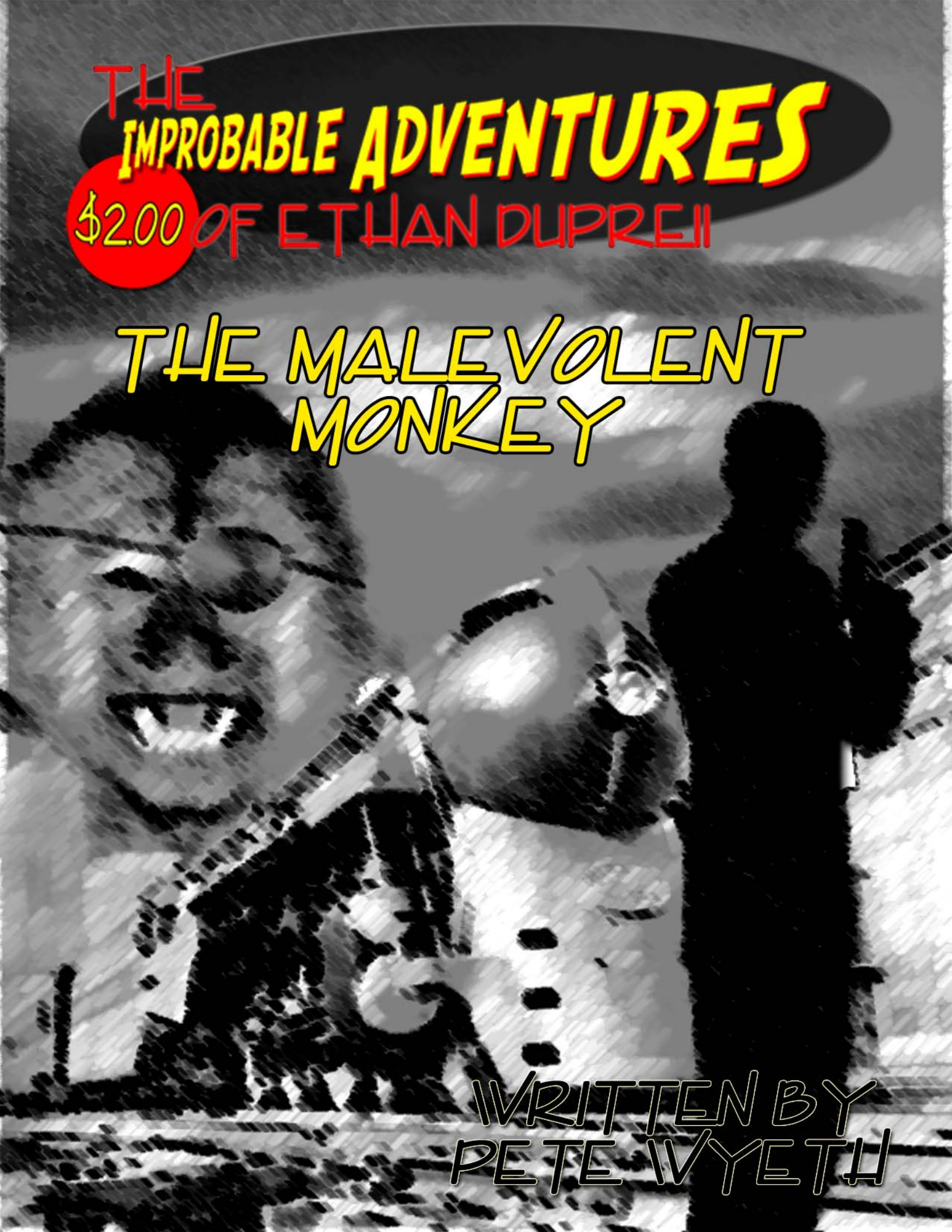


THE IMPROBABLE ADVENTURES

\$2.00 OF ETHAN DUPRE II

THE MALEVOLENT MONKEY

WRITTEN BY
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When Rose Sheffield entered the First National Bank of Cleveland, she noticed a pair of men dressed in taupe suits filling out deposit slips. One of the Men in Taupe, she noticed, watched her every step of the way as she walked toward a vacant teller's window. When she was halfway from the front door to the teller, she was intercepted by Horace Whitaker, a low-level manager at the bank.

"Good to see you again, Ms. Sheffield, it's been sometime. To what do we owe the pleasure?" He extended her hand so that Rose couldn't pass him without making touching him. Rose stopped in mid-stride and ignored the offered hand.

"It has been a while Mr. Whitaker, I've been out of the country." She looked at him, expecting him to step aside, but he remained rooted in position, a smug and expectant smile on his face a greasy black pencil-thin moustache rested on his upper-lip. When Whitaker didn't move, she continued. "I need to wire money into another account; I've recently hired a bodyguard."

"Has someone been troubling you Ms. Sheffield? Hopefully not your brother's former, uhm, **associates**." Whitaker emphasized the last word; she wasn't sure if he was trying to make Jim's mafia connection sound distasteful to himself, or if he were hoping that she could help him get connected.

"No." Rose smiled at Whitaker. "Nothing like that, I'm just planning my next trip overseas and, well a male presence will aid me in my business affairs."

"And what **are** those affairs, Ms. Sheffield?"

"None of **your** business, Whitaker."

"Of course not." Whitaker backed up a couple of steps. "I was merely curious. I can help you with your business, Ms. Sheffield."

"Rose nodded, looking at the line that had formed at the teller windows, and noticing that the men in taupe hadn't moved from the small table that they were at when she entered the bank. She followed Whitaker into his small office with half-glass walls; he closed the door behind them and sat down at his desk looking expectantly at her.

Rose smiled demurely and produced the information to Whitaker who took it with a smarmy smile and looked at it.

"A Mister Ethan Dupreii from Mile High City, New Jersey. Different bank, I'll have to make a couple of phone calls, but it shouldn't take more than a half an hour."

"I'm on a bit of a tight schedule, Mr. Whitaker," she smiled widely at him, "if you could get it done any quicker, I'll make it worth your time." Rose could see that he was flustered at the prospect and cringed inwardly; knowing what it was that he thought would make anything worth his while.

Fifteen minutes later, Rose walked out of the First National Bank of Cleveland, her business concluded and fifty dollars poorer. Better that, than being seen in a social situation with Horace Whitaker, Rose mused. Rose made her way along the busy sidewalk to the corner diner where she was to meet Dupreii

Rose stole a quick look down the street as she entered the diner and sure enough, then men in taupe were following her at what they thought was a safe distance. Rose slid onto the stool at the counter next to Ethan Dupreii and

handed him a copy of the contract from the bank, he slipped it into an inner pocket of his overcoat without looking at it or saying a word.

"The men in taupe have located us." Rose said quietly as she looked at a menu. Dupreii nodded without saying a word while sipping his coffee. When the waitress arrived to take their order, Rose ordered two meatloaf plates for her and Dupreii. "We'll be catching the Silver Streak at three this afternoon."

"Will we be taking your brother's car there?" Dupreii inquired between sips of his coffee.

"No, I'll have one of his friends pick it up; it'll be safer that way. Rose replied. A few minutes later, their plates of meatloaf, coleslaw, and green beans arrived, the pair began eating, keeping an eye on their surroundings.

Later in the day, they arrived at Union Terminal in downtown Cleveland. Dupreii was amazed to find that Rose's luggage was already loaded and waiting for them on the train. They found their way to a private cabin on the train and had their tickets checked by the conductor and settled in for the ride to San Francisco.

"Did you see them?" Dupreii asked when they were alone in the cabin.

"Who?" Rose asked, engrossed in the newspaper that she had purchased before boarding.

"The men in taupe, I sure would like to know who the hell they really are."

"The Turks were at the train station, I saw the man with the monkey."

Rose replied. "I don't think that they saw either of us, however."

"Good."

"Can I see that notebook?" Rose asked curiously. Dupreii nodded, pulled the notebook from the inner-pocket of his overcoat and handed it to her. Rose began to page through the notebook, staring at it intently as she flipped through the book. "Interesting, the notes in this book are pretty much just theory, the last pair of pages in it look to be the first part of the assembly instructions to put it together, though clearly there are supposed to be more instructions. I wonder why he would separate the two sections, only to ask that you find Jim and thus, reunite them..."

"Do we know for sure that your brother has the missing section?"

"No, we don't, I suppose."

"It could stand to reason then, that the missing section is in Mile High City somewhere, or anywhere else in the world, for that matter."

"Do you think that the Turks might have found it when they ransacked Happenstance's office?"

"It's a possibility." The pair sat in silence for a while as they mused on the events of the past week. "What is this thing supposed to do, exactly?" Dupreii suddenly blurted out.

"I don't know all of it, I'm not much of a scientist or engineer, but it looks like it's supposed to take the power from an energy source, convert it to electricity and then broadcast that electricity via microwave or radio waves without wires over an area...And that houses will need to be equipped with a receiver to pick up the energy.

“Sounds a lot like how radio frequencies work...” Dupreii stated. “I’m getting hungry, would you care to join me in the dining car Ms. Sheffield?”

“I don’t mind if I do, Mister Dupreii.” Dupreii rose, took the hand that she offered him and helped her rise from her seat. The pair made their way along the train until they arrived at the dining car; they found a table in a quieter corner of the train car and sat down.

A young man with black hair and olive skin who was dressed as a waiter approached. “May I get some drinks?” He asked in heavily accented English.

“That’s an interesting accent, are you from the Middle East?” Rose smiled at the boy.

“Yes ma’am. Turkey. My parents came when I was young.” The smile on Rose’s face momentarily fled and she glanced at Dupreii who was deeply engrossed in the menu on their table. Rose smiled at the young man again. “I’ll have a Cosmopolitan.”

“I’ll have a scotch on the rocks.” Dupreii stated without looking up from the menu. The young waiter nodded quietly and left the table.

“You don’t think...” Rose started to ask, but Ethan interrupted her.

“Hard to say for sure, seemed like a good kid, parents probably fled the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the ‘20s.” Dupreii paused and looked toward the bar at the other end of the train car. “But still, it can’t hurt to keep an eye on him...” Dupreii looked at Rose and flashed a sudden smile at her. “So, Ms. Sheffield, I don’t think you ever told me what happened to your husband, unless it’s none of my business, of course.”

“No, it’s fine. It was a couple of years ago. He was a salesman, sold industrial machinery to other companies. Well, he had been on a sales trip to Seattle, Washington, when the train he was riding on derailed in the mountains, all aboard died.” Rose paused to wipe the tears that were welling up in her eyes before continuing. “Jonathan’s body was never found...” The young waiter returned with their drinks.

“Are you and your wife ready to order sir?”

“Oh, I’m sorry, we’re not married.”

“Many apologies, sir.” The young waiter bowed graciously.

Rose raised a hand to stop the show of humility. “It’s alright; it’s natural to assume that a man and a woman traveling together might be a couple.” Rose picked up the menu and scanned it quickly. “I’ll have the Chicken Cordon Blu.” Rose smiled at the young waiter.

“And I think I will have the porterhouse, medium well.” Dupreii stated, looking the young waiter up and down. The young waiter bowed slightly, then turned and left, quickly retreating to the kitchen car. “Well, he doesn’t appear to be armed.” Rose breathed a sigh of relief at the news.

“What about you, Mister Dupreii? Why are you just a custodian?”

“What do you mean?”

“You come across as being highly intelligent, why didn’t you ever go on to university?”

“I wanted to, as a child. But, my parents were farmers; they didn’t have a lot of money, so they couldn’t afford to send me off to university. Further, they

needed me to help work the farm as they got older as I was the only living child they had.”

“How many other siblings did you have?”

“Three; two sisters and a brother. They died during the influenza outbreak in 1918.”

“Were they older or younger?”

“Older. I was ten. I don’t know why I didn’t catch it.” Dupreii paused, took a sip of his drink and continued. “Anyway, they lost the farm after the stock market crash last year, I moved to Mile High City to find a job they refused to leave the town where they were born. I got lucky when I landed that job, no matter how poorly it pays. It also doesn’t help that most of my meager income goes to help my parents to just survive in a cramped and dingy house. And that’s why I’m just a custodian, because sometimes you do just exactly what you need to survive, especially with the economy doing as poorly as it is.” their meals were brought out to them after a little while and they ate in silence as the train raced through the night-time countryside of the American Mid West.

As Dupreii and Rose made their way back to their cabin, they were being watched by a pair of brown eyes peeking out from a private cabin, this went unnoticed by them however.

“I just remembered, we’re going to need more bullets for your brother’s revolver. Not that it matters much; I’m a poor shot with a handgun as we found out while the Turks were pursuing us. But, with a rifle or shotgun, I’m much better. “I did a lot of hunting while growing up, Deer, Raccoon, rabbit, quail, that sort of thing. When they returned to their cabin, Dupreii and Rose folded the beds from the wall of the cabin. “We should probably sleep in our clothes, at least for tonight, until we’re sure that the waiter isn’t one of the Turks that’s been chasing us.” Rose nodded quietly, and they lay in their individual bunks and turned the lights out. They quickly fell asleep to the rhythmic sound of the train as it rolled along the countryside in the night.

Dupreii awoke to the sound of someone jiggling the door handle to the cabin. Eventually the door slowly opened a crack. At first Dupreii didn’t see anyone, but then he saw a small furry creature near the door, it had long thin arms and slightly shorter legs, it cautiously walked with a stooped over gait, using its arms to walk as well as its legs. Dupreii recognized it as a small monkey and he watched it with interest while pretending to sleep.

The monkey paused and watched them as they slept; waiting to see if they were really asleep, it then went to the couple of bags they had in their cabin and began rooting through them for something. Dupreii continued to watch, eventually the monkey found the revolver and notebook in his overcoat. The monkey looked at the upper bunk where Dupreii lay ‘sleeping’ and showed its teeth in what seemed to him to be a mockery of a smile.

When the monkey turned from Dupreii, he slowly and quietly slid his pillow from its pillowcase and he leapt to the floor, in an attempt to throw the case over the monkey, which easily dodged out of the way and ran for the cabin’s door with a surprised squeak. Dupreii quickly gained his feet and sped after the monkey, turning right down the corridor outside and running toward the front of the train.

The monkey quickly fled along the narrow corridor of the train car with Dupreii close behind. When they got to the end of the car, the door to the next car was closed; Dupreii smiled as the monkey was far too small to open the door on its own. *I've got you now.* Dupreii grimly thought as he slowed down pursuit. The monkey leapt to the handle of the door and futilely pulled at it, trying to get the door open.

As Dupreii closed on the monkey, it dropped to the floor and aimed the revolver that the monkey had pulled from the custodian's traveling bag and aimed it at him, baring its teeth. The monkey was ugly, it had an eye patch over its left eye and Dupreii could see a scar going down the left side of the monkey's face from underneath the eye patch.

Dupreii continued to advance on the monkey despite the gun that was leveled up at him by the diminutive capuchin monkey. The monkey pulled the trigger of the revolver and with a click, nothing happened. The monkey chattered angrily and threw the revolver at Dupreii, who easily dodged the hurled weapon. With a screech, the monkey charged between Dupreii's legs. Dupreii swung around, following the monkey with his eyes and when it was out from under him, let loose with a vicious kick, sending the monkey flying with a squeal of surprise and pain along the train car's narrow corridor, narrowly missing a pair of light fixtures, when the monkey landed in a furry heap, it looked up and saw Dupreii quickly advancing on it, the monkey let the notebook lie where it lay and fled down the train's corridor, Dupreii stopped and scooped up the notebook, making sure that it wasn't damaged in the chase and then turned and picked up the revolver and pocketed it just as an employee of the train company emerged from the car that the monkey had tried to access.

"Can I help you sir?"

"No thanks."

The employee nodded silently and continued past Dupreii. Dupreii returned to his and Rose's cabin, where he found her awake.

"What happened?" Rose asked; concern in her voice.

"Caught a little thief in here."

"The waiter?"

Dupreii shook his head. "No, an ugly monkey with a scar and an eye patch...Took the notebook and the revolver."

"Did it get away?" Rose asked, concern rising in her voice.

"Yes and no. It got away, but without the notebook or the revolver." Dupreii paused as he stashed both under his pillow case-less pillow before jumping into his bed. "That reminds me, I'm so glad that the both of us forgot to buy bullets for the revolver. "But, we should pick some up when we get to San Francisco. Or sooner, if we're able to." Dupreii rolled over and closed his eyes. Rose crossed to the door to their cabin and locked it before settling in for the rest of the night.

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The train rolled to a stop at the train station of some small town in central Illinois.

“Where are you going, Mister Dupreii?” Rose inquired.

“We need ammo, there’s got to be a general store here that sells it. I’ll only be gone for a little bit, you should be safe here. But, just in case, keep the door to the berth locked...” Dupreii smiled immediately before he exited their berth in the train.

The day was cold and windy, the sky spat sleet down to the world below them, making Dupreii’s footing very treacherous as he walked the length of the wooden boarding platform along the train tracks. Dupreii stepped off of the platform and circled around the wood and brick train station, finding himself along a now muddy street, deep ruts marred its surface as other passengers attempted to cross it without slipping toward a small diner across the street, stretched before him.

Next to the Diner Dupreii could see a rundown general store, he looked up and down the street and saw that there were no vehicles driving along the road and he slowly made his way through the slick mud and deep ruts, barely keeping his feet under him as he went. Dupreii stepped up onto the boardwalk from the squelching mud and noticed that not only were his shoes muddy and soaked through, but so were the bottom third of his trousers. Dupreii sighed deeply, and looked up at the store, the sign above the double doors read “Gunderson’s Store.

Stepping forward, Dupreii pushed the doors open and entered the cramped, dusty store. Dupreii paused a moment and let his eyes adjust to the dim light, the windows looked as if they hadn’t been cleaned for years because of all the grime that had built up.

“Can I he’p you, sir?” the balding and overweight man behind the counter asked. Dupreii walked over to the counter and smiled widely.

“You sure can, I need bullets for a .38 revolver. It seems that I’m fresh out at the present time, though it proved to be a good thing last night.”

“How many rounds you need?” the clerk grunted at Dupreii.

“Three, four hundred I think.” Dupreii said. “I’m not a very good shot at all.”

The clerk nodded as he turned to the shelf behind him. “Target shootin’ then?” the clerk asked.

“Exactly.” Dupreii replied. The clerk turned back with two boxes of bullets and began to work the register.

“Two dollars.” The clerk said as he hit the total button on the register. Dupreii peeled a couple of bills off of the wad he had in his pocket, handed the cash to the clerk, then deftly scooped up the boxes of ammunition and slid them both into one of the pockets of his overcoat. Dupreii nodded once to the clerk and exited the store, nearly bumping into the young Turk that had served him and Rose dinner the night before.

“Mister! Come quick!” The boy was breathless and covered in mud. “The Ottomans, they took your girl!”

“What?!” Dupreii shouted, “where did they take her?”

“Off of the train, shortly after you left. To an old silo! Come with me, quickly!” The Turkish youth turned and ran toward the train, Dupreii followed as

quickly as he could. The pair crossed back across the muddy street, around the train station and train, which was still being loaded with additional passengers and their luggage.

The young Turk and Dupreii rounded the train, where Dupreii could see a grain elevator two miles across a flat wheat field." They took her there, I followed them, Mister."

"Thanks man!" Dupreii shouted as he tore through the field. Dupreii silently hoped that the train wouldn't depart before he returned with Rose. Dupreii turned toward the Turkish youth. "Can you find a way to delay the train's departure until I return with her?" the youth nodded and ran toward the rear of the train as Dupreii turned toward the grain elevator and resumed running across the wheat field.

Ten minutes later, Dupreii neared the grain elevator, he could see that there were four silos that were connected and a garage door at the base of them where trucks could pull in and get loaded. Dupreii guessed that the silos were probably a couple of hundred feet in height, at the top of the silos was a structure with windows and a door that was blowing in the wind. Dupreii could make out someone the shape of someone standing in one of them, but he couldn't make out any details. To the right of Dupreii was a lone building, it was a small house and looked like it had been converted to the office for the grain elevator. *Well, if they want me to walk into their trap, I will.* Dupreii thought as he began to walk purposefully toward the grain elevator.

Dupreii entered the truck door at the base that stood wide open, he looked straight up and saw the loading chute above him through the dusty air. Dupreii then crossed the space to a wooden ladder that was near the opposite side and he began to ascend into the darkness of the structure.

Dupreii climbed higher and higher into the concrete and steel silo, eventually, Dupreii reached the top of the silo, where there was a ledge and small hatch, Dupreii forced the hatch to open and climbed through it onto a narrow walkway, he could see the train in the distance still at the train station. Steeling his nerves, Dupreii turned to the short stairs that would take him to the top of the silo and he went up. Upon reaching the top of the silo, Dupreii saw that the wooden structure on top of the grain elevator was dark and he couldn't see anyone inside. Still, Dupreii made his way across the grain elevator, some two hundred feet above the fields of central Illinois.

Cautiously, Dupreii approached the door that was standing wide open and looked in, he could see Rose inside, and she was tied to a rickety wooden chair and was gagged. Rushing in, Dupreii pulled the gag from her mouth.

"Are you alright?" Dupreii asked. Rose nodded as Dupreii began to work the knots at her wrists in an effort to untie them.

"How did you find me?" Rose breathlessly asked.

"Our young Turkish friend." Dupreii grunted as he continued to untie the knots at Rose's wrists.

"Thank God." Rose muttered when Dupreii undid the final knot at her wrist.

"Did they hurt you at all?" Dupreii inquired as he knelt at her feet working the knots tying her ankles to the front chair legs. Rose shook her head.

"It's a trap though. But, I don't know why they haven't sprung it yet."

"My guess is to get the both of us away from the train long enough for them to ransack our berth." Dupreii grunted as he worked the knots free. Dupreii stood and took Rose's hand in his and helped her to stand. "Who was it that nabbed you?"

"The Turks." Rose responded and then hugged Dupreii in gratitude.

"Well, let's get the Hell out of here before they figure out that the notebook's not in our berth." Dupreii said as he took Rose's hand in his and led her out the door. Dupreii stopped short at the sight of several Ottoman Turks in their expensive Italian Suits and armed with Tommy Guns that were leveled at him and Rose. The only Turk who wasn't armed had the ugly monkey with the eye patch sitting on his shoulder. It looked to Dupreii that the monkey leaned over and whispered something in the man's ear.

"Where is the notebook, Dupreii?" The man inquired after several seconds.

"Didn't you find it in our luggage?" Dupreii shouted back.

"You know we didn't." The man with the monkey said. "Now, please, we don't want to hurt anymore people, all we want is the notebook, if you give it to me, we'll let you go on your way."

"I'm sorry; I'm not at liberty to do that. I'm returning it to the rightful owner."

"You'll never find Happenstance, Dupreii, and Lanahan? Well, he was killed weeks ago for his section of the notebook."

Dupreii could feel Rose stiffen up at the mention of her brother's death. "You're lying, you don't know where Lanahan is either, or otherwise you wouldn't have attacked us at his house yesterday. As for Happenstance, I don't believe that you have him, there's been no proof."

"Enough talk, Dupreii." The Turk growled. "Outside now."

"What are you going to do? Shoot us?" Everyone in the town will hear and come running, especially since they're most likely not used to the sound of automatic gunfire." One of the Turks motioned with his Tommy Gun.

"Don't worry, you'll enjoy a longer, more lingering death my American friend." The Turk with the monkey cryptically stated. Dupreii looked at Rose, then with a deep sigh, the two of them walked toward the open door of the shack and stepped out into the bright sunlight and frigid temperatures. Dupreii and Rose were escorted to the edge of the grain elevator's roof, where the Turks formed a half circle around them, their only escape was straight down two hundred feet to the concrete below.

"Now jump." The Turk with the monkey sneered at Dupreii, a broad smile crossing his face showing his mouth full of gold teeth. Dupreii looked over the edge and noticed the narrow walkway on which he had climbed up to the roof was about ten feet below where he and Rose stood, the Turks slowly moving forward as if to push them off.

"Do you trust me?" Dupreii whispered to Rose, she nodded slightly, fear building in her eyes as she saw her own impending death approaching. Dupreii grabbed Rose's hand and leapt off the side of the grain elevator, Rose right behind him.

Dupreii had over jumped, and seeing this he let go of Rose's hand and shoved her hard, she hit the side of the grain elevator, then landed in a heap on the narrow wooden walkway, Dupreii shot past it, but then saw a thick rusty iron cable hanging from the bottom of the walkway and in a desperate bid, he grabbed at it, the cable burned as it slid through his fingers and hands, but Dupreii was able to maintain his grip and slowed himself to a stop about fifteen feet below the wooden walkway. Dupreii looked up and saw Rose looking down at him, relief flooding her eyes but he also noticed that the Turks were quickly bringing their weapons to bear on her from above.

"Rose!" Dupreii shouted desperately, "Run!" Rose glanced up and saw the Turks aiming their weapons at her and she leapt into the door that led into the structure of the grain elevator, bullets from the Tommy guns splintered the wood and whizzed past Dupreii split seconds later. Dupreii was glad that the walkway concealed him partially. Desperately looking around, Dupreii caught sight of a window several feet below where he was hanging; he then looked at what was connecting the cable to the walkway and saw that it was a simple metal bracket.

Working painfully slowly, Dupreii worked the gun from a pocket in his overcoat and took aim at the bracket, the cable was rocking back and forth from his movement. Dupreii could hear the Turks running down the steps to the walkway above him as he carefully aimed the revolver. Several Turks ran past where Dupreii was dangling from the side of the grain elevator, but two stopped and one angled his Tommy gun over the side at him.

"It's time to die, Dupreii!" the man with the monkey shouted at him, in desperation, he fired his gun and missed the bracket by mere millimeters. Dupreii fired again and again in quick succession, barely missing it each time. Dupreii could hear the Turk with the Tommy gun moving around on the walkway trying to get a better shot at him.

Dupreii glanced up and saw that the Turk was leaning over the edge of the walkway, aiming the Tommy gun at him and about to fire, without thinking, Dupreii swung his revolver up and opened up, firing two shots into the Turks face, which exploded in a shower of blood and bone fragments, the Turk then lurched forward and toppled off of the grain elevator and hitting the pavement below with a wet thud and clatter of the Tommy gun. Dupreii then swung his gun around and fired the last round at the bracket and hit it square.

The iron cable that Dupreii was desperately hanging on came loose from the metal bracket and swung him toward the grain elevator, he missed the window by inches and bounced off of the grain elevator. Dupreii dropped the revolver in the impact and nearly lost his grip on the cable. He kicked off the side of the grain elevator and Dupreii angled for the window on his return, slamming into it shattering the glass as he passed through it.

Dupreii impacted on a Turk that had his back to the window, knocking him to the ground and sending his Tommy gun flying into the dark depths below. Dupreii let go of the cable and very nearly tumbled over the edge of the narrow, wooden platform where the Turk had been standing. Before he could recover, someone came at him and was swinging a very large metal hook at him, Dupreii

rolled to his left and was blocked by the wall of the silo, and the hook sailed past him and bit into the Turk's skull with a sickening crunch and spray of blood.

"We need to get out of here, Ethan!" Rose shouted at him as she left the hook embedded where it was.

Dupreii quickly gained his feet and wiped the blood that had sprayed onto him from his face. "Through here!" he shouted as he climbed into a small hatch in the side of the silo. The silo was filled about three-fourths of the way up and Dupreii stepped onto the grain, it smelled musty inside of the silo and they could see a second hatch on the opposite side of the silo that was open as well. "we'll run across to that hatch, there should be a way down on the other side, the Turks are coming after us over here." Rose nodded grimly and handed Dupreii the Tommy gun that the now deceased Turk had.

Stepping cautiously, Dupreii stepped onto the grain and tested his weight before fully committing, when he was satisfied that it would hold him, Dupreii climbed through, then helped Rose through the small hatch, setting her down gingerly upon the crusty layer of moldy corn. Once both Dupreii and Rose were through the hatch into the grain elevator's silo, they began to hurry across the open space to the hatch opposite them.

About half way across, Rose stumbled and fell to her knees and looked up at Dupreii, fear crossed her face. "Is it supposed to be hollow under this layer of corn?" She asked. Dupreii stopped, his face ashen from panic.

"Are you sure that it's hollow under there?" Dupreii asked, his voice wavering from fear. Rose nodded as she carefully worked her leg and foot free of the hole. At that instant, a bright light was shined down on them from above and they heard the voice of the Turk with the monkey.

"You have nowhere to go Dupreii; it is well past your time to die." Dupreii could hear the click of a gun being cocked."

In desperation, Dupreii fired the Tommy gun toward the bright light, hoping to hit something, at the same time he shouted "Run!" to Rose, who took off for the open hatch that they had been heading toward originally. Dupreii could feel the layer of corn give way beneath his feet and he threw the Tommy gun down and ran closely behind Rose, the grain beneath his feet crumbling away with every step he took. In desperation, Dupreii leapt toward the hatch as Rose swung herself through it to the other side and gripped the bottom of the hatch as the layer of grain collapsed in a cloud of dust 150 feet below his feet.

Rose turned around and grabbed Dupreii's arms and attempted to haul him up the side of the silo as he scabbled for any kind of footing that he could find. With one last desperate heave, Rose pulled Dupreii up as he thrust up with his legs after gaining a slight foothold against the concrete silo's wall, and he tumbled through the small hatch, landing on top of Rose. The pair sat there for a few seconds as they regained their breath, then stood up on still shaky legs and they made for the wooden ladder.

Dupreii and Rose emerged into the bright, cold day and in the distance they could hear the sound of the train's horn blaring, it was their last chance to get back on, so they began to run across the field after Dupreii scooped up the revolver that he had dropped. As the pair neared the train station, the train began

to pull away, forcing them to change direction and run along the tracks in pursuit of the train, Dupreii grabbed a hold of a handhold on the final train car and pulled himself up, he then turned and reached for Rose, grabbing her hand tightly and heaving her up onto the train with him where they collapsed in exhaustion.

“Do you have tickets?” Dupreii looked up and saw the mousy conductor standing over them, a hole punch in hand.

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They awoke the next morning, the sun was shining in and they were rolling across the Great Plains. Dupreii and Rose made their way to the dining car where they ordered Eggs Benedict and orange juice; the pair ate in silence as the countryside seemed to roll along outside the train.

“Where do we find your brother once we get to San Francisco?” Dupreii asked between bites.

“I’m not sure, to be honest. I know that he keeps a rented locker at the ferry building, there might be something that will help us find him in there.”

“There’s only one problem with that. No key.”

“That’s where you come in...Jim.”

“Tricky, I like it. You are quite devious it seems.”

“A lady has to be when she has a tendency to travel alone these days, Dupreii. There is a lot of very real danger out there now.”

“You’re right, of course.” Dupreii nodded in thanks to the waiter who silently cleared their table.

“Have you noticed that the Turkish waiter seems to have aged quite a bit?” Rose asked after he left their table, Dupreii solemnly nodded. Rose inquisitively arched her eyebrow at him. “Why didn’t you say something?”

“It’s important that they don’t suspect we know anything is wrong. When we’re done, we’ll quietly get up and walk slowly to our cabin to, hopefully, avoid any confrontations with them there.” Rose quietly nodded and the pair stood up, Dupreii stretched his back, and they slowly strolled along the train’s corridor toward their cabin quietly making small talk along the way.

As they passed a cabin where the sliding door to it was slightly open, Dupreii couldn’t help but glance in, where he saw a man wearing a taupe suit. Dupreii quickly averted his gaze as the square-jawed man stood and slid the door shut without a sound, keeping his face impassive.

“Men in Taupe.” Dupreii hissed quietly in Rose’s ear after they were well past the cabin.

“What?” Rose asked quietly.

“They’re on the train also.” Dupreii coolly replied. “Well, at least one of them is.” Dupreii continued. Rose and Dupreii continued to their cabin without a word.

When they arrived, the door was closed and locked, but they could hear the sound of rushing wind and something, or someone, moving about in the cabin. Dupreii motioned for Rose to step back; he pulled the empty revolver from his pocket, quietly unlocked the sliding door, and jerked it open as quickly as he

could, just in time to see a small brown and white monkey leap out the open window. Dupreii rushed to the window and stuck his head up, looking up he saw the monkey quickly climbing the side of the train toward the roof.

“How the hell did it get back on the train?! We barely made it!” Dupreii shouted in frustration. “I’m going after it!”

“What?! Are you insane?!” Rose incredulously shouted at him.

“Like a fox!” Dupreii flashed a crooked smile at Rose. “Take this.” Dupreii tossed the leather-bound notebook at Rose and leapt toward the window, he quickly looked for a ladder or something to give him a handhold. Immediately to the right of the window a metal ladder was welded to the train car. Dupreii carefully climbed out the window, sitting on the bottom edge of it and reached for the closest rung. Gripping the ladder rung tightly, Dupreii swung his legs out the window so that he was sitting side-saddle on it and then quickly pulled himself toward the ladder, barely hooking his feet around the bottom rung before his arms were pulled from the ladder on the side of the speeding train car.

With great exertion and determination, Dupreii slowly pulled himself up the side of the train car, being careful to keep a tight grip.

When Dupreii finally pulled himself to the roof of the sleek train car, he saw the monkey was already a tiny brown and white speck several cars toward the rear of the train.

Dupreii stood up, tentatively at first, but when he found his footing, he began to slowly run along the top of the car in a hunched over posture. At the end of the car, Dupreii paused, looked at the space between his car and the next one back, took a few steps back and charged forward as fast as he could, waiting until the last second before he leapt across the open space, clumsily landing safely on the other side. Quickly, Dupreii regained his feet and ran as fast as he could along the train, leaping to the next car when he got to the end of the one he was on.

Dupreii only made it to the third car back when the monkey disappeared down a small vent in the center of the roof two cars ahead of where he was presently at. Dupreii skidded to a stop and stood on top of the train loudly cursing when he became acutely aware of a large presence immediately behind him.

Dupreii quickly turned just in time to see a large, muscled fist coming at his head, not even a second later it made contact with his face. Ethan stumbled about blindly for a second, when the stars cleared from his vision; he could see one of the men in taupe coming at him again. Dupreii shook the pain off and stepped out of the way hoping that his assailant would tumble off the side of the train. Sadly, Dupreii would have no such luck.

Dupreii spun around on the balls of his feet and took up a fighting stance, crouching low with legs set wide and both hands balled up into fists waiting for the man in taupe’s next charge. The man had taken a similar posture to his, but did not charge.

“Give us the notebook Dupreii and you and your girlfriend can quietly go on your way!”

“Who **are** you people?!”

“It’s none of your concern Dupreii!”

“When someone is pursuing me, I think I have a right to know who they are!” Dupreii shouted back, the pair of men were circling around each other, the wind whipping their jackets and ties as they both sized up their adversary.

“We are trying to stop the Ottomans from destroying the world; they seek the notebook in your possession Dupreii.”

“What Ottomans? That empire is gone!”

“There are still sympathizers who wish to see its return to this world.”

“Who do you work for?!”

“We’re with the FBI Dupreii. We could just have you arrested for treason if you don’t comply with my request.”

“Somehow, I don’t believe that you’re with the feds...” Dupreii shouted in reply.

“You can make this easy; or hard Dupreii!”

“Looks like I’m choosing hard, sir!”

“Very well!” The man in taupe pulled a large automatic handgun from under his jacket and leveled it at Dupreii. “This is your last chance, Dupreii. Give me the notebook!”

“I can’t!” Dupreii quickly dropped to his stomach and covered his head as the train rushed through a tunnel with a low-hanging ceiling. Dupreii remained in that position until the train exited the tunnel, when he looked up; all that was left of the man in taupe was a smear of blood along the roof of the train car near where he had been standing.

Slowly, Dupreii made his way back to the train car where his cabin was, climbed back into the cabin as the train slowed down for a fairly large town as it traveled through it.

When he was all the way into the car, Rose rushed forward and hugged him tightly. “What happened?” she asked as she let him go. Dupreii seemed a bit flustered to her.

“Oh, uh, monkey escaped, man in taupe ambushed me. He’s dead though, tunnel got him it seems.” Dupreii began to examine where he was hit in the face in the mirror and winced as he noticed it was starting to bruise up. “Where are we?” Dupreii asked, still examining his wound.

“Kansas City, I think.” came the reply.



“We might be in deeper then we planned on this little adventure.” Dupreii replied.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, if the man in taupe isn’t lying, it seems that our friends the Turks are looking to restore the Ottoman Empire... This device of Professor Happenstance’s just might help them do that.”

“But, what about the – “

“Men in Taupe?” Ethan interrupted Rose. “I don’t know, the one on the train still maintains that they work for the feds...something about them says that’s not true at all. There’s, something **weird** about them in my opinion, but I can’t place my finger on exactly what it is though. I think we should work under the assumption that they’re not trying to help us find your brother. And, we should try to blend in a little better somehow as well.”



“I think that we should also disembark right before the train leaves and find another route to San Francisco, since they know that we’re here.” Rose stated.

“I agree.” Dupreii nodded. “I suggest flight, it will ensure that we get to California well ahead of the train as we don’t know how much of our plans they know, or how they found out where we were heading to begin with.” Rose nodded in agreement.

A half an hour later, the train rolled into Union Station, where just before the train was to depart, Dupreii and Rose disembarked. As far as they were aware, they were unseen by the Turks and Men in Taupe. They flagged a taxi cab and had it drop them off at New Richards Field near Kansas City’s downtown area where they were able to book a flight to San Francisco that was to leave an hour later. When the airplane was finally airborne, they breathed a sigh of relief and could finally relax.