

Hunting CHUD (for the April Fools Day challenge)

by A. Pseudonym

One morning police were called to a big box parking lot in the northwest suburbs. A shirtless man was waving a large sword around and stabbing at cars. The police asked him what he was doing.

“Hunting werewolves. And CHUD.”

CHUD means Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dweller.

They asked the man to put his sword on the ground. He did, and they took him to Riverview Hospital for evaluation.

The werewolf story held up. CHUD were everywhere. He had no wallet, and could not decide on his name. When no relatives could be located, the doctors committed him for treatment.

One month later no progress had been made. Then a woman came to the hospital asking for the director. She had a briefcase and a business suit and produced a sheaf of documents. She said the man was her client and she was his lawyer. She identified the man as Dr. Jonathan Bow, a professor of psychology from an ivy league on the east coast. The documents stated Dr. Bow's intention to feign insanity for the purposes of an experiment, to be concluded after spending 30 days in the care of a mental health facility.

The director was both impressed and insulted by the stunt. He walked with the lawyer to the doctor's cell, thinking of what he would say.

When they arrived the man was seated properly on a chair by the window. His posture was upright and his eyes were composed. Nothing was left of the wild slouch to which his nurses had grown accustomed. It was an exquisite transformation. The director considered that the doctor was not only a gifted psychologist, but clearly a fine actor as well.

"Well, sir, this was quite a trick. I'm not sure whether to scold you or applaud. You wasted a lot of public resources here -"

"All that will be reimbursed, actually. His university has taken care of it." This came from the lawyer.

"Ah, well. I guess I'm just curious then, about what you were trying to do. And how your time here was. How you were treated. Any improvements you can recommend? How were the staff?" The director shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

Dr. Bow spoke with extreme precision. "The only thing I've missed," he said quietly, "is my sword. There are a lot of CHUD in this place."

After a second the director and the lawyer laughed. "Hilarious. And that was a nice detail, the 'CHUD' thing. Something obscure an obsessive might fixate on. Really weird."

"CHUD are only obscure because they dwell underground, obviously. In their own habitat they are quite common. Unfortunately the construction on the new interstate north of here has stirred up an especially big nest, and on the surface these creatures can be dangerous. They can turn up anywhere, too - even in your hospital. They need to be exterminated. Now, are you going to give me back my weapon?"

This went on for a while. The director and the lawyer played along until they got tired of it. The professor did not get tired of it. The director was a bit confused, and the lawyer's documents said nothing about extending the experiment. The director got very serious and told the professor that he sounded crazy, and that if he didn't say something rational they might have to keep him, and this time it would not be an experiment.

"Do what you must. If you don't believe me, ok. But someone has to get rid of the CHUD. I just wish you'd return my sword."

The director was exasperated and the lawyer was confused. They left the cell consulting. The director suggested that Dr. Bow might be suffering from the effects of certain medications, and should be given a few days to get back on his feet. The lawyer agreed, and flew back to inform the university.

Dr. Bow did not change his mind, and so he was kept on. The director took a special interest in his case now. Something seemed to have backfired on the professor. Feigning insanity had driven him crazy, maybe. Many in the discipline were perplexed, and came to interview the patient. Dr. Bow never stopped talking about the werewolves and the CHUD, and asked every day for the return of his sword.

Six months later a man came to the hospital asking for the director. He produced a sheaf of documents and identified himself as the professor's lawyer.

This time the director was more than a little impressed. To have kept it up for so long, under the scrutiny of the country's most eminent psychologists - what focus. They went to his cell. They congratulated him.

And the professor asked for his sword, and warned them about CHUD. He did not react as their frustration grew and sat calmly at the window looking out.

He stayed this way for another year. At the end of the year, two lawyers came and produced a much larger sheaf of documents, and signed a much larger check for the expenses incurred. The lawyers and the director went down to the cell. They were astonished to have the same conversation.

This went on for ten years.

At the end of that decade, a carful of lawyers pulled up to the hospital and were greeted by the greying director. Assistants carted boxes of papers for review. The check was turned over, and they went down to the cell.

And the conversation was the same.

One week passed. A nurse came with the professor's meal. He asked to see the director.

"I am ready now," said Dr. Bow. "The experiment is complete."

"What? The lawyers were just here!"

"Never mind that. CHUD are imaginary. Now please let me go."

"But you were recommitted! After the last time, after you insisted on being crazy aGAIN. And how the hell did you continue this for ten fucking years, you lunatic!?"

"So you're not going to release me?"

"Seems to me that wasting ten years of your life staring out a window, after setting up something so elaborate, is more than a little crazy. I think we might just need to keep you here a little longer!"

"So, you're not going to release me."

"No, not yet."

"Alright. In today's mail you'll find a notarized document, signed by me, indicating my intention to remain committed to a mental health facility for the period of ten years and one week, after which I am to be released provided that the director of said institution refuses to do so. Please go and check."

The director checked, and the document was there. At the top in big letters it said:

JUST KIDDING!

He went back to the cell. The professor was packing his things.

"Why did you do this?"

"I don't know. I guess I just like hunting chud. And like I said - this place is full of them. Just wish I would've had my sword!"

