

ASHES

by

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61 INT DeLILLE HOUSE NIGHT

It's morning, and a Fed Ex truck is seen pulling up to the house. CHARLES answers the door and accepts delivery of several boxes addressed to "Joseph Moncourt". He's got cuts and bruises all over his face. He takes the boxes upstairs to the study, where there are more such boxes, as yet unopened, stacked around the room.

MONCOURT is hard at work, taking portions of various people's ashes out of various jars, cutting them with potash, pouring them into even smaller vials, and packaging them up for shipment. The study now has the appearance in fact of a fully functioning drug-lab. One whole wall is lined with jars, reading "Benjamin Franklin", "Groucho Marx", "Benito Mussolini", etc. As MONCOURT and CHARLES work an oldies radio station is playing a Beatles song in the background. MONCOURT casually takes a little hit off some lines of ash laid out on a witch's skrying mirror beside him. Next to the mirror is a jar labeled "John Lennon".

62 EXT ENGLAND & ELSEWHERE 1943 AND BEYOND

The P.O.V. swirls back into MONCOURT's head, with the intense color saturation and fish-eye effect used in Scene 50. Again, the shots are not necessarily sequential, but they include...

An air-raid in wartime England as people madly rush for shelter as seen by a child looking back over a woman's shoulder...

These mobs turn into young girls screaming as they run after a limousine occupied by The Beatles...

From one end of a drunken, make-shift chorus line, we seen Keith Moon, Harry Nilsson, and Alice Cooper doing a can-can on top of a hotel bar...

A group of really skanky prostitutes giving the come-on in German in a Reeperbahn alleyway...

An arm being injected with heroin...

A geeky fan-boy approaches asking for an autograph, pulls out a pistol and fires...

A close-up of Yoko One screaming, but she's actually performing at a concert, with a smiling Frank Zappa conducting a band behind her...

A stadium full of screaming kids.

FADE TO BLACK

63 INT

DeLILLE HOUSE

LATER THAT NIGHT

MONCOURT is rummaging through piles of papers and receipt and examining various delivery boxes. He's also marking up a log of the many deliveries.

MONCOURT

You know, Charlie, I really can't think how we ever managed before this century. The murder... they mayhem... not to mention world wide delivery services. This really is a brave new world.

He consults a print-out.

MONCOURT

(continues)

Now, let's see, who wanted Harry Truman... I can't imagine why, but... I know there's an order for him here somewhere.

CHARLES

(quietly)

It's horrible, you know.

MONCOURT

Yes, I know. But isn't it fun?

MONCOURT laughs, then sobers up.

MONCOURT

(continues)

Now look, dear boy, I don't want you having any second thoughts. Remember, you're part of the club now.

MONCOURT notices something on the print-out.

MONCOURT

(continues)

Aaah, this just in... it seems Charlie Chaplin's on the market! He comes highly recommended. Why don't I get some of him for you? That ought to cheer you up.

CHARLES

No, thank you.

MONCOURT

Ah, I know what you want. Something truly classic, steeped in significance, and full of that old time hippie-cosmic consciousness!

MONCOURT pulls out a glassine envelope and shakes it temptingly in front of CHARLES's nose. CHARLES registers disgust.

CHARLES

Who is it?

MONCOURT

(pouring out ashes)

Who? Who do you think? Liberace?!!

MONCOURT

(continues)

I swear I don't know why I put up with you, you've got all the intellectual curiosity of Bambi! Think pyramids! Think Earth, Wind and Fire! Think Steve Martin's favorite disco boy! King Toot!

As he says this he pushes CHARLES's face down against the mirror, so the latter has no choice but to inhale. He does and starts to see a vision of ancient Egypt, while MONCOURT giggles like a crazed junkie.

64 MONTAGE

ANCIENT EGYPT

12TH CENTURY B.C.E.

CHARLES sees from the P.O.V. of the pharaoh TUTANKHAMEN (in contrast to MONCOURT's teasing, this should all be portrayed very seriously):

He leads a procession through a long shadowy chamber of lotus-topped columns, with incense and torches illuminating arcane hieroglyphics...

He emerges all at once onto a balcony in blinding white sunlight, with a huge crowd below him. He reaches up his arms to the sun, which he hallucinates as an enormous gold disk, its rays visible as thick gold lines shining straight down to earth and specifically striking straight down into his chest. Chanting, music, cheers...

CUT to a beautiful interior room in the palace, a lovely woman emerging naked from a pool. They make love...

Scenes of soldiers running, fighting, an insurrection. TUTANKHAMEN is cornered in his temple before an enormous carved representation of the Sun God disk and its rays. There are treasures everywhere, including all the famous gold sculptures from his tomb. The soldiers attack him and run him through.

FADE TO BLACK as he collapses to the ground.

65 INT

DeLILLE HOUSE

NIGHT

MONCOURT

Have a nice trip?

CHARLES collapses into a chair, completely shaken, frightened, exhausted, and yes, thrilled by the experience. He looks up at MONCOURT almost gratefully.

MONCOURT
(continues)

Perhaps now you see what we're dealing with. This is more than simply some sort of celestial trading company. Oh, of course, there are always those for whom "possession" is nine tenths of the point, but to study the past... to control the future... no one man can do it. Just think of me as a fellow historian!

CHARLES turns away, ashamed, unable to meet his eye. MONCOURT pretends not to notice. He picks up a large Baggie filled with three or four cups of ashes from the table.

MONCOURT
(continues)

Now, who do we have we here... ?

CHARLES

Those are the ashes you asked me to get from the DeLille tomb.

MONCOURT

Ah, yes, so I did.

He dumps them out on the floor and spreads them out unceremoniously with one foot.

MONCOURT
(continues)

Now, Charlie, come here. It's time to continue your education. Remember how I've always stressed the importance of purity?

CHARLES

Yes. You told me to make sure I never mixed up any of the... the remains.

MONCOURT

Yes, well. One does want to keep track of just who's who. However, under certain circumstances...

He slices open his own finger using the straight razor he's been using to cut the ashes, and lets a few drops of his blood fall down on the pile in front of him. Dark oily smoke starts to rise from it.

MONCOURT
(continues)

Here for example you have my dear companions from my not-altogether-final resting place. Seven generations of dead DeLilles, all mixed up together thigh-bone to thigh-bone in the jolly charnel house we all called home. Charlie, why don't you step up and say hello to your own past?

What's coalescing out of the smoke is a pile of arms and legs and heads and torsos all melded together like a collage out of Auschwitz. Men and women and children all stare out at their resurrectionist in mute torment. Among them is the head of ETIENNE DeLILLE.

MONCOURT

(continues)

What did I tell you? That I need the experience of other souls to be truly alive? Well, that's true, but there is one pleasure for which I am fully equipped. The pleasure of revenge.

MONCOURT approaches the head of ETIENNE DeLILLE, who gazes up at him with two centuries of hatred. The feeling is mutual.

MONCOURT

(continues)

Ah, Monsieur DeLille. How lovely to see you again... comfortable? No? Well how do you think I felt, when you seized my property, stole my money and took my wife?

He glances to one side and sees the head of his wife LILAS somewhere else in the pile.

MONCOURT

(continues)

Ah... my dear. Thank you so much for following my wishes. However, I'm afraid I can't keep my end of the bargain now. There's really not much I can do for you. After all, you still threw your lot in with these people and as they say, now you're stuck with them. No? You don't like that? Well then, let's see if what God has joined together, I can pull asunder...

He advances towards them and the camera ZOOMS IN on the straight razor he's holding. As he slashes it down out of the shot there's the sound of terrible screaming...

66 INT

CANOPIED CAFE (FRENCH QUARTER)

MORNING

CUT to a cappuccino maker as a sudden sharp scream of steam is forced into the hot milk. Reveal the same noisy cafe where ELIZABETH first spied on CHARLES. Lunchtime, it's busy. ELIZABETH is sitting at a table. She gets a ring on her cell phone and answers.

ELIZABETH

Yes?

67 INT LOVECRAFT'S OFFICE (TULANE UNIVERSITY) MORNING

CUT to PROFESSOR LOVECRAFT in his study. He's sitting surrounded by books at his desk.

 LOVECRAFT
Miss Willet? Forgive me for bothering you,
but I've come across something that I think
you might find useful.

 ELIZABETH
What is it?

 LOVECRAFT
Well, remember how we spoke about the Watchers?

 ELIZABETH
How can I forget?

 LOVECRAFT
It's just that I thought I ought to point out
that not all of these Watchers are evil. Oh,
yes, a great many of them, no doubt, but there's
also a tradition of "guardian angels" as it were.
So, if someone really believed they were in peril
from the powers of darkness...

 ELIZABETH
 (amused)
They might do well to try and contact these
powers of light, the good guys?

 LOVECRAFT
Well, er... in a way, yes.

He's uncomfortable, glances aside, and hangs up the phone. PAN to reveal MAMA AIMEE sitting on the other side of the room, calmly watching him.

 MAMA AIMEE
That's alright, baby. You did just fine.

68 INT CHARLES'S STUDY (DeLILLE HOUSE) DAY

CUT to a CLOSE-UP of CHARLES's face, frozen in horror and fascination as he watches something happening offscreen. There's the sound of wet grunting, which should be sexual and/or violent in nature. Finally MONCOURT staggers up from the floor. He's naked, covered with blood, still holding the straight razor and a piece of bloody human skin which he slaps down on the table in front of him. He's exhausted.

 MONCOURT
There. That should do it. Let's see how fond
they are of one another now...

you over the phone. Please. Please. Please come and see me. I'm at home. I'm not going anywhere. I can't. I don't think he'll let me. Listen, please, I'm not losing my mind... it's something much worse... please, I can't stand it anymore... please come and see me!

During the above, the camera slowly PANS UP to the ZOMBIE-BUTLER, who's standing above him on the stairs impassively watching him.

73 EXT DOORSTEP OF DeLILLE HOUSE DAY

ELIZABETH is ringing the doorbell.

ELIZABETH
(to self)
Come on, come on, open up. It's not like I've got nothing better to do than to check up on you, you skinny rat bastard.

Still nothing. She lights a cigarette.

ELIZABETH
(continues)
If this is just a joke, I am going to be so fucking pissed off...

She leans on the bell. Nothing. She steps back and looks up at the house.

ELIZABETH
(continues)
Charles!

Nothing, and the silence of the house, of the street, all get to her. This is a little spooky. She steps back down the walk to the street.

ELIZABETH
(under her breath)
Charles, if you're in there, I'm never going to forgive you, and if you're not...

She doesn't know how to finish this thought, and turns and walks away from the house instead. As she goes, ELIZABETH pulls out her cell-phone and hits an auto-dial command.

74A INT JAY-CEE'S OFFICE (N.O.P.D. STATION) DAY

JAY-CEE is typing up some sort of report on a computer with a large "shoe-sole" pastry in his mouth. The phone rings. He whips around to answer it. Forgetting he has the pastry in his mouth, he mashes the receiver into it. JAY-CEE rolls back a bit in his chair as the crumbly mass drops to the floor.

JAY-CEE

Damn!

(recovering his composure)

Detective Thibodeaux...

(imitating The Big Bopper)

"Hello, baaa-by!"

As he listens to the caller, he picks up the pastry from the floor and contemplates throwing it away or continuing his snack.

75 EXT THE STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS DAY

On her way back to her hotel, ELIZABETH is talking to JAY-CEE on her cell-phone. We hear him speaking through it.

ELIZABETH

That's right, he's not there. So what should I do?

JAY-CEE

(over the phone)

Have a party?

ELIZABETH

Ha ha. Very funny.

JAY-CEE

(over the phone)

Listen sugar, I'd like to sympathize but you know me, I thought he was a creep from the git-go. I'd say you're well rid of him.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, well I wouldn't.

JAY-CEE

(over the phone, getting serious)

Well listen darlin', if you'd just seen what I seen, maybe you might change your mind.

ELIZABETH

What's that supposed to mean?

74B INT JAY-CEE'S OFFICE (N.O.P.D. STATION) DAY

JAY-CEE is handed a sheaf of photographs from offscreen. He nods thanks and spreads them out. They're pictures from the levee.

JAY-CEE

I've got a whole new look at your little boyfriend's handiwork. He's startin' to make Jeffrey Dahmer look like Bozo-the-fuckin'-clown.

ELIZABETH
(over the phone)

WHAT?!

JAY-CEE
Yeah, I mean that, sweetheart. You stay away from that sick-o, y'hear? I'm not looking forward to seeing a photo-essay of your pretty face stuck on somebody else's freakin' body!

ELIZABETH
(over the phone)

What the...?

JAY-CEE
(cutting her off)
Never mind. You just go long and give Mister Charlie a wide berth from now on, hear me? Just lay off seeing him for a while... like till next Halloween.

76 EXT ELIZABETH'S HOTEL DAY

ELIZABETH is approaching her hotel as she finishes up the conversation.

ELIZABETH
Oh, grow up! You're just jealous! Never mind! I wouldn't call you if you were the last cop on planet Earth!

She hangs up. ELIZABETH is just about to enter the hotel, when MONCOURT suddenly opens the door for her from inside the lobby.

MONCOURT
Liza! How delightful to see you again!

ELIZABETH
You!

He's dressed as CHARLES, but he isn't wearing his glasses. He takes her arm and gracefully guides her inside to a corner of the lobby for a little privacy.

77 INT ELIZABETH'S HOTEL LOBBY DAY

ELIZABETH
What are you planning on doing next, yelling "fire" in a crowded theater?

She shakes her arm loose.

MONCOURT

(musing)

No, I hadn't thought of that...

She tries to walk away.

MONCOURT

(pursuing her)

Elizabeth...!

He's tickled to death.

MONCOURT

(continues)

Does that mean you were worried about me?

ELIZABETH

Damn right I was worried! Listen, you may think this is all a big joke, but it isn't! I was scared to death!

MONCOURT

I know it isn't funny.

She looks at him, and his gaze still holds her. It's a look that could melt steel. She resists, but she's obviously weakening.

MONCOURT

(softly)

I know I scared you. And I'm sorry. I won't do it again.

ELIZABETH

Damn straight. You're not going to get the chance.

She tries to leave once more.

MONCOURT

Aren't I?

ELIZABETH

No.

MONCOURT

I was out looking at some old family property by the river. It's lovely by moonlight.

ELIZABETH

I'm sure it is.

MONCOURT

Come with me. I'd like to show it to you.

(smoothing her hair)

You'd look beautiful by moonlight.

ELIZABETH
(finally pulling herself away)
You've seen me by moonlight. You've seen me
by daylight. And I don't think I've seen you
at all, Mister DeLille. And till I do... well,
I don't think I want to see you.

She turns and leaves. MONCOURT stands looking after her with a slight smile.

MONCOURT
(to himself)
I don't think you've seen Mister DeLille either,
Miss Willet. And unfortunately, I don't think
you're going to see him ever again.

78 EXT LOUISIANA COUNTRYSIDE DAY

MONCOURT's plantation house is seen from a distance down a long overgrown driveway, stretching across ruined fields. A car, new, large and shiny, drives up to the house. MONCOURT gets out, accompanied by the ZOMBIE-BUTLER who's been driving. Slowly, as if in a dream, MONCOURT mounts the steps.

MONCOURT
(to self)
The prodigal returns...

(then, to the BUTLER)
Unload those boxes. We're moving in.

PULL BACK to WIDE SHOT of them unloading the car. PULL BACK further to reveal two troopers in a squad car watching the house.

79 INT MONCOURT'S PLANTATION NIGHT

That night, candles burning everywhere inside the deserted plantation. MONCOURT moves from room to room dressed in a long red dressing gown. The house as well as its owner should now have a mixed feeling, one foot in the elegant 19th century and one in the decrepit present.

MONCOURT goes into an empty room where the only furnishing is a large clay jar sealed with red wax. MONCOURT kneels down on the floor and starts murmuring incantations. He picks up a chisel and chips off some of the wax seal. A ray of light shoots out, burning MONCOURT and making him cry out and drop the chisel. Slowly, blood seeps out of the break in the seal, filling in the gap and hardening to red wax again. The seal is intact.

MONCOURT
Cul du Diable!

He attacks the seal with his fingernails, clawing at it and pounding on the jar to break it. The only answer is a deep rumble of laughter that gets louder and louder the more frantic he gets.