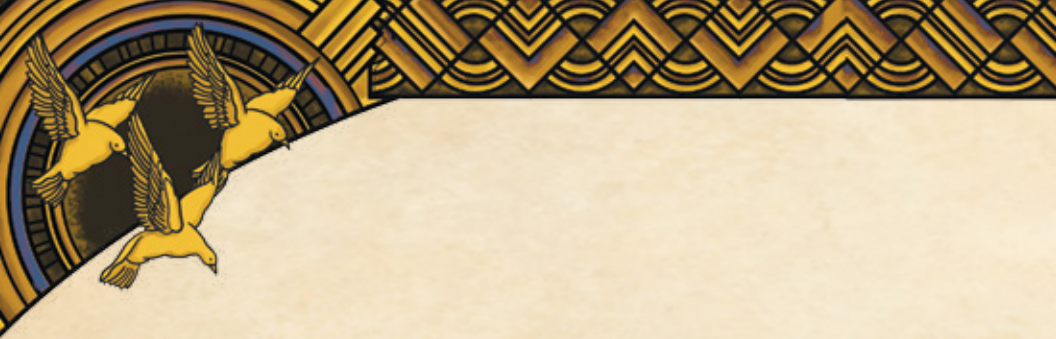


SECRET FILES OF
THE 19XX
VOLUME ONE





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THE 19XX
VOLUME ONE



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome aboard. This is the first volume of the Secret Files of the 19XX. This book is designed to give you better insight into the motives and histories of the characters appearing in the pages of The Rise of the Black Faun. In this revised edition, you will also find new articles on 19XX weapons in addition to two brand new short stories that take place in the 19XX world and an article on life in the Diesel Age!



A blue handwritten signature, likely the author's name, written in a stylized, cursive script.



The Adventures of the 19XX takes place during a period of explosive technological growth and culture in perhaps the most tumultuous time the world has ever known. This era covers the expansion of electricity and combustion engines in the 1920s to the aviation boom of the 1930s and into the 1940s, when total war gripped the globe. In literature, the diesel age is exemplified by H.P. Lovecraft stories in which mobsters fire Thompson guns at monsters. In film, it is defined by every hard-boiled detective to ever chew the scenery. In technology, the diesel age is represented by powerful engines hurling race cars and streamlined passenger trains at speeds once considered deathly dangerous. In the sky, the diesel age means airplanes flying to distant countries and

impossibly large airships that seem as unbelievable as the massive dinosaurs that once grazed the surface of the Earth. This was an era struggling to exist between two wars and dealing with a crippling global economic depression. But, as evidenced by the Empire State Building, the Chrysler building, Charles Lindbergh, Howard Hughes, frozen foods, airmail, and countless other innovations and innovators, the diesel age stands as a testament to humanity's ability conquer adversity and continue pushing forward.

Prohibition

The 1920s saw a looser lifestyle take hold in major cities around the world, which was accompanied by a period of global economic prosperity. The Roaring Twenties witnessed the spread of electricity, motion pictures, jazz music, the art deco style, and the flapper lifestyle. The later half of the 20s, until the crash of 29, was so prosperous that it is sometimes referred to as the Golden Twenties. Alcohol was blamed for moral deterioration, and in 1920, an amendment was added to the U.S. constitution which outlawed the sale of alcohol in the United States except for use in science and religious practices. This created a unique atmosphere where crime thrived and alcohol consumption and production moved underground.

**States Should Help
Enforce Prohibition,
Governors Are Told**
Wickersham Note CITY TO FURNISH



To the left are the results of a car chase and a seizure of bootlegging supplies. In the U.S., Prohibition lasted from 1920 to 1933.

Organized Crime

Even though prohibition was the law of the land, Americans still wanted their alcohol. Many citizens either broke the law themselves to get it or turned a blind eye to criminals who could get it for them. Rum Row was the term used for ships that sat a few miles off the coast with illegal shipments of alcohol waiting to be brought into the country. Alcohol was still legal around the world, and imports inevitably found their way into U.S. markets. Moonshiners brewed alcohol and shipped it through back roads in modified automobiles. Speakeasies were the clubs in which alcohol was served and a new breed of criminal rich developed. These crime bosses, like Lucky Luciano and Al Capone, had enough money to bribe under-paid police officers and buy better guns and equipment to defeat the men they couldn't bribe.

Thompson submachine gun variants saw extensive use during WWII, and they were popular weapons among Depression-era gangsters.



Crime Stopping Tools

During the late 1920s, criminals had access to better technology than the police officers who were chasing them. The result was an arms race between cops and criminals. From the small, hand-held black jack to the Thompson sub machine gun, weapons made the difference in the battles fought everyday on back roads and in back alleys between criminals and police. Under the hood, automobiles continued to get faster and stronger. From the Hudson Super Six to the Ford V8, rapidly changing technology and cheaper prices ushered in an era of high-speed car chases.

Rise of Aviation

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh made the first solo transatlantic flight, and by 1934, the Boeing 247 airliner was making regular passenger service connecting major American cities. For the first time, travelers could leave San Francisco and arrive in New York 19.5 hours later on the same airplane without any stops.



In this picture, fans of the MacRobertson air race use elbow grease to pull a participant out of the mud. To the right is a photo of Charles Lindbergh. The level to which he was worshipped as a living American hero is hard to fully appreciate today.





A post card marked from the Graf Zeppelin's first North American flight.

The country and the world were getting smaller. The rigid airship, the Graf Zeppelin, with its 20 sleeping berths carried over 13,110 passengers for more than a million miles between 1928 and 1937. Pilots could learn how to fly small biplanes back home on the farm and perfect their skills in daring aircraft at air races all over the world. Then those same pilots could use everything they learned to navigate B-17s over Europe or Mustang fighters over the Pacific. In a very short amount of time, airplanes transformed from novelties and experiments of war to an important part of the transportation network that moved human beings around the planet. Their role in the war between Good and Evil was cultivated in the diesel age.



The U.S.S. Macon docking at Hangar One at what is now Moffett Field. The black dots at the bottom of the picture are automobiles.

Technology

In 1933, FM, or frequency modulation, was introduced. This new method of radio transmission allowed for the delivery of superior signals as compared to the original AM radio technology. Electricity was slowly making its way to rural parts of world. The internal combustion engine was being perfected and motion pictures were creating a city of lights on the West Coast. The diesel age was not just about the creation of new technology, but the perfection and rapid expansion of existing fields. “Bigger, faster, better, and cheaper” was the motto. Families gathered by radios under the glow of electric lights and listened to the President tell them how things were hard but getting better. Radio serials let them dream of a powerful future that seemed very possible with the expanding rate of technology. Theaters were showing news reels of far away places that once seemed mysterious and distant. But with commercial air travel, many foreign lands could be reached in only a matter of days.

Fatalism and Poverty

Hope was an important factor in surviving the 1930s. The early part of the diesel age brought the First World War and a worldwide Spanish Flu epidemic that killed over 60 million people combined. After the war was over, the world seemed to settle into two groups. One group was terrified another war was imminent and would give anything to appease the other side; the other group was certain another

1938 1939

war was coming and was desperately preparing fortifications and arms. In this valley between the wars, messages of hope and a bright future came in the form of film, science fiction stories, comic book heroes, and even fortune telling.

1940s – Total War

Of course, no amount of hope or preparation could prevent the next Great War. The seeds of the conflict that would define several generations had been planted at the end of the previous war. Over 100 million people served in some form of military, and the majority of the world's countries participated in the first Total War. World War II saw every aspect of life refocused in an effort to win; no life was left untouched. In the early stages of the war, the causes and justifications of the conflict could be debated, but as the struggle waged on and the true stakes were revealed, few were left with doubt. The truth about the horrors of Hitler's ambition created a war between Good and Evil, with both sides taking on uncomfortable allies in their efforts to win.

The full power of man's technological achievements was put on display and culminated with the dropping of the atomic bomb and the end of the war. The diesel age concluded and a new one began. This series, *The Adventures of the 19XX*, is an attempt to capture the spirit of hope, adventure, exploration, travel, and even fatalism that existed in the 1930s. The last book in the series will take place in 1939. The war is a subject that has been analyzed and fictionalized endlessly; nothing I could write would add to that. Nor could I ever create a villain as truly dark and twisted with evil as Adolf Hitler or those in his inner circle. So, our journey will take place in the valley between the wars. This is a story about a small group who knows the war is coming, and is doing everything they can to prevent it.



Above is New York city in the 1930s and a typical American Main Street during the same period.



BLACK FAUN



In the aftermath of World War I, countries were either eager to get revenge or terrified of another war. In this atmosphere, paramilitary groups thrived where the seeds of revenge were nourished. Some of these groups had their roots in older, esoteric organizations which had existed for generations but never earned the chance to truly seize power. After the publishing of Darwin's theories, the deaths of millions during the war, and the outbreaks of many diseases, humanity was experiencing a crisis of faith. Answers were sought in the dark arts. The Order of the Black Faun can trace its origins to the death of Otto the Great, the first ruler of the Holy Roman Empire. But here in the dark valley that is the 1930s, it finally has a chance to truly influence the course of history.

THE 19XX



The organization, designated nineteen hundred or 19XX, has its heritage in many earlier groups that came before it. These groups have always been behind the scenes fighting evil wherever it raises its head. This new organization was created to save the 1900s from the fate which had been foretold. With the fatalistic attitude of the world during the 1930s, this horrible destiny was accepted as inevitable. But there was a chance that a group working secretly, without the official sanction of any single country, could fight against it. They would have to battle without angering other nations and without prematurely bringing on the next great war. The 19XX goes where it is needed, with members all over the world fighting any force that is too big or too unknown for normal authorities to handle. The 19XX has operatives everywhere, but the airship known as the Carpathian is the closest thing it has to a home.



THE BARON

CLASSIFIED

name The Baron

case no. 378982

A soldier who has outlived too many wars, the Baron is old, tired, and looking for a way to hold on to any form of lasting power. When he spends time in the springs near the castle Wewelsburg, he is rejuvenated both figuratively and literally. His bloodlust and hunger for power are also strengthened. He has been the eldest head of the Order of the Black Faun for decades; many in the Order are weary of his failures, but no attempt to remove him from power has been successful. The Baron has heard the stories and the prophecies about the coming war. He believes this will be the war to finally sweep him into lasting power. His vast personal fortune allows him to hire the best assassins and scientists from across the globe, and his constant bribes guarantee that he will always have allies in the highest ranks of the Order of the Black Faun. While he is not well liked, the power of the Baron has always been feared.





ALEISTER GURDJEFF

CLASSIFIED

name Aleister Gurdjeff

case no. 231664

Aleister was born to wealthy parents who died mysteriously while he was in his teens. He inherited their vast fortune before his 17th birthday. This assured that he would never have to work another day in his life. He took the opportunity to enroll in the University, where he developed a taste for anything relating to the occult. But that was his only successful area of study, and he soon dropped out to focus on magic and the esoteric arts. He imagined himself as a sorcerer—the next in a long line of sorcerers dating back to Merlin and Archimedes. Aleister doesn't care about any earthy agendas; he only wants to delve into the mysteries of the unknown, no matter the cost. He is often accompanied by a young female familiar whom he keeps hypnotized at all times. He practices his craft religiously, always pushing himself with spells he doesn't fully understand and always reaching into realms man should never see.





SHINING SKULL

CLASSIFIED

name Shining Skull

case no. 473782

Saint Albertus Magnus, mentor of Saint Thomas Aquinas, discovered, among other things, the philosopher's stone and a way to imbue a small metal construct with a living spirit. His ideas were both praised and shunned by the church; his teachings would eventually form the basis of modern technomancy—the mixture of magic and technology. During the Great War, a Prussian general who devoted his life to the art of technomancy eventually discovered the secrets of Albertus Magnus. Following the general's death, orders were discovered to have his spirit attached to a body made of metal. He discarded his old name and old life, embracing the new name of Glanzen Schadel or "Shining Skull." The only remnants he kept from his corporeal life were his old Prussian uniform and his undying desire to engage in battle. He is now a spirit of war, attached to gold and brass, thanks to a few stolen devices. His will alone keeps him walking the Earth.





STERLING RISKIN

CLASSIFIED

name Sterling Riskin

case no. 983762

Sterling Riskin got his start as a bootlegger during prohibition. He made a small fortune but lost everything after the repeal of the Volstead Act and the stock market crash. He then earned a living working odd jobs for various mob families or whomever would hire him. He lost his arm during one of these "jobs." Riskin could not deal with being disfigured, so he used the power of the occult to bring his arm back. Sterling made a deal with a demon from another plane of existence; the demon agreed to give his arm to Riskin. In exchange, the demon wanted his arm to see our world. Riskin's replaced limb is covered with eyes the demon uses to observe. Sterling has access to a small portion of the demon's powers, which he rents out to the highest bidder. His goal is to someday regain his lost fortune and walk back into his old neighborhood a rich and powerful man.





FLYING DRAGON

CLASSIFIED

name Flying Dragon

case no. 889587

Fujibayashi was a fifth generation shinobi. His clan was once proud and respected, but over the years, the Fujibayashi clan descended into a gang of pirates roaming the seas around Japan. Fujibayashi Nagato was no ordinary pirate; he studied the spells of his ancestors and used those powers to increase his clan's control over the sea. Eventually his smuggling operation and powers earned him the nickname Flying Dragon and the attention of the Black Faun, who was looking to expand their power in the East. Fujibayashi had long wanted to expand into the West since reading *The Great Gatsby*. So, to meet his own ends, Fujibayashi and his clan pledged their mortal loyalty to the Order of the Black Faun. Now the Flying Dragon works for the Order when called upon, and for the right price, he would give his life for his new employers. His goal is to increase the power of his clan at any cost.





SOUL EATER

CLASSIFIED

name Soul Eater

case no. 443412

The Soul Eater has wandered the Earth for generations, no longer able to remember why she was exiled here. Like Phaëton being thrown from the chariot of Helios, she was cast out, falling to the Earth with only a fraction of her powers. Her curse is to live among humans, her wings clipped, unable to die, unable to ascend or descend. The firmament has been her prison. She began her time living alone, far from human eyes, but soon she grew bored and became more and more entangled in mortal problems. At different times she has fought alongside kings, queens, peasants, animals—whomever she felt like fighting with. A soldier never stops fighting, and that is the only life she's known. Today, she fights alongside the Order of the Black Faun, finding their cause the most interesting. Her penchant for harvesting the souls of the newly deceased to fuel her powers has earned her the name Soul Eater.





ZEYNEP

CLASSIFIED

name Zeynep

case no. 122829

Zeynep bin Ibrahim Gaddar, which translates to Zeynep son of Ibrahim the Cruel, is the descendant of the infamous Ottoman architect Ibrahim, whose specialty was prison building and torture devices. Ibrahim the Cruel experimented on his prisoners, perfecting his methods of torture through his advanced knowledge of anatomy. Zeynep has followed in his ancestor's footsteps, devoting his life to the research of anatomy, science, and the occult. Like a great artist mixing mediums, Zeynep throws himself into his creations, relishing every cut of flesh, every chemical compound, and finding every opportunity he can to bring the dark arts into the world of science. He is responsible for giving birth to the new soldiers of the Order of the Black Faun. As head scientist for the Order, his job is to find a combination of science and dark magic that will lead to unstoppable power. Zeynep is a great scientist, but sometimes he cannot control the beings he creates.





No. X

CLASSIFIED

name Number 10 (X)

case no. 737271

Zeynep was tasked with creating a harvestable army of obedient drones for the Order of the Black Faun. While Zeynep conquered the task, his design was not perfect. His soldiers matured in a few short months but were simple minded, and after a few more months, they quickly mutated and fell apart at a cellular level. The subject marked with the Roman numeral X was the exception. After an especially brutal fight, his body began to mutate, and not in the usual way. He grew grotesquely large, and the ancient symbols on his body that were carved into each clone's skin by Zeynep began to glow. No. X grew more powerful and grotesque each day. Today, he is still recognizable as a human, but there is no telling what his future shape will be or how powerful he will become. Until then, No. X marks the most successful of all of Zeynep's experiments.





THE QUEEN

CLASSIFIED

name The Queen

case no. 898382

The identity of the new Voodoo queen is a mystery. At least, it remains a mystery to those in the realm of the living. She swept into New Orleans and began solidifying her power with every witch doctor, lesser queen, two headed doctor, and anyone who held any local political sway she might need. No power-wielding leader can escape the eyes of the Black Faun for long, and the Order soon came calling with a favor. The Queen agreed to work with them, but she has her own motives. The body she inhabits is not her own, and helping the Black Faun obtain the Tome of Orhmazd will let her solidify her place in our world. She wants to reclaim the power and glory she had when she walked the earth in her own form, and the Black Faun can help. The Queen wants power, love, respect, and a healthy amount of fear from all of the residents of New Orleans, the Crescent City.





THE CAPTAIN

CLASSIFIED

name The Captain

case no. 704134

Captain Croft's accomplishments are many. He has been a military attaché to Sweden, an expert dog-driver, a member of the Oxford University Exploration Club, a recipient of the Distinguished Service order, and a Burnside Brotherhood agent. During the Great War, his daring airship maneuvers over the English Channel earned him the right to be called simply Captain. He survived many brushes with death and was brought into the 19XX for his experience and his steady hand under fire. After losing his wife to the worldwide Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918, the Captain made sure to always keep his daughter, Marjorie, close by. He and his daughter each wear half of a small Tibetan talisman that glows bright blue when the other one is in danger. The Captain knows that the missions of the 19XX are no place for a young girl, but he also understands the harsh world that awaits his daughter, and he knows preparing her for that future is his cause.





MARJORIE

CLASSIFIED

name Marjorie

case no. 901629

Marjorie has always enjoyed action and adventure. As a child, her mother would put her to sleep with tales of her father's acts of heroism. Even though she always admired her father, they were never as close as she and her mother were. Marjorie fit in on the ship from day one; she was never scared to speak her mind or jump into action. From all of her mother's stories, she felt like she had already served for years on her father's ship. Even though serving on the Carpathian has brought her closer to her father, she still refers to him as "Captain." After a while, it became apparent that Marjorie had a knack for tuning into the souls of the deceased. She is young and cannot fully control this ability, but with the help of a device called the tuner, designed by Nicola Tesla, she is able to call spirits from the other side to help guide her along the way. She hopes to one day control this ability enough to find her mother and speak to her on the other side.





CLASSIFIED

name Frank Diabo

case no. 847239

Diabo was a proud steelworker in New York, laboring alongside fellow Mohawk men. These men were called to the high steel when the skyscrapers started rising from the concrete. When Diabo left home to become a skywalker, as the Mohawk steel workers were called, he was given 20 dollars, a bag of apples, and a necklace that his great grandmother made years ago. His mother said it would protect him when he needed it most. And now, when he is in the greatest amount of pain, the necklace glows blue and his strength increases along with his physical pain. The desire for higher and higher altitudes led Diabo to leave the steel and eventually join the 19XX. As the Carpathian's XO, Diabo has earned the trust of the Captain and the entire crew. Unquestionably loyal and undeniably brave, Diabo's only goals are to serve the 19XX, defeat their enemies, and push himself to points where average men would break.





PENN CLEMENT

CLASSIFIED

name Penn Clement

case no. 225669

Born in Oklahoma in the heart of Indian country, Penn discovered the West on horseback. When he was old enough, he studied engineering riding the rails in the 1920s. There, he learned everything he could about the tracks and the explosives used to flatten mountains; he learned all about the machines and the engines that ran them; and he learned that he was good with his hands. Penn can create a gun out of almost any set of objects, and he can get a little extra horsepower out of almost any engine. Penn carries with him a small mojo bag that Zora prepared. It allows him to move faster than a jackrabbit for short periods of time. Penn likes machines more than magic, but he has a habit of using whatever he can to get out of a pinch. Known for always wearing a smile and his cowboy hat, Penn's biggest ambitions are to knock out some bad guys and build a bigger machine than his last one.





THE KID

CLASSIFIED

name The Kid

case no. 101920

Joining the crew of the Carpathian when he was 14, the Kid was hired as a deck hand. The Kid's father was a good friend of the Captain and served with the Captain in the Great War and as a Burnside Brotherhood agent. The Kid was very young when his father died, and the Captain felt it was his duty to keep an eye on the boy. In an age when 15- and 16-year-olds fought in wars around the globe, it was time the Kid started training for his future. He has a name; it's his father's name. Since most of the crew knew and respected that name, it's still hard to utter, and so he is known simply as the Kid until he carves out a piece of that name for himself. The Kid is no coward, but he has not seen much of the world. He is no fool, but he never finished school. He learns quickly and moves even quicker. Always taking notes in his journal, the Kid never misses a thing. Now it's up to him to ascend to the legacy his father left behind, and maybe make one of his own.





ZORA HOUNON

CLASSIFIED

name Zora Hounon

case no. 726788

Zora Hounon was born and raised in New Orleans on a steady diet of Hoodoo, Voodoo, Santeria, and other forms of local magic. As soon as she was old enough, Zora traveled the country, spending time learning about the magic traditions of different areas of the United States. Along the way, she learned the magic, the science, and the mythology behind the art of root working. Zora can tell a story about John the Conqueror that would make your hair stand on end. When she was recruited into the 19XX, she found their knowledge of even the most basic magic rituals lacking, and she quickly set about educating the crew. She has always wanted to return home to practice Hoodoo with her mother and sister, but time has a way of slipping away from people. Zora has always been a very caring person who loves helping others and treats everyone around her like they were members of her family.





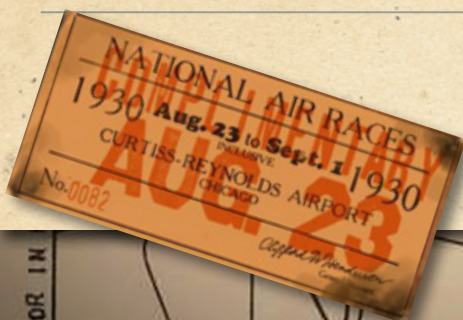
FAY WELLS

CLASSIFIED

name Fay Wells

case no. 970031

Born in Wichita, Kansas to a Russian immigrant mother and an American father, Fay grew up with a passion for excitement. Adventure becomes your middle name when you're a member of the Wells Family Flying Circus. It was there, between the air races and flying circus act, that she perfected her aerial acrobatics and knife throwing skills. You couldn't keep Fay out of the sky after that; she received the distinguished flying cross and wrote books about her long distance flights around the world. She was a charter member of the Ninety-Nines, a group of talented female pilots. By the time the 19XX came calling, new laws had rendered flying circus acts less dangerous and therefore less profitable, and after the death of her father, not much was keeping her in Wichita. Fay is known among the crew to have nerves of steel—after you land a few flaming airplanes that are missing vital parts, you tend to earn that reputation.



CUT ELEVATOR IN

SHOWN IN
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 O THE BODY
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 D AILERON
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 AIRPLANE
 H APIN.
 US PLANE
 BUILT.



AHMED HASSAN

CLASSIFIED

name Ahmed Hassan

case no. 912905

An Oxford-educated Algerian diplomat, Olympic athlete in fencing, photographer, writer, politician, and explorer, Ahmed Hassan was, in addition, a highly skilled sniper during the Great War. Patience and focus have always served Ahmed well and earned him respect, whether fighting alongside French, British, or American troops. Around his neck Ahmed wears a small vial. This vial contains a single drop of blood from his father, grandfather, and great grandfathers, going back over a hundred years. When Ahmed dies, his blood will be added to the vial and given to his son. But today, wearing the vial around his neck and standing on the shoulders of his ancestors, he is granted the most steady footing a man can achieve. His calmness, sure shot, character, and intelligence exemplify the standards by which the Carpathian's senior staff is measured.





PRINCE HERMAN

CLASSIFIED

name Prince Herman

case no. 144547

World famous magician Prince Herman is a master of the unknown. Born in Amherst, Virginia, his rise to fame has been unparalleled. His astounding shows played to mixed audiences around the globe. On a trip to Egypt years ago, Prince Herman acquired an ancient staff of solid gold with a sphere of glass at the top. This staff has untold powers, and it is known that Prince Herman uses it to display wonders that other magicians can't even dream of. Prince Herman remains a valuable member of the 19XX, even when his magician duties keep him otherwise occupied. He is the perfect example of an independent 19XX agent: always vigilant, always watching for evil, and ready to join the fold when called upon. Known for faking his own death convincingly, half of the fun of a Prince Herman show is waiting to see if he'll show up! If you ever have the chance to attend the magician's show, it will be an experience you won't soon forget.



HERMAN MAGIC SHOW
— ADULT —
Est. Price 36c Def. Tax 4c
40¢
Keystone Ticket Co., Shamokin, Pa.



STEAM AGE TESLA

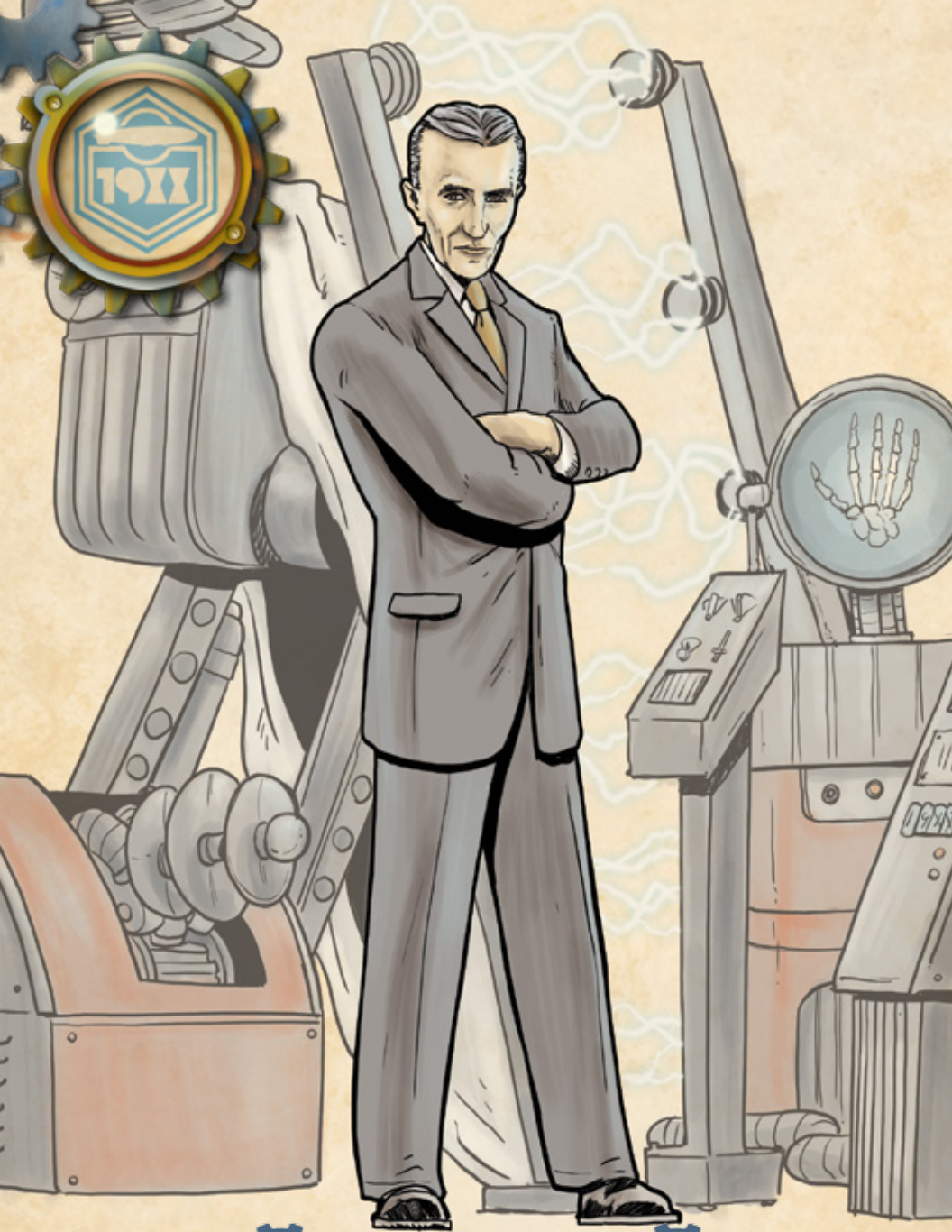
CLASSIFIED

name Nikola Tesla

case no. 000169

During the late 1800s, Nikola Tesla was a pioneer at the frontier of electrical engineering. His future-thinking techniques were so revolutionary that his experiments seemed magical. With contributions to radio, modern electricity distribution, and X-ray technology, Tesla became one of the most important scientific figures of all time. His work helped to transition the world from the steam era to the diesel era. Far from the front page inventions, Tesla labored on devices the public was never meant to see. His work pushed the boundaries of the physical world and crossed into the arcane. Some inventions were so dangerous he had to destroy or hide them to keep them out of sinister hands. When members of the Ordo Templi Orientis and the Order of the Black Faun illicitly obtained a few of these devices, Tesla knew he had to contribute to such groups as the Burnside Brotherhood and the 19XX in order to save the 1900s from destruction.





DIESEL AGE TESLA

CLASSIFIED

name Nikola Tesla (continued) case no. 000169

By the 1930s, most of Tesla's inventions were going toward fighting a battle raging in the shadows. Whenever he could contribute, Tesla attempted to make a difference. Some of these devices went to governments who fought for peace, and some went to secret groups like the 19XX. On the following pages are details about a couple of these inventions. Upon his birth during a thunder storm, his mother uttered, "He'll be a child of the storm." Until the day he left this mortal realm, the Master of Lightning was sought after for his creations. After his passing, the United States government seized all of his papers. They thoroughly reviewed them for potentially dangerous inventions before handing them over to his estate .

"What has the future in store for this strange being, born of a breath, of perishable tissue, yet immortal, with his powers fearful and divine?"
Nikola Tesla, 1930



**THE LATEST FROM
TESLA INDUSTRIES!**

TESLA TUNER



Here at Tesla Industries, we constantly strive to push the boundaries of technology and overcome the inherent limitations of reality.

Since the theft of some dangerous items from the Tesla laboratory, we have devoted our energy toward helping the 19XX in their mission of adding order to a chaotic world.

One of our most important contributions has been the Tesla Tuner. This small device is worn with straps by the user. It harnesses the energy contained in objects once held dear to someone who has departed our plane of existence.

The soul is then brought back into our world in a form that takes on a consistency between gelatin and mist. This transmission of energy needs a host on our side to act as a magnet, pulling the departed spirit through. The user must have an existing connection to the spiritual world.

Currently, the young Marjorie Croft is one of the few users who possess this ability and can take full advantage of the tuner.



Houdini's Handcuffs



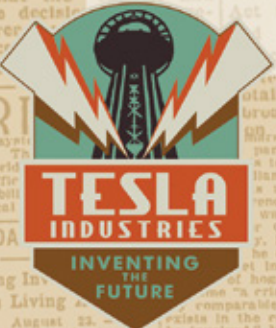
Ismard's Pocket Watch



Joan of Arc's Ring



Archimedes's Compass



**HEY!
THAT'S
YOU ON THE
NEXT PAGE,
TOGO!**



TOGO

THE SMARTEST
RABBIT IN THE
WORLD!



Taking his name from the sled dog who covered the longest and most hazardous stretch of the 1925 Serum run to Nome, Alaska, Togo is a genetically engineered rabbit. He is the creation of Dr. Auguste Heuvelman, the lead scientist of the 19XX organization. Dr. Heuvelman augmented Togo's breeding with training which included teaching the small rabbit to recognize vocal commands and hundreds of distinct shapes and letters.



Dr. Auguste Heuvelman

TOGO'S HARNESS



Togo's true usefulness was unlocked with the creation of the harness communication system designed by Tesla Industries. 2 earpieces allow Togo to be given short commands via radio. The panels open to reveal a video monitor capable of 240 lines of resolution which can relay images from the 19XX communications network. A small, removable, handheld radio is also contained inside and can be used to reach Togo's earpieces.

**THIS IS TRULY AN
AGE OF INVENTION!**

THE SCREEN HAS NEVER
KNOWN ITS EQUAL!

AUTO RADIOS
Priced as low as \$49.99
Come in for a demonstration
AT TON BROS.



TYPES OF AGENTS

The 19XX organization is comprised of agents from all over the world. After determining their skill levels and backgrounds, they are assigned to one of the various 19XX divisions.

1

Relic Recovery

These agents work undercover in an attempt to obtain powerful artifacts or keep the peace in sensitive situations.

2

Carpathian Crew

The airship crew is hand picked by the Captain, and they are prepared to take the fight to the enemy at any time.

3

Armored Division

The members of this select group are always at the forefront of technology and the front lines of the battlefield.



1

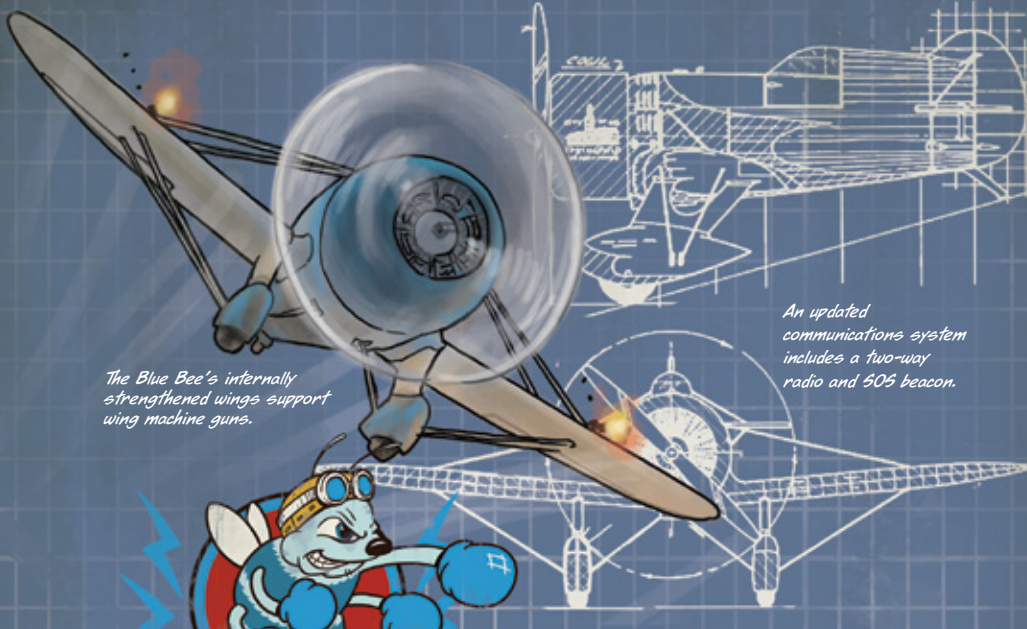


2



3





The Blue Bee's internally strengthened wings support wing machine guns.

An updated communications system includes a two-way radio and 905 beacon.

The Blue Bee

Fay Well's plane, the Blue Bee, is based on the Gee Bee Model R design. When the expert pilot, Fay Wells, joined the 19XX, she was allowed to pick any vehicle she wanted. Her choice was the Granville Brothers designed aircraft with heavy modifications by aviator and inventor Howard Hughes.

The Hughes company installed many modifications that resulted in an aircraft with a faster top speed, tighter controls, radio system, weapons, and the ability to dock with the Carpathian aircraft. For those who can pilot it, the Blue Bee has no equal.



First Flight: 1932 Developed From: Gee Bee Model R
Engine: Pratt & Whitney R-1340H HP: 620
Wingspan: 25 ft Incidence: 2.5 Degrees
Maximum Speed: 300mph
Range: 925 miles (1500 w/drop tank)

CARPATHIAN TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS



The Carpathian

THE LEGENDARY AIRSHIP THE 19XX CALLED HOME.



The Carpathian was built in Germany with the assistance of Auguste Heuvelman, who designed both the pressurization system that allows the ship to rise higher than any other dirigible and a detachable compartment which becomes submersible should the need arise. The ship was then given to the League of Nations as a gift for war reparations after WWI. The name comes from the Carpathian Mountains—the ship was intended to be as solid as rock and yet rise above the clouds.



x1



x2



FACTS

Hydrogen/Helium Mixture

Weapons

- Four hidden Bren Light Machine Guns
- Two guns on the observation deck—
 - Double Browning M2HB (heavy Barrel)
- Anti-submarine—up to 8 MK 15 torpedoes

Speed

- 8-1,050hp engines
- Top speed of 95mph

Range

- Over 30 hours of flying time

Length

- 810 ft

Up to 100 total passengers and crew

Technology

- Long range radio
- Electricity generating turbine
- Long range visul communications
- Communications and electrical systems designed by Tesla Industries

Vehicles

- Capable of carrying four small planes and 2 scouting balloons

PAUL ROMAN MARTINEZ
PRESENTS

ANNUAL



TALES OF THE 19XX

JUNE
1933

7.99¢

INSIDE BURNSIDE BROTHERHOOD

AN EARLY TALE FROM THE 19XX ARCHIVES

THE GYPSY

A STORY OF ONE FORTUNE
TELLER'S TERRIFYING VISION!

Plus,
CHARACTER BIOS
AN OVERVIEW OF
THE 1930s
AND MORE DIESELPUNK
ADVENTURE!

BOOK 1



TESLA FIGHTS FOR
HIS LIFE! THE
SHINING SKULL
IS BORN!

TALES OF THE 19XX

THE BURNSIDE BROTHERHOOD ASSIGNMENT: TESLA

STORY AND ART BY
PAUL ROMAN MARTINEZ



Agent Croft

STARRING



Agent Jameson



Nikola Tesla

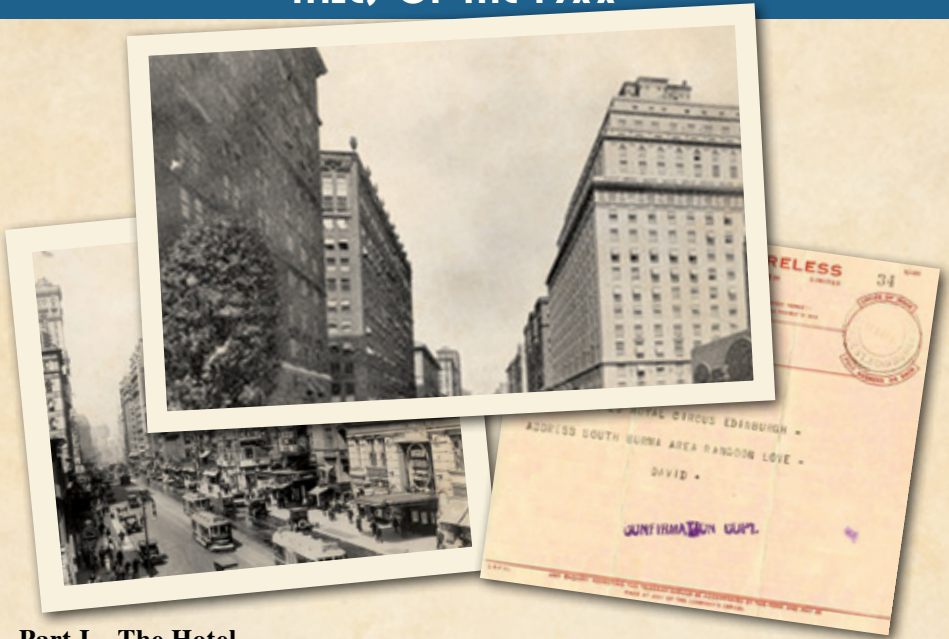


Herr Schädel

*Turn the page, dear reader,
for a defining and harrowing
tale from early in the 19XX
timeline!*

1925

TALES OF THE 19XX



Part I—The Hotel

In 1925, between 47th and 48th Street, there stood a 12 story stone faced monument to the Roaring Twenties. This was one of the places the world came to dance, sing, and drink—throwing themselves into a hedonistic daze trying to forget the men who spent their final moments on the battlefields of Europe. They gathered in the lobby, recuperated in the morning by the pool, and star-gazed in the hotel bar.

The Hotel Marguery was famous for two things: not asking many questions of its long term tenants, and serving the second best Monte Cristo sandwich in the city. (The first best if you only counted Park Avenue.) The hotel provided 4-star service to anyone who paid their bill, and a few who didn't, if they brought along the right headlines. Among the tenants who called the Hotel Marguery home were a handful of confidence men, an opera singer, a rich heiress, a roaming illegal card game that took up a 6 room suite on the 11th floor, a prima ballerina, a retired polo player, and one reclusive scientist. Here among his admirers and the press, the aging Nikola Tesla was regarded as Merlin in King Arthur's court. He emerged every now and then to wow the crowds with a new electrical engineering magic trick and then retreated to the solitude of his laboratory or rooftop pigeon coops.

At 8pm on Friday evening, the lobby was heaving with people.

Too early for the evening's events, visitors and tenants milled about, planning their tours of New York's most overpriced watering holes and competing to be the next Douglas Fairbanks or Mary Pickford. Two men

THE BURNSIDE BROTHERHOOD

dressed in attire guaranteeing they would never see the front of the society page argued with the boy at the front desk while the crowd passed by in their best pre-evening outfits trying hard to look like they weren't trying hard.

Of the two unassuming men, Croft looked to be the more experienced. He wore a heavy, brown coat hiding a Webley revolver, 12 rounds of ammunition, a notebook containing a list of names and locations, and a brown hat with tufts of newly greying hair escaping just underneath the brim at the back of his head. On the sides of his head, black hair with specks of grey connected to a thin beard that ran along the edge of his jaw. His thick eyebrows sat right on top of blue eyes that stared unrelentingly from two dark valleys. The small bump at the bridge of his nose added to the character of his face, assuring that if he stared at you with thin, unmoving lips, you would feel obliged to give him some sort of reply. He was still a fairly young man, but he wore every minute of his service in the Great War on all the thin lines that came together to form his face.

His partner, Jameson, wore the collar high on his grey overcoat, partly to cut the spring chill and partly to look mysterious as he peered over the edge of it and under his eight panel cap. Short, blonde hair atop a smooth face made him look younger than his age, and his kind eyes sporting a permanent smile seemed to defy his years of military service. Jameson carried a Colt .45 automatic, an extra clip, and a letter signed by President Coolidge designed to get the two out of any trouble they might encounter with the local bulls. Between Jameson's smile and Croft's cold stare, the two could usually talk their way out of any situation, but the new boy at the front desk wasn't buying what they were selling.

Walking back toward the men after pressing a small switch on a brass box located near the mail slots, the boy behind the counter made no eye contact. "I buzzed Mr. Tesla's suite; he's not answering." The desk clerk was too young to have served in the war and too old to break into show business, so the 6 x 4 foot area that made up the front desk was his only chance to leave a mark on the world.

Croft leaned forward on the counter, "Buzz him again – we need to speak to him now. He'll want to hear what we came to say."

Jameson smiled and adjusted his greyish brown cap. "Maybe the buzzer's broken, pal. Why don't you go slip a note under his door, and tell him his friends from the Burnside Brotherhood are here. Then we can go up there in person and give him the good news—that Croft and me are here to watch his back!"

TALES OF THE 19XX

The Burnside Brotherhood was a small group of agents who worked for almost any country that would pay them. Their mission was to capture stragglers, spies, and war criminals left over from the Great War. They didn't do it just for the money; the men believed in what they were doing with a passionate fervor that was missing from most in the general population.

“Hey mister,” the boy seemed agitated. “Mr. Tesla designed the system himself, and it works like a dream! I don't care if you're with the Moose Lodge, you ain't gettin' up there, so scram!”

Halfway through the 20s, they still found themselves in the shadows, fighting ghosts from the last war. The Burnside Brotherhood was in many ways a precursor to the one-nine-x-x organization, or the 19XX, as they came to be known. By the 1930s, groups like the Brotherhood would be absorbed into the 19XX, and men like Croft would be fighting an even greater evil.

Croft leaned in closer at the counter and locked into the boy's eyes. “And who's gonna stop us?” Croft paused for effect. “You?”

The desk clerk was already moving on with his life; he didn't notice the not-so-subtle threat Croft handed him. “He don't take kindly to unwanted visitors. That's why we've got the ton of bricks over by the stairs there.” The boy motioned to a giant set of legs in blue with white pinstripes standing behind the evening edition of the New York Times while he moved down the counter to hand some letters to a man with a black eye and a toothpick hanging off his lip. “Mr. Tesla gets his share of nuts—people claiming to have created some fantastic new invention or accusing Mr. Tesla of stealing an idea, or they just want Mr. Tesla to invent something for them.”

Croft and Jameson turned around and leaned back on the front desk. Croft reached into the pocket of his slacks and palmed a set of brass knuckles.

“What do you think, Jameson? Should we wait for him in the bar, or show ourselves up?”

The lobby was a flood of the city's best dressed getting ready to percolate. Between the bar, the pool, the restaurant, and the front entrance, the flow of bodies never ended. The two agents watched the crowds as a small group began to gather, passing through the lobby and into the pool area. Flashbulbs were firing and falling to the floor. Some famous aviator had just accomplished a new unbelievable feat that was sure to be topped the following week and was celebrating in the underbelly of the upper crust.

THE BURNSIDE BROTHERHOOD

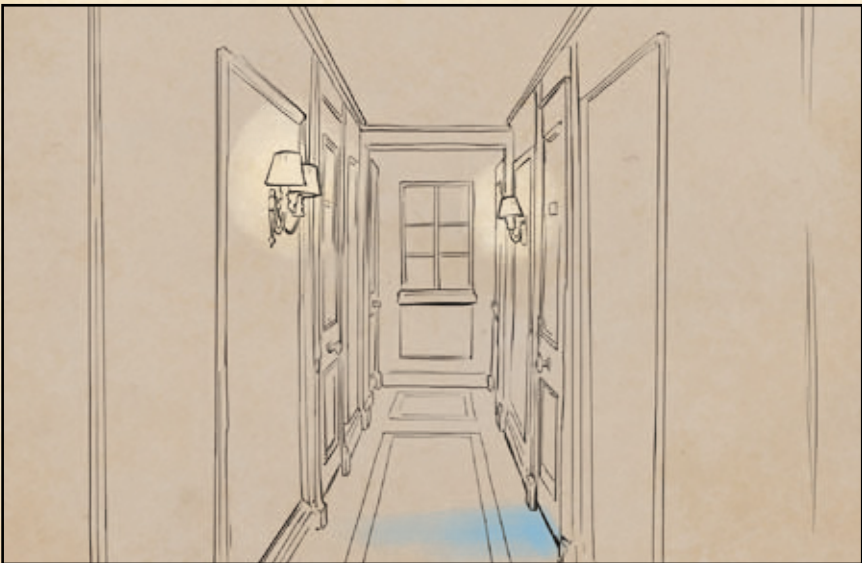
In 1925, a new record or milestone came everyday, and this aviator was the most recent conquering knight returning from battle to be showered in accolades and admiration.

Croft followed the crowd with his eyes while his head stayed completely still. “The glory is in the skies, Jameson. The wrecks we flew in the war were nothing compared to the flying beasts they have now. I’ll get back to the sky again someday.”

Jameson took a step from the front desk and began to walk backwards toward the front door while pointing at the stairs. “Look! The muscle reading the evening news is hot for pilots! I’ll take the fire escape.”

The guard at the stairs lowered his paper and followed the group. By the time he returned, Croft was halfway to Tesla’s floor. Nikola Tesla split his time between this multi room suite and his office on 40th Street. As he got older, his inventions grew stranger and more powerful. He kept some of his more dangerous inventions and blueprints where he slept, knowing they would never be too far from his watchful eye.

Stepping onto the 10th floor, Croft’s hand left the mahogany banister and he immediately noticed a blue light coming from under the door of room 1004. The light was soft, fading in and out, but the rest of the hallway was lit by only a few low wattage electric lamps providing just enough illumination for the agents to make out the yellow wallpaper and the reddish-brown carpet. The darkness made the blue light seem deceptively bright and



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sinister; nothing innocent could release a light of that shade. Croft pulled out his revolver and moved forward. Stepping up against the door, he put his ear against it and held his breath to hear what was happening inside.

“My men will find it eventually! You could make this less painful by telling me where it is now! Tu, was man dir sagt!”

“Damn, we’re too late.”

Part II—The Home of Nikola Tesla

On the other side of the door, Croft heard the unmistakable, sharp voice of the Prussian General they were sent to find. During the Great War, it was rumored that the Prussian had performed macabre experiments on the dead, allies and enemies alike. They say he had a habit of staring into the eyes of his victims, watching without blinking, as the last bit of life left them. His piercing stare and sunken-in cheeks earned him the nickname Herr Schädel, or Lord Skull. Croft and Jameson had seen the remnants of Schädel’s encampments and knew first hand that the rumors were true. Herr Schädel had an unhealthy preoccupation with death, and they’d seen the piles of defiled bodies to prove it.

“Jameson, I hope you’re in position.” Croft mumbled to himself in the empty hallway.

He waited a few second to give Jameson time to reach the tenth floor. Croft stared at the small brass plaque in the middle of Tesla’s door with the number 1004 engraved in the center and tried to imagine Jameson climbing the fire escape and moving into position. Then, with a short, running start, Croft threw his body against the white wooden door, causing it to shatter the frame and fall forward with him on it into the suite. He moved to one knee and swung his gun around, looking for a target. At the far side of the room, the unmistakable Nikola Tesla was sitting in a chair tied with some ropes, belts, neckties, and other improvised straps. Tesla was wearing brown pants and a white shirt, and he was drenched with sweat. From behind a few hanging strands of grey hair, his dark eyes looked up in exhausted determination.

Herr Schädel stood to Tesla’s side, looking at the wreckage of the door.

Gone was the menacing pickelhaube helmet with the single spike, but under a large dark overcoat, he still wore his Prussian uniform from a now defunct army. In his hands he held a small device shaped like a screw driver with two prongs at the end and a small spark glowing from the two points. The device was connected by a long cable to a large steel box with several dials and gauges built into the wall behind them.

THE BURNSIDE BROTHERHOOD



The entire suite consisted of several apartments connected by small doorways. Each room looked like it had been furnished at one point with tasteful contemporary furniture, including couches, desks, lamps, and beds. After the decorator had done her job, Tesla had added a layer of papers, machines, gadgets, and crates, which created the effect of a home and advanced laboratory being forced together in an uneasy alliance. Croft could see two men in each of the rooms to his left and his right. They were wearing anonymous clothing, appropriate for the season, but their strong frames and hushed accents gave them away as trained German soldiers.

Everyone in the room and the connected rooms paused and stared at the new participant. The four men in other parts of the suite stopped tearing apart bookshelves and throwing open drawers. The unspoken consensus was that gunfire would be next, and no one wanted to be the one to start it. The soldiers spoke a few quiet words in German to each other but otherwise made no movements.

Croft broke the silence by calling out, “You there, Schädel, step away from him. I’m with the Burnside Brotherhood.” He yelled loudly even though Tesla and the Prussian sat only a few feet away on the other side of the main room. Croft was hoping his voice would carry to his waiting partner, Jameson, on the fire escape, letting him know he was in position.

“Do . . .” Schädel paused to look at Croft. He gave him his skull-like stare, seeming unfazed by the pistol pointed at him. “Do I know you?”

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“No, but I know you. I was sent to find you and bring you to my superiors.”

“My friend, I have a transaction to complete with the good scientist, and then I will be on my way. I assure you.”

The exhausted Tesla yelled to Croft from his chair. “Do not be afraid to shoot him, son. The housekeeping staff here is very good at what they do.”

Tesla’s words worried Schädel’s guards, and they all pulled out their weapons, pointing them at Croft from the connecting rooms.

Tesla yelled again, “Shoot him! He has the notebook of Aquinus! It is only a matter of time before he unlocks its secrets. Even a terrible chef can follow a brilliant cookbook.”

“Shut up! The only thing I want to hear from you is the location of the magneto!” Schädel touched the small device in his hand to Tesla’s chest and removed it again quickly. This sent an electric shock through Tesla’s system, leaving a small burn-mark on his white shirt that matched the red marks already visible on his skin through the open buttons.

“Stop!” Croft was outnumbered with four pistols pointed at him, but he managed to make Schädel pause. The German soldiers in the other rooms began to move closer, and Croft’s eyes darted from left to right while he moved slowly to his feet, keeping his revolver aimed at the Prussian.



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Sweat ran down Tesla's face, and he fought to be heard while struggling for breath between words. "The esoteric magneto, the ability to harness spiritual energy, is too powerful. No one should have it. It shouldn't even exist!"

"Hör mir zu!" Schädel smiled and exclaimed in German. "He is right. I already have the books of the Saint. I stormed the catacombs beneath the Church of the Jacobins myself. The monks thought I was there to steal his head—they keep it there in their collection of holy relics. But the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas are infinitely more valuable than his mummified skull."

Croft ignored Schädel; his job was to bring him in, not figure out what he meant. Croft realized his only chance of making it out of that room alive involved Jameson jumping through a window and shooting at least half of the men while Croft shot whomever was left standing. He tried to keep Schädel talking, hoping Jameson would make his move before it was too late.

"What are you talking about? What was in those books?" Croft stared past the two men and into the darkened windows, looking for any sign of movement on the fire escape outside.

"My friend," Schädel began, "you are a Burnside agent. Which means you were probably a soldier during the war. And you were probably a good soldier."

"I was a balloon pilot." In the darkness, the silhouette of a man outside moved slowly past Schädel, disappearing beyond a wall separating the main room from the one to Croft's right.

"Oh, a pilot! Well then, you were far from the carnage, flying high above it all. You didn't march knee deep into the death like I did."

Jameson moved toward the other room on the fire escape as Croft kept Schädel talking. "I saw plenty of death there, Schädel. Enough for ten lifetimes."

"I did too! I did too, and I found a solution, my friend. Life and death, it is the serpent Ouroboros, constantly being created and devouring itself. In this way, we are trapped for all time in this loop, but I found a way out." Schädel smiled wide and lowered his head, never removing his stare from Croft, but still stood with his body facing Tesla.

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Schädel continued, “Alexander conquered; Ghengis Khan conquered; I am going to conquer the ultimate embattlements. The ones between life and death. The writings of Aquinus point the way. He solved it—buried beneath that church for hundreds of years was the answer. All I need now is the Esoteric Magneto Mr. Tesla developed”

“Mr. Schädel, I would die before I gave it to you. I would destroy this building and everyone in it before I gave it to you. My apologies to you, sir.” Tesla nodded in Croft’s direction, barely able to keep his eyes open.

“Don’t worry, Nikola. If you are dead, I will still find it. You don’t get this close to breaching the castle walls only to call in your troops.” Schädel’s military laced speech made sense to himself and Tesla. They were the only two men in the room who knew the power of the Esoteric Magneto and the arcane extent St. Thomas of Aquin reached in his experiments.

Part III—The Esoteric Magneto

Schädel paused, waiting for Croft to speak. Even Tesla looked up, hoping the Burnside agent would have a response to Schädel’s fanatical and, at the same time, prophetic speech. A window shattered, breaking the silence and throwing a sea of glass flying through the air in the next room. Jameson rolled across the floor, tossing lamps, piles of papers, and small tools falling in a series of crashes. He fired three shots before jumping behind the cover of a wooden roll-top desk. The German soldiers spun around and fired small pistols in his direction, sending bits of paper and chunks of wooden floor into the air before they scrambled for cover of their own.

In the momentary distraction, Tesla threw his 69-year-old body from his chair onto the ground, landing in the center of the room. For a man in his



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golden years, his eyes had a powerful focus. He pulled loose from his improvised bonds, and his pale, wrinkled hands deftly reached for a single tile in the middle of the floor. A torn piece of fabric still hung around his wrist. Flipping up the wooden tile, Tesla revealed a dial which he quickly turned clockwise as far as it would go, emitting a series of clicks.

The Prussian reached out for Tesla, but he was too late. On the last click, a small metal rod shot up from the center of the room, tossing up more sections of the dark, wooden floor. Electric bolts reached out like tentacles to a series of square metal plates located on the walls around the suite. The effect was a net of crackling electricity that kept everyone frozen in fear with the exception of the two German soldiers in the room to Croft's left who had rods of electricity running directly through them. Their bodies were locked in a standing position by the raw electricity, causing them to gyrate madly. One of them squeezed every shot from his pistol straight into the floor beneath him, and his empty gun kept clicking impotently as he was unable to stop squeezing the trigger.

"Jameson! Are you alright?!" Croft yelled out, barely able to see through the sparks and ropes of light moving rhythmically around the room.

"Aye, I'm in one piece. If you have Schädel in your sights, punch his ticket!"

Schädel was already looking for a way out. He stared at the plates around him which connected to the rod in the center of the room and remembered the electric device he had been using to torment Nikola only moments before. Covering his eyes with the sleeve of his heavy coat to block the brightness, Schädel threw the small electric device into the center of the rod.



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Outside, the crowd by the pool stopped their festivities long enough to notice that an entire floor of the hotel was glowing with a faint blue light.

“Hey, would you look at that! Someone is having a party!”

“What is it, honey? Oh, that’s Tesla’s floor. He’s a wet blanket.”

The faint blue light dimmed for half a second and then exploded with a crackling energy that shattered every window on Floor 10, sending several bolts of electricity dancing across the neighboring buildings in all directions until they disappeared and the street went dark again.

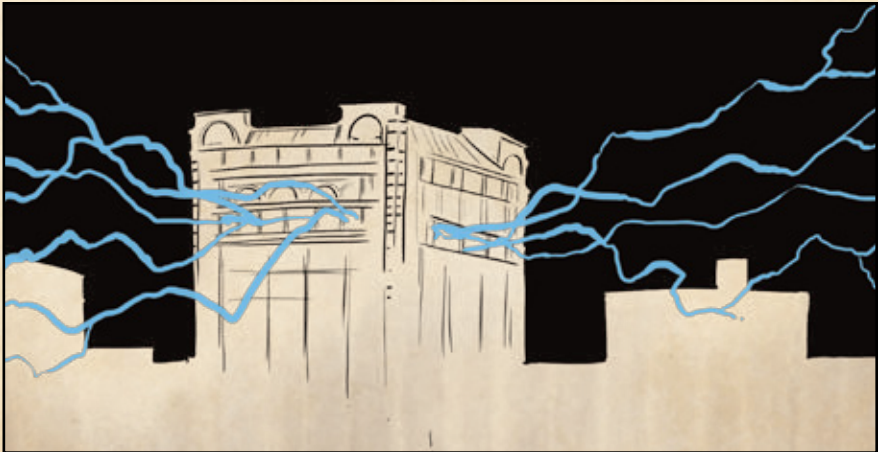
The crowd gathered at the pool was quiet as several electric lamps slowly began to flicker back into existence. Then they began to cheer, throwing glasses into the air or smashing them on the street.

“Tesla! Tesla!”

The socialites and hangers-on chanted his name and took the light show as an excuse to order more liquid refreshments.

In the hotel, Tesla watched his electrical net crumble under the weight of a powerful feedback loop, revealing a glowing object the size of a grapefruit amidst a pile of metal rubble. Smoke was dispersed around the room, and everyone was desperately trying to get their bearings after the explosion of energy.

Schädel came to his feet first and, in the darkness, his eyes locked onto the



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small glowing object. “The Esoteric Magneto!” He stumbled forward with burning embers falling around him. His coat had been torn in the explosion, revealing the gold tassels and dark blue fabric of his military uniform underneath. In a trance, ignoring the smoldering papers and small flames, he moved toward the object of his search.

Jameson worked his way through the smoke and into the main room. “Schädel, don’t move or I’ll shoot!”

As soon as he finished speaking, Jameson squeezed the trigger, sending gunfire into the heart of the darkened room. Shots were quickly fired from the shadows of the suite by soldiers trying to protect their General.

Schädel ignored all of them. With immortality so close, he was no longer afraid of death. His thin, bony hand reached down and clawed at the glowing device, ripping it from the wreckage of Tesla’s security system. Schädel held the small, brass-colored sphere that was the heart of the defeated security device. The brass sphere was covered with ridges and small openings through which a pulsating purple light escaped. Through the openings, metal rings in the center of the small device revolved around an unseen core at an even pace, which created the slight ring of metal rubbing softly against metal. A disgusting smile grew over the Prussian General’s face.

Schädel greedily shoved his prize into his coat then yelled out a command in German and ran to the window. He jumped through the already broken glass and landed with a clank on the fire escape just outside. The soldiers who were still conscious jumped to their feet and ran to meet him, sending a few shots at the Burnside agents as they left. Some small machines began to return to life, adding a subtle hum and an ominous glow to the smoke-filled room as power was restored to the 10th floor.

“The magneto! They’ve absconded with the magneto!” Tesla yelled in the direction of the broken windows, trying to get to his feet. “You have to stop them—you have to!”

Jameson ran to Tesla’s side, helping him to his feet. “Croft, get over here! Mr. Tesla, what was that device? What can Herr Schädel do with it?”

Nicola spoke with a defeated and serious tone in his voice. He looked down and placed his head in his hand. “I invent, and the line between the fantastic and the real becomes more blurred every day. The devices I create now have so much power that they keep me up at night. I try to hide them here—I don’t sell them to anyone because I know the powerful weapons they would create. But still, men find me. You can’t let him have that device; it’s too

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powerful!”

Jameson grew impatient with Tesla’s wandering explanation. “Croft, where are you?!”

Jameson suddenly realized too much time had gone by since he last heard his partner’s voice. He walked with his gun drawn to the last spot he had seen Croft. Looking past an overturned ottoman, Jameson could see Croft staring into space with half of his face covered in blood and small cuts seeping red through his clothing all over his body.

“Croft?! Are you alright? Speak to me!”

Jameson holstered his gun under his coat and fell to Croft’s side, lifting Croft’s head upon his lap.

Croft gurgled through some blood that had gathered around his mouth. “Th-n-bks of Sa-t T-m-s”

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Jameson wiped the blood from his mouth and Croft spoke again. “The notebooks of . . . Saint Thomas. He mentioned them specifically.”

Tesla pulled several drawers out of a nearby chest of drawers, hurling them to the ground. A pigeon fluttered loudly and landed at the window. Tesla froze for a moment, looking at the bird, and then continued his hunt. He stopped at a drawer, pulling out a brown leather satchel. While searching through the bag, the old man walked toward Croft and Jameson on the ground.

Jameson asked Tesla, “Why did he mention Saint Thomas, Tesla? What was that device Schädel stole?”

Tesla removed some cloth and chemicals from the leather bag and began attending to Croft’s wounds.

“This is not the first laboratory explosion I’ve had to deal with, but I’m sorry you gentlemen were caught in its fury.”

Croft was beginning to lose consciousness. “The device?” His eyes were closed and his question was barely audible. “Jameson, I need you . . . to take care of Marjorie for me.”

“Croft, don’t be such a baby. It’s just a scratch!” Jameson was thankful for the darkness in the room. If he had seen exactly how much blood was covering his partner, he might not have maintained such a calm demeanor.

“Jameson!” A fist reached out and weakly grabbed the collar of Jameson’s coat. “Promise me you’ll make sure she and her mother are safe!”

“I promise, I promise, my friend! Now relax yourself for just a moment—you’re going to be fine!” Jameson watched as Croft closed the eye that wasn’t covered in blood and lost consciousness.

Tesla carefully applied pressure to the gash over the left side of Croft’s face. “Here, hold this!” He grabbed Jameson’s hand and placed it over the bloody pile of cloth on Croft’s eye. “St. Thomas of Aquin, the most brilliant and under-appreciated scientist of his day.”

Tesla continued speaking while wrapping Croft’s other wounds. “His inventions, his discoveries, they were . . . too much. They were just too much. He probed the boundaries of nature; he explored the inherent energy of metals. He was a master philosopher, an expert alchemist. At the frontier of any realm, dangerous thoughts and discoveries lie, just waiting to be

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conquered. St. Thomas Aquinas discovered something—a place at the frontier where flesh, metal, and the human mind joined together to form something new, something not entirely any one of those materials but infinitely more when combined.”

Jameson held the now-bloody rag firmly to Croft’s face. “What does that mean? You’re not telling me anything! What is Schädel going to do with that device?”

“It is the Esoteric Magneto, designed to harness the energy of the soul that all living beings exude and turn it into a source of constant energy. Before St. Thomas abandoned his research to focus solely on philosophy, he made some startling discoveries. He created strange metallic dolls that could move on their own for a short time before falling lifeless to the floor, and he found ways to animate the dead for a few moments as well. This was only immediately after death, you see, and it never lasted more than a few seconds.”



Jameson was growing impatient. He took a deep breath and tried to remain calm while he slowly asked again, “What does it all mean, Tesla? What is Schädel making?”

“I don’t know, son, but he has the writings of Saint Thomas and he has the esoteric magneto. In the right hands, with that information and the right components, someone could live forever. Bound to my device, encased in a suit of metal, covered in the proper runes, disconnected from the flesh . . .”

“Herr Schädel could become immortal.”

THE BURNSIDE BROTHERHOOD

PART IV—Hair of the Dog

The next day, Croft woke up in a hospital bed covered in bandages. He opened one eye and immediately brought a bandaged hand up to his face to discover why he couldn't open the other. A dressing covered a large portion of his face, and he wondered if it would pull at his beard when they removed it. His hospital room was quiet. There were three other beds, but all of them were empty. By the color of the bright light shining through the open windows, Croft knew it was morning.

Across the room, in a chair with his feet propped up on the edge of the hospital bed, Jameson was reading the first edition of the daily paper. The front page showed a picture of the Hotel Marguery, and the headline attributed the explosion to a power overload at Tesla's home office caused by a non-existent electrical storm.

"Mr. Croft! You awaken!" Jameson folded the paper under his arm and approached the head of the bed.

"Jameson, I have several questions for you. One being, why can I only see out of one eye?"

"Oh, it's an eye patch. Don't worry, they say you'll definitely be able to keep your eye, and you'll probably see out of it again someday too! The doctors predict a large scar will enhance that side of your face. Maybe you'll model for Arrow Collars, eh?" Jameson smiled to himself, trying to keep Croft in a good mood.

"What happened? Schädel? Tesla?"

"Well, Schädel destroyed Tesla's security system, sending hot metal flying through the air in your direction. But you knew that part, didn't you? Schädel left before I could give him a piece of my mind, and Tesla is fine. He says his next invention will most definitely help us in finding Herr Schädel. It might have something to do with tuning in dead spirits or some other thing—I can't say for certain. I was up to my elbows in your blood at the time, you see. And Nikola Tesla doesn't always make the most sense."

"So am I to understand that you saved my life? That's not part of the job, you know."

"Mr. Croft, I always commit. 100 percent."

"You were really going to take care of my Marjorie, weren't you?"

Jameson sat on the edge of the bed and pointed the folded newspaper at

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Croft. “Hey, I’ve got a kid at home myself. I know the feeling, my friend. If anything ever happens to me, I hope you’ll keep your good eye on him! He’s just a couple years older than your Marjorie, there.” Jameson poked Croft gently in the chest to punctuate his sentence, and then stood up to walk away. Croft let out a slight sigh of pain from having one of his wounds prodded.

Jameson paused as he walked away and looked back. “As soon as you’re better, we’ve got a new case. So don’t get too comfortable here.”

“What’s next? Are we going after Schädel?” Croft strained in his bandages to speak loud enough to be heard.

“Well, he made it out with the magneto. Tesla says Herr Schädel could be dangerous if he figures out how to use it.”

Croft looked up at the ceiling, already exhausted at the thought of chasing after Schädel. “How dangerous could he be?”

“Mr. Tesla says with the writings of Aquinas and the magneto, Schädel could transpose his soul into another body, perhaps one of brass or steel. He may live forever.”

“He won’t outlive me.”

“Don’t let it keep you up at night, Croft. If he pokes his head up, we’ll be there. In the meantime, the Burnside Brotherhood is sending us after a one-armed bootlegger by the name of Sterling Riskin.”

“One-armed?”

“He lost it to a rival smuggler to cover some debts. Tough game, I suppose.”

“We’re chasing bootleggers now? Will we be breaking up opium dens next?”

THE BURNSIDE BROTHERHOOD



“He’s not just importing top of the line hooch from Europe. Someone is paying him to gather guns—lots of them. Sterling Riskin is acting as a middleman, exporting whatever surplus guns he can get his hands on to who knows where. He’s small time, but someone is funneling big dough his way.”

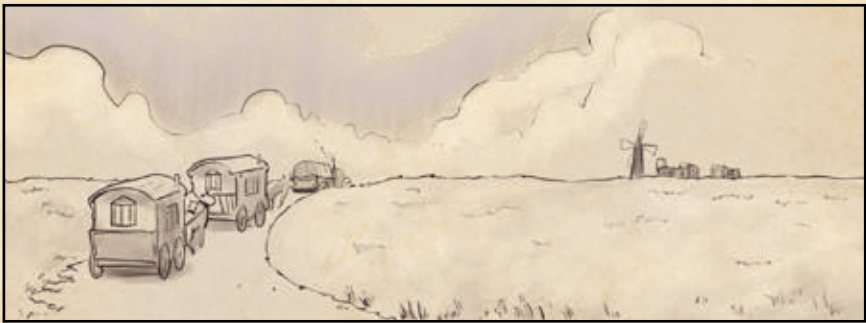
“Well, get me a bottle of the hard stuff and I’ll be ready to go.” Croft was already falling back asleep as he finished his sentence.

Jameson laughed as he walked away, adjusting his eight panel cap and tucking his blonde hair away from his forehead as he went. “Take a rest, my friend. There’s plenty of fight left in the both of us. Don’t worry.”

THE GYPSY

STORY AND ART BY
PAUL ROMAN MARTINEZ

1931



Where the roads turn to dust and grow so narrow a horse-drawn buggy has to pull over to let an automobile by, you would find the Roma. The locals called them Gypsies. They were families traveling in large caravans who stopped now and then to trade horses and offer other services to locals. Little girls would beg for bread; small boys would chop wood; the Gypsies would do almost anything to make ends meet. The unique clothing, accents, and cooking smells emanating from their campsites created both fascination and trepidation among the towns they visited. After making enough money to keep their bellies full for another month, stakes were pulled and camp was struck. The group of wagons, horses, and a few trucks would travel on to the next town in the nomadic style of their ancestors, and the gypsies would attempt to make another month's wages from those who barely made a living themselves.

At the 1931 Greene County Fair, just outside of Xenia, Ohio, Patia was setting up her wagon to receive visitors.

Meaning "hospitality" in Greek, Xenia was just another dusty town in a string of dusty towns Patia's clan temporarily called home. Among the local Shawnee Indians, Xenia was known as "the place of the devil wind." Tornadoes had destroyed the small city before, but it was rebuilt in fatalistic defiance of any future storm, and it was now plagued by the same punishing

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dust storms that all mid-western counties faced.

Patia was a fortune teller. Some mothers taught their daughters to make jewelry or baskets, but Patia came from a long line of seers. It was a gift she didn't ask for and couldn't give back. Patia was the first of her family to be born in the United States. Her accent was not strong, and she understood the people better than anyone in her clan. She was in her mid-twenties with a small figure, a nice smile, dark eyes, and a nose that crinkled harmlessly when she laughed, which was often. Because of all this, she was a very popular reader. Her wagon was always busy during the fair, and she made enough money to keep herself fed during the lean months.

Patia had a reputation for giving good readings and getting some of her cousins and uncles out of the trouble they often found themselves in with the locals. She saw time as clearly as water flowing. She often pictured herself being carried by a stream passing through the events of someone's life. This was a trick her grandmother taught her to help her focus.

Sometimes the hardest part of seeing someone's fate was making sense of it.

The sun was setting and the Greene County Fair was filled with people. Patia found her best readings came after dark when it was easier to separate her mind from the buzz of the outside world. Her brightly painted vardo glowed by the light of some well placed torches, guiding people seeking good news into her wagon and to her table. A gypsy's vardo was their home, their place of business. It was their most valuable possession. Patia took pride in decorating hers with vivid green vines and red flowers from the rooftop to the wheels. Her red shutters and orange door opened wide let the evening air in and signified to people that she was ready for business. A dry breeze passed through one side and disappeared out of the other back into the night.

No one came seeking bad news, and they wouldn't receive it well if they got it, so Patia had two rules: If she felt any bad news, she kept it to herself or else served it with a sizeable spoonful of sugar. And she always got her 25 cents up front.

Patia was only 5 feet tall, but behind her table in the candlelit darkness, she and her looming shadow filled the vardo she called home. On her head, she wore a bright red scarf with yellow flowers tied to the side with a long tail falling on her blouse. Her blouse was flowing with a blue paisley pattern that did not live in harmony with the design of her scarf. Around her neck she wore a simple silver chain. In front of her she fondled a set of cards with hands calloused beyond their years from the hard physical work of

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guiding horses and setting up and tearing down her wagon at each stop.

A young couple walked up the steps to her vardo. The woman clung to the man's arm, which was also holding a hat that was slowly crushed under his nervous hand. His other hand pulled the two up the green handrail attached to the short stretch of wooden stairs that guided them in. The young man's eyes never stopped moving, trying to take in every color, every shiny bauble and hand painted design on the worn wood.

"Come, come. Sit!" Patia motioned toward two chairs resting opposite from her. Two types of clients kept her busy—single customers wanting to know about the people they loved who they wished loved them back, and couples nervous about the road ahead. Patia fanned out the cards in front of her while holding out a thin arm with palm open. "25 cents."

"Pardon?" The young man finally stopped looking around the room as the couple sat down.

Patia rearranged the cards back into a deck with one hand while still keeping her arm outstretched. "25 cents and I will tell you what you came to hear."

"Oh, yes, here you go!" The young man reached in his pocket and dropped a quarter into the open leathery palm that immediately clamped around it like a trap. The money disappeared into the folds of Patia's blouse. The hand quickly reemerged empty back on the table.

"I can see it in your eyes. I see abiàv, yes? A wedding?" Patia tried to get the couple talking while she prepared the cards. Any information they offered would help make the reading easier.

The young lady perked up immediately, and the scared look on her face softened into a smile. "Yes, yes, that's true. We've been married only a few months and we were hoping—"

The young woman talked, and Patia payed only enough attention to make sure that she was saying the same things all young married women say. The young man made himself more comfortable and placed his worn grey hat on the table.

"Our parents didn't really approve."

"If they approved, you wouldn't be here seeking guidance," Patia thought to herself.

"We really want to have children!"

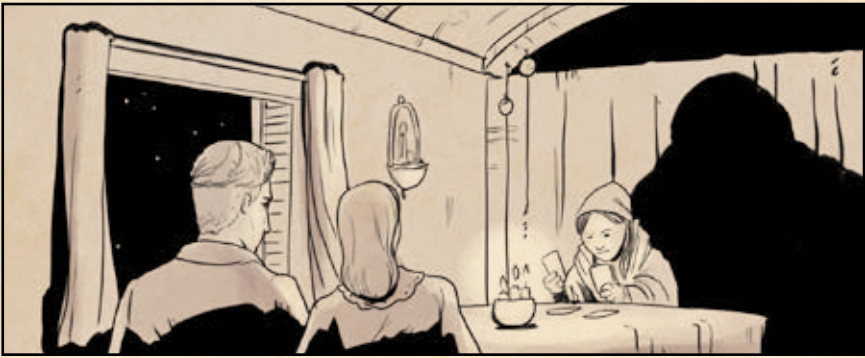
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“Of course you do. What young couple doesn’t want a little bebelus?”

“We are nervous for our financial future.”

“The only ones who aren’t nervous these days are princes and people named Rockafeller.”

While listening silently to the young woman, Patia prepared the cards and began to lay them out, beginning a pattern that would eventually fill the table. She thought back to her last few readings. Sometimes she saw nothing and told the people what they wanted to hear. Sometimes she saw many amazing things unfolding but still told them what they wanted to hear. But lately, she had been seeing some dark images like waking dreams that had no explanation. They stayed with her long after the readings were over.



“We don’t normally do this sort of thing; we just thought it would be a real hoot to hear what you had to say.” The young man reminded Patia that they were too smart to believe in divination, just like every other couple who ever came through her door.

As Patia set cards in front of her she began to look deeper. She stared past the images handpainted generations ago and looked for meaning. They poured out of the deck like a stream winding through dense woods. You could not see where the stream went until you approached each turn. Each placed card gave her a clearer vision in her mind, and soon she was following the stream’s path, translating a vision which most God-fearing citizens would never get to see.

“Anything at all you can tell us would be real nice. Just anything at all.” The young woman moved closer to her new husband and pleaded. They were just kids themselves, eager and terrified to start their new life.

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“Oh, I see a bright future for both of you!” Patia began to speak

“Wait, what’s this? I see some trouble, a dark spot in your way.” Patia found it was always best to give the couple some trial to overcome. That way, they would believe the good news that came after and think their 25 cents was well spent. When 22 cents could buy you a pound of steak, it was important everyone left feeling satiated with forbidden knowledge of their futures.

The young man leaned forward. “What is it? What is the dark spot?”

Patia looked at his hands as the young man held his wife close to him. At the end of his worn grey suit sleeves, his hands were well weathered and tan with dirt deep under his nails that no bath could remove. He would have to let his nails grow long, not touch another hoe or horse collar for months, and then cut them short to rid himself of the badge of honor that came with hard labor. His wife wore a simple, homemade dress with a faded yellow pattern made from bottom-shelf fabric. Both of them were in their finest clothes.

“I see fields—fields in trouble. And I see . . .” Patia remembered many pens filled with sheep when the caravan passed through Xenia, and she took a chance. “I see sheep?”

The young woman was so excited at the possibility of truth in the fortune teller’s words that she spoke up. “Yes, yes it’s true! We raise sheep, and my father raised sheep before us!”

“Ma’am, what’s the trouble you see? The bank? The weather? Some disease?” The young man gave her all the information she would need to create a crisis.



“Yes, yes, it’s the weather. After some bad weather, the bank will try to take your land. It looks like a terrible time, just terrible! But there’s more, much more! Just past the bad spot.” Like a great conductor, Patia now had them at her pace and could make them feel what she wanted when she wanted them to feel it.

“What is it? Please tell us!” The young woman begged Patia.

“I see a clearer day around the bend. I see a bountiful year with strong sheep! The bank looks to be calmed.” Patia ended their imagined crisis and placed more cards on the table in front of her. In the pattern, she began to see their fates more clearly. The stream turned to a river before her. Using the ways learned from generations of Romani, her mind opened and the path of the river poured in. The clearer she could see it, the further away her vardo, the married couple, and the material world seemed.

“What next?” The young man calmly asked, hopeful for stories of a brighter day.

“Yes, please tell us!” His wife’s eyes were red as the emotions of knowing a possible future filled her with a combination of fear and overwhelming hope.

Patia began to recount the next chapter in the tale woven especially for the newly married. She described the joy of their first child, the sorrow of losing a parent, and then the solemn responsibility and security that comes with a small but helpful inheritance.

While she spoke in one world, she watched the river grow in another. It twisted and turned into the future. Between the trees she could see its path. And like so many readings in the last year, it began to take a dark turn. Patia could feel rough waters coming and considered ending the reading right then.

“Any other children?” The young woman interrupted Patia from her vision.

“What?”

“I said, will we have any other children?”

“Yes, yes, I see a girl, as beautiful as her mother, with a strong heart like her father.”

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The river turned darker still. She was being pulled into it. Patia was now being pushed along like flotsam looking to both shores. At first the water carried her calmly, then firmly, then she could not control where it took her. Through the haze in between the trees she could make out pain.

In the cloudy visions playing out on the shores, she saw the pain infesting every country all over the world. Not just the pain of losing a farm or of losing a parent, but of millions and millions of voices dying. She saw the horror through the trees of another world war. The water rushed and she was being carried ever faster by an unforgiving current. On the shore, she could see soldiers dying. She saw cities being razed. Patia's hands shakily drew cards and placed them nervously while she finished the old tale of the young married couple.

“And many years later your son will be married himself, then.” Patia watched the river grow as she recounted the tale she'd repeated so many times from memory. But the real vision terrified her. Innocents being tortured, new weapons of destruction being created and used against her fellow man. In the path of the river of time that was now raging, no one was safe.

In every corner of the world, the pain was searing. The torture of millions being murdered by fanatics and maniacal, power-mad villains roared through the future. The power of the new weapons were beyond comprehension for a fortune teller who traveled sandy back roads and lived off the kindness of small town people. She was a child among scolding parents, a mortal among angry gods—she did not belong here in this vision. This dark bitter fate was not meant for her to see.

A tear rolled down her face and her look turned to one of great sadness and dread as Patia took the next card from the deck.

“Excuse me, Ma'am, are you ok?” The young man began to realize this did not seem like a normal reading.

Patia placed the card at the end of a pattern of cards in front of her and the dam broke. The river flowed wildly in her mind and the seemingly endless years of total war, death, torture, and destruction filled her head. She was no longer in her vardo—she was standing in the middle of the torrent with water flowing all around her.

There was no end to the war, no end to the conflict. Bodies fell around her; weeping mothers' faces appeared by the thousands in the waves that rushed by. Her eyes turned white, and she could see clearly a caravan like hers in

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a small clearing in an old forest. She saw soldiers in grey uniforms taking everyone, every man, every woman and child. She watched them die as if it were happening right then.

Patia stopped speaking, and the young couple grew frightened. “What is wrong with her?” the young wife asked, not sure if this was a normal part of the reading or if the fortune teller was having some sort of attack.

The young man held his wife tighter and began to stand up. “I don’t know. Maybe we should get someone?”



Around the world in parlours, in wagons, and on stages, anywhere people claimed to see into the future, the same future was being seen.

Even those who could barely tap into the river, even the charlatans who preyed on widows and grieving mothers, they could now see it clearly. Man’s bitter fate could not be avoided. Another great war was coming—the largest movement of troops and destruction of life to ever be witnessed on the earth. True evil was rising from the dark corners of mankind.

Patia still sat motionless with light colored eyes and her mouth slightly agape. Minutes had passed since her last word. A single card was held loosely from her hand, but she no longer needed the cards to see.

“Darling, go out and bring someone here. Tell them she’s having an episode or something!” The young man motioned for his wife to go, and she stood up to leave. She made it to the door with her husband watching when a voice cried out.

The calloused hand of the young Romani fortune teller grabbed the arm of

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the young man and pulled him back down toward the table. Her eyes had returned to normal, and the movement of the man crashing into the table sent tarot cards flying in all directions. His wife, standing near the door, let out a brief shriek of surprise.

“You!” She spoke through gritted teeth with tears in her eyes.

“Yes?” The young man spoke with a rational fear in his voice but a slight relief that the fortune teller did not pass away during their reading.

“Do you have a cousin in Europe?”

“What?” He was surprised at the odd specificity of the question. “Yes, I guess I do.”

“In Wiesbaden, my cousin Herschel, he is a jeweler there.”

“Why hasn’t he left? Why is he still there?” Patia spoke with the desperation of someone who had already witnessed a terrible event and the helplessness of a victim who could not avoid it. She watched the river of fate destroy the forest and become a beast. She watched that beast claim the life of everything it touched.

“He . . . he wants to. He wants to, but he needs to save some money to leave. Then he will join my family here. We send him money when we can. What is this about?” The young man felt the fortune teller’s grip tighten, leaving a red mark on his arm. He pulled it away, and her hand slammed on the table.

Patia reached in her blouse and pulled out the young man’s 25 cents. She grabbed his other hand and slammed the quarter into it, closing it into a fist.

“Here, take this and promise me something!”

“What, what is it? What did you see?” The young man pleaded curiously but wasn’t quite sure if this was all part of some elaborate ritual to get more money out of them.

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“Promise me you will take this money and whatever else you can scrape together . . .” Patia stared into his eyes, unblinking, making sure he was staring back into hers.

“Fine, fine, I will promise. What, what?!”

“Promise me you will get him **out**.”





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