

SILENCE

By

CJ BARNES

LOGLINE: A group of adventurers chase a legend of lost treasure to a cave where they find more than they bargained for.

INT. NAUFRAG CAVES - TIME UNKNOWN

DAVID (35), his damp brown hair hanging in his eyes, awakens to a flickering light. He exhales and the dust of the cave floor kicks up in front of him.

DAVID (V.O.)  
Where am I?

In front of him lies KLAUS (45), whose sun weathered face stares back blankly. There's a shuffling from somewhere in the cave and a wet, tearing sound.

DAVID (V.O.)  
Klaus. The caves.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. BEACH HEAD - DAY

David stands on the beach head and stares off at a narrow bit of land jutting out into the sea. The wind tosses his hair and ruffles his crisp white linen shirt.

He shades his eyes with a hand.

Klaus pads up behind him, his greying hair stiff with sea salt. Years at seas have left his skin leathery and brown. His shirt has the look of a man who cares little for finery.

KLAUS  
Tide is heading out. I think now is the time.

DAVID  
Agreed. Tell Smitty and Dierks to get the boats in the water.

Klaus nods but lingers.

KLAUS  
You really think it's there? It's just a legend after all.

DAVID  
It's there.

END FLASH BACK.

INT. NAUFRAG CAVES - TIME UNKNOWN

Klaus still hasn't blinked. The wet sounds continue.

David slowly rolls away from Klaus. He grimaces in pain. Something is wrong. David blinks away tears and focuses on the ceiling of the cave.

DAVID (V.O.)

The caves. But they weren't caves.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. NAUFRAG CAVE MOUTH - DAY

David stands at the edge of the cave's darkness and strains to see past the shadowy black.

SMITTY (60s) a grizzled old seafarer and DIERKS (20s), a wiry youth with unweathered skin, drag the boats onto the sand.

DIERKS

Is there really treasure in this cave?

SMITTY

We wouldn't be here if there wasn't, lad. But mind your tongue. It's awful bad luck to disturb a dead man's things.

DIERKS

Then why are you here?

SMITTY

(grins)

Better men than I have risked bad luck for less than gold, my boy.

Klaus retrieves a pair of lanterns from one of the dinghys.

KLAUS

Less tongue wagging, men. Get those boats stowed and grab your lanterns.

Klaus walks away from the two men and hands David a lantern. David lights it and holds it up. The darkness springs back and the cave's features spring into view.

KLAUS

Look at that.

David follows Klaus's outstretched finger to the top of the cave. An arch stretches across the entrance, roughly hewn, but clearly carved, not natural. The words "*Pro Tacere Quam Gravis*" are neatly carved into the arch.

KLAUS

That doesn't happen on its own.  
What does it mean?

DAVID

It means we're in the right place.  
Let's go.

David walks under the archway and into the caves. Klaus lights his lantern and looks back at the other two. They wait, lanterns already lit.

KLAUS

Heads on a swivel, lads.

The three follow David into the caves.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. NAUFRAG CAVES - TIME UNKNOWN

David's face contorts in agony as he tries to move again. He lies still until the pain subsides. The shuffling and the wet sounds have stopped. It's far too quiet.

DAVID (V.O.)

"Silent as the grave". That was on  
the arch. The others didn't know  
enough Latin to read it.

The snuffling and the wet sounds continue. Somewhere in the distance there is a heavy dragging sound.

DAVID (V.O.)

Where are the others?

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. NAUFRAG CAVES - TIME UNKNOWN

The four men, led by David, walk carefully through the narrow passages. It's oppressively quiet.

KLAUS

I don't hear anything.

DAVID

Well, we're the only ones here, so  
we wouldn't hear anything.

KLAUS

No, not that. I don't hear anything. No wind. No water.

Klaus stomps his foot. The sound is muted.

KLAUS

Not even us.

DAVID

You worry too much, Klaus.

KLAUS

And you don't worry enough. It's bad luck disturbing...

Klaus trails off as they step through a narrow opening into a massive chamber. Their lantern light barely touches all corners of the room.

Along both sides are rows of chairs cut from the rock walls. In almost every seat are dessicated human remains, their decay slowed by the dry air of the cave. In the center is a wide stone cistern.

DAVID

It's a tomb. The legend is true.

KLAUS

They should be buried. Doesn't seem right leaving a man like this.

DAVID

They don't seem to be complaining.

Smitty and Dierks go to either sides of the room and examine the bodies, looking for valuables.

SMITTY

Dear God in Heaven.

DAVID

What is it?

Smitty turns and gives him a frightened look.

SMITTY

No tongues.

DIERKS

These don't have them either.

Dierks picks up the hand of one of the bodies.

DIERKS  
Or any gold.

SMITTY  
Don't touch them! Leave them be,  
lad.

Smitty steps away from the bodies and looks around the cave.

SMITTY  
I think it best we leave from here,  
Mr. David.

DAVID  
I'm not paying you for your  
opinion, Mr. Smith. Steady on.

Smitty nods reluctantly and edges over to Klaus, who looks down into the cistern. Klaus dips a finger into the dark liquid inside and sniffs it. He gives it a taste and spits.

KLAUS  
Oil. It's rancid though.

David looks into the cistern and frowns. Klaus fishes a match from his leather pouch and strikes it. He drops it into the cistern and it flares up.

The cave is brightly illuminated and reveals a door at the opposite end of the tomb. Carved into the rock above is "*Silentium est Aureum.*"

DIERKS  
*Aureum?* I know that word. It means  
gold! It must be this way!

Dierks bolts through the door before anyone can move. The other three men share a look before following but are stopped short by a blood curdling scream.

They sprint after him.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. NAUFRAG CAVES - TIME UNKNOWN

David breaths slowly, trying to move but the pain is too much. The wet sounds stop. The dragging sound grows closer.

DAVID (V.O.)  
Dierks. We couldn't find him. Just  
the blood and his lantern, still  
lit.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. NAUFRAG CAVES - DAY

David, Klaus, and Smitty run into a smaller antechamber with stone shelves on the walls. More dessicated corpses lay on the shelves. One is empty and imprint in the dust indicates that the body has recently been moved.

There is a blood splatter on the floor and a lit lantern.

SMITTY

Poor lad. I implore you, Mr. David:  
we must leave this place.

DAVID

It's likely his idea of a joke, Mr.  
Smith. There's no need to be  
afraid.

(to Klaus)

Come on.

David exits the room, lantern held in front, and is followed by an apprehensive Klaus.

Smitty takes another look at the lantern and is about to follow, but a sound from the room behind him makes him turn.

He holds out his lantern, but the gloom swallows the light. In the shadows, something walks past.

SMITTY

Dierks!

Smitty follows the shadow through into another antechamber. The shadow stands still in the middle of the room.

SMITTY

(chuckling)

You gave us a fright there, boy!  
The others have gone...

Smitty draws closer and realizes the shadow is much larger than Dierks. The lantern illuminates long, ratty hair and rotting clothes over a dessicated body.

SMITTY

What in God's--

He is cut off by the rapid turn of the creature. Smitty's lantern crashes to the floor along with a gout of blood and flickers out.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. NAUFRAG CAVES - TIME UNKNOWN

The dragging gets closer and David tries to roll and locate the sound, fighting through the pain.

DAVID (V.O.)  
Smitty disappeared. It was just me  
and Klaus. Klaus.

Suddenly he is grabbed roughly and hoisted into the air. He lets out a scream of pain as he is thrust roughly against something hard and cold.

David looks around to find Klaus and realizes where he is: the massive chamber with the chairs and corpses.

DAVID (V.O.)  
Oh God, what is happening to me?

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. NAUFRAG CAVES - DAY

David and Klaus go through another narrow passage way into a dead end chamber. More shelves with bodies line the walls.

KLAUS  
Dead end. Guess we turn back.  
Where's Smitty?

David ignores him and holds his lantern up to the rock wall ahead of them. High above their heads, "*Silentium est Aureum*" is carved. His attention is so fixed he doesn't hear a scraping sound behind him, the massive figure rising up behind him or the wet thunk as it strikes down Klaus.

DAVID  
"Silence is golden". Why silence is golden?

David turns back to find Klaus on the ground, a gaping wound in his chest. Bloods bubbles aorund his mouth.

Movement draws his eye. Standing several feet taller than himself, a DESSICATED CORPSE snarls soundlessly and swings a rusty sword towards David. It cleaves him neatly through both knees. He screams in pain and crashes to the ground.

Everything goes black.



END FLASHBACK.

INT. NAUFRAG CAVES - TIME UNKNOWN

David looks down at his legs. They end in bloody stumps at the knees. He screams and tries to roll from the chair.

The large DESSICATED CORPSE grabs him with bony fingers and shoves him back into the chair. With its other hand, it tries to force David's mouth open. David resists, but the weakness of blood loss makes it more and more futile.

The corpse gets its fingers into his mouth. As it fishes for his tongue, David can see the words carved above the door in the light of the cistern. "*Silentium est Aureum*".

DAVID (V.O.)  
Silence is golden.

The corpse manages to get a grip on David's tongue and starts to pull. David screams around the rotting hand as his tongue starts to tear free. Blood gouts out of his mouth.

The tongue pulls free with a meaty rip. David slumps in the chair, blood running freely from his wounded mouth. His head lolls to the side.

Klaus is being positioned on the chair next to him by another DESSICATED CORPSE. His head flops towards David, eyes sightless, mouth bloody from his own tongue removal.

Across the room, Smitty and Dierks sit in stone chairs, still.

DAVID (V.O.)  
Few things are more powerful than  
the lure of gold. Others will come.

David watches the two corpses walk to the cistern. They throw the tongues into the fire and shamble back to empty chairs. They sit and immediately go still.

DAVID (V.O.)  
They will find no gold here. Only  
us. Waiting here in the darkness.

The flames in the cistern flare up briefly, then go out, casting the chamber into an endless black.

DAVID (V.O.)  
In silence.

CUT TO BLACK.