against stench filled animal hide and fur. Wedged against a belly that I came to be aware was both gravid and lined with pillow sized mammaries with swollen teats. My face was jammed against one of them. My surroundings heaving in a panting rhythm. It was so tempting to just lie there, stay warm, nudge the fleshy warmth and open my mouth to take in that heated stalk and...

...disgusted, I wriggled away. Difficult thing to do when your legs are severed and resorted to using my arms gripping fur as managed to stick my head over that curve of folded, furred thigh.

And bore witness to the long muzzled dark snout, wolf like, but not a wolf, twisted back in my direction. Giant muzzle happily chewing up severed legs, arms, heads and other people body parts like so many mini milk-bone snacks. Painfully bright, blue eyes lacking pupils gazed into mine, dark lips cracked open in a bloody, fang studded grin and I heard it speak between my ears in a female voice.

Drink of me. For you are one of mine. I shall save you for last.

I woke up, drenched in sweat, shivering from the fucking oddest of nightmares. This was no PTSD nightmare from Basra, but a symbolic drenched dreamscape that would make Freud and Jung salivate in psychoanalytical envy.

I gazed up at the little malachite sculpture. I stood up, took a step towards the shelf, reached out with my hand and was about to sweep off the carved green canine. When I got hit with a sensation strongly compelling me *not too*.

That's not right. I then gently reached out this time and turned the sculpture around, facing it away from me. The compulsion to undo that action hit me again.

Trembling I reached for the leaded cut glass cup, turned it over and placed it over the green Malachite canine.

Those urges vanished. I stood there, breathing heavily.

Someone put a Geas into that sculpture.

Let's interpret the days events. There's the photo of Frank Hutchinson, the same individual from Iraq. Okay, happenstance.

That donated and oddly constructed Dire wolf display at the Museum. A coincidence.

Receiving that gift of hell hound sculpture and having a dream/nightmare with waking compulsions. That's three times, making it enemy action.

Fuck.

I stood up and went over to the coat peg, grabbing my anorak. I left the flat for my car. Boot stuffed with Tesco tinned dog food.

Continued in part 4:

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