

Smooth Draft Sample (first 132 pages of 340)

The Southern Cross

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V2: Sullivant's Hill

The Southern Cross

Condensed Novel Draft Sample 1st 12 chapters (of 25)

First 6 Episodes (of 12) for our Internet-Comic-Book Concept

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1. The Light Cannon

Friday, March 6, 1885, 4:00 PM.



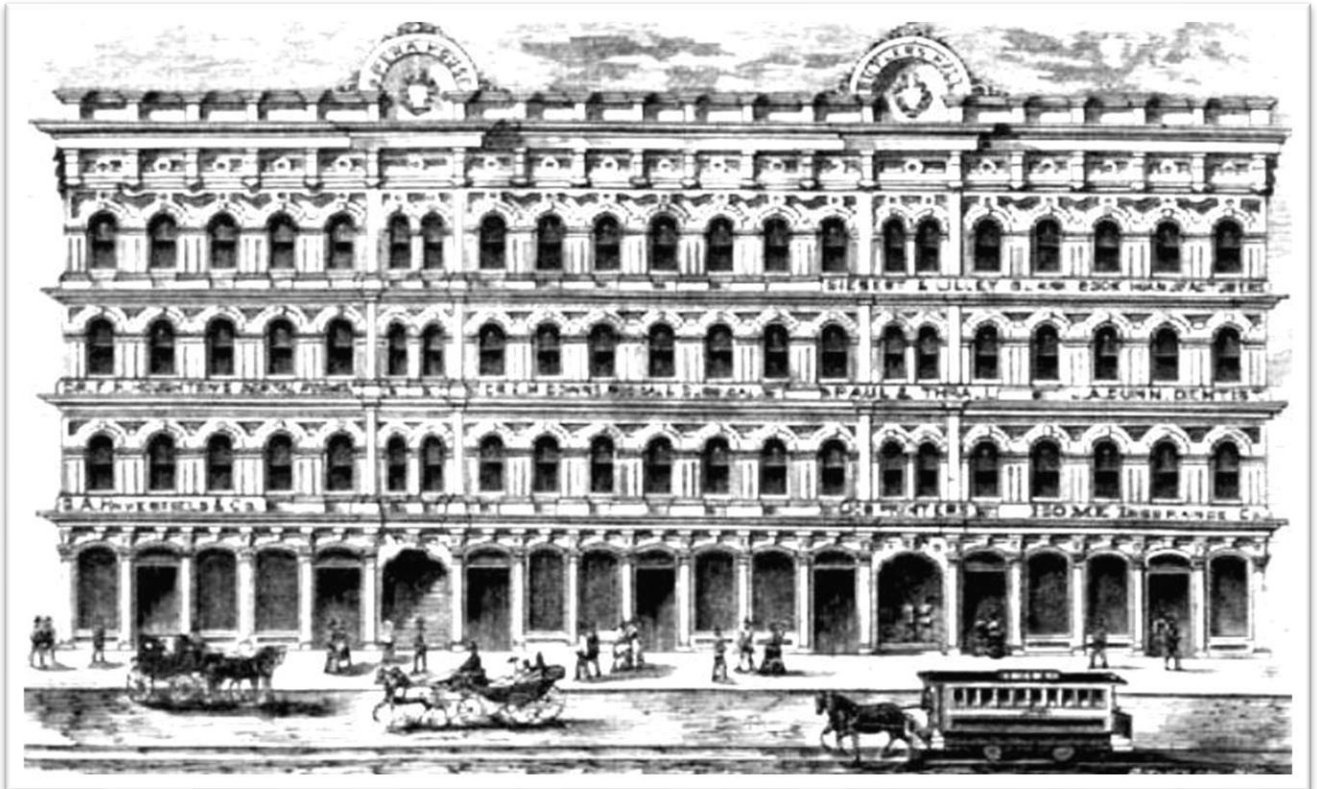
Thomas Alva Edison was as excited as a spoiled child on Christmas eve.

For nearly three years, he and his Manhattan-based engineers had been rolling in and out of Ohio's capital to open the world's first fully electrified music hall.

Finally, the grand opening of Columbus's new ***"Metropolitan Opera House"*** was only four and a half hours away.

Well, only Edison's promotions called this music hall "new." Only its name, paint, curtains, upholstery, and Edison's direct-current electrical lighting system were actually new.

Twenty-four years earlier, at its original Grand-Opening, it was the:
"Cotton Block and Comstock's Opera House."



Columbus's Metropolitan Opera House was located at 127 North High Street. Fire destroyed it in 1892.

Four months earlier, at a New York press conference, Edison boasted, "This event will be far more than electrifying a music hall. I will introduce two revolutionary products that will forever enlighten our world!"

In the last half of the nineteenth century, Americans and Europeans worshipped the greatest inventors, like the greatest athletes today. In 1885, Edison was the most famous (living) man in the Western World. Articles about him increased newspaper sales so dramatically that six

hundred reporters from eight countries had rail-rolled into Columbus for this historic night.

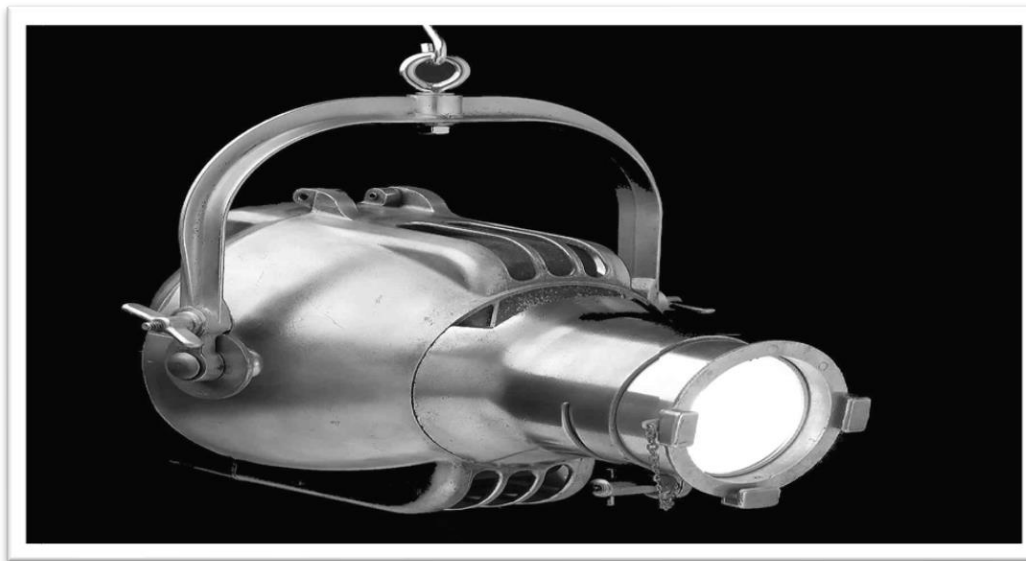
Even without mentioning his two new products, this event still drew the second-largest crowd in Columbus's 72-year history.

Edison had also sent railroad and show tickets, paid hotel reservations, and whiskey vouchers to sixty-three VIPs. Sixty-one showed up.

His guests included two former presidents (Hayes and Grant), author Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), composer John Philip Sousa. Inventors included Alexander Graham Bell, George Eastman, Harvey Firestone, Skyler Wheeler, Elisha Gray, and Joseph Gayetty, the inventor of toilet paper.

Like this new theater, one of his 'new' products was not so new. After seeing its prototype in February of 1881, lame-duck President Rutherford B. Hayes ordered the first 1000 for the US Navy, provided Edison's company produce them secretly until March of 1885.

Edison called them "Light Cannons," however, the press dubbed them "Spotlights," which stuck.



The day after Edison's New York press conference, Columbus's three hotels were over-booked, leaving no rooms for hundreds of reporters.

So, Governor Hoadly jumped into action. He ordered a battalion from the Columbus Arsenal (now Fort Hayes) to erect 25 troop tents on the statehouse grounds, several blocks south of the Opera House.



About two hours before '*The Maids of Armando*' would become the world's first spotlighted musical, Edison's excitement turned into anxiety. He worried that a tiny malfunction could become a headline disaster.

So, he slid and skidded over several icy blocks to Saint Patrick's Church to make a \$100 donation, which was rather large for 1885.

As Reverend Furlong's big powerful hands clamped the cash, Edison asked him to pray that tonight's show runs glitch-free. After stuffing the bills into his donation box, Father John took Edison's hands. Then in his rich Irish accent, he recited a beauty, amen.

Too bad Edison didn't ask the preacher to cover the entire evening.

Five minutes before showtime (8:25 PM), under the flickering glow of the theater's original gaslighting, Governor Hoadly opened the show by thanking the dignitaries, and reporters, before introducing Edison.

After America's Innovation Wizard made sure he was standing on the 'X,' pre-painted on the stage floor, he showed off his most extraordinary talent, marketing:

"Ladies, gentlemen, oh and also you reporters," cracked up everyone, not holding a pencil.

"The Annals of Time will remember this evening as one of the most significant nights in human history!"

"Tonight, we will leave the darkness forever behind!"

His adoring crowd laughed at almost everything until he said, "LET THERE BE LIGHT!" when instead, they all gasped.

He suddenly glowed so intensely that everyone had to cover their eyes for a moment. They expected to see the world's first fully lightbulb illuminated musical, but nothing this brilliant.

His lightbulbs were not nearly bright enough to power his Light Cannons. So instead, he used "Voltage Arcing," the first electric lighting method

patented. That patent was issued in 1804, forty-five years before Edison was born.

“Let the Show Begin!”



The ‘Buckeye Beauties’ would soon be glowing under Edison's reveal headlines.

Why would Edison choose this small town’s opera house for this event when his company was headquartered in Manhattan? New York City had dozens of music halls and newspaper offices; Columbus had one of each.

Although Edison was born and raised in Ohio, he would not have chosen this music hall. However, mathematically, Columbus was the center of the nation’s massive web of railroads. Because this city provided the quickest access to the country, President Hayes chose this area in 1880.

In April of 1881, now Ex-President Hayes became the country’s first secret spy agency commander. His first quandary; explain why Edison’s engineers would be hanging around Columbus for a few years. His second, create a dull cover story so uninteresting that no one would question it.

Hayes's brilliant, 6'9" secretary/bodyguard and former child slave, Lemont Freeman, suggested having Edison electrify that old opera house to hide his real job. "That's perfect," Hayes instantly realized.



Lemont Freeman

Edison Electric's real work was electrifying a still-hidden 1100-foot long Civil War weapons factory.

This underground facility was 7 miles west of the music hall, 30 feet under a rise called "Sullivant's Hill" (today's Hilltop).

For that boring agency cover, Lemont suggested a federal orphan aid agency."

FYI: Immediately after the Civil War, European nations began dumping what would eventually be 1.7 million orphan children into America's open arms. Most were fostered by farmers scattered throughout the country.

This underground Civil War munitions factory also opened in 1861. Union Army Engineers adapted 'Limelights' from coal mines to light it up during the war, which required a full-time 12-man crew instead of 1 light switch.

Soon after the war, President Andrew Johnson ordered that the still-secret factory closed and the rail-car lubrication barn above it locked and boarded up.

Thirteen years later (1878), Edison began providing electric D/C generators to the federal government. Suddenly lightbulbs and ventilation fans made this invisible facility too viable to ignore.

In February of 1881, outgoing President Hayes, and President-elect James A. Garfield (both Ohio-born Union Army Generals), secretly formed Orphan as the first 'actually secret' division of the US Secret Service.

To explain its visible aspects, Orphan's public name was NORA, the National Orphan Relief Agency.

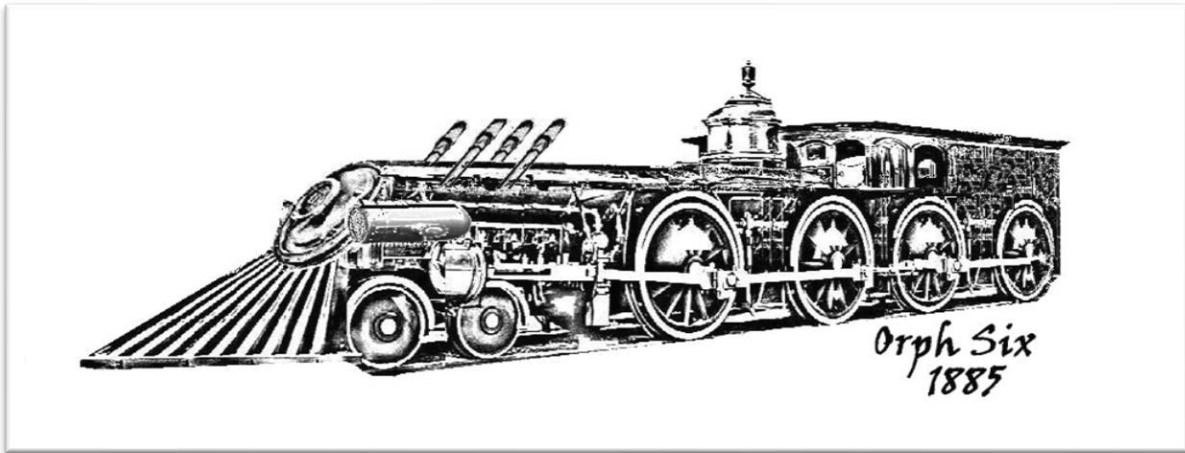
Later that year, the barely electrified Orphan Underground (6 dim lightbulbs) opened. Rushing emergency medical aid to several hundred thousand orphan children was NORA's unquestioned excuse for their little train racing around America's rails.

From NORA's railroad barn above the underground complex, Orphan agents could reach these poor orphan babies (ruthless mega-villains) faster than any other location in the nation.

On March 4, several days before tonight's big show, Edison's new D/C system increased the underground facility's power from 6 to 2800 amps.

By now, NORA operated five custom 'Orphan Ambulance trains' with several more being readied. They affectionately called these low-slung, hidden-weapon packed rail rockets "ORPHS."

Painted white with big red crosses, ORPHS hid in plain sight while zooming around the nation's rails. Most of their features, like their world-record-shattering speeds, and concealed weapons, remained highly classified.



While still in dark primer, ORPH Number Six was about to be rushed into service.

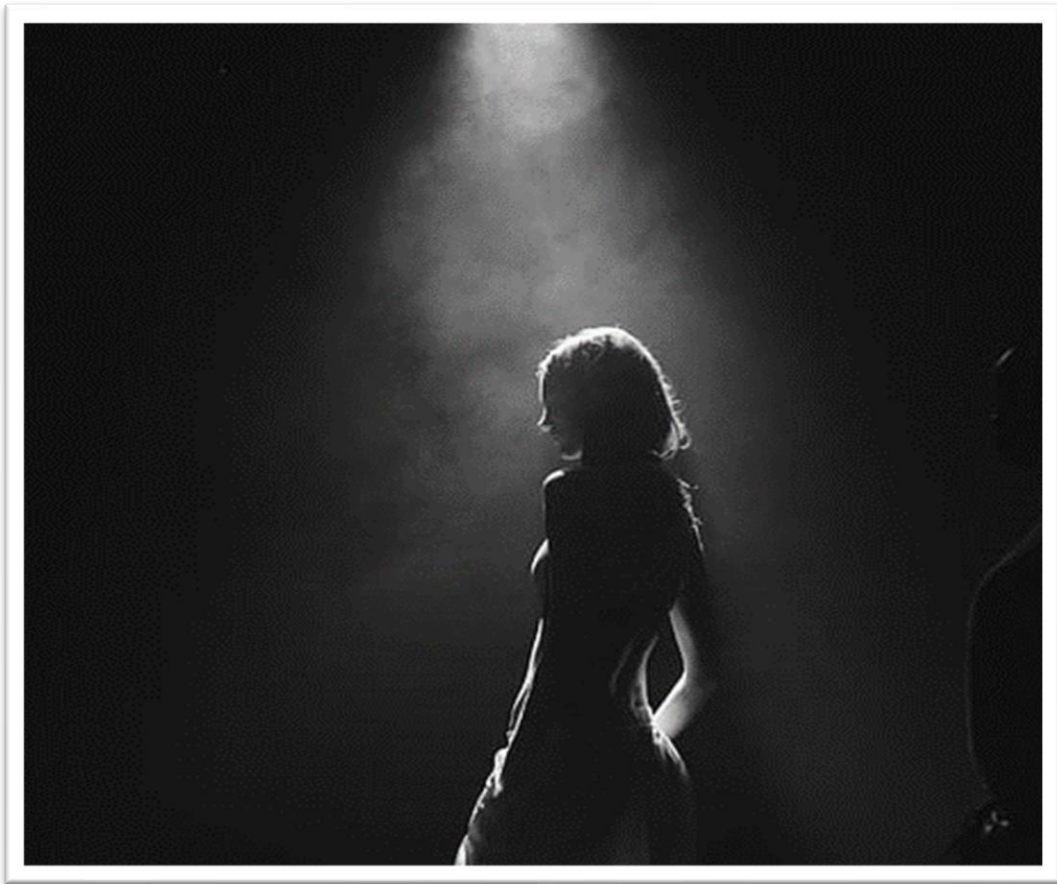
Ten feet north of NORA's shabby Orphan Ambulance garage, NORA built a little (big house-sized) 'National Orphan Child Hospital' to literally complete the compound's cover. This clinic would also actually treat an injured orphan child (once in a while).



This image of the Rail Car Lubrication Barn above Orphan's base is from the Civil War (before Orphan). The walled prisoner of war section of Camp Chase sat about 1000 feet behind those background trees.

Anyways, once tonight's show *'The Maids of Armando'* began, the audience gasped each time another Buckeye Beauty was "spotlighted."

Their gorgeous leader was Sara Kilbourne from a small upscale settlement seven miles north of Columbus, called Worthington.



Sara's five companions (Armando's other maids tonight) were also from Ohio and closer than most sisters.

Sara and Elizabeth were natural redheads, auburn, and copper, respectively, as Dolly, Daisy, Dotty, and Dorothy were natural blondes.

The show's producers, Peter D. Legend and Edison, planned a lavish after-party, three blocks south of the opera house, in the Neil House's ballroom.



The Columbus Neil House (of 1885) sat directly across the street from Ohio's Statehouse.

Edison did not want his VIPs walking the three blocks to the after-party through 5000 fans, so he turned that issue into tonight's other reveal.

The VIPs would ride inside tonight's most exciting breakthrough, the most advanced vehicle to yet roll over America's horse-crap-covered roads, Edison's "Electro Wonder Coach!"



Along with teams of Clydesdales (gigantic show horses), he shipped the first twenty produced in from New York by rail.

He proudly called their most significant advancement: ***“The Dome Light!”***

Although light bulbs glowing on a stagecoach's ceiling sent drool dribbling down the chins of nineteenth-century nerds, this was not their only revolutionary feature. These were also the world's first coaches with a removable table in-between their two (facing) bench seats.

Very advanced stuff, but these tables still needed cup holders.

The battery under the forward bench seat was powerful enough to keep the dome light glowing past midnight.

Six months earlier, the musical *“Ladies Come First”* (written by Sara and John Phillip Sousa) was the last show before the theater closed down for its electrical rebirth.

So, Peter naturally reserved the first Electro Wonder Coach lined up in the alley, beside the stage door, for his six gorgeous stars.

Anxiously he checked his glowing radium (radioactive) pocket watch before telling them, “The coach parade was supposed to start in one minute!” (11 PM).

As he closed their coach's door, after seating them, he shook his head and mumbled, “They (the VIPs) are all in the lobby, sucking up to reporters.”

Suddenly, just as Peter stepped back from the coach, its enormous 'whip man' (driver) cracked his tool. His dinosaur-sized ponies launched onto North High Street then swung a hard left at full speed.

All six beauties screamed as their coach skidded around that icy corner on two wheels before racing off to the north. But, unfortunately, this was not their only problem; the after-party was to their south.

"STOP! That's the wrong way!" The horrified producer uselessly yelled.

The VIPs, journalists, and fans remained oblivious as they partied in the lobby near the theater's south side. Only Peter and the next coach's whipman saw that giant hijacker toss his (Edison provided) top-hat away, like a Frisbee.

As his hat soared, a dark cover draped down over the coach's windows and doors. Then it tightened, preventing the girls from escaping or seeing what was going on.

Peter dove into the next coach, shouting, "Go after them! That lunatic does not know where he's going!"

The driver launched his team faster than ever before. However, that extra speed had nothing to do with giant horses wanting to save pretty ladies.

Somehow, right in front of that driver's eyes, someone had replaced the steel pin connecting the team's rigging to the coach with a toothpick. With nothing to pull, his giant beasts launched faster than ever.

However, he had grasped his reins so quickly that they wrapped around his wrist, flinging him face-first onto the brick pavement below.

Fortunately, his impact was well padded by several massive piles of warm, still steaming Clydesdale dung.

Before that driver picked himself up, Peter dove into what had been the third coach waiting in line, shouting, "Go after them!"

"Go after who?" the whipman replied.

"The coach that just snatched the Buckeye Beauties!"

"Where did it go?" the driver asked.

"It went that way! North! Go now!" Peter yelled and pointed out the still opened door.

"GO, GO!" the whip-man yelled as he cracked his whip while maneuvering his team around the horseless coach in front.

His beasts obeyed as they shot around it, then turned north in hot pursuit.

"What the hell!" that third whip-man yelled as the reins tore loose from his left hand. Somehow someone had also replaced his coach's pin with a toothpick as he sat right above it.

Before his Clydesdales turned the corner, they sideswiped that second whipman as he staggered to his feet. He was again fortunate enough to land on another massive horse patty, so only the odor and perhaps a mental issue would linger. After being fooled twice, Peter took off running south toward the lobby, screaming for help!"



This photo, taken after the 1892 fire, shows the alley where the Buckeye Beauties were hijacked.

The opera house's lobby was near the south (downtown) side of the building. In front of that entrance, the sidewalk was jammed with fans screaming for Edison, the former presidents, and other celebrities.

So, no one heard Peter's squeals until he reached them.

Keeping the crowd out of the road were two equestrian constables (Columbus policemen on horses). Once Peter explained enough to send them off in hot pursuit, the only thing still visible moving up North High Street was that third team of Clydesdales.

The Buckeye Beauties were gone!

Hearing an even louder commotion out front, Colin McLaughlin, Sara's man-friend, squirmed his way through the crowded lobby to see what was happening.

Colin was a former prizefighter and Columbus constable turned local bandleader. At age eight, both of his parents died from a cholera outbreak.

For the next eight years, Colin and his twin brother Lucas were raised by Father John at Saint Patrick's Orphanage next door to his church.

During the Civil War, both smart, extremely athletic 16-year old boys became spies for the Union Army. They never knew that Father John secretly arranged their placements in security, so his favorite sons would not die on battlefields.

Colin remained in Central Ohio and worked directly for (then) Union General Rutherford B. Hayes. At one point, he knocked out two Confederate assassins' seconds before they would have filled General Ulysses S. Grant with bullet holes.

Lucas was sent to Washington DC to protect US senators.

Almost no one knew that Colin and Lemont Freeman also became Orphan's first two undercover agents in 1881. His girlfriend, the suddenly kidnaped Sara, had no clue about his double life.

Peter yelled at him, "Colin, they snatched Sara and her girls!"

"WHO!?"

"I don't know! Their coach left like a bat out of hell!"

"They went that way!" Peter said as he again pointed north.

"Those Turds!" Colin yelled as he ripped his boots off. Then like a momma cheetah out to get her baby's back, he sprinted barefoot up that icy brick road towards that third team of Clydesdales. They were now meandering as if waiting for him.

He leaped like that mad momma kitty onto the team, snatching the loose reins as he belly-flopped over the rigging. He instantly bounced to his feet, straddling the rear horses.

He gave the reins a mighty tug, and the gigantic team blasted off.

Resembling a water skier, Colin extracted every inch of speed those colossal beasts could muster.

Several minutes later, he reached the mounted constables. They were stopped by trains parked across High Street, in front of Columbus's Union Train Station, a half-mile north of the opera house.



Columbus's Union Train Station in 1885.

"That coach has to be on these grounds! It is either in or behind one of these (eleven) buildings!"

They explained that tonight's event had created an enormous glut of parked trains, blocking every north or eastern route that a stagecoach could use.

"East Naghten Road" (the only eastbound road left) "is closed by firefighters dousing a home fire." There were no escape roads headed west from here; the Scioto River was in the way.

"That coach has to be in or around one of these railroad buildings."

The other constable explained, "Unless it boarded a train."

"Stagecoaches are too tall to enter boxcars. They ship them on open flatbed cars, which we would see." Colin explained as he pointed at the ten flatbed cars that brought all 20 dome-lit wonders from New York.

As they searched the rail complex separately, Colin surfed around the eleven buildings, yelling, "SARA, where are you!"

They were right; that hijacked coach had turned into Union Station's industrial park. Then just before it slammed into the massive door of the station's locomotive maintenance building, that steel door shot open.

It slammed closed the instant after the coach entered.

Like 99.9% of buildings in 1885, Union Station's locomotive garage did not have electricity yet. However, tonight it did have some portable electric lighting. To the left, just inside the door, a 25-watt lightbulb was wired to a suitcase-sized battery. These temporary connections were held together with adhesive tape.

Adhesive tape was another invention that Washington had tagged secret. A Google search says this sticky stuff was first patented in 1923.

A second after the door slammed shut, the enormous hijacker leaped from the coach's bench while four darkly dressed men shoved wooden lever-jacks under the coach, much like an Indy-car pit crew.

Its springs, axles, and wheels were removed and stowed in less than two minutes. Next, they lowered the coach's body onto four small dollies that resembled modern skateboards.

The screams from the six clueless beauties sealed inside were muffled by the dark cover, still tightly wrapping the coach.

Ironically, Colin leaped off his Clydesdales, only six feet away from that locomotive-sized door. Then from pure frustration, the barefoot agent hammered it with his fists raised high above his head.

The hijack team froze; their gigantic leader waved for them to keep working as he moved to the door.

Colin was not pounding to enter; he had no clue that his gorgeous girlfriend was thirty feet away.

The two extra-long (60-foot) cargo cars these hijackers had waiting inside looked like typical double-length boxcars when closed up. These customized ends were opened above the cars, creating a large enough opening for a team of six huge horses to enter.

When closed, these end walls also had walk-through doors, like typical passenger cars, allowing car-to-car access while traveling.

Beneath these end-walls were thick steel sheets that folded out to form a bridge between two cars or a ramp to the ground.

Both methods were in use here.

Their director then escorted the Clydesdales, still attached to the coach cabin, up the ramp into the first custom boxcar.

Once in place, he pulled the steel pin, then led the horses into the next car. His men then retracted the platforms and bolted down those end-wall doors.

They attached the coach cabin to hooks, hidden beneath something unexpected for a boxcar, removable tiles, from an exquisitely tiled floor.

Besides being extended to double standard length, that second boxcar, now filled with horses, suspension, and wheels, was designed to transport animals.

Typical stable cars had vented sidewalls. However, this one only had vents along the center of its roof. These looked like hood scoops from classic muscle cars, built eighty years later.

In less time than it takes to buy a train ticket on a busy day (22 minutes), these two cars became the eighty-fourth and eighty-fifth units in an eighty-three car train, rolling out track 9.

In 1885, Columbus's Union Station had 13 east-west tracks, so only the city's streets (not railroads) were blocked by parked trains.

About three minutes later, railroad controllers switched this train to a northeast track, headed for Cleveland, its next scheduled destination.

Four miles north of town, a warning torch was burning on the track in front of the train. Typically, this meant that something was blocking the rails 1500 feet past the fire. So, the engineer brought it to a complete stop.

This cargo hauler had four employees aboard, two engineers (drivers), and two boilermen (hard workers). Once stopped, the boilermen walked a half-mile forward but found nothing. The train's alternating engineer remained deeply asleep inside the caboose.

Besides the hijackers, no one witnessed those two custom boxcars being pushed onto the switch track, in-between the north and southbound rails.

As they reconnected the northbound's caboose, another flair suddenly warned a southbound train of a blockage. This private nine-car cargo hauler stopped far enough past the northbound train that only their cabooses sat side by side, with those two custom cars parked in-between.

Seconds after that short southbound train stopped, it did something strange. Its caboose self-detached, then rolled itself far enough back for the hijackers to push those extra-long cars onto the southbound track.

As the blacked-out team pushed those two long cars onto those southbound rails, their sprawling leader, also displaying cat-like agility, slipped into that northbound caboose.

Inside he plucked a tiny yellow dart from the napping engineer's neck.

For the next 30 seconds, from six inches away, he gazed into the man's unconscious face. Then he straightened up his collar.

Suddenly he yelled, "Damn Yankee!" splattering spit across those snoozing cheeks just before his vast hands slapped them.

Simultaneously, that southbound caboose rolled itself back, automatically locking all three cars to their southbound train.

He slipped out, tossed that dart into the woods, then rejoined his men as they boarded their caboose.

Besides having electric eliminated (mostly frosted) glass windows and doubled length, it looked like a typical caboose. You would have never guessed that this was the most luxurious caboose in the country.

Inside was a five-star kitchen and two highly accomplished French chefs. They were baking crocks of sweet onion soup, topped with cheese imported from Switzerland and Colorado's finest Prime Rib. An ideal midnight feast.

Just as the hijackers closed their caboose's door, the boilermen returned to their locomotive, which was still about a third of a mile away.

"Whatever was blocking must have left," they reported.

Seconds later, both trains were rolling.

This evening (now 11:58 PM) went exactly as planned. Well, that is for whoever controlled that phantom southbound train. This operation took fifty-eight of its sixty allotted minutes.

Several hours later, that unreported train crossed over the Ohio River from Indiana into Louisville, Kentucky.

It was immediately switched to an eastbound rail running along the southern bank of this, the nation's second-largest river.

2. March 7, 12:20 AM

That dome light could no longer outshine a firefly.

The coach cabin, still wrapped in that dark cover, only allowed the six sobbing beauties to hear the constant beat of railroad tracks.

Suddenly at 12:30 AM, bright light poured through the coach's windows. That dark cover had vanished as quickly as it appeared, allowing their eyes to start focusing again.

They saw no one in this rolling room, but the aroma of fine food poured in. Seconds later, they piled out of their high-tech machine into another luxurious space.

Six light bulbs were glowing inside the stained-glass fixtures on this boxcar's copper gilded ceiling. Several dozen small light bulbs were also burning. Six of them were in blue glass and gold sconces (wall lamps), imported from Venice.

The room's walls were finished in birds-eye maple, under several baby blue cashmere rugs, a bright white tile with a pearl-like finish.

One of its two sixty-foot-long walls had a fifteen by three-foot table attached to it, with six Hepplewhite dining chairs lined up in front. Each chair's backrest displayed the shields or crests of a powerful royal family.

The table was covered by a silk cloth in the same baby blue color as the rugs. Five led-weighted cut-glass vases with stunning orange jasmine flowers separated each dinner setting.

Servings of prime rib, lobster bisque, alligator sausage, and smoked salmon were beautifully displayed on flow-blue China.

A secured cart offered bottles of fine French champagne and Italian Sauvignon. Another held cut-glass pitchers of hot chocolate or tea, cold milk or water, and a large cloisonné bowl full of ice. The last cart contained only one silver platter holding six tiny desserts that looked like artwork.



Although upset, the girls were starving.

Several weeks earlier, Edison told them, "A friend with the first camera prototype that can shoot sharp pictures of dancing bodies will also debut at this show."

"The whole world should see you girls dancing under my Light Cannon headlines."

They had only fantasized about big, tasty meals ever since.

It smelled and looked amazing, so they dug in.

George Eastman with his high-speed Kodak film Prototype

A small note was neatly taped onto the wall above the feast.

Its message:

Dear Sara, Dolly, Daisy, Dotty, Dorothy, and Elizabeth, Please, forgive me for this sudden intrusion on your lives. But, unfortunately, sometimes, I must operate secretly.

Your Columbus Dispatch Newspaper has been notified that you are all safe and well taken care of. That you will return after a fun tropical vacation.

We need you to perform "Big Daddy" from your musical, "Lady's Come First," for presidents, emperors, kings and princes, and other world leaders at a warm and sunny location. For this, you will all be richly compensated far beyond your dreams.

Please do not be upset with me. To protect so many world leaders in one place, I could not risk telling you or anyone about this. You will be treated like the goddesses you are, effective immediately!

For relief and hand washing before dinner, look behind the blue curtains.

Since you could not pack for this warm vacation, I provided Paris and Rome's most celebrated designers with your measurements, favorite colors, and tastes.

They created seven lightweight warm-weather dresses and seven flowing gowns for each of you.

Each wardrobe also contains seven pairs of the best Italian shoes and seven sets of the highest quality French undergarments and hosiery. Your little assistants will provide you with almost anything you desire.

Your wardrobes are inside your travel closets on the other side of this room. Your name is engraved on your travel closet's door.

Sorry for these limited accommodations aboard my train; they are not worthy of goddesses!

For this morning, suffer through this meager meal. It only improves from here. However, to ensure your new wardrobes fit correctly, I recommend that you avoid overeating.

Your Admiring President

That letter, combined with this delicious food, generously seasoned with herbal flowers (tranquilizers) and the new wardrobes, turned their terror into almost playful excitement.

These modern refrigerator-sized travel closets were mostly walnut, with cedar lining. Only their golden side handles (likely from caskets) exposed their portability.

The girls gasped as they opened theirs, then five more times as they peeked inside the others. Each was packed with some of the most beautiful light-weight dresses, outfits, and the silkiest undergarments they had ever seen.

On top of each closet sat several boxes of Georgia Peach brand bonnets.

Beside their travel closets sat a twelve-foot-long walnut vanity with a white marble top and six more (royal) crested chairs. The first mirror they had ever seen, surrounded by light bulbs, was on the wall above the vanity.

That mirror was exciting and frightening for them, for the same reason; it showed everything.

Inside the vanity's drawers, the most exquisite makeup, perfumes, lotions, beauty tools, and hairbrushes that Europe and Asia had to offer.

Just past the vanity were two rest areas behind blue curtains. Each contained a flushing toilet with toilet paper (both huge new things in the 1880s), a sink with hot and cold running water, and a soap dispenser.

After feasting, all six beauties felt wonderfully relaxed (quite stoned).

Suddenly at 1:20 AM, a tiny Asian girl (or lady), about as cute as a baby panda, entered their car through the standard train-car door (built into one of those fully opening end walls).

Cheerfully she greeted them with a big “Ewoo wadies!” (Hello ladies).

All six beauties started questioning her.

She joyfully replied, “nee no sneaka Angish” (I do not speak English).

But her “follow me” hand motion communicated universally. So, now more excited than frightened, they followed her into the next car.

The outside area between these railroad cars was also closed in, using the same dark material that sealed their coach.

When the door to that next brightly lit car opened, the first visible feature was the shadow outlines of two more little Asian girls (or ladies?), welcoming them.

All three happy little assistants were wearing white silk robes and white wicker slippers, and each gave each Buckeye Beauty the most comforting hug as they entered this car.

These now intoxicated beauties could not help but hug these adorable little females back.

“Can you tell them apart?” Dorothy asked Dotty.

“No, they look like three twins,” Dotty answered.

“That’s called ‘triplets,’ Dotty,” Dorothy said before she pointed and named herself and her five companions. Then she pointed at each joyful assistant, and they understood.

The first one pointed at herself, “Pee” than her doubles, “Wee, Mee.”

Then Elizabeth asked Sara, “How old are they?”

Looking at their perky softball-shaped breasts, beneath one thin layer of white silk and flawless skin, Sara replied, “Certainly past puberty.” Then she laughed, “Somewhere between fourteen and sixty-five.”

“I’d bet you’re right,” Elizabeth giggled back.

“As usual.”

From the outside, no one would have imagined that inside, this plain-looking extra-long cargo car was finished like a Roman emperor’s white marble bathhouse.

On one of its long walls, a fire was crackling in a small marble fireplace. Down its center sat a narrow white marble tub full of hot steamy water under a layer of bubbles. It was large enough for ten beautiful ladies to sit side by side (or maybe nine with one lucky guy in the middle.)

Hanging on the marble wall beside the fireplace, six white ‘Afghan’ cashmere robes (the softest woven material known in 1885) were embroidered with colorful Asian landscapes.

Beneath their robes, on this rolling room’s marble floor, several white fur rugs (pelts from baby polar bears).

Waiting for them (on these baby bearskins), six pairs of white cashmere slippers embroidered with the beauty’s name, they would perfectly fit.

Aided by tranquilized wine, they just giggled as their adorable little assistants began undressing them.

As Pee, Mee, and Wee carefully hung their clammy dresses and folded up their undergarments, all six were quite amused.”

As Sara complained, “Colin just throws my things on the floor!” the other five suddenly completely undressed dancers giggled.

The tiny assistants then led their happily intoxicated beauties up several steps, then down several more into that soft, warm bubbly water.

As the girls splashed bubbles at each other, Pee, Mee, and Wee used gentle warm water hoses to wash their hair and remove their tear-smudged makeup (from behind them, outside the tub).

After their little helpers rinsed lightly perfumed oils through their hair, they masterfully crowned each head with the softest Egyptian towels.

Pee, Mee, and Wee then hung up their white silk robes and removed their slippers. They wore only white cashmere gloves as they joined the six giggly dancers in the warm bubbly water.

They arranged their happy victims into three groups, with one tiny assistant sitting in between each pair.

The enthusiastic little assistants then lathered up their gloves with an oily soap smoother than silk. Next, they began cleaning the dancer’s bodies in the most delightful and stimulating ways.

By 3 AM, these now happy hostages were exhausted, so their assistants carefully guided them out of the water into the warm room. Before they slid them into their fabulous new cashmere robes, they smeared their dripping wet bodies with an Avocado, Lavender, Coconut, and Tea oil mixture.

The looks on each face verified these robes and slippers were the softest garments they had ever worn. Finally, Dolly Stern yelled, "This robe must have come from heaven!"

As these pampered victims of beauty snuggled their magnificent robes, their attendants put their thin silk versions back on.

Pee, Mee, and Wee, then led the now yawning beauties into the next car, a sleeping car. This car had also started life as a double-length cargo car, then customized by its builder, Cross Railroads Incorporated (CRI).

This sleeping car was also lovely. Its walls were burled walnut, with the same copper gilded ceiling as the first car. This car had been divided into six, seven by six-foot bedrooms on one (their right) side.

Between the bedrooms was a four-foot-wide bar with electrically warmed and ice-cooled refreshments, biscuits, and sweet exotic fruits. On both ends of this car, beautifully equipped restrooms.

Each latching bedroom door held a plaque with the first name of the singing dancer assigned to it.

In the hallway, beside each sleeping room door, was an electric light switch controlling the room's ceiling lamp. A second switch was mounted on the wall beside the bed.

Typical sleeping compartments on trains were tiny, with a window but no electricity. Instead of windows, these electrified sleeping cars had ship-like portholes painted on their outer wall. These beautiful porthole paintings displayed boats and tropical islands. They looked as realistic under electric lighting, as if painted by Michelangelo.

However, this early morning flow of gifts, or call them prepayments for performing one song for the world's leaders, was not yet over.

On the table beside each bed, six small pieces of milk chocolate sat on a sandalwood chest (about the size of a shoebox). Only Dolly had ever tasted milk chocolate.

Before 1903, when Milton Hershey invented a way to mass-produce the stuff, only very wealthy people could afford milk chocolate.

Each sandalwood chest also had the name of its Buckeye Beauty inlaid in her birthstones and gold.

Inside each chest, hundreds of the highest quality gems masterfully set into several dozen gold and platinum rings, necklaces, earrings, and bracelets. Tiffany and company had perfectly matched each lovely lady's style, taste, and personality.

It can be challenging to buy gifts that your sweetheart will adore. But a box packed with Tiffany jewelry offers a good chance of success.

Chinchilla sheets, cashmere pillows, baby alpaca down comforters, designer wardrobes, world-class food, fine wines, herbal happy-dust, and chests packed with Tiffany jewelry launched their nightmare through the most pleasant dreams.

3. February 1882 (Three years before the hijacking)

Several months after Edison began designing Orphan's robust electrical system, he told Commander Hayes about a young genius he was bringing in from Eastern Europe.

"This kid invented an electric motor so efficient; it only has one moving part! It is so powerful, the Dean of New York's College of Electrical Engineering told me Men from Mars must have given him the design."

"Rud (Hayes's nickname), his mind sees prototypes three maybe four generations out."

"I want him to refine my citywide Direct Current (D/C) components. However, I can't ignore the fact that he would be ideal for designing the equipment you want for Orphan."

"Al, we are infants at espionage. Some kingdoms have operated spy networks for thousands of years. We must use our advanced technology to compensate for our lack of practice."

"Since you secretly funded me in 78, I am willing to share him with you."

"Do you think a foreigner can be trusted with national security?"

"He loves Croatia, his homeland, and its citizens adore him."

"But Croatia is occupied by Hungary, whose king is so scared of him, Hungarian guards are posted in his laboratory, watching his every move."

"They only want him working on the king's projects. He has no desire to provide them with anything."

"He sees America as an island of intellectual freedom."

Hayes responded, "Authoritarians fear that independent innovators will invent their demise."

"But it does concern me to involve a foreigner in a secret program that congressmen and senators know nothing about."

"Since you say he is a real genius, he most certainly is."

"Oh, no doubt about that."

"I do want to meet him. We have virtually unlimited development funding."

"Does he speak English?"

"Indeed, perfectly," Edison laughed.

"He speaks and writes in eight languages and understands dozens more. He has even created his own language that the Hungarians don't understand."

"Reminds me of Ivanta Mann," Hayes muttered.

"Ivanta Mann?"

"Just thinking aloud."

"Who is Ivanta Mann?"

"My lascivious administrator in the Orphan Hospital."

"The scary lady with the pert bazooms"

"That's her."

"Seems named appropriately."

"It's her married name. She says he died after a freak accident with a pitchfork."

"The cops told me it looks like he flung himself on it."

"Hell of a way to go."

“Especially by choice; her maiden’s name was Blade.”

“Ivanta Blade?”

“Yeah.”

“Sounds bloody.”

“You could say she never lost it. Anyway, she ran that Lunatic Asylums for six years, for the craziest one there, Doctor William Awl.”

“A resident?”

“No, he is a surgeon. He calls himself Doctor Cure-Awl. He has nearly a full year of medical school. He was the Superintendent of all state asylums, Lunatic and Imbecile.”

“She says he spent most of his time conducting experiments on inmates that no one would miss. A great deal of medical research is secretly conducted in its lower basement, for the greater good of mankind.”

“In 1881, Doctor Awl gave that up to open a business breeding enormous bats, real blood suckers, on the eastside of town.”

“Enormous vampire bats!?”

“Bigger than chickens, nearly the size of turkeys!”

“Where did he even get them?”

“He shipped in from South America.”

“Why would anyone do that?” Edison asked.

“He sells their spittle to surgeons. It paralyzes humans long enough for surgery.”

“I suppose that’s noble work.”

“Yeah. Ivanta told me that “He hugs and kisses them like rich bitches do their French Poodles.”

“Disgusting!”

“Anyhow, Ivanta also invented her own written language.”

“Like a secret code?” Edison asked.

“Yes, but that was not her intention. She invented it for swift notation. She can write 200 words a minute with it.”

“What does it look like?”

“Scribble.”

“How accurate?”

“I read a law book as fast as I could for five minutes. She wrote every word that I pronounced correctly. She can also do this while listening to German, French, or Spanish.”

“Very Impressive!” Edison said as he pondered her invention’s marketability.

“Even though she lives in a constant state of arousal, she does not let it interfere with her work. As a result, her talents have already proven to be extremely valuable.”

“She sounds like a great, even fun find, Rud.”

“She is irreplaceable!”

“Anyways, ORPHAN needs a small fleet of trains that can safely move at greater speeds than anything else on the rails.”

“Is this something you would put your boy on?”

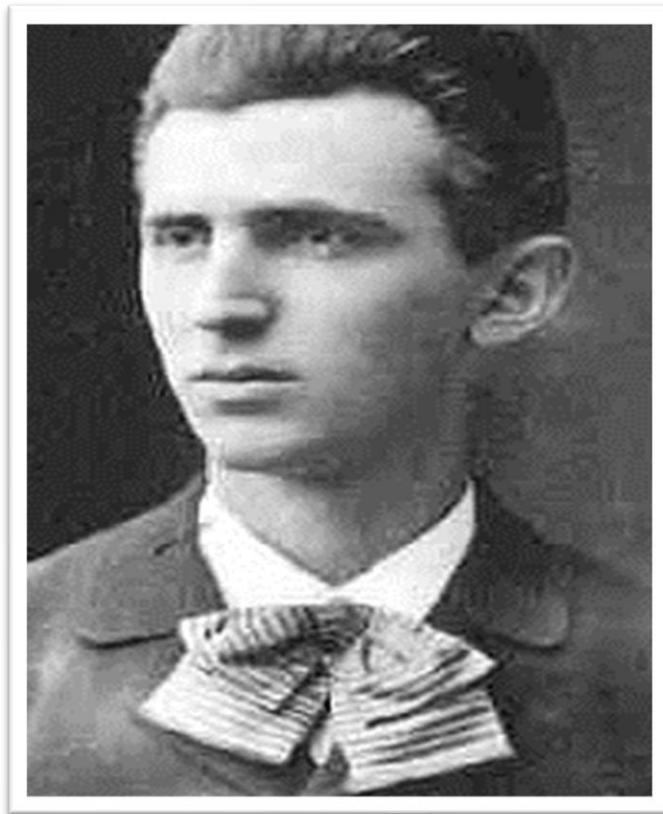
Edison replied, “Absolutely! Try not to make any major railroad decisions until I get you two together.”

“When will he arrive?”

“In about six weeks.”

“What is his name?”

“Tesla, Nicola Tesla.”



Young Nicola Tesla

4. Friday, March 7, 1885, 2:54 AM



Lobby - ORPHAN Headquarters, 30 feet beneath Sullivant's Hill

For over a thousand years, dozens of European kingdoms fought over a Texas-sized piece of land; so, espionage was vital to their existence.

However, the USA only spent a few years arguing with Canada and Mexico over land disputes over its first century. So, the need for an American espionage agency was not seriously considered until the Civil War.

Five days after the war, Lincoln's assassination proved that the country needed secret police, at least to protect presidents. So, three months later, President Andrew Johnson opened the Secret Service.

In the decade before the Civil War, America's constitutional protection of citizens' inventions (patents) provided a tidal wave of new technologies. However, the vast majority were invented by poor, uneducated American nobodies, creating a massive embarrassment for the nation's universities.

They also caused kings, dictators, and popes to worry that America's nobodies could unknowingly hand their demise to their enemies. As a

result, most nations sent spies to America to buy, steal, or bribe copies of these inventions before the world learns of them.

They targeted copies of the applications that Washington “classified,” like Light Cannons, adhesive tape, countless weapons, and cup holders.

In 1869, after years of classified US inventions popping up in Europe, President Ulysses S. Grant ordered the Secret Service to identify, interrogate, and expel foreign spies, as well as hunt down counterfeiters.

They determined that many of those classified inventions were being sold to foreign nations by ruthless American industrialists who operated the factories secretly manufacturing these things.



However, America’s Secret Service agents wore badges, seriously hindering undercover missions.

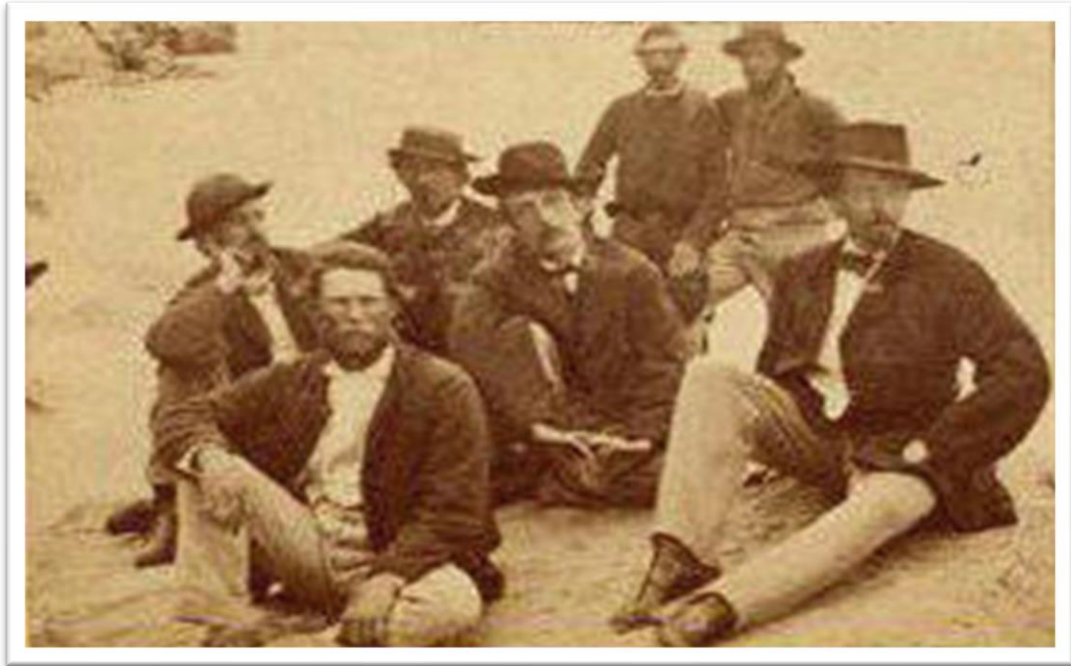
In 1881, President Garfield ordered the Secret Service to open an actually ‘secret’ branch that operated a cover so dull, it would be ignored.

The president’s predecessor, Rutherford B Hayes, told him, “Explaining federal locomotives racing across the nation’s rails without arousing suspicion will be a problem.” So, they spent Garfield’s first month as president, searching for the perfect “boring” cover.

After Lemont suggested the cover of rushing medical aid to the flood of incoming orphans, the excuse for little trains flying around was over.

Garfield officially appointed Hayes as NOMA’s director (Orphan’s secret commander).

However, since the USA was a thousand years behind at espionage, Orphan’s early agents were rather crude by comparison.



Anyways, down in what Hayes called the “war-room,” Colin Mclaughlin was distraught.

“Mr. President, I’ll kill those Turds if they harm her! They probably have her in chains!”

Hayes had never seen Colin so upset.

Even though Colin and Sara had been a couple for a decade, she had no clue that he was (still) a secret federal agent. She had (often) heard about seventeen-year-old Colin punching out two assassins’ seconds before they would have shot General Grant. But she was seven when that happened.

Band leader Colin was the official spokesman for NORA, donating all the bands’ tour ticket sales to each town’s Orphanages. So, no one, even Sara, questioned why NORA provided Colin’s band, “The Irish Orphans,” with an Orphan Ambulance (an Orph) to use like modern bands use tour buses.

Fundraising for each city's orphanages gave 'Celebrity Colin' the perfect excuse to drop in on each town's most ruthless tyrant, to ask them for donations. These monsters typically made fat (heavily publicized) contributions before naively showing Colin around their operations. Likely one of the greatest spies covers ever used.

Sara also knew that Lemont Freeman managed Colin's band for NORA when on tour.

However, like almost everyone else, Sara had no clue that ORPHS were jam-packed with robust hidden weapon systems.

"Colin, they have no intentions of harming her," Hayes assured him.

"How do you know?"

"They spent a fortune pulling this mission off, likely a thousand dollars" (when a thousand dollars felt like a million). "This was a complex mission, executed with military precision; they must consider Sara and her girls extremely valuable."

"Hell yeah, they are! I'm gonna toast those Turds!" Colin growled.

"Anger will cause mistakes. Pull yourself together, or I will have to send other agents after them."

Before Hayes left the opera house, he sent Lemont to Orphan Control to call a 5 AM meeting, using another new invention, the telephone. Orphan Control had the first switchboard in Central Ohio, west of the Scioto River.

When Hayes arrived at Union Station (around midnight), Columbus police, federal marshals, and several dozen reporters had started searching all eleven railroad buildings.

At 1:10, ORPH number Three picked Hayes up at the train station, then whisked him to Orphan Control, nearly eight miles away.

"Do you think they're squeezing Montgomery (Sara's father) for ransom?" Colin asked.

"No, for several reasons."

"One, they nabbed six girls, not just Sara."

"The Kilbourne's are better off than most families, but they are not big money. At least a dozen of the nation's wealthiest men were at that show last night."

"If this was about ransom, they would not have considered our girls."

"That makes sense, Mr. President," Colin replied.

"Colin, I have not been your president for four years. Start calling me Rud or Commander already," Hayes said, trying to lighten Colin's mood.

"I'll try, Mr. President."

By 3:20 AM, four Orphan and six Secret Service agents were seated in the war-room, and nearly a dozen more were coming.

"Here is what we know so far. Hopefully, much more in minutes."

"Since the coach could not have escaped to the east, north, or west, the only road it could have used to escape was High Street heading south, right in front of thousands of people looking for it."

"That means they are still here, or they left by rail," Hayes proclaimed.

"Six huge horses, a stagecoach, and six screaming ladies would be impossible to hide at Union Station this long, Boss. So, they had to have left by rail," Lemont, who just arrived back (again), explained.

“According to station records, between 11:11 last night and 3:00 this morning, nine trains stopped long enough to transfer passengers or cargo.”
“Five only pulled passenger cars. Each of these stopped for less than four minutes, inside the concourse, in plain view.” (The concourse was lined with natural gas lamps).

Lemont continued, “The longest passenger train had eleven cars, all packed with potential witnesses.”

“The four cargo trains pulled 84 to 121 cars, with only several workers aboard. These were also loaded or unloaded beside or inside other buildings, where Union workers and travelers would not have seen them.”

Hayes responded, “I have planned a hundred clandestine missions since 61. Squeezing that mission through a four-minute window in front of countless witnesses is a recipe for failure. So, we can all but eliminate passenger trains.”

Secret Service Commander (former Union Army General) Lancelot Stone then walked into the room.

“No time for hellos, fellows,” Stone added before reporting:

“Because of a fire, parked trains, and an ice-flooded street-car tunnel, all stagecoach traffic heading north, east, or west from the city center was blocked between 5:00 yesterday evening, until just one hour ago.”

“Because they could not have headed south without being seen, only one possibility remains, that coach entered one of the buildings in the railroad complex.”

“It could still be here. However, it is most likely that your ladies, their captors, left by rail.”

Colin rolled his eyes at Lemont, communicating, “Tell us what we don’t know.”

Stone continued: "So far, 16 federal agents, at least a hundred local constables, and bounty hunter Willy Wags' bloodhounds have searched all eleven buildings and found almost nothing."

"Almost nothing?" Hayes asked.

"The dogs became excited inside the station's locomotive service building. But the only unusual thing they found was this piece of sticky paper," Stone said as he handed it to Hayes.

"That's some of our adhesive tape, Boss," Lemont stated.

"It sure is."

"What is adhesive tape?" Stone asked.

"A strip of sticky paper or cloth that binds things together," Lemont replied.

"It's a classified material; no one is supposed to know it exists," Hayes replied as he passed that scrap around the room.

"We have a bag of it in development," Lemont told Stone.

Holding the scrap up to the bowling-ball-sized light bulb in the ceiling, Colin added, "Yep, another secret out of the bag."

Stone continued, "All the evidence indicates that stagecoach, the hijackers, your ladies, and even the horses left town on one of two cargo trains."

"The first left at 11:11 last night, the other at 1:21 this morning."

"Most likely, it was the 1:21."

"Why?" Hayes asked.

"The 11:11 departed just 12 minutes after the hijacking. Stagecoaches are too large to squeeze into boxcars, and neither cargo train left town pulling flatbed cars."

"Since they must have used boxcars, they had to dismantle the coach before they could load it."

"To plan this entire operation, for a window that leaves in twelve minutes, seems almost impossible."

"Could elite mercenaries pull this off?" Hayes asked.

"Possibly, which is why the 11:11 has not been eliminated. But a one-minute delay could end in disaster."

"What if they controlled departure time, enough that they could leave the moment they were ready?" Lemont asked.

"That was already considered. However, because both trains left precisely on their pre-scheduled times, insider help seems unlikely."

"If you planned this, would you choose to leave immediately or to wait around for a couple hours?" Hayes asked Stone.

"I would prefer the 11:11, but that is too close for comfort, so I would likely wait for the 1:51," Stone replied.

"Stone, if they waited for the 1:51, we would have caught them. Police, agents, and the press were already swarming the place when I arrived at midnight. If I planned this, I would have taken the 11:11," Hayes explained.

"This must be one of the most advanced strike teams on the planet to make that 11:11 departure. So, your local dancers must possess something of extreme value."

"I bet you have never seen them, Commander," Lemont responded.

"You would win that bet. I arrived at Union Station 90 minutes ago."

"But within minutes, I had wired ahead of both trains. By 2:20, local marshals had already run through every car. So far, no trace of the ladies, the coach, the horses, or the perpetrators."

"They hot enough to leave scares," Lemont uselessly inserted."

"Both trains are being repeatedly searched, so they may still find something," Stone added.

Hayes responded, "even Houdini (the first one) can't hide six giant horses, six ladies, a stagecoach, and a gang of criminals inside a cargo box. If they are aboard either of those trains, we would have found them by now."

"Are you suggesting they removed the girls, horses, and stagecoach from a moving train without anyone noticing?" Stone asked Hayes.

"I know that sounds insane, but so does everything else about this abduction."

Stone responded, "I discussed this with federal marshals a half hour ago."

"Releasing a boxcar from a rolling train would not be that difficult provided it was the last car on the train. However, Union Station track directors claim a caboose was the last car on both trains. Both cabooses are still attached."

"Only releasing cars from inside the trains would be nearly impossible."

"Also, both trains have the same number of cars, as stated in their records."

"Does Union Station count the cars as they depart?" Hayes asked.

"I don't know. We compared unit numbers to the Union Station's departure reports, and everything matched. I did not ask if they physically count every car during departure," Stone responded.

“They did not count them when you had me taking tickets undercover for you, Mr. President,” Colin added.

“General (Stone), did you ask if either train made an unscheduled stop before the marshals blocked them off?” Lemont asked.

“No, we did not discuss that, but both were stopped before they reached their next destination.”

“We need that answered immediately!” The former president declared.

Stone then sent his assistant to Orphan’s communications room to find out.

“Have there been similar abductions?” Lemont asked Stone.

“Nothing this brazen.”

“They must have wanted headlines. They could have quietly nabbed those ladies after their next show.”

“So, this was obviously planned to happen in front of hundreds of reporters, local police, and at least six federal agents.”

“They have nuts like cannonballs,” Secret Service agent Thomas Zimmerman added.

Stone continued, “Extreme confidence, to say the least, they were showing off.”

“You know there are 66 other unsolved kidnappings with similarities.”

“How so?”

“Over the last two years, not counting last night, 66 reportedly attractive ladies have vanished without a trace.”

“What are the other common denominators?” Hayes asked.

“Well, besides Vermont, these disappearances happened in every state above the Masson Dixon line, yet not one below.”

“That means something. Do we have suspects?” Hayes asked.

“Only one circumstantial longshot,” Stone replied while looking through his briefcase.

“However, it could explain why only Northern ladies have been nabbed.”

“Explain.”

“There is an unholy alliance between some Southern social clubs, with a secret organization called the “White Knights.”

“When did they start operating?” Hayes asked.

“Several years before the war. They began by intimidating the Northern publishers, editors, and journalists, who were demanding a nationwide end to slavery.”

“Once the war started, these White Knights began attacking our weapon factories, armories, and railroad infrastructure with dynamite.”

“This underground complex was built to avoid those attacks. But, we just called them Confederate spies,” Hayes stated.

“More often than not, intimidation, extortion, and blackmail go unreported, so they are more prevalent than we know,” Stone replied.

“What else do you know about these White Knights?”

“Each team operates independently, as if not affiliated with any other, so even torture can’t expose who and what they do not know. Besides these

White Knights, we have not seen crimes executed with such a high precision level. That is another common denominator about last night.”

“I hate to say this, but I don’t think the (Secret) Service could have pulled this off so invisibly,” Stone added.

“How many witnesses have we found so far?” Hayes asked Stone.

“Just two. The show’s producer, and another coach's whipman, so far.”

“Peter Legend, the producer, said the hijacker is huge, but not portly.”

“They both said that someone or something was moving on top of the coach as it ran away.”

“I heard the same thing,” Hayes added.

“What else have you connected to those White Knights?” Hayes asked.

“This,” Stone said as he spread a map over the table he pulled from his case, “pinpoints suspected White Knights crimes.”

“I thought you said all of the kidnappings happened in Northern states. This shows far more kidnappings in the deep south than up here.” Hayes questioned.

“None of those southern disappearances are white girls. They are brown and black men, big powerful fellows, many born into slavery,” Stone explained while pointing at his map.

“Looks like these White Knights leave those pretty Southern Bells alone,” Hayes muttered.

“Over half of them (the big black dudes) vanished from Southern Louisiana.”

“Numbers like this can’t be a coincidence!”

“It would be far easiest to nab victims near their resources,” Hayes mumbled aloud.

“Southern Louisiana must be their operational headquarters since most vanished from the New Orleans area,” Hayes said as he looked up at Stone.

“That seems apparent. Yet, the actual number of missing men is likely larger. Moreover, most do not trust local authorities, so they have no desire to speak with them. That could get them killed.”

“Rightfully so,” Lemont injected.

“Maybe those White Knights are trying some crazy experiment, like breeding big black fellows with pretty white girls?” Colin suggested.

“You are offensive, Colin!” Lemont snapped at his partner. “They have no reason to hijack powerful studs when many of them would happily volunteer.”

“Just a thought, Big Boy.”

Stone resumed control, “We did not suspect the White Knights of those southern abductions until just days ago.”

“We thought they either disappeared on their own or that some Southern hate club disposed of them.”

Hayes replied, “If these were hate crimes, their tortured bodies would be hanging from trees.”

“They have a different motive.”

“Like enslaving them to do something those White Knights are too cowardly to do,” Lemont remarked.

“That would mean they are likely still alive,” Hayes added before asking Stone, “How did we connect the White Nights to those disappearances?”

“Ten, no eleven days ago, two former slaves appeared at the New Orleans Navy base.”

“They told the guards that they had been drugged as they walked home from repairing brick roads.”

“They woke up shackled inside an ancient prison, along with twelve other large victims.”

“Still shackled, they were loaded into an old cargo boat. A day and a half later, they arrived at what they called a huge industrial complex, hidden behind hills on an island in the Gulf.”

“They said that hundreds of Confederate soldiers were walking around.”

“Confederate Soldiers?”

“Well, they were wearing Confederate uniforms.”

“Damn!” Hayes said.

Stone continued, “The navy guards took them to their command center for Admiral Forti to question them.”

“They claimed that before sunrise, they were loaded onto the hold of an old single mast cargo ship.”

“They slushed around for nearly two days before reaching that hidden bay.”

“What else?”

“When they were taken aboard, the boat was flying old glory, but when they were brought back on the deck, it was flying a blue flag with a white cross. Not the holy cross, but the tilted one, like the Confederate flag. They said it only had one star, a blue one in the center of a white cross.”

“Who flies that flag?” Hayes asked.

"We have never seen it before," Stone replied.

"Without that star, that is the Scottish flag. And that is called the Cross of Saint Andrews," Lemont explained.

"He might be right," Stone told Hayes.

"I might be right!" Lemont fumed to himself.

"There were no crosses on the official Confederate flag. But General Bobby Lee thought the official one looked too much like our stars and stripes. So, he marched his armies under his battle flag with the Saint Andrews cross."

Hayes put the meeting back on track, "I see no personal benefit for them to make up that story. They likely hated even reporting it."

"President Cleveland said that a couple days ago," Stone said before continuing. "Before they reached that base, one of these men twisted his shackles, and they shattered; he then helped his buddy break his off."

"He told the admiral, 'the old things were badly corroded.'"

"Damn right, they broke!" Lemont (who was known for crushing rocks with his dinner plate-sized hands) snarled.

Stone continued, "They held their chains in place, hoping for a chance to escape."

"When they were brought back onto the deck, they saw eight 'pretty' white ladies being led up a gangway onto a much larger ship docked right beside them."

"They said that ship flew a solid blood-red flag."

"Morocco," Lemont blurted.

Stone continued, "As the sailors and Confederates gawked at these poor girls, those two fellows slid down a rope behind the boat, unseen."

"Soon alarms went off, and search parties began hunting for them, but they never looked in the water behind the boat."

"After sunset, they climbed back aboard, then hid under a pile of sails on the top deck, hoping that boat would soon head back to New Orleans."

"Just before sunrise, three sailors came aboard and set sail."

"Two days later, they recognized the muddy Mississippi River Delta."

"Once they were approaching New Orleans, they threw the three sailors overboard."

"They managed to pilot the boat for a few miles before beaching beside the Algiers district, where they lived."

"They did not trust the local authorities, so they told the navy the following morning."

"Damn!" Hayes added, "They could not have made up seeing beautiful captive ladies because they would not have known about this."

"Admiral Forti was leery until he received a report of an old cargo beached beside Algiers."

"How were they drugged?" Hayes asked.

"The last thing they remembered was being hit by little darts as they walked home from work, around dusk."

"They repair brick roads for a living."

"Knock out, darts?"

"Evidently, Commander."

"I'd bet they were coated or tipped with (Doctor) Awl's Vampire Bat Spit!" Hayes said as he looked at Colin.

"The Turd knocked me out in seconds with that crap! We could use a few cases of those darts, Mr. President," Colin added.

"I should have let the doctor give you that lobotomy instead of rescuing your ass," Lemont jabbed.

Ignoring them, Hayes asked Stone, "Did they determine which island?"

"Admiral Forti thinks they were taken to Cuba's South Central Coast."

"Unfortunately, international agreements have kept Cuba's coast off-limits to our ships for ninety years. We have no maps showing a hidden bay along that coast."

"Although his daddy abolished slavery at home, Spain's King Alfonzo is still having a half-million people whipped in Cuba," Hayes added.

Lemont added, "During the war, his daddy was going to provide the Confederacy with 2000 cannon, as he claimed Spain's neutrality. He was going to have those guns forged from an Indian cannon mold."

"British agents exposed Alfonso's plan to their King Edward, who informed our embassy."

"President Lincoln sent a message to Alfonso asking him about the roomer of Indian Cannons he was planning to sneak to the Confederacy."

"That Alfonzo denied everything as he canceled that order."

"We would have lost the war if the Confederacy received those cannons," Stone said before offering his next piece of strange evidence.

"I know," Hayes replied.

Stone continued. "After the break-in at Nicola Tesla's home in 82, we found another odd connection to these White Knights."

"Tesla never mentioned that to me," Hayes popped.

“Well, he reported it, and we (the service) investigated.”

“The burglars left a tiny gold coin, stamped with the only emblem that we had ever connected to the White Knights.”

“Tesla had never seen it before, yet it was the only thing remaining on his desktop after the break-in.”

“We believe the White Knights use it, or once used this symbol to verify members from other branches, like a secret handshake.”

“On one side was that ah, Saint Andrew’s Cross with that six-sided star in its center. Then, on the other side, just the initials, WN.”

Orphan Agent Daniel Blair, who was once a Columbus Constable with Colin, suddenly burst into the war room.

As he handed the still barefoot agent (Colin) the boots he left on High Street, he announced, “We found their trail!”

“Are you sure, Danny?” Hayes asked.

“No doubt of it.”

“Where? How?”

“Last night at 11:11, a northbound cargo train left Union Station for Cleveland’s Central Depot.”

“About ten minutes later, a flair warned the engineer that something was blocking the tracks ahead.”

“He brought the train to a full stop, then had his boilermen walk ahead to clear the blockage. But after a half-mile, they found nothing.”

Hayes, “Nothing means something.”

“Sorry, Danny, keep going.”

“As the boilermen searched ahead, an unreported southbound train, pulling eight to ten cars, also stopped, nearly beside it.”

“One or more northbound boxcars seemed to have been switched to that unreported southbound while the boilermen were away.”

“They found nothing blocking the tracks, so their engineer slowly rolled away a few miles before returning to speed.”

“Did the alternating conductor see anything?”

“No, he slept through the stop in the caboose.”

“That southbound is a phantom; it shouldn’t have been there. It was not registered. We don’t know where it came from or who owns it.”

“Boss, it is not unusual for private trains to be unaccounted for. This is because they often neglect to report.”

“Proof of the switch, Danny?”

“Both trains stopped on the only center switching rail capable of transferring northbound cars between here and Cleveland.”

“This train was falsely stopped on the only quarter-mile stretch, out of 180 miles, that could switch boxcars is ah.../.”

“/Beyond coincidence,” Hayes completed Blair’s sentence.

“The odds are seven hundred and twenty to one,” Lemont tacked on.

Blair resumed, “A well-prepared team could have moved four or five cargo cars from a stopped northbound to a parked southbound in ten minutes.”

“Good work, Danny.”

"This is not all; over the last five years, eight cargo cars, all carrying precious cargo, vanished along this route. That includes the 300 of those Light Cannons when they were still confidential."

"Anything else?"

"Not right now, sir."

"Our ladies were long gone by the time we stopped those trains. I'd bet my ranch they are heading for Southern Louisiana!" Hayes stated as he looked around the room.

"We should be able to rescue them even before they reach the deep south," Hayes said as he began calculating on paper.

"They have been rolling for four hours," Hayes mumbled.

"Train's average forty miles an hour, but that phantom train may be pushing forty-five. So that puts them, um...."

"160 to 180 miles away by now, Boss. So, they should be rolling through Central Kentucky by now," Lemont explained.

Hayes looked up from his map and told Agent Blair, "Go call the federal marshal in the New Orleans area towns."

"Also find out everything they know about Northern ladies, and big black men disappearing, and the group called the White Knights."

"Also, make a list of old privately-owned forts along the Mississippi River within 20 miles of New Orleans.'

"Is that all, sir?" Blair asked.

"Yes, but run back down here as soon as you finish.

"Okay, sir."

Lemont added, "It is likely an ancient French fort along the river."

Using the compound's intercom (a telephone), Hayes called his secretary Ivanta Mann. She was already at her desk in the little hospital's lobby, 30 feet above Hayes's war room.

Three years earlier, when Hayes hired her, he gave her an apartment inside the hospital to be instantly available during emergencies.

When she ran the new Columbus Lunatic Asylum for Doctor Awl, he gave her a penthouse on top of one of that vampire-bat-based monstrosity's 14 towers.

When Doctor Awl resigned to open his Vampire Bat venom business (1882), the doctor Ohio hired who replaced him demanded that she "stops boinking the inmates."

So, when she heard that former President Hayes was building the National Hospital for Orphan Children (behind the Lunatic Asylum), she contacted him.

"Ivanta, I need you to call Tesla; at Westinghouse's Development Center" (Central Station New York City).

"Tell him to bring ORPH Six here immediately. Tell him this is a class A emergency" (speed authorization).

"But tell him to be very careful."

"Is that all you need, Rud?"

"At this moment."

As Hayes closed this meeting, he sent Colin and Lemont to the communications room.

"Contact Colonel Sanders in Kentucky and Captain Crockett in Memphis. Call Sanders first. He needs to hurry; it might already be too late for his men

to stop that train. Tell them 'code A,' they have permission to stop any cargo train heading south."

"Make damn sure; they know who and what to look for."

Hayes only made one mistake. He assumed that slick, unseen switch north of Columbus was their final southbound escape plan; it was not.

After the phantom train crossed the 14th Street Bridge into Louisville, Kentucky (from Clarksville, Indiana), someone switched it to an easterly track along the Ohio River's southern shore.

When it reached Huntington, West Virginia, it picked up a southeast rail through the Allegheny mountains. It would eventually enter Southern Louisiana from the east, just 25 miles north of Mexico's Gulf.

Entering Louisiana from the east kept the phantom train from being suspected, stopped, or searched.

5. April 1882

Several months after Thomas Edison told Commander Hayes about Nicola Tesla, Hayes stopped by Edison's headquarters in New York City to meet the young genius.



After a few minutes of hearing about Croatia, Edison rushed off to deal with a fistfight between engineers, leaving Hayes and Tesla alone in his office.

"This is such a wonderful country; I am going to become a citizen," Nicola told Hayes.

“That’s a great move, son!”

“In Croatia, an American can only be an American, but here, a Croatian can be an American!”

“So true, son. Most American families came from the rest of the world. My great grandfather came from Scotland.”

“I have been there; Scotland is a beautiful nation. Its coastlines remind me of my homeland. But sadly, the Croatian people are being bled dry by the Hungarian king.”

“Kings and dictators worry that abused citizens will invent their demise. But American presidents are voted in by the people (just men in 1885) every four years. So, inventive citizens are a bonus for us instead of a problem.”

“Democracy is obviously the reason this nation is rapidly modernizing,” Tesla added.

“Yes, Nicola. Do you know that 70% of all new technologies are coming from the USA, with only 3% of the planet's population?”

“I have never read those percentages, but that feels correct.”

“Nicola, because our leaders work for the people, instead of the other way around, we care for all Americans, rich or poor, with equal respect.”

“Even the poorest orphan child is as important as congressman senators or presidents,” Hayes exaggerated.

“It’s wonderful!”

“Before he was assassinated, my great friend President Garfield, God rest his soul, put me in charge of the nation’s orphan assistance program.”

“Orphan assistance program?”

"Last Year, he opened *The National Orphan Relief Agency* (NORA) to send emergency aid to our poor orphan babies. For the last 20 years, Europe has been dumping almost all of their orphan children into our open arms."

"These children are now Americans, so we have to take care of them."

"I have never heard of such compassion," Tesla responded.

"We are currently building the National Hospital for Orphan Children."

"Here in New York?"

"No, a few miles outside of Columbus, Ohio."

"Why such a small town?"

"Most of these poor orphan children are adopted by farm families, spread out over rural America. So, we needed a central location to rush medical aid to these innocent babies most rapidly."

"That is efficiency."

"Indeed. Columbus, Ohio sits near dead center of America's railroad network, so it was chosen."

"We also reimburse doctors and hospitals in New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, Boston, Atlanta, and San Francisco, for rescuing local orphans," Hayes explained. However, he did not mention that those were the same six cities with Secret Service offices.

"What a wonderful nation this is!"

"Private companies have already installed more rails in the USA than the rest of the world combined," Hayes added.

"Traveling at these tremendous speeds (40-45MPH) is so exciting; I read everything on rail technology," Tesla replied. At this time, the official

(reported) flat-land world speed record was 82.5 miles per hour, and it was held by a locomotive.

“We will open the hospital in about six months.”

“You should tell the world about this,” Tesla replied.

“Here in America, we lead by example. We would rather show them what we do than boast about it. That brings me to an issue that Al (Edison) thought you might enjoy helping us with.”

“How.”

“The faster we can reach these poor injured babies, the more lives we can save.”

“Of course.”

“We were planning to use public passenger trains. However, they stop at most depots along their routes, which significantly slows them down, which would cost far more innocent lives.”

“So, we decided that NORA needs to operate a small fleet of non-stop trains.”

“Obviously, for the sake of maximizing the number of poor critically injured babies we save, we need faster trains.”

“How much faster, sir?”

“All the speed we can safely squeeze from them.”

“But son, feel free to call me, Rud.”

“I’ll try, but that would be like calling King Charles Chuck.”

“My term as president ended; that is the way this country works. So now I am just Rud, the director of NORA, America’s orphan aid program.”

"Anyways, before I start spending our taxpayer's dollars on NORA's trains, Al insisted that I ask you for ideas about our 'Orphan Rail Ambulances.'"

"How many cars will they haul?"

"Likely five, four if the coal bin is part of the locomotive."

Tesla answered, "May I study this for a few days before you make decisions? I have already read the specifications on every locomotive being mass-produced. Six European countries, Pakistan, India, China, Nippon, and the USA, build them."

"We can only use trains built here," Hayes responded.

"Of course, sir."

"Maximum speed has never been the primary design goal for production locomotives."

"Think of them like plow horses, perfect for pulling great loads across great distances. But unloaded, plow horses could not stay up with racehorses, half their weight."

"Certainly," Hayes agreed.

"Available components are not designed for speed, so if your goal is to maximize speed on existing rails, virtually all components will need to be re-designed."

"This is a very complicated, time-consuming, and expensive process."

"I have directed the development of many technologies since the war. That is the cost of progress, and we are all about progress."

"What war?"

"Oh, pardon me, you were still a baby on the other side of the world."

“In the 60s, we fought a terrible civil war between our states to abolished slavery. It cost nearly a million lives.”

“How sad.”

“It was a high price to pay, but freedom is never a bargain.”

“Sir, I need direction. Should I use existing components or start from scratch?”

“We need all the speed that is safely possible on existing rails. This is about saving innocent baby’s lives, not money. No doubt we will have many other uses for high-speed trains, so if fresh innovation is necessary, that is the plan.”

“However, we need at least several Orphan Ambulances as soon as possible. So, we will have to adapt many existing components at first, then replace the weakest components for each new unit.”

“That provides direction. How many will this hospital need?”

“Eight to twelve, eventually.”

“I am overwhelmed, sir!”

“However, my days are committed to Mr. Edison. I can only work on this project at night.”

“AI has already cleared you for all the time NORA needs.”

“Excellent, This project is far more exciting than finetuning Mr. Edison’s old Direct Current transmission components.”

“Great!”

“Have you heard of George Westinghouse?”



“Of Course. He is the genius behind train car air brakes,” Tesla responded.

“Yes, George is brilliant. He has invented dozens of important locomotive components. He is also a close friend of mine, and I have already spoken to him about you.”

“You have!”

“He is a huge fan of yours. He was so impressed by your dynamos that he is prototyping hydraulic pumps based on them.”

“He also owns facilities where our orphan ambulances can be built, and he would love to help you develop them.”

“It feels amazing to join a nation where its leaders care so deeply about the lowliest orphan,” Tesla responded with tears streaming down his cheeks.

The happy sobbing genius stood and saluted the former president. "I can't imagine ever leaving this country! I love it! The USA is the hope for all humanity!"

Still saluting with his head bowed down, "I hope that I can reach your level of human decency!"

"I will begin penciling the swiftest locomotive this planet has ever seen when I arrive home this evening."

Suddenly feeling like a jerk for over-selling the poor-orphan cover, Hayes could not look Tesla in the eye. Then, holding his belly, he rose from his seat, saying, "Sorry to run out on you, son. I need a commode!"

As Hayes ran out of Edison's office, he yelled, "I can't wait to see your first sketches. I will return in a few days!"

"It's on your right, sir!" Tesla yelled back.

The next day, Tesla showed his Boss (Edison) his first sketches for NORA's Orphan Ambulance.

His slick-looking little train instantly excited Edison's innovative mind, much like car-guys when seeing a great new design.

While looking it over, Edison asked Nicola, "Where did you hide the cannons, flamethrowers, and Gatling gun?"

"The whats?!" Tesla responded.

As Edison continued studying the sketch, he added, "They need instant release functions and continuous mechanical or maybe even electrical reloading."

“All three systems must be controlled, aimed, and fired by a single agent inside a dedicated weapons control car.”

“Why would NORA want a child’s ambulance fitted with weapons of war?”

“Oh, crap!” Edison thought as he realized that Hayes only asked Tesla to design a super-fast ambulance train.

“Ha, ha, ha, I was just pulling your leg, Nicola,” Edison responded.

“Pulling my leg? You did not touch me.”

“That means I was just joking around with you, Nicola.”

It only took about one more second for the young genius to realize what he was actually designing. Yet he was not upset with Hayes for lying about this; he was used to that, almost every European leader already had.

Instead, he began fantasizing about defending America’s freedoms in weapon-packed rail rockets.

Several days later, before returning to Ohio, Hayes stopped by to see Tesla’s first sketches. Before Edison called Nicola back to his office, he apologized to Hayes:

“Sorry, old buddy, I assumed that you told him Orphan’s actual intentions for these trains, so I opened my mouth. He knows your real intentions.”

“It's all right, Al. He needs to know anyways.”

When Tesla walked into Edison’s office, Hayes apologized. “Nicola, forgive me for not telling you about the entire need for our Orphan Ambulances.”

“Although it seems like I lied to you, I just did not explain everything.”

“No problem, sir.”

“These Orphan Ambulances will certainly be used to rescue gravely injured orphan children. However, they will also be used to protect our country’s security, which also protects these orphans and all Americans.”

“No problem, Sir. I understand.”

“NORA has already provided \$50,000 to America’s orphanages.”

“No problem, Sir. I’m thrilled to be involved.”

Tesla had spent two days picturing himself as a covert agent, taking these super speed machines on secret missions.

Edison added, “Nicola, NORA is reimbursing me to set you up with a private laboratory so you can work full time on these special trains.”

This move was a stress reliever for the lightbulb wizard. Tesla was not working out as Edison envisioned; to refine his Direct Current components for a city-wide electric distribution system.

On his first day working for Edison, Tesla told him, “These components are too inefficient for city-wide electrical networks. They will lose far more power than they can deliver.”

He added, “Furthermore, this planet does not produce enough copper to just fully electrify Manhattan using this system.”

“I developed a system called “Alternating Current.”

“With my system, comparatively tiny components can deliver hundred times more electricity over far great distances, using 90% less copper.”

This was far easier for Tesla to say than for his boss to accept. Edison had burned through millions of dollars (billions today) that JP Morgan and others had invested in his Direct-Current distribution equipment.

Edison would not tell his investors, “the planet does not provide enough copper for my system to work.”

Their A/C-D/C conflict was not the only initial problem between Edison and Tesla. Edison had agreed to Tesla's request to take two 40-minute naps and an hour for lunch each workday.

Tesla's deal inspired some of Edison's other engineers to request hour-long lunches, nap times, and a slew of other things. So, moving Nicola to an isolated laboratory to work alone offered Edison some relief, temporally.

However, this arrangement only lasted another month after Hayes introduced Tesla to George Westinghouse. These two rapidly found inventive compatibility, so Tesla resigned.

Several weeks later (late 1882), Nicola and George started building NORA's first ORPH at Westinghouse's rail foundry, besides Grand Central Station in New York.

To provide NORA with one as rapidly as possible, about 90% of the first ORPH was pre-existing components.

6. March 7, 1885, Westinghouse's New York facility

When Ivanta called at 6AM, Nicola was busy running final tests on the newest Orph. This sixth-generation marvel was the first one with mostly (over 80%) newly designed components.

For the previous five weeks, Tesla lived and worked inside its “surgical car” parked inside Westinghouse’s facility.

Twenty-five minutes later, he launched for Sullivant’s Hill, alone.

Piloting any earlier ORPH (or any other train) across the country alone in 1885 would have been impossible. ORPH Six’s locomotive was the first that did not need boilermen to shovel coal into the firebox.

It burned oil instead, delivered to the boiler through a rubber hose and an electric pump. That oil was stored inside a 1000-gallon tank near the locomotive's rear, where the first five ORPHS had coal bins. ORPH Six also ran on almost any kind of oil, as long as it passed Tesla’s burn test.

The space saved by using oil instead of coal also allowed ORPH Six’s locomotive to carry 1500-gallons of water, instead of 500, like the first five. While making this change, Tesla added a few extra features.

He designed this water tank, so agents could bathe or exercise in it while traveling. He invented a small water pump to circulate water around the boiler and engine, so this tub/pool combo stays warm year-round. The roof above the tank could also be opened, allowing the sun or stars to shine in.

Custom dynamos (motor/generators) were installed inside each wheel of this Orph’s five cars. These more than matched the power from its steam engine (when activated).

Tesla installed a lever on the driver's console to control these dynamos. Pushing it forward supplemented its steam engine with electric power, something like a modern hybrid automobile.

Pulling that lever back reversed the system's polarity, turning those dynamos into powerful brakes. This feature cut ORPH Six's stopping distance to one-third of ORPH Five.

Tesla added another 'secret' performance feature called "Magnetic Glue." It used 'centrifugal force switches' to activate electromagnets along the inside rail of curved tracks. This, along with ORPH Six's far lower stance (height), gave it immensely more speed around curves than any other train in 1885.

Because the oil was delivered by a mechanical pump, instead of men shoveling coal, it was the first train capable of traveling cross-country with one person aboard (if necessary).

Tesla was the only person in New York who could operate every system, so he drove it to Columbus alone. Between New York and Orphan Control under Sullivant's Hill, he would average 96 miles per hour (155kph). But on a flat stretch between Zanesville and Columbus, he pushed it to 149.5 MPH, nearly doubling the official world speed record of 82.5 MPH.

Tesla could have also become famous for being the fastest man on earth. However, ORPH statistics were US classified secrets, so the official world record would not be (officially) broken for another 18 Years.

Several times reporters asked Hayes, "How fast do your Orphan Ambulances travel?"

"Oh, crazy-fast! They actually reached 70 miles an hour during testing."

7. Orphan Control, 6:14 am, March 7, 1885

After contacting Captain Crocket and Colonel Sanders, Mclaughlin and Freeman rushed back to Hayes' war-room.

In 1885, only a few dozen telephones were operating in Ohio. However, just before they returned to Hayes's war-room, they used several to call the Orphan Ambulance garage to have ORPH #3 made ready for launch.

The war room was now dark, so Lemont pulled the string that turned on a basketball-sized 100-watt bulb in the ceiling.

Commander Hayes was still there, slumped over the table, napping. "He's asleep," Colin whispered to Lemont.

"I'm awake," Hayes said as he sat up.

"Mr. President?"

"Yes, Colin."

"We need to leave for New Orleans. ORPH three will be ready for launch in fifteen minutes."

"You are not going anywhere yet."

"If they are not rescued by 3:00, you two will go down there with science agent Nicola Tesla."

Colin shrugged, "Mr. President, this may be our most mission dangerous yet. We can't risk carrying that dorky bookworm along; the guy is a Lab Rat, not a field operative."

"Yeah, Boss, he's right. There are too many unknowns. This is not a good time for babysitting a new field agent," Lemont added.

"He can't keep up with us athletes! He'll bog us down," Colin added.

"He won't be in your way, boys."

Lemont added, "Boss, I'll bet he has never thrown a punch or shot a gun! Croatians are not even allowed to have guns. Their Hungarian occupiers are afraid of being shot."

"Mr. President, isn't Tesla in New York? We will lose another day just waiting for him to get here," Colin pointed out.

"Wrong, he is currently racing through Pennsylvania with the fastest ORPH yet. He'll be here in a few hours," Hayes replied (and hoped).

"Both of you are greatly underestimating him, just as I did."

"Tesla passed the Secret Service's applicant tests with the highest total score they have ever recorded."

"Your bookworm is superhuman."

"Yeah, that because he comes from Mars," Colin popped.

Has his head shook that "no motion," Hayes added, "Trainer Butkus said Tesla is incredibly fit, ripped to the bone. He works out his muscles and stamina in pools for a few minutes a day."

"Maybe you boys can pick up some great new fitness tricks from him."

"Yeah, right," Colin remarked as he flexed his arms like a bodybuilder, popping up his rather impressive biceps. "Obviously, I already know how to stay powerfully fit."

"Put them puny little things away before you embarrass yourself!" Enormous Lemont, with arms like tree trunks, advised.

Hayes added, "Nicola does not walk around holding himself all flexed up, like you two muscle heads."

"No one would notice through his lab coats and bulging pockets."

"Why did he even go through covert agent training?" Colin asked.

"He constantly asked for missions."

"So, I told him that all agents had to complete the Service's training before I could send them into the field."

"Like you boys, I assumed he was a dork fellow who could never pass our physical requirements."

"But he called me on it."

"I need him happy. Since I assumed he could never run five miles in under forty minutes, I signed him up."

"Your bookworm can fly; he ran five in under thirty minutes!"

"Only two other agents have ever broken thirty minutes before."

"I did!" Colin reminded them.

"We know, Colin."

"Boss, that was the four hundred and the eleventh time he reminded us."

"Oh, Mr. President."

"I seem to have forgotten something. Do you remember Lemon's time?" Colin asked while pointing at his gigantic partner.

"Shut up, Colin! I finished in time!" Lemont growled.

"Oh, yeah, I remember, he had a whole second to spare."

"I timed it that way! I don't waste my energy like you! That why I was undefeated," as a pro boxer.

"Boss," (looking at Hayes while pointing at Colin), "he used to be a nice, humble guy."

“The music business turned him into this insecure prima-donna.”

Flexing his arms up again, Colin replied, “Does this look like some lady?”

“Yes, a very wimpy one,” Aunt Jemima’s enormous son responded.

“Boys, it was not just running; he made marksman on every weapon system.”

“He had the highest score with long guns (rifles) in three years.”

“The young man has an uncanny control over mechanical devices.”

“Hum.”

“He scored 100 on the Service’s written test. I recall you only scoring a 98,” Hayes said while glancing at Lemont.

“That test had two wrong answers, not me,” Lemont replied.

Colin added. “They say our brains will explode at 100 miles an hour; I already hit ninety in (Orph) Four. So, we won’t be able to get there much faster anyways.”

“Boss, he learned science from drunks at Flanagan’s.”

“This new ORPH should reach New Orleans five hours faster, so you will still arrive around the same time as if you left in ORPH Three, now.”

“Six is the fastest machine on the planet!” Hayes explained.

The agents looked at each other, hoping the other could say something to win this argument.

Colin finally suggested, “We should send him back in Number Three to install these new things in it while we zip down to New Orleans in Six.”

“That will work,” Lemont agreed.

“Okay, I’ll go along if either of you can tell me how Magnetic Glue works,” Hayes asked.

“Magnetic Glue, what is that?” Colin asked.

“The complicated stuff he invented to double this one’s speed.”

The two agents just looked at each other.

“I worked the nation’s greatest inventors for over 20 years. Nicola is the craftiest one I have ever seen. He makes Al (Edison) look more like a salesman.”

“I guarantee you both will find him amazingly useful.”

“If we must.”

“I need both of you to make sure nothing happens to him; Nicola is a national treasure.”

Their mouths hung open as they looked at each other.

“Well, someone needs to stay with the ORPH when we rescue the girls,” Colin added.

“Right now, he is moving faster than anyone ever has before,” Hayes hoped.
“Boys, that proves he has serious balls!”

After several seconds of silence, both agents simultaneously demanded (almost in harmony), “I WANT TO DRIVE!”

McLaughlin and Freeman were America's first full-time secret agents. So, their covert professionalism was considerably less developed than their advanced physical abilities, courage, and trustworthiness.

"It's 800 miles to New Orleans, so you should both get plenty of piloting time."

"Set that up with Captain Yeager. He and Cochran will be conducting."

"Nicola is bringing Six alone because I have no one else in New York that can."

"Where are Yeager and Cochran?"

"They are sleeping; Ivanta put them to bed upstairs," Hayes said while pointing up. "I need well-rested agents using my valuable assets."

"Since Nicola is still four to five hours out, I'll have her put you two to up" (in hospital beds).

"Boss, tell her I need two beds together lengthwise."

"Same as before; she already knows."

8. March 7th Northern Georgia

10:00 AM. All six hijacked beauties were still pleasantly dreaming when the deep male voice began singing (in the hall outside their doors):

“♪ Yoo-Hoo girls, it’s time to rise♪.”

“♪ Don’t be shy, don’t ask why, ♪
♪it’s all for fun, under our electric sun ♪”

Cameroon sang as he flipped the light switches (beside each door) as he Frolicked down this bedroom car's hallway.

All six were so thrilled that their Tiffany-dreams were real that being hostages had not even entered their still (and continually) sedated minds.

♪ Just because it’s too early for beer♪”
♪ Coffee, juice, milk, and tea are out here♪

Several minutes later, all six beauties were gawking at each other’s shiny new bling in the car’s electrically illuminated hallway.

They had all spent some time in New York City, seeing things that cause an epidemic of heart attacks in bible-thumping Ohio. But, even with that experience, they had never seen such a muscular man in lady’s bloomers.

And these were not your average run-of-the-mill bloomers either. They started six inches above his knees, which would have been shocking on ladies in 1885.

They were also 'LOOK AT ME COLORFUL.' One leg was green, the other red, while the glossy gold material that tightly wrapped his hips and butt matched his eight-inch stiletto boots.

If not for the silver-dollar-sized holes freeing his nipples, his red gold and green top was shaped like a modern sports bra.

His two-inch fake-looking fingernails were carefully polished like rainbows. Shimmering ceramic cherries dangled from his ear lobes.

Only the ship anchor tattoo on his right forearm seemed out of place.

You would think six kidnapping victims would pounce on the first person speaking their language for answers. But these fine ladies, with towels still crowning their heads, were far more in each other's jewels, than his.

Not fully realizing what he was competing against (treasure), Cameroon stood dejected, arms crossed with a boot, impatiently tapping.

After being ignored for almost five minutes, he finally clapped his hands and said, "Okay, okay, okay, girls! I have a great day planned for you!"

He then pulled six one-piece silk outfits out of one little bag. He passed them out as he sang:

"♪Now you need to put these on♪
♪So we can start having fun.♪"

They were the same vibrant blue as the rugs, tablecloths, and silk sheets. They looked like modern one-piece bathing suits. The silk material was about a hair thicker than see-through.

Instead of demanding, "What the hell is going on here!" Elizabeth asked, "Where is the rest of these?"

Cameroon answered, "It is going to be hotter than an Ohio July in a few hours. Yawl will be far more comfortable in these than in twelve sweaty layers of cotton."

"You can't possibly expect us to parade around in these?" Sara stated.

"What is wrong with them? You girls will look astonishing. These are all the rage in the South of France, Monaco, and Sicily."

"Yeah, so is being naked."

"No worries, other than your masseur, manicurists, dentist, and little assistants, only us girls will even see you."

Dotty flashed a wondrous expression at Dorothy as she whispered, "Did he say, masseur and manicurists?"

"I heard that."

As Dotty began fantasizing about a massage, Sara asked, "Who are you?"

"I'm Cameroon Gayetty."

"President Cross wants me to train you, girls, for the next two weeks."

"These charming outfits allow me to see where your flawless bodies can be improved without forcing me to see things I'd rather not."

Cameroon held one outfit against his body. "When you sing for the leaders of great nations, he needs me to make sure they know you are the world's most beautiful dancers."

"Are you saying Ty Cross, the President of Tyberia!" Sara asked him.

"I thought you knew; he is such a fine man; everyone adores him!"

“Girls, you remember Ty Cross?” Sara asked.

“Oh my god!” Dorothy responded, “He is the best-looking man I have ever seen! I could not even speak to him after that show.”

Although Ty Cross was the president of Tyberia (36 Islands in the Eastern Caribbean), he was born in Corpus Christi, Texas.

In 1856 Ty Cross inherited the world’s largest shipping company, Cross Shipping International (CSI), plus hundreds of international enterprises from his father.

Three years later, once the Civil War was inevitable, Ty paid France two and a half million dollars (US) for 36 of their Eastern Caribbean islands.

He declared them ‘The Republic of Tyberia’ and himself president, then transferred the registrations for CSI’s 331 large cargo ships to his nation.

Once the war began, Ty announced “Tyberian Neutrality.” International law prevented the US Navy from sinking or taking a neutral nation’s ships outside the embargoed (Southern) Ports.

If they were still registered in Louisiana, the Northern Union could seize or sink them anywhere in International waters as enemy vessels.

However, he spent most of his time at Crosswinds, Southern Europe, and his yacht, The Maximus V, the world’s largest and swiftest pleasure craft. It was also considered to be “The most beautiful ship on earth.”

Ty appointed Maximus Cross (Max), his oldest son, Prime Minister. Max spent most of his time at Tyberia’s capital island, Sainte Marguerite, running the country and the Tyberian Technological Research Center.

Sometimes things are just not fair; many ladies considered Ty as handsome as a man can be. So besides not yet having Ty's gray temples, Max could be his daddy's double.

Eight months before Edison's big Ohio event, Ty Cross was checked into the Neil House Hotel (the same hotel as that after-party). He was in Columbus to meet with Cross Railroad Systems' (CRS) largest clients.

CRS was an Ohio-based passenger and cargo car manufacturing corporation.

On his last evening in town, he walked those three blocks to the *Cotton Block and Cornstalk Opera House* to see a local musical, *Lady's Come First*.

Even under the dim glow of the place's natural gas-lighting, he became mesmerized by Sara as she sang "Big Daddy."

He could not recall ever seeing a more beautiful and talented girl. Being the President of Tyberia, he was escorted backstage to meet all six Buckeye Beauties after the show.

They could do little more than quiver, giggle, and blush beneath their make-up; they nearly melted as he gazed into their beautiful eyes and kissed the back of their hands.

He only stayed with them for another moment, physically anyway. You know how a song can keep playing in your mind? So, for the next several weeks, Sara's sweet voice never stopped singing inside Ty's.

Several weeks later (just before the Opera House closed for its electrical rebirth), Ty sent engineers to record Sara and the girls singing Big Daddy. Today, few people know that the first phonographs marketed (in 1878 by Thomas Edison) played and recorded music.

Ty wore both recordings out in less than a month, which only strengthened his feelings for Sara. He finally realized that he had fallen for someone besides himself, for the first time in his overly-pampered life.

Even though he had six 'obvious' children and over a dozen "maybes," he had never considered marriage until now.

Colin, Sara's boyfriend for the last 12 years, was Columbus's second most popular entertainer (behind her). He was also considered a good-looking man for someone so scared.

To explain the difference, most ladies that walked past Colin would make sure to smile. However, if Ty walked by, they would stop and quiver.

Sara was sixteen the first time she went to Flanagan's Pub to hear his Irish Orphans band. Colin could not take his eyes off of her. He performed the packed show as if she was the only person there.

They became a "thing" a few months later.

There were few age requirements in the nineteenth century. A thirteen-year-old could get plastered in a saloon, then go upstairs for some bordello action (if they had enough cash).

At age twelve, Colin discovered that as a young man Father John was Ireland's bare-knuckle-fighting champion. So, he began begging him for lessons. But the preacher did not want to even discuss that he became a priest after his final opponent died in his arms.

However, Colin persisted.

Finally, after months of begging, Father John gave in. But only after, Colin promised God that he would never bear-knuckle fight for a prize or status.

This training bonded them like father and son, likely because Colin was remarkably athletic, large, and willing to work hard. By sixteen, Colin had mastered bare-knuckle, and his freaky speed made up for his lack of experience.

At sixteen, orphans were sent out into the world to fend for themselves. Fortunately, Colin and his near twin brother Lucas had no problem landing good jobs in town. This central city's economy was booming since the railroad came through.

That same year, something called "Boxing" came to a tavern in Franklinton. It was like bare-knuckle fighting; however, boxers wore gloves. So, Colin convinced himself that boxing would not break his promise to God.

Even though they remain as close as father and son, Colin never told Father John about his prizefighting with gloves, but he still found out.

Anyways, over nine months, Colin won 17 of 18 fights at Reggie's Tavern. Ironically, that only loss came from another 17-year-old, his future Orphan partner Lemont. Funny thing, Colin won the \$25 for losing.

Reggie offered \$25 for anyone that could last five rounds against Lemont because Central Ohio's other fighters refused to get into the ring with this bone-breaking giant.

Colin had no intention of hitting Lemont; he did not want to make him mad; he only wanted to be standing after five rounds. So, he used his remarkable quickness to stay clear and his wit to keep Lemont discussing his favorite subject, food.

After the fight, Lemont took Colin to the Florentine, his favorite Italian restaurant. Although they had to eat in the kitchen (blacks were not allowed to eat in the dining room), Colin had the best meal of his life.

In an overly competitive way, they became great friends.

Lemont was the son of the former slave chef Jemima Freeman, often called Aunt Jemima. When Lemont was eleven, she earned her family's freedom.

Jemima rushed her children out of New Orleans to a shack in Franklinton, just west of Columbus. Soon she became one of the most desired private chefs in Central Ohio.

Most slave children were taken from their mothers at around six, then sold. However, Jemima's food was so delicious that her master did not dare take her children from her.

"You just don't piss off the wonderful chef that prepares your meals," he realized. So, Lemont grew enormous devouring mountains of rich-white-folks' leftovers.

Before age eight, the McLaughlin twins lived on corn, potatoes, tomatoes, bread, wild berries, Scioto River carp, and any critter their dad dragged home.

Both of their parents died from a Cholera outbreak on their eighth birthday. Father John brought them into his Orphanage along Columbus's Irish Broadway days later.

When the Civil War began, all three seventeen-year-olds (Colin, Lucas, and Lemont) enlisted.

Colin and Lucas would never learn that Father John had arranged for them to be assigned to security instead of bloody battlefields.

After basic training, Colin was stationed at Camp Chase on Sullivant's Hill. Lucas was sent to Washington to protect US Senators from assassins.

Father John's involvement became a blessing for the new General Ulysses S Grant. Nine months after he enlisted, Colin worked undercover as a ticket-taker at the first Union Station at that North High Street location. There he used Lemont's backhand blast to knock out two assassins' just before they would have filled Grant with led.

Lemont went to work at the Franklinton Slaughterhouse when he was thirteen. By age fifteen, he was lifting two sides of beef onto sliding hooks at the same time. This chore typically took two adult men to lift one side. Lemont did this several hundred times each day, six days a week, for three years.

Lemont also read every history, science, and geography book that his mother could borrow from her employers. He loved feeding his mind almost as much as his belly.

However, when Lemont enlisted, the slaughterhouse owners sent this request to the general building Camp Chase on Sullivant's Hill.

*Dear General McClellan,
To help the war effort, Lemont Freeman of Franklinton, Ohio, must
not be accepted into the Union Army.
Soldiers need to eat; 40% of our workers have just enlisted, which is
already reducing our output, while you need it increased.*

*His boy's physical stature allows him to do the work of three men in
the slaughter room. His great advantage here would make him the
largest target on the battlefield.
I know young men feel they must enlist, as does Lemont. However,
he is already doing the most vital work for the Union!*

*Sincerely
Harrold T. Boner, President,
The Columbus Slaughterhouse*

121 W. Broad St., Franklinton, Ohio.

General McClellan agreed, but only for two years. Two years later, Lemont began basic training at Camp Chase.

During a stop-over, General Hayes dropped in on the camp's Toughest-Recruit Championship Finals. 1200 black recruits, many escaped slaves, came to Camp Chase for basic training in the summer of 1863. Hence, two separate tournaments were "naturally" organized. Segregation was not "officially" over in the USA for another 101 years.

Hayes walked into the arena (the camp's mess hall by day) five minutes before "The Negro Championship round."

Several minutes later, a delivery boy brought Lemont a pan of his mother's juicy turkey legs, ringside.

Lemont slipped off his left glove, grabbed one, then took a man-sized bite just as the bell rang. His powerful opponent pounced on the distraction.

As that usually overwhelming recruit charged, Lemont appeared more interested in protecting his snack than his head. As he swung the juicy leg behind his back, his right hand came smashing up from below his waist, literally knocking his challenger out twice (out cold and out of the ring).

Hayes decided to congratulate the massive boxer, so he walked down to the ring. He never imagined they would end up talking for nearly an hour. Instead, Hayes left thinking that Lemont was too brilliant, trustworthy, and uniquely gifted to become the easiest target on some battlefield.

Several weeks later, on the day Lemont completed basic training, he was stunned to learn he had been assigned to the General's staff.

He soon became Hayes's advisor of general knowledge and his natural bodyguard. For both reasons, combined with the fact he really liked him, Hayes kept Lemont close for the rest of the war.

Three years after the war, Hayes became Ohio's governor. He then hired Lemont for similar duties. He hooked Lemont up with a Wooton desk then placed it in the hallway beside his office door.



Hayes's Office in the Statehouse



Six days after the war (the day after Lincoln was assassinated), Columbus's Marshal of Police hired Colin Mclaughlin to walk a city beat.

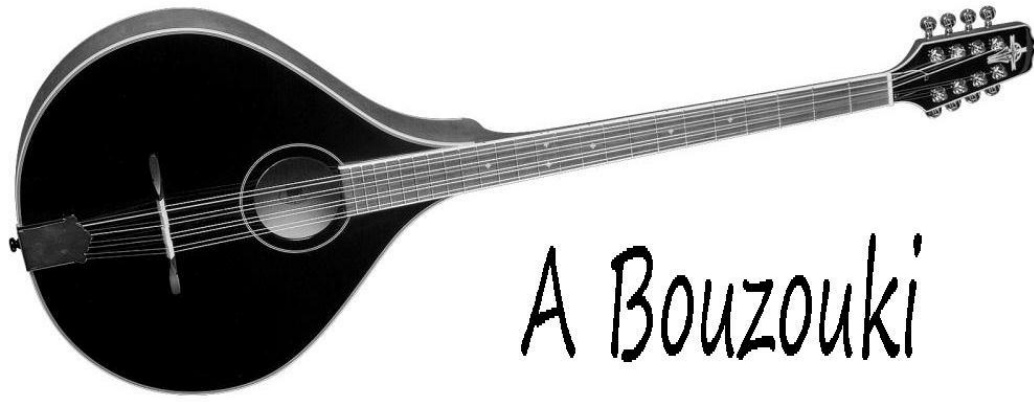
Four years later (1869), the first move Columbus's new mayor, a wealthy land-baron named George Meeker did, was close Columbus's police department and fire every marshal and constable.

The next day, as Colin sat pounding pints of ale at Flanagan's pub, two of his old orphanage mates asked him to jam some with them, as they did as kids. Spontaneous musical eruptions along Columbus's Irish Broadway happened every day.

Musically gifted nuns at Father John's orphanage were still shoving music lessons down their orphans' throats daily. Among other things, this ensured

that the beautiful new Saint Patrick's Cathedral, next door, would have quality music for every service.

They beat Colin into a decent singer and the best Bouzouki player in the building. A Bouzouki is an Irish cross between guitars, banjos, and ukuleles.



Colin had nothing better to do, so he grabbed a fresh pint, then staggered to his old orphanage (only a block away). There he found the same old Bouzouki he played as a child.

It was battered and badly worn, but it still played. Father John gave it to him, then helped him wobble back over to Flanagan's.

The few full-time drunks parked on Flanagan's stools cheered wildly after each song, drawing more cheering folks in from Broadway (N. Grant Ave).

Several hours later, Flanagan's was packed with folks singing along, celebrating, and most importantly, pounding down pints of Irish Ale.

After the hat overflowed with tips, Shannon Flanagan convinced them to start playing nightly shows. The Irish Orphan's band formed that day.

The Irish Orphans became the hottest on Columbus's Irish Broadway and have remained on top for over a decade. Colin became the second most popular performer in Central Ohio, only behind Sara.

Sara's background could not be more different. She was from a small upper-class settlement just north of Columbus, founded by Governor Thomas Worthington for his Central Ohio home.

Sara was an adorable, pampered deva from July 4th, 1857, the day she was born. She touched a broom for the first time in her life while rehearsing for the maids of Armando.

Sara had never made a bed, cooked a meal, or even emptied her chamber pot, as servants handed that crap. Even Lemont's mother, Jemima, was well compensated for preparing her family's meals twice a week.

However, unlike typical devas, she never acted like she was better than her servants; everyone had vital work to do in her mind. Instead, she treated them as friends, so they loved serving her.

By six, Sara could sing and dance as adorably as she looked. She practiced her arts every day as if that was what pretty little girls did for fun.

By age twelve, Sara was the best singer and dancer in Worthington, likely in Central Ohio. Her private school hired her to teach music and dance to other privileged children for several hours a week. She never told anyone that she turned her 30¢ weekly salary over to her chambermaid Clara (so she could bring home a \$1 week to feed her family).

At fourteen, producer Peter D. Legend, from the *Cotton Block and Cornstalk Opera House*, offered her a bit-part, and she stole the show.

In his next show, he gave her a significant role. Even though the show was not that good, she began packing the place, even on weekdays. She soon became the city's favorite entertainer.

Now, approaching fifty, President (King) Ty Cross pondered his perfect queen for the first time in his life.

In Sara's eyes, he looked like an incredible catch.

She knew that he ran dozens of international companies. However, she had no clue he owned several hundred thousand slaves or that the slave trade was still Cross Shipping's most profitable venture.

This handsome, charming, and overly charismatic tyrant was a prime example of why men, like books, should not be judged by their cover.

All six lovely jaws dropped when Elizabeth asked Cameroon, "Is Ty Cross aboard this train?!"

"Oh my god!" Their hair was wrapped in towels, and their adorable little bathing assistants had washed off their makeup. They could not fathom such a fine-looking man, seeing them in this condition.

To their great relief, Cameroon answered, "Oh no, he is not aboard, but he will be most excited to see you after we arrive."

Being Ty's hostages did not even enter their thoughts.

"Arrive? Where?"

"Near beautiful New Orleans, my home."

"We are going to your house?"

"Oh, no way! I have a one-room flat in Centertown. So, we would all have to sleep in the same bed!" He replied with a horrified look on his face.

"You will be the President Cross's guests at his Crosswinds estate, the most beautiful plantation in the South."

"Is that where we will be performing?" Dorothy asked.

"I don't think so, I know it will be in a warm sunny location, but he won't say where to protect these leaders from their enemies."

"Do you know when?"

"It must be in three weeks when my work with you will be complete."

"Put on your practice suits before your little assistants serve your breakfast."

"It is still cold through these hills, so wear your robes over them if you want."

"No reason to be modest around me; I would love to look just like you, but you're not my type."

Cameroon, as he again held one of those silky blue suits up against his torso, sang:

"♪I have one that fits me too.
As long as you are com-fort-able.♪"

"Oh, no. I would get you confused with my girls," Sara responded as the others giggled.

With a sad sigh, he sang:

"♪Oh, how I wish! ♪"

Then he twirled his way out of their bedroom car, singing:

"♪Okay, Girls, what the hell,

When you're ready for fun, just ring this bell.♪"

After another hour of checking out each other's new wardrobes and jewelry, they figured that the gorgeous Ty Cross must be in love with them.

"What a great guy," They thought of their mega-rich abductor.

About noon, they rang their bell. Mee, Wee, and Pee came through the door so quickly, they must have been waiting on the other side. They then waved the beauties into that next car.

This car was divided into two rooms. The first, a small dining car with windows on both sides, allowing them to see the beautiful Allegheny Mountains.

The table held a wide variety of tropical fruits, milk, grits, six small biscuits with country gravy, plus several kinds of thinly sliced smoked fish. It also held pitchers of lightly spiked coffee, hot cocoa, and tea.

Everything tasted as if prepared for dieting princesses.

As soon as they finished, their tiny attendants led them through the other half of this car. If not for its compact size, this could have been a beauty salon at Caesar's Palace.

As Pee, Wee, or maybe Mee said, "Hairdo af-er pool," they led the girls into the car's other room.

This room contained a crystal (clear glass) exercise tub made in Venice. Imagine a 5ft by 5ft by 5ft square crystal jar with a turquoise base. It had brass plumbing that was also the pool's entrance ladder.

This room's floor was turquoise tile. Its upper walls and ceiling looked like blue skies with fluffy white clouds (glowing over electric lighting).

Because it would remain closed for this trip, these six pale-faced Buckeyes would never learn that roof above was fully retractable.

Inside this see-through pool/tub, Cameroon was wearing what would be called a speedo today, a gleaming gold one.

As he modeled his ripped but hairy body at them, only Dolly stared. The other five either looked away or covered their eyes.

“I wanted to dress like you girls, but you said, “NOOOOO!”
“So, this is what you get.”

Still staring, Dolly asked, “Aren’t you a little overdressed?”

“Shut up,” Sara whispered to her. It was too late.

Cameroon then began flexing his muscles. “Water is how Ty Cross stays in fine shape. He wants me to teach this to you.”

“This tub is meant for one at a time. There are several big pools at Crosswinds that we can all use together.”

“But if any of you want to start today, I’ll squeeze you in.”

They chose to wait.

Again, feeling rejected, Cameroon climbed up then down this pool’s ladder, pointed his nose at the ceiling, then strolled out of the room.

Wee, Pee, or Mee then escorted them into the next double-length car. This one was divided into two rooms.

The first room was a luxury lounge. It had big cushy chairs and stools, game tables, and another restroom. A complete set of Edison’s music tubes and his fanciest phonograph sat on (and in) a walnut cart latched to the wall.

As soon as the ladies looked comfortable, Mee Wee and Pee brought in some more deliciously spiked beverages.

Suddenly a very tall, hairless man, resembling Rob Gronkowski (Gronk), minus personality and eyebrows, seemed to have appeared in their room, from nowhere.

He was wearing black dress pants, a white dress shirt, and a black bowtie.

If Mee, Wee, or Pee, seemed alarmed, the girls might have freaked out, but their tiny helpers just ignored him as they continued pampering the girls relaxed.

In a voice about three octaves under Cameroon's, "I am Animus, your masseur."

"Animus?"

"Yes."

"Is that your name or how you feel?" Sara joshed, causing a light five-girl giggle.

Without expression, he slid one of his colossal index fingers over his lips then made that "shush up" sound.

He gently took Sara's hand, then smoothly led her into that car's next room.

It had burlled walnut walls under another copper gilded ceiling. Now, this 10-foot long room only contained a cabinet holding another music machine and a few bottles of olive oil, and of course, a massage table.

Still silent, he tapped one of his dinner plate-sized paws on the massage table, and she climbed aboard.

She then received a masterful massage.

Each time she started talking, she heard him “shush” again.

“Not much on personality; nothing like Cameroon,” She thought.

She had no idea that Animus had many skills. They ranged from being the first Thai Kwan Do master from Mississippi to hijacking coaches and trains without being seen.

After her body-melting massage, Animus gave her a few minutes to recover before leading her back into the lounge. Then he repeated his ‘follow me’ gesture to Dotty.

“He’s no conversationalist,” Sara told Dotty. Yet he nearly smiled when she added, “But he has got magical hands!”

Next, Mee (Wee or Pee) led Sara back to that beauty salon.

One began massaging fragrant conditioners into Sara’s thick auburn hair while another removed her new rings and bracelets.

She placed them on the vanity right in front of Sara to watch them sparkle during her manicure. This fantastic glitter polish they applied changed color depending on the angle of light.

“Wow! Beautiful! I love it!” Sara said while rotating her hand.

One by one, all six got a massage and manicure before returning to that lounge for more intoxicating beverages, fruits, and some entertainment.

Cameroon returned wearing a see-through net robe over his golden speedo. He intended to play songs for them on the hand-cranked Edison phonograph.

However, Liz intervened, "We can handle that; we have been using phonographs for three years. We are close friends of Edison."

Pouting, Cameroon left the rolling lounge. He just wanted to be one of the girls.

"I did not mean to hurt his feelings," She added as he left.

They would spend most of the remaining day singing along with the recordings that Ty stocked inside that rolling cabinet.

They would only see one more person before reaching New Orleans. A small bent-over fellow, nearly as old as Methuselah.

Unlike Animus, he knocked on their door before entering. "Hello, girls. I am Dr. Levi. Your dentist."

"I am going to fix, clean, and whiten your teeth before we arrive in New Orleans."

One by one, he led them into the first room in the next car, which was set up as a single chair dentist's office. Here, Dr. Levi carefully cleaned their teeth and then filled a few cavities.

Then he held up a spool of silk thread and said, "I invented this stuff sixty years ago. It's why I still have these beautiful choppers at ninety-four."

"My floss removes that crap stuck between teeth, that rots them out and stinks up our breath."

"This will add many years to your teeth if you floss them every day."

As soon as he finished, he offered each beautiful Buckeye this same suggestion:

“Hey Sweetie, want to have some fun? We can slip into my private room. It is just on the other side of that door!”

“Don’t let that wedding ring fool you; I’m a widower,” he lied.

Each lovely dancer seemed to consider his offer before reluctantly declining.

Around sunset, Cameroon returned for “♪Announcements. ♪”

“♪We will arrive with the morning sun, ♪ at Crosswinds Plantation, for some real fun♪.”

“♪Then Ty Cross, that lovely man, ♪will be sailing in, around ten ♪

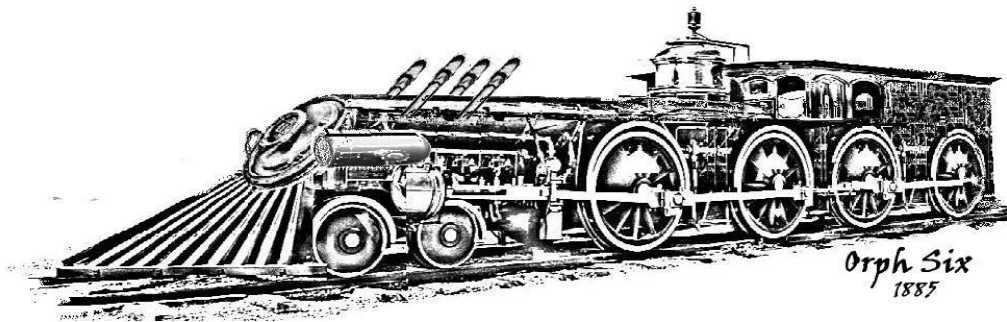
♪ Since he is your biggest fan, he will look as fine as a man, can ♪

♪To be sure you look your best, ♪ get to bed soon for your beauty rest♪.”

“That was his worst one yet,” Elizabeth complained.

“Yeah, at least he tries,” Sarah responded.

9. March 7th, 1:40 PM, Sullivant's Hill



As old Doc Levi inspected far more than just Sara's teeth, Tesla rolled through Columbus. Several minutes later, his new ORPH entered the thousand-foot rail entrance into the Orphan Ambulance Garage, next door to the far smaller orphan hospital.

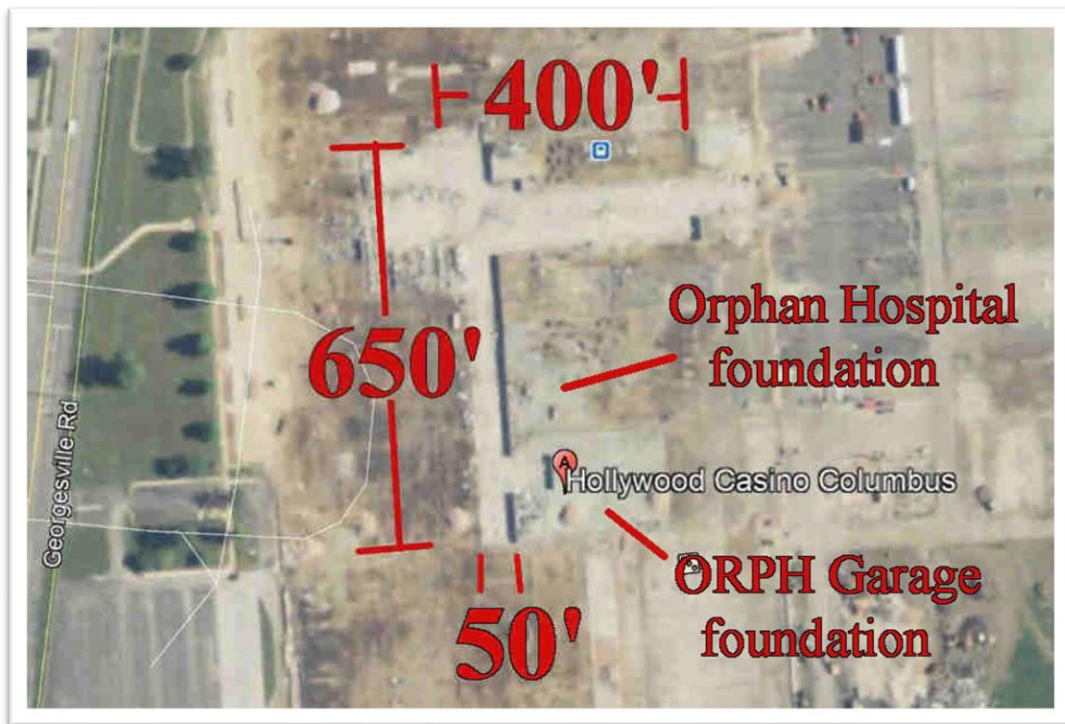
As the first five Orph's sounded like typical trains, ORPH Six growled like an angry animal; just hearing it approach had the mechanics overly excited.

Because Hayes rushed Number Six into service, Westinghouse's artists had not yet painted it white with red crosses, only dark primer to prevent rust. This color gave it a menacing appearance that seemed to perfectly match its belligerent growl.

After showing the drooling mechanics where to refill depleted fluids, Tesla entered a small room against the garage's western wall. Inside he faced a ten-foot-tall oak cabinet. He twisted, then pushed in on the pull handle on its center drawer.

The cabinet began rumbling. After about 30 shaky seconds, on its own, it opened like a clamshell revealing another recent invention, an Otis Elevator. Tesla entered, then pulled a two-foot lever to its 'down' position. After a few more shakes and rattles, the elevator slowly descended about thirty feet to Orphan Control.

Other than several engineers in a small development laboratory and Hayes's war room, ORPHAN Underground was big and empty. The Orphan Ambulance Garage and Hospital had been operating for several years. However, most of the old 1050 foot concrete compound below had only been electrified for five days, so its actual usefulness had just begun.



In 2010, four months before the Hollywood Casino broke ground on Orphan's old site, Washington's secret keepers exhumed the underground facility and contents before the casino builders stumbled into it. At that time, a USDA satellite snapped this image.

Hayes used the hospital's attic with dormers (windows) as his office for NORA. Even with the windows closed, he heard ORPH Six rumble over Sullivant's Hill, early enough to watch it arrive.

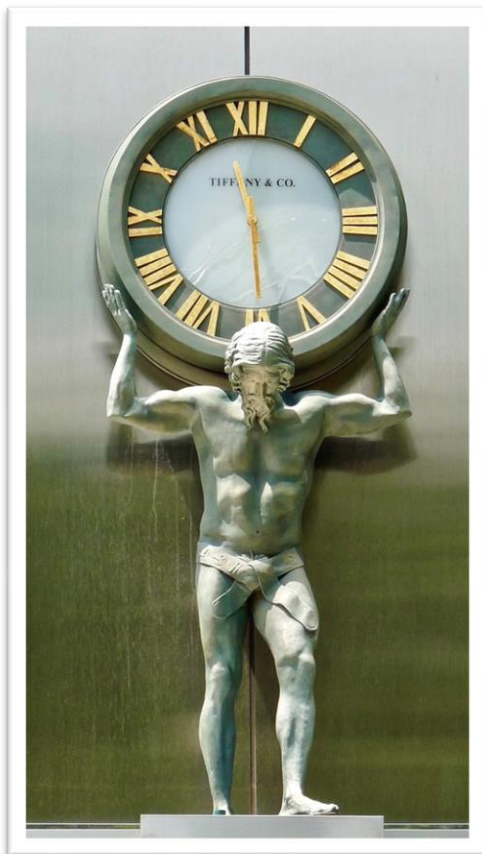
Near the empty war room, Tesla asked J Packard, one of Orphan's engineers, "where is Commander Hayes?"

"He is in his upstairs office."

Nicola boarded the compound's other elevator, which had two levers hidden in its ornate trim. One hidden lever sent it down to the secret base; the other sent it up to Hayes's attic office. The elevator's visible lever only offered two destinations, the hospital's first and second levels.

Spending time in Orphan's underground complex gave Hayes a new appreciation of windows. On top of Sullivant's Hill, his NORA office provided a fine view of Ohio's statehouse, seven miles away. However, that view was now framed by those two enormous new asylums on this hill's eastern ridge.

Although this office was now his shrine, displaying a lifetime of his accomplishments and awards, it only had enough room to seat eight people.



As Tesla waited for that other elevator to arrive, Hayes's newest award rang.

It was a wall clock also created by Tiffany and Company. It was one of 100, presented to America's Greatest leaders, chosen by the Boston Daily newspaper.

"Perfect timing," Hayes thought as he called Ivanta's desk.

"Tesla has arrived. He is here somewhere. Send McLaughlin, Freeman, Yeager and, Conrad up here."

Freeman and McLaughlin walked in first. "We have not found the girls yet, so New Orleans is a go."

"I just heard Nicola arrive. Six should be ready to again in a half-hour," he said as Yeager and Conrad walked in.

Hayes handed his test pilots a list of military bases ready to refuel ORPH Six.

He told Lemont, "Call me from each stop. I'll be right here."

After several minutes, the elevator finally opened for Tesla.

As he reached the attic office, one of Hayes's six desk phones began ringing. As he answered each one until he found the one ringing, he complained, "These damn things need separate sounds!"

"Hayes here."

"X, in DC."

'Rud, we just found your hijacked stagecoach and horses."

"I just sent several dozen men to go find those ladies."

"Who was with it?"

"No one, the team was just wandering around."

"Where?"

"In Arlington, just across the river."

"The horses are clean. All we found in the coach was a scarlet and gray lady's scarf."

"Are you sure it is their coach?"

"It says Electro-Wonder over its doors; it has a six Clydesdale team and a dead light in its ceiling."

"That must be it!"

"How did you find it?"

"It wandered into Arlington's city center."

"Hold on the line, X; I'm briefing agents right now; I be back with you in a moment."

Hayes put the ear cup down, "The coach and horses were just found strolling around Arlington, Virginia, but no one was with it."

"It does not make much sense, but it appears the girls are near DC."

"This is a diversion, Boss."

"Why?"

"The coach had to be rebuilt, just to abandon it where it would be rapidly identified."

"If they wanted to dump it, they would have just thrown its parts off a bridge along their route."

"They put it back together, just to release it in America's most (telephone) wired town hours later. They wanted us to find it rapidly."

"They are playing us as fools."

"You're right!" Hayes agreed.

"Of course," Lemont added.

Hayes picked up the earpiece, "X, this is just a diversion."

"A diversion?"

"They assume we have no clue about their destination or that we know they had dismantled that coach. That coach would still be in Ohio if it did not take a train."

"You said the horses look fresh."

“Yes, and clean.”

“They would be filthy after 500 miles.”

“Call your men off; this is a ploy,” Hayes told him.

Then Hayes changed his mind, “Wait, don’t call them off!”

“Run a big obvious investigation today. If we look clueless in DC, they could let their guard down and make more blunders.”

“Indeed.”

“Have agents comb all buildings that have a curtain or entry track (private rails) around Arlington. I would also try following large pony-pies.”

“Anything else?”

“I’ll let you know.”

“On it, Rud, X out,” click.

“Boys, I mean men, let’s get to New Orleans.”

Hayes then placed a wooden box on his desk. He removed five pistols and five boxes of ammunition, then passed them out.

“These six-shooters prototypes from Webley are the most accurate pistols we have ever tested. It is a shame they’re made in England instead of here,” Hayes said.



As he handed one to Colin, he explained, "This is only on loan to us."
"Webley calls these prototypes, 'priceless.'"
"In May, after they replace them with production units, these will go on permanent display at London's Webley Firearms Museum. So, don't lose it, Colin!"

"Have one crappy pistol, shot out of my hand by a counterfeiter, who I still hog-tied and dragged in; all he remembers is that gun," Colin muttered.

Hayes then pulled two leather belts from the crate and gave them to Colin and Lemont.

"Put this on securely, so you won't lose it," Hayes told Colin.

After they buckled them up, Hayes told them too, "Twist the latch."

As they did, part of the buckle's frame popped off into their hands; it then straightened itself into a brass tube.

"Wow, what is it?" Lemont asked.

"It is a blowgun, preloaded with a tiny dart, that knocks men out in seconds."

"Just make sure you only blow in the same direction its arrow points."

"Don't suck; that could be very bad."

"I never suck, Boss."

"20 darts are hiding inside each belt," Hayes said as he showed them how to access them.

"You already had these darts!" Colin blurted as he popped his little peashooter on and off for a second time.

"Packard" (an in-house engineer) "built these buckles while you were resting."

"This morning, I asked him about those little darts Stone mentioned."

"He whipped out a Sears Roebuck catalog. These darts were on page 447."

"Sears really does sell everything," Colin inserted.

"They do sell a variety of darts."

"I was right; they are even called 'Awls.'"

"Awls?" Colin asked.

"Their tips are molded from or covered with vampire bat saliva from your old buddy, Doctor Awl's company."

"After that turd injected me with that crap, then he tried to drill a hole through my head!"

Lemont blurted, "He never thanked me for saving his ass."

"I even missed a gourmet buffet with Senator Armstrong."

“Obviously, he has never ever missed a meal!” Colin replied.

While shaking his head, “no,” Hayes explained, “I called my old buddy Dick Sears. He had his man Roebuck take all of the Awls and shooters they had in stock to their rail depot.”

“I had (agents) Morton and Pluck, who were already in Chicago with ORPH Five, rush them down here.”

“Dick only sells these grass reed blowguns,” Hayes said as he pulled a bundle of them from the box.

“Grass reeds are too fragile and awkward for agents to hide, so I had Packard make these buckles while Stanley made the belts.

Hayes thought he read, “Where’s mine?” expression on Tesla’s face.

“They barely had time to finish these today. I have one ready for you after this mission. Nicola.”

“I doubt that I will need them, sir.”

“Fine, but since this will be your first field mission, stay behind these two master agents. It is most helpful to follow seasoned pros at first.”

As the words “seasoned pros” echoed around the office, Colin’s preloaded dart nailed Hayes’s painting of General Grant between the eyes.

“Man, these things are accurate!” Colin remarked as he admired his shot.

“You killed Grant!” Lemont responded.

“Oh, no! I saved him from Confederate assassins!”

“Lucky punches. Blind squirrels find nuts occasionally,” Lemont commented.

“Pure aptitude! No luck needed.”

“Boss, that was the three hundred and sixty-fourth time he mentioned saving Grant without crediting the backhand I taught him.”

“That was the thousandth time Lemont brought up his backhand,” Colin responded.

“Things of great beauty deserve attention!” Lemont replied.

Hayes’s head shook that “no” motion again, “This is not playtime, boys.”

Still admiring the dart between Grant’s eyes, Tesla answered, “Yes, sir, I feel fortunate to follow professional mentors.”



“Nicola, you can take these reed shooters and a case of darts if that makes you happy,” Hayes offered.

“No, thank you, sir; I’m already packing enough. Just coming here today was the most fun I ever had by myself,” Tesla, with his stuffed pockets, replied.

“That’s great, son.”

“Because of my latest improvements, I reached Columbus from New York twice as fast as anyone before.”

“Rather proud of himself, don’t you think?” Colin whispered to Lemont.

Then their eyes rolled as Hayes added, “Son, without you, we would not even have a way to chase them.”

Hayes then told them to meet at ORPH Six in 20 minutes while he kept Tesla for a few minutes to quickly brief him.

After a three-minute briefing, Hayes asked Tesla about those prototypes and notebooks stolen from his Manhattan home several years earlier ago.”

“Yes, what a mess.”

“You should have told me about this right away.”

“I ran to the New York (Secret Service) Office, four blocks from my house. You were here, 600 miles away, and telephone lines did not reach this far yet, sir.”

“Well, you did the right thing, son. But in the future, make sure I know about things like this.”

"Yes, sir."

"Could any of those notes or things be used against us?"

"Like a weapon?"

"Yes, like a weapon."

"Um, possibly, sir."

"Possibly?"

"They took 17 notebooks packed with my designs."

"Please elaborate."

"Several devices can be controlled from a distance, without using wires."

"From far away?"

"Potentially around the world. I've only operated prototypes within 20 miles so far, sir."

"Could they ignite bombs from miles away?"

"Yes, If wired for that."

"Wonderful."

"What about the prototypes they stole?"

"That could be a problem."

"Wonderful, again."

“They took some dynamo-powered prototypes, which would be easier to duplicate than to build from my notes.”

“Al (Edison) is already selling ventilation fans with your dynamos, and so is George inside air pumps; everyone knows about your dynamos.”

“It’s not the dynamos. It’s the machines they power.”

“Machines, what machines?”

“Well, my boat.”

“They stole your boat?”

“It looked like a spoiled child’s toy. it is only two feet long.”

“What is special about it?”

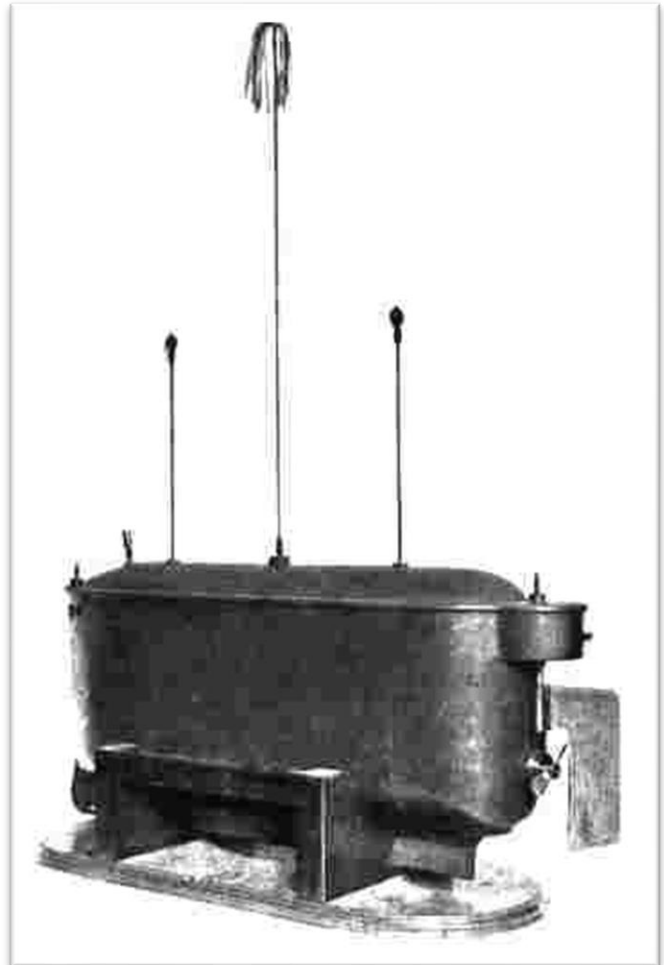
“It can be operated from shore, or another boat, without wires.”

“What do you mean by “operated?”

“Piloted, as if someone is aboard.”

“Precisely?”

“Very, in still water.”



“From how far away?”

“Well, you need to be close enough to see it, to guide it.”

“How far is that?”

“With sharp eyes and a flag flying above in daylight, over a mile, maybe two.”

“Could the enemies of freedom put a bomb in it, then remotely blow up ships?”

“Possibly, but there is not much room inside that prototype for more than few couple sticks of dynamite.”

“Could they build larger ones to carry more dynamite?”

“With enough resources.”

“Could they operate a full-sized boat without a crew aboard?”

“Yes, with an immense amount of engineering, but hopefully, they haven’t figured out my notes. They may not need boats any larger than that prototype.”

“Why is that?”

“One book has an explosive formula, I call Scalar Ignitro.”

“I calculated that one pound will release the energy of 163 pounds of dynamite.”

“Good God.”

"I've never tested it. I never even made a sample; I did not want the Hungarians to have it. It is only a design formula. It might not even work."

"How often do your designs fail?"

"They sometimes need adjustments, but I don't recall any total failures."

"How good is your memory?"

"Like everything else."

"Lovely."

"Hopefully, they can't break my code."

"Your code?"

"I write my notes in code. Well, actually more confusion than code."

"My sentences use words from eight languages, written backward."

"Written Backwards?"

"Most people would have to read their reflections in a mirror to try reading them."

"Your Clever ideas never end."

"Actually, Leonardo Da Vinci came up with the mirror idea. I just did that with multiple languages."

"I was not trying to fool everyone, just the Hungarian guards looking over my shoulders."

"Any other designs that can be used against us?"

"Perhaps."

"Perhaps?"

"One explains how to use modulation frequencies to shake down buildings, bridges, or worse."

"Or Worse!?"

"Cause earthquakes."

"Big earthquakes!?"

"Perhaps."

"Mother of God!"

"Is that all?"

"Mostly."

"Nicola, it looks like that White Knight Crime Syndicate, I just briefed you on, also stole your things."

"These are white supremacists. They naturally hate America's equality, freedom, and our constitution."

"That's not good, sir."

"These hate mongers are technically savvy and overly funded."

"We need to develop countermeasures to everything in those notebooks rapidly. Do you remember everything in them?"

"I do, but I also made copies before I arrived here."

"I copied them in Germany, with a great engineering friend, who kept them for me."

“After that break-in, he sent them to me, and I copied them again.”

“I put these sets in security boxes at two banks, one in Manhattan, the other in Pittsburgh.”

“Do you bring those keys with you?”

“I have almost everything with me. I’ve been living in Six for four months, inside George’s (Westinghouse) high-security facility.”

“I have not seen my house in months.”

“You should leave those keys here with me. I will lock them in our safe and would only use them if something happens to you.”

“If I can’t trust you, I can’t trust anyone.”

Tesla unzipped the little leather bag attached to his belt, extracted those keys, then gave them to Hayes. He then wrote a note with each bank’s name and box number for the former US president.

Because Elias Howe already patented the zipper in 1851, Tesla never bothered to patent his little belt container. Therefore today, very few hardcore nerds even know that Nicola also invented the fanny-pack.

“Nicola, Mclaughlin, and Freeman have great respect for you. But they are a bit intimidated by having you come along as an agent. So, forgive them if they act distant or aloof.”

“I can handle it.”

“They met as kids prizefighting each other for \$25:

“They have never stopped trying to one-up each other ever since. It looks like they don’t care for each other, but they are closer than brothers.

“Who won the money?”

“Well, Lemont won the fight, but Colin won the \$25.”

“Must be another wild and crazy American thing,” Tesla thought.

“Now, go find our girls, just stay behind them for now.”

“Yes, sir.”

11. April 27, 1883, Ancona, Italy



Almost two years earlier, Ty and Max Cross arrived at the Ancona Shipyard on Italy's east coast to pick up his new yacht (the 300-foot Maximus V).

Not only was it considered "earth's most beautiful ship," it was designed to be the swiftest ever. As a result, it could literally blow past the world's quickest warships.

It was the fifth 'five-masted tall ship' with a steel hull. But unlike its four predecessors, this ocean rocket used dual power sources, not just wind.

Beneath its four teakwood decks sat the largest coal-burning steam engine on the sea. Its two center masts were robust steel vent stacks soaring eighty-six feet above its upper deck. They only looked like wood.

Under optimal conditions, the combination of sails and this 2500 horsepower steam pumper could hold twenty-three knots (28 miles per hour), making her the fastest ship on the sea in 1883.

It was also the world's first fully electrified ship. Every room had electric lighting. At night, its masts lit up like Christmas trees, years before any other vessel. This mesmerized almost everyone at night, within sight.

Engineers from the Tyberian Technical Institute designed its drive system using technology so advanced, it might have come from a Martian. These technical components were built in Cross's Holland foundry, then shipped to Italy for installation.

All steel ships are painted to prevent rust. The first four steel-tall-ships were painted dark gray, which was far too dull for Ty. So, he had them paint his white under a thick blue racing stripe.

After seeing its vast white sails filled during its first sea test, its builders called it "La Angelo Bianco," the White Angel.

Its level of luxury was just as impressive as its style. Even Italy's King Umberto's private yacht, the second of these five steel hauled tall ships, seemed more like a cargo hauler by comparison.

It was scheduled for a May 1, 1883, delivery, so Ty and Max arrived a week early to first go shopping for art glass in Venice.

However, the day they arrived at the shipyard on April 27th, a steam manifold blew apart during a pressure test. It was damaged beyond repair, so it had to be replaced.

The manifold was created at Cross's facility in Holland. It would take nearly two weeks to forge and rush its replacement to the Alcona Shipyard.

Over the previous 104 years, Cross Shipping International had hundreds of ships built here. To fill the time for Italy's best customer, King Umberto invited Ty to sail to his private sporting event. It was held every Mayday (May 1st) for 20 royal families. It was called the "Reale Ludi Munus."

"Will Alfonso (Spain's King Alfonso # 12) be there?" Ty asked Italy's king.

"I have not discussed this year with him. His gladiators have survived three of the last six years, putting nearly three tons of gold into his pocket."

"I would be shocked if he only sends his son."

"What do you need to discuss with him?"

"He wants to increase the tax on Cuban tobacco and sugar that I ship around the world. I need to keep the costs low for you and all nations to maintain demand," Ty lied.

"Good for you, my great friend!"

"I heard that we might be building him a new ship, right here."

"His personal vessel?"

"I did not hear any details," Italy's king lied.

Since they had to wait for that manifold, Ty took King Umberto up on his free vacation offer.

In the morning, they set sail for Sicily's Port of Syracuse in the Italian King's personal craft, the *Bella Enchantadora*, the second of those five steel hauled tall ships.

The 'Reale Ludi Munus' was held in Syracuse's Nero Theatrum, a 1900-year-old Roman amphitheater.

When they reached Syracuse on April 30th, Ty was pleased to see that King Alfonso's ship had already arrived.

The Cross family and Spain's kings shared many things besides Cuban tobacco and sugar.

Ty inherited two secluded ports and a hidden bay in Cuba. That bay (and surrounding land) was deeded to Ty's great grandfather, Captain Adrian Maximus Christofis, by King Charles III of Spain, in 1767.

However, the British would dub Christofis "The Last Caribbean Pirate."

In 1766, after dropping off a load of African slaves in Brazil, Captain Christofis was commissioned to haul a shipment of cocoa beans to the King of Portugal's (his boss) warehouse.

As they loaded his ship, the slaves continually complained, "these beans are as heavy as rocks!"

After they finished, he noticed his ship was drafting a half foot low. So, after verifying it was water-tight, he checked those crates.

Each of those 800 crates had a false bottom jammed with golden Incan treasure.

Sea captains were paid 2%-10% of their cargo's total value upon delivery. Thus, his commission should have been enough to buy a fleet of ships.

Feeling cheated, he and his six most trusted mates transferred the treasure to a rotten old boat he paid scrap money nothing for. Then they sunk his fine Portuguese ship, claiming it had suddenly become too heavy to handle the waves.

He had arranged for a long-time friend to have that old ship show up just in time to rescue his unaware crew.

Several months later, though Cuba's governor, he offered Spain's king two of the four treasure chests he took from Portugal's king for trying to cheat him. Christofis and his men had actually filled 40 treasure chests.

In exchange for those two chests, he requested that Spain's king deed him the land around an unnamed lake, hiding a row of small hills along Cuba's southcentral coast. He also promised to develop the land.

Twelve years earlier, Christofis was the 1st Mate on a Spanish ship. After a storm did sink that one, he washed up on the beach beneath these same hills two a couple days later.

Between several of these jungle-covered hills was a slightly salty brook flowing to the sea. It led him to that rather deep lake about 1200 feet inland. After another 1200 feet, the still hilly land became far too dry for sugar or tobacco farming.

Because a canoe could not reach that lake up that little creek, Spain's King saw no value in this remote site. So, he sent a message to his governor to grab the two treasure chests and issue the deed.

Christofis was fascinated by Dutch engineering, which had added hundreds of square miles to Holland from the sea.

He realized that if he (slaves) built two small cofferdams (mounds of rock and soil), closing off each end of this little creek, he could use a windmill to drain it dry. Then have slaves dig out a canal large enough for large ships to enter this rather deep lake.

Christofis also knew that Kings change their minds if not kept happy.

Before he made this offer to Spain's King, he had slaves bury the other 36 chests on 36 separate Eastern Caribbean islands. Almost a century later, these same 36 islands became his great-grandson's (Ty Cross's) Republic of Tyberia.

Christofis cleverly marked each chest's location on a star map. He and his six mates then sunk the rotten old boat they bought, still packed with the digging slaves, so only he and his trusted few knew anything about it.

Soon after Christofis had turned that lake into a hidden bay, Lloyds of London started something new, underwriting new British ships against damage and loss.

This gave him an idea to become very tight with Spain's king.

Under unrelated company names, they began buying one new English galleon a year. Within that year, each would be (supposedly) lost at sea while hauling extremely valuable (also insured) cargos. Each belonged to a different operation, so it worked.

The Spanish King and Christofis split the insurance reimbursements for the ships and their precious cargo.

These new English ships sailed into the hidden bay, then converted to look like Spanish galleons. Christofis then sold these nearly new Spanish ships in Nassau.

He again split this cash with the Spanish king. They also shared the precious cargos.

They pulled this scam off once a year, six times, through 1774.

That same year, Lloyds of London began offering marine insurance on any used ship built in any country, provided it passed their stringent inspections first.

While scrutinizing a nearly new Spanish galleon, their inspectors realized this was an English galleon that Lloyds had fully covered as a total loss.

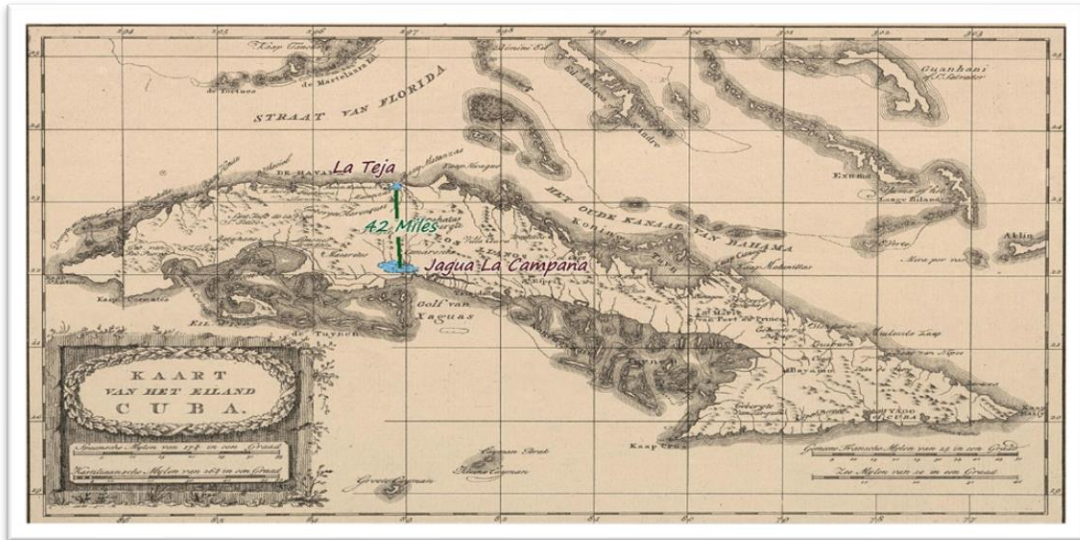
Its owner had bought it legally in Nassau. Its transaction was signed by Captain Adrian Christofis and Nassau's British governor.

Unaware of Christofis's hidden bay, King George III sent a dozen British warships to find him. But, after several months of searching, 13 American colonies suddenly declared united independence from England, forcing King George to divert his ships to the Revolutionary War.

Christofis took the opportunity to move his family to Corpus Christi, Mexico (not yet Texas), where he changed their surnames to Cross.

Thirty-seven years later (1813), his son (Ty's grandfather), Claudius Maximus Cross, turned La Teja, that second base in North Central Cuba, into one of the most beautiful tobacco plantations on earth.

By sea, La Teja was over 700 miles away from his Campa La Jagua base. However, those two Cuban bases were just 42 easy miles apart by land.



Claudius also opened Cross Shipping International, which brought millions of African slaves to the New World Under horrendous conditions.

He turned CSI into the largest privately-held shipping company on earth. Although CSI shipped almost everything anywhere, slaves remained its most profitable product, even after the Civil War.

In 1856, Ty inherited thousands of ships and boats, hundreds of companies, a quarter-million slaves, both Cuban bays, several dozen plantations, and his Great Grandfather's 36 treasure maps.

Because his two Cuban bays were so close by land, Ty planned to smuggle 2000 Spanish cannons (molded to look like Indian cannons) into the Confederacy by cutting across Cuba.

This would have been a game-changer for the Confederacy because the Union Navy included Cuba's 1300 mile length as part of its embargo line. Cross knew he could smuggle those cannons from Cuba's north-central coast to southern state beaches (avoiding southern ports) by shipping them one at a time in small fishing boats.

However, English spies exposed Spain's plan to disguise their cannons for the Confederacy. King Edward VII informed Lincoln, who then asked the Spanish king about this. That King Alfonso denied everything as he chickened out, canceling the plan.

12. Orphan Control March 7th, 1885, 3:00 pm

Yeager had already logged over 5500 miles test piloting Number Six, so he knew what it can do.

The rails from Columbus through Indiana were the flattest until Mississippi. Since it was still daytime, Yeager told Conrad to “Take a nap (in the caboose) while I let the agents play co-pilot for a couple hours.”

As Mclaughlin and Freeman began elbowing each other for the co-pilot seat. Yeager’s head shook that same “no” motion that had greatly strengthened Hayes’s neck.

When the big boy elbow match escalated to slapping, Yeager punched all three drive systems at once.

Everything other than Orphan’s first two secret agents took off. They seemed to freeze in space as the ORPH kept moving. But that experience only lasted a moment, then the steel wall (in front of the oil tank and water tub) slammed into them.

As they slid down, Lemont’s jacket snagged an iron coat hook, which slowed his three hundred and thirty pounds down just long to make a soft landing on top of Colin.

Colin’s grunt drowned out this Orph’s angry roar for a moment.

As they staggered to their feet, Yeager threw the power stick down, which reversed electrical polarity. This action turned Tesla’s new electrical drive system into those magnetic glue brakes, sending both agents airborne again.

While soaring forward, Lemont grabbed a handrail while Colin hard-kissed the wall behind the two pilot compartments with his tonsils.

Like that coat hook, that handrail only held for a fraction of a second before breaking loose. However, this delay was just long enough for Colin to again cushion Lemont's massive impact.

When his orphaned lungs re-inflated, his giant partner was already stuffed into the co-pilot's seat.

Unlike Tesla, test pilot Yeager was no daredevil. He had no interest in finding this Orph's top speed. He thought. "Full speed on rails designed for 40 miles an hour was foolhardy."

However, before they crossed the Ohio River from Indiana, the rails were straight and smooth. So, he decided to allow both agents to break 100 MPH just to shut them up. Lemont had hit 103.

After 45 minutes, it was Colin's turn.

As Colin reached 100, he pleaded, "Nicola hit 149 miles an hour a couple hours ago, so we need to at least break 150 and be the fastest men on earth."

"Tesla might be the smartest guy, but that does make him intelligent, just less stupid than most of us," Yeager said as he glanced at Colin.

With his eyes back on the tracks, Yeager added, "We have already traveled faster than any team ever has before."

"Even though we can't tell anyone, you just broke the world's land speed record. We are rolling at 105 right now!"

"Come on, man, let's crank it!"

"Kill yourself when I'm not around. The next three hundred miles will feel like that Switchback ride (world's first roller coaster) in New York."
"But this is not a circus ride, so I don't want clowns distracting me."

Yeager then rotated Tesla's microphone dial to its "CABOOSE" setting, then pressed it. "Conrad."

"Yeah," his primitive speaker replied.

"I need a real co-pilot; you're up."

"What a killjoy," Collin thought.

ORPH Six was likely the first vehicle with an electric intercom, which was most helpful. Without it, occupants had to climb a catwalk above the water tub and oil reserves to speak with the pilots.

As Colin reached the surgical car (Tesla's laboratory), Nicola was busy on a tiny prototype as Lemont watched.

Still used to Hungarian agents watching him work, he barely acknowledged them.

Colin and Lemont naturally began competing for a better view. Once Tesla could feel their breath, he began explaining what he was creating.

He pointed at several pearl-sized stones wired together. "That darker stone can detect an identical copy if I send a tiny electrical current through it."

"What does that mean?" Lemont asked.

Tesla then held up a wooden block, about the size of a deck of cards. It had a spring button switch and a round gauge that looked like a pocket compass. It also had two wires leading to a battery about twice its size.

"This is a locator. It has an identical crystal inside. When a tiny current energizes its twin, this needle will point at it."

"From how far away?" Lemont asked.

"It should work up to about 20 miles."

"Wow!" Lemont responded.

"Watch what happens when I put that crystal set (the two little stones with wires) in my mouth."

The needle suddenly pointed straight at him.

Lemont asked, "If Sara had one when they nabbed her, would it point her out?"

"If she is within range."

"How far is its range?"

"Fifteen to twenty miles. It won't work as well in a dry mouth. Moisture helps carry electricity through our bodies."

The two agents looked at each other in amazement.

"If we planted one in the mouth of one of those big, abducted men, could we follow them to that hidden Island base?" Lemont asked.

"Again, as long as we are close enough. Are you volunteering, Agent Freeman? You fit the description."

"No, well, I have not considered this."

"You could maybe help us find them," Tesla suggested.

"If I was a big brownie, I'd volunteer," Colin added.

“That’s easy for someone as white as a cracker to say.”
“You’re a pretty big boy. I can fix you up with some brown shoe polish.”

“Sure, I’m pretty, but why fake something when we got the real thing?”
“You know it’s better to die as a young hero than a wimpy old turd.”

“We’ll see what Hayes has to say about it,” Lemont decided.

Upfront, Yeager told Conrad, “It will be dark at 18:40 Central. If we stop at Nashville, we will lose daylight. We have enough to reach Memphis.”

“Next stop, Memphis.”

ORPH Six’s three weapon systems were operated from another dual-seat console inside this Orph’s weapon car. Additionally, this sign was posted on its exterior door:

WARNING:

Deadly Disease Confinement!

Do not enter!

The weapons car’s walls, floor, roof, doors, and hatches were forged from a still top-secret carbon-steel mixture (stainless steel).

The car’s little control room was separated from the weapons by four inches of that secret alloy. When activated, electric dynamos drive the mechanical arms that extend the weapons above this car.

The control console used a pair of semi-secret aiming devices, called “periscopes,” which also extended above the car.

The flamethrower was a defensive system that sprayed (and ignited) oil from the Orph’s 1000-gallon fuel tank. It was mounted on a rotating arm that allowed it to spread a ring of fire around the Orph.

The 50 caliber Gatling gun also used a rotating turret for defensive or offensive action. While activated, water (for the steam engine) was pumped around its barrels, keeping them cool enough to fire fifty-five thousand bullets.

The third weapon system was purely offensive. A howitzer (cannon) that could fire 12-pound shells at targets up to four miles away. It was the first cannon with automatic reloading. It was also water-cooled, allowing it to fire three times per minute without overheating.

The next car was storage. Half of it was a vapor-compression refrigerator, which could keep food, beverages, and a pile of dead bodies fresh.

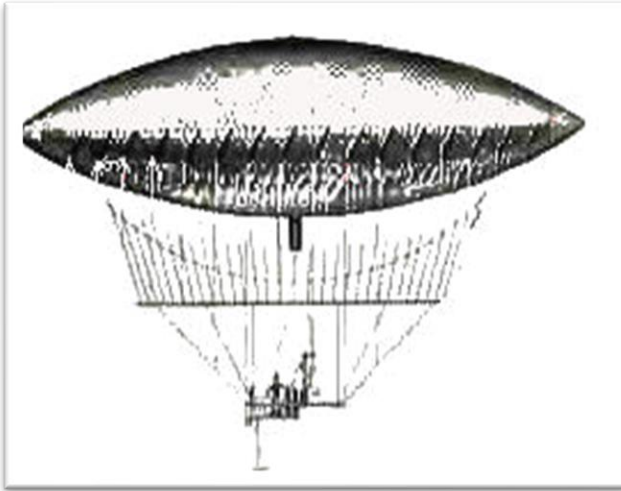
Besides the locomotive, only the last two cars had windows. The fourth one was a low-profile passenger car that could seat 40 agents, troops, or prisoners.

The fifth car (today) was a low-slung caboose. It had a kitchen, dining booth, and six sleeping compartments designed for extra-large men, as was the case for almost every Orphan agent so far. Even Tesla was 6’2”.

This ORPH also had seven toilets, basically holes hidden under its built-in seats. But, unlike Ty Cross’s phantom train, there was no plumbing involved; these just dumped onto the tracks.

Both dual-console seats (pilot and weapon) had these holes under their fold-up butt cushions.

Mercifully, Tesla also paid homage to Joseph Gayetty by installing one of his toilet paper dispensers beside each converting seat.



Thanks to Orphan's massive secret ORPH budget, Hayes did not know that Nicola and George had also built a new car for ORPH Six, "The Flight Car."

The Flight-Car concealed a folding dirigible that could be quickly inflated and launched through its roof by

opening a pressurized hydrogen tank.

It could carry a thousand pounds of agents and or cargo.

Tesla's motivating idea was to give agents a birds-eye view during reconnaissance.

A Hydrogen balloon would have been far simpler to use. However, Tesla decided on dirigibles because they could be piloted while balloons go with the wind.

Other than its dynamos, Tesla did not create this airship. Instead, he had his French engineering body, Jules Henri Giffard (inventor of dirigibles), build this unique folding version. Then Cross Shipping delivered it to Westinghouse's New York facility.

13. Memphis base 7:14 pm March 7th, 1885

As Naval engineers excitedly replenished ORPH Six's liquids, someone informed Lemont, "you are the first negro to use the Admiral's telephone."

"We have not found that train yet," Hayes told him.

"Everything happened so rapidly, we (I) assumed they were also rushing to New Orleans. However, there are at least eight routes by rail; they must have taken a less direct path."

"That makes sense, Boss. Casually walking away attracts far less attention than running."

"The New Orleans evidence keeps piling up. But to keep those White Knights assuming we are spinning in confusion, I stopped searching all south bounds and started searching trains near DC."

"As long as they think they fooled us, the more they will drop their guard, Boss."

"That's the plan."

"Anything else, Boss?"

"Something so strange it has to be true."

"Yeah."

"A couple weeks ago, a federal marshal in New Orleans questioned a Jamaican beautician about \$200 the local police found on her. She claimed a masked man gave it to her to do up several pretty northern ladies who were locked inside an old jail or fort."

"She was ordered to act as if she could not speak English, so she did not learn their story."

"She said that she was transported in a windowless wagon, so she did say where the old jail is."

"The ride took less than an hour, so they were in or near New Orleans."

"The next day, her home and salon were empty, and she was long gone."

"Wow."

"Lemont, a story about pretty kidnaped Yankee ladies, is not something someone would just make up; it has to be based in fact."

"It's like those hijacked men also seeing pretty white ladies in ropes. These might even be the same ladies."

"This sighting twice is no coincidence."

"Just more verifying New Orleans."

"You knew it, Boss."

"We'll see. I have your morning agenda."

"Go ahead."

"At 8:00 AM your time, that federal marshal..., ah," Hayes said as he looked through his notes.

"Marshal Clyde Dupree will meet you at the New Orleans Navy base. He will fill you in on this lady and help you move around town."

"Dupree suspects that beautician was taken to an ancient French fort beside the Mississippi River. You will roll right past it several minutes before you reach the naval shipyard."

"You want us to stop and check the place out?"

"Yes, but just from a distance. It is a Moroccan consulate; we can't even get a search warrant for it. It would be an act of war to force our way in, which could expose Orphan's so far, perfect cover."

"Isn't it an act of war for a nation to kidnap another's citizens?"

"That's for judges to decide, not you, or especially Colin."

"Boss, they would remove any evidence before they would allow us in."

"That's the way it works. But since you roll right past it, have Yeager stop long enough to look around."

"Got it, Boss."

"Like usual, you are a famous music band hunting for a member's missing girlfriend."

"If those White Knights suspect federal agents, they could expose Orphan's existence to the world."

"We just make music, Boss."

Then Lemont explained Tesla's tracking device and possibly going deep undercover to locate those big brown men.

"Find our ladies first, while I ponder this," Hayes said before asking, "Is Nicola Tesla with you?"

"I can see him outside. He has a swarm of navy engineers crowded around him."

"Break him loose; I need to talk to him."

“Hold on.”

Lemont stepped outside and yelled, “Nicola, Hayes wants you.”

“Tesla here.”

“Nicola, are you sure your tracking gismo can point out Lemont from 20 miles away?”

“If nothing interferes.”

“I’d prefer ten miles.”

“Do you know this technology well enough to trust it?”

“I have been testing it for years. Dozens of my inventions use this; it’s proven exceptionally reliable to me.”

“If I heard of a device like this from anyone else, I would not even consider this. Hell, I probably would not even believe it.”

“it’s actual simple science, sir.”

“Simple for you, maybe. But if you say it works, I know it does.”

“Can you put Lemont back on the line?”

“Give me a minute.”

“Yea, Boss.”

“Are you up for something this risky?”

“It’s my job to stop organized crime, under disguise. What these big men are being forced to do could be a huge problem for our country.”

“Certainly.”

"I am the only big black American secret agent; it's me or no one."

"I'm just not going to send you off halfcocked."

"Never been accused of that before."

"Right."

"How's Colin. Is he thinking straight?"

"He's normal, not straight. He's been punched too many times."

"I know how he feels; this is just as personal to me."

"How so?"

"You must know by now that Elizabeth and I have been, um, close for years. But we keep that behind locked doors, for obvious reasons."

"I know about it."

"Colin seems less disturbed about Sara than I am about Liz. He is as cocky as ever and just as easily distracted by pleasure."

"I'm fine."

"Well, adapt your standard cover."

On planned (not sudden emergency) missions, Lemont plays the Irish Orphans road manager. Since they raise funds for the orphanages near each show, Hayes (NORA) has the excuse to lend them an ORPH to use like a modern band's tour bus (minus all the hidden weapons).

"Call me as soon as you arrive at the New Orleans Navy base. I am staying here until we get a telephone line to my house."

"Yes, Boss."

“Now go find them, very quietly. Hayes out.”

14. 9:42 PM, Saturday, March 7th, 1885

Every off-duty mechanic, engineer, and nerd at the Memphis Naval base had joined those on duty to check out Orphan's amazing new 'railroad ambulance' before it rushed off.

They had seen early ORPHS, but that was like comparing a white Subaru to the only black Corvette on the planet.

As he finished using their navigation abacus, Conrad told Yeager. "40 miles an hour should have us beside the old fort by zero-five-hundred Central" (5AM Central Time).

Yeager spun Tesla's intercom dial to the "ALL CARS" position before pressing it.

"Mr. Tesla," Yeager announced as if Nicola was the other man aboard, "HOLD ON TIGHT!, Let's make all those guys happy."

Yeager slammed all three drive systems to maximum, solely for all those mechanical fans' amusement.

ORPH Six was likely the world's fastest drag-racer long before that term even existed. Yeager could not hear or see those navy engineers jumping and cheering as the rail rocket blasted off, but he knew they were.

"God, that's fun!" He told his co-pilot.

Yeager had locked Lemont and Colin out of the locomotive, so they had boarded the surgical car to watch Tesla invent.

"It's almost ready to test," Tesla said to them as they sat down.

He had set two pearl-sized crystals inside a pinky finger-sized piece of modeling clay. The thin copper wire that connected the crystals extended beyond both ends of the clump.

That second crystal only allowed the electrical current to flow in one direction, which kept the “signal crystal” energized.

He told Lemont, “Before we harden it, you need to shape it. Press it down behind your bottom lip and gum until it is comfortable.”

As soon as it entered his mouth, that needle on the locator began pointing at Lemont.

“It’s working.”

Tesla then walked around the car to verify that the needle would continue pointing at him. “Excellent!” Tesla excitedly proclaimed.

Maybe 30 seconds later, Tesla accidentally pulled the wire loose from the battery in his pocket.

The instant he reconnected it, “Lemont blurted, “Ouch! The thing just shocked me.”

“Did that minuscule amount of voltage hurt you?” Tesla asked.

“No, no, It just surprised me a little, like a bug.”

Tesla then reconnected it again, “Did you feel that again?”

“Plain as day.”

“This is fascinating!” Tesla remarked.

“Let’s try counting how many times I complete this circuit.”

With his back turned to Lemont, the inventor tapped the connection six times.

"I got six."

"Excellent!"

"Thus, is like a bonus from God!"

"A bonus from God?" Lemont asked as he shared the same confused expression as Colin.

"I'll explain if we can verify distance," the excited inventor replied.

"Take out your watch," he told Lemont.

"Wait exactly two minutes as I head to the caboose."

"Then, just during the third minute, count how many you feel."

"Fine."

"Start now," Tesla said while checking his pocket watch.

Nicola opened that circuit 23 times from the caboose; he then returned to the surgical car.

"I got 23 plain as day," Lemont told Tesla as he opened the door.

"Excellent!"

"Is the sensation only quick snaps?" he asked.

"Yes, just little pops."

"Do you realize what we just invented?"

"The agents just looked at each other."

"With the right code, I could send you messages without wires!"

"This is a discovery of unimaginable importance!"

"Both agents suddenly realized the value."

Tesla then mumbled, "We need a code of just dots."

"Morse Code needs dots and dashes, so need a different code."

Colin, the world-famous musician (world famous in Columbus), suggested, "Maybe not Nicola."

"If you send dots at a steady beat, you could use dots to send Morse Code."

"How so?" Tesla asked the musical agent.

"Say we time two clicks per second, we could skip one for dashes and skip two for the next word. It's simple."

"You got an inventor hiding in you, Agent Mclaughlin," Tesla complemented.

"Yeah, normally, he invents turds," Lemont added.

Tesla then asked Lemont, "Do you know Morse Code?"

"Like the back of my hand. I have been sending Hayes's messages since the war."

"Give me a few minutes," Tesla said.

He then ran the battery wire through a rubber-coated clip so that the circuit only connected when squeezed.

Just as Tesla was about to send the first words ever transmitted, Colin interrupted. "Hey Nicola, I also mastered Morse code, and I have perfect timing, so how about letting me send him first wireless words?"

"Fine. I know Morse Code, but have rarely used it," Tesla said as he handed Colin that squeeze switch.

"Okay, big boy read it and weep, - -- .- - ..- .-. -.."

"I-a.m.-a-T.u.r.d" slowly rolled off Lemont's lips.

"And you smell like one too," Colin stated.

However, this hour's load of inventing was not quite over yet.

That protruding copper wire began jabbing Lemont's lip, so he picked up one of Tesla's tiny screwdrivers to manipulate it.

As the tool touched the device, Tesla saw his locator's needle jump.

"Do that again."

"Do what again?"

"What you just did with that screwdriver."

The needle jumped again.

"Try that with a nail," Tesla said as he handed him one.

It worked again.

"You know what this means?"

"What?" Lemont asked.

"Two-way communications, over miles, like telegraphs without the poles and wires!"

“What a great day this has become,” Tesla glowed.

A couple minutes later, the two slightly less impressed agents retired to the caboose for some sleep.

Tesla spent the rest of the night charging batteries, hardening Lemont’s mouthpiece, and proving more possibilities.

New Orleans Saturday, March 8th, 5 AM



Even though the phantom train and its happy hostages were less than three miles away, they might as well have been four hundred miles away.

The quickest route from Columbus ran south along the Mississippi River's west bank. However, Crosswinds was east of the river. Louisiana would not have a bridge over this half-mile-wide river until 1935. The nearest bridge was 200 miles north, so Sara and the Buckeye Beauties were over 400 miles away by rail.

After 200 years, that old French fort was still standing. In 1812 Morocco's Sultan Slimane bought it as a holding pen for his greatest export, African slaves.

The fort saw little use after slavery in the USA ended.

However, because Moroccan laws governed it, owning, and abusing slaves was still perfectly legal inside these walls.

The fort had two very elaborate wrought iron gates, one above its Mississippi River dock. However, its matching inland (west wall) entry was not original. It was added after the railroad came through in 1852.

That curtain track did not reach the fort. It just ran beside the southbound track about 1000 feet west of that western gate.

"I thought it was a good idea to replace big strong boilermen with an oil pump, until now," Conrad told himself as it took all he had to free the switch lever beside the curtain track.

As soon as Yeager parked the Orph, he called Colin and Lemont.

Colin then told Lemont, "I'll do this alone. If someone sees you, that could blow your big brownie cover, if needed."

"You are about fourteen sizes beyond forgettable, and, you know, I run like the wind."

"Just don't cause an incident."

"I'll just go for a walk around the place, then return," Colin said while slipping into black overalls.

The four 20-foot walls surrounding the old fort were each 300 feet. The building inside covered about a quarter acre.

This two-acre fort had eight towers, rising about 15 feet above the wall. There was one at each corner and a pair framing in both gates. However, they all looked unmanned.

The ornate iron gate was locked and chained on the western side, with nothing inside lit up or moving. Like a drunk stumbling after a long night, he walked around to the original entrance, overlooking the river.

The front gate was also chain locked. But the place was not abandoned; lantern light was flickering inside a small guard shack about 30 feet inside the front entrance.

Through its window, Colin saw one uniformed man. He was dressed like a guard, but he looked far too old to defend anything.

Colin climbed up on the gate then began yelling, "Help, sir, I need your help!"

He came out, then walked up to the chained gate, unarmed.

"Sir, my hound dog, Clementine, just chased a rabbit under your back gate. So now he's lost in there somewhere. I need to get in there to rescue him."

"This is Moroccan Republic land; You will need written permission from Prince Charles or Ambassador Johnson."

"I cannot allow anyone in. But if I see a hound around, I will tie it to this gate for you."

"Why don't you come back in an hour after daybreak."

"Well, Clementine will not come to strangers. Why don't you just let me come in and find her?"

"I am not here to harm you; You can even hold my gun," Colin said as he gently pulled the revolver out of his belt then let it dangle from two fingers.

"Without written permission, no one enters."

"Come on, man," Colin yelled as the man turned back towards his shack.

“I won’t tell anyone you helped me find him.”

“I will even give you fifty dollars if you let me find him.”

He turned and said, “I’ll take your money when attached to written permission from Ambassador Johnson.”

“Is he here?”

“He is in the country, but in Washington, DC,” he said as he again turned back towards his shack.”

The former cop in Colin told him, “this place was hiding the truth,” so he decided to get inside one way or another.

A thick braid of barbed wire capped the fort’s 20-foot wall, and the iron gates were crowned with rusty blades and spears. Going through instead of over the wall made more sense to Colin.

He slowly walked beyond the guard's view, then hit full speed as he sprinted to the Orph’s Weapons Car. As he sat down, he pulled the lever that Tesla labeled “Boom.”

One of the car’s roof-hatches opened, and the 12-inch howitzer rose through the opening.

Using one of the periscopes, Colin aimed. He then squeezed the trigger Tesla had built into his Boom lever.

About a second later, a 12-inch shell slammed into the old fort’s inland gate.

Unlike steel, wrought iron is too brittle to bend or give, so the gate shattered as if made of glass. A couple seconds later, iron shrapnel had spread out nearly a mile; some even pelted the brand new Orph.

Lemont reached the weapon car just as Colin was rushing out.
“What the hell are you doing!?”

“I’m going to get her!” Colin yelled as he ran off.

About a minute later, he entered the old fort, where it once had a rear gate.

Tesla and Lemont grabbed their handguns, then torches, before cautiously heading out. As they crept around the Orph’s locomotive, they saw an iron spear protruding from one of its brass spotlights (headlights).

“Damn! We did not even paint it yet!” Tesla complained.

As Lemont told him, “No problem, Bob can fix it right when we return,” Colin had already found 12 jail cells and no one home.

Even the old guard was gone. After his shack was showered with iron, he slowly ran towards a nearby donut emporium to find the local police.

Tesla and Lemont entered the old fort several minutes later.

Lemont found a wooden crate of corroded iron shackles in one of the cells. He twisted one with his large pizza-sized hands, and it shattered.

“Even you could break these things,” Lemont said as he handed one to Colin.

As he picked his torch back up, Lemont told Tesla, “We should tell Edison to make a battery-powered light cannon that we can carry.”

“I make a far better electric light than he can. No one ever mentions that his light bulbs waste 90% of the electricity they use; mine won’t!”

“Nicola is jealous of Edison,” Lemont incorrectly thought.

Colin then yelled, "Look at this!"

"What is a beauty salon doing inside an old prison?" Lemont said to Nicola as they arrived.

Colin could tell it had been used recently because there was no dust lying around this fully equipped salon.

As dawn was breaking, at about 6:40AM, local police finally arrived at the old French fort. However, ORPH Six and the men from Orphan were already inside the naval base, two miles farther south.

It was apparent that pretty ladies and big brown men had been held here recently. However, they found no trace of Sara and her Buckeye Beauties.

15. Crosswinds Plantation, 7:00 AM, March 8th, 1885



Although their train arrived around 5:00 AM, Cameroon did not wake the sleeping beauties until 7:30.

“♪I let you rest till the morning sun, so now it's time for far more fun.”

“♪Don't clean up right here; your Crosswind suites have lit-up mirrors.♪”

“♪And your closets are already there, with beauticians to do your hair♪.”

It was 80 degrees (Fahrenheit) when they stepped off the train onto a stunning flower garden. Days earlier, they trudged through four inches of snow to reach rehearsal, so stepping into this sunny paradise felt wonderfully surreal.

Because steam locomotives belched thick black smoke, Ty had Crosswind's train depot erected 1200 feet downwind (east) of the mansion. An electric rail car with a folding top provided transportation to and from the estate.

They rolled past billions of flowers, five waterfalls, three fountains, dozens of ancient Roman and Egyptian statues, four gazebos, and three swimming pools. The grounds looked like a private nineteenth-century Disney Water park.

Crosswinds also featured the only white sand beach in the states. However, this did not occur naturally; Ty shipped it in from the Bahamas.

Several signs warning “Danger! Only Swim in Pools” were posted along this beach. But, unfortunately, Lake Pontchartrain was also the home for millions of deadly creatures, including sharks and alligators, not just narcissistic tyrants.

Much of the shade over Crosswinds was provided by six 80 foot ship sails in blue. Groundskeepers would continuously adjust them to prevent these pasty white Ohio sweeties from burning.

A glowing twelve-foot Alabama marble (world’s whitest stone) wall wrapped around the 1.5 square mile plantation’s dry sides.

Twelve feet beyond the western wall sat a canal that Ty’s father built so his ships could enter Lake Pontchartrain from the Mississippi River, then dock at the plantation.

The suites inside the mansion were also inspired by European palaces.

Ty Cross was obsessed with beauty and technology. He had architects continually designing and redesigning his opulent homes. His Tyberian Technical Center’s engineers (on Sainte Marguerite) ensured that all his estates offered the newest technologies.

When the girls entered their private suites, one of their light-weight dresses (and matching attire) had already been chosen for them. Instead of being laid out on their beds, they were on mannequins. These mannequins were

not the standard dummies; they were artistic copies of each Buckeye Beauty.

The selected dresses and undergarments weighed less than a pound. However, these girls were used to wearing twenty pounds of clothing in August, so they were reluctant to have Ty see them in such revealing dresses.

After their mirrors exposed how amazing their athletic bodies looked in them, their reluctance became excitement.

At 9:50, black butlers in white tuxedos led the Buckeye Beauties outside. In the gazebo beside the largest pool, a band played a new local music style called “Ragtime.” Their unique new groove was invented by a teenager named Scott Joplin. He was also the band’s youngest member.

Flying on an 85-foot pole over that gazebo were seven flags. The top flag featured a white background with a blue Saint Andrew’s Cross, with a white six-sided star where the blue lines intersect.

The other flags had the first name of each Buckeye Beauty, surrounded by lovely artwork.

Cameroon said nothing about the Maximus V. But he did tell them that Ty would be arriving by boat. So, as the ship suddenly turned into view (from only five hundred yards away), they were stunned by its beauty and size.

“I had no idea that ships were so beautiful!” said Sara, who had spent her entire life inland.

As the ship reached the dock, the Chief of Staff led a parade of chefs, beauticians, maids, acrobats, jugglers (juggling), and butlers outside to welcome Ty.

As soon as it lowered its gangway, the band began playing “Big Daddy” from Sara’s musical, “The Ladies Come First.”

However, it appeared that Two Ty Crosses were looking down at them from the ship's bow.

“Oh, my Goodness!” Dorothy yelled, “Ty has a twin!”

“That's father and son,” Cameroon explained.

“Which one is Ty?” Sara asked.

“The immaculately dressed one waving at us (at her).”

“The one yawning is Ty’s eldest son Max.”

“Since his thirteenth birthday, Max has been Prime Minister of Tyberia.”

“They elected a thirteen-Year-old?” Sara responded.

“The world does not vote for its leaders; that’s an American thing.”

“Ty owns Tyberia, all 36 islands. His opinion is what matters.”

“Max normally stays at his Tyberian Palace, in Sainte Marguerite.”

“He runs the country while his daddy runs hundreds of companies from his homes or from that ship.”

“Oh my.”

Since there were suddenly two hot Cross men, the ladies looked at each other with even more excitement. This second one was even their age.

They already realized that Ty Cross felt something more special for Sara. She was always first on the train; her jewelry box contained a platinum ring with a diamond easily twice as large as any other. Her suite was Crosswinds’ royal suite, and her flag was not only on top of the poll, but it was also twice as large.

However, having a wife had never crossed Max's mind. Since his first trouser disruption (at age twelve), Ty provided a steady stream of gold diggers and pretty slave girls for his relief, just as his daddy did for him.

The first time that Ty's heart melted over a girl was when he saw Sara perform. After that, hardly an hour passed when she did not enter his thoughts or dreams.

He nabbed the girls in the grandest way possible, so the whole world could meet them and Sara.

Still standing on the bow, overlooking around a hundred people, Max scolded his father. "You have not only lost your mind, but you also lost control at the worst possible time."

"You spent far more than you can get for them for after you get over this infatuation."

"They are not merchandise! All great men deserve love; it makes them better."

"You are incapable of loving anyone besides yourself. I still have to remind you of my mother's name."

"You spent ten minutes with them, then more months planning this, during the most important endeavor of our lives."

"You are wrong."

"You are going to wreck the Liberation over this!"

"It is already planned; we are right on schedule. So, this will have no effect."

"My boy, you are too young to realize that great leaders need the perfect woman to maintain their balance."

"She will make me better at everything."

“Not so!”

“She is a massive distraction when you need focus.”

“You probably don’t even know that I’m older than she.”

“Really?”

“You did not even try her out. She might not even like men.”

“I always admired your great focus and detail planning; now you don’t even know what you’ll be doing in ten minutes!”

“She has already taken control of you, and she doesn't even know it yet.”

“You are overreacting.”

“If I knew you had ordered the Knights to pull off this crap in front of the world’s press, I would have locked you away in this ship’s brig until Liberation Day!”

“Relax, son; loosen up.”

“If Washington finds out you brought them to our nation’s fucking Embassy, we will be tagged as the power behind the Liberation.”

“We worked my entire life to have Morocco take our heat!”

Never taking his eyes off, Sara Ty responded, “I had to make my move now. If I waited, it could take years before I get another shot at her.”

“In two months, she will despise you, like all other Yankees.”

“Do you seriously believe she won’t find out?”

“Just look at her,” Ty said from The Maximus V’s bow, about sixty feet away and thirty feet above. “Isn’t she the most beautiful creature you have ever seen!”

“I don’t see one standing out. I know you have a thing for redheads, so it must be one of those two.”

"Sara is auburn, not copper."

Pointing at Dorothy, Max added, "If you ask me, that blond is by far the prettiest."

"You are lying, just to argue over this. You don't understand true love, son."

"I know that True love is something that all of your money can't buy."

"It means you can't just do as you please; she gets an equal say, or it won't last."

"If she is shallow enough, your money might keep her happy enough to fake a few orgasms."

"You just don't understand love, son."

"I understand that love is lust in your mind. Once you think something is most beautiful, you have to have it."

"That's a lie!"

"You are lying to yourself. You are having six (Maximus VI) built just because someone said King Alfonso's new toy is prettier."

"It's just a copy of V! He even used the plans that I paid for!"

With his eyes glued on Sara, Ty responded, "You are a hypocrite; you are just like me."

"Don't compare me to the spineless gelatin you have become! I'm like the man you once were."

"I will have her fall deeply in love with me in two days."

"Oh, she will melt into your arms an hour from now."

“But in a month, she will loathe you, no matter what you give her.”

“You are mistaken; she will be my forever loving queen.”

“Ha-ha, forever!”

“ I will give you until Mayday (May 1st). If she is not your forever loving queen, then agree to move her and her friends on like the others!”

“She will be!”

“Then you have no issue agreeing!”

“Agreed! Now cordial to them.”

“I’m always cordial.”

“Don’t embarrass me in front of them.”

“I’m the one being embarrassed.”

After the gangplank latched, Ty and Max walked down to greet Ty’s lovely guest hostages.

Ty ignored everyone but his smiling captives. His first words were, “Please forgive the crude way we came together!”

Standing side by side, all six looked beautiful, excited, happy, and forgiving. But this time, Sara would come last.

Dorothy stood first to their right, while Sara stood last to their left, so Ty introduced Dorothy first.

After kissing her hand, “Hello Dorothy Schmidt, please allow me to introduce my eldest son Max. He is the Prime Minister of Tyberia.”

Looking disinterested, he said, "Pleased to meet you."

"Her father owns a German Sausage company in Columbus."

"Yummy," Max mumbled.

Ty then kissed the back of Dotty's hand.

"Dotty Nordstrom, it is my pleasure to introduce you to my son Max."

Max yawned again before saying, "Nice to meet you."

"Dotty's father owns three General Stores in Cleveland, Ohio."

"Wonderful"

Ty then kissed Elizabeth's hand.

"This is Elizabeth Hyde. Her family runs a large farm east of Columbus."

"Sadly, her father was killed in the Civil War."

"Sorry about your father. That war should have never occurred," Max, who was ten when the war started, expressed.

Next, Ty kissed Dolly's hand. "Dolly Cavendish, allow me to introduce Max Cross."

"Her father, rest his soul, was a fine surgeon," he told his son.

Max almost smiled, "Nice to meet you."

"Now, this gorgeous creature is Daisy Wolf. Her daddy founded Columbus's daily newspaper in 71."

"Well, you must be well informed," Max replied.

Finally, he kissed Sara's hand, "This is their leader, Sara Kilbourne."

"I have heard everything about you, even things he does not know."

"Oh, like what?" she asked Max.

"That you and I were born one day apart," Max answered as he motioned toward his father.

"Who is younger?" She asked.

"That would be You. I was born on the 3rd." Sara was born on July 4th.

"Excuse me," Max told them before walking over to their enormous masseur, Animus.

Max whispered a few words to the hairless giant. Then they walked to the mansion as if they had pressing business (or bladders).

Ty had not let go of Sara's hand since he reached her. He then led her a few steps away, far enough for the other beauties to act like they were not trying to hear.

"You have not left my thoughts since last September," he revealed.

"I still hear your voice singing, even after I wore out your wax cylinders" (Edison's phonograph tubes).

"I have fallen for you. Now I intend for you to fall for me."

Not knowing how to respond, she changed the subject. "What a beautiful ship; I never imagined that a boat could be so lovely."

"Well, very few ships are lovely, my dear."

"This one just happens to be the most beautiful ship on earth. It has the finest of everything. Just like you, my dear; she is beautiful inside and out."

“You have many beautiful things, Ty.”

“Great wealth has beautiful privileges; this is also the most expensive ship ever built.”

“However, It is no longer mine; you are already its legally registered owner. It is today’s gift for you,” Ty said as if he intended daily presents.

Again, not knowing how to respond, she didn’t.

“Allow me to show you her true beauty.”

Still holding her hand, he walked her down the dock, then up the gangway into the stunning ship.

He then told Captain Funk, “Pull the gangway and reset the sails. We are taking the Lady Sara on an afternoon excursion.”

“Yes, sir,” Funk responded while flashing his biggest smile toward Sara.

When Ty said, “The Lady Sara,” Sara assumed he meant her.

President Cross, she said, “May I run down to tell my girls where I am going and when I will return. We are like sisters.”

“Certainly, my dear. It will take ten or so minutes before we can depart.”

“But please call me Ty.”

“Okay, Ty.”

“Tell them that we will return in three hours.”

“I will be right here waiting for you, my dear.”

With the grace of a world-class dancer, Sara jogged back ashore.

“He is smitten with me,” she told them.

“He wants to take me on a three-hour cruise, so enjoy this place until I return.”

“I told you he is in love with her,” Elizabeth told the others as Sara jogged back aboard.

“I’d bet we are really here to be bridesmaids!” Dotty excitedly declared.

16. March 8th, 8 AM, North Orleans Naval Base

Several hours before Ty and his happy hostages hooked up, Marshal Clyde Dupree had spent six minutes pounding on ORPH Six's caboose.

"Hey Yawl, get up! It's 8:06; the whole plumb day is wastin' away!"

Before Colin and Lemont responded, Tesla met the Marshal outside.

"Are you Marshal Dupree?"

"Yes'um, last time I checked."

"Who might you be, fine sir?"

"Last time I checked, Nicola Tesla."

"You don't look that girly."

"Mind if I call you Nicky?"

"Yes, I do," Tesla replied, which somehow Clyde took as, "Fine, call me Nicky."

"Goody-goody. I enjoy gettin' off to a fine start."

"Police work gets bloody round here, which ain't always fun."

"And that-there sun gets toasty. You'll know in a couple hours."

Clyde then stepped back and gazed down the side of ORPH Six.

"Dang, beat the Dutch!"

"Did dem Federal big shots build yaw des fancy ride?"

"Well, they own it, but I built it."

"You designed this, Nicky?!"

“Over 90% of it.”

“It’s slicker than a greased piglet!”

“Why is it so low?”

“To move faster around curves without tipping.”

Still staring at it, Clyde said, “Dang Nicky, you’re one smart feller.”

“Like my mama, Tilly.”

“She invents stuff all the time.”

Tesla replied, “My mother, Duka, also invents things.”

“What did Tilly invent?”

“Ah, mostly new vittles.”

“Vittles?” Nicky had never heard that word before.

“Her upside-down lemon cake is world-famous.”

“Oh, how clever, Marsal.”

“Yes, sir, Nicky, ma is the real deal! And she even invented that cake by accident!”

“What does your mama invent?”

“She is best known for appliances.”

“Appliances?” Clyde, who had never heard that word before, asked.

“Cooking tools,” Nicola answered.

"Cooking tools? Like what, Nicky?"

"Have you seen one of those hand-cranked batter-beaters?"

"Dang! Small world! Mama uses dem doohickies!"

"Anywho, why do you need a train that moves so fast?"

"You know above sixty miles in an hour causes shingles."

"No, I have not heard that before."

"I designed these trains to rush injured orphan children to the hospital. But because they are the fastest machines on earth, Washington sometimes lets federal agents use them."

"Dang, they only gave me a rotten wagon and an old mule."

"They had me add many special features so this train could have a great many uses, like an upside-down lemon cake."

"Special features?"

"Yes, it packs enough hidden weaponry to take out a regiment."

"Why'd da want little orphans shoot'n powerful weapons?"

"Not sure, Marshal Clyde; I will keep that in mind."

Clyde whipped out his pencil and notebook.

"Does ya spell Tester, t-e-s-t-e-r?"

"Close enough."

"You any relation to dem, Tester glue people?"

"If you go back far enough."

"Dey make glue out of dead racehorses. I spose their meat is too tough for dog food."

"Oh, I 'spose' that's better than making glue out of dead people," Tesla sarcastically played.

"Hum, human Glue? I think you got something there, Nicky."

"Why?"

"Can't bury the dead round Norleans the land is just too wet. Dey float to the top."

"I must learn something every day; now I can go to bed," Tesla responded.

"You're funny, Nicky."

"Wait till you meet the other agents."

"Okie-Dokie."

"You're not from around here, are you?" Tesla asked.

"How could ya tell?"

"A guess, I 'spose,'" Tesla answered as his eyes rolled.

"I was born and raised in Mountain City, Tennessee, bout ten miles south of Damascus," Clyde answered as if everyone knows where Damascus is.

"Ben here since 67."

"I was the first Southern soldier to become a US Federal Marshal after da war."

“Good for you, maybe.”

“On that tell-e-call, your Commander Hayes said yawl coming to find some hot girls.”

“That’s one way of putting it.”

“Ha-ha-ha,” Clyde chuckled.

“Dem Bama boys been hunting Norleans, fer hot girls since George chopped his pawl’s cherry tree down. They’d beat dem Bama boys with bibles back in Mountain City.”

“These girls we seek are not here by choice.”

“I know dey was nabbed; just pulling your leg, Nicky.”

Before Tesla, who had never heard that pun, said, “Don’t touch my leg,” Colin and Lemont stumbled out of the Caboose.

“Double Damn Dang!”

“You must be Agent Freeman.”

“Yes, I’m Lieutenant Commander Lemont Freeman.”

“Ohhhh, Hayes said yous a biggin’!”

Looking Lemont over from his toes to up his nostrils, Clyde added, “I don’t remember ever seeing a bigger ne-aaaahhh man than you.”

“Yeah, a big deal.”

“I’m Federal Marshal Dupree of the Norleans Office.”

“Who might you be?” he asked Colin.

“McLaughlin, Colin McLaughlin.”

"You a manly feller. I'd bet you one of dem vagitarians?"

"I eat meat."

"Dat's what I meant! Hey-he-he-ha-ha!"

"Mind if I call you Cole?"

"No!" (meaning yes, I mind).

"Goody, I know yawl here vestogatin' snatched ladies."

"I know who likely knows where they are."

"What did he tell you," Lemont replied.

"Making her talk is the problem."

"Her?"

"Yes'um. Since I been here, this Voodoo priestess has had her fingers in bout every unsavory activity tween here and Jamaicer."

"Why has she not been put away?"

"No one will testify. Dey frets she will kill dem with her magic spells."

"Magic Spells?" Tesla asked.

"Oh, yes'um."

"How is she connected to these kidnappings?"

"I have no doubt that spooky witch sent that hair-doer to spruce up kidnaped Yankee ladies at that old French fort you boys blasted this morning."

"We did not blast anything; we just got here," Colin blurted.

"Okay, since you say so."

"Anywho, your Commander Hayes says they're connected."

"Hey, Is he kin to President Hayes?"

"I believe so," Lemont answered.

"Dat was two weeks ago, so dey cain't be da girls you hunt."

"A fine deduction," Lemont replied.

"Just tell us what you know," Colin prodded.

"Two weeks back, the 8th precinct boys picked up dat Jamaican hair-doer lady on suspicion of mug'n an old bitty in the Frenchy."

"A what, in what?"

"Oh, a grandmother in da French Quarter, a local district."

"The old woman was head clunked from behind, so nobody saw the culprit. But when dem local cops arrived, dat hair lady was da only one person around."

"So, they searched her, looking for da old lady's ring and da \$1.44 she said was stolen."

"She had no ring, but she had \$200 in cash money."

"Dat's two years pay for dem-kind round here. Dem local boys smelled a foul beyond the city limits, so they called me over. I'm just next door."

Da old lady was just knocked out cold, but day told the hair lady she was killed for da \$200 in her purse.”

“Dat if she cain’t explains her cash, she’d be hang’n.”

“She said a masked man gave her dat money to do up four ladies. And that she must act like she cain’t speak English.”

“Like you,” Lemont thought.

“She said he locked her in a windowless coach, so she could not see where he took her. Then, bout an hour later, he opened the door already inside dat old fort, so she could not say where she was.”

“She said da old jail had a beauty salon room inside.”

“Anywho, she said dat dey wez white ladies, three was yellor, and one rusty, and da was Yanks.”

“I got the Yanks part,” Lemont said.

Tesla translated, “I think he meant three bonds and a redhead.”

“Dat’s what I said.”

“Den, after she did um, the masked feller loaded her up and took her back to her place.”

“Dem local cops did not believe her, but dey could not charge her with, since da knew she was not da mugger. But since dem Yankee girls likely crossed state lines, dey called to see if I wanted to question her.”

“Instead, I had dem order her to stay in town while they investigate, so I could tail her.”

“Tailing is my specialty.”

“Anywho, I followed her straight to dat witch’s house.”

“The next day, I went by her hair booth and apartment; dey was both empty and up fer rent.”

“Guess who dat owner is?”

"The witch," Nicola responded.

"Yes'um, Lady Azacca."

"Her magic tricks only work because people believe they do," Tesla added.

Lemont responded, "I lived here for a few years as a little boy; there was priestess casting spells back then, so there something to it."

"Anywho, when yawl's commander Hayes said pretty northern ladies, I made this connection."

"Dat hair-doer told em half-truths to keep da witch out of da discussion."

"I'd bet my wife dat Lady Azacca knows where yawl's girls are."

Lemont looked at Colin and said, "This is more than coincidence."

"Getting info-motion from Lady Azacca is harder den milking gators."

"You can't milk gators. They lay eggs," Tesla remarked.

"Dats hard."

"Local cops fear her; she curses and casts spells at em. They say she turned a man into a lizard."

"She does tricks," Tesla repeated.

"Ain't heard bout no tricks. If yawl's ladies are here, she knows where."

"I just hope yawl bought enough Yankee magic to make her talk."

"Our tricks from Croatia," popped out of Colin.

"Where?"

"A magical kingdom in the old world."

"Oh, alrighdy, Cole, hope dey work."

Tesla asked Clyde, "Why did you not rename Lemont?"

"Lemont is a fine manly name; nothin' bout it needs fiddling."

"What's wrong with my name?" Colin asked as Lemont pointed his nose upward and advised.

"Calm down there, Cole," Lemont whispered to him.

"If you were named Clyde, you would be happy someone changed it."

"Dang! Mr. Lemont," Clyde said as Lemont stretched and yawned.

"You're big enough to be in the circus!"

"The Freak Show," Colin whispered.

"You could probably carry Old Tinker," Clyde said as he pointed at his mule.

"Good thing we ain't in Mountain city. He could only go downhill."

"Good thing."

"Tinker should be fine today; he's only going about a mile today because of our ferries."

"I reckon Norleans has more ferries dan any town in America."

"Ferries?" Colin asked.

"Boats that take wagons across the river," Tesla explained.

"Oh, ferry boats."

“Azacca’s house is less than a block away from da dock. If the ferries ain’t backed up, we’ll be there in 45 minutes.”

“Me and da Tinkster are ready to go.”

“I need some breakfast first,” Lemont demanded as he and Colin leaned beside their low-slung caboose.

“Don’t hit the electrified wheels! That could make your Tallywackers explode!” Tesla warned.

A moment later, Lemont and Colin were back inside the caboose.

“I can’t believe you did not make sure food service stocked this kitchen. That’s not like you at all!” Colin told his partner.

“I never tell them to stock ORPHS; that’s their job; they do it automatically.”

“Hayes did not put this ORPH in service yet, so they did not know about it.”

“Here is a case of canned fish; it must be Nicola’s,” Colin said as he grabbed a can.

“I love red salmon from the can; what kind is it,” Lemont asked.

“They just say, ‘Fish,’” Colin answered as he removed a couple.

Lemont gagged as one of Duka Tesla’s can openers, then penetrated the lid.

“How can he tolerate this crap?” Lemont asked as he gagged.

“That smells delicious, just like carp from the muddy Scioto. I grew up on it,” Colin explained.

“Horseshit smells better.”

"Not everyone was lucky enough to be Aunt Jemima's boy."

"That's your problem."

"Evidently not today."

"Eat up, my man. Carp is good for you," Colin said as he took a big bite, causing Lemont to dry heave again.

"Yum-yum, this will make you grow up big and strong, just like me."

"I think you mean smelly and shriveled like you."

"look here, Nicky must have left a can of crackers on the floor," Colin said as he handed Lemont the gallon-sized can.

"You know I don't care for crackers," Lemont added.

"Complain, complain. I bet crackers don't like you either."

"Just hold your nose and pretend this fish is your mama's flap-Jacks drenched in butter and maple syrup!" Colin fantasized.

"Your breath reeks."

About three minutes later, Yeager entered the caboose. "God, this car stinks. You got to air it out!"

"All we have is fish and crackers, help yourself," Colin told Yeager.

"Oh hell no."

"Too bad you boys got to run."

"Why?"

"Admiral Forti just invited us to his Saturday morning officer's brunch."

"It is loaded with waffles, pork chops, beef steaks, omelets, sausage, country gravy, biscuits, shrimp, crawfish, and some pastries."

"Well, let's eat before we leave. I function far better that way," Lemont decided.

"Well, when will you return? The buffet does not open until 10:30." Yeager asked.

"When is it over?" Lemont asked.

"It runs for an hour."

Lemont opened the door and yelled to Clyde, "How long will this take?"

"Oh, I spose 3 to 4 hours, any-who."

Lemont then dumped Tesla's crackers out of the big can then handed it to Yeager.

"Fill this with biscuits, sausages, and steak, covered with gravy, so we can eat when we return."

"I'm not your maid. You are big enough to handle your own meals. I got you invited to brunch; it's not my fault if you don't show," Yeager responded.

From the doorway, Clyde added, "Don't worry, Norleans has great restaurants everywhere."

"In our rush to leave yesterday, I left my wallet in my locker," Lemont commented.

Colin added, "I got a crisp hundred dollar bill in my boot."

"We'll get the finest lunch in town after we handle this witch."

"I'll pay you back."

"Don't worry about it, my treat."

As he squeezed his nostrils to down an entire can, Lemont stated.

"If Michigan and Kentucky were the cookies on mama's cookie-witches, Ohio would be the tasty cream filling in between."

"Now that's how you do it!" Colin responded.

Several minutes later, as Clyde, Cole, Nicky, and Lemont climbed aboard Old Tinker's wagon, Colin asked, "Are you sure this is a federal issue? It is all worn out."

"The wagon or Tinker?"

"Both!" all three agents answered simultaneously.

Looking back at their Orph, then down at his wagon, Clyde added, "Dang, well, your rail-ride looks angry. Does it bite?"

"Only when agitated," Tesla replied.

"Dem Washington boys are still pissy bout the war they started. So, you Yanks get all the good stuff."

"I ain't griping, but I'd bet they even pay yawl more than \$40 a month."

"Well, a little more to adjust for Ohio's high cost of living," Lemont offered.

Once seated, Clyde asked, "Hey, yawl want to take the scenic or plain route?"

"What on the scenic route?"

“Yesterday, a parade of naked ladies protesting.”

“Protesting what?”

“Don’t know, I didn’t look at their signs, He, He, Ha, Ha.” Clyde joked.

Since Nicky and Cole had never been to ‘Norleans,’ they agreed it would be better to take the scenic route.

There was only one direct route to Lady Azacca’s home. So, about fifteen minutes later, Tinker pulled them aboard a ferry.

Lady Azacca’s French Quarter home was close enough to see the river from her second-floor balcony. This large square house was covered with decorative wrought iron, inside and out.

Because local and federal marshals have never been able to get information from her. They decided to use the cover of some Ohio musician trying to find his missing lady.

Lady Azacca could recognize Clyde, so he and Tinker parked beside the river (a half block away) as the three agents walked to her home.

Clyde then used his open bible to cover his face to nap while waiting.

After minutes of pounding on Lady Azacca’s iron security door, they finally heard, “Go Away!”

“Lady Azacca, if you help me find my kidnapped girlfriend, I will pay you!”

“Go away!” She repeated.

“Look, here is a one hundred dollar bill for information,” Colin offered, causing a look of concern to spread across Lemont’s face.

No reply.

He offered it again.

“Is it real?”

“As real as the sun.”

“Hold it against the window.”

About 10 seconds later, she opened her solid oak inner door to face them through the bars of her iron security door.

“Slide the money through the bars,” she said, “then I will tell you what you need to know.”

“Tell me first, then it’s yours.”

“I’m no fool; you would never pay. So, pay first for the information!”

Colin, who earns \$500 a month (a massive income for 1885) from Orphan (and even more from his shows), slid his crisp \$100 bill through the bars.

“With the bill firmly grasped, she looked Colin up and down, “Even fools come in pretty packages!” The heavy oak inner door slammed then bolted.

Colin looked at Lemont, “That Turd took my money!”

“She took my lunch!”

He looked at Lemont, “Your turn, Hercules.”

“Stand back, Nicola,” the giant agent warned.

His cigar-sized fingers wrapped around the iron bars (molded into snakes with snapping jaws). He then turned that security door into a pile of scrap iron.

As one blow from his left shoulder flattened the inner oak door. Nicola stuck a broken-off iron snakehead into his pocket.

The three agents then entered with their guns drawn, with Tesla behind.

Lady Azacca seemed to be alone in her main room, seated on a throne, looking like she was in a trance, mumbling words that Colin and Lemont could not recognize.

Then she looked through them and yelled, “Cops! Leave now, or DIE!”

“No police; we are with the ah... Circus, ” Colin blew.

“You lie!”

“Look, lady, we are just trying to find his kidnapped girlfriend. We mean you no harm. We are not cops; we run a music group that raises money for poor orphan children,” Lemont claimed.

“Lies! I can smell cops from miles away.”

“No, you smell carp fish, not cops,” Colin pitched.

“Leave now or die!” Then she reached into a shelf beside her throne, loaded with little cloth dolls.

She grabbed the biggest one, then ranted something in French.

The doll was a thick dark fellow wearing dark brown pants and a beige shirt, just what Lemont (and thousands of men) were wearing.

She held it out for Lemont as she yelled (in English), "This proves I knew you were coming!"

Then, she pulled a long sharp needle from her thrown. "Now, die!" she yelled as she stabbed it in the back.

A crushingly spasm suddenly bent him over. Lemont, who never showed fear before, told Colin, "Get me out of here!"

He helped his partner back to the front porch. Then, as Tesla helped him straighten up, Colin went back to try again.

"Look, lady, we did not come here for you; I just need to find my kidnapped girlfriend."

"You said you would give me information for my money, but you did not."

"I told you that you are a fool!" She said as she found a doll that resembled Colin. Get out, or I will stab you all the way through!"

"Come on, be reasonable."

She held her big needle up like a dagger, "LEAVE NOW OR DIE!"

"All right, all right! Calm down, lady! Don't do anything rash!"

"Give me a few seconds."

"If you are here in ten, you die! One, two, three..." Colin ran back out to the porch.

"She is not going to talk," Colin complained.

Tesla, who had watched everything from behind, asked the quite disturbed agents, “Do you want me to make her talk?”

Lemont, who could stand upright again, looked at Colin, then Tesla, “Sure, professor, knock yourself out.”

“I know you’re hungry; I’ll work fast,” he told Lemont as he walked inside, then right up to her as if he feared nothing.

As she cursed, he just stared into her eyes and smiled for about 30 seconds. Then, his happy expression became an angry scowl as he growled, “Vous etes un Faux Mambo!” (You are the fake Priestess!).

“If you were true to the word, you would know who I am!”

She became silent as she stared. But nothing registered.

He then slowly rose his hands above his head.

Suddenly both former prizefighters, now cowering in the doorway, lost a bit of pee as the lightning bolts thundered from Tesla's fingers into the iron crown molding above her head.

About a second later, the queen of local crime was kissing Nicola’s shoes while screaming, “Zula Merveilleux, pardonne mi!” (Wonderful Zula, please forgive me).

He turned and pointed at Colin: ““The truth brings you forgiveness. A lie makes today your last!”

“Now tell that strange musician where his lady is being held!”

“She is at the Crosswinds Plantation, on Lake Pontchartrain!”

"The truth brings you forgiveness. A lie means you die!" Tesla said as he held that iron snakehead (from her security door) out like a microphone, then dropped it before he turned and left.

She cried back, "The Truth is Told!"

"She is at a plantation called Crosswinds, on a lake called Pontchartrain."

"We heard."

"Where is that?" Colin asked.

"That huge lake just a couple miles from here."

"You had to see it on the map; well, that is if you looked," Lemont, who lived in New Orleans for several years as a child slave, recalled.

"Oh yeah, that big lake," Colin bluffed.

As they reached the street, Colin said, "Damn, Nicola, you should have got my money back."

"Okay, since you have a hard time dealing with that 90 pound lady, I can go back and handle that for you," Tesla offered.

"Never mind, we got a hot trail to follow. We need to go."

"What did you say to her?" Lemont asked Tesla as they walked away.

"I called her an imposter because she did not know who I am."

"Then I drained a battery to make her believe I'm her god that can shoot lightning bolts."

"Damn, wild man."

"It's a spin on an old trick."

“The first guy to ever light a match would have also been worshiped. I just charged that up enough to trick a trickster.”

“How did you fire lightning bolts?”

“They are sparks like you hear when you take off a wool sweater, just amplified a couple thousand times.”

“Where did you learn how to do that?”

“I taught myself when I six or seven to scare off bullies.”

“Did it work?”

“Perfectly, instead of getting wedges, they soiled their trousers.”

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