

DEAD SERIOUS

A Play in One Act

by

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Cast of Characters
(in order of appearance)

Scar: Leader of the group. Focused on the big picture. Hates being denied or ignored.

Blitz: Explosives expert. Tough demeanor toward friends. Somewhat pensive.

Echo: Spirit medium. Paranoid about her own abilities. Has difficulty trusting others.

Frames: Strategist and former engineer. Overconfident. Condescending towards the group.

Clarence: Odd duck of the group. Emotionally driven. Views the group as his family.

Hope: Leader of the zombies. Probably has a great personality.

Zombies: Romero-style members of the undead. Particularly miffed about the fact that they are never called zombies by name.

Scene

A nondescript American town outside of Cincinnati, beset by a zombie apocalypse.

Time

Present.

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: Zombie-ridden city. Set is comprised of three zones: stage stage right is a mishmash of supplies for headquarters (and can be used for other scenes as well); stage left is the hospital set, while center stage serves as the alley as well as the hallways of the hospital. There should be 2-3 doors set on rollers to allow for rearranging during the search of the hospital.

AT RISE: Late morning.

(Single spot on SCAR who stands down center; in the background, up right, are other characters, in the “Kitchen” area of the set.)

SCAR

Scar’s Log. Day 196. Hope has been lost. Er, not the human concept of hope-we lost that months ago. I mean Hope Miller. One of *them* dragged her into the lake while we were fishing. Hope was our best fighter. With her gone, this group is in a tailspin towards disaster. Case in point....

Codename: Blitz.. Former munitions expert for the American military. Useful in a bind, but watching his dog being swarmed by the undead has exacerbated his... explosive tendencies.

BLITZ

(holding a bottle of a dark liquid)

Hey, who wants grape juice?

(takes a swig of it)

Wait, that’s crude oil. My bad.

SCAR

Codename: Echo. Claims to be able to hear the voices of the dead... which, these days, isn’t anything special. Suffering from a bad case of identity crisis.

ECHO

Do you guys ever think about what it’d be like if our organs were outside our bodies? I do.

SCAR

Codename: Frames. Talented biomedical engineer and strategist. Unfortunately, being surrounded by... the less mentally capable has given him a bit of a superiority complex.

FRAMES

Morning, numbskulls! I see we've all decided to dress ourselves today.

SCAR

And least, and most certainly least, is...

CLARENCE

(yawning while
he enters)

Good morning everyone!

SCAR

Clarence. To call Clarence an anomaly would be an understatement. I don't think he's ever gone a full hour without smiling... and that includes while he's sleeping.

CLARENCE

Ooh, is Scar doing his monologue voice again? I love it when he does that.

ECHO

His voice is so smooth. It's like listening to ice cream melt.

SCAR

Clarence isn't just an idiot; he's a dangerous idiot. We're fighting for our lives, and he's acting like a kid who just pissed himself in the ball pit. Something needs to be done about him, and fast. Until next time, this is Scar, signing out.

(SCAR mimics turning off
his recording, and joins
the rest up right.)

SCENE 2

FRAMES

Greetings again, simpletons- *Survivors*, sorry. As you know, our quest, should we choose to accept it, is to infiltrate the Cincinnati Hospital and Research Facility. C.H.A.R.F. for short.

BLITZ

Remind me again why we care about some crummy hospital?

FRAMES

We care about what's *underneath it*. See, most people think C.H.A.R.F. only has one floor. But, if you had enough cash, you could bribe your way into the basement, where all the best scientists would work nonstop to develop exclusive medicine for the rich and famous, including... a cure for death itself.

ECHO

Wait, so you're saying that whether or not people got *life-saving medicine* depended on how much cash they could shell out? Yeah, that tracks.

BLITZ

Hold on. Even if your miracle cure really existed, how would we get in there? That place must be packed to the brim with brain munchers.

SCAR

You're right. Sneaking into this place is dangerous. That's why I've made us a plan.

(FRAMES hands out
copies to everyone
except CLARENCE.)

CLARENCE

Hey, Scar? I think you might've made a printing mistake. I didn't get one.

SCAR

Oh, right! Clarence. You're staying here.

CLARENCE

What? Why?

SCAR

Because.... Because I've got another important job for you! Um, your job is to, to make sure those alley cats don't get into our food supply.

CLARENCE

Alley cats? I've never seen any alley cats around here. Or any alleys, come to think of it. But, sure! You can count on me, dude!

SCAR

If you ever call me "dude" again, I'll break your kneecaps.

CLARENCE

Got it! See you around, everyone!

(he runs off stage right)

SCAR

There! Now, as for the rest of you, grab your weapons! We're leaving now.

ECHO

Shotgun!

SCAR

Yes, Echo, that includes the.... Never mind, I got it.

(They head off stage left, while stage right becomes C.H.A.R.F.)

Scene 3

BLITZ

Ok, gang. Time to suit up! Now, I don't want to spoil my choice of weapon, but let's just say if any of those bastards try to get near us, they're in for an *explosive*-

(Clarence is revealed)

CLARENCE

Surprise!

BLITZ

SWEET JESUS!

SCAR

Clarence? What are you doing here? You were supposed to keep the alley cats away from our food!

CLARENCE

I did! Look! I rounded them up and put them all in this here sack!

FRAMES

If cell phones still existed, I would call PETA on you right now.

SCAR

How did you even manage to fit dozens of cats into a garbage bag?

CLARENCE

Oh, that part was easy. I just dumped a few pounds of tuna from our pantry in it.

SCAR

Your whole job was to- never mind, I don't have time for this! Get ready. I'll deal with you later.

BLITZ

(grabs smoke bombs)

Alright. You guys sprint in, and I'll toss some of these puppies to make sure you aren't followed.

SCAR

Sounds good. On the count of three. One... two... two... TWO... (he clears his throat) Blitz?

BLITZ

What? Sorry. It's just.... Watching the fuse on this smoke bomb get shorter and shorter reminds me of how quickly life can fall apart. One moment, you're playing fetch with your favorite Pomeranian pal, the next, you're watching the frayed remains of hope succumb to the flames of despair....

SCAR

(awkward beat)

Cool. So any time you're ready...

BLITZ

Oh. Right. THREE!

(BLITZ throws a smoke bomb while ALL run. CLARENCE, behind the group, looks back at BLITZ pitifully and throws back the bomb.)

SCAR

Nice job, team. Smoke bombs should be going off any second now.

CLARENCE

Smoke bombs? You mean those weren't chew toys?

SCAR

No, Clarence. Those are highly dangerous explosives.

CLARENCE

So, if someone were to "fetch" the smoke bombs for Blitz in an effort to imitate the mannerisms of his dearly departed canine friend, that'd be... bad?

SCAR

Wait. Did you.... Oh no.

(Smoke bomb goes off on

BLITZ, surrounding him;
Zombies appear
and start to shuffle towards
BLITZ, who is coughing.)

CLARENCE

Maybe not all of them went off?

BLITZ

Oh God, it burns! All of them went off!

CLARENCE

Well, I bet they're not the combustible kind?

BLITZ

I'm sizzling like a piece of Kentucky Fried Chicken! Why did I bring the combustible kind?

CLARENCE

... at least the horde won't be able to find him in the smoke?

BLITZ

Oh no! They found me in the smoke due to my choice to monologue over my misfortune! Remember me!

(ZOMBIES drag BLITZ off)

SCAR

Damnit! He was our escape route! What were you thinking? Actually, on second thought, don't tell me. In fact... don't open your mouth ever again!

(CLARENCE begrudgingly
zips his lips; ALL move
on within the hospital)

Okay. One of these halls leads to the basement. Echo, do your thing.

ECHO

(she pulls out a headband
with a large googly eyes,
And puts it on)

Ok, you might want to stand back. Opening my third eye can make me a little... philosophical.

(the group steps back)

Good. Now.... SPIRITS, SPIRITS, LET ME KNOW, HOW TO REACH THE FLOOR BELOW.

(pause)

Alright. I've got it. They say to go right.

SCAR

Good. Now lead the wa-

ECHO

Then again, does it really matter? Left or right, right or wrong, they're all arbitrary choices made to give us the illusion of control. What if we're just actors, playing our parts on the cruel stage that is life?

(Clarence begins to hum
showtunes.)

SCAR

Echo, we don't have time for this. Take us to the cure.

ECHO

But really, what is a cure? A name that we assign to that which removes something we view as a disease. But where does the disease end and we begin? Perhaps the only real parasites are-

SCAR

Clarence, will you stop that?. We should've left you in the alley. Echo, which way is it?

ECHO

(snapping out of it)

What? Right. Or left.... It's left.

(ECHO walks off stage right,
And is swarmed by the
ZOMBIES)

ECHO

THEY MEANT STAGE LEFT!

CLARENCE

Crap! Follow me!

(the group escapes,
going through
a door mid-stage)

FRAMES

Oh, that was close. (he thinks for a second) Wait a second, Clarence, how'd you know where to go?

CLARENCE

I dunno. Hey look! The cure. Let's focus on that.

(FRAMES approaches the case
but is interrupted by a booming
voice and flashing light.)

OTTO

Unauthorized personnel detected.

(A zapping sound is heard
and Frames pulls their hands
away from the case.)

FRAMES

Ow! What the hell just shocked me?

OTTO

You may call me OTTO. I serve as C.H.A.R.F.'s last line of defense against intruders. Access to Vial #4136 is restricted. To override security measures, please recite the magic word.

FRAMES

Magic word? Oh. Yeah, this happens all the time. Scientists love to make people solve these elaborate puzzles in order to get access to healthcare. Why do you think taxes take so long to do?

OTTO

Please recite the magic word, or defensive measures will be employed in twenty seconds.

FRAMES

Oh! Well, that's fine. I mean, I know the magic word, right? Of course I do.

CLARENCE

I think I know the magic word, actually. It's-

FRAMES

Quiet! I need to think. Alright, let's see here... Abracadabra? Mumbo-jumbo?

OTTO

Ten seconds remaining.

CLARENCE

I really think if you just would....

FRAMES

NOI am a genius! I don't need some lobotomized, cat-hoarding fool to help me! I am infallible!

(thinks for a moment)

Hocus Pocus, final answer.

OTTO

Incorrect. Administering poison dart.

(FRAMES clutches at neck and
falls over)

FRAMES

I knew I should've gone with mumbo... jumbo....

CLARENCE

That's it. Computer, the answer is please.

OTTO

Hmm. Well, the actual answer was "transiet verbum", but I admire your politeness, so you may proceed.

(Scar grabs the cure)

SCAR

You know, Clarence, any other day I'd be agape at your limitless incompetence, but not today. Do you know why that is? Because now I have this. And despite your best attempts, humanity once again has hope for the future. And it's all thanks to this cure for....

(he checks the label)

Uh-oh.

CLARENCE

What? What do you mean, "uh-oh"?

SCAR

Otto? What exactly is Vial #4136?

OTTO

. Vial #4136 is medication used to treat erectile dysfunction in the elderly. Would you like to see an ad?

SCAR

No thanks, Otto.

(becomes noticeably somber)

Wait. So then, the cure, the mission, it was all... fake?

CLARENCE

Yeah... I guess it was.

(pause)

You asked how I knew where to go earlier... I used to come visit my mom in this hospital. It feels like forever ago. Every day I saw her, she'd look a little worse, but she'd smile a little more. I was angry at her, angry that someone could act so happy despite everything going wrong around her. I asked her how she could still be smiling, and she said, "the world's always going to be going wrong, Clarence. There's nothing you or I can do to change that. What we can do is choose how we respond to it;" ...Ever since then, I haven't let myself lose hope. But today that hope, it just ruined everything.

(significant pause)

SCAR

Hey. So if all the corporations are dead, we don't have to worry about climate change anymore, right?

CLARENCE

What? Yeah... I guess.

SCAR

And we don't have to pay taxes, or do jury duty anymore. And I bet animal populations are recovering.

CLARENCE

But everything else...

SCAR

I know. Everything else sucks. And if we just ignore the stuff that sucks, nothing's going to change. But we're not going to accomplish anything with just brooding and reminiscing over what we've lost.

CLARENCE

Scar?

SCAR

Yeah?

CLARENCE

Thanks, dude.

SCAR

No problem...dude.

(SCAR and CLARENCE
prepare to leave.)

OTTO

Thank you for choosing C.H.A.R.F. for all your medicinal needs. Did you find everything you needed?

CLARENCE

Not unless you have a cure for the living dead.

OTTO

Unfortunately, no. Medicine for the curing of the undead is reserved for O.W.A.R.F., our Ottawa location.

SCAR

Wait, Canada? That's less than a day's drive. What are we waiting for?

CLARENCE

Oh! Wait, one second.

(at the side of the
stage, CLARENCE
releases his cats.)

Goodbye, sack of cats. You have served me well.

SCAR

You think those alley cats will be ok in the wild?

CLARENCE

Yeah.... They're free now. The cat's out of the bag.