

King of Ghouls

by
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EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT (1860)

WILL, 30s, black duster and bowler hat, pushes a cart with a large box. He pauses and wipes sweat off his brow. A HOMELESS MAN, 50s, sickly, sits against the brick wall.

HOMELEESS MAN

(wheezes)

What do you got there?

Will jumps at Homeless Man's voice. He looks around.

HOMELEESS MAN (CONT'D)

I said, what do you got there?

Homeless Man coughs and moves into a sliver of light. Will scowls. He takes his hat off his balding head and covers his face with it.

WILL

Nothing.

HOMELEESS MAN

Sure don't look like nothing.

WILL

Just some baubles. For the Christmas display.

HOMELEESS MAN

Can I have one? It'd lift my spirits.

The Homeless Man wheezes and coughs. He covers his mouth with his dirty sleeve.

WILL

Can't spare any. Really must be going.
Have a good night, sir.

Will pushes his cart away from the Homeless Man. A door CREAKS open and CHARLES, 20s, lab coat, pokes his head through the doorway.

CHARLES

Get in here, you fool. Before someone
sees you!

Will looks back to the Homeless Man in the distance and pushes his cart into the building.

INT. MEDICAL SCHOOL LAB - NIGHT

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM, 50s, lab coat, rummages through cabinets. The entrance door SLAMS shut.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM
Charles! I told you to keep it down.

CHARLES
Sorry, Professor. I found the ghoul, sir.

Professor Cunningham continues rummaging.

WILL
I never much cared for that moniker.

Professor Cunningham turns around.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM
Well, a man of your stature doesn't get to choose, now, does he? What are you men waiting for? Get that thing on the table.

Will opens the box. Charles jumps back from the box in disgust.

CHARLES
Good lord! How long has she been dead?
You were ordered to bring us fresh
cadavers!

Professor Cunningham peeks inside the box and shakes his head.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM
This will not do for us at all. How am I supposed to teach anatomy on a corpse well past her prime?

WILL
She was only just buried this evening!

CHARLES
I think he's lying, Professor.

Charles smirks. Will shakes his head.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM
Are you a liar, Will?

WILL
No! I swear she was just buried.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM
That may be, but she's still not fresh.
You may go. Come back with a fresher
specimen or else we'll call on someone
else.

Will bends down to close up the box.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM
(CONT'D)
Leave her.

WILL
I brought you what you asked for. I
deserve my pay. That's our deal.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM
No, our deal is that you bring us fresh,
bodies and then you get paid. This is
hardly usable!

WILL
You're a cheat.

Will shoves the box off his cart and pushes the cart out
the door.

WILL (CONT'D)
(to himself)
You'll get what's coming to you. I swear
it.

Charles and Professor Cunningham laugh.

INT. WILL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Bills are spread out over the kitchen table. Many have
red overdue marks. Will holds a newspaper before his
face.

He takes a sip from his mug and scowls.

WILL
Damned devil is making me drink water
with my morning news.

Will takes another sip from his mug and looks at the
newspaper headline: "DISEASE SPREADS THROUGH VAGABONDS."

Will grins.

WILL (CONT'D)
Interesting.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Will, a mask over his nose and mouth, pushes his cart. He walks with a little pep in his step. He hums a tune.

Will spots the Homeless Man digging through a trash can.

WILL

Hello, there!

The Homeless Man looks up. He wheezes, coughs, and covers his mouth with his dirty hands. He wipes his hands on his jacket, leaving black tar-like stains.

HOMELESS MAN

More baubles?

The Homeless Man grins.

WILL

Not today, my good man! I have something much better.

HOMELESS MAN

What is it?

WILL

Come and see! I guarantee it's like nothing you've seen before.

The Homeless Man walks closer to Will.

HOMELESS MAN

Can I eat it? I am so hungry.

WILL

You will never go hungry again.

The Homeless Man sprints toward Will. Will opens the box slightly. The Homeless Man looks inside.

HOMELESS MAN

Where is it? I don't see anything?

Will pulls a hammer out of his pocket and hits the Homeless Man in the head. The Homeless Man collapses.

Will shoves the body into the box. He wipes the hammer on his duster and looks at the body curiously. He shruges, then pushes the cart back down the alley and hums his tune.

He approaches the medical school's side door. He knocks. Charles opens the door.

CHARLES

We weren't expecting you tonight.

WILL

No, but I have a body so fresh you can't refuse.

Charles lets Will inside.

INT. MEDICAL SCHOOL LAB - NIGHT

Professor Cunningham takes a swig from a flask. Charles leads Will to the table. Will lifts the Homeless Man's corpse onto the table.

Charles looks over the body.

CHARLES

He's still dressed.

WILL

I told you it was fresh.

Charles looks at Will with interest. Professor Cunningham moves to inspect the corpse's head.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM

He's suffered a blow to the head. His skull is probably damaged.

WILL

Ah, yes. Poor fellow.

Professor Cunningham leans in to look at the body more closely. He takes a gloved hand and wipes the body's nose.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM

What is this black ... slime?

WILL

I haven't the foggiest.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM

Mm. I am impressed, Will. Is twenty-five good?

CHARLES

But, Professor! It's damaged!

Professor Cunningham counts bills and hands them to Will.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM

(to Charles)

Will, here, went through a great effort to get you a fresh corpse in an expeditious manner. He deserves payment.

Will grins.

WILL

I've never seen a dissection. Do you mind if I watch?

Charles looks to Professor Cunningham.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM

It's a little unorthodox, but sure. Why not?

Will takes a seat on a counter.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM

(CONT'D)

Charles! Let's begin. Remember, you should be able to perform in your best clothes with just your sleeves rolled up.

Charles rolls up his sleeves and puts on gloves. He cuts apart the corpse's clothes. He makes incisions on the corpse's chest and pulls back the skin.

Charles looks inside and gags. A black fog rises from the body and into Charles.

CHARLES

Professor, his organs...

Charles coughs, black oozes from his orifices, and he collapses. Professor Cunningham runs to Charles' side.

PROFESSOR CUNNINGHAM

What?

The lab door SLAMS.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Will walks and counts his money. He continues humming his tune.