

# **Transylvania Detective Squad**

**Transylvania, #1**

**by Matthew Finneran,**

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# Chapter 1

The bullet hole Lt. Tom Flynn found in his helmet should have been enough to convince him he was dead, but it wasn't.

Most of us instinctively realize when we have died and passed over, but despite there being plenty of signs he'd met his end, like the hole in his helmet, Tom Flynn did not. This was because he was young and cocky and brave, but Tom Flynn's number finally came up September 19, 1944 as his paratrooper company attempted to capture a German-held bridge in Holland. Moments later Tom arrived in Purgatory—as will we all someday.

Coming to and looking all around, Tom discovered he was lying in the middle of a large field with a thick fog hanging in the air when a moment before there had been none.

Spotting someone coming toward him, Tom drew his pistol and held it by his side, but instead of a fellow Airborne Ranger or an enemy soldier, the person turned out to be a distinguished-looking gentleman wearing a frock coat, bow tie and bowler hat. The man did not carry a weapon, instead he carried a clipboard.

„Lt. Flynn, welcome to Britannia,“ the man said, warmly.

„How do you know my name?“

„It's right here,“ the man said tapping on his clipboard. *„Thomas J Flynn—born March 17th, 1919 in Wabash, Indiana, graduated from Notre Dame, 1941...“*

„Where did you get that?“ Tom asked, stepping closer.

„You do realize where you are now, don't you lieutenant?“

„You just told me Britannia,“ Tom said, „but I've never heard of it.“

„You would know this place by another name,“ the man, who spoke with a British accent, claimed.

„Like what?“

„Purgatory.“

„Purgatory?“ Tom asked like he'd been told a joke. „Like where you go after you're dead?“

„Exactly.“

Tom looked around again for the bridge his company had been ordered to take, but he was not able to see even any part of the town that surrounded it. He poked his finger through the hole in his helmet, wondering how it could have gotten there without leaving a similar hole in his head, and then he looked at the man in the bowler. The man simply nodded at him and Tom realized he was dead.

„I don't feel dead.“ he said pounding on his chest like Tarzan to demonstrate he was still flesh and blood.

„No, of course not,“ the man said. „I didn't mean to imply you were dead, only that you had died.“

„What’s the difference?“

„Quite a bit,“ the man said. „You are the same as before now, just somewhere completely different.“

„Who are you?“

„I’m Mr. Jordan. I’m with the Administration. We don’t usually receive Yanks here in Britannia.“

„Where do Yanks usually go?“

„The New Amsterdam Realm.“

„Why wasn’t I sent there?“

„Your grandparents, on your mother’s side, since they lived in Ireland before their deaths, are here, and they are your closest relatives now,“ Mr. Jordan explained. „You would like to see them, wouldn’t you?“

„I suppose,“ Tom said, noticing a train not too far away—an old-fashioned steam train heading for a red brick station. „I don’t understand,“ he said pointing at it. „What is this place?“

Mr. Jordan turned part-way around. „You were expecting flying chariots maybe? You’ll find that life here is much the same as on Earth. Here in Britannia, everything is like England was about 1922—fashion, the trains, technology, everything. That way people arriving here from Great Britain feel at home,“ he explained. „Shall we get started?“ he asked, holding out his hand.

Tom followed him toward the station. „What happens now?“

„We’ll get you some proper clothing, something more in fashion here.“

Tom eyed the odd-looking bowler Mr. Jordan was wearing. „I mean after that. What will I do here?“

„You’ll find work of some kind. Meet a young lady. Hopefully you live a long, rewarding life here. What were you planning on doing after the war?“

„I’m not sure.“

Mr. Jordan looked at his clipboard, „I see you were awarded several medals in the war.“

„Yes,“ said Tom.

„You went to college.“

„That’s right.“

Mr. Jordan looked at Tom then, „As well you are a rather tall, fine-looking fellow,“ he said. „I may know of a line of work that might suit you. I could check into it for you if you like?“

„I guess,“ Tom said.

They entered the train station through a side door. Tom followed Mr. Jordan down a hallway lined by dressing rooms, like would be found in a high-end department store in a large city. Coats and hats lay about, of the style popular in England in the 1920’s.

At the end of the hallway, a young man stood in front of a full-length mirror, admiring the way he looked in his new suit and hat.

„Everything all right Mr. Smith?“ Mr. Jordan asked as they approached the young man. „You’ll need to catch your train soon.“

„Oh yes. Just about ready,“ Mr. Smith said turning toward them. He smiled warmly at Tom, demonstrating a remarkable set of very white and very straight teeth.

„Mr. Smith arrived here less than an hour ago,“ Mr. Jordan told Tom as they continued down the hallway. „He was eighty-one years old when he died, so forgive him for being shocked at the sight of his young self again. Everyone arriving here, except children, begin life here in their early twenties and age from there. You are, of course, are already that age, so you don't look much different.“

They arrived at a counter, behind which were closets full of suits, shelves stocked with shirts and pants, and stacks of shoe boxes set all around on the floor. On the wall were numerous cubby holes filled with bowler, straw and derby hats.

„I'll check on that matter for you,“ Mr. Jordan said as a finely-dressed man came around the counter carrying a measuring tape.

Soon Tom was headed back toward a dressing room with an armful of new clothing. When he looked in the mirror there, any doubt that remained that he had not arrived in the Hereafter quickly left him. Not because he looked dead, but rather because he looked so alive. The scar over his eye he'd picked up on D-day was missing, and his teeth were as perfect now as any movie star's.

He sat down on the small bench inside the dressing room, realizing then that he had arrived in Britannia, which is a Realm of Purgatory.

## Chapter 2

By the time Mr. Jordan returned, Tom had changed into a black suit, white shirt and striped tie and was placing his uniform and pistol inside a canvas bag he'd been given for their disposal. On the wall there was a sign instructing new arrivals, that anything they had happened to carry across the veil with them, would need to be destroyed. It seemed a shame to lose the photograph of his parents, so Tom asked if he could keep it.

Mr. Jordan said he could hold on to it, as well as his helmet if he liked, before waving a telegram at Tom.

„I sent a telegram to Chief Inspector Meriwether of the Transylvania City Police Department and here's his reply. He's willing to take you on as a recruit for the Flying Squad. That's what they call the detectives there in Transylvania.“

„I wouldn't think there'd be much need for detectives here either,“ Tom said, under the incorrect assumption he'd left all his worries behind.

„Well it's true the worst of humankind does not make it this far,“ Mr. Jordan said. „There's a lesser realm for them,“ he said jabbing his finger at the floor, „but we still have crime here, although rarely does it rise above that of a misdemeanour. Except for Transylvania City.“

„What makes Transylvania City so different?“

For a moment, Mr. Jordan seemed unsure how to reply. „Maybe it would be best if I showed you,“ he said finally, gesturing for Tom to follow him. „Where's your hat?“ he asked as they went out a door, where a sign read; *Exit to Train Platforms*.

„He's looking for one my size,“ Tom said jabbing his thumb back toward the clothing counter. „I'm supposed to go back and pick it up.“

As soon as they came through the door, Tom realized he had, for all intents and purposes, travelled back in time. He felt as if he had stepped onto a movie set as an extra, since he was likewise attired in clothing fashionable to 1922 England. The women passing through the station wore dresses so long, they dragged on the ground, as well as the most stylish hats. It was like he was watching a march in support of prohibition pass before him.

The men passing by all lifted up their bowler, straw or derby style of hat when greeting him. The train porters wore sharp-looking, blue uniforms and caps, even the train station looked to have been constructed about the turn-of-the-century with exposed steel girders and brick walls. When Mr. Jordan halted, Tom ran into the back of him as he was distracted by the sights of the Roaring Twenties.

„Look here,“ Mr. Jordan said pointing at a poster, among others, plastered to the wall and Tom looked.

The poster, full of vibrant colors, like the cover of a comic book or traveling circus announcement, was instead an advertisement to visit Transylvania City. There was a row of Gothic style buildings, and then along the edge of the poster were drawn a witch, a vampire, a werewolf and some very muscular brute dressed like a member of the Chicago mob. A jack o'lantern was superimposed over the entire picture. Tom studied it a moment, not sure what Mr. Jordan wanted him to understand.

„Some kind of tourist town?“ Tom asked, remembering the time his family had travelled to Hannibal, Missouri where they'd „met“ Mark Twain and Huck Finn and Tom figured Transylvania City offered a similar experience, although apparently a more ghastly one.

„Well yes,“ Mr. Jordan said. „But that's not what I wanted you to see. There are real vampires and witches there,“ he said rapping his knuckles on the poster.

„Real vampires and witches?“

„Yes. I know it's difficult to fathom, but a few minutes ago you doubted Purgatory really existed, but here you are,“ he said. „Vampires and witches and plenty more monsters really do exist, the Administration wants them confined to Transylvania, and it's the job of the Transylvania City Police Department to see to that.“

„Witches,“ Tom repeated. „The kind that fly around on brooms?“ he asked, pointing at the one on the poster doing just that.

„Exactly, but as for letting them flying around on a broom, that's the kind of thing the TCPD is there to stop. By the way that's why the detectives there are called the Flying Squad. Sort of a joke.“

„And you want me to be a detective there?“

„If you are so inclined, but I must warn you—it can be dangerous.“

„Can't be any worse than where I just come from,“ Tom said, showing Mr. Jordan the hole in his helmet.

„No, I suppose not,“ he said, „but more than anywhere else here in Britannia. I wouldn't want you to suffer an early demise a second time.“

„You're saying I'm going to die again?“

„I'm afraid so.“

„And then where will I end up?“

„It depends on how worthy a life you live here, and that’s all the more difficult there,“ he said tapping on the poster. „There are vices in Transylvania City like nowhere else in Britannia, or anywhere on Earth for that matter.“

Tom looked at the poster again.

„Would you rather do something else with your life?“ Mr. Jordan asked.

„No,“ Tom said. „This will be just fine.“

„Very well then,“ Mr. Jordan said. „Let’s see when the next train for there is departing.“ Mr. Jordan pointed at a large board hanging from the rafters of the train station where departure and arrival times were posted. He studied it a moment and then glanced at a very large clock hanging nearby. „The next train for Transylvania City is leaving right now,“ he said waving Tom after him.

They hurried through the crowd, past several trains and finally to a platform where a conductor was shouting off a list of towns his train was headed for. Mr. Jordan went to talk with him while Tom stood nearby.

„You’re all set,“ he said coming back. „You’ll get off at Essex. You’ll catch another train there for Transylvania City. I’ll send a telegram ahead that you’re on your way.“

„What about my grandparents?“

„I’ll send them a telegram too, but you really should visit them when you get the chance.“

„I’ll do that,“ Tom promised as a billowy cloud of steam filled the platform.

„There was another young man we sent ahead of you, who is going to join the T.C.P.D. also. Look for him on the platform in Essex,“ Mr. Jordan said.

„I will,“ Tom said catching hold of the last train car and pulling himself up.

„Good luck, lieutenant, looks like you forgot your hat,“ Mr. Jordan shouted as the train pulled away.

## Chapter 3

Tom found a seat as the conductor announced they would arrive in Essex just after 12 o’clock. It seemed most of the passengers were headed to Transylvania City. He settled in and for a while looked out the window as the train rolled past the most beautiful countryside he had ever seen, but at some point he fell asleep.

Sometime later the conductor woke him, and Tom looked out the window to see a sign welcoming them to Essex. He followed the crowd onto the Essex platform. The tourists heading to Transylvania City seemed to all be traveling in pairs or larger numbers, so when Tom spotted another young man traveling alone, he remembered another recruit was headed to Transylvania City as well. The young man was resting his arm on a British paratrooper’s backpack. Tom approached him.

„Are you headed to Transylvania City to join the police department there?“

„Yes,“ the young man, who looked about nineteen and was rather tall and gangly, said.

„So am I.“

„Oh excellent, someone should be coming to meet us here.“

„Tom Flynn,“ Tom said offering his hand.

„Mike Horne,“ the young man said shaking Tom’s hand. „I just arrived in Britannia earlier today. What about you?“

„I haven’t been here even as long as you.“

„Were you killed in the war?“

„Yes. I was with the 101st Airborne.“

„Operation Market Garden?“

„That’s right,“ Tom said.

„I landed in Holland as well. I was with a glider outfit that came in the day before. Our pilot overshot our target and we ended up lost in a swamp,“ Horne said. „Spent the whole night lost. Ran completely out of water. I was trudging through marsh up to my knees, wondering if the water was safe to drink, when suddenly shells started exploding all around me. Then there was a flash of light and then, well then I arrived here.“

„German machine gun got me,“ Tom said showing him the spot on his head where there should have been some kind of hole. He spotted a black train approaching the platform then.

„The *Vulture*,“ Horne said noticing it too.

„What?“

„That’s what they told me the train that comes down from Transylvania is called.“

„Oh,“ Tom said looking at the train, which was as black as a vulture and had a large, round headlight that looked like a vulture’s eye. It screeched like a vulture as its steel wheels brought it to a stop. Tom and Horne waited for someone to approach them as the other people headed to Transylvania City began boarding the train. Finally, a middle-aged, stocky gentleman, wearing a bowler and carrying a black satchel, stepped off the Vulture, looked around the platform and spotting them standing there, hurried toward them.

„My name is Meriwether. Chief Inspector Meriwether of the Transylvania City Police Department,“ he said in a British accent. „I presume one of you is Flynn and the other is Horne?“

„I’m Flynn,“ Tom said and then Horne introduced himself.

„We’d better get on board,“ Inspector Meriwether said as the Vulture blew its whistle. They followed Inspector Meriwether onto the train and then to the dining car. „Call me Red from here on out,“ he said sitting down. Tom sat down across from Red as he removed his bowler to reveal a thick head of red hair. He had a thick mustache also and pinned to the vest of his three-piece suit was a policeman’s badge as black as the Vulture. A waiter asked what they would like.

„Well we might as well get down to business,“ Red said when the waiter left. He picked up his satchel, opened it and pulled out with a silver policeman’s badge. „This is for you Officer Horne,“ he said, handing him it. He reached in again and brought out a second badge, a bright red one. „This is for you Inspector Flynn—the blood-red badge. I chose you a most fortunate badge number—777.“

„Blood-red?“

„Yes. That’s what it’s called.“

„How come?“

„You must understand things are done a little differently in Transylvania City. They did tell you some about the place, didn't they?“

„They told me witches fly around on brooms there.“

Red laughed. „Only if they've managed to lay their hands on all the ingredients that particular potion requires. But's that's exactly the kind of thing the Transylvania City P.D. is there to prevent,“ he said. „If it wasn't for us, Transylvania would look like the Fall of Rome with witches and vampires running around causing all kinds of trouble for us humans.“

„So there really are vampires there?“ Officer Horne asked.

„Yes, unfortunately.“

„The kind that drink blood?“

„Well yes, but they don't need to. Only a few now days still practice the old ways, sinking their fangs into a young woman to suck her blood, but not because they need to and it's a felony now. The biggest problem we have with them is their attitude. It's a badge of honor among them to con or fraud a human,“ Red said. „I guess you're getting an idea of the kind of police work you'll be doing?“

„I guess so,“ Horne said.

Tom spoke then. „They told me this place is much like Great Britain, but better. How's that work?“

„Well you already know everything here in Britannia is like 1922 England,“ Red said, „but there are differences.“

„Like what?“

„Where you boys from?“ Red asked, pointing a finger at Tom and then Officer Horne. Tom told him Wabash, Indiana and Officer Horne told him Enfield, which Tom figured must be part of Greater London. „Well we have places just like those here, but even better. Take your town of Wabash. What are the worst things that happen there?“ Before Tom could answer, Red offered some suggestions. „Crop failure? Twisters? Flooding probably?“

„Among others,“ Tom said.

„All gone,“ Red said, throwing his thumb over his shoulder like a baseball umpire calling a batter out. „What about where you live?“ he asked Officer Horne. „People get sick there in Enfield right? Or can't find work or always have enough to eat? You don't have to worry about those things here,“ he claimed, „Nobody goes hungry here or catches anything worse than a cold. You do need to be careful not to get your hand caught in some machinery or step in front of a train. Enfield eh?“ he said eyeing Officer Horne. „In my day there were some pretty bad sorts there, but you won't find any Jack the Ripper types here or drug pushers, thugs or wife-beaters. There's a lesser Realm for them, don't know much about it, but I know they got to stay there till they've progressed enough to be let out.“

Red sipped from his tea then, but indicated with a raised palm that he had something more to add. „Anyway that being said, Transylvania City is a horse of a different color.“

„Tell us about it.“

„Well you already know it's full of vampires, witches, goblins and I'll add to that golems and a few more creatures you thought didn't exist,“ he said cocking his eye.

„I never heard of golem before,“ Horne said.



„And you'll probably come to wish you never had,“ Red told him. „But they are spoken of in the Bible. They are literally made of earth, but fortunately that kind of powerful magic has been taken away and they are not making any more of them. They are as strong as Samson and when they get riled up they can be just as wild, but like any other creature in Transylvania City, they answer to the T.C.P.D.,“ he said tapping his badge.

„What do they look like?“ Tom asked.

„Easier if I just show you,“ Red said reaching into his satchel. He pulled out two identical books and handed both Tom and Horne one. „That's your copies of *The Transylvania City Policeman's Handbook*,“ he said. „Page thirty, I think,“ he said reaching over and tapping on the cover of Tom's book.

The book, bound in black leather, was about the size and shape of book a bird enthusiast might carry around and quickly flipping through it, Tom saw it was organized similarly, with colorful drawings on one page and then on the opposing; the physical description, customs and habits of some creature. He turned to page thirty and looked at the drawing there. What he saw was a brute that appeared to be formed out of clay and hardened into stone. The book seemed to want to give the reader the impression that a golem could be civilized and live peacefully among humans, since he was drawn wearing a suit and hat, but he was as large, as muscular, and as intimidating as gorilla still. It was the same creature Tom had seen on the poster in the train station.

„Bullets don't bother them much,“ Red told them.

The golem's head and features were as uncomely as a Neanderthal's, his jaw jutted out like a determined piranha's and his nose had little more shape to it than a door knob.

„It's your job now to see they don't step out of line,“ Red said, „Not just them either, all creatures and then besides the creatures the worst of Britannia's human lot tends to make their way to Transylvania City too—thugs and thieves, arsonists and bootleggers who just barely avoided being sent to the Dark Realms,“ he said pointing down at the floor. „Or maybe they've been there and been released to Transylvania. Transylvania City is sort of the half-way house of Britannia. I think the Administration likes to have all its trouble-makers together in one place.“

„Do bullets work on vampires?“ Tom asked, having flipped back through the book and landing on a page showing one.

Red smiled as he patted his gun beneath his coat. „It requires a direct hit to the heart or head, but bullets work just fine on them. I guess I might as well issue you your weapons,“ he said reaching into his satchel again. He brought out a revolver and handed it to Officer Horne and then he reached in and brought out a black pistol.

„You've got a .38 revolver there,“ he told Officer Horne. „This is just like a 1911 Colt 45,“ he said admiring the black pistol before handing Tom it. „There's just one difference between these weapons and what you men are used to,“ he said drawing his own gun out. He pulled the clip out, extracted a bullet from it and set it down on the table so that it sat pointing straight up like a shiny rocket. „These shoot silver bullets,“ he said, grinning. „Welcome to the Transylvania City P.D. gentlemen.“

## Chapter 4

Soon the *Vulture* came to a mountain range as tall and imposing as the Alps and Tom picked up his *Transylvania Policeman's Handbook*. He was about to begin reading it when the *Vulture* entered a tunnel. Right then Red noticed Officer Horne's backpack.

„Did they let you keep some of your old clothing and such?“ he asked, pointing at it.

„Yes,“ Officer Horne said. „They told me it would be all right.“

„Let me have a look,“ Red said turning up the flame of a lamp on the wall before reaching for the backpack. „You might have something in here that's prohibited from Transylvania City and not even know it. This way we can bypass customs when we arrive at the station,“ he said beginning to look through it. „What you got inside here?“

„Just a watch and canteen, my boots and a Dickens' novel,“ Horne answered. „The canteen was my father's when he served in the Great War. I was hoping to hand it back to him someday.“

„Looks okay,“ Red said, satisfied there was nothing in the backpack a witch would want to throw in her caldron. He handed it back to Officer Horne.

Tom showed him his helmet and photograph of his parents and Red told him to hold onto them as mementos of his life on Earth.

The *Vulture* shot out the tunnel, started down a narrow gorge and began picking up speed. A small stream appeared alongside that soon grew into a raging river. Red pulled out a small leather notebook and sat reading from it, but a few minutes later, when the train's whistle blew, he put it away before leaning to look out the train's window.

„Look up there,“ he said and Officer Horne and Tom twisted their necks around to look up the tracks. Just ahead was a wall, forty feet high, constructed of stone blocks, like would surround a prison. It extended from one side of the gorge to the other and just the other side of it, Tom spotted the tops of trees. „There's only one way in and out of Transylvania City,“ Red said. „This train—we call it the *Vulture*.“

The *Vulture* came to a stop before a tall black gate and a pair of constables stepped out of a guard shack and pushed it open. The *Vulture* sounded its whistle as it passed inside the wall and into the forest. The forest was like none on Earth. The closest it can be said to resemble is the darkest, thickest jungle of Borneo or the like, with trees as big around and tall as smokestacks, the roots of which ooze out and spread along the ground like melted candle wax.

The forest struck Tom as ancient-looking, foreboding. He thought it was the way the tree's branches wrapped around their trunks like a mental patient in a strait jacket. Or perhaps it was their color, for the trees were as black and shiny as a polished coffin.

„Oh, here we go. Here's your first look at a goblin,“ Red said tapping on the window pane before sliding the window open.

Both Officer Horne and Tom looked where Red was indicating, a spot out away from the train, where, standing in the dark forest was a creature about five feet tall. They were not the only ones to have spotted the goblin as a number of windows in the passenger cars ahead of theirs were thrown open also. Tourists headed to Transylvania City stuck their heads out open windows to look at the goblin. The goblin did not seem as interested in them, he was busy, holding a lantern up, searching for something along the ground.

In the glow of the lantern, Tom saw the goblin's nose was long and pointy like a pepper. He looked like goblins Tom had seen in comic books, but this one was dressed like a Dickens' character, wearing a Prince Albert coat and misshapen top hat.

„Gathering mushrooms,“ Red said explaining what the goblin was out there doing and just as he said it there was a scampering noise on the train's roof. „Sounds like we have gremlins overheard,“ he said looking up at the ceiling.

Just then a face appeared upside down in one of the windows in the passenger car ahead of theirs. The gremlin's sudden appearance there caused a young lady to scream, but that was soon followed by excitement and then laughter. Another gremlin stuck its head in the window Red had opened, and Tom saw a small creature with a fat, bulbous nose like a second-rate boxer's. The creature, no taller than twenty-four inches, was hairless, with wrinkled skin. In fact the gremlin looked much like a tiny, bald, old man except for its body was very small and its black eyes were quite large and round. The gremlin reached inside for some cake sitting on the table, snatched it away and disappeared.

„They are just a cursed species of monkey. Other than that they love to set things on fire,“ Red informed them, „they are harmless.“

The gremlins all leapt from the train onto the floor of the forest as the train entered an area cordoned off by a fence. Constables stood on either side of the passing train holding lanterns. The *Vulture* came out of the forest into a valley enclosed on all sides by steep, granite walls. The train passed over to the other side of the river by means of an iron bridge and glided past a sign welcoming visitors to Transylvania City, past a gas street lamp and finally into the station. The *Vulture* announced its arrival with a long, whistle blow.

„There's Chief Hall,“ Red said pointing out the window at a distinguished-looking gentleman, wearing a top hat, standing on the train platform. Officer Horne and Tom followed Red to the back of the railcar as the train came to a halt. „Transylvania City is like a more gothic-looking London. It has its English pubs and Brownstones, trolley cars and St. Paul's Cathedral, but it also has some of the scariest looking mansions and buildings.“

Chief Hall approached as they stepped onto the platform which was quickly filling up with tourists. „You must be our new recruits,“ he said looking over Officer Horne and Tom. „I'm Percy Hall, Chief of Police.“

Chief Hall, with his long, white mustache, top hat and carrying an umbrella, reminded Tom of a turn-of-the-century robber baron, John Rockefeller or J.P. Morgan or the sort.

„Welcome to Transylvania,“ he said shaking Tom's hand. „Where might you be from?“ he asked Officer Horne.

The four men started making their way down the platform through the crowd.

„The city is completely surrounded by forests,“ Red told Tom as they followed just behind Chief Hall and Officer Horne. „Deep forests, like something out of a fairy tale. Witchcraft is behind the trees growing the way they do here,“ he said waving his arm back towards the forest they had just passed through.

At the end of the platform, a pair of constables held onto bloodhounds by leashes. The two dogs sniffed everything passing by them. As Officer Horne filed past, one dog became excited and jumped up on him, but Chief Hall waved off the constable after Red informed him he'd already gone through his backpack. Tom noticed everyone else stepping off the train was funneled toward an open building where their luggage was placed on long tables, opened up and looked through.

„We can go out the side gate,“ Chief Hall said leading them there.

„Beyond the forests,“ Red said picking up his conversation with Tom, „are sheer cliffs going straight up for nearly a mile.“ He pointed out beyond the city some four or five miles away and Tom looked there to see cliffs so tall and vertical that even a Norwegian with his fjords would have stood in awe of them. It was like they were standing at the bottom of a giant pot. „They make for a natural prison,“ Red said, „but the cliffs are also the reason we get so little daylight here. Only the vampires love that about them.“

By the exit gate, another dog sniffed them, and it too signaled that it had found something on Officer Horne, but again Chief Hall waved the constable off when he went to search through Horne's luggage. Looking toward the building the other passengers had to pass through, Tom saw a most amazing sight. A black bear was sniffing through the luggage set out on tables and right then it let out a yelp and started pulling its handler out the building.

„Must have found something,“ Chief Hall said noticing the bear as well. „Probably something left on the train. I'm sure the constables will find whatever it is.“

Now the bear was standing on two legs, sniffing the air and making much noise, frightening the tourists near it. Red was clearly wondering why the bear was acting like it was, but he did not say anything as they started away from the train station.

The street they were walking down was built atop the levee that contained the river that flowed out of the gorge the Vulture had come out of. Gas lamps, the kind that have to be lit manually, lined the street, and on both sides of the river were shops and pubs and redbrick buildings. The river was not wide; in fact Tom was thinking he could throw a rock across it, but it was big enough and deep enough for small boats, as there were a number of them tied to piers. He noticed jack o'lanterns everywhere, at the entrance to a pub, in the window of a butcher shop, and several more on the stoop of a building.

„I've never seen so many jack o'lanterns,“ he said.

„Yeah, Halloween as you can imagine is a big deal here. The season is just starting. Lots of tourists arriving,“ Red said as they started across a covered bridge. A sign nearby said the river was the Black River. When they were halfway across the bridge, Red stopped. Chief Hall and Officer Horne were ahead of them and didn't notice them stopping to take in the view. „You can see all the way to the other end of the city,“ Red said pointing. „If it's not too foggy, but that's usually not the case here.“

Tom was impressed by how clear the water was and he even spotted a few fish along the sandy bottom, but these fish were like none he was familiar with, they were black. They were not the only people on the bridge, and as well there were a number of people on the street also, stepping out of pubs and restaurants, riding in horse-drawn carriages, but none of them had fangs or looked overly pale.

„So where are all the vampires?“ Tom asked anxious to see one.

„Bit early for them yet,“ Red said. „Direct sunlight can burn a vampire to death in less than fifteen minutes. Unfortunately we don't get much direct sunlight here.“

„And the witches?“

„Oh you won't see a witch just walking around. They don't socialize much with others not of their kind. Plus they need a permit to enter Transylvania City. Most of them live in the woods or at Pendle Hill, which is a village outside the city.“

Up ahead, a goblin was crossing the bridge from the other side, just then passing by Officer Horne. He was dressed the same as the one in the forest, except his hat was like what Abraham Lincoln wore. Tom noticed his shoes had holes cut in them to allow his toes to stick out. Just after passing Officer Horne, the goblin stopped and began sniffing the air with his long nose. He did this for a moment and then he turned and caught up to Officer Horne. Horne stopped when the goblin tapped him on the shoulder.

„Carry bag?“ the goblin asked, lifting his hat up in greeting and starting to remove the backpack from off Horne's shoulder.

„No,“ Chief Hall told the goblin, having turned around just at the end of the bridge. „Move along.“

„We warn visitors to never let street goblins carry...“ Red started to tell Tom, but he stopped when he saw the goblin grab hold of Horne's backpack and yank it off him.

The goblin fled down the bridge, but when he saw Red and Tom prepared to grab him, he stopped. Looking panicked, the goblin climbed over the bridge railing and dropped into the river below before Red could grab hold of him. He did manage to knock the goblin's hat off his head and it landed on the bridge.

Red looked expectedly at Tom, so Tom put his foot atop the bridge railing, about to jump in, but then Officer Horne dove over the railing headfirst and plunged into the river.

Horne quickly surfaced and began swimming after the goblin, but the fog hanging over the river was thick and soon Tom and Red lost sight of him.

Red bent over and picked up the goblin's hat as a constable out in the street began blowing his whistle.

„Goblins can float as well as a log,“ Red said gesturing for Tom to follow him off the bridge. „I've never seen one attempt such a blatant theft. Usually they snatch things when you're not looking. And then to jump into the river,“ he said clearly more impressed with the goblin's show of bravery than Tom's.

They, along with the constable who had witnessed the theft, hurried downstream. Soon they spotted Officer Horne emerging from out of the water, soaking wet.

„I lost him in the fog,“ Horne told them.

„What did you have in that backpack?“ Red asked.

„Just those things I told you about; a watch, my boots, a canteen... a Dickens's novel," Horne said, „probably ruined now.“

„Anything special in the canteen—liquor maybe?“

„Nothing but water.“

„Very strange," Red said taking out his notebook so he could make a list of the items.

From further downstream came the sound of a whistle, some constable having spotted the goblin in the river, but then no others were heard. Red told Tom a whistle sounded meant any constable should be on alert and take action toward anything out of the ordinary and Tom figured a goblin floating down a swift-flowing river clutching a paratrooper's backpack would fit the bill.

„Did you recognize that goblin?" Red asked the constable who had followed them there.

„Oh, I've seen him around here before.“

„Know where he sleeps at night?“

„There's a group of them that hangs out under the bridges around here.“

„I'll have the desk sergeant send you some men in just a little while," Red told the officer. „Have them look along every pier and under every bridge around here. He had on a long, black coat—in fact just round-up all the goblins you find around here and bring them to the station.“

„Very good sir.“

„Yes, let do that," Chief Hall agreed. „Won't hurt to have some officers roust through the local goblin population and see if they can find that fiend. I'd like to give him a good thump for being so bold," he said smacking the tip of his umbrella on the bridge.

„I've been meaning to do some questioning about the incident the other day anyway," Red told Chief Hall.

They started walking again and Tom could tell Officer Horne was embarrassed by having caused such a fuss on his first day, but as well he could tell that both Chief Hall and Red were impressed with his display of daring.

Under any other circumstances Tom would have shown similar fortitude, but having nearly drowned as a child, he had never been comfortable around water since. He was certainly capable of swimming and diving underwater, having had to in order to become an Army Ranger.

As they walked, Tom noticed Red rubbing his mustache, thinking over something. „What was the incident the other day?" he asked.

„Oh, a young man was caught just outside the station trying to smuggle some mice into the city. One of our grounded citizens," Red said. „That means he cannot travel out of the Transylvania Valley, but he was wearing a fireman's coat he'd stolen. Police and fireman don't need tickets to board the *Vulture*, just flash them your badge and identification.“ Red pulled his wallet out of his pocket to show Tom his identification as Chief Inspector Red Meriwether of the T.C.P.D.

„Why mice?“

„To sell to some witch," Red explained. „We might have had witches zipping all around the sky if he'd been successful. Not that that would be so bad, but there's some other, more dangerous potions, that require a mouse and we don't want that.“ Red jabbed his thumb back at the station then. „That's what those

bloodhounds and bear are for. They're trained to pick up the scent of anything not allowed into Transylvania City."

"Like what else?"

"Oh, certain plants and rodents and the sort... you know," he said, but actually Tom had no idea, having thought just a few hours before that witches were fiction. "That's all in the handbook I gave you. Anyway this young man shoved his way past the constables at the gate and ran down the street, but Captain Clarke of the fire brigade had gone out ahead of him, and he tackled him before he got too far. A chain of goblins helped hold onto him until the constables arrived," Red said making a perplexed expression then. "Anyway the constables went through his pockets—sure enough they find a couple of mice on him. There's plenty of tricks witches can perform legally. We don't need them laying their hands on anything more than what's allowed here in Transylvania City."

"So what do you want to question them now about?" Tom asked.

"Well that's the odd thing," he said. "So after the constables arrest the young man, all the goblins run off," Red explained. "Usually they would have stuck around, hoping to be rewarded. I thought on that the whole ride down on the train today," he said. "And it's my thinking that; this young man might have handed off some mice to one of the goblins, keeping the others as decoy. Anyway I questioned the young man after he was brought in. Where do you live? Where do you work? Asked him what he had planned to do with the mice."

"What did he say?"

"Said he just wanted to make some money. So I asked him who he was going to sell them to, but he claimed he didn't know yet. Anyway I held the scofflaw in our jail while I had him checked out, but there was not much to find out. Seems he arrived here a few weeks ago. Didn't come here from Earth, but from the Dark Realms, which means he's been trouble before and that's why he doesn't hold travel privileges. I warned him a second offense would land him in Blackstone Prison."

They came to the Transylvania City Police Headquarters then, a stone building five stories high and just inside was the booking desk—a tall counter built upon a pedestal so that the sergeant on duty could look down at any criminal being brought into the station. Red walked up to the desk-sergeant and asked him to call out a half dozen constables. The sergeant went to a phone behind him on the wall, an old-time phone, at least to Tom, and lifted it. The sergeant spoke into it and then came back to Red. Red told him to send the constables to the bridge to help round up the local goblin population. He handed the sergeant the goblin's tall, black hat and told him to log it in.

"I'll take you men to the dormitory," Chief Hall said as he started up a wide staircase just next to desk sergeant's station. There was an elevator they could have taken, the kind that looks like a cage, but Chief Hall preferred the stairs despite his advanced age. He seemed blissfully unaware of the water dripping off Officer Horne.

Tom went to follow them, but Red asked Chief Hall to leave Tom with him and Chief Hall turned around and motioned for Tom to remain there, before he started up the stairs again, ordering Officer Horne along.

"Well, I'll see you around," Horne said reaching out to shake Tom's hand.

„Good luck,“ Tom told him. „It’s been quite a day hasn’t it?“  
Officer Horne smiled. „It certainly has.“

Tom waited for Red to finish up with the desk-sergeant and then they headed upstairs also. „So what do you think I did as soon as I let this young felon go?“ Red asked, wanting to instruct Tom in his first detective lesson.

„Have him followed?“ Tom said after a moment.

„Exactly, I was hoping he’d lead us to whoever he’d given the other mice to.“

„Did he?“ Tom asked feeling relieved he had finally impressed Red.

„No, he went home and stayed in the rest of the night. I may have underestimated him.“

At the top of the stairs, Red pointed to the left and said that was where the inspectors’ offices were, and to the right was the cafeteria, and looking in there, Tom saw a goblin wearing a white coat and cap, clearing tables. It seemed goblins are not all untrustworthy criminals. They continued up to the third floor where the constables’ quarters were located and then Red and Tom continued up to the fourth floor.

„This is the inspectors’ and department heads’ quarters,“ Red said as they reached the fourth floor landing. „I have a room there,“ he said pointing down the hallway, „but I have a home in the city too.“ Red unlocked a storage closet and opened it. There were some keys hung on hooks inside and he grabbed one, and then some towels and a small bag off a shelf before closing the door and leading Tom to room 4G. He unlocked the door and handed him the key.

„This is your new home,“ Red said stepping in the room and setting down the towels and bag on the bed. „There’s personal items in the bag there—toothbrush and such.“

It was a simple room; just a bed, dresser, a small desk and a window that looked out the front of the building. Tom went and looked out at the street below. Right then he saw some constables hurrying out the building. They piled into a paddy wagon and sped away and he guessed they were the constables Red had requested to search through the goblin camps.

„Let me introduce you around,“ Red said. So Tom followed him down the hallway past the lavatory and showers to where there were voices. They came to a common area where there were tables and a small kitchen. „This is Tom Flynn,“ Red told three detectives sitting at a table, playing cards and eating sandwiches. They all had black pistols in shoulder holsters, two of them wore black badges and the third had a blood-red badge like Tom’s.

„This the new recruit?“ one of them asked.

„Yeah,“ Red said. „See he’s taken care of. I got to check downstairs.“

Inspectors Jones, McElroy and Dunne introduced themselves and welcomed Tom to the Flying Squad. Inspector Jones was a black man with a John Henry like build, who spoke in a fine English accent. „How’d you die?“ he asked. „Or can’t you recall?“

„I was shot in the head,“ Tom said placing the tip of his finger on his forehead. „I was in the war.“



„Is that still going on?“ Dunne asked in a heavy Irish brogue. „Damn shame—McElroy here was killed in that,“ he said, gesturing toward the youngest of the three, who wore the blood-red badge. Tom looked at him.

„Where you from?“ McElroy asked.

„United States,“ Tom said causing Inspector McElroy to frown.

„He was hoping London,“ Inspector Jones explained as he shuffled the deck of cards. „He was killed D-day and left a pretty wife behind. Now he asks everyone arriving here where they're from, hoping to find out some news about her. He's worried she might have remarried.“

„I'm worried me wife hasn't remarried and they'll force me to take her back when she gets here,“ Inspector Dunne said and Tom laughed at what he thought was a joke.

They invited Tom to play a hand with them, and starting teaching him how, but then before long the three men had to go on duty. So far, as far as Tom could tell, he was the only American in Transylvania City.

## Chapter 5

Tom was looking out the window in his room when Red came in through the open door. „The constables have brought in the street goblins they rounded up,“ he told Tom.

They went downstairs to a floor half below street level. Just at the bottom of the stairs were some interview rooms and then at the end of the hallway was the entrance to the city's jail.

Two constables stood guard at the entrance of one of the interview rooms and Red and Tom walked past them into a room full of goblins. The first thing you notice about goblins is that they always have a hat on. Top hats or bowlers preferably, but street goblins usually have to settle for whatever hats they can scavenge. Goblins spend much of their time going through trash cans, trying to find something better, but they often are stuck with hats that have lost their shape or are the wrong size. The result is they look quite comical.

The ones in the interview room that day could hardly stand still or quit yammering; one asked if they were going to be fed, another said he had to go to the bathroom. After looking at each of them in turn, Tom told Red he did not think the one from the bridge was among them. None of them wore damp clothing or had holes cut out of his shoes for his toes to stick out. In fact only two out of the whole bunch even wore shoes.

Just then, a middle-aged man wearing a fireman's uniform entered the room. Red told Tom he was Captain Clarke and he was there to see if he recognized any of the goblins from the incident at the train station a couple of nights before. Before Red went to greet him, he handed Tom a folder and asked him to look through it.

Tom opened it. It was the report of the incident involving the young man who had tried to sneak mice into Transylvania City, filed by a Sergeant Davis on duty

that day. Tom just kind of scanned it, thinking there could be nothing of importance there, but one thing did catch his eye—a paragraph that read;

The young man tripped and a chain of goblins close by jumped on top of him and held him down. Captain Clarke of the Fire Brigade then reached the young man and helped the goblins subdue him. A search of the young man's pockets found two mice. The goblins all fled before they could be interviewed.

„Captain Clarke recognizes two from the other night,“ Red said coming back.

„What's a chain of goblins?“ Tom asked

„That's what a group of goblins are called,“ Red said, „like a pack of wolves. That's all in your handbook.“

„I think there's something important in this report,“ he said handing it back.

„What?“

„It says the young man tripped and fell and the goblins jumped on him. Captain Clarke didn't tackle him first. I wonder if he tripped and fell when he came to the spot where the goblins were so they would be the first to get to him.“

„Does look a little more staged that way, doesn't it?“ Red said rubbing his mustache.

The goblins were given sandwiches and a pound each for their trouble and then told they could leave, except for the two Captain Clarke recognized. One was a little taller and heavier than the other and Red had them placed into different interview rooms and left there while he and Tom ate one of the small sandwiches. Red wanted to let the two goblins sweat it out a little before they went in and questioned them. Red said they would talk to the more gullible-looking of the two first, and Tom was curious to see which one that was as they both looked silly to him.

„You helped subdue the young man the other night at the train station,“ Red told the smaller goblin as they entered the room where he was being held. The goblin was sitting at a table, facing the door and Red and Tom went and sat across from him.

„I did?“

„Yes,“ Red said undoubtedly. „The constable there that night recognized you. Said you did him a favor helping grab that young man. We owe you a reward for your good deed. You were one of them, weren't you?“

„Yes,“ said the goblin, wearing a tweed cap that he kept tugging on nervously. „Reward?“

„Yes, what would you like? Some money, new hat?“

„Money.“

Red took some paper bills out of his pocket and handed him them. „You can go now, have a nice day.“ The goblin stuffed the money in his pocket and stood to go. Tom just about stopped the goblin, to ask him some more questions, thinking Red was missing an opportunity to find out some useful information still, but then Red said, „Oh, just one more thing, who was it that brought you goblins there that night? I'd like to reward them with a few pounds too.“

„Dodger made us go there,“ the goblin answered.

„Dodger?“

„That’s right.“

„Is that Dodger in the other room?“ Red asked pointing through the wall.

„No that’s Huckleberry.“

„What kind of hat does Dodger wear?“

„Chimney sweep hat,“ the goblin said.

„Real tall hat?“ Red asked holding his hand above his head to indicate a real tall hat.

„That’s right governor.“

„Thanks,“ Red said.

The goblin started out the room, but stopped to stare at Tom. „Why aren’t you wearing a hat?“ he asked.

„I don’t have one.“

„I could find one for you. It’s bad luck to go around without a hat.“

„I’m sure it is,“ Tom said sarcastically, not knowing that walking around without one really can bring bad luck upon someone in Transylvania City.

The goblin glanced at Red and decided he’d overstayed his welcome. „Good day governors,“ he said tipping his hat.

„Well if we didn’t know it before, we do now,“ Red said after he left. „Something was handed off, else why would you hire a bunch of goblins to tackle you? And it seems this Dodger might be the same one that just snatched Officer Horne’s backpack.“

They headed for the second interview room.

„Goblins tend to give themselves names taken out of popular books,“ Red explained as they went down the hallway. „Dickens, and Jules Verne and Jane Austin, thing is they’re always changing their name whenever they feel like it. It was probably Dodger that got the rest of the mice handed off to him,“ he said before stopping to write in his notebook, but before doing so, he ran his finger back and forth across his mustache, like a bow across a violin string. „Why don’t you run upstairs and retrieve that hat our goblin just lost,“ he asked and Tom quickly went upstairs to the desk sergeant and asked for it.

„Got it,“ Tom said when he returned.

„Hold it at your side when we go in here.“

„All right.“

„Here’s your reward money.“ Red said as they entered the room where the second goblin was being held, holding out a couple of bills toward him. Tom did think this one seemed more suspicious than the first one had, but he could not resist taking the money offered him. This time Red remained standing, to intimidate the goblin some, Tom thought, so he stared down at him too.

„Reward for what?“ the goblin asked.

„Helping nab that lawbreaker at the train station couple nights back. Dodger gave us a list of names that helped. He’s been working for us. You are Huckleberry aren’t you?“

The goblin seemed to not want to admit it, but Red had tricked him into thinking they’d gotten his name from Dodger.

„Yeah I’m Huckleberry,“ he said. „I was just helping out. I didn’t know what was going on exactly.“

„You seen Dodger today?“

„Saw him a little while ago,“ Huckleberry said tugging on his cap nervously.

„Where?“

„Out front here.“

„Is that right?“

„Yeah.“

„Where did you guys run off after the constables took the young man from you?“

„Under the bridge.“

„Dodger go there with you?“

Tom could practically see the wheels turning in Huckleberry's head as he thought about it. „No, I didn't see Dodger till the next day come to think of it. How long Dodger been working with you guys?“

„Oh, awhile now.“

„You pay him?“

„Of course. Any idea where Dodger went that night?“

„No, but why don't you ask him if he works for you?“

„I'd like to. That's why I'm trying to find him.“

Red looked over at the hat Tom was holding and took it from him. „If you see Dodger maybe you could give him his hat back,“ Red said placing it on the table. „This is his, isn't it?“

„Pretty sure.“

Red slid the hat across the table. „If you see him let me know. There's a couple of pounds in it for you. Come back and ask for me, Chief Inspector Meriwether.“

„Okay governor,“ Huckleberry said picking up the hat and hurrying out the room.

Red waited till Huckleberry had left. „And now we know the same goblin that organized the little performance the other night, is the same one that stole Officer Horne's backpack just now. That gives me an idea.“

„What?“

Red sat down, removed his hat and set it on the table. „Here's what I'm thinking. Say you were a no-account goblin and had just pilfered something; a knapsack and contents in this instance. And now you want to pawn it. So where do you go?“ Red asked. „Might you take it to the scofflaw you just recently schemed with? Maybe we'll go over to that young man's flat tonight and have us a look-see.“

Tom liked the old-fashioned way Red talked, as well as the odd words he chose. He didn't remember actually ever hearing someone use the word scofflaw before.

„Right now, unless he's looking to have his bail revoked, that young man better be at work out at the Vamp's distillery. So we got some time, but I'll send a couple of plainclothes officers over to his place right now to keep an eye out for our favorite goblin—Dodger. In fact what we'll do is take the tour bus out there,“ Red said looking at his watch. „We can call for a ride back.“

„What was this young man's name?“ Tom asked and Red pulled out his notebook and thumbed back a few pages. Tom suspected he didn't really need to look at his notes.

„John Baker,“ Red answered. „While I was interrogating him the other day he asked me as many questions as I asked him. Wanted to know if Chief Hall had

been with Scotland Yard—he thought he remembered reading about an Inspector Hall in the papers long ago. Wanted to know if I'd been a policeman in London too. I answered his questions as long as he answered mine," he said putting his notebook away. „Right now what we'll do is put you through firearm training and then order you some new clothes and get you a proper hat," he said. „Only vampires go around without a hat," he said derisively. „That goblin was right about one thing. It is bad luck for a man to go without a hat here in Transylvania.“

„Oh," Tom said.

As they went upstairs, Red told Tom about his pay and benefits. He would be paid 75 pounds a week, but Tom had to ask if that was good pay or not, since for one, he was from Indiana and for another, it was like 1922 here.

„Oh, a good Rueben sandwich at Dempsey's will cost you a pound," Red explained. „A pint of lager about the same," he said and Tom did some quick math in his head. „Of course you get free room and board here. You can eat all you want in the cafeteria.“

Tom was handed a signing bonus of one week's pay inside the accounting office. He signed the receipt and started looking through the bills.

„That's a five pound note," Red said pointing at a bill with a picture of a queen on it. „That's a ten pound note," he said pointing at another bill with the number ten on it and a picture of a long-haired, wild-eyed man. „That's Vlad the Impaler," he said pressing his finger into the man's face.

„Who's he?" Tom asked staring at the picture, which stared back at him. Vlad had a sort of crazed look about him.

„Vlad the Impaler," Red repeated like that might help, „he's some vampire that lived on Earth a long time ago. You'll learn all about him on the tour bus. These aren't the same bills as where you just come from," he said unnecessarily.

Red told Tom that the department would buy him a suit, as well as a hat. Next, they stopped by the desk-sergeant and Red told him to send two plainclothes officers up to his office. They went upstairs and Red handed Tom off to the day-officer, a middle-aged lady named Kensington with red hair, who was attractive despite not particularly interested in being so. She shot Red a look like he'd caused her to waste half her day waiting for the new man.

„And just so you'll know," Red said, „she's my wife. Just give him the short introduction dear. We've got somewhere to go.“

Miss Kensington had Tom fill out some paperwork and then she took his picture with a camera as big as a bread box. She walked him past some file drawers and introduced Tom to the typist pool, who were all middle-aged ladies standing around drinking coffee until Miss Kensington told them to find something to do.

Next he was shown a chalk board that had each inspector's name written on it and what cases they were working on, and as he stood there studying what kinds of things he would be spending his time on, Tom was surprised to find his name already there. It seemed he was scheduled, along with a half-dozen other officers, for what appeared to be a stakeout later that night at a Hotel Romania. Miss Kensington explained that there had been several goblin pick-pockets hanging around the hotel lately.

„That's your desk there," she told him, pointing at one in the corner. „Good luck Inspector.“

She left then so Tom went and sat at his desk. He opened the drawers and found pens and notebooks, so he put one of each in his pocket and then noticing a large map on the wall, he went to look at it.

The map was of the Transylvania Valley and it appeared only two roads led out of the city into the surrounding countryside; Appian Way and Queen Anne's Way and circling around the entire valley was another road, Horseshoe Road, which was shaped just like a horseshoe to fit the valley's hoof shape. Also drawn on the map in colorful, out-of-scale pictures were the most prominent points of interest, St. Paul's Cathedral; The Transylvania City Library; Vamp's Distillery; the TCPD building, the Tunnel-like-Hell-mine, The Triumph Hotel, Goblin Park, Dracula Manor, Mouth of Hell cave and about a dozen other places. A number of bridges were drawn on the map, all crossing over the Black or Blood rivers which ringed the city. The railroad tracks were depicted on the map in oversize black X's which showed the *Vulture* following alongside the Black River through the city and then crossing over the Blood River before circling back around to exit the valley the same spot it came in.

Red tapped Tom on the shoulder just as he noticed the poster next to the map—something about Recognizing Chance and Coincidence in Transylvania.

„Let's go,“ Red said.

## Chapter 6

### Tuesday 4:30 pm

This time they went all the way to the bottom of the TCPD building, well below street level, down a hallway, past the entrance to the policemen's locker room and through a steel door, that read; Armory, where there was a shooting range.

„Let's see how well you shoot,“ Red told Tom as they approached a constable sitting behind a sliding glass window. Red asked him for a box of shells. The Range Conducting Officer (RCO) handed him some and said to use any of the shooting alleys, as no one else was there. Red opened the box of shells and poured some into his hand. He held them out for Tom to see.

„These bullets are made out of wood,“ he said. „I know I showed you that silver bullet on the train, but that's mostly for show. A werewolf can only be taken down with a silver bullet, but we haven't had a werewolf on the loose in some years now. I keep a silver bullet in the last spot in my clip just in case, but we use these wood bullets for everyday use.“ Red counted out seven bullets and handed them to Tom. „Seven is a lucky number,“ he said, „Superstition is real here.“

„What do you mean?“

„I guess some powerful witches placed a spell on this place a long time ago making superstition real. So don't go walking under ladders or cross the path of a black cat or inexplicably, skipping church causes bad luck also,“ Red told Tom.

„Okay,“ Tom said, like he did his mom when she told him to be good or Santa would strike him off his list.

Tom began slipping bullets into the clip of his pistol. They were as heavy as lead even though they were made from wood.

„These bullets are made from the Black tree,“ Red said. „Those were Black trees you saw from the train.“

They walked to the first shooting stall and Tom looked down range at a target hanging there. Staring back at him was a golem. The golem wore a fedora, pulled down in front so that nothing showed above his eyes. He had a flat nose like a cartoon character that made him look tough, and an evil-looking grin. He wore a pin-striped suit and aimed a black pistol at Tom.

„Only drowning or a long fall onto a hard surface will kill a golem,“ Red said. „But put enough bullets in them and they’ll fall over and then they are slow getting back on their feet.“

Tom squeezed the trigger of his Colt and shot the golem in the chest—which made for an easy target.

„Nice shot,“ said Red. „But that’s like a bee sting to them. Let him have all seven.“

Tom fired off the rest of his clip and the sound echoed off the stone walls and smoke filled the room.

„Not bad,“ Red said reeling in the target. He pulled another paper target off a shelf and clipped it on. This time Tom would be shooting at a goblin wearing a top hat. Red reeled the target all the way to the back of the shooting range. „A goblin, if you just want to wound him, shoot for a leg,“ he said stepping in front of Tom and firing several times. „Problem is goblins have skinny legs,“ he said, having failed to hit the goblin there.

Red gave Tom another seven bullets before stepping into the adjoining booth. He shot at a werewolf not wearing any clothing, but rather just a hairy beast ready to spring at someone. Each of them filled their targets with holes and then Red asked the RCO for a 49er and two drums.

The Range Conducting Officer slipped into a room behind his counter. A moment later he came out carrying a machine gun and two, round drums as large and thick as lids to a cast iron pot. Tom recognized the Thompson machine gun. The RCO brought it to Red.

„These drums hold forty-nine shells,“ Red explained as he took one and snapped it to the machine gun, „that’s why it’s called a 49er.“

Red set the gun down while he clipped a new target on—a witch in flight upon her broom—and reeled it all the way to the back of the range where there was an earthen bank. The RCO went to the wall and turned some knobs—old time light switches—till all the lights in the room were off, except for the lamp on his counter and some lights at the back of the range. Red lifted the heavy gun to his chest, aimed it and fired.

It tore off forty nine bullets in less than eight seconds and the room lit up and fell dark forty nine times. The RCO flipped the lights back on. The witch had been reduced to shreds. Red removed the hot drum, clicked in the second one and tossed Tom the gun.

„We got any pumpkins, George?“ Red asked the RCO and George said he did. „Just throw that bolt back when you’re ready,“ Red told Tom. „Keep your feet

spread apart," he said as he clipped on a new target—a vampire—and started reeling it towards the back wall. „She kicks like a mule.“

The RCO came out of the supply room carrying two pumpkins. He walked them to the back of the shooting range and hurriedly dug a spot for each of them into the earthen bank there before turning off all but the one light again.

„Tear that vampire up and then let them pumpkins have it,“ Red instructed Tom.

Tom slid the bolt back, brought the gun to his chest and took aim. He squeezed the trigger just briefly and the gun slammed into his shoulder as it quickly spit out bullets. Before he could take his finger off the trigger, he had fired a dozen times. The gun was not terribly accurate, but was fun to shoot. The vampire was unrecognizable.

He lifted the machine gun again and reduced the pumpkins to an orange mash that splattered onto the back wall as flames shot out the barrel of the 49er. When the gun clicked empty, the RCO turned the lights back on and Tom handed the smoking gun back to Red. The smoke was so thick they had to wave it away with their hands.

„You’ve completed firearm training,“ Red said before telling the RCO that Inspector Flynn needed outfitting. The RCO stepped into his supply room again. A moment later he came out carrying a cardboard box and set it on the counter. Red reached inside and started pulling things out and handing them to Tom; boxes of shells, two extra clips for his pistol, a shoulder holster; that Tom slipped on right then over his shirt. There was a pair of handcuffs, a box of silver bullets, that Red said he probably would never need. There was a watch, a small flashlight and a whole packet of matches—the kind that come in small boxes—and a second smaller gun, a short nose revolver, that came with a small holster that clipped on the back of his belt. The gun was to be used when Tom was working undercover and didn’t want to be spotted for a police officer.

Tom loaded his clips, putting a silver bullet in the last spot just like Red did, before slipping the clip in the gun and the gun into his shoulder holster.

„Oh, did you grab a notebook?“ Red asked and Tom proudly pulled one out of his pocket. „That’s your most useful tool right there,“ he said. „Take notes of all you can—names of goblins and golems, where they live and work, who they associate with, names of bartenders. Anything you think might be useful to recall sometime. You got a torch there,“ he said indicating the flashlight, „but I like carrying matches too,“ he said pulling a box of them out of his pocket. „That way you always have light handy, even just to look at your watch or need to light a lantern. It gets dark here early.“

Tom slipped the watch on, wound it and set the time. He slipped the two extra clips onto his belt. He was given a key that would open any call box across the city and two more keys, one to a locker in the policeman’s locker room, and another to a door that lead out to the garage from the armory. After storing his supplies inside his locker, Red and Tom went up two flights of stairs and out the building.

„This is Appian Way,“ Red said as they came down the steps of the TCPD building. „Heard of it?“

„Should I have?“



They were headed north on Appian Way, walking briskly. The fog had grown thicker, but jack o' lanterns lighted their path down the sidewalk.

„Appian Way is the road that leads into Rome from the south, the old Rome that is, Caesar and what not,“ Red told him. „This road is named after that road. The vampires here named it. I guess many a poor soul was crucified on that road and the vampires here claim a fair share of them was theirs, so they named this road in their honor.“

„Vampires name the streets here?“ Tom asked.

„Half of them. Every street they name is something morbid. You can also thank them for your blood-red badge and that Vlad the Impaler note in your pocket.“

The first street they came to was Mulberry, which Tom figured vampires had not named. The cars passing by all looked like late 1920's models, this being a minor exception to the 1922 rule. Still there were plenty of carriages and buggies about; hansom cabs and other black coaches and carts pulled by draft horses.

„You should see a constable at every major intersection along Appian Way,“ Red said waving at one. „There's a call box there,“ he said pointing out a red box, about the size of a breadbox, on top of a short pole as they crossed Guillotine Street. Red stopped when he stepped onto the sidewalk there. He was looking across the street, where there was a large hotel, The Fountain.

„There's Inspectors Jones and Dunne,“ he said pointing at the two inspectors climbing out of an unmarked police car. A squad car pulled up behind them and two officers got out, one of which was Officer Horne. A hotel employee hurried out of the hotel to meet them. „Let's see what's going on,“ Red said starting across the street.

„Hey chief,“ Inspector Dunne said when he spotted them coming up the sidewalk.

„What's going on?“ Red asked as Tom nodded at Officer Horne.

„We're going to apprehend a young vampire in the hotel bar. He bit a young lady in a hallway upstairs. Lucky for her a porter happened to come around the corner and chased the vampire off. He was seen dashing into the hotel bar. Hotel staff called us and said he's still in there.“

„How can we help?“

Inspector Dunne sent Officer Horne and the other constable around the corner of the hotel to wait in the alleyway, and then the rest of them went inside where there was a large fountain in the lobby. Tom thought the fountain's pool looked large enough and deep enough to have played water polo in. Immediately the hotel detective approached them and explained the vampire in question was standing at the far end of the counter in the hotel's tavern. The detective discreetly pointed the vampire out, before telling them the only way out of there was through the kitchen, the lobby or out the fire exit.

„You mind taking the kitchen?“ Inspector Dunne asked Red.

„Fine,“ Red said. „Give us a few seconds first.“

Red and Tom hurried through a back entrance to the kitchen, Red seeming to know his way around the hotel. They made their way past a couple of chefs and dishwashers, two of them goblins and another, some race of creature that looked like a really big fat man with bad teeth and a nose that looked like someone had smashed it in with a frying pan.

They arrived at a swinging door that led from the kitchen to the hotel bar. Red pushed it open a little and looked out at the counter lined with tourists while Tom looked over his shoulder. He pointed the vampire out. The vampire looked like any other good-looking young man, except he was dressed sharply and overly pale. He had thick black hair and when he turned his head just right, Tom saw his eyes were as dark as the #8 pool ball. He also saw his fangs then, as long and sharp as a pit viper's.

Inspectors Jones and Dunne were coming down the line of patrons standing at the bar, but the vampire must have spotted them, because he leapt over the bar before they got to him. Inspector Dunne went to grab him, but the vampire grabbed a glass sitting on the bar and threw its contents in Inspector Dunne's face. He ran then, shoving a bartender out of his way as he headed for the fire exit. Tom shoved his way past Red and chased after him.

When the vampire threw open the door, he found several constables and some hotel staff waiting for him. Inspector Jones and Tom came out the door right behind him and it looked as though he was cornered, but the vampire ran to a crate and sprang off it toward the roof of a delivery truck parked in the alley. He went right over Officer Horne's outstretched arms, caught hold of the roof and scrambled atop the truck before anyone could stop him.

Then he ran across the truck's roof and leapt off it toward the landing of the hotel's fire escape coming off the second floor. It was a long jump—and Tom expected him to break his ankle when he crashed onto the alley pavement, but the vampire glided through the air like a squirrel jumping from one tree to the next. His foot slipped deftly between the bars of the bottom railing and his hands caught hold of the top. He climbed over the railing quickly, but Inspector Jones shot him in the leg as he went to open the door leading back into the hotel. Amazingly the bullet barely slowed the vampire down and he disappeared inside before Inspector Jones could fire a second time. He was gone. Tom was stunned.

A split second later, before the door closed shut, it flew back open as the vampire stumbled back out, a hand pressed against his mouth. He fell against the railing. Red came out the door right after him, his fist held up by his shoulder after having delivered a punch. He quickly slapped one handcuff to the vampire's wrist and the other to the railing before the vampire realized what had happened. Red had hurried to the second floor of the hotel and come to the end of the hallway there, just as the vampire was coming back in.

„You broke my fang, you stupid cop,“ the vampire yelled.

„Unfortunately it will grow back,“ Red muttered. „I'll let you take it from here,“ he yelled down to Inspector Dunne below.

Tom waited with Officer Horne in front of the hotel as Inspectors Jones and Dunne went to retrieve the vampire. A minute later, they led him out in handcuffs.

„Horne,“ yelled Inspector Dunne, „watch him while we go talk to the manager.“

Horne and the other constable walked over and grabbed hold of the vampire.

„I think we got a lead on your backpack,“ Tom mentioned as Horne helped place the vampire in the back of the squad car.

„Is that right?“

„Yeah, some goblin named Dodger snatched it.“

„Isn't he the same one that helped smuggle some mice in just the other day?“

„You heard about that?“

„Yeah,“ Horne said as Red came out the hotel. „I’ve read through half my policeman’s handbook you gave me chief,“ Horne told him as Red approached them on the sidewalk.

„What? Oh yes, very good,“ Red said.

Red told Tom they should be on our way and as Tom went to wave goodbye to Horne, he glanced at the vampire in the backseat. The vampire had a slight grin on his face, and soon, Tom would wish he had paid more attention to it.

## Chapter 7

### Tuesday 5:30 pm

At a tailors shop Tom was measured for a suit and then leaving there, they headed back to Guillotine Street, turned west towards the river, crossed Hangman’s Street, and then right by the river they entered a hatter’s shop.

„Pierre, my friend, how are you?“ Red asked the small Frenchman who greeted them as they entered his establishment.

„Very fine inspector,“ Pierre said in a French accent as Tom was amused by a mannequin of a golem positioned right at the front of the shop. The mannequin wore a pin-striped suit, striped shirt and a fedora. Other than not having a gun, it looked just like the one on the shooting target.

„This is Inspector Flynn,“ Red said. Tom and Pierre shook hands, but Pierre demonstrated an odd way of doing so, placing his hand inside Tom’s like a dog taught to shake hands does. „He showed up here with nothing but a helmet to cover his head and needs a proper hat to mark him for the fine gentleman he is and cover up a fine head of hair—we don’t want him mistaken for a vampire,“ Red leaned in and told Pierre, looking around first to see if any were in the store.

„No, we do not want that,“ Pierre said waving his hand like he did not like the idea of it. „Is this to be put on your account?“

„Of course,“ Red said magnanimously. „Pierre says for a society to consider itself developed and respectable everyone must dress appropriately and nothing is more important than a man’s hat. Isn’t that right Pierre?“

„Very much so,“ Pierre agreed. „I traveled to Egypt once in my first life. Very few hats there, only scarves and turbans,“ he said circling his hand around his head like someone wrapping a turban. „They have quality fabric there,“ he said undoubtedly, as he led Tom to a chair to measuring his hat size. „But if they want to become a first-world country, then they must demand better fashion. A banker should not be mistaken for a baker or a policeman for a bellboy. You couldn’t tell one from the other there,“ he said throwing his hands up in frustration. „I did like the one kind of hat...“ he said trying to recall a word. „The Fez. I would recommend a bowler like Inspector Meriwether’s,“ Pierre suggested. „There’s still some time left in the year before straw hats are out of season if you would prefer one of them.”

Tom told him he would take a bowler.

Pierre went around his counter where there was a wall of hats. Each hat lay in its own cubby hole and Pierre began looking through them. When he found a black bowler of proper size, he handed Tom it and gestured toward a mirror. Tom placed it on his head and looked in the mirror. He liked the look of it despite it seeming old fashioned and Red also nodded his approval.

„I think I'll buy another one with my own money,“ Tom told Pierre.

„Excellent,“ Pierre said rubbing his hands together.

Tom already knew the kind he wanted, but Pierre took down a straw hat before he could point it out. He tried the straw hat on, but looking in the mirror, thought it made him look like a carnival barker.

„How about one of those,“ Tom said pointing at the fedora the mannequin was wearing. It was the kind of hat made famous by the notorious gangsters around Chicago in the 1920's.

„Those are popular with golems and trolls,“ Pierre said frowning, but he went and started looking for one Tom's size and found a dark grey one with a black band.

„Might want to get yourself a raincoat,“ Red suggested. „Transylvania City is a damp, rainy town.“

Tom had noticed all the detective-inspectors wore the long raincoats and he wanted one already. They cost about eight pounds, Red told him, and right then Red was wearing a gray one that reached down below his knees. Pierre pointed to a rack of them and Tom went and picked out a black one. It was a soft fabric that hung loosely and flowed like a cape. He tried it on and looked in the mirror. With his suit, long, black raincoat, Colt .45 in its shoulder holster, blood-red badge, and fedora—he looked very much the detective. Pierre said as much.

„I'll take it,“ Tom said.

Tom paid for the hat and raincoat with two Vlad notes and received a pound note and a small coin with the profile of Dracula, Vlad's father, stamped on it.

„I'll have your bowler delivered to the station,“ Pierre said.

„Thanks,“ Tom said, following Red out the door.

They started back toward Appian Way, crossing Hangman's Street again and looking up the street through the fog, Tom spotted a large figure approaching. It was a golem.

The golem was as tall as Tom, but twice as wide and as muscular as Hercules. He reminded Tom of the army of Chinese soldiers made out of terracotta, but the golem looked less fragile, almost stone-like, and he was able to bend his elbows and knees and what not. Still he looked like cracks would appear in his face if he was to smile. He wore a hat just like Tom's, except of course larger, a suit, but no tie, instead his white shirt was left unbuttoned at the collar.

The golem entered a pub like he planned on staying there a while—throwing the door open wide and ordering a drink before he had even stepped inside. He removed his hat then, and Tom saw he had a closely-cropped head of hair—as white and bristly as a polar bear's.

„That's a golem,“ Red said. „I guess I don't need to warn you not to pick a fight with one.“

Tom shook his head.

„If you ever were to find yourself in a scrape with one—hit them in their Adam’s apple—that will back them off a little. If they get their hands on you, well—you’d have better odds against a gorilla. If they throw a punch; your best bet is to duck since they aren’t as quick as us,“ Red said as he ducked and weaved like a boxer to show Tom what he meant. „Fire hardly bothers them, but they don’t like water. Only a few of them can swim and even then it is not pretty.“

They walked to train station #1 on Appian Way. Attached to a pole just in front of the station was a sign, *The Transylvania City Tour Bus Company*.

„Bus will be along any minute,“ Red said approaching a peanut vendor. „Every hour on the hour, starting at 9:00 am until 7:00 at night and its 5:58 right now,“ he said looking at his watch. „No better way to be introduced to Transylvania City.“

Red bought a bag of peanuts and a small bottle of soda. „Anything for you? We might not get dinner tonight,“ he said, so Tom went over and bought the same. „Only time I eat peanuts is on this tour,“ Red told him tossing one in his mouth.

A short, red bus, with the Union Jack painted on it, came around the corner and stopped just in front of the sign. The doors were flung open and the line of tourists ahead of them climbed on board. It cost one pound for the tour and Tom found the correct bill and handed it to the lady greeting them. The lady, probably about fifty, wore a sweater with a pin attached that read, *Transylvania Tour Bus Company*. The pin had a picture of a witch on a broom on it and the tour lady wore a witch’s tall, black hat too.

Red and Tom took seats at the front of the bus and there was a feeling of anticipation running through the group. Tom cracked open a peanut and tossed it in his mouth. He took his policeman’s handbook out and thumbed through it while waiting for the tour to start. The book fell open to a page on vampires and Tom read that they do not consume food, but only drink liquids or slurp soup. There was a drawing of one walking on a very high, narrow ledge of a building, and just below the drawing it explained that vampires have a sense of balance as good as a cat’s and are remarkable climbers and daredevils.

Tom flipped through more pages until he landed on the page describing goblins. He read that they can smell better than a bloodhound even, and he remembered that the one on the bridge, just before he had stolen Officer’s Horne backpack, had sniffed the air with his long nose.

Flipping to the last page of the book, he found listed all items prohibited from being brought into Transylvania City; guns, mice, reptiles, amphibians, many kinds of plants and herbs; hemlock, certain minerals and rocks were listed; brimstone, arsenic, among others.

„Welcome to the Transylvania Metropolitan Bus Tour,“ the lady announced through a small megaphone as the bus started off with a lurch when the clutch was released too quickly. The lady, holding on to a pole, did not fall when the bus heaved, but she did lose her hat. She shot the driver a wicked look as she retrieved it off the floor. „My husband never drove an automobile until we arrived in this realm,“ the lady said apologizing for the driver, who apparently was her husband. „For the next two and a half hours, prepare to be amazed,“ she announced excitedly as she returned her witch’s hat to her head. Some of the

tourists clapped. „Have we got any first timers to Transylvania?“ she asked. A couple of hands shot up, so Tom added his. „Wonderful!“ the lady said.

„We are presently on Appian way,“ she informed them. „That large building just ahead is the Transylvania City Police Department,“ she said pointing. „It looks like we have two officers with us today,“ she announced and the crowd of tourists clapped for Red and Tom. „Better watch your driving today, sweetie,“ she warned the bus driver. „My husband of 75 years, Edward is our driver today,“ she announced through her megaphone and everyone aboard clapped for Edward. „Of course Edward remarried after I died the first time and we do not count those years do we dear?“

Edward shook his head as the bus rolled past the TCPD building and crossed Mulberry Street. „There are over four hundred men and women serving on the police force—even some goblins,“ the lady said in a way that hinted this last bit of information should be found astonishing. „Looking out the left side of the bus, you’ll see one of our pubs—Dunleavy’s. Did you know that Transylvania is the only place in Britannia where you can buy Vamp’s for your own consumption?“

Red leaned over and told Tom that Vamp’s was a locally distilled whiskey, very popular throughout Transylvania and Dracula. Only the local pubs could legally sell it, thus one more reason Transylvania was the top tourist destination in all of Britannia. Tourists were allowed to take a small keg home with them on the train and Red said that counterfeit bottles of Vamp’s, was one of the biggest problems the TCPD faced.

As the bus drove down Appian Way, the tour lady pointed out different shops and points of interest, but what struck Tom most about Transylvania City was how beautiful it was, but in a sort of cold, gothic way. The way a sickly, pale, young woman can be beautiful.

The major streets looked like 1920’s London, with narrow, stone buildings three or four stories tall. Often stained by centuries of dripping water and guarded either by stone gargoyles or angels, adorned with stone ledges and arched windows. And then branching off the major streets were narrow cobblestone streets or alleyways running diagonally through the block.

These streets more resembled medieval ones, lined by gingerbread-like cottages overgrown with climbing roses and always decorated with shutters. Where one of these cottages was situated next to one of the tall, narrow brick buildings, they reminded Tom of a tall, thin man married to a short, fat wife, the one emphasizing the most prominent features of the other.

Transylvania was vibrant as well as pleasing, the cobblestone streets were free of litter, the sidewalks crowded with people and there were no large unsightly parking lots, cinder block walls or tacky billboards.

The tour bus came to a traffic round-about then, in the middle of which was a large fountain throwing columns of water into the air. In the center of its pool stood a statue of a witch, ten feet tall, made of black marble and just before her was a large caldron with real flames licking at the bottom. There was much traffic here, two lanes of delivery trucks and carriages and even carts pulled by draft horses passing through the intersection and two constables, wearing white gloves, standing atop large boxes, helped the traffic along. After the tour bus was waved

into the round-about, looking down into the pool of water; Tom saw eels swimming there and shiny coins.

„This is the fountain of the Witch in Lament,“ the tour lady announced. „Leonardo De Vinci designed this fountain during his third life. You can visit his grave out at the Transylvania Metropolitan Cemetery—we also offer guided tours of the cemetery if you would like to sign up for one,“ she announced holding up a clipboard. „There are only three ways to kill a witch; severing their head, burning, and drowning. If you get a chance—throw a coin into the fountain for good luck.“

„What happens to a witch after she dies?“ a young boy on the tour asked.

„She sleeps for two hundred fifty years and then rematerializes, hopefully to denounce the black arts and give up her pagan ways for good. Good question,“ the tour lady told the young boy before pointing out the bus window. „Out the left hand side of the bus is the Coven Theatre,“ she said as the bus drove past its marquee where presently *Werewolves—the Musical* was playing and there was a line all the way around the corner of people waiting to be let in. „You’ll want to catch a performance if you can.“

The bus continued down Appian Way, crossing a few more streets and everywhere Tom looked he spotted jack o’lanterns and then the bus came to a stone bridge built atop three arches.

„We’re about to cross the Blood River. Some people like to call it the Bloodstream. A popular activity here is to rent a boat and float down the river until it runs into the Black River and from there on down to the Executioner’s Bridge. It takes about three hours,“ she said. „I have coupons for the boat rental if anyone would like one,“ she said holding them up before passing them toward the back of the bus.

The bridge carried both foot and automobile traffic and a brick wall lined both sides. Just the other side of the bridge was a twenty foot tall, bronze statue of a wild-eyed man with long hair, holding a long pike with a head skewered upon it. Tom recognized Vlad the Impaler from his picture on the ten pound note.

„We just crossed over the Vlad the Impaler Bridge,“ the lady announced as the bus passengers stared out the window at Vlad. „He’s said to have been the first vampire king on Earth.“

The tip of his pike was nearly thirty feet high and it pointed straight up at the sky and—the tour lady explained—served as a lightning rod. A number of tourists stood around the base of the statue admiring Vlad. „It’s estimated the pike is struck by lightning over two hundred times a year,“ she explained as the bus drove past.

Red told Tom he should take a coupon as they were handed the stack of them. „You should find yourself a fine, young lady to accompany you,“ he said. „It’s bloody fun actually. The night I took Miss Kensington for a ride down the Blood River was the night she fell in love with me,“ he said. „Of course we had been married two years already.“

Tom laughed as he shoved a coupon in his pocket, but not liking water, he had no intention of floating down a river in a flimsy wooden boat.

„There’s black trout in there as long as your arm,“ Red said stretching out his arm to show Tom how big the fish were. „Sometime we’ll go over to Dempsey’s and order the fish and chips,“ he said as the tour lady announced they had arrived in

the Kansas district of Transylvania City. A man on the bus asked why it was called that.

„Good question,“ the tour lady said.

She explained that, for those that did not know, Kansas was a state in the middle of the United States where many a Cause was first fought over, often violently—slavery, reconstruction and most recently—Prohibition, which was a movement to outlaw all alcohol consumption in America. The same man said he was glad he was dead now then. The lady explained the Kansas District here was where many churches and aid organizations operated shelters to serve the creatures.

Just then they could hear a siren approaching from behind and the bus driver pulled over to let a fire engine speed past. It was old time fire engine that the firemen had to ride holding onto the side.

„Probably a gremlin fire,“ Red said.

The bus started down the street again and then starting on the next block, running beside the street was a twelve foot high stone wall. The wall ran the entire length of the block. When the bus turned onto Royal Street the lady announced that Saint Paul’s Cathedral of the Damned was just ahead. The stone wall continued the length of that block too and even stretched another block, except for where the steps leading up to the cathedral were located. Tom imagined the cathedral might draw more parishioners if the name was shortened a bit, but the lady said the damned part refers to the creatures.

„Saint Paul was the first missionary to have brought the gospel to the vampires of Transylvania,“ the tour lady explained, „In Romania.“

Just in front of the cathedral, the fire engine blocked the street. The tour lady pointed out the gargoyles atop the cathedral and the bell tower—which she explained—was the tallest structure in Transylvania City. She announced that gremlins often could be seen scrambling up the dome and ledges of the cathedral and she invited the tour patrons to look for them. Everyone on that side of the bus poked their heads out the open windows, looking.

„There’s a fire!“ a young lady at the front of the bus yelled pointing towards the roof of the cathedral. The rest of them looked and saw the flames of a small fire, as though someone had built a bonfire right on a ledge of the cathedral.

„There are gremlins up there,“ the same young boy as before announced.

Red stood up and motioned for Tom to follow him off the bus. „This is close to where we want to get off anyway,“ he said. As they exited the bus, the tour lady handed the young boy a pin and told him it was a good luck to have spotted gremlins atop St. Paul’s Cathedral—even if, apparently, they were trying to burn the thing down.

Red and Tom walked past the fire engine as it extended a ladder towards the cathedral roof. A fireman climbed the ladder dragging a hose behind him as a nun, and the group she was guiding through the cathedral grounds, watched. Red and Tom made their way through the crowd and crossed Transylvania Street which runs north and south along the east side of the cathedral. Red was looking for the two plainclothes officers he had sent there earlier. One of them stepped out and approached them. Red asked if the young man, John Baker, had arrived home from work and the officer said there had been no sign of him yet.



Red wanted to get off the street then. He sent the two officers home after they pointed out John Baker's flat, on the second floor of a Brownstone apartment building halfway down the block. Red looked around for somewhere he and Tom could spy on the apartment and determined the best spot would be on top of the library. The Transylvania City Library on the corner of Transylvania and Royal Streets, just across from the cathedral.

The library was about to close as they went in. Behind the main counter stood a young, thin, woman that smiled at Red as they crossed the lobby toward her. Tom thought she was pretty, she looked some like Katherine Hepburn, but she didn't look like a lot of fun.

Her dress was more modest than the one the nun across the street wore. In addition, the young woman's hair was in a tight bun, her hair pulled as tight as shoelaces so as not to slip free and be a distraction. She apparently thought the purpose of the buttons on her dress were to be buttoned, because she had not allowed even a single one to remain unbuttoned on any part of her clothing, not near her neck or even at her wrists. She had a pencil stuck behind her ear which further suggested a singular devotion to the library sciences. She was like a beautiful, shiny roadster that you are informed has no third gear and cannot be driven down any twisty roads lest the wheels fall off.

„Nice to see you again Inspector Meriwether,“ she said.

„You too Miss Howard,“ Red told her as he rested against the counter. „Let me introduce you to Inspector Flynn. He just arrived here today.“

„Tom,“ he said reaching across the counter to shake her hand. When she looked at him, she seemed to recognize him.

„Rebecca,“ she said after a moment, and her expression changed then to a most charming smile as she shook Tom's hand. He went to pull his hand back then, but she would not let go of it and then she placed her other hand on top of his.

„We need to access your roof,“ Red told her.

„Official police business?“ she asked more loudly than Red liked, considering they were in a library. The funny thing was; she continued looking at Tom even as she answered Red. Tom was becoming uncomfortable, but she finally let go of his hand. It was evident she had taken to him. He is rather good-looking.

Red whispered that, yes, they were on official police business.

She led them to the back of the library, through some doors that said, Employees Only. „So you're new to Transylvania?“ she asked as she led them up several flights of stairs.

„First day,“ Tom said.

„Oh, you should really let me show you around then,“ she said stopping part way up the first flight of stairs and turning around.

Tom noticed Red was looking at him like he was watching Valentino in action. „Well, when I'm not busy sometime,“ he said thinking that would be the end of it.

„It's a date then,“ she said standing two steps above him so that she stood higher than him. „When will that be?“

That wasn't what Tom had meant and he was sure she understood that. She was just pretending like Tom had meant he would let her show him around as soon as he had a day off. It actually was pretty clever of her, as Tom was not about to explain that that wasn't what he'd meant.

„I don't know yet,“ he said.

„Oh,“ Rebecca said, quite dejectedly and Tom found he did not like hurting her feelings.

Red had stopped partway up the steps and was staring, stone faced, at both of them like one of the gargoyles atop the cathedral and Tom was embarrassed to be carrying on this way in front of him. Also, suddenly Tom felt light-headed and he found he was taking to this young lady much more than he had just a minute and a half before.

Maybe it was the fact that she didn't need to conceal how she felt about him, but it also didn't hurt that she was transforming from an uptight librarian to a beautiful, young woman right in front of him. Right then she was loosening her hair and letting it fall down upon her shoulders, she unstuck the pencil from behind her ear and unbuttoned the two buttons near her neck.

„But as soon as I find out I'll let you know,“ Tom said, and she cheered right back up.

„Promise?“

„Yes,“ he promised.

„Why don't you take Rebecca on the river Friday,“ Red said unexpectedly. „You have that coupon you know.“

„Oh I would so dearly like that,“ she exclaimed.

„Okay,“ Tom said not enthusiastically, not because he didn't want to see her, but because he didn't like the idea of being around water.

They started up the stairs again, and when they reached the top, just a heavy door and this thin, young lady blocked their access to the roof.

Red opened the door and went out. He turned around to say goodbye to Rebecca, but she walked past him out onto the roof, which was a flat roof that they could move about on and that's why Red had chosen it. Red walked to its northeast corner.

„That's his flat there,“ he said pointing at the two-story Brownstone the plainclothes officer had shown them. Transylvania Street was just below them, and then the other side of it was a small grocery shop and next to it was John Baker's building. From atop the library they had a nice view of his apartment, except for the fog.

„Do you know what I was reading not even an hour ago?“ Rebecca asked, seemingly oblivious to the important work Tom was there to do.

„No,“ he said shaking his head.

„That here in Transylvania, instances of love at first sight have been scientifically documented. What do you think of that?“

She stood looking at Tom, eagerly awaiting his reply. He did think Rebecca Howard was pretty, but he was not about to say he had fallen in love at first sight with her, especially not in front of Red, who seemed as eager to hear his answer as Rebecca did.

„I'll keep my eyes open,“ he said.

Rebecca smiled like that was good enough for now and then she left. Tom watched her all the way to the door.

„She seems to have taken to you,“ Red said in an understated way as he pulled a pair of opera glasses out of his pocket. „This will do quite nicely,“ he said looking through them toward the apartment.

While Red kept an eye on the place. Tom watched the people coming down the street as the firemen finished up putting the fire out. Tom began pacing around the roof, when, suddenly, a parachute flare shot straight up into the night sky, two miles to the northeast.

„Oh, yes,“ Red said turning to look at the flare swaying back and forth in the night sky, held up by a small parachute. „Full moon tonight. Werewolves need to be chased back into the woods.“

„What?“

„Werewolf duty,“ he said. „The flares are to light up the fields out that way. If a werewolf is spotted our men and some from the Vampire Force will chase them back into the woods with water hoses and scatterguns to keep them away from populated areas and livestock,“ he said. „Those who carry the werewolf curse know to head out to the woods before each full moon. They are all perfectly rational men and women beforehand, but come the full moon and their transformation; they have no idea that they are anything but a werewolf bent on killing sheep or whatever else they might come across,“ Red said. „There are grandstands out there for the public to watch from—very popular with the tourist crowd. We keep them well protected. The woods would all have been cleared earlier today. I wouldn’t doubt Officer Horne is on duty out there somewhere.“

Another flare went up, farther out than the last. „What did you mean by the Vampire Force?“ Tom asked.

„The Vampire Council has jurisdiction over the north end of the valley starting at the Executioner’s Bridge,“ Red said pointing at the lights of a bridge that direction. „Their police force is made up of trolls, vampires and a few hobgoblins. Their part of the valley, outside Transylvania City, is called Dracula. We inspectors can go out there to investigate, but we can’t arrest anybody unless they give us the okay, which is rare. Another concession made to keep the vampires happy. They are not a humble race. Of course on full moons we help out with werewolf duty.“

Just then Tom caught a glimpse of someone in the alley across from the Brownstone. It was definitely a goblin, and he was not wearing a hat. „Chief,“ he said pointing at the alley. „I think Dodger is waiting in the alley across the street.“

Red lifted his binoculars toward there, but after looking there a moment, said he couldn’t see anyone. Tom started pacing around the roof again while Red lit a match to look at his watch. The door to the roof opened behind them, causing light to spill out onto the roof as Rebecca stepped out, carrying two cups.

„I thought you might like some coffee,“ she said.

Red looked at Tom the same way his mother had the time a stray puppy had followed him home, but Red accepted the coffee and told Rebecca thanks.

„How do you take your coffee?“ she asked Tom.

„One sugar and a little cream,“ he answered, wondering why she asked because she didn’t seem to have either with her.

„That’s exactly what I put in here,“ she said. „How did I know that?“

He just shook his head.

„What is it we're watching?“ she asked.

„Oh, nothing very important,“ Red said as another flare went up, this time to the East, close enough to the cliffs that the light shone on them.

„How beautiful,“ Rebecca said looking there. She turned and left then, and if Red had not been there, Tom would have asked her to stay a little while longer.

„Here's our man,“ Red whispered, tapping Tom on the elbow as Tom watched Rebecca close the door behind her. Red pointed at a figure coming down the street, just then passing in front of the cathedral.

Tom looked at John Baker as he passed through the glow of a street lamp. The two men were of course about the same age since both had arrived in this Realm recently, but while Tom had died in his prime, John Baker had been restored to his after having had to spend his second life in a dark realm paying for his sins. He was just as tall as Tom, but thinner and he was dressed like he had just come from the opera or some swanky party when actually he was coming home from the Vamp's mill where he worked loading barrels and moving heavy sacks around.

He went hatless which was unusual and unlucky for humans, but not for vampires. His hair was not disheveled like you might expect after a long day spent doing manual labor, but instead his hair—very blond and long on top—was neatly combed and slicked down in a manner that was not common among your typical mill worker.

Red and Tom stepped back further into the darkness as John Baker crossed Transylvania Street. He made his way up Royal Street and half-way up the block, he entered the front entrance of his building. A minute later, the light from the hallway fell into the front room of his flat as he entered his apartment. The flat went completely dark again as he closed the door behind him, but a moment later the gas lamps in his front room came on, and Tom and Red found they could see inside his flat fairly well.

Not everywhere he went, but they could see Mr. Baker as he moved about the small kitchen and front room. Mr. Baker pulled a book from out his coat pocket and set it on the kitchen table. Then he went to a cupboard and took down what looked like a packet of tea. He set some sugar out also before heading to the stove to pick up a tea pot. He carried it out of sight, but apparently he had gone to the kitchen faucet for water, because he came back to the stove and set the pot down. He lit one of the burners before stepping out of view into his bedroom.

Tom tapped Red on the shoulder as he pointed at the front of the building. Dodger was starting up the steps of the Brownstone.

About thirty seconds later, John Baker stepped into view in his kitchen. He was looking at the front door of his flat, presumably because Dodger had knocked there, but he did not answer it right away. Instead he approached the kitchen window and looked outside at the alley below a moment, before finally heading to the door. He paused again just before the door, probably to ask who was there. Finally he opened the door and Dodger stepped inside. Dodger bowed slightly at John Baker as Mr. Baker stuck his head out in the hall to look around. Dodger was carrying Officer Horne's backpack, which he promptly opened when John Baker closed the door.

John Baker looked inside the backpack a moment, and then looked at Dodger. Dodger seemed to be explaining something. They went into the kitchen and as Red

and Tom watched, John Baker began taking the contents of the backpack out; the Dickens' novel, a pair of boots, a canteen and a watch. He set the items on the table. John Baker's back was to the window as he talked with Dodger, and then he returned to the stove, picked up the tea pot and carried it towards the sink again. He returned a moment later and set the pot down on the kitchen table, but neither Red nor Tom could make out what they were up to.

Moments later Dodger and John Baker sat down at the table and talked for a moment, and then Mr. Baker went to the stove to turn the burner off before he disappeared into his bedroom again. He came back holding out some money toward Dodger. Apparently Dodger was not invited to stay for tea, because he stood up and both of them headed for the front door. Tom watched John Baker bolt the door after Dodger left.

„One of them has the watch,“ Red said looking at the kitchen table through his binoculars. „Grab Dodger once he exits the building,“ he instructed Tom.

Tom hurried to the stairwell door, threw it open and started down the steps. Rebecca was just then coming up, carrying two chairs.

„Where are you going?“ she asked as Tom tried to slip past her.

„I have to catch someone!“ he shouted.

„The door's locked. I'll have to let you out.“

„Hurry then,“ he said reaching back and grabbing a chair from her. He tossed it toward the top of the stairs, but it came rolling down the steps after them. They hurried out of its way and then at the bottom of the stairs, they ran for the front doors of the library. The library was closed now and dark, but it took Rebecca only a couple of seconds to find her key and unlock the door. Tom pushed the door open and strolled across the street just in case John Baker happened to be looking out his window. He looked up the street and spotted Dodger stepping into the alley where he had been waiting before.

When Dodger disappeared from sight, Tom ran as fast as he could to the next block, to wait for Dodger to come out the other end of the alley, just a half-block up the street from him. He was standing at the corner there, peering around a house, when something bumped into him. Tom turned around to find Rebecca had followed him and he gave her a curious look.

„I thought I could help,“ she whispered.

„Stay here,“ he said looking around the corner again, as Dodger stepped out of the alley into view.

He started up the sidewalk toward Dodger. He had his hands in his pockets and whistled a tune so as to make Dodger think he was just someone out for a stroll. Dodger glanced at him as he crossed the street towards the next alley, and he must have recognized Tom, because he bolted into a run then. Tom drew his Colt and ordered him to stop, but Dodger disappeared into the blackness of the alley. Tom ran after him.

The alley was as dark as a train tunnel, but Dodger's shoes made a clapping-like noise as they smacked on the bricks there. Tom chased blindly after the sound, but stopped when Dodger stopped. Moments later, he heard Dodger's shoes running down the alley again, and Tom chased after the sound.

Now, Tom Flynn had played football at Notre Dame, and although not very familiar with goblins, he suspected none could outrun him, but apparently he

underestimated how clever they are. He found out just how devious they can be when, running down the dark alley, he tripped over two metal trash cans that had been tipped over and placed so he could not have missed running into them. Tom crashed into some more cans and made an awful racket.

Picking himself up, Tom looked to the end of the alley and saw Dodger stepping into the streetlight there. Dodger looked back at him and grinned, and then took off running again as if a starting pistol had been fired. Tom ran for the street, but once there, found he had lost him. And while Dodger seemed a fitting name for the goblin just then, Tom thought that if he any brains, he'd pick some other Dickens' character to start going by and choose a new style of hat to wear, because Tom planned on finding him soon and paying him back.

As he walked back toward the library, Tom spotted Rebecca standing by the cathedral wall that ran along Transylvania Street. He had ripped his new pants just at the knee.

„You are quite bold,“ he told her.

„You are not mad. Are you?“

„No.“

„You can run very fast,“ she told him.

„So apparently can goblins.“

„Your pants are ripped. Did you fall?“

„Yes.“

„I could mend those for you.“

„I don't think I should take them off right now,“ he said.

Their conversation continued all the way back to the library like that. He told her she should be more careful and Rebecca responded by saying it was nice that he cared. He said it was his job and she asked if he wanted the job full time. It seemed everything he said, she was able to twist to mean something a little different than what he had intended, something more in her favor.

He asked how she was so sure that he didn't have a wife coming to meet him some day in this realm, but instead of answering, she asked; how did he know he hadn't been sent to this particular place to meet a wife? She was very bold.

„You don't really even know me,“ he said smiling at her, but the truth was, he did not want to discourage her.

„That's just it,“ she said. „I do know you. Many more things are possible in Transylvania City than where you just come from and you have not accepted that yet.“

That was something he could agree with.

Tom shrugged his shoulders when he returned to the roof to let Red know Dodger had managed to get away. That was twice he had failed Red now. Rebecca followed him out onto the roof.

„It's okay,“ Red said pointing at John Baker's flat. „He's just sitting at the kitchen table looking at Officer Horne's things.“

Tom looked into the apartment just as John Baker stood up and returned the tea pot to the stove. He came back to the table, picked up the tea packet, tea cup and sugar bowl and returned them to the cupboard.

„I guess he changed his mind about the tea,“ Tom said.

Mr. Baker quickly gathered up the Dickens' novel, canteen, and boots and placed them back in the backpack. He carried it toward the front door. They watched as he opened the front door and went out, but did not shut the door behind him.

„What's he up to?“ Tom asked.

They spotted him coming out the back of the Brownstone, where a row of trash cans sat in an alley that ran midway through the block. He approached one, lifted the lid up and dropped the backpack inside. He returned to his apartment then and sat reading the book he had brought home with him.

„Why don't you discreetly retrieve Officer Horne's backpack?“ Red asked Tom. „Why don't you wait here?“ he asked Rebecca when she went to follow him.

Tom used the same alleyway where the garbage cans sat to approach the building. There were no street lamps there and he would not be seen going through the trash. He quietly went through the cans and found the backpack that had Horne's name written on it.

As he walked back toward the library, Red and Rebecca came out the front doors. He opened the backpack, and one after another pulled all the items out; the empty canteen, the boots, which had Horne's name written on them, and the Dickens' novel. Only the watch was missing.

„Are we going to arrest John Baker?“ Tom asked.

„What for?“ Red said. „He hasn't broken any law.“

„We could bring him in for questioning.“

„I'm sure he would claim Dodger showed up at his place to sell him some junk.“

„Why would he give him money for this stuff and then throw it all away?“

„I don't know,“ Red said, shaking his head. „But if we asked him he would just lie anyway. What we'll do is let ourselves into his place tomorrow after he leaves for work. See what we can turn up.“

Red asked Rebecca where she lived and she said just down the block, so Red had Tom walk her home while he went to a call box to call for a ride back to the station.

Walking to her house, which was a Victorian-style, boarding house, she informed Tom gentlemen callers were allowed till nine on Sunday through Thursdays and then until eleven on Fridays and Saturdays.

„Okay,“ Tom said like it was no big deal, but actually he planned on remembering that information.

„I can't believe someone would throw away Dickens,“ she said looking at the copy of *Great Expectations* Tom had in his hand.

„I think it's ruined now,“ Tom said. „It fell in the river, but you can have it if you want,“ he told her, thinking Horne wouldn't mind.

„Maybe I can save it,“ she said, taking it from him. „I'll see you Friday,“ she said swinging open the gate that led to her boarding house. „If not before.“

„Yes,“ he said, looking forward to seeing her again.

## Chapter 8

## Wednesday

Early the next morning, Tom answered a knock on his door and opened it to find Red. Red told him they had work to do. Tom was glad he still wanted him on the case after, twice failing to collar Dodger. The only useful thing Tom had accomplished was to improve the police department's working relationship with the Transylvania Metropolitan Library.

Tom had no idea what Red had planned for them that day. Possibly a vampire stakeout, or hunting down werewolves, or rousting goblins. Neither did he have any idea what other kind of duties he might be expected to perform in service of the T.C.P.D.; maybe testing a witch to see if she would float, or catching dwarfs in the forest and placing them in a bag. There are of course no such things as dwarfs, but right then Tom wasn't 100 percent clear on that.

Red handed him a pair of pants he'd gotten from the wardrobe department, where officers going undercover could borrow suitable clothing, to replace the pants he'd torn the night before. He also handed Tom his newly printed papers and photo identifying him as Inspector Thomas Flynn of the Transylvania City Police Department.

Red told him he'd left orders for two plainclothes officers to tail John Baker when he left for work that morning, and they should be reporting in soon. They went downstairs and while Tom ate breakfast in the cafeteria, Red went to check-in with Miss Kensington.

A few minutes later Red joined him in the cafeteria, which was a long room with large windows that looked down on Appian Way or out toward the train station. Red sat down while a goblin retrieved him a cup of coffee. Not much later, two plainclothes officers came in there looking for Red.

„How'd it go?“ Red asked them.

„Mr. Baker left for work late, not till after eight. I guess he was waiting for the library to open, because he went in there for a while before he finally went to work,“ one of the plainclothes officers said.

„He went to work then?“

„Yeah, we trailed him all the way there and then we waited outside the gates for another twenty minutes to make sure he didn't slip back out.“

„What did he do in the library?“

„We don't know. We figured it was best if we didn't get spotted following him in there.“

„All right,“ Red said. „Good work.“

The two officers left then and Red turned to Tom. „Let's head over to his place and have us a look around.“

„Okay.“

„I'll be right back,“ Red said standing up. „Need some things first.“

A few minutes later Red returned, and they headed down to the garage. They signed out an automobile that was for Red's use only. It looked a lot like a Nash Roadster except it had an emblem of a vulture on the hood. Tom had noticed all the cars out on the street had some kind of hood emblem; birds being the most common—chrome eagles and falcons, or ravens and vultures cast in black bronze,



so he asked Red about it. Red explained all the cars in Transylvania had them, as the hood emblems sort of served as lucky charms that supposedly cut down on traffic accidents. He explained a car with a bat emblem likely belonged to a vampire, and if it was an expensive car with a bat on the hood, the car probably had some connection to Dracula Manor out in Draculia. They got in the car and drove down Appian Way toward the Kansas district.

„Oh,“ Red said suddenly remembering something. „I checked with the constables that were on bridge duty the night the mice were smuggled in.“

„Yeah?“

„A couple of them remember a goblin crossing the bridge that night wearing a chimney sweep type of hat.“

So he must have delivered the mice somewhere for Baker?“

„Must have. Another constable remembers him crossing back into the city yesterday morning, so he must have stayed out there all night,“ Red said. „So this morning I provided a description of our favorite goblin to all the constables and inspectors going on duty. See if we can find Dodger.“

They parked on the street in front of St. Paul’s Cathedral and walked past the library. Tom thought Red might make a remark as they did, and he did, but not what Tom was expecting.

„I think I’ll have you go in there when we’re done and have them make a list for me. I’m sure Rebecca would help you with that.“

„List of what?“

„Any potion that can be concocted if one has a mouse,“ Red said. „Might be a good idea to take a look at it.“

They crossed Transylvania Street, walked halfway up the block and entered the Brownstone where John Baker lived. As they went up the stairs, Red brought some tools out of his pocket he’d brought along to pick the lock.

„Keep a look out here,“ he told Tom when they reached the top of the stairs. „Our District Attorney doesn’t approve of me entering suspects’ homes by this method, so if anyone enters the building and starts up the stairs, say good morning to them loud enough for me to hear.“

Tom waited there while Red went down the hallway. He knocked on John Baker’s door just in case he had returned, but when no one answered, Red went to work picking the lock. He soon had the door open and he waved Tom toward him and then they stepped into the front room of John Baker’s flat. Inside, there was not a lot in the way of furniture or possessions. Red closed the door behind them. The apartment smelled of candle smoke as several were left burning inside.

„You going to teach me how to do that?“ Tom asked as Red put his tools away.

„Sure, we’ll even go over sometime and get you your own set.“

Red took out his notebook and starting writing down some notes—Tom would have too if he’d known what Red found worth writing down already. In the kitchen they found a copy of *The Salem Witch’s Spell Book* lying on the table.

„So this is what he was reading last night. This isn’t a genuine spell book,“ Red said picking it up and shaking it like he was hoping something might fall out. „These are just reproductions you can buy in any gift shop here.“

He set the book down just like it had been, and then started opening up kitchen cabinets. There was nothing unexpected to be found in in the first one Red

opened; cups and plates was all. In the second cupboard were some packets of tea, a can of sugar and some other food items. In the third cabinet they discovered three bottles—a full bottle of Vamp's, another of Absinthe, and a half-full bottle of a brand of rye whiskey that Red was familiar with and seemed impressed John Baker would have in his flat. Red wrote them down in his notebook, as did Tom, after he looked at the bottle to see how to spell Absinthe.

Tom fumbled some more around the kitchen, lifting up the tea kettle on the stove and finding it was half full of water, before setting it back down exactly the way it had been. There was a candle left burning on top of the stove next to it.

Red moved into the bedroom and began checking through pockets of the clothes hung in the closet. He found a slip of paper with a phone number on it.

„There are probably less than a thousand phones in Transylvania City,“ he told Tom, showing him the phone number he had found. „Your average citizen doesn't have a phone in their home. We'll ring this number up and see who answers.“

They continued searching the apartment, checking the chair cushions and under the mattress, but found nothing of interest. A few minutes later they left and headed over to the library. As they came inside, Tom spotted Rebecca in a lecture hall just off the front entrance. She was standing behind the last row of people seated on chairs and Tom tapped Red on the elbow and pointed at her.

„Oh, I've been meaning to catch this,“ Red said pointing at the sign resting on a tripod just outside the room. *Everything you need to know about Golems*, by Rollo the Golem. „I want you to meet him.“

They went and stood against the back wall of the room, but the lecture had just ended. Rollo, dressed in a sharp suit, asked if anyone had any questions and a middle-age lady raised her hand. Rollo, who stood about six foot three, with the build of a Roman gladiator, pointed at her.

„I've heard that golems can withstand fire, is that true?“

„Well not exactly, but we can stand it as well as any of Hell's demons,“ Rollo said, his voice, deep, like someone speaking with a garbage can over their head. The crowd laughed. „Let me demonstrate,“ Rollo said taking a match out of his pocket. He struck it by running it across his cheek and then proceeded to hold it to the palm of his hand—the crowd gasped—and then he held it to his chin.

Tom was impressed as much as anyone as Rollo let the match burn down to his fingertips. Rollo took off his coat then and rolled his sleeve up, revealing an arm nearly as thick around and solid as a telephone pole. He struck another match, lit a piece of newspaper with it and proceeded to hold the flame to his arm, wincing only a little. The crowd began to clap. He extinguished the newspaper by pressing it between his hands and smothering it.

„I'd better stop before we catch the library on fire,“ Rollo said and the crowd rose and gave him a standing ovation and then some of them went to shake his hand, poke his biceps and congratulate him on his lecture. Rollo thanked them graciously.

„I had a feeling I might see you today,“ Rebecca said spotting Tom by the doorway and coming over. „You should have come closer to lunch time.“

He believed her about having expected him, because, unlike the day before, she had allowed some buttons near her neck to remain unfastened, and her hair,

while not completely down, was worn in a more attractive manner. She looked very pretty.

„He’s actually here on police business,“ Red said, „but maybe you could help us.“

„Oh, how exciting,“ she said. „Do you need me to pretend to be his wife or mistress or something?“ she asked excitedly, taking hold of Tom’s arm.

„Well, not today, but maybe some time.“

„Too bad,“ she said making an exaggerated pouting face. „How can I help?“

„I’d like a list of all witches’ potions that require a mouse,“ Red said speaking softly. „Maybe you two could put that together for me, but first I want to introduce him to Rollo.“

„I’ll be over at the main counter,“ she said.

„One more thing,“ Red said before Rebecca left. He leaned in close to her so no one overheard what he was going to say. „The man we were watching last night, John Baker.“

„Yes,“ she said nodding.

„He came in here this morning. Can you check to see what book he might have been looking at?“

„I’ll check,“ she said.

Red and Tom waited until the last of the crowd left before approaching Rollo.

„This is Rollo,“ Red said and Tom reached out and shook Rollo’s hand which was twice the size of his. Shaking Rollo’s hand felt like sticking one’s hand into a bucket of wet cement. „Tom is our newest inspector.“

„Rebecca was telling me about you.“

„She was?“

Rollo nodded.

„Rollo owns the Rock Bottom, which is just one block over from headquarters. He also works for us,“ Red said softly, reaching in his pocket and pulling some money out. „He learned the whereabouts of an illegal still we’re going to break up tonight. If you ever need to talk about him refer to him as Officer Rockmonovich. Understand? Not Rollo.“

Tom said he understood.

„If you ever need information about some underground type, Rollo’s your man, right Rollo?“ Red said counting some money out.

„Know everybody,“ Rollo said stuffing the money in his pocket. „Thanks.“

„Anytime.“

„Be nice to Rebecca or you’ll have to answer to me,“ Rollo said slapping Tom on the shoulder and knocking him off balance. Rollo tipped his hat then and left.

„If you ever need to get hold of him just tell Miss Kensington or the desk sergeant you need Officer Rockmonovich called in and one of our plainclothes officers will go over to the Rock Bottom and signal him. Rollo can come and go as he pleases there since he owns the place. He’ll meet you in the garage or just inside the armory—he’s got a key. Nowhere else, understand?“

Tom said he did and then they went over to the main counter of the library. When Rebecca spotted them approaching, she pulled a large book out from under the counter and set it on top.

„This is what Mr. Baker was looking at this morning according to Miss Winters,“ Rebecca said. „It’s about the history of Transylvania City and Dracula.“

„I guess he’s some kind of scholar,“ Red said opening the book and flipping through it for a moment. „May I use your phone?“ he asked and Rebecca picked one up and set it on the counter. Red picked the handset up and waited for the operator to come on the line. He pulled his notebook out of his pocket.

„Connect me to Transylvania 4355,“ he said reading from his notebook and then he stood tapping his fingers on the counter, waiting. Tom could barely hear a voice on the other end of the line. „Oh, sorry, I must have the wrong number. Good day sir,“ Red said and hung up. „It was The Depths. That’s a seedy bar and grill in Dracula,“ he said as he made a note of it. „I’ve got to get back to the station. I’ll leave him in your hands,“ he told Rebecca. „You can catch a ride back on the trolley,“ he said winking at Tom.

„Come with me,“ Rebecca said grabbing hold of Tom’s arm.

She took him to a private area of the library and then to a small room where she retrieved a key. Then they went to another room that she unlocked with the key. It was a narrow room with shelves piled high with thick books, but she went to a locked cabinet and unlocked it with a key hidden nearby. From there she pulled out a large book. She carried the book to a table nearby.

„What you got there?“ he asked. The book looked well worn, and some of the gold leaf lettering on the cover had been rubbed off.

„*The Salem Witch’s Handbook of Potions and Spells*,“ she said setting it down gently. „This particular edition is 250 years old.“

„Were there really witches in Salem?“ Tom asked pulling a chair up next to her.

„A few,“ she said opening the book carefully.

On the first page was a picture of a witch enveloping a mob of villagers, chasing after her with pitchforks, in a cloud of smoke. This same potion could also be used to create glowing balls of blue light, or cause small objects to move around. The potion’s recipe did not call for a mouse, and any witch in Transylvania or Dracula would have been able to concoct it legally.

Tom learned a witch often needed to ingest a potion to be capable of performing whatever powers or magic the potion granted. Most potions lasted an hour or two, some more, and it seemed people came to Transylvania City from throughout Britannia and paid good money, to have a witch cast a spell on them that would make them more confident or modestly more interesting, at least for a short duration. Some people even chose to be afflicted with some minor curse, like suffering amnesia for a day, or for the next month have trouble keeping track of what day of the week it was.

Of the curses that could be legally administered in Transylvania City and Dracula, nearly all involved the witch needing to come into physical contact with the cursed. Thus, all witches were confined to the area outside the city, unless they had a day permit. That way they did not walk around town causing people to fall asleep instantly or suddenly not be able to recognize their wife sitting across the table from them, just generally causing trouble.

„The potions in here are listed in increasing order of potency and malice,“ Rebecca told Tom as she flipped through the book. „A witch needs to first concoct the potion and then for it to take affect she would need to recite the proper Latin

phrase. We offer a lecture series here at the library, *Support Your Local Witch*. You should attend. I'd be happy to accompany you."

"That actually might come in handy," he said. "Do you speak Latin?"

"I was studying Ancient Languages at Cambridge."

"How did you die?"

"An air raid."

They began compiling a list of potions that required a mouse. There were 66 potions in the book; the first three dozen needed nothing more than could be legally found in Transylvania. And then if one was to have a mouse; only four more potions could have been made; one that allowed a witch to conduct sparks from her finger tips, that Rebecca explained was what we would call an electric charge nowadays. Another that affected a broom, making it capable of flight until three in the morning; one that caused the dead to repeat the last five words they had spoken before dying and the last potion, if ingested, turned the person into a vampire.

It required an oath, spoken in Latin by the one desiring to become a vampire. A few more potions in the book listed a mouse in their ingredients, but they required additional items also—items banned from Transylvania City and Draculia.

When they finished, Rebecca returned the book to its cabinet. "Of course, a witch needs the book in her presence," she said. "A proper witch's spell book."

"Could I curse someone with that book?"

"No," she said. "You have to be a witch and to become a witch they would have to let you join their coven. It's probably been a hundred years since they've accepted any new members. You need to know Latin fluently too."

"Wow."

"Every witch in Transylvania and Draculia has her own spell book," Rebecca said. "Some books have more spells than others, but none more than this book," she said patting it before locking it inside. "They are, of course, all highly guarded and protected. You can't just write a spell down on any old piece of paper. The spell books sold in the shops here are just props. The Witch of Endor herself could not make even a glowing orb with them. Of course, there used to be much more powerful books long ago, but they were destroyed after a portal was opened to Earth and many witches and goblins and vampires fled there."

"Really?"

"Oh, yes," Rebecca said adamantly. "They were hunted down and either killed or captured and brought here or a few other places—that's how Transylvania City came to be. The ones in Salem were some of the last. A few vampires remain on Earth, but none are pure."

"What do you mean by pure?"

"I mean what vampires are left there are the mixed blood of vampire and humans."

"You'll have to tell me more about this later," Tom said, figuring he should check in with Red. Rebecca handed him the paper she had written the list down on, locked the door and walked him out to the main counter of the library.

"I'm looking forward to Friday," she said, "but I have the feeling I'll see you before then."

He said goodbye and left, not really wanting to. He felt like he was under her spell.

He rode the trolley back to the station, went up to the inspectors' offices and checked in with Miss Kensington, who told him he was scheduled to help raid some bootleggers the department had received a tip on. He had some time to kill until then, so he ate lunch in the cafeteria, finding the food here much to his liking. As he was sitting there, Red walked into the cafeteria.

„I just got a message from Inspectors Dunne and Jones. They got something they want me to see,“ Red said. „You want to drive out there with me?“

„All right.“

„Finish your sandwich first,“ Red said. „We're in no hurry.“

They went down to the garage and checked out the same Nash Roadster as that morning. Red told Tom the spot they were headed to was next to the Black River, about six blocks from the station.

„Got that list you wanted,“ Tom said, remembering he had it in his pocket and pulling it out.

„Anything look interesting?“

„There's a potion here that can turn someone into a vampire.“

„Really?“ Red said. „I didn't know that was possible. I'm surprised we haven't had witches turning people into vampires just for the fun of it.“

„Well, they have to want to become a vampire it says. They have to repeat some oath in Latin.“

„Oh,“ Red said, clearly relieved.

„Why would anyone want to become a vampire?“ Tom asked.

„Well, they have really nice hair,“ was Red's first thought. „They live a long time and I guess that might appeal to someone if they really like it here in Transylvania and Draculia. Especially if they think they're next life might be somewhere darker, but my guess is what might appeal most to a young man like Mr. Baker is that vampires have a gift for persuasiveness,“ he said. „You probably run into some of them in your first life.“

„I did?“

„Yeah,“ Red said. „Probably a carnival hypnotist or a door to door salesman of some kind—like maybe selling magazine subscriptions.“

„Those guys are vampires?“

„Not full-blooded ones, in fact they probably don't even know they have any vampire blood in them. On Earth now there are just quarter-blood vampires at best. We got vampires here that sell vacuums door to door. We get complaints all the time from housewives who were talked into buying a vacuum when they don't even have carpeting in their flat.“

„Really?“

„Absolutely. That's why all the vampires and witches that fled to Earth over a thousand years ago were eventually hunted down. They caused too much havoc down there. It was vampires who started the Crusades,“ Red said. „That's their idea of a joke.“

„Really?“

„Yeah. The other thing about vampires is that they can develop a strong ability to see things right before they happen—premonition,“ he said. „Many times I've

gone to grab a vampire and they seem to know what I'm about to do—slipped right out of my hands.“

„Is that right?“

„The trick is not to know what you're going to do, until right before you do it.“

„I usually don't,“ Tom said.

„It's not something all vampires are capable of, but the best of them have that ability. You ever had a feeling like you know something is going to happen? Like when you know someone's going to visit you. Ever had that feeling?“ Red asked.

„Once or twice.“

„Well, the best vampires have that feeling all the time.“

As they turned onto Strigoi Street, a constable was standing at the middle of the block holding a lantern. It was mid-day, but the fog creeping up from the river was enough that lanterns were needed. That block and the surrounding ones were part of an industrial area, and not many people were on the sidewalks. As they pulled over to park, Tom saw Inspector Dunne down the block interviewing a civilian. The constable led them down an alleyway while telling them a goblin's corpse had been discovered back here. Parked in the alley was a car from the Medical Examiner's Office and Red said hello to the coroner filling out some paperwork there.

They passed through a gate that led to a carriage-repair shop's back lot. The gravel lot was fenced off and served as a place to store broken-down carriages that were used for spare parts—a scrap yard. A number of carriages and coaches in various states of disrepair were scattered about and apparently the lot offered a good spot to discard unwanted items of more than just the carriage kind.

Just inside the gate, Inspector Jones and Inspector McElroy stood next to a sagging lorry watching a photographer take photographs of the crime scene. It was an old camera—at least to Tom—the kind that looks something like an accordion and requires a new bulb after every flash. As they came through the gate the photographer was aiming his camera at the ground, specifically at what Tom could not tell, because a stack of wooden crates was between him and the corpse. The flash bulb went off and its light hung brilliantly, if just momentarily in the fog. Inspector Jones came towards them. Another sergeant stood nearby, supervising some constables searching through the scrap yard with lanterns.

„What you got, Jonesy?“ Red asked.

„A deceased goblin,“ Jones said leading them towards the body, „homicide for sure.“

„You didn't call me here for a little dispute between goblins that got out of hand, did you Jones?“

„No chief. This looks a little more involved.“

„How so?“

„Well,“ Jones said as they arrived at the body, „you can see the deceased's head has been lopped off.“

„Does look a little short—doesn't he?“ Red remarked, looking down at a jack o'lantern someone had placed above the corpse where the victim's head should have been.

„We're looking for his head,“ McElroy said waving a hand at the constables searching nearby. „We think his killers must have wanted some information from him.“

„Maybe they thought they could take it with them,“ Red joked.

In some parts the gravel had been washed away and Red noticed some footprints in one spot. „There are some footprints here,“ he said. „This one is a golem for sure,“ he determined, pointing at a set of large and deep footprints.

„Yeah,“ said Jones. „We got pictures of all those.“

„Good.“

„Another set of prints is pretty small, so we figure they belong to either this goblin or another goblin. One of the other sets of footprints is about the size of either a human or vampire, but it looks like a narrow shoe, so we might have had a vampire involved in this trouble too. Altogether it looks like three or four creatures were back here.“

„A motley crew,“ Red said. „Who found the body?“

„One of ours walking a beat,“ Jones answered. „About forty-five minutes ago he noticed the gate open when it had not been earlier. He decided to walk back here since this gate is only opened when they haul a carriage back here. He took a look around and that’s when he discovered the body.“

„What did the Medical Examiner determine?“

„Said our goblin lost his head sometime around noon.“

„This is our goblin,“ Tom said, suddenly realizing it and happy to make some kind of contribution. „Dodger.“

Red looked down at the corpse and then at Tom. „What makes you say that?“

„I noticed in the line-up yesterday that very few goblins wore shoes; only two out of the whole bunch.“

„Okay.“

„This goblin has shoes,“ Tom said pointing at them.

„Sure does,“ Red said, „but like you said—other goblins wear shoes too.“

„There are holes cut in them for his toes to stick out,“ Tom said pointing at them. „I noticed yesterday just before Dodger assaulted Officer Horne that he had holes in his shoes. Look at the coat he’s wearing.“

Red looked down. „It certainly is the same looking. That’s what I would call just too much coincidence,“ he determined.

„Must have taken his head so we wouldn’t be able to identify him.“

„What are you thinking chief?“ Inspector Jones asked, watching Red staring down at the corpse as he ran his finger back and forth over his mustache.

„I’m thinking this has something to do with those mice Dodger delivered somewhere.“

„Found out something interesting,“ Inspector Dunne said coming through the gate. He had his notebook open and was looking at it as he joined the other detectives standing over the corpse.

„What?“

„Shop owner I talked to said he didn’t see anyone, but he did see a black, touring car pulling out of the alley this morning. One of those eight cylinder jobs.“

„What kind of bird was it flying?“ Red asked, which Tom took to mean; he was asking what kind of emblem was on the hood.

„He didn’t see,“ Dunne said shaking his head.

„Was anything found in his pockets?“ asked Red, turning back to the corpse. „A watch maybe?“



„No, nothing,“ Inspector McElroy said.

„Well the real question is; what did they want to know from him?“ Red looked at his watch—it was almost 4:00 p.m. „Dunne, I’m going to let you take charge of the raid tonight. Have fun.“

„What are you going to be doing then chief?“

„Right now Flynn and I will drive out to the Vamp’s mill and see if Mr. John Baker, a known associate of Dodger goblin here,“ he said, pointing at the corpse, „left work early today. Either way I think I’ll have a little talk with him.“

As Red and Tom left, Red made a remark about how the killers had taken the goblin’s head with them like it was just another spare part.

They drove north on Appian Way, passed over the Vlad Impaler Bridge and continued a few more blocks to the Executioner’s Bridge. They drove over it and then, just the other side of the river, was the Vamp’s Mill. Red drove through the gates and parked and then he and Tom walked into the offices there. The main office sent someone to fetch the supervisor that was over the crew that John Baker worked on, and when he arrived, Red asked if John Baker was at work.

„He left early,“ the supervisor said. „Claimed he wasn’t feeling well.“

„Did he look sick?“

„He always does,“ the supervisor said. „I don’t know why the Administration has to send us these guys.“

„What time did he leave?“

„About two hours ago.“

„Not before then, you sure?“

„I’m sure,“ the supervisor said. „I saw him several times this morning and I saw him at lunch time. Did you guys send someone else here earlier looking for him?“

„No, why?“

„A big golem and a vampire were walking around the dock area not more than half an hour ago. I asked them what they were doing and they told me to mind my own business. They seemed to be looking for someone. They left then, but afterwards one of my men told me they were looking for John Baker.“

„Is that right?“

The supervisor nodded.

„If Mr. Baker shows up, don’t mention we were checking up on him, alright? Let’s go,“ he told Tom and they hurried out the door.

They drove to Royal Street and parked in front of the building John Baker lived in. As they were climbing out of the car, an elderly woman, looking nervous, approached them.

„Are you the police?“ she asked.

„Yes,“ Red said showing her his badge.

„I’m the one who called,“ she said. „I had to use the phone in the store there,“ she said pointing at the small grocery store just next to the Brownstone.

„What happened?“

„Someone broke in the flat across the hall from me. Made the most awful racket. They’re gone now though. It was creatures. I saw them leaving.“

„How long ago?“

„Fifteen minutes.“

„Which flat?“ Red asked.

„That one right there, she said taking a few steps back so she could point at the windows of John Baker’s apartment. „A very nice young man lives there.“

„Was he home at the time?“

„No. I went in after they left and checked. He was not there. He works out at the mill, but he plans to work at the hospital someday.“

„Thanks,“ Red said hurrying inside.

The door to the apartment was slightly ajar and Red pushed it open. They stepped inside. What little bit of furniture there was had been upended and what few things had been in the cupboards had been knocked onto the floor. In the bedroom the bed had been overturned and the contents of the dresser had been thrown on the floor. There was a strong odor of smoke in the room, from several candles that had been left burning in the apartment, but they were all extinguished now.

„Seems like we just missed these guys again. I wonder if they found what they were looking for,“ Red said.

„Maybe they thought he had the mice here.“

„Maybe. I just don’t know,“ he said removing his hat and scratching his head. „I wish I knew where Mr. Baker was.“

„What are we going to do?“ Tom asked.

„Nothing much,“ Red said looking out the window and spotting a police car pulling up in front of the building. „Here come some of our officers now. I’ll have them take down a description of the suspects and then stay here and keep an eye out for John Baker. I’ll have them bring him in if he shows. Then we’ll get to the bottom of this.“

They went out front to talk with the officers arriving on scene and then Red said he needed to get back. They drove west on Royal Street and as Red turned onto Appian Way on their way back to the station, Tom mentioned he needed to buy some underwear and socks and the like.

„I’ll drop you off at a place right up here,“ Red said. He drove another block, turned, and pulled over in front of a clothing store. „Take the rest of the day off,“ he told Tom. „If you’re around when they bring Mr. Baker in I’ll send for you.“

„Okay,“ Tom said climbing out.

Tom went inside and bought some things, a second shirt and pair of pants, socks and underwear, all reasonably priced and of good quality and paid for them and left. Stepping out the store a fire engine roared down Appian Way—another gremlin fire he figured. He walked to the corner and spotting the marquee for the Coven theatre—he thought he would walk over and buy tickets for *Werewolves—the Musical*. He was certain Rebecca would like to see it. At the ticket office he was informed the show was sold out until Friday’s matinee performance. Two tickets in the upper balcony cost him eight pounds each, and after paying for them he had only a little more than ten pounds left. He walked over to the Witch-in-Lament fountain and threw a coin he just gotten for change into the water for good luck and stood watching the eels swimming there a while.

He spotted the trolley approaching that could take him down Queen Anne’s Way, so he jumped aboard it, thinking he would surprise Rebecca with the tickets. She was on his mind increasingly.

Riding the trolley was a vampire; the first one Tom really had time to take a good look at. They are all thin and pale. They appear Eastern-European-looking with high cheek bones, long eye brows and dark, thick hair, often combed straight back; always accompanied by some slight facial hair. Tom didn't want to admit it, but they are all handsome, or at the least, distinguished-looking. They dress stylish, often wearing expensive jewelry and a matching scarf, but never a hat. They do have a pair of teeth like viper fangs, curved and sharp. Tom thought the vampire sitting in front of him on the trolley, who would not slide over to allow someone to sit next to him, was rude, which is what Red had told him to expect.

Vampires rarely smile, and the joke goes; If a vampire is smiling at you, then you are about to be conned out of some of your money. That is unless you happen to be an attractive, young lady and then the smile means something completely different. On the sidewalk, Tom spotted more of their kind; several female ones even, with long, dark hair and dark eyes. The female ones were said to only smile at rich men.

Tom also spotted a golem, and then two trolls, who are said to be the only creature capable of taking on a golem in a fight, but even then, despite them being about equal size, trolls are usually overmatched, because the only thing that distinguishes them from a large, fat man with a big, flat nose, is the tooth on either end of their mouth that juts upwards like a stalagmite. Their ability to take a beating is legendary.

Tom had yet to see a witch, but he figured there must be plenty of them around, because most every fence had some handbill plastered to it advertising some witch or another's services. One large advertisement was for a show at The Dungeon Room, where, apparently, every Friday and Saturday night was promised a show with witches conjuring up glowing orbs of light, and causing patrons chosen from out of the audience to levitate in the air and other amazing sights. This is why Transylvania City is the biggest tourist destination in all of Britannia.

The trolley passed an outdoors café where tourists and even a few vampires were sitting enjoying their coffee and teas while watching people and creatures pass by. When the trolley stopped at the corner of Transylvania and Queen Anne's Way, Tom stepped off. One block farther down Queen Anne's Way he could see the large neon sign for the Hotel Romania and then, one more block was the Oxford Crossing Bridge. He would have liked to go have a look at the bridge, since his major had been civil engineering, but he didn't have time right then.

He started down Transylvania Street, having three blocks to cover until the library at the corner of Transylvania and Royal Streets. Looking up at the roof of the cathedral, Tom spotted a gremlin perched atop one of the gargoyles there. This was supposedly a good omen.

As he walked beside the stone wall that encircled the entire two block area the cathedral grounds encompassed, a motorcycle cop sped past him. The motorcycle turned on Royal Street, headed the direction of John Baker's building, and when Tom reached the corner there, he saw the motorcycle cop talking to the two officers Red had stationed outside the Brownstone. The motorcycle cop sped off then and when the two officers started their car and went to drive off also, Tom ran out into the street and flashed them his badge.

„Where you guys going?“

„We got pulled off duty here. I guess Chief Meriwether is coming over here to keep an eye out for Mr. Baker himself.“

„All right,“ Tom said and the two officers drove away.

He headed toward the library and as he entered the building, he spotted a large poster on a tripod outside the same room where Rollo had given his lecture that morning. *Recognizing Chance and Coincidence in Transylvania*, the poster read and once again he spotted Rebecca in attendance. She was sitting in the first row of the crowded room and as he went in, Tom glanced at the speaker to apologize for interrupting, and found it was Miss Kensington. As he sat down next to Rebecca, she smiled at him so warmly that he was doubly glad he had come to see her. Rebecca did not say anything as he sat next to her, but she did slide her hand on top of his.

Miss Kensington was just wrapping up her lecture, but she repeated the foremost point she had wanted to make, which was that one in tune with Transylvania would recognize many coincidences and remarkable happenstance. The ability to understand what these chance encounters meant was a skill that one should try and develop, but Tom had missed the part about how you go about doing that.

„You would learn so much more if you came at the beginning,“ Miss Kensington walked up to him and said before the crowd’s applause had ended.

„I didn’t know you were speaking here today.“

„You should have. There is a handbill posted in the inspectors’ offices,“ she said.

„I thought you would show,“ Rebecca said.

„Oh, you did not.“

„Did I not say as much?“ Rebecca pleaded to Miss Kensington, in a most beautiful accent that made Tom wonder what she thought of his mid-west accent.

„She absolutely did,“ Miss Kensington said before leaving to mingle among her admirers.

„You are a witch of some sort then,“ he joked.

„I cannot make you do anything you do not already want to do. What reason brought me the pleasure of your company?“

Tom pulled the theatre tickets out of his pocket causing Rebecca to gasp. „I have dearly wanted to see this,“ she said taking them from him.

„You hold onto them,“ he told her looking at his watch. It was twenty till six. „They are for Friday afternoon. Maybe I could buy you dinner tonight?“

„That would be nice. The library closes at 6:30 tonight. Oh,“ she said, lowering her voice and pulling Tom towards the corner of the room away from the crowd. „I thought you might like to know that Mr. Baker is in the library right now. I saw him come in about forty minutes ago.“

„He’s here now?“

„He was when the lecture started, sitting by the main counter.“

„Go see if he’s still there, will you?“

Rebecca nodded and started out the room. Tom followed her to the doorway, but no further. He watched her go around the counter and over to the far side of the lobby around a corner, but when she came back, she shook her head to indicate he was gone now. She waved Tom over toward her as she pulled a large book, as tall and wide as the top of an end table, off a shelf below the counter.

„This is the book he asked to see,“ she said turning it sideways so they both could look at it.

„What is it?“

„It’s a very old spell book, well, not a real one of course. Just a reproduction and translated into English, but it has a great number of ancient spells. Most of which you could never produce anymore.“

„Why?“

„The actual spells don’t exist anymore. All the old spell books were destroyed years ago—to prevent the vilest potions from ever being made again. The Salem witches’ handbook I showed you is one of the few remaining and even it does not contain many of the old spells.“

„I wonder why he wanted to look at this then?“ Tom asked, flipping the book open. He looked through a few pages and saw the same spells that were in *The Salem Witch’s Handbook of Potions and Spells*.

„The best ones are in the back,“ Rebecca said sliding her finger under most of the pages and flipping them over.

Tom looked at the page the book fell open to. At the top it read; *The Curse of The Werewolf*. And then just below was a drawing of a man standing under a full moon, tearing his clothing off in a rage, just at the stage where he changed from human into a werewolf. Rebecca flipped to the next page where there was a picture of a witch causing, what looked like, someone’s eyes to bleed. It was a most horrible picture.

„You can see why they destroyed all these spells,“ Rebecca said.

Tom nodded.

Tom did not like looking at blood pouring out of someone’s eyes so he turned the page to see a witch with her arm raised in the air. In front of her was a sort of shimmering hole in the air. He looked toward the top of the page.

„Potion to cause a portal’s opening,“ he read. „That’s kind of neat.“

„Unless you’re the young woman sacrificed as part of the potions’ requirements,“ Rebecca said pointing out the young woman lying dead at the feet of the witch.

„Is this potion real?“

„It was. That’s how vampires and witches came to be unleashed on Earth thousands of years ago.“

Tom shut the book. „Can you take me up to the roof again?“ he asked.

„Sure.“

They went upstairs just like the night before. Tom walked over to the corner of the roof where he could see into John Baker’s flat. The lights were on there and John Baker was in the kitchen cleaning up.

„He’s there,“ Tom said. „Can I use your phone to call Red?“

They went back downstairs as Tom followed Rebecca around the main counter he noticed the copy of *Great Expectations* lying on the shelf. „There’s a coincidence for you,“ he said tapping on the book. „It was a goblin named Dodger who stole that book from Officer Horne.“

„Really? Of course, Dodger is from *Oliver Twist*,“ Rebecca said.

„Oh, thought he was in *Great Expectations*.“

„No,“ Rebecca said. „You should read it. It is one of my favorite books.“

„What’s it about?“

„It’s about Pip, a young boy who encounters a convict on the marshes—and the most coincidental of circumstances that sets off.“

„Really?“ Tom asked as he picked up the phone. He was sort of in a daze, his mind elsewhere, until he heard the operator asking for the number he wanted to be connected to.

He told the operator he wanted to be connected to police headquarters. While he waited, his mind went back to thinking about what Rebecca had just told him about *Great Expectations*. Tom was experiencing something like déjà-vu. When the station answered, he asked for the inspectors’ offices. Red answered when the call was transferred and Tom told him it was him.

„I’m at the library. I just went up on the roof and saw John Baker is in his apartment now.“

„Jones and I were just about to head over there,“ Red said. „We we’re going to watch to see if he had any more visitors tonight. Wait there for us.“

„Okay,“ Tom said about to hang up, but then Red told him that Officer Horne had left a message for him. It seemed Officer Horne wanted Red to get in touch with him as soon as possible to talk about a most urgent matter.

„You don’t think he wants to quit do you?“ Red asked and Tom told him that Officer Horne did not strike him that way. „Wonder what he wants? I checked and he’s scheduled for manning a bridge starting just about now, but I don’t know which bridge.“

„Would Miss Kensington know?“ Tom asked.

„She just might.“

Tom could see Miss Kensington talking to some people by the door and he asked Rebecca to ask her to come there.

„Do you know what bridge, the new constable, Officer Horne is scheduled for tonight?“ Tom asked her as she approached.

„The Oxford Crossing Bridge,“ she said, „starting at 5:30.“

Red heard her over the phone and told Tom that the Oxford Crossing Bridge was just five blocks from the library.

„I’ll drop Jones off to keep an eye on Baker’s place while you and me go see what’s on Officer Horne’s mind.“

„All right.“

When Tom hung up the phone, Miss Kensington told him that on her way out of the police station, she’d overheard a vampire asking the desk sergeant where he might find an Officer Horne, something about having found a lost item of his.

„Really?“

„I believe he was told that Officer Horne was on bridge duty tonight, but that he could leave his name and address and Officer Horne would contact him later.“

„Did the vampire leave his name?“

„No I don’t think so, but I heard him say ‘Thank you, you’ve been most helpful.’“

„Thanks,“ Tom said and Miss Kensington left.

Tom had some time to kill before Red would arrive, so he picked up the copy of *Great Expectations*. On the cover was a drawing of a boy, out on the foggy moors, looking lost.

„Officer Horne spent his last day lost in a marsh,“ Tom mentioned to Rebecca, showing her the cover that reminded him of that. He put the book back on the shelf and picked up the spell book he and Rebecca had been looking at before. He placed it on the counter and opened it toward the back. „I can't believe some of these spells,“ he said looking at the drawing of a man transforming into a werewolf again.

„Well we don't have to worry about them anymore,“ Rebecca said.

„What if some old spell book was still lying around somewhere?“ he asked, flipping the page to the one with the young girl lying dead at the foot of a witch. „Maybe they didn't destroy them all.“

„Well, they would still need a frog and that's not going to happen.“

„What do you mean?“

„The vilest potions,“ Rebecca said, placing her finger down on the book, „require a frog. And of course there are no frogs in all of Britannia. You knew that didn't you?“

„No,“ Tom said as a very odd feeling came over him as he remembered Horne had told Red, the day before, that his canteen was half full of water, when he had told Tom, at the Essex platform, that he'd run completely out of water. And then the same way a small spark can ignite an inferno, Tom realized why Dodger had been killed; why a vampire was making inquiries about Officer Horne; what Horne wanted to talk to Red about, and where the frogs were.

Tom was determined to get to Officer Horne before any harm came to him. He shouted Miss Kensington's name. The entire library turned to look at him climbing over the counter, knocking some books to the floor, and then pushing his way through the crowd like a madman to get at the woman he had just shouted at.

„The vampire that was asking about Officer Horne,“ Tom asked grabbing hold of Miss Kensington. „Did he have a broken fang?“

„Yes,“ she answered quickly.

„Get on the phone,“ Tom said pushing her toward the counter. „Call the Oxford Crossing Bridge and have Officer Horne taken into custody for his own protection.“

He ran out the library then into the dark night.

He held his police identification up as he ran out into the street, hoping to stop a car driving by. He failed to stop a car going up Royal Street, but another was heading down Transylvania toward the Oxford Crossing Bridge. He chased after it, shouting for the driver to stop, but the car sped away. Tom continued running, having five blocks until he would reach the bridge.

He ran flat out, but when he spotted another car coming toward him, and determined to stop it, as soon as the car's headlights shone on him, Tom drew out his weapon and fired into the air. As the car slammed on its brakes, he opened his raincoat to show them his detective badge pinned to his vest. The car slid to a halt just in front of him and he stepped around toward the driver.

„What the hell are you doing?“ Red yelled, sticking his head out the car window.

„Get to the Oxford Crossing Bridge immediately,“ Tom shouted, climbing in back. „Officer Horne is in danger!“

Red threw the car in reverse, stepped down hard on the gas, causing the car's tires to squeal, before the car suddenly jerked into gear. Red backed up onto the sidewalk, before putting the car in drive and speeding off toward the bridge.

„What the hell is going on?“ Red asked as Inspector Jones flipped the siren on and placed a flashing light on top the car.

„They're going to kill Horne,“ Tom said.

„Who?“

„Whoever killed Dodger.“

„Why?“

„His canteen,“ Tom said. „There are frogs in it.“

Tom saw Red's eyes open wide in the rearview mirror. „That can't be,“ he said as he made the turn onto Queen Anne's Way. A constable, standing in the intersection, hearing the siren, had stopped traffic so they could speed past. The bridge was two blocks away.

„Horne told me the day he died he had run out of water. He told you at the train station his canteen was half full. He'd spent the last day of his life lost in a marsh,“ Tom said, speaking as fast as the car was moving. „He must have put swamp water in his canteen and there must have been some tiny frogs or tadpoles caught in it. That's why the bear at the train station acted that way—it must have picked up the scent of them. That's why Dodger wanted Officer Horne's backpack. Horne just realized all this himself and that's why he wants to speak with you. To warn you. That's why Dodger was killed—to keep him from telling anyone. That's why someone was at the station asking about Officer Horne's whereabouts.“

„May God have mercy on us,“ Red said.

Ahead, was the Oxford Crossing Bridge. It was dark and especially foggy near there and the bridge's lights caused a halo over the bridge. Red raced past the last cars before the bridge and came to a screeching halt. The bridge constable ran up to their car as Tom threw open his door looking for Officer Horne.

„Where is Officer Horne?“ Red yelled at the constable.

The constable quickly pointed towards the opposite bank of the river. Tom took off running toward there across the bridge.

„I just sent him over there,“ the constable shouted. „Someone was yelling for help down there. Probably just kids having trouble with their rental boat,“ he shouted as Inspector Jones chased after Tom.

Tom yelled for Officer Horne as he ran across the bridge and Horne stepped out from under the bridge on the opposite riverbank holding a lantern. He looked up at Tom, smiled and went to wave, but a hand followed him out of the darkness. The hand held a gun and before Tom could warn Officer Horne, the gun fired. Horne fell.

Tom leaned over the side of the bridge and emptied his gun into the darkness there, but he could not see anyone. He thought maybe he had killed the assassin, but then another shot, fired from further underneath the bridge, struck Officer Horne as he lay in the reeds.

Tom started toward Officer Horne again as Inspector Jones ran to the other side of the bridge and emptied his pistol at the darkness there, but he too must have missed, because then the assassin fired again as he escaped through the tall reeds.



Tom only wanted to get to Officer Horne, so he ran to the end of the bridge and jumped over the railing once he was at a spot that was not too much of a drop. Horne lay nearby.

Tom got to him as Red yelled for the bridge constable to blow his whistle and the constable blew his whistle long and loud.

Horne's lantern lay in the grass just above his head and the flame still burned and its light cast a sort of eerie glow around Officer Horne. Horne was pressing his hands to his chest, but despite his best efforts—blood worked its way between his fingers. Wanting to look at the wound, Tom took a box of matches out of his pocket and hurried to light one. When he had, he held it over Horne's wound while he pressed his other hand down on top of Horne's, hoping to stop the blood loss. Officer Horne focused on the match.

„The canteen,“ he whispered.

„I know,“ Tom said turning around to look up at the bridge. He yelled at the bridge constable to call for an ambulance.

„There are baby frogs in it,“ Horne confessed.

„I thought there was,“ Tom said turning back to Horne, continuing to press down on his chest.

„Just put them in there for a lark,“ he said. „Lost in the swamp, remember?“

„I remember.“

„Didn't know they would cause trouble.“

„I know,“ Tom said. „There is no way you could have known. I know where they are. I'll take care of it,“ he said noticing Officer Horne's silver badge was now the same color as his—blood-red.

„Good,“ Horne whispered. „It's been... some day... hasn't it?“ he struggled to ask and then Horne's hand slipped away.

„It has,“ Tom answered as the sound of gunfire, coming from some distance off reached him, followed by a constable's whistle, but Tom didn't think Officer Horne heard him. For the second time, Michael Horne was dead, and Tom was certain that this death was no less expected or welcome than had been his first. The match singed Tom's fingers and he tossed it away.

## Chapter 9

**Wednesday 5:45 pm**

He would have liked to stay with Officer Horne awhile, but there was work to be done to prevent a most awful curse being placed upon Transylvania City, so he left Officer Horne's side and ran to the top of the Oxford Crossing Bridge. A storm was beginning; a bolt of lightning spread across the sky, thunder boomed and echoed off the cliff walls.

Red was shouting for lanterns to be lit and for more officers to be called to the scene. Tom arrived next to him just as a constable, searching the cemetery the other side of the bridge, suddenly began firing his revolver among the headstones

there. Tom looked there as the constable began blowing his whistle, alerting the other officers that he had spotted the assailant and several constables started toward there, but Tom grabbed hold of Red when he went to follow them.

„We have to get to the frogs,“ he told him as thunder boomed again. „I know where they are.“

Red looked at him and nodded and then yelled for Inspector Jones. The three of them hurried back across the bridge toward the police car.

„Where to?“ Red asked as the first fat raindrops of the storm splattered on the windshield.

„John Baker’s apartment,“ Tom said. „I just realized where they are there.“

„Where?“

„The tea kettle.“

Red sped off the bridge as more constables ran toward the cemetery. He quickly drove down Queen Anne’s Way and turned on Transylvania Street, headed towards the Brownstone where John Baker lived. He told Inspector Jones to turn the siren and lights off so John Baker would not be alerted to their coming. As they approached the intersection of Royal and Transylvania Streets, a series of lightning strikes lit up the street ahead of them, giving them a view inside a car just then passing through the intersection. Red and Inspector Jones saw the creatures inside as the car passed right in front of them. Tom did not see the creatures since he was looking at Rebecca, standing in front of the library, under an umbrella, waiting for him to return.

„Did you see that?“ Red asked.

„Sure did,“ Jones said, drawing his weapon.

„See what?“ Tom asked.

„There were two golems and some other creatures in the car that just passed through the intersection,“ Red said. „A car like was seen leaving the carriage lot this morning.“

„It was flying a bat,“ Jones said.

Red drove through the intersection just after the creatures, but he did not turn to follow them. Instead he drove another half-block and turned into the alley that ran behind the Brownstone John Baker lived in.

Red turned the car’s headlights off as they crept up the alley. „His lights are on,“ Red said, looking up through the windshield and rain towards John Baker’s flat. Red stopped the car and Tom got out just as the car, with the creatures inside, made a U-turn and parked on the opposite side of the street from the Brownstone.

„Baker’s there,“ Inspector Jones said pointing up at the apartment and Tom looked and saw John Baker pass by the window.

„Hold on a minute,“ Red said when Tom started toward the building. „Let’s see what happens.“

The back-wall of a detached garage was next to where they had parked in the alley, so Tom climbed on top of the police car and pulled himself up atop it. Lightning fractured the sky as Inspector Jones joined him there. They stood among some tree branches so as not to be seen. Red went to the trunk of the car and took out a 49er. He clicked in a drum.

„He’s putting glasses out on the table,“ Jones said watching John Baker from atop the garage. „Like he’s expecting company.“

Tom looked towards the front of the building. Best he could make out, there were four creatures and a lone human standing on the sidewalk, discussing their plans before heading inside.

„He’s setting some bottles out now. Looks like a bottle of Vamp’s,“ Jones said looking in the flat. „I can see the big, black label they stick on those bottles. He just put another bottle down now. Looks like he’s planning a party.“

„A clear bottle?“ Red asked.

„Yes.“

„Absinthe.“

„He’s gone and opened the front door, like he’s expecting them,“ Jones said.

„Should we go in now?“ Tom asked.

„Not just yet,“ Red said.

„Looks like they’re going inside now,“ Jones said watching the creatures cross the street toward the Brownstone. One of them, a big golem, stayed with the car.

„Should we call for back-up?“ Jones asked.

„No,“ Red said. „It would take five or six minutes for them to get here and I think it’s going to be over by then. Jones, climb down here and pull this car back,“ he ordered Inspector Jones. „Don’t turn the lights on till you are out in the street. Then drive over to the next street and come up the alley that looks straight at the front this building,“ he said jabbing the machine gun at the Brownstone. „Park about halfway down and turn your lights off before you start up the alley over there,“ he said, „hurry.“

Jones climbed down and got behind the steering wheel. As Jones backed the car down the alley, Tom saw Rebecca was still standing by the corner of the library, watching them. Jones backed out onto Transylvania Street and drove past the library. He drove to the next street and turned. Tom saw the car’s headlights turn off then.

„What going on in there?“ Red asked.

Tom turned back towards John Baker’s apartment. He could see the front door through the window and right then he saw the barrel of a big gun coming through it, and then a big golem stepped into the front room. „A golem just stepped into the front room. He’s holding a 49er,“ Tom told Red.

„A machine gun?“

„Yeah.“

„Where did he get that?“ Red wondered.

„A vampire just stepped into the room, he’s armed too,“ Tom said. „John Baker is just sitting at the kitchen table,“ he said looking through the kitchen window. „He’s pouring himself a glass of whiskey.“

Tom continued telling Red everything that went on inside the apartment. How the golem approached John Baker while holding the machine gun on him, but John Baker responded by holding the bottle of Vamp’s up, offering the golem a drink. The vampire followed the golem into the kitchen.

„They drinking with him?“

„I don’t think they trust him,“ Tom said. „Baker just poured a glass of Vamp’s and downed it. He’s pouring another one and holding it out to the golem... the golem just drank it in one gulp. I guess they’re okay with him now.“

The vampire and golem sat down at the table. Looking into the front room, Tom saw a tall goblin entering the apartment and then the human behind him. The human kept his hat on, and the collar of his raincoat was flipped up, so Tom was unable to see his face, but he was a tall fellow. The golem and vampire seemed to be enjoying John Baker's company now. The golem took his hat off as he waved the human into the kitchen to join them.

„They're just sitting at the table now,“ Tom told Red. „They're going through that bottle of Vamp's pretty quick.“

„What about the tea kettle?“

Tom looked for it on the stove. „It's still in the same place,“ he said. „That's the last of the Vamp's,“ he said watching John Baker holding the bottle upside down so the last of it would pour out. The glass was handed to the human, who stood out of sight between rooms. John Baker got up then and went to the stove. He picked up the tea kettle and showed it to the golem and then the goblin entered the kitchen and sniffed it. They all stood up then and Tom could not see what they were doing—the golem's back was to the window and blocked much of his view.

„They're getting ready to leave,“ he told Red, seeing the golem put his hat back on. They rain began to fall harder and lightning struck as the creatures and human headed for the front door. Red stepped out of the alley into the small parking lot of the grocery store next to the Brownstone. There was a tall hedge running between the two buildings and Red was hid behind it. He started following it toward the street where the creatures' car was parked.

„They taking the kettle with them?“ he asked.

„No,“ Tom said spotting it on the kitchen table.

„How does John Baker look?“ Red asked. „He seem different to you?“

Tom had already noticed that John Baker did seem different somehow. He seemed to have a different air about him—like vampires do, one of contempt and arrogance and awareness. In fact John Baker came to the window then and looked outside like he was looking for something out in the darkness. And when lightning struck and illuminated everything outside his window, Tom pressed next to the trunk of the tree so he wouldn't be seen. If John Baker had spotted him, he didn't act like it. He waited a moment before stepping away from the window and disappearing into his bedroom.

„Yes,“ Tom determined. „He has changed.“

„Maybe he talked them out of taking the tea kettle with them,“ Red said. „That persuasiveness they possess. Maybe he's made some kind of deal with them. We'll go in and get it as soon as they leave. He won't talk us out of taking it.“

The creatures were coming out of the front of the building as Tom climbed down off the garage. He joined Red by the hedge and watched as the creatures crossed the street towards their car. The driver started the engine and the big golem was the last to climb in, taking the front passenger seat. He showed the other golem something as he opened the car door. At first Tom thought it was his gun, but then he realized it was the dark bottle of Vamp's.

It struck Tom then, just as the creature's car started to pull away, that they had drank the entire bottle inside, so why would they take the bottle with them?

„They have the frogs!“ Tom yelled pointing at the car, suddenly realizing what had happened. „They're in the bottle of Vamp's.“

„Shoot them!“ Red shouted as he pulled back the bolt of the 49er.

Tom pulled his pistol and ran toward the street as the creatures' car pulled away. He fired, aiming for the driver, hoping to cause him to crash, and his first two shots went through his window. Tom kept firing as the car sped away, but the car did not crash. Instead the creatures sped down the street as Red opened fire with the 49er.

It was then that Tom learned that wood bullets, once they have traveled just a little ways through the air, will catch fire—lighting up the darkness unexpectedly like fireflies, and the line of them, as they ignite and then glow, look like a succession of meteorites entering the Earth's atmosphere. The closest thing Tom had ever seen like them were the tracer bullets fired at German bombers during nighttime, but still, even that magnificent site did not do this one justice, as the wood bullets glowed bright yellow or orange even as they zipped through the air and then afterward left behind a thin trail or ribbon of gray smoke.

Red's bullets glowed white hot as they ripped into the back of the creatures' car and lodged into the metal body to glow then like small ingots in a furnace. The car's tire was pierced, causing it to blow out with a loud bang as the other golem in the passenger seat swung his machine gun out the window and fired over the roof of the car, but the car swerved violently and nearly rolled.

Red and Tom dropped to the ground as bullets smashed into the brick wall of the Brownstone behind them or knocked down garbage cans which, caught by the wind, started rolling down the alley.

Inspector Jones ran out of the alley on the opposite side of the street and opened fire as the creatures drove out of Tom's sight as the grocery store blocked his view as the car entered the intersection of Transylvania and Royal Streets.

Tom rose and ran out into the street as Red shouted for Inspector Jones to get the car, and Jones turned and ran for it down the alley.

The driver had managed to regain control of the car, but still it swerved from one side of the street to the other, sideswiping cars parked in front of St. Paul's Cathedral. The big golem still hung out the window, firing his machine gun, and its flash, coming out the barrel, illuminated the fog as his bullets caught fire, coming toward Tom as if shooting stars falling out of the night sky.

Red ran out into the street and started firing again, shooting out a second tire, and the creatures' car swerved into the curb, flipped on its side and slid up against the stone wall surrounding the cathedral. Red stumbled backwards then and fell and as lightning flashed Tom looked down at him and saw Red had been hit in the shoulder. Red reached up and handed him the 49er.

„Get a new drum out of the car,“ he said as Inspector Jones drove out the alley. Jones slammed on the brakes just behind them and opened the car door as the car's headlight shone on them like escaping prisoners caught in a searchlight.

„Open the trunk,“ Tom yelled and Inspector Jones quickly went to the back of the car. The golem had stopped firing, and as well there was no apparent movement inside their wrecked car. Front porch lights and bedroom lamps came on in the houses along the street as Tom grabbed a drum from out the trunk and clicked it in. He threw the old one in back, the drum so hot steam came off it where the rain landed on it. He shoved a second drum and shoved it as far as it would fit into the pocket of his raincoat.

„Help Red into the car,“ he said just as the goblin came flying out the back window of the creatures‘ car—thrown out by one of the golems, Tom figured.

The goblin landed in the street and bounced, but stood up unsteadily and started shooting at the police car; his bullets igniting half way down the street. The windshield of the police car shattered and fell out. Tom stepped out from behind the car and started returning fire, his bullets catching fire at the corner of the cathedral.

The goblin fell—Tom had hit him in the leg—and started screaming. Tom ran up the street while the golem, the one who had been driving, kicked at the driver’s side door. It broke free of its hinges and shot ten feet into the air before landing on the sidewalk. The vampire crawled out the rear window. Tom fired at the golem, but he slipped behind a column that jutted out from the stone wall. The vampire ran across the street, firing a pistol, before hiding behind a parked car. The other golem climbed out through the busted windshield, stood up, and opened fire at Tom, but he ducked behind the corner of the cathedral wall just in time. Just inches from him bullets caught fire as they zipped by, seemingly so close he could have reached out and caught one. The firing stopped.

Across the street, Rebecca lay on the sidewalk in front of the library. She was not hurt and Tom motioned for her to stay down. A number of library patrons stood just inside the doors watching the goings on in the street.

Tom turned around when he heard the police car’s engine revving. Inspector Jones was behind the wheel. Jones started up the street then, accelerating quickly and Red, sitting in the passenger’s seat, started firing his pistol from out where the front windshield should have been. Things took on an even eerier quality when the bells of the cathedral began ringing, striking 6 o’clock.

As Inspector Jones raced up the street, the big golem began firing at the police car and Tom stepped out to provide them some cover fire. He managed to force the golem to duck down, but the radiator of the police car had been hit and it made a noise like a dragon just before the car’s hood blew off. A tire blew out too, and the police car swerved toward the curb.

The cathedral bells rang, rain fell, thunder boomed, lightning struck and the police car smashed into a car parked in front of the cathedral with a loud crunch of metal and shattering of glass.

Red flew out the windshield, smacked against the other car and dropped to the ground. Tom ran to him as the golem hiding behind the stone column stepped out, shoved the police car out of his way, causing it to spin like a revolving door, and started running across the street. Tom spit bullets at him as he ran toward the house Rebecca lived in and crashed through the picket fence there. The other golem had placed a fresh drum in his gun and Tom spotted him about to open fire. He ran for the opening in the wall that led to cathedral steps like a novice nun late for choir practice and made it safely there. All around, lying on the cathedral steps, tourists were sprawled on the ground or peering around columns, watching the mayhem out in the street.

Inspector Jones’ head rested on the steering column of the police car causing the horn to blow, but the horn soon died, to everyone’s relief. Jones had been knocked unconscious, but he appeared to be otherwise okay. So must have Red, because he popped up from between the two cars and began firing at someone.

Tom sprang back up and ran back out into the street firing his machine gun. When the vampire exchanging gunfire with Red saw Tom coming for him, he panicked. He went to run, but it was too late and Tom filled him with bullets. The vampire lay on the sidewalk full of holes, but no blood seeped out of him. Tom looked back toward the second golem and saw he was well down the street now, running away. Tom looked at Red.

„Get after that bottle you silly Yank,“ Red yelled, pointing at the golem.

Tom turned and started after the golem, his black raincoat trailing behind him like a cape. The golem was big and slow and Tom quickly gained on him.

He fired at the golem's head as he ran, thinking at the very least that would knock him down, but he had to stop shooting to prevent hitting a civilian trying to get out of the golem's way. As the golem turned the corner, Tom shot at him, but hit a street lamp instead, shattering the glass and causing the flame to explode.

The rain stopped falling as Tom came to the corner of the stone wall. He looked up the street to see a delivery wagon, pulled by four, large draft horses, coming out an alley, trample the golem down. The horses stumbled over him and fell, even the wheels of the cart rolled over him, but amazingly the golem stood up, causing the wagon to slide off his back and tip over. The golem began running again, shoving people on the sidewalk out of his way.

Tom was running after him when he saw a constable directing traffic. He yelled at the constable to shoot the bottle the golem was carrying, but the constable was too late hearing him before the golem shoved the constable, sending him skidding along the wet street. As Tom ran past him, the officer sat up and began blowing his whistle. Other constables answered his call for help as the golem continued up Appian Way, causing cars to swerve out his way and Tom could not get a clear shot at him.

Tom began shouting for the crowd to clear a path. Up ahead, spotting another constable, Tom shouted at him to fire at the bottle, and the constable bravely ran up and fired point-blank at it, but the golem shielded the bottle and the bullet glanced off his thick arm. At the sound of the gunshot, the crowd on all four corners careened their heads around and saw a large golem shoving a police officer through a store window. Those in the golem's path scattered to get out of his way as he fled down the street, but Tom was catching up to him.

The golem came to the Vlad the Impaler Bridge and Tom fired into the air as he yelled for the crowd there to get down. All around people dropped to the ground or pressed up against the side of buildings. Tom aimed over their heads at the golem, but just before he pulled the trigger, a Transylvania Metropolitan Tour bus entered the intersection and screeched to a halt to avoid hitting the golem. The tour lady inside the bus tipped backwards and fell, but the bus driver caught her. Still she shot her husband a wicked look, as it was the same tour-guide and driver from the day before.

Tom ran around the bus just as the golem bowled his way through the crowd admiring the statue of Vlad. Seeing the bottle in his hand and his smashed hat, they probably thought he was drunk. The bridge constable drew his weapon and ordered the golem to stop, but as the constable fired once, the golem grabbed the constable, lifted him three feet into the air and tossed him over the side of the bridge. By this time, call boxes had been rung up and whistles blown and several

police cars screeched to halt on the other side of the bridge to cut off the golem's escape. A golem gun with steel net was pulled from a trunk. The golem, seeing this, ducked behind a car stopped on the bridge and fired his machine gun at the police cars blocking his escape.

Tom was moving closer when the golem swung his gun around and fired at him, causing every bystander not already on the ground to scream and drop. Several frightened carriage horses bolted up the street as Tom took cover in a doorway. When he poked his head out, he saw that the golem had ducked out of sight again. On the other side of the bridge, constables were taking up firing positions. The big golem was trapped on top the bridge.

Tom learned just how strong golems are then, particularly this one, when he began dragging the car he was hid behind, closer to another one that was also stopped on the bridge. While he was doing this, the occupants of both cars jumped out and escaped down the bridge. As Tom was admiring this awesome feat of strength, someone bumped into him. He knew who it was immediately.

„What are you doing here?“ he asked looking over his shoulder at Rebecca, noticing she had taken her shoes off in order to run after him.

„Helping.“

„How?“ he asked removing the spent drum, and clicking in the second one.

„That's how,“ she said pointing toward the automobile.

„I know where he is already.“

„No,“ she said. „The gas tank. Shoot at it and the car will explode and break the bottle he's holding.“

„Oh,“ Tom said. „Good idea. Wait here.“

He went to run then, meaning to improve his aim by moving behind the Vlad statue, but before he could step away, Rebecca pulled him back.

„Kiss for luck,“ she said kissing Tom just as a camera bulb flashed. A newspaper photographer, kneeling on the ground nearby, had snapped their photo.

Tom dashed toward the statue and crouched behind the short wall encircling it as hundreds of eyeballs watched him. Nothing near the bridge was moving, not a car or carriage, every bystander, creature or tourist lay sprawled on the ground or pressed against the side of a car. It was eerily quiet, but then a thunderclap boomed so unexpectedly and so loudly, that it caused everyone there—already on edge as it was—to scream or jump.

As the thunder echoed off the cliff walls, Tom pulled back the bolt of the 49er and started firing. Constables from the other side of the bridge opened fire also, but Tom aimed at the gas tank. He was far enough back still that his bullets had time to catch fire before they ripped through the car's metal. With a giant blast the tank exploded and flames shot out all directions. The car was lifted off the ground as the shockwave blew out the closest shop windows. The car slammed into the golem, knocking him down and the bottle slipped from his hand. It began rolling down the bridge. Tom spotted it and fired, but all his bullets struck the road instead and then his machine gun clicked empty.

The golem, his clothing on fire, pushed the flaming car out of his way and it rolled down the bridge and slammed into another car. The golem was after the bottle still and he chased after it as it rolled down the incline of the bridge. Tom



dropped the empty 49er and pulled his pistol as the bottle rolled through a pool of burning gasoline. He fired at it three times and missed before the golem caught it and grabbed hold of it. Just as he lifted it up, Tom aimed and fired and the bottle shattered spilling its contents into the fire.

Just before the golem fled, he stared at Tom, literally burning with hate. Then he ran straight at the brick wall lining the bridge, and unable to leap it, crashed through and dropped into the river below. The golem hitting the water caused a splash as big as a whale's. Tom ran to the middle of the bridge and looking into the burning gasoline, he spotted two small frogs, nearly burnt unrecognizable. He ran to the side of the bridge then and looked down into the depths of the river, but the golem had sunk like the stone he was. Tom hurried back to Rebecca as a dozen firemen and policemen ran onto the bridge.

An ambulance had arrived by the time Rebecca and Tom arrived back at the cathedral. Inspector Jones was being placed on a stretcher, but it appeared he was not seriously injured. Red was also being prepared to be taken to hospital. Tom told him the two frogs were just ashes now. Inspector Dunne arrived on scene then and informed them that Officer Horne's killer had been cornered and killed inside the Transylvania Metropolitan Cemetery. Red decided they should drive over there and identify him.

A constable, holding a lantern, led them through the cemetery toward where the vampire's body lay. In Transylvania City it is customary to place a jack o'lantern upon a grave instead of flowers. Often the face of whoever has been buried just below will be carved into the pumpkin. Goblins are excellent pumpkin sculptors and many make their living that way. Walking through the graveyard that night, Tom looked around in amazement at hundreds of jack o'lanterns, a few of which, he recognized the face carved into it. There was one there of Percival, a knight of the round-table.

The constable carrying the lantern led them to an open grave and pointed down. Tom looked at the bottom of the grave and saw the vampire, whose last act was to stumble into this open grave after having been shot through the heart. Now, as several lanterns were held over him, Tom recognized him. The vampire was who he feared—the same vampire they had arrested at the Fountain Hotel the day before. He told Red as much, pointing at the fang Red had broken when he'd punched him.

„That's some coincidence.“

„It's no coincidence,“ Tom said.

„What makes you say that?“

„I made the mistake of mentioning in front of him,“ Tom said pointing his finger at the bottom of the grave, „that Dodger had stolen Officer Horne's backpack. Officer Horne then mentioned the mice that had been smuggled in. This vampire was listening the whole time. It's my fault Officer Horne was killed.“

„You don't know that,“ Red said, but Tom was not persuaded differently.

Red looked at the vampire a second time. „We'll get his name from his arrest record. I'd like to just throw some dirt on him and be done with him here and now, but vampires are not buried in this cemetery,“ he told Tom. „They have their own

cemetery out by Dracula Manor. It's called the Strigoi. You won't find a single cross inside there."

## Chapter 10

### Thursday

The photo of Rebecca kissing Tom, while in the far background stood a robed Vlad the Impaler in bronze; was plastered on the front of *The Raven*; Transylvania City's paper, the next morning. The paper is named after the Edgar Allen Poe poem. Tom found the photo rather embarrassing, but worse was the story making him out as some kind of hero. The truth was his carelessness had helped get Officer Horne killed. People came up and shook his hand, but he'd rather someone punch him in the gut.

Red was taken to Lost Souls Hospital, which is run by an order of nuns, and it is the nuns not vampires that gave this hospital its name. He had the bullet removed from his shoulder and then was held overnight for observation.

Chief Hall held a press conference on the steps of the TCPD building a few hours after all the shooting died down. He did not disclose everything, but he did inform the media—which had come all the way from Essex and Dubhlinn—that the two incidents; the murder of Officer Horne and its subsequent manhunt, and the running gunfight that started by St. Paul's Cathedral, were related. He told them the suspect in Officer Horne's murder was killed.

Inspectors Dunne and Jones were assigned to find out all about the vampire, whose name was Dragonovich. They were to track down his movements the three days prior to him assassinating Officer Michael Horne underneath the Oxford Crossing Bridge. The media was also led to believe that the goblin, shot in front of St. Paul's Cathedral, had died at the hospital, but this was not true.

That morning Tom drove over to the hospital to pick Red up. They had breakfast together before heading to the police department garage to meet Rollo. Rollo had gotten word to Red that he had some information for him. They also planned to question the goblin that had been arrested outside St. Paul's, but they weren't in much of a rush, since Red thought the most important work was done; the frogs were burnt to a crisp and Officer Horne's murderer was dead. Red said it wasn't much of a mystery who had sent Dragonovich to murder Officer Horne, the Vampire Council, but there was no way to pin it on them, since they were smart enough to use intermediaries and they ran Dracula the way Capone ran Chicago.

Before going down to the garage to meet Rollo, Tom checked in with the desk sergeant who informed him a package, wrapped in brown paper, had arrived for him. Inside Tom found a small, glass globe. It was much like a snow globe, but within the sphere were no snowflakes or merry scene, just the figure of a gravedigger holding a candle at the foot of an open grave. The candle really burned inside the globe even though the sphere was filled with water. Red told him it was

witch magic that caused this. That's the kind of souvenir sold in Transylvania City.

„What's this,“ Tom asked.

„It's a Halloween globe, but I think in this case someone is trying to scare you. When someone sends you one of these anonymously it's like a threat, a warning.“

„I'm being warned?“

„Yeah,“ Red said taking the globe from Tom. He turned it upside down and shook it before flipping it right side up again. Little black leaves fell all around the graveyard while the candle's flame burned. „The candle will burn out eventually,“ Red said, „probably one this size will last about six months. Sending you this means you got till the candle burns out to leave town or face the consequences. I suspect that big golem last night sent you this or maybe John Baker, who knows?“

„Maybe Rollo will know.“

„Let's hope so,“ Red said, „Else we're going to have to send you out of town for a while.“

Rollo was waiting for them in the darkest corner of the garage. „What you got there?“ he asked spotting the globe Tom was carrying.

„Someone sent me this.“

„Got one just like it, but bigger,“ Rollo said taking it from him and shaking it. „Mine probably won't burn out for another year still. A golem named Stone had it delivered to me after our match. From what I've heard, I'm pretty sure it was him that sent you this one too.“

„Stone?“

„Yeah,“ Rollo said handing Tom the globe back. „He used to be a boxer like me, but no one will step in the ring with him now. He only had a couple of fights after he lost to me—nearly killed both of his opponents. Since then I heard he's been doing dirty work for the Vampire Council—collecting gambling debts and protection money. I'm pretty sure that was his crew you guys ran into last night. That was a nice picture of you in the paper,“ he told Tom. „Stone must have got your name from the paper.“

„Why did he send you one?“

„Well, I'm the only one to have ever beaten him in the ring. Never been defeated myself,“ Rollo said bringing his hands up like a boxer posing in front of cameras. „I wouldn't give Stone a rematch. I'd already announced that was going to be my last fight. He thinks he was robbed, complained to the ref that I'd hit him after the bell rung, but it was all fair and square. He just can't deal with the idea he lost, won't admit to himself that he's not the toughest golem there is. Strength is the only thing Stone admires in any creature or human. Nothing else is even close,“ Rollo explained. „Anyway he sent me one of those to let me know he's going to get his rematch sometime. He will too. Someday I'm going walk out into the alley and he'll be there. Probably would have happened already if he wasn't pretty much confined to Dracula, being Creature Enemy #1.“

„Stone's been working for the Vampire Council?“ Red asked.

„Yeah, that's the scuttlebutt. He's got a crew he works with; another golem, a vampire named Nikasi and a goblin who calls himself Fixx.“

„Well we'll put Nikasi's name on a headstone and be finished with him,“ Red said. „We'll find out if that's Fixx we're holding in a cell. Keep that under your hat,“

Red told Rollo. „There was a human with them last night too. Is there a human that runs around with them?“

„Not that I know of,“ Rollo said shaking his head.

„The vampire that shot Officer Horne was named Dragnonovich. You ever heard of him before?“

„Dragnonovich,“ Rollo repeated. „Yeah I’ve heard of him. Just a low-life that likes to run scams on tourists. I guess he graduated to murder.“

Rollo left after telling them what little more he knew and then, since Red needed to meet with Chief Hall and then get some rest, Tom attended Officer Horne’s funeral without him. Red had Inspector McElroy drive him to the funeral home. Rebecca was going to meet him at the cemetery.

Inspector McElroy dropped Tom off at the Sokoloff funeral home so he could accompany the hearse, a long, black carriage pulled by four black horses, out to the cemetery. The hearse crossed over the same bridge where Officer Horne was killed, and then just across the Black River was the Transylvania Metropolitan Cemetery.

Approaching the cemetery in daylight, Tom got a good look at it now and thought it the creepiest place he had ever seen and it was daytime, although it was cloudy and a storm threatened. He rode atop the hearse next to Mr. Sokoloff, the mortician, who was a close friend of Red’s. Mr. Sokoloff, whose father was Romanian and mother English, spoke with an accent that seemed to be a compromise between his father’s native tongue and his English mother’s. He wore a black hat made of silk that sat atop his head of curly black hair. He also had a waxed mustache that was wider than his face and he snapped at the carriage horses with a long whip, causing them to gallop much too fast for Tom’s liking. All together Mr. Sokoloff came across as a madman of some sort; Mr. Hyde or the like. Red had told Tom not to be put off by Mr. Sokoloff though, as he had been one the finest constable sergeants on the Transylvania City P.D. before retiring to open a funeral home.

Growing among the headstones and monuments inside the wrought-iron fence that encircled the cemetery, were tall, wide trees, some as big around as silos, that many visitors found frightening because of the streaks of scorched black running vertically along them, as if the trees had been on fire once. What part of the trunk is not black is ash grey, and the two colors wrap around the trunk in bands the way camouflaged battleships are painted. Mr. Sokoloff noticed Tom looking at them.

„Obsidian trees,“ he said. „Like many things around here there’s some witch curse behind them looking like that.“

The leaves of the trees are grey also, except just at their edges, where there is a black rind, so that the leaves look like pieces of burnt paper pulled from a fire. The leaves were falling as it was autumn presently, and lying about the cemetery grounds they made it appear as though a fire had burned there recently. In addition, a good number of ravens and crows swept in and out of the branches making cackling and cawing noises like two opposing mobs shouting threats at one another. There was just a little wind blowing, but the branches creaked like neglected barn doors and around the very base of the trees hung a mist that rose from the dark soil like a breath.

Mr. Sokoloff stopped the hearse abruptly and Tom climbed down. The night before, walking through the cemetery, he had found the ground damp and soft, and walking on it felt like walking on something that was alive. A creeping fungus grew at the base of the headstones, which the night before had looked like the hands of the dead clawing their way out of their graves. He noticed too that many of the jack o'lanterns from the night before had been removed, but a new crop would be brought there, starting near dusk.

A golem wearing a cap and a bridge troll wearing an undertaker's hat like Mr. Sokoloff's, approached the back of the hearse. Mr. Sokoloff opened the doors for them to lift Officer Horne's coffin out. The coffin was made from a Black tree and was pitch-black even without benefit of having been painted or stained. The two workers carried the coffin through the cemetery as Mr. Sokoloff and Tom followed just behind. They had passed ropes underneath the coffin and carried it by that means, neither needing to exert themselves much.

Inspector McElroy, Rebecca, Commander Rogers and Miss Kensington stood next to the open grave. Miss Kensington and Rebecca wore immaculate, yet plain enough black hats appropriate for a funeral and black dresses too. A priest, with a long, white beard and wearing a black robe stood at the head of the grave. The priest, who looked like something out of the Middle Ages, wore a silver cross that was as long as a necktie and a black, pear-shaped hat, regal enough for the Pope. Standing next to him was a nun dressed in full regalia, with a starched, white cornette that exposed only a small circle of her face, the top of which was shaped as if to catch rainwater. Her habit was heavy and long enough that it dragged along the ground. She also wore a silver cross. Both she and the priest watched intently as the coffin was lowered into the grave.

When this was done, the golem and troll removed their hats, as did all the men, and the priest finally spoke. He offered a prayer in Latin, and Tom caught a few words here and there, but Miss Kensington must have understood Latin, because both she and the nun knew the appropriate Latin phrases to add to the priest's intercession. When the prayer was finished, the nun handed the priest a chalice hooked to a chain that he began swinging over the grave like a pendulum. In broken English he said, „Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, let this mortal body be returned to its Creator.“

Then both the priest and nun stared at Tom. For a moment Tom wondered if they were looking at him this way because they blamed him for Officer Horne's death, but then Rebecca nudged him. She gestured at the mound of dirt next to the grave and Tom realized they were waiting for him to grab a handful of dirt, which he did, and drop it onto the coffin. Then the golem and troll put their hats back on, grabbed their shovels and began burying Officer Horne's coffin. The bridge troll told Tom a headstone would be erected in a few days; if he wanted to come back then.

Afterward Tom had Inspector McElroy drive Rebecca and him to the library to drop Rebecca off. She was scheduled to guide a library field trip that morning: Birds of the Transylvania Valley.

„Who's Fixx in literature?“ Tom asked as they were headed for the library. „We're holding a goblin at the station who calls himself that.“

„Fixx is a detective in *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne.“

„A detective, really?“

„Yes,“ she said grabbing hold of Tom’s hand. „You’ll be more careful today, won’t you? My hands were shaking all last night.“

„I don’t think there’s anything to worry about now,“ he said kind of sadly. „Probably nothing more exciting will happen now than chasing down goblins that have snatched a sandwich or something.“

„I hope so.“

After they dropped Rebecca off, Inspector McElroy asked Tom if he had been recruited along with Officer Horne.

„I met him on the way here.“

„And he was killed here yesterday and then two days before was killed in the war?“

„That’s right.“

„They say you never get used to it,“

„Dying?“

„Yeah,“ McElroy said. „I was killed at Normandy.“

„Is that right?“

„Yeah,“ he said. „A grenade landed right at my feet and blew my leg off, but no matter now. Put back together like Humpty Dumpty now. I can’t remember the names of many in my troop now,“ he said. „They say you’ll forget most things, just a few people and things will stay with you. Sort of like when you wake up and know you had just been dreaming, but you just can’t seem to recall much of it. Know what I mean?“

„Yeah.“

„I guess there’s some famous people buried out at the cemetery, Blackbeard and Edgar Allen Poe and Anne Boleyn even I’ve heard,“ Inspector McElroy said.

„Is that right?“

„Yeah,“ he said. „I haven’t had time yet to come up here and look for them. That’s the proper way to do it, not use a map or any help, just find them on your own. It’s a popular thing for tourists to do.“

„I can see how it would be.“

Tom wondered then if the headstone of Officer Michael Horne would be added to the list of graves visitors to cemetery would want to hunt down; the T.C.P.D. constable that was murdered his first full day on the job by a vampire.

## Chapter 11

### Thursday, 12pm

A special edition of the paper identified Stone, from anonymous sources, as being the big golem involved in the previous night’s shooting. Tom figured Rollo was the anonymous source. The paper ran the photo of Rebecca and him again just below a mug shot of Stone. Stone was already a wanted man, in fact he was Creature Enemy #1 and for that reason he mostly limited himself to the region of

the valley under the jurisdiction of the Vampire Council where the T.C.P.D. couldn't touch him. His wanted poster already hung in every post-office, but now it was re-printed in the paper.

Publishing Stone's picture proved to be unhelpful though, as calls came in almost immediately reporting he'd been spotted, but it turned out tourists mistook just about any golem wearing a fedora like Stone did in his Wanted Poster, for him. Golems look much alike.

Chief Hall, at Red's request, lied and told the press that the goblin shot in front of St. Paul's Cathedral had later died. Red had already given orders that he not be put in with the other prisoners in the TCPD jail. He was being held in a special cell on the fifth floor of the building and that's what Red and Tom were going to do that afternoon—make the supposedly dead goblin, Fixx, talk.

„Hello, Fixx,“ Red said as they came through the steel door that led to his cell. They carried cups of tea in with them, along with that day's newspaper and a folder Red had under his arm.

Fixx, sitting on the bunk in his cell, was still wearing the custom-tailored suit he'd been brought in wearing, but his expensive hat, (not a discarded hat like street goblins usually wore) was set on a peg just out of his reach through the bars of his cell. It bothers a goblin to no end not having his hat on his head, so Red had instructed for Fixx's hat to be put on the wall there, within sight so as to agitate him.

„We know who you are,“ Red said sitting down on a bench across from Fixx's cell, just below where his hat hung. „Is Fixx the name you'd like on your headstone.“

Red sipped from his teacup then. Goblins love tea, particularly the smell and it was bothering Fixx that they had some and he didn't. Tom didn't care for the stuff, but he was pretending too, just to get on Fixx's nerves.

„What are you talking about?“ Fixx asked.

„Oh, didn't you know? You're dead already.“

„I haven't even been charged with anything yet.“

„I don't need to charge you with anything.“

„What are you talking about?“

„Can you read?“ Red asked.

„Sure I can read some, I'm not some stupid street goblin. I'm a hobgoblin.“

„Read this,“ Red said opening the paper he'd brought with him and pointing to the part he wanted Fixx to read.

Fixx reached between bars and took the paper. He started reading the account of the shootout in front of St. Paul's Cathedral. It was painful listening to Fixx read, Tom thought even nuns wouldn't have the patience to listen to him for long. He read slowly and pronounced several words incorrectly. Finally Fixx got to the part about how a vampire and goblin had both been killed.

„I'm not dead,“ Fixx yelled at the paper.

„Just a minor oversight that we'll soon correct,“ Red told him. „Only us three,“ he said indicating the guard by the door. „Know you're alive still and I don't think any of us has any problem with taking you downstairs and wrapping a noose around your neck.“

The guard by the door shook his head to indicate he had no problem with that.

„You can't do that," Fixx argued. „It's against the law."

„You'd know all about that," Red said opening the folder he'd brought with him and pulling out a stack of mug shots of Fixx taken over the years. He showed Fixx them as he read the crime he was charged with in each arrest; bootlegging, counterfeiting, vagrancy.

„Oh this is my favorite," Red said showing Tom the mug shot before showing Fixx it. In it Fixx looked younger, confused, and the top hat he wore looked misshapen and dirty. „Of course you went by Fagan then—how fitting that you were being charged with pick-pocketing at the time."

„I'm not stupid," Fixx said, „you're doing all this so I'll talk."

Red set the folder down on his lap. „I'm glad you've smartened up over the years," he said flashing the embarrassing mug shot of Fixx at him again. „You're right. I want some information, and if you're smart enough to tell me everything I want to know, I'll see to it that your life inside the Bastille is almost bearable. Else, I'll make it so the paper don't need to correct their statement saying you're dead."

„You think you're holding all the cards, don't you?" Fixx asked.

„Yes I do."

„Maybe I got a card to play."

„Have you? Play it then."

„First you'll have to put something in the kitty."

„I did already."

„I'm going to need something more," Fixx said before telling them he wanted no more than five years out at the Bastille, which is the prison just for creatures. He wanted to be placed in a special wing there, one just for goblins needing protection and assigned an easy inmate job. He told them he wanted a cup of tea with a spoonful of sugar before he would tell them anything though.

„I thought we were using the analogy of a card game and now you're acting like I asked for your list to give Santa," Red said when Fixx was done listing his demands. „Why would I do all that?"

„Because I know something."

„Do you really?"

„I know you two is a couple of imbeciles," Fixx said jabbing a finger through the bars first at Red and then moving his hand down to the next set of bars to jab a finger at Tom.

„Well, I may be an imbecile," Red said, „but I am not going to be spending the rest of my days at Her Majesty's Pleasure out at the Bastille with the rest of the bad goblins."

„You may not be spending them as chief inspector either after what I know gets out," Fixx said. „I would like a cookie with my tea."

Red stared at Fixx a moment, but the thought that they may have missed something must have crossed his mind. „Okay, but you'd better not be bluffing," he said standing up and setting his tea cup down on the bench. „Or else the next person you'll be meeting with is the priest offering you last rites," he said heading out the cell area.

„He's not going to like it," Fixx said turning to Tom. „And I'm a hobgoblin, not an ordinary goblin."



„What’s the difference?“

„Hobgoblins are all around more impressive than our cousins—taller, smarter and better looking,“ Fixx said and Tom shot him a look like he just didn’t see it. „Can’t fool me,“ Fixx said. „It’s even in that manual they give you guys. Look it up. And you shot me in my leg,“ he said showing Tom the bandage wrapped around his thin leg. „You could have killed me. I figure you owe me.“

„Well, you shot out our windshield, so I figure we’re even.“

Fixx sat down again as they waited for Red to return. Tom occasionally sipped his tea. Finally Red came back carrying a cup of tea and a cookie even.

„Just like you wanted,“ he said sliding it between bars.

„Five years,“ Fixx said taking the cup from him. „That’s the deal I want.“

„As long as your information is worth something—I’ll see that’s arranged.“

„I’m working for you now?“ Fixx asked, poking a finger at Red.

„Yes,“ Red said. „You’re on our team now. Let’s start with some names. We know Dragonovich already. Give me the names of the creatures and the one human you were with last night.“

„Gibraltar is the one golem’s name—the one that was driving. The vampire you killed was Nikasi, and of course the big golem was Stone. I’m sure you’ve heard of him. I don’t know the human’s name, that was the first time I ever met him and he didn’t offer it.“

„Which one of you killed Dodger? Not that it matters much—you all had a hand in it.“

„That ain’t right,“ Fixx said jumping up and spilling his tea. „It didn’t happen like that.“

„How’d it happen then?“

„Dragonovich killed him. He ain’t part of our crew. Last night was the first time we ever had anything to do with Dragonovich and none of us had any idea he was going to do that. I might be a thief and a con man, sure I done some bootlegging and some smuggling, cheated at cards and...“

„What’s the point?“ Red interrupted.

„The point is I ain’t never killed anybody—and I didn’t know Dragonovich was going to slit Dodger’s throat like he done.“

„You were trying to kill us last night.“

„No,“ Fixx said poking a finger through the bars, „you were trying to kill us. You started shooting first.“

„What were you doing with Dragonovich in the first place?“

„Dragonovich showed up at Dracula Manor Tuesday night saying he could lay his hands on some mice if the Vampire Council would help him find a street goblin named Dodger. So they sent us with him to find Dodger and we did. We drove him to the scrap yard just to scare him some and it worked because Dodger starts running his mouth off, telling us if we let him go, he’ll tell us where to find some frogs. So we tell him he’s crazy, that there hasn’t been a frog here for three hundred years, and he says there is now.“ Fixx pulled the blanket off his bunk then and used it to wipe up the tea he’d spilt.

„Go on.“

„Dodger told us he'd sold the mice to John Baker of Royal Street. And then Stone says he's heard that name before and we should go back and check in with the council's secretary before we do anything else.”

„And then what?”

„And then Nikasi says; ‚What do we do with him?’—meaning Dodger and that's when Dragonovich says ‚I'll take care of him’ and before we could have even stopped him he slits Dodger's throat.“

„And you took his head?”

„We didn't want him to be identified.“

„Then what did you do?”

„We headed back to Dracula Manor, and after about twenty minutes, we were told to go find John Baker. And that's when they sent that human along with us because he knew John Baker. He'd set John Baker up with some witch to turn him into a vampire. That's what I wanted to tell you—John Baker had himself turned into a vampire.“

„We knew that already,” Red said, „but you're saying the human there last night set him up with the witch that turned him?”

„That's what I'm saying.“

„You went to the Vamp's mill looking for John Baker?”

„That's right, but we didn't find him there so we headed over to his apartment, but we didn't find him there either. So we searched his apartment, but didn't find the frogs and we weren't sure they really existed anyway.“

„How come you weren't able to smell the frogs there?”

„Mr. Baker had left a bunch of scented candles burning to conceal their smell. If we had had time to air the room out, I would have found those frogs.“

„Why wasn't Dragonovich with you then?”

„When we'd gone back to Dracula Manor he was talking to the secretary there and then all of a sudden he left.“

„That's probably when he came here and asked about Officer Horne's whereabouts,” Tom said.

„Probably,” Fixx said. „Anyway, you haven't let me tell you what's so important.“

„Go ahead,” Red told him.

„You might want to send someone over to that flat you ambushed us coming out of last night, and see if you can catch John Baker,” Fixx said. „I'm sure he's long gone though, because he's been two steps ahead of you the whole time. I mean ahead of us,” he said, correcting himself. „I'm a bona fide secret informant for the Transylvania City P.D. now.“

„Why?”

„They sent us there to get three frogs,” Fixx said holding up three fingers as thin and knobby as twigs and Tom's heart sank. „Dodger told us there were three...”

Red shot Tom a look. „You said you saw two frogs on the bridge?”

„Maybe there was three,” Tom said weakly.

„No,” Fixx said. „There was not. Baker kept the third one. Baker talked us into letting him keep one—made a real good argument for it. He poured some water and two of the frogs into the empty bottle of Vamp's and kept one in the tea kettle.“

„I should have expected some trick,“ Red said banging his fist on the bench, causing his cup of tea to slosh over its rim.

Fixx continued, „He promised if we let him keep one, he'd do something wonderful for the Vampire Council. I think he needs that human to do something for him now as part of his plan.“

„Like what?“

„I don't know. They didn't let me in on that part.“

Red stood up abruptly and yelled for the guard. „Don't let anyone else talk to him,“ he instructed the guard, handing Fixx his hat from off the peg. „Get him anything he wants. Let's go,“ Red shouted at Tom and Tom stood up quickly, spilling some tea onto his shirt.

„I'd like a hat with T.C.P.D. on it,“ Fixx thought to yell as Red and Tom hurried down the hallway, „and for someone to read me a book!“

Red knew that John Baker would not be found at his flat and of course neither would the third frog, but they hurried there still. They drew their weapons as they entered the building and ran up the stairs. Tom thought Red would pick the lock again, but instead he kicked the door in and it flew open and banged against the wall and they rushed inside.

The place looked the same as it had the night before; the glasses and one bottle of rye whiskey still on the table. The tea kettle was sitting on the stove, but it was empty now, the frog probably being carried around in an empty bottle now. There was something new in the room though, a small scalpel stuck into the kitchen table, so that if you ran your finger across it, it would have reverberated back and forth like a tuning fork. Red unstuck it and studied it a moment and Tom saw the color drain from his face as he did. Red reached for a chair and lowered himself down like he was suddenly very tired. He took his hat off, set it on the table and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. He handed Tom the scalpel.

„You have better eyes than I do,“ he said, „What does it say there?“

Just then Tom realized that nobody in Britannia needed glasses. He had not seen a single person with them his whole time there and he thought that was something a detective should have picked up on much sooner. He didn't know why Red wanted what was inscribed on the scalpel read out loud, but it was not because he couldn't read it himself. Tom looked closely at the words and date edged onto the handle of the scalpel.

„It says, St. Thomas Hospital—1888,“ he read. The name of the company that had manufactured the scalpel was printed there too and Tom read that also.

„No wonder he asked me if Chief Hall had been with Scotland Yard once,“ Red said staring out the window, and Tom remembered Red had told him how John Baker had asked him a number of questions when Red had interrogated him after his arrest.

Red slammed his fist on the kitchen table then and yelled, „They should have told us they were going to release him here!“ Tom had never seen Red act like this, he was angry one moment and then discouraged the next, and it had everything to do with the scalpel. „There's a phone in the store next door, right?“ Red asked more calmly and Tom nodded. „Go call Chief Hall. Ask him to come here right away. It's best if he doesn't hear it at the station. I'll wait here.“

It took less than a minute for Tom to get to the small grocery store and ask to use their phone. A woman showed him the phone and he cranked it and waited for the operator to come on. He asked to be connected to the police station, and identified himself to the operator there and asked to speak with Chief Hall. He had to hold awhile and then the chief came on the line and asked what he wanted. Tom told him Red wanted to see him right away and Tom gave him the address. It was a short conversation and then Tom went out the store. Coming out, he looked up at the window of John Baker's flat and saw Red sitting at the kitchen table still, staring ahead blankly.

„He's on his way,“ Tom told Red as he stepped back into the kitchen. Red barely nodded.

„Just us three will know,“ Red said, seeming to come out of his thoughts. „I'll wait till the chief is here, if you don't mind waiting.“

„I don't mind.“

„You did wonderful last night,“ Red said. „I'll put you in for a commendation, Jones too.“

That was the first time Tom ever felt uncomfortable around Red. He started looking for something to do and he picked up one of the glasses off the table that had some liquor in it still. He held it to his nose. It had an odd smell; like there were two odors there, but he could not identify either of them.

„This Vamp's smells awful,“ he told Red.

„It's supposed to smell sweet. Taste sweet too. That's why it's so popular.“

Tom put the glass's contents to the tip of his tongue. „It doesn't taste sweet.“

„Let me see,“ Red said reaching for the glass. Tom handed him it and Red sniffed the glass before tasting it. A puzzled look came over his face. „That's vodka mixed with Vamp's“ he determined, standing up abruptly. „Funny we didn't find any vodka here yesterday when we went through the place and I don't see any bottles of it now, so one of them visitors last night must have brought it with him.“

„Must have,“ Tom said, not seeing what importance, if any, this meant, but he was glad to see Red regaining his old, engaging self.

Red smiled like he knew something Tom didn't. „Only a Russian would carry vodka around with him and mix it with Vamp's,“ he explained. „That's means the human here last night is Russian and if we can find him, then maybe he can lead us to John Baker. Fixx told us the human here last night had a job to do for Mr. Baker and there's not a lot of Russians here in Transylvania City. That narrows it down quite a bit.“

They heard a car pulling up outside and Tom looked out the window and saw Chief Hall arriving.

„He'll take this hard,“ Red said looking out the window also.

## **Chapter 12**

**Thursday, 2pm**

Tom heard Chief Hall coming up the back stairs, moving quickly for a man his age. The door to the flat was open; hanging by just the one hinge now since Red had busted it. When Chief Hall appeared, he looked at the broken door and then at Red and Tom standing at the kitchen table. He must have known bad news awaited him, because he walked over slowly, took his hat off and sat down at the kitchen table before asking Red why he had called him there. There was a still some rye whiskey left in the bottle, and Red poured it in a clean glass and set it before Chief Hall, who lifted it up and took a gulp.

Red handed him the scalpel then and lightly tapped on the words printed on it with the tip of his finger. Chief Hall looked curiously at Red a moment before looking at the scalpel. When he had read the words imprinted on it, he set the surgical instrument down in front of him and sat looking at it, bewilderingly.

„He’s here,“ Red told him. „He left that here for us to find.“

„How can this be? He belongs in the Dark Realms.“

„I’m sure he spent a lifetime or two there, but the Administration must have had to release him, and they probably sent him here to be with the rest of the monsters. They should have informed us they were sending him here,“ Red said smacking his hand on the kitchen table again. „He must have kept this scalpel on his person the whole time he was in the Dark Realm, sewn into his favorite jacket probably, so he was certain to have it on him when he died again. Just like Officer Horne brought that canteen across with him.“

„Where is he now?“

„Gone underground,“ Red replied, „And worse, it seems he’s had himself turned into a vampire.“

„Find him.“

„I will, but obviously he’s been planning this for some time. He asked about you when I was questioning him the other day. He recognized your name from back when you were an inspector in London, and that’s why he left this here,“ Red said poking the scalpel. „He’s reminding us we never caught him.“

Red looked at Tom then, knowing he was anxious to know who they were talking about.

„We’ve seen other scalpels exactly like this,“ Red said pointing at it. „Same trademark and manufacturer—scalpels made for St. Thomas Hospital in London back in 1888. Chief Hall was an inspector back then. I was just a young constable, but I was shown two scalpels just like this one,“ he said picking it up. „One had been left on a murder victim—a young woman. The other had been mailed to Scotland Yard.“

„With a note,“ Chief Hall added.

„That’s right and more murders followed. I’m sure you’ve heard of them,“ he told Tom. „I’m talking about Jack the Ripper.“

„Jack the Ripper?“

„None other. He left this scalpel behind so we would know it’s him. And apparently he’s planning more of his insane games. Why else would he run? Why else would he have himself made a vampire? He wants to be even more diabolical this go-round.“

„We collected the rest of the scalpels from this same batch,“ Chief Hall said looking up at Tom. „The manufacturer told us there were thirty six of them and we rounded up thirty five.“

„Now we have the 36<sup>th</sup>,“ Red said setting the scalpel back down on the table. „Or rather a perfect copy of it.“

„The public was never told any of this. Only a handful of men on the force and the Ripper himself knew any of this,“ Chief Hall said. „We had him trapped on the Westminster Bridge after he'd sent one of his silly riddles to Scotland Yard and we figured it out—it was a nursery rhyme reference to Big Ben and we laid a trap for him, but just as we were closing in, he ran onto the bridge. I was one of the men who chased him that night, but rather than be caught—he leapt into the Thames, drowned himself, never to be heard from again.“

„Until now,“ Red said.

„Chose to take his own life rather than be caught and identified.“

„That says a lot about him,“ Red added. „His greatest fear was not death, but rather that he would be caught and no longer pose any kind of threat. The most important thing for Jack was always that he strike fear into the hearts of women and children. He did not care to go on living if all he was going to be was just another deranged mind locked up in an asylum. That's why he'll kill again.“

„Must have carried this scalpel with him into the Dark Realms,“ Chief Hall said placing his finger on it.

„What about the press?“ Red asked. „Should we warn the public that Jack the Ripper is here? I'm certain he'll kill again, why else would he leave this scalpel behind for us to find?“

„I'm sure that's exactly what he wants,“ Chief Hall replied. „To be infamous again, to spread fear like he did all through London once, but you're right—our highest obligation is to protect the citizens and visitors of Transylvania City. I'll have to inform the press the Ripper is here and the Administration.“

„I'm sure the Administration already knows. I'm sure he was sent here because they realized he should not be allowed among respectable society. That's why John Baker was not given travel privileges. We have something we did not have last time,“ Red told Chief Hall. „We have his photo. Miss Kensington can pull his booking photo from the other night for you. Maybe we'll catch him before he can hurt anyone.“

„I imagine he's hiding out in Dracula,“ Chief Hall said. „I'll contact the Vampire Council, but if they refuse to grant us an arrest warrant—don't let that stop you.“

„It won't.“

„Good. Anything more you need from me now?“ Chief Hall asked, standing up.

„No, but I'm going to send Jones and Dunne out there today. See if they can pick up his trail.“

„Okay Red,“ Chief Hall said putting his hat back on. „I'll see you back at the station.“

Tom listened to Chief Hall's shoes landing on the stairs as he went out the building; they seemed heavier and slower than when he had come in.

„It might be nice to know what potions one could concoct if they had a frog,“ Red mentioned to Tom after Chief Hall left. „I'm sure Rebecca could help us with that. Here you hold on to this,“ he said picking the scalpel up from the table and

handing Tom it. „I’m putting you in charge of finding the worse fiend London ever saw. Turn this city upside down if you have to. Jack the Ripper was the most diabolical mind Scotland Yard ever went up against and I want him found before he can hurt anybody.“

Tom nodded that he would do his best. „You mentioned John Baker—Jack—does not hold travel privileges,“ Tom reminded Red.

„That’s right.“

„And we know he asked the Russian here last night to do something for him.“

„Are you thinking Jack needs that big Russian to travel out of Transylvania City for him?“

„That’s what I’m thinking.“

„I’ll make a call to the passport office from the library. Good thinking,“ Red said slapping Tom on the shoulder. „I’ll make you the fastest detective ever to wear the black shield if you keep thinking like that.“

Rebecca spotted Tom coming into the library and Red went up to her and asked to use the phone. She placed one on the counter, but Red asked her if there was another somewhere more private.

„There’s one in the director’s office,“ Rebecca said starting toward there.

They followed her to an office and Red went in, picked the phone up off the desk and asked to be connected to the train office. Tom and Rebecca stood near the doorway while Red waited for the ticket office to come on the line. When they did Red identified himself and asked them to look for the names of Transylvania City or Dracula residents buying a train ticket for today or the next that looked to be Russian.

„You know like Smirnoff or Tolstoy,“ Red said.

He tapped his fingers on the desk while he waited for them to search their manifest, and then Red winked at Tom when he was told they’d found some. Red wrote the information in his notebook, said thanks and hung up.

„They had three Russian sounding names on their manifest; Michal and Ivana Ivanovich, Leo Breshnev and Vladimir Kiraleko. Kiraleko left this morning for Dublin. The married couple leave soon for Londonium,“ Red said reading from his notes, „and Breshnev has a ticket tomorrow for Londonium. I wish I knew which if any of them is our man. Maybe I’ll try calling that number again. The one we found in Mr. Baker’s flat,“ he said not wanting to refer to him as Jack in front of Rebecca.

Red picked up the phone again as he thumbed back through his notebook for the number, telling the operator it and then waiting. „Yes, hello I’m looking for a big Russian fellow...“

Red smiled and put his hand over the mouthpiece. „He called me a dirty name and told me he’s not running a dating service out there,“ he said before removing his hand and speaking into the phone again. „I thought maybe you had someone like that who works there,“ he said before pausing again. „Okay fine. Same to you.“

Red hung up the phone a little angry then. „Maybe that was not my best idea, but I got another. Let’s you and I go down to the ticket office,“ he said pointing at Tom. „In order to travel on the train you have to show identification and that’s

matched to the photo and information on file there. Let's go pull these three names."

Red started out the office while Tom said goodbye to Rebecca. Tom hurried after him, but then Red stopped and turned back around looking at Rebecca. "You wanted to pretend to be his wife," he reminded her, jabbing his thumb at Tom. "Why don't you come along with us? Bring a bag with you. You two just might be taking a little trip together."

Tom walked Rebecca home so she could pack some things, and then the three of them went to the ticket office and pulled the photos and identification of the three Russian travelers. The Ivanovichs' were both in their seventies with white hair, too old to be the man they were looking for. Breshnev was five foot seven—too short. Vladimir Kiraleko was six foot four and looked like their man although neither Red nor Tom had gotten a good look at him the night before. His address was listed as the Shadows Hotel, which Red said was owned by the Vampire Benevolent Society and a lot of low-lives on the payroll of one or the other Vampire Council businesses listed it as their address.

Red's idea was that Tom would try and find Vladimir Kiraleko in Dublin and figure out what he was up to. He sent Rebecca along to help him find his way around, since Tom was new to Britannia. Tom and Rebecca caught the next train to Essex where they would switch to a train headed to Dublin. Rebecca brought along a copy of the *Salem Witch's Handbook* to look through and *Great Expectations*, which she said she'd read to Tom on the train. Even give him the goblin-version, which meant skipping from one action or suspense part to the next, omitting the romance and social commentary typical of Dickens' novels. She said the Transylvania Library and some of the churches held story time for goblins, where a member of the staff, well versed in particular novel, read it to a goblin audience, embellishing and editing as they went along so as to hold a goblin's interest. This is how goblins got started calling themselves after the various characters in Dickens, Verne, Bronte and other novels.

At the town of Saratoga they disembarked and waited for the train coming back from Dublin, because, they'd learned, it would be the same train and crew that Vladimir Kiraleko would have traveled with to Dublin. Tom wanted to show Kiraleko's photo to them and see what they remembered about him. He was hoping someone had overheard him mention where he was staying.

When the train arrived, Tom took out his identification and asked the conductor to hold the train just a few minutes while he showed Vladimir Kiraleko's photo around. The conductor explained he did not need to hold the train, since he remembered the man in the photograph. He said he had been *trouble* bothering some young ladies on the train and occasionally sipping from a flask he had in his pocket. The most surprising part, the conductor explained, was his friend didn't say a word when he was asked to speak to the Russian about his behavior.

"I would have thought better of one of your firemen," the conductor said, "especially being in uniform and all."

"He was traveling with a member of the Transylvania Fire Brigade?" asked Tom.

"That's right. A big fellow. They both got off Hampton Square."

"We passed Hampton Square an hour ago," Rebecca mentioned.



„Why did they get off at Hampton Square?“ Tom asked the conductor. „They had tickets for Dubhlinn didn't they?“

„They did I remember. I don't know why they got off early, but I was glad to see them go.“

Rebecca and Tom boarded the train right then, since it was headed to Hampton Square. They used the time to look through the witches' handbook searching for a spell that could be used to transform someone into someone else's likeness. They found it easy enough, but the potion required a mouse and then some other items banned from Transylvania City. Somehow Jack must have laid his hands on them. The potion allowed the one drinking it, the ability to take on the appearance of someone else simply by touching them, at least until the stroke of midnight. They would not have the power of speech while under the effects of the potion and often a complete transformation is not achieved.

„I've read that there are some other limitations too,“ Rebecca said.

„Like what?“

„Like a female could never appear to be a man and they must be of roughly the same height and build.“

The prohibited ingredients, besides the mouse, were wormwood and arsenic, but Rebecca thought those items could be obtained with a little cunning.

It was dark when they arrived at the Hampton Square station. On the outskirts of town Tom could see some tall lights that had been erected in a field for some event. He asked and was told that the circus was in town. They of course headed there, since Hampton Square on any other day, while very nice, offered nothing else that any other town along that same route did not offer also.

The crowd was well into the thousands. There were three, tall, canvas tents held up by poles, the largest in the middle and as big as an airplane hangar. Circuses here are much the same as they are on Earth—but there were other small tents and pavilions too, offering other entertainment; Britannia's largest horse, a fortune card teller, a snake charmer and more.

Tom began showing Kiraleko's photo around; the ticket salesman did not recognize him, nor did the operator of the Ferris wheel, the fortune teller did not recognize him although she did foretell a dangerous journey for him. Finally, they found someone who remembered seeing the man in the photo—the bartender at the beer garden was certain he had sold him two pints, but had no clue where he had gone next. Continuing down the midway, Rebecca spotted a Kissing Booth where a beautiful, gypsy girl sold kisses for two crowns. Remembering what the train conductor had said about Vladimir's conduct on the train; Rebecca was sure he would have solicited her business if he had come this way. Tom showed the photo to the gypsy girl and asked if she had seen the man. She said she would answer him if he bought a kiss from her.

Tom glanced at Rebecca as he pulled some money out of his pocket and set it on the counter. Rebecca gave him a look like she did not see the necessity of this, but Tom acted like it was all in the line of duty. The gypsy girl quickly gave him a kiss, but followed it up with another longer, more passionate one. Rebecca stared at her.

„The second one was free,“ the gypsy girl said handing Tom some change. She took the photo out of his hand and studied it. „This man was bothering me earlier,“ she said.

„Was a fireman with him?“

„No,“ she said, „but one of our security personnel was and I asked him to keep this man from bothering me,“ she said tapping on the photograph. „He seemed reluctant to do so, but finally grabbed this man and pulled him away without saying a word.“

„Where did they go?“

The gypsy girl pointed down the path that ran between the large, circus tents.

„Thanks.“

„Anytime,“ she told him.

„Are you going to put that kiss on your expense report or was that a personal expense?“ Rebecca asked as they went down the path.

„Purely in the line-of-duty,“ Tom said as they approached a burly guard standing in front of a sign that said the area, behind a wire fence, was restricted to circus personnel only.

Tom showed the guard his identification and then held Vladimir Kiraleko’s photo up and explained he was looking for this man.

„He was here about an hour ago,“ the guard said nodding at Vladimir Kiraleko’s picture, „but he waited here while the circus security man he was with went inside. Wasn’t long after they left that we discovered the reptile trailer had been broken into. The local police are back there now looking into the matter.“

„Can I talk to them?“ Tom asked. „It might be related to the work I’m doing.“

„Maybe you’d better,“ the burly guard said. „Go on in, they’re over that way,“ he said pointing.

Rebecca and Tom stepped inside the restricted area, which was enclosed by a tall, barbwire fence. A number of policemen and circus personnel were standing outside a barn-like structure made of sheet metal, where apparently, the circus animals are kept. Tom approached the local chief of police, introduced himself, and asked what had happened.

The chief said he would tell him, but only if Tom promised to keep it under his hat, which is a popular expression here. It seems someone had broken into a special trailer, inside the larger building, located within the restricted area. The trailer housed the circus’ reptiles and apparently is to be tightly guarded on the Administration’s instructions. A guard was found knocked unconscious just by the trailer.

„We can’t figure out how they were able to kick the door in,“ the police chief said.

„The door was kicked in?“

„A steel door, let me show you,“ the chief said leading Rebecca and Tom to the trailer, like a small railroad car, the door of which was smashed in.

„Is anything missing from in there?“

Tom was told three poisonous cobras had been taken, having been brought here from another realm, which was a most unusual occurrence. The cobras were quite a loss to the circus, and more specifically to Raji the snake charmer, because Rebecca and Tom learned, they were irreplaceable and Raji had nothing else quite

as menacing to charm out of his baskets. Tom suggested the train station be watched and was told that was already being done.

The chief said he could not figure how this could have happened, since for someone to break into the reptile house, first they would have to pass by the guards at the entrance to the restricted area. Then they would have to enter the animal building, the entrance of which is guarded by burly men sitting on chairs, all who are long-time circus employees and swore no one they did not know had gone past them. They also swore, without being asked, that they had not been drinking. Lastly, the reptile trailer had been broken into. It had been locked and has a steel door and walls, but by some means the door had been kicked in. Apparently this was a feat of strength the Realm's Strongest Man felt even he could not accomplish, for he was asked to come over from his nearby exhibit and offer his opinion. In fact Sergei, as he was also called, was trying to reproduce the feat by kicking at a similar steel door and trailer with his boot, but to no effect. Next he took a sledge hammer to it, but made no real headway other than to scratch and dent the steel door some, causing a loud enough racket in the process that a lion in a cage nearby became upset and began to roar.

„I guess it's not so important how they did it, but what are they planning to do with three poisonous cobras anyhow?“ the police chief asked, watching Sergei and his assistant, Hugo the Horrendous, both go at the door now. „You say you're from Transylvania City?“ he asked, turning toward Tom.

„That's right.“

„What brings you here?“

„We're looking for this man,“ he said showing him Vladimir Kiraleko's photo.

„I don't know why anyone would want those dangerous cobras,“ the chief said, „unless they could sneak them into where you're from, where some witch might have use for them.“

„That's what I was thinking,“ Tom said.

„Maybe you'd better put in a call to your chief.“

„Where could I find a phone?“

„The police station. I'll take you there.“

„Okay, but I'd like to ask a favor of the circus people first.“

Tom approached one of the circus managers and asked if they feed these cobras mice. The circus manager nodded. He asked if he might have a few, explaining he'd feed them to the snakes if he was able to locate them.

„I'll get you some,“ the man said heading off.

While they waited, someone wondered out loud if a bull elephant could have been used to smash in the steel door. So, one was quickly brought to the trailer Sergei had already softened up. Rebecca and Tom watched as the elephant, after some prodding, rammed the door with its head. The door gave none and instead the trailer rocked almost to the point of tipping over. The mice arrived then and the police chief led them to his car.

„You have any idea how they might have smashed that door in?“ the chief asked as he drove them to the police station.

„A golem, a real big one named Stone might have done it,“ Tom answered.

„Well I'll admit there were a lot of freaks walking around back there, but even a golem would have caught someone's attention,“ the chief said.

„A few days back some mice were smuggled into Transylvania City,“ Tom said. „If some witch laid her hands on one of them and few other prohibited items, well then, she could have made a potion that could make even a golem capable of taking on the appearance of whoever they touched.“

„That explains it,“ the chief said.

Once they arrived at the station, the only place in Hampton Square where a call could be placed back to Transylvania City, Tom was able to talk to Red. He told him that three poisonous cobras had been stolen from the circus here and were, likely, headed his way.

„I'll double up the dogs and put another bear or two to work at the train station,“ Red said. „We'll put a second contingent of constables there too.“

„There's something else.“

„What?“

„You've got a golem coming your way. Stone I'd bet.“

„He could never slip out of here,“ Red said, surprised.

„He could if he had the ability to take on the likeness of someone else,“ Tom explained. „A fireman in this case that didn't need a ticket to get on the train.“

„A potion?“ Red asked. „What would a witch need to make such a powerful potion?“

„A mouse for starters. Rebecca and I looked through the witch's handbook and figured the two other things she'd need were wormwood and arsenic.“

„Absinthe,“ Red said like it was a dirty word. „I wouldn't have thought it, but Jack must know how to put absinthe back into a form of wormwood potent enough for a potion. The arsenic would not be too difficult for some witch that's been living here the past nine hundred years and probably still has some lying around from before arsenic was banned.“

„That explains it.“

„Well, good work,“ Red said. „At least you warned us Stone's coming; we'll be ready for him. I suspect they'll try and make a run for it at the station. There is no way the bears won't pick up the scent of those snakes and you know what? I'll have some goblins sniffing around there too.“

„We're on our way back.“

„They're probably already on their way here. I suppose you'll miss all the fun,“ Red told Tom.

Rebecca and Tom caught the next train back to Essex and then caught the *Vulture* back to Transylvania City. When the *Vulture* arrived at the black gate, he noticed extra constables on duty there, one carrying a machine gun. Crossing the Black River Bridge, he looked ahead to see if there was some indication that something had happened already at the station, but seeing lots of constables standing around and two fire engines parked just outside the gates, he figured Stone had not returned yet. As the *Vulture* pulled into the station, the bloodhounds on the platform began barking, a bear growled, and a goblin yelled out that he smelt something. Tom pulled his pistol thinking the snakes must be on board his train. He told Rebecca to stay put while he headed for the back of the passenger car, wanting to get outside right away. Looking out the window, he saw Red on the platform shouting out orders.

As soon as Tom stepped out onto the landing of the railcar, a bloodhound came flying at him and knocked him back into the aisle. Tom kicked at the dog, trying to keep it from biting him, but he was glad that the bear had not charged him. The dog was pulled off soon enough, but a shotgun was thrust in Tom's face then. Red's finger was on the trigger.

„It's me,“ Tom shouted.

„How do I know you're not Stone pretending to be you?“

„It's not Stone,“ Miss Kensington spoke from directly behind Red. „That's Flynn, that's him.“

„How do you know?“

„He can talk,“ she said. „I just explained that to you. Only a witch has the power of speech under this spell.“

„Oh right,“ Red said as he pulled the gun back. Behind him was a host of officers disappointed they could not shoot somebody. „Why are these dogs going nuts then? Check every inch of this train,“ he instructed the officers.

„It's me,“ Tom said, having forgotten about the mice in his pocket.

„What do you mean?“

„I have some mice,“ he whispered. „I thought they might come in handy. You know, fight fire with fire.“

„Oh, well, they might. Why don't you hand them over to Miss Kensington?“

Tom reached in his pocket and took out a small box with two mice in it and handed it to Miss Kensington. Rebecca and Tom looked at each other and made an expression like, oops. „So they haven't shown up yet?“

„No,“ Red said. „And there are only two more trains before midnight.“

„Well I guess I can help then.“

„You already did. You broke the tension with that stunt,“ Red said pulling a newspaper from his coat pocket. „The evening edition of *The Raven* came out while you were gone,“ he said as he unfolded the paper and showed Tom the front page. The headline screamed, *Jack the Ripper in Transylvania!*

Tom looked at the photograph just below the headline. The caption claimed the picture was of John Baker; suspected to be Jack the Ripper, but instead of John Baker's booking photo from the other night, it looked like its negative. The photo showed a human face with wide, illuminated eyes while every other facial feature was just blackness. Not only that, but the ink had run and John Baker was unrecognizable. In fact the photograph seemed not a picture of a man, but instead one of a ghoul or monster. Like a face seen in a House of Horrors' mirror; stretched-out and grotesque.

„What happened?“ Rebecca asked looking at it.

„Every paper came out like that,“ Red explained. „Some witch magic involved most certainly.“

„A very powerful witch,“ Miss Kensington added. „He's not working alone.“

Tom handed Red the paper back and looked around. The area just outside the station—at least as close as the constables there would allow—was packed with people who heard a rumor that something was happening. Barricades had been thrown up and two fire engines and a paddy wagon were parked just outside the gate, it being Red's thinking a fire hose might come in handy on a golem trying to run.

„Red?“ Tom asked.

„Yeah.“

„Can I take Rebecca up to the cafeteria and let her watch from there?“

„Sure. Bring me a donut if you think of it.“

Just then people in the crowd began pointing up at the sky and soon the whole crowd was looking up and cheering. They were looking at what looked like a small meteor passing just over the city from east to west. As it passed in front of the moon, Tom saw it was a witch on a long broom; the bristles of the broom on fire and sparks following her.

„What is that?“ he asked.

„She’s been putting on a show for the last hour or so,“ Red said watching her pass overhead. „Whoever she is, she must have gotten hold of some of those mice smuggled in.“

„We figure she’s the one helping Jack,“ Miss Kensington said. „It was probably her who caused his photograph in the paper to be ruined.“

Tom watched with delight as the witch whipped by overhead. Her broom was close to eight feet long and thick around as a fence post. „She couldn’t fly out of the valley, could she?“ he asked.

„No,“ answered Miss Kensington. „She could never fly high enough to get over the tree tops. Brooms are not really meant to fly. I wish she would try though, her broom would give out and she’d come crashing down. Those cliff walls can’t be flown over, that’s one reason Transylvania City was built here,“ Miss Kensington said.

Rebecca and Tom started through the crowd still watching the witch fly across the sky. Tom took Rebecca to the cafeteria and sat her at a table that had a view of the train station a block away. No constables or inspectors were in the cafeteria as all were on duty, but some ladies from the typist pool and a couple of goblins who worked in the cafeteria were there. He got her a cup of tea before telling her he needed to get back, but before he left, and just as the witch zipped past the cafeteria windows; Tom bent lower and kissed her. A cheer went up from the crowd out on the street, ostensibly for the witch passing by again, but Tom felt like they were cheering him.

The *Vulture* would not complete another loop down to Essex and back for a while yet. Right then it was still making its way around the city, probably just then leaving Train Station 2 out by the Vamp’s distillery, after having stopped for barrels of Vamp’s to be loaded. It would make one last stop before heading out of the valley, so the TCPD’s train division with its bloodhounds, could search through the freight and luggage to make sure no vampire or goblin, or any creature was trying to escape.

Tom remembered Red’s donut and brought it with him to the station. He handed it to Red and asked where he’d like him to be.

„Right by my side,“ Red answered.

Tom looked through the crowd of constables and fireman near the station and spotted Inspectors Dunne, Jones and McElroy and two others he had not even been introduced to, nearby. They were all dressed the same, with long raincoats either of black or gray color, and hats; straw, bowler or the kind Tom preferred. Inspectors Jones and McElroy carried 49ers and near them were two constables

who carried something that looked like short bazookas, but were actually guns used to shoot steel nets over golems or trolls.

Miss Kensington had gone into the train's ticket office and was working the phones there while Chief Hall paced back and forth in front of the windows. Commander Rogers, head of the Goon Squad, stood just outside the door there.

Tom killed the time waiting for the next train, walking up and down the train platform which had been cleared of passengers. There must have been a dozen bloodhounds and several black bears pacing with him. Looking towards the TCPD building, he could just make out Rebecca in the window. Occasionally, the witch passed overhead, but when it was about two minutes till the train was due, she flew off and the crowd turned its attention towards the station. Soon they were chanting; *We want a train, we want a train!*

Their wish was about to be answered. The spot where the tracks curved coming out of the forest the other side of the iron bridge was dark until a lantern was lit there to indicate the train had arrived and the gate had been opened. There was so much noise coming from the crowd that only those closest to Red could hear the instructions he shouted.

As the *Vulture* began emerging from the forest, its headlight reflected off the fog and mist hanging over the tracks, and Tom saw a constable running down the tracks frantically waving his arm. As the train caught up to him, the constable jumped out of its way to avoid being run over.

„Did you see that?“ Tom shouted pointing down the tracks, trying to be heard over the crowd.

„I did,“ Red answered. „This is it boys!“ he shouted up and down the platform and constables stepped closer and drew their weapons.

The crowd grew even louder as the *Vulture* crossed the bridge and neared the station; the train though was not slowing down any, but instead was picking up speed. The excited bloodhounds and two bears had to be dragged back from the edge of the platform. Inspectors Jones and McElroy pulled back the bolts of their machine guns as the *Vulture* approached the station. Everyone looked toward the front compartment of the train and saw Stone in the cab where the engineer should have been. Stone reached over and pulled on the train's whistle as the train blew into the station. He took his hat off and waved it out the small window there at the crowd as he sped by.

Stone had used the train's stopping at the city gate to make his way to the engine compartment and hi-jack the train. That was what the constable running toward them had wanted to warn them about.

Inspector Dunne opened fire with his pistol, shooting out the front window of the train, but Stone ducked down behind the engine. Red immediately yelled for the firing to stop, not wanting to risk any passengers getting hurt. The firing ceased and the train rushed past the platform and right out the other side of the station. As it did, Tom watched a number of blurred faces, some children's, rush by, many with their hands pressed against the train windows. The train was packed with tourists for the Halloween season.

All hell broke loose then. Red made for the ticket office to give Miss Kensington instructions, but got caught in a tangle of dogs and bears and leashes as the animals pulled their handlers down the platform wanting to chase after the scent

of snakes. A stampede ensued as the bloodhounds and bears ran down the train platform packed with constables, inspectors, even goblins and train workers, many of which, including Tom, were knocked over or pulled down. The sight was like the frontrunner in a horserace slipping and falling, causing the pack behind it to stumble and trip also.

Red shouted obscenities as he worked to untangle himself, finally he did and then he ran to the ticket office and threw the door open with such force that the glass shattered and fell out. He ordered Miss Kensington to sound the riot alarm. She first had to break the glass covering it and then force a big handle up.

Tom could not have told you then what the riot alarm did, but he soon found out as alarms went off all over the city. They sounded much like the tornado warnings back in his hometown of Wabash; a long, drawn-out, high-pitched siren that builds up, holds that piercing note for a moment, and then fades before repeating the process again and again. The riot alarm meant for every traffic constable to force traffic to the side of the road so the fire engines and police cars could speed down the streets unobstructed. Every constable in every police station was to run out and man the nearest intersection. No traffic was allowed to cross the bridges, and every bridge constable was to fire a parachute-flare into the sky atop every bridge to serve as a warning and for illumination. Every pedestrian was pushed onto the sidewalk, every fire engine roared out of its station, bells ringing, lights flashing, waiting for instruction.

Commander Rogers yelled for his men to hop on a fire engine and race to Train Station 2. They followed his orders eagerly, rushing out of the gates to grab a spot on the fire engines or the one paddy wagon and a scene like the Keystone Cops followed; the constables bumped into each other trying to squeeze through the gates and then fought with the fireman as they tried to climb aboard a fire engine. The paddy wagon took off with a lurch, throwing several constables out the unsecured doors back onto the street. The crowd was highly amused by their antics and they laughed and pointed at the pile of officers in the middle of the street. Chief Hall was furious. Inspectors Dunne, Jones and McElroy headed for a police car and took off after the train and Red and Tom ran for Red's car.

Tom flipped the siren and lights on as Red raced towards the Headless Horseman Bridge, which would take them across the river to a street with less traffic than Appian Way. One of the fire trucks was just ahead of them and both vehicles headed over the bridge at such a high rate of speed that passing over the bridge's wooden trestles sounded like the beating of bass drums. Red made the turn onto River Street with such speed that the police car's tires squealed, a hubcap was thrown, and Tom was thrown across the front seat to smack into Red. A constable on the fire engine ahead of them lost his grip and was thrown into some trash cans as the fire truck made the turn also. Red avoided hitting him before flooring the police car and passing the fire truck.

They sped by cars and carriages pulled to the side of the road as Tom looked ahead at the train full of passengers pressing their faces against the train windows in terror.

Red hit a low spot in the road and the car bounced and Tom hit his head as it smacked against the roof. He had to brace himself with a hand pressed to the car's roof to keep from hitting again and again. Looking across the river he saw the



other fire engine proceeding parallel to them up Appian Way, as it sped past hordes of people lining the streets.

Unexpectedly, a spray of water hit the back window of their police car and Tom looked back to see the fire engine following them turning on its fire hose before swinging it towards the sky, but he could not figure out what they were up to.

Red was gaining on the train, but the *Vulture* passes through the city on an elevated track and they were below it on the opposite side of the river. Tom spotted Stone in the locomotive cab just as Red handed him a shotgun. Tom took it, took off his hat as he rolled his window down to lean part way out to fire at Stone, but the train was too far away and moving too fast to inflict any damage.

Now if this scene is not exciting enough; with sirens blaring and a runaway train spitting out a white cloud of steam and police cars, and fire engines packed with constables and firemen holding on for dear life as they sped down city streets with lights flashing, past sidewalks packed with tourists and onlookers. With every person in the city having run to the nearest window, or rushed out to the sidewalk. With heavy fog hanging everywhere, so much so that the fire trucks passing through it caused it to curl and coil upwards. Where hundreds of lighted jack o'lanterns lined the streets, shops and windows and gremlin fires blazed atop buildings and parachute flares hung in the sky.

If this sight is not exciting enough, then add to it a witch dropping out of the night sky on a broom, the tail of which was on fire. The witch descended to a spot just behind the fire truck, and it was she that the firemen were spraying water at—trying to fend her off. The witch rose up higher, passed over the fire engine and swept down next to the *Vulture*.

Stone opened the window of engine cab and held a sack out towards the witch, but Tom fired the shotgun at her just as she grabbed hold of it. A shotgun blast might not kill her, but it did scare her enough that her broom began to wobble and then she dropped the sack into the river as she went to place both hands on her broom handle. The witch flew higher then and slowly circled back towards where the sack had fallen.

„She's going back for that sack,“ Tom yelled over the noise of the siren.

„Hold on,“ Red yelled and Tom grabbed hold off the dashboard with both hands and pressed his feet firmly to the floor to avoid being thrown around the inside of the car as Red slammed the brakes. The car came to a screeching halt and ejected a second hubcap.

As the fire truck sped past them, Red pulled the keys from the ignition, opened his door, and quickly went and opened the trunk as a crowd of onlookers gathered on the sidewalk. A young constable ran up to him to see if he could be of any assistance and Red told him to jump in the car, before he climbed back in and tossed two flare guns and a fistful of flares meant to scare werewolves back into the woods at Tom and the young constable. He started the car again and quickly sped down the road toward the witch.

„There she is,“ Red yelled as the young constable and Tom loaded the flare guns. Tom looked and saw the witch slowly flying over the river, passing just over the heads of some young couples in a wooden boat. She appeared to be looking for the sack and she must have spotted it, because she dipped lower then and reached out her hand.

„Hit her with a flare,“ Red yelled and Tom leaned out the window and sent a flare charging towards her that just missed, but nearly caused her to fall off her broom. The young constable fired then and his flare knocked the pointy hat off her head, causing it to spiral away. Of the three ways to kill a witch; she was perilously close to two of them and it must have unnerved her, because she pulled her broom up and sped off across the sky, abandoning the sack. Tom fired at her again, not really wanting to hurt her, but the flare just about caught her before its parachute opened. It hung in the sky there, swaying back and forth.

„Get another flare up,“ Red yelled when they came to the spot where she had been trying to grab the sack. The young constable fired a flare straight up and they were able to see the sack floating down the river; halfway submerged underwater now.

„Can you swim?“ Red asked the young constable.

„Like Tarzan.“

„Get that sack then,“ he said and the young constable threw off his coat and ran and dove into the water. „Careful, it’s got a poisonous snake in it I believe,“ Red shouted after him.

The young constable swam to the middle of the river where the sack was close to sinking, and grabbed hold of it by the very top.

„I believe there is a snake in it,“ he shouted as he swam back holding it away from his body. He climbed out of the water and they could see the snake thrashing about inside.

„We’ll put it in the trunk,“ Red said.

They did and then they piled back into the car and sped toward the other train station only to find it was all over. Shaken, but uninjured passengers were being helped off the train and blankets were thrown around them. Constables with lanterns or flashlights were searching the nearby cornfield for Stone and for the other snakes, but they would come back empty handed. The sirens were turned off, the parachute flares drifted down from the sky and sank into river, fire engines returned to their firehouses, tourists went to bed, traffic flowed across the bridges again, the witch was nowhere to be seen in the night sky and Jack the Ripper had two deadly cobras for whatever diabolical plan he was working on.

Red delivered the one snake to Miss Kensington who said she would take it to their home for safe-keeping. Tom was impressed by how she accepted the bag with cobra hissing inside from Red without any fear. He was starting to think that there was a lot he did not know about her. Tom took Rebecca home then and told her he would see her the next day—his first day off.

## **Chapter 13**

13 is an unlucky number, so they are not used in Transylvania City.

## Chapter 14

### Friday

After showering and having breakfast, Tom met with Red in his office. Red told him to go ahead and take the day off. They knew Jack would be getting in touch with them before long, and right then Red had the rest of the Flying Squad out searching Dracula, hoping to turn up some sign of him. There was a copy of the paper sitting on Red's desk and *The Raven's* headline read, *City read the Riot Act*, but Tom did not bother reading the article.

His bowler and suit had both been delivered and Tom was planning on wearing them that day. He went back upstairs and found an iron and pressed his new shirt and pants and put them on. He shined his shoes and brushed his raincoat and then, looking in the mirror, thought he looked handsome. He had some time to kill, so he sat on the edge of his bed thumbing through his *Transylvania Policeman's Handbook*, finding a section entitled; *Beasts of the Transylvania Forests*. He looked at pictures of gremlins, and vultures, and some other mostly innocuous creatures, but then came to a drawing of a dog that was as large as an Irish wolfhound, but more muscular and menacing-looking as it stood with its mouth agape and baring sharp teeth.

The caption called the dog a Hell Hound and the next picture showed the dog on fire, not in any danger itself, but actually capable of spontaneous combustion. Tom devoured all there was there to learn about the animal, reading that it did not like water, but it turned out that hell hounds had, most likely, long ago become extinct here. He put his policeman's handbook in the top drawer of his bureau then before heading out to catch the trolley that would drop him off by the library.

He took Rebecca to Dempsey's for lunch (having had to borrow some money from Red beforehand) and afterward they headed to the theatre to catch *Werewolves—The Musical*. Red knew where he was going to be.

It was a magnificent show that tells the stories of three different werewolves; two who fall in love as humans, but are afraid to express their love to the other, because neither is aware that that the other is also a werewolf. After a few near misses, expressed in song, they eventually discover the truth, almost tragically, but then have a happy ending.

The other story is played for comedic effect and tells the story of Wolfgang, a timid baker with a harpy for a wife, who looks forward to the full moon just to feel some control in his life and escape his wife for a while. Whenever Wolfgang starts thinking about the next time he'll transform, he takes his hat off and rubs his hands together in anticipation and scheming before busting into song.

The ending for Wolfgang and his wife is tragic; after they reconcile and fall in love again; she follows him to the woods one night thinking he's gone to end an affair with a mistress. Curious to know who the mistress is, she hides and watches only to discover her husband's true secret is that he's a werewolf. She screams and alerts him to her and he unwittingly chases and kills her. The next day, after returning to human form, and blissfully looking forward to returning to

her; he's arrested for her murder and hung—that kind of dark humor is popular in Transylvania City.

As Tom and Rebecca exited the theater, a goblin youngster stood on the corner hawking a special edition of *The Raven*. „Ripper threatens Transylvania citizens,“ the goblin youth yelled. „Citizens warned to not go out alone.“

People were standing in groups, reading the article. Tom headed to the corner to buy a copy, but then he spotted Red leaning against a squad car parked at the curb. Red was reading *The Raven* and Tom saw the look of concern on his face. When Red spotted him, he held the paper so Tom could see the headline, Ripper promises murder. Red also handed him an envelope. „This came in the mail today,“ he said, „He sent one to the paper too.“

Tom pulled a note out of the envelope and read it as Rebecca looked at Red's paper. The note was written in a most elegant cursive and read;

While the Wren's song holds lasting appeal,  
And the Condor does toward Venus soar,  
I tell you it's the Raven's tale that I kneel,  
And I place most dear and listen for.  
Sincerely, Jack.

The same poem had also been published in the paper and Rebecca was reading it there.

„What does it mean?“ Tom asked.

„Well, we're thinking the Condor means our train here. It's actually called the *Vulture*, but a Condor is a type of Vulture, right?“

„It is.“

„We figure Venus, being the second planet, might mean the second train station,“ Red said. „The Raven must have something to do with our local paper. The Wren, well, there are no wrens found here.“

„I know what it means,“ Rebecca said looking up from the paper.

„You do?“

„Well first off this very bad poetry. The metering is awful,“ she answered, „but actually deciphering it is quite easy,“ she said. „What time is it now—exactly?“

„It's 3:54,“ Red said looking at his watch.

„Well you have till 6 o'clock, when the bells at St. Paul's peal, to set a trap for Jack,“ Rebecca told them.

„Six o'clock today?“

„Yes.“

„Let's get in the car,“ Red said opening the back door and Rebecca and Tom climbed in. Red went around to the driver's seat. „How do you know that?“ he asked closing the car door.

„Friday got its name from Venus in a round-of-bout sort of way,“ Rebecca explained.

„How do you know it's going to happen at six o'clock?“

„The poem says Wren's lasting appeal. It's referring to Christopher Wren, the architect of St. Paul's in London. The six o'clock peal is the last one of the day; the

other hours are announced with a ringing not a full peal of the bells. That why the note reads, lasting appeal.“

„So he’s planning something near the cathedral?“ Tom asked.

„No,“ she said, „that’s just when it will happen. Those bells can be heard just about everywhere in the valley. I believe it will happen out at the cemetery where Edgar Allen Poe is buried. Notice how one of Poe’s stories, *The Raven*, is referred to with the words, tell, tale and most dear. Our heart is where we hold things most dear. He’s saying, *Tell-Tale Heart*, another Poe story about a man who has committed murder. I believe by linking the two, Jack is hinting that the clue to where the murder will happen involves Edgar Allen Poe.“

„What about the Condor?“ Red asked.

„It may just be a decoy. Or he may be referring to the vulture eye in *The Tell-Tale Heart*.“

„How sure are you it doesn’t mean the train?“

„Pretty sure,“ Rebecca said, scrunching her shoulders.

Red started the car. „Let’s go to the station. I’m going to call Dunne, Jones and McElroy in.“

„Oh,“ Rebecca said. „I looked this morning at *The Salem Witch’s Handbook of Potions and Spells* to see what potions require a poisonous snake and there are only three. The first transforms someone into a younger version of themselves for a few days; another creates a mist of darkness, the last when ingested, allows someone to take on the form of an animal.“

„Yeah, I’m betting on the mist of darkness,“ Red said.

„You already knew this?“

„Uh, yeah, Miss Kensington told me,“ Red explained, and the way he said it had Tom wondering about Miss Kensington again.

„I guess she told you that none of those potions requires a frog.“

„Yeah,“ Red said. „She let me know that.“

„In fact, I could find no potion that required both a frog and a poisonous serpent. Doesn’t that seem odd to you?“ Rebecca asked.

„It does.“

„Then Jack has something else he’s planning still with that frog,“ Tom said.

„It would appear so.“

„What are we going to do?“

„Here’s what we are going to do,“ Red said.

Red planned on setting traps at both the cemetery and second train station. Tom told him he wanted to be at the cemetery and Red said he would go there too.

Once they arrived at the inspectors’ offices, Red called in Inspectors Dunne, Jones and McElroy. Miss Kensington was already there, and Red spotted the same young constable from the night before, who had dove into the river, and pulled him into the office too. His name was Andrews and he could not have been much older than twenty or twenty one.

Chief Hall arrived also as did Commander Rogers. Red gave them a description of John Baker and sent Inspectors Jones and, Dunne to the second train station, while Miss Kensington, Inspector McElroy and Commander Rogers went to board the train at its first stop.

„I think you could use my help,“ Rebecca said after they left.

„How?“

„Jack would want a young woman, preferably one alone, near the grave of Edgar Allen Poe. I'll be your bait.“

„No thanks,“ Tom said.

„You're more likely to catch him if you set a trap for him.“

„No,“ Tom said shaking his head, looking at Red and then Chief Hall thinking they would back him up.

„Actually that's a good idea,“ Red said. „Setting a trap I mean, but we'll get one or our female officers to do it, not Rebecca.“

„Who?“ Rebecca asked. „There's not much time.“

Red looked at the clock on the wall, it was after five already. He rubbed his mustache thinking, before looking at Tom. „What if you were just feet from her, and no one could see you? I would be close by too—she would be the safest girl in the cemetery then wouldn't she?“

Tom looked at Rebecca. She nodded excitedly at him, wanting to help out. He knew what that felt like, but that kind of zeal had gotten him killed at a young age. „You sure you want to do this?“ he asked.

„Yes,“ she said calmly. „I'll be safe if you are with me.“

Tom looked at Red. „I hope you have a good plan.“

Red nodded as he picked up the phone. „Operator, connect me with Transylvania 4004—the Sokoloff funeral home.“

Five minutes later, Chief Hall, Rebecca and Constable Andrews were headed for the cemetery while Red and Tom went to the wardrobe department before they were to go to the Sokoloff funeral home. Leaving wardrobe, Red would not show Tom what he gotten from there; he just stuffed the item in his pocket.

Mr. Sokoloff met them inside his mortuary. Mr. Sokoloff was going to help out too; which apparently required him to wear his undertaker suit and hat.

„Everything set?“ Red asked.

„Horses are hitched to the hearse—just need your man here to jump in,“ Mr. Sokoloff said jabbing his thumb at Tom.

„What's the plan?“ Tom asked. So far Red had not explained much.

„You're going to ride out to the cemetery with Mr. Sokoloff. Arrangements have been made for your funeral. I'll meet you there,“ Red said just before turning around and walking out the mortuary.

„My funeral?“

„Not claustrophobic are you?“ Mr. Sokoloff asked.

„No.“

„Well you may be when we're all said and done.“

Tom was told to lie down in a coffin which was nailed shut then. A bridge troll and a goblin then placed the coffin inside the back of the hearse.

It was a ten-minute ride to the cemetery and approaching there, Tom could feel the hearse as it passed over the Oxford Crossing Bridge. A short while later they arrived at the gates of the cemetery and the hearse stopped. Tom heard Mr. Sokoloff talking with the same golem that had helped with Officer Horne's coffin and then the hearse began moving again, headed farther back into the cemetery. It was a couple more minutes before it stopped again, and then a moment later the back door creaked open. Tom felt his coffin being dragged out.

„We hardly had time to get the grave dug,“ the golem mentioned as he and the bridge troll carried the coffin toward the gravesite.

„Yeah,“ Mr. Sokoloff said. „Bit of a rush.“

Tom was carried some ways through the cemetery and then set down, but lifted up again just a moment later and then slowly lowered into a grave. He heard Latin being spoken then, but not a prayer—just phrases—*dulce periculum* and *per angusta ad angusta* and lastly *semper instans*. Dirt started landing on the coffin lid and then more and more until Tom became concerned they had forgotten he was alive inside it still.

„Thanks,“ came the muffled voice of Mr. Sokoloff. „That’s enough for now,“ he said and the dirt stopped.

„Aren’t we going to finish the job?“ the troll asked.

„I’m hoping some family will show still,“ Mr. Sokoloff answered. „You can go though—I’ll finish the job myself.“

„It’s bad luck to leave a coffin unburied once it’s been placed in a grave,“ the troll said.

„It would be bad luck this time,“ Mr. Sokoloff said. „Believe me.“

Tom heard the golem and troll mumbling as they walked away and then he heard Red telling him to come out. The coffin lid had been nailed shut with finishing nails and even with some dirt on top it, it was easy for Tom to pop open.

He climbed out and sat on top of the coffin so his head would not show above ground. Red was standing at the foot of the grave wearing a black robe, silver cross and pear shaped hat. He carried a thick bible and wore a long, fake beard. Tom pointed at him and smiled.

„Where did you get that?“ he whispered.

„Priest friend of mine,“ Red said. „The beard is from the wardrobe department. Rebecca’s working her way toward Edgar Allen Poe’s grave right now,“ he said gesturing at her. „We’d better make this look good, so I’m going to leave and Mr. Sokoloff is going to throw a little more dirt on your coffin and then he’ll go too, but we’ll both be close by. That’s Poe’s monument there,“ Red said, pointing discreetly at it.

Tom stood up a little higher and looked where Red was pointing, about fifty feet away. He spotted a large headstone; six feet tall and shaped liked an obelisk. On top of it was a jack o’lantern that had Edgar Allen Poe’s face carved into it. Edgar Allen Poe had died for the second time, here in Transylvania, in 1905.

„Utrunque paratus,“ Red said as he stepped away.

„What does that mean?“ Tom asked Mr. Sokoloff.

„Means be ready for anything,“ he said picking up a shovel and beginning to throw more dirt on Tom’s coffin.

It was foggy and dark, but gas lamps, moonlight and hundreds of jack o’lanterns lit up the Transylvania Metropolitan Cemetery. Looking around, Tom spotted, some distance away, a crowd gathering. They held candles or lanterns and wore white robes as they lined up in two rows. He understood them to be a church choir; there to sing farewell to one of their fellow parishioners. Scattered around, in small groups and even individually, were tourists holding lanterns up to headstones to read the names etched there, all of them aware, and apparently comfortable with the idea that Jack the Ripper had promised that night, to add to

the cemetery's population. It was the peak hour and season for scavenging among the cemetery and it was Chief Hall's and Constable Andrews responsibility to shoo people away from the section of the graveyard where Edgar Allen Poe was buried.

Looking towards the back of the cemetery, Tom saw row after row of graves, many with elaborate headstones or monuments. Then, where the graves ended, was a footpath and just beside it, a twelve-foot high, wrought-iron fence topped with pikes. Beyond the fence was a field that looked to be thick with cornstalks. Tom was well concealed in his grave and the dark and fog masked his presence even more. He looked around for Red and saw him walking among some graves, acting like he was blessing them, making the sign of the cross over them. An Obsidian tree moaned in the wind, as if imitating a sound it was familiar with.

Mr. Sokoloff tapped Tom on the shoulder with the shovel and signaled he was ready to leave, but then something behind Tom caught his eye. „People should not bring their dogs here if they can't control them,“ he said shaking his head before throwing his shovel down and leaving.

Tom twisted slowly around in his grave to see what Mr. Sokoloff had been looking at. A woman was being pulled down a row of graves by a very large Saint Bernard. The dog ran up to and jumped on Red, knocking him over. The dog pinned him down a moment before starting off again, carrying the woman along behind it. Tom turned to find Rebecca then.

He spotted the glow of her lantern among some distant graves as she pretended to be hunting for famous names. He looked at his watch, but could not make out the time in the dim light and did not want to light a match, but he could hear it ticking, making him think of a bomb about to go off.

He watched Rebecca's progress towards Edgar Allen Poe's grave. She was to arrive there just before six o'clock and she was wending her way between graves, holding her lantern over the headstones. When she came to Poe's monument, with his likeness carved into the jack o'lantern set atop it, she acted excited to have found it. Her back was to Tom as she held her lantern up and began reading the poem etched into his headstone.

Tom must have been nervous about her being there, because when the first cathedral bell rang—it caught him off guard and caused a shiver to go down his spine. The second bell rang right behind the first and then a third, higher-pitched bell joined in and others followed.

Another sound, barely audible above that of the bells, caught his attention and he turned around to see the Saint Bernard chasing Red. The dog pounced on him and stood on top of him, pinning him down. Tom thought the dog's owner would come to Red's aid, but looking around he did not spot her until he had turned a hundred and eighty degrees and was looking toward the back of the graveyard. She was standing next to the fence, witnessing her dog assaulting a priest, but apparently unconcerned enough to do anything about it.

Tom spun around and saw the abnormally large dog still holding Red down, but then it stood up on two feet. The animal howled loud enough to be heard over the sound of the bells as its hair began to fall off in clumps. The dog stretched taller, human-like features emerged, its paws shaped into hands, limbs thickened and muscles sprouted. Tom realized it was transforming into another creature—a golem.



It was Stone. Soon Tom could even make out the burn marks on his face from the other night. A naked Stone reached down and jerked Red up. Red dangled in the air a moment before Stone set him down. Red went for a gun he'd hidden in his boot, but Stone snatched it away.

Tom pulled his pistol, but then saw that Stone was not going to hurt Red, probably on Jack's order. Tom did not want to tip Stone off that he was hiding there, so he watched as Stone picked Red's pear-shaped hat up from off the ground and began questioning him.

Tom could not hear them, but he saw Red point the direction of the second train station and he figured Stone had asked where he was. Stone placed Red's hat back on his head, and then held onto him as he marched him through the graveyard, like an unruly kid being taken to the principal's office. They were headed toward Edgar Allen Poe's grave.

Rebecca did not hear or see them coming toward her until Stone grabbed her from behind. The fright caused her to drop her lantern. She had a second shock when she saw that Stone was naked, but apparently underneath golems are just like mannequins. Stone led Rebecca and Red toward the back of the cemetery where the woman waited by the fence. Tom watched as the woman removed her hat, letting her hair fall down, and then she placed a witch's pointy hat atop her head. Only then did he realize she was a witch, the same one as the night before.

He climbed out of his grave and ran, hunched over, toward Poe's monument as Stone arrived at the fence. Once there, Stone lifted Red up and slipped the back of his coat over the tip of a fence pike, so as to make him hang from it like a scarecrow. Red could do nothing but kick at him.

Tom moved closer as Stone took hold of the fence and starting ripping it from the ground like he was pulling the lid off a can. When he had created an opening there, the witch lifted up her arm, spoke something in Latin, and then dropped her arm suddenly. A gust of wind carried dry cornstalks and leaves into the graveyard. So many that Tom could not see Rebecca as they swirled about her, but the wind died just as quickly, and the leaves and cornstalks floated to the ground.

Jack the Ripper came through the opening in the fence then accompanied by a well-built vampire. Jack tipped his hat at Red as he handed Stone a raincoat first, and then a machine gun. Then Jack withdrew a long knife from out his pocket as Tom snuck closer.

Standing beside a tall headstone, Tom took aim at Jack in the moonlight. Tom was about to punch his ticket back to some dark realm, but just as he pulled the trigger—Jack moved—having sensed something was about to happen. The bullet missed Jack and struck the vampire just behind him in the shoulder.

Tom turned his gun on Stone and shot him multiple times in the back, causing him to stumble forward and trip over a headstone. Rebecca slipped free of him and took off running through the graveyard. The bells were loud enough that Tom did not hear Chief Hall and Constable Andrews open fire, but he saw their bullets catch fire as they passed through the air in front of him. The bullets ricocheted off headstones and smashed into jack o'lanterns set on top of monuments.

Chief Hall and Constable Andrews ran through the graveyard firing their weapons and then Mr. Sokoloff opened fire from a spot somewhere behind Tom as Stone rose up and fired off the clip of his machine gun, but when it was empty, he

fled. He ran out the opening in the fence into the cornfield and mowed down two rows of corn.

The vampire began returning fire, but he remained inside the cemetery and a running gun battle ensued between him and Chief Rogers and Constable Andrews. Mr. Sokoloff chased after him too, as they fired burning bullets at one another that zipped across the air in brilliant yellow streaks. But then Mr. Sokoloff fell into an open grave and disappeared. All the while, Tom weaved past headstones toward where Jack had disappeared.

Perched on the fence, Red pointed Jack out and Tom found him crouched behind a monument. The witch crouched beside him, but she stood up when Tom found them. He figured she couldn't do anything to him as long as he stood far enough back. She tried to conceal Jack and Tom tried to see around her and then he fired, but his attempt to dispatch the Ripper back to some dark realm failed, and instead ricocheted off a headstone. Before he could fire again, the witch raised her hands up, spoke something under her breath and an electric shock—a bolt of lightning—came out her fingertips.

Tom was fifteen feet from her, but the blast carried him another fifteen feet through the air. He landed on his back between headstones, temporarily unable to move, like a tortoise unable to flip over. His hands and feet went numb and his coat, where it had been struck, was scorched black and smoldering. He struggled to rip it off before it caught fire as the witch moved toward him; her hands out in front of her like Frankenstein—ready to deliver a second jolt.

Tom spotted his gun lying nearby and rolled over on top of it and then rolled over again. He shot her as he lay flat on his back, but the bullets passed through her as if passing through water. The witch cackled. Then she launched a second bolt of electricity as Tom rolled behind a large headstone. Electricity swirled around the headstone making a humming noise, but he did not suffer a direct hit, although it still felt like a thousand needles pricking him. The witch moved closer.

Tom didn't think he could take another jolt, already his heart was beating like a drum and his feet were too numb for him to run. In seconds she would reach him. He spotted his coat lying nearby, smoking now from twice having been struck with electricity. He grabbed hold of it, crumpled it into a ball and blew on it. The raincoat caught fire as he slid his hand underneath it and tossed it at the witch.

She screamed as the flames came toward her. She tripped trying to back away from it. She kicked hysterically at the coat when it landed on top her shoes. Then the witch scooted back along the ground and stood up. She seemed undecided if she should run or fight. As she stood there deciding, Tom took the theatre playbill out of his pocket and crumpled it up. He struck a match on a headstone and lit the playbill on fire. He reached around and tossed it at her. She was only feet away and the flames came straight at her face. The witch screamed like a banshee, her hands moved like she was trying to keep bees from stinging her, and then she turned and ran.

The church bells stopped ringing as a whirlwind arose, lifting cornstalks and leaves into the air and swirling them all around the back of the graveyard. Tom could not see as far as the fence, but the gust lasted only briefly and then the leaves and cornstalks drifted slowly toward the ground. The witch and Jack the

Ripper had vanished, Red still hung from the fence post and Tom limped toward him. The shooting elsewhere had stopped.

Tom helped Red down and then they ran through the dark graveyard looking for Rebecca. They found her hiding behind a monument and then the three of them ran looking for Chief Hall and Constable Andrews. A crowd had gathered near the base of an Obsidian tree and as they hurried there someone shouted out a man had been shot. As Red and Tom pushed their way through the small crowd, Constable Andrews stood and blew his constable whistle loudly, before taking off running toward the front of the cemetery to call for an ambulance.

Red knelt beside Chief Hall. He lifted up Chief Hall's raincoat to look at his wound. He looked there a moment and then he glanced at Tom to let him know there was nothing to be done for him.

„We failed to get ours,“ Chief Hall said meaning the vampire. „He got me instead. Did you get Jack?“ he asked as he grabbed hold of Red's coat. Red desperately wanted to tell him they had, but he could only shake his head.

„You will,“ Chief Hall said and then he struggled to catch his breath so he could speak one last time. „Wherever I go next, I'll be waiting for the day you arrive there. Look for me... at the train station.“

„I will,“ Red said as Chief Hall's grip slipped from Red's coat. His hand fell and lay, unmoving, on the ground. He was dead for the second time.

Just then the sound of bagpipes floated across the cemetery and a choir began singing the hymn, *Rock of Ages*. It was the church group Tom had seen preparing minutes before—not aware, (because of the bells) what had happened farther back in the cemetery.

## Chapter 15

### Saturday

The Raven's headline that morning;  
*Jack the Ripper foiled by the TCPD, Chief Hall killed.*

Tom was in the cafeteria, reading the article, when Constable Andrews found him. Red had sent him to find Tom and bring him to his office. When Tom arrived there, Inspectors Dunne and Jones were just coming out. Tom went in and found Miss Kensington was there. Red told him to shut the door.

„My wife has some questions for you,“ he said.

„The witch last night at the cemetery,“ Miss Kensington asked, „did you get a good look at her?“

„Closer than I liked.“

„What did she look like?“

„She was attractive, except for a long nose. I would say she was about my age...“

„There are no witches here younger than your great grandmother,“ Miss Kensington said, „Go on. What was her hair like?“

„Long, straight and black.“

„How tall?“

„Not much over five feet.“

„I want you to look at some photos,“ Miss Kensington said opening a photo album that had been sitting in her lap.

She set the album on Red’s desk and opened it to the first set of pictures.

„This is our secret mug book of witches’ photos,“ Red told Tom. „Have a look through there and see if you recognize the witch from last night.“

Tom kept shaking his head as Miss Kensington flipped through page after page of photographs. Many of them seemed to have been taken when the witch was not aware her photograph was being taken. Some seemed to have been taken inside The Dungeon Room, some on street corners from a window above. Some were not even photos, but just pencil drawings.

„That’s her,“ said Tom, placing his finger down on a photograph.

The picture had been taken from some distance away, as the witch stepped out a tall gate that led out the grounds surrounding a large mansion. It looked to have been taken from across the road from the back of a car. It was not a very good photo, the witch’s head was partly turned away from the camera, but Tom recognized her still.

„Zlata,“ Miss Kensington said turning toward her husband. „You could not have picked a worse witch to go up against.“

„But now we know which witch Jack has been working with. All we have to do now is have her brought in. Use her to lead us to Jack,“ Red said like he had the case just about wrapped up. „Where can we find her dear?“

„I have no idea,“ Miss Kensington said shaking her head. „No one does. She has a secret lair somewhere deep in the woods.“

„Oh,“ Red said, clearly disappointed. „Jack’s probably hiding out there with her.“ Red looked at Tom then. „I can see it’s going to be expensive keeping you in clothes,“ he said reaching into his desk drawer. He pulled out a small piece of paper, signed it, and handed it to him. „That’s a voucher for Pierre the hatter. Why don’t you go get yourself a new raincoat?“

„Now?“

„Sure, why not.“

„I’ll be back in twenty minutes,“ Tom said.

When he returned, wearing a new raincoat, Tom headed for his desk to start work on writing up a report on the previous night’s activities, but Red pulled him into his office again.

„I got a call a few minutes ago that Vladimir Kiraleko arrived on this morning’s train. I had the constables at customs keeping an eye out for him.“

„Let’s go arrest him.“

„I just sent Dunne, Jones, and McElroy over to the Shadows Hotel to do just that. That was where he listed his address as,“ Red said. „In the meantime you and I are going to have another talk with Fixx. When they bring Kiraleko in, we’ll have the pleasure of applying some pressure on him,“ Red promised. „Oh and Rebecca called here while you were out. She’s been doing some research at the library.“

„On what?“

„Well first she read some in Newton’s *Applying Scientific Reasoning to Reported Incidents of Witchcraft*...”

„Isaac Newton?”

„Yes.”

„I never heard of him writing books on witchcraft.”

„Well I think it was kept under wraps,” Red explained, „but what she found out is a person taking on animal form must transform into an animal of roughly equal size. So I guess next time we spot a Saint Bernard that big again we’d better look out.”

„Okay.”

„More importantly she wondered why Jack would go through all the trouble of stealing those cobras if all he had planned for them was to turn Stone into a big dog. Impressive—yes, but not really necessary. Of course he still has the one and she wondered if he might need it for some other potion, maybe one that’s not in *The Salem Witch’s Handbook of Potions and Spells*.”

„Are there any other spell books?”

„Well there were, but as far as I know they were all destroyed—at least in this realm, and the Administration sees to it that no others are brought here,” Red said. „But that’s not really what I wanted to tell you. When Rebecca called she said she had just discovered that John Baker had looked at the same reference book a number of times this week. She’s going to sit down and look through it. She asked for Miss Kensington’s help and I just sent her over there.”

„Of course if we’re to find Jack none of that would matter.”

„That’s true. Rollo called in with some information too.”

„What?”

„I asked him to find out what he could about Vladimir Kiraleko, seems he might also be known as the Czar. Let’s go ask Fixx what he knows about the Czar. Then when they bring him in we’ll have a talk with our favorite Russian.”

Fixx was being held on the fifth floor of the building away from the other prisoners since he was supposed to be dead. They brought him coffee and a donut and found he was just finishing breakfast, which was a boiled and then chilled fish.

„How’s your fish?” Red asked as they came through the steel door.

„Could be colder,” Fixx said taking a bite right through its slimy skin. „Don’t know what you’re missing,” Fixx said seeing Tom’s disgust. „I’d rather be sent to the Bastille than held here. I haven’t got anyone worth talking to here,” Fixx said glancing at the guard. „He won’t get up and show me the pictures in the paper when he reads it.”

„Couple more days,” Red told Fixx slipping him the cup of coffee and donut between the iron bars—the donut was a cream puff—an inside joke between Red and Tom. Fixx was wearing an incongruous outfit; a constable’s cap like the guards wore with T.C.P.D. across the front, matched with a prisoner’s striped uniform that had, Prisoner, in large-block letters on the back. „We got a couple more questions for you.”

„What?”

„You don’t know what John Baker’s planning with that frog, do you?”

„You mean Jack,“ Fixx said. „I don't know what he's planning on using it for, but I'm looking forward to finding out. I'm sure he'll put it to good use. I'm sure he'll put on an even bigger show than the one yesterday inside the cemetery. Tubby there,“ Fixx said pointing at the portly guard sitting on a stool by the steel door, „told me all about it.“

„I'd eat that frog if it was me,“ Fixx continued, „but I heard Nikasi and him talking that night. Hobgoblins hear better than humans or vampires even and Mr. Baker promised if we'd let him keep that third frog, he'd deliver something big with it. They had kicked me out of the room by then and I heard Nikasi say he doubted he could do it, but if he could, the Vampire Council would be in his debt. I heard them mention something about Dubhlinn.“

„Really? Dubhlinn.“

„That's right governor.“

„Maybe that's why you were able to beat Stone back here the other night,“ Red told Tom. „Him and Kiraleko must have gone on to Dubhlinn still after that business in Hampton Square.“

„But why?“

Red shook his head. „But Fixx here is correct in thinking Jack must be planning something big. I'd like to find him before he's able to put his plan into action.“

„Noooo,“ Fixx pleaded. „I'd like to see what he's up to.“

„Would you? Maybe he's planning to make every goblin's eyes drop out of their head and roll around on the floor,“ Red said turning on Fixx. „I guess you're forgetting you're on our side now,“ he said reaching inside the bars to knock Fixx's T.C.P.D. hat off his head. Which act all goblins found particularly upsetting.

„I'm a hobgoblin, not an ordinary goblin,“ Fixx said picking his hat up and putting it back on.

„You don't have any idea what they needed from Dubhlinn?“

„No,“ Fixx said. „Stone and Nikasi never really trusted me. That's why I don't mind turning informant on Stone now. Of course you'll never tell him I said anything, will you?“ he asked reaching out and grabbing hold of Red's coat.

„No,“ Red assured him, peeling Fixx's hands off his lapels. „I think I'll put a call in to Dubhlinn and see if anything out of the ordinary happened there that night. They don't get a lot of trouble there usually, so if something did happen it probably involved Stone,“ he said. „You wouldn't know how to find the witch Zlata would you?“

„Not her,“ Fixx said shaking his head. „If you're telling me she's the one Jack had with him at the cemetery—good luck finding her. She's not the type to do an act at the Dungeon Room or hire out for some party. And she don't care for witches that do. Zlata's been known not to show her face for years at a time.“

„The human that went with you to visit John Baker, his name is Vladimir Kiraleko, but I heard a rumor that he also calls himself the Czar?“

„Oh,“ said Fixx. „That was him? Never laid eyes on him before, but I've heard of him. Makes sense, he's probably how John Baker and Zlata got together. I've heard talk inside Dracula Manor that the Czar makes his living running errands for several witches out that way, that and setting tourists up, wanting to hold a séance with a better order of witch than say the ones at the Dungeon Room.“

„You say he runs errands for Zlata and some other witches?“ Tom asked.

„Yeah.“

„So they must have some way of getting hold of him when they need him. Right?“

„I'm sure they do.“

„How do they though?“

„Well, I don't really know, but I can tell you that every witch has some pet of one kind or another, you know like a black cat or a dog. My guess is that whenever a witch wants to get a hold of the Czar, they send their pet to his place where's it recognized. I've never seen the thing, but Zlata is known to have a raven.“

„I can't see them showing up at the Shadows Hotel,“ Red said. „Or anyplace within city limits,“ he added just as a constable sergeant entered the cell block.

„Chief,“ the sergeant yelled. „I got a message for you.“

„What is it Sergeant Hightower?“

„Inspector Dunne just called in from the Shadows Hotel. Says that the man you sent them there to find is not there. And they learned from a reliable source that he does not actually live there.“

„I guess we should not find that surprising,“ Red said. „He must keep a residence out in Dracula if he's running errands for the witches out there.“ Red turned around to face Sergeant Hightower then. „Thank you sergeant.“

„What about The Depths?“ Tom asked, poking Red in the chest. „Maybe that's where he lives. I'll bet that's why Jack had their phone number in his coat.“

„There's no rooms for rent at The Depths,“ Fixx said. „I'm pretty certain he don't live there.“

„But they probably know how to get a hold of the Czar when some witch has summoned him,“ Red said, nodding.

„Then let's head out there and make someone start talking. We know he's back in town now.“

„I like your thinking,“ Red told Tom. „Might not hurt to take Jones there with us. The Depths is known to be the favorite hang-out of some pretty tough criminal types.“ Red turned around quickly then. „Sergeant Hightower,“ he yelled at the sergeant who had started back down the hallway. „Go see if you can find Inspectors Dunne and Jones. Tell them to hurry back here.“

„Yes sir,“ Sergeant Hightower answered in a very commanding British officer voice.

Fixx laughed and shook his head. „It'll take more than just the four of you. You'd need a paddy wagon full of your toughest officers if you're planning on starting trouble inside The Depths. You know Sledgehammer Jones runs that place now with his brother don't you?“

„I hadn't heard that,“ Red said concernedly. He turned to look at Sergeant Hightower headed down the hallway. „Hold on a minute sergeant. Come back here.“

„Who is Sledgehammer Jones?“ Tom asked.

„The only bridge troll to ever step into the ring against both Rollo and Stone. He lasted almost six rounds against Stone before being knocked out of ring,“ Fixx said.

„I was at that fight,“ Red said. „Fixx is right,“ he said causing Fixx to smile like a Cheshire cat. „I'm not sure I want to go into his place and try and push him

around. He'd put up a fight and I actually don't have any jurisdiction out in Draculaia."

"I might have a better idea," Fixx said.

"What?"

"I think I know how to have them show us where the Czar is and then trick him into thinking Zlata has summoned him."

"How?"

"I'll tell you on the way there," Fixx said, "but you're going to need to take me with you, so let me out of here."

Red looked at Tom. "What do you think?"

"I don't think we have much choice."

"All right then," Red said. "Unlock this cell," he yelled to the guard.

"I'll be risking my neck," Fixx said. "How are you going to make it worth my while?"

"Well," Red said brushing his mustache as the guard unlocked the cell door and Fixx stepped out. "It ain't in my power to set you free, but if you happened to escape after your part in this was done—well, that would be a shame."

"Okay," Fixx said smiling. "We're going to need some money too, seventy pounds ought to do it."

"That's a lot of money."

"Not as much as the hospital bills if Sledgehammer Jones goes to work on your men."

"I'll arrange for it," Red said.

"Oh and I'd like a new hat and coat if I'm going out, and some kind of disguise. I don't want anyone to recognize me out there," Fixx said. "I'm supposed to be dead you know."

"Well, we can always arrange that too," Red told him as they started down the hall.

Red went to his office while Tom and Constable Sergeant Hightower accompanied Fixx to wardrobe. The officer there said she could slip a false nose on Fixx.

"You might want to wear some kind of disguise too," Fixx told Tom as the lady officer started work on him. "You don't want to be spotted for a policeman where we're headed."

So after Fixx was made-up and went to pick out a coat and hat, Tom asked the lady officer what she could do for him. She suggested a handle-bar mustache and some bushier eyebrows.

When she was done, Tom looked in a mirror. He thought he looked just like his grandfather had as a young man. Then Fixx, Sergeant Hightower and Tom headed down to the garage to wait for Red. On the way there, Tom went to his locker and grabbed his small revolver and strapped the holster to his ankle. He took his shoulder holster off and carried it with him.

They went to the garage and waited and it wasn't long before Red came through the shooting range door and Tom could tell, looking at him, that Red had learned something from his call to Dubhlinn.

"Definitely an improvement," Red said spotting Tom's mustache as Tom approached him to ask, out of earshot of Fixx and Sergeant Hightower, what he



had learned. „I made a call to Dublin and talked with the chief inspector there,“ he said, „just asked if anything out of the ordinary had happened there the last few days.“

„Yeah?“

„Seems they had a break-in at the Realm Royal Court building the same day Stone took our train for a joyride. A steel door was ripped out of its anchoring that lead to an old evidence room.“

„What was taken?“

„They have no idea, since it’s just a giant room full of crates and such, but they must have wanted something entered as evidence at a trial a long time ago.“

„Huh,“ was all Tom could think to say.

„That’s the other thing, my wife called—she wants to speak to us at the library,“ Red said in a way that made Tom think he was holding something back. „She says we have time.“

Red signed out a long, black car with dark windows that did not look anything like a police car. It reminded Tom of an early-model Rolls-Royce Phantom. Then the four of them headed for the library, Red uncharacteristically silent the whole drive there. They pulled up in front of the library and parked, and Sergeant Hightower waited with Fixx while Red and Tom went inside. Coming through the door, Tom spotted Miss Kensington and a librarian standing behind the front counter, whispering to one another. When Miss Kensington noticed him approaching, both ladies stopped talking. They looked distraught, and that had Tom worried because Miss Kensington was not the type to be easily troubled. Rebecca was nowhere in sight.

„Where’s Rebecca?“ he asked.

Miss Kensington’s gaze left Tom and went to Red.

„She’s been taken,“ Red told him, „but we’ll find her. You have my word on it.“

„What do you mean?“ Tom said loudly, forgetting they were in the library.

Red motioned for Miss Kensington to fill Tom in with the details.

„When I got here, Miss Winters,“ Miss Kensington said indicating the anxious woman next to her, „told me Rebecca had just left without saying a word, two creatures had a hold of her; one a vampire and the other was a golem.“

„No!“ Tom shouted, pounding his fist down on a book sitting on the counter.

„We’ll find her. We have time,“ Red said placing his hand on Tom’s shoulder on Tom banged his fist on the book a second time. „Tell him what you found dear.“

„Rebecca called me down here. She told me she had discovered something important,“ Miss Kensington explained.

„What?“

Miss Kensington nodded at Miss Winters, who smiled weakly at Tom as she pulled the book from out under his fist wanting to protect it from further damage. She opened it to a page where there was a book marker. Tom looked there. „Rebecca asked me why this book was left here under the counter the past two days. It’s my fault,“ Miss Winters said nervously. „I told her I had left it here instead of putting it back on its shelf because a young man had come in Wednesday, Thursday and yesterday and requested it. I thought he might come again today, but he has not.“

„Did the young man say anything to you Friday when he returned it?“ Red asked.

„I asked him if he had found what he was looking for and he said, ‘Yes I found exactly what I wanted in Dubhlinn’,“ Miss Winters said. „I have no idea what he meant by that.“

„That’s right after Stone returned from Dubhlinn,“ Tom said.

„Look at what Rebecca was reading,“ Miss Kensington said putting her finger down at the top of the page. Tom looked and saw it was the transcript of a trial, *The Royal Realm vs. A Conspiracy of Witches and Vampires and other loathsome Creatures to commit High Treason*; that had taken place over a thousand years before. It was the trial where the portal to Earth had been opened and vampires and witches and goblins and more had fled to Earth.

„I’ve been reading through it,“ Miss Kensington said moving her finger down the page before stopping halfway down. „It says here that a page was taken out of one of the old witches’ spell books and entered as evidence at the trial. The page that has the spell for opening a portal!“

„That’s why the Realm Royal Court building was broken into,“ Red said. „They were looking for that spell.“

„We need to go,“ Tom said becoming agitated again. „We need to find Rebecca.“

Miss Kensington looked around the room before leaning in closer to Tom. „Jack can’t have hurt her yet,“ she whispered. „Zlata would have to wait till six this evening, today Saturday the start of the witching hours before opening the portal. You have until then to find her.“

Tom stared at Miss Kensington then. „I would like to talk to you in private,“ he said forcefully. „You too Red.“

He led them to a private reading room and shut the door behind them. He looked directly at Miss Kensington and she became uncomfortable with him looking at her so intently.

„Is there something I need to know about you? Some secret you’re keeping, because if so it might come in handy for me to know right about now. Rebecca’s life may very well depend on it.“

Miss Kensington shot her husband a look before answering. „Okay, I’m a witch.“

„I thought so,“ Tom said nodding. „You haven’t sent that cobra back to the circus yet—have you?“

„No.“

„You could do something with it and those mice if I needed you to, couldn’t you?“ he asked forcefully.

„There are a number of potions and spells I could concoct with that snake,“ she said. „What did you have in mind?“

„I don’t know right now, but I’d like you to be ready—just in case I need you.“

„Drop me off at our home,“ Miss Kensington said. „I’ll wait for your call. We live just next to the Oxford Crossing Bridge. If you call the bridge’s call box a constable can run over and summon me to the phone. I’ll have everything prepared if you should need me.“

„We’ll leave Sergeant Hightower on the bridge,“ Red said.

„Thank you,“ Tom told Miss Kensington. „We have Fixx in the car, is there anything you could do right now to make him look different. He’s worried about being recognized.“

„Let me think,“ she said, „I suppose I could give him a bad cold. That would swell his face up a little and redden his color a little. All I need do is touch him.“

„Might help,“ Red said shrugging his shoulders.

Tom led Miss Kensington to the car and opened the door Fixx was sitting by. She started telling Fixx how noble he was to serve the department this way. Fixx blushed, his nose becoming even redder and then Miss Kensington reached in and placed the palm of her hand on Fixx’s cheek. As soon as she did, Fixx sneezed.

„Bless you,“ Miss Kensington said.

They dropped Miss Kensington off at her home and then Constable Sergeant Hightower was dropped off at the Oxford Crossing Bridge with orders to keep the call box line open and be ready to run and summon Miss Kensington there. Then Red, Tom and Fixx headed for Dracula.

They drove over the Executioner’s Bridge and then the full length of Appian Way, about ten miles, out of the city, passing by the Vamp’s distillery and then past farm after farm where the corn stood twelve feet high or where field after field was filled with haystacks as high and round as paddlewheels on a steamboat. As well they passed scarecrow after scarecrow and maybe a hundred jack o’lanterns.

Where Appian Way ran into Horseshoe Road, there was a gas station, shops and The Depths; a long, unappealing building made of wood planks with peeling paint and just one window. They pulled into the parking lot with the headlights on as it was dark now.

„How’s this going to work?“ Red asked Fixx as he handed Tom a large wad of money.

„Us two will go in and you’ll buy everyone there a drink,“ Fixx said poking Tom in the back. „Act like you just recently lost your wife and you’re missing her. I’m going to need some of that money,“ he said reaching for it.

„What for?“ Tom asked pulling it back.

„I need to make it worth the bartender’s while to send someone to find the Czar. I figure they must know how to get hold of him and that’s where you come in governor,“ he told Red. „Come in after us and watch for who he sends out the building and collar them. Then come back in a get us. Let’s hope the Czar’s around.“

„We know he’s back in town,“ Red said.

Fixx and Tom got out and walked up to the entrance of The Depths. Fixx opened the door just a little and looked inside, checking to see if Stone or Gibraltar was in there before he went in. Satisfied they were not, he stepped inside. Tom’s mustache was bothering him, causing him to brush his finger across it every few seconds.

The Depths was dimly lit and fairly crowded, but two large fires, in separate fireplaces as wide as crypts, threw shadows across the room. A tour group had stopped there for tea and most of the tables were occupied, but the counter was lined by creatures; a couple of golems, a few goblins, and handful of bridge trolls all dressed in miner’s clothing. There was also a pair of vampires, dressed sharply.

Working the bar were a pair of bridge trolls in aprons, and Fixx started towards them. Tom was not worried about Fixx being recognized, because his face was swollen now and he hardly looked like himself. Both of them went and leaned against the bar.

„What‘ll ya have?“ one of the trolls asked.

Tom looked at Fixx who signaled for him to go into his act. „I would like to buy a drink for everyone here,“ Tom said throwing a stack of bills down and talking like he‘d already had a couple of drinks. The troll smiled, reached back to where a bell hung from the wall and rang it loudly.

„Gentleman here wants to buy everyone a drink,“ he shouted slowly, as bridge trolls talk fairly slowly, as he rang the bell, causing a cheer to go up.

„In honor of my dear departed wife,“ Tom yelled just as he spotted Red entering the establishment. Red came and took a place at the far end of the bar where the door to the kitchen was.

It took a couple of minutes to serve everyone and some of the tourists and both golems came up and thanked Tom for the drink and offered their condolences for his loss. Then Tom slipped Fixx some money. Fixx approached the troll bartender.

Tom could not hear what Fixx said, but he saw him slip the troll some money (not all of it, some went into Fixx’s pocket) and point at Tom. The troll looked at Tom and then back at Fixx, before agreeing to Fixx’s proposal. The large bridge troll stepped into the kitchen then, out of sight, but Red went around the bar and into the kitchen acting like he was looking for the bathroom.

„What‘d you tell him?“ Tom asked.

„Told him you lost your wife recently and wanted to talk with her one last time to say goodbye.“

„A séance?“

„That’s right,“ Fixx said, „I told him I wanted to do business with the Czar and he said he‘d send for him.“

A moment later Red came back out, signaling them he‘d learned what he needed, and then he hurried toward the front door. The troll stepped out of the kitchen just moments later, and signaled Fixx that he‘d sent for the Czar.

Fixx and Tom each ordered another drink to make it look like they were nothing but a grieving widower and his goblin guide.

„My name is Sledgehammer,“ the bartender said as he filled Tom’s glass.

„The boxer?“

„That’s right. You’ve heard of me?“

„Sure,“ Tom said.

„I lost my own wife just a couple of years ago,“ he said waving off Tom’s offer to pay him for the drink. Tom was anxious to slip out of there, but Sledgehammer waited for him to drink the glass he‘d just poured. Tom lifted it up, toasted Sledgehammer’s late wife and downed half the drink in one gulp. It was important Sledgehammer not suspect him for anything other than a young husband who had lost his wife.

„You look familiar,“ Sledgehammer said despite plenty of other patrons waiting for him to serve them. „You been in here before?“

„No,“ Tom said.

Sledgehammer stared at him, studying his face. „Wait a minute,“ he said reaching over and grabbing hold of Tom’s mustache and ripping it off his face. „You’re that cop whose picture is in the paper. You ain’t lost your wife, but if you do have one, she’s about to lose her husband if you don’t get out of here.“

Fixx and Tom immediately headed for the front door, just as Red was coming back in.

„I’m canceling that arrangement I made for you,“ Sledgehammer yelled as he headed for the phone.

„What’s happening?“ Red asked.

„He recognized me,“ Tom said.

Red hurried back outside as Tom and Fixx followed him. He pulled a pocket knife from out his coat while he looked at the side of the building. When he spotted where the phone line entered the building from the pole, Red cut it with his knife.

„We’d better get out of here,“ he said.

They hurried for the car as Sledgehammer Jones came out the front door looking for them. Sledgehammer chased them out the parking lot as Red sped away.

„That was close,“ Tom said as he noticed a goblin handcuffed in the back seat.

„We’re headed for Dracula Manor,“ Red said as Tom tore off his fake eyebrows. „That’s where Pickwick here says we’ll find the Czar.“

Tom retrieved his shoulder holster and gun out of the glove compartment as Red drove down Horseshoe Road. A large mansion came into view as they came around a bend in the road. Red turned into the dark forest and drove a little ways down a dirt road and parked. They all got out the car and walked to a low hill that allowed them to see through the trees and inside the wall surrounding Dracula Manor.

„This is for you,“ Red said handing Pickwick a five pound note. „You ever delivered a message before from the witch Zlata?“

„Yeah, sometimes her raven comes around and taps on the back window. They send me to let the Czar know she’s summoned him.“

„Well that’s what we want you to tell him now. That Zlata’s raven’s come knocking for him.“

„Okay governor.“

„Do it and I’ll have another five pounds for you. Try anything else and I’ll have you spending Christmas out at the Bastille breaking big rocks into little ones.“

„Why do they need them broken up?“

„To put in the mattresses out there,“ Red said sarcastically and then when he saw Pickwick was about to ask another question—Red told him to just get going.

Pickwick made his way through the woods and up to the gate of Dracula Manor, which was the most striking building Tom had ever seen. It was part medieval castle, part Hotel Transylvania. Three stories high and nearly as long as a battleship, constructed of stone, with arched windows, balconies and gargoyle waterspouts. A number of small cottages with thatched roofs surrounded the mansion so that it could be rightfully considered a small village. In the center of the village was a fountain, in the middle of which stood a large statue. Tom asked

and Red told him, not unexpectedly, the figure, wearing a cape, was Count Dracula—Vlad the Impaler's father.

The mansion's gardens were landscaped with hedges shaped into howling wolves and demons, and the entire grounds were surrounded by an ivy-covered, brick wall ten feet high. Bats flitted around the grounds and a few gremlins dashed along the top of the mansion.

When Pickwick reached the guard station by the front gate, a large troll stepped out. Red and Tom watched Pickwick have a short conversation with the troll and then Pickwick was allowed through. He made his way to one of the small cottages and knocked on the door. Tom saw the door open, but he could not see the person who had answered it, but Pickwick must have passed the message on, because after the door closed he turned around and signaled, with a tip of his cap—that he had done his good deed. He walked out past the guards and started back towards them.

Tom kept his eye on the small cottage. Soon the door re-opened and a man stepped out. Red brought out his opera glasses and looked at him through them as the man walked toward an automobile parked by the side of the cottage.

„You had that photo of Kiraleko. Take a look at this chap,“ Red said handing Tom the spy glasses.

„That's him,“ Tom said looking through the binoculars.

Red and Tom hurried back to their car and as Fixx went to climb in also, Red looked at him. „This is where you make your escape,“ he told him.

„I want to see how this turns out,“ Fixx said climbing in the back seat. „Besides I need to tell you guys something.“

„What?“ Red asked as he started the car.

„I guess you're planning on following the Czar out to Zlata's hideout, but there's a reason no one goes out there looking for her—she's got a couple of fire dogs that guard her. They probably know the Czar's scent. I hope you have a way to get past them.“

„What do you mean by fire dogs?“ Tom asked. „Like Dalmatians?“

„No,“ Fixx laughed. „I mean hell hounds that actually catch fire when they are mad. You don't want to be petting them. It's in that handbook they give you guys,“ he said before sneezing again.

Red stopped the car when they came to Horseshoe Road, waiting for Kiraleko to drive out of the gates. He had not turned the car's headlights on as he did not want to be spotted. Pickwick was coming back then and walked up to Red's window.

„Here's the rest of the money,“ Red said handing him it. „You keep your mouth shut about all this.“

„I will,“ Pickwick said. „How much for a ride back to The Depth's?“ he asked.

„You're going to have to walk back,“ Red told him.

„No I won't,“ Pickwick said. „Here comes Sledgehammer now.“

Red looked at the truck coming down the road.

„Brace yourself,“ he said stepping on the gas. Just as Sledgehammer went to block them in, Red plowed into the side of the truck. He floored the car and the tires smoked as he pushed Sledgehammer's truck across the road and into the ditch. The truck flipped on its side.

„He'll be all right,“ Red said as Sledgehammer stumbled out of the smashed window of his truck.

Tom looked toward Dracula Mansion and saw Kiraleko drive out the gate and turn the other direction. Red backed up and started after him, staying just within sight of his taillights. Kiraleko drove past the Strigoi Cemetery, which had large, black gates leading to row after row of graves and mausoleums that were in need of care, but Red said vampires liked their cemetery that way, neglected, overgrown with vines, and generally eerie looking.

They followed Kiraleko another mile before he turned onto a dirt road that led into the woods.

„Are hell hounds something to be worried about?“ Tom asked.

„The handbook says there may be such an animal,“ Red said. „I've been here twenty years and never seen one. Have you seen them for sure Fixx?“

„No, but then I never been silly enough to go looking for them,“ Fixx said as Red turned onto the dirt road where, just ahead the Black River ran between sheer rock cliffs, twenty feet high. Before coming to the wooden bridge that crossed over the river, Kiraleko turned onto a rutted road that ran alongside the river. Red drove over the bridge before turning his car's headlights. He stopped then, put the car in reverse and backed up until he came to the road Kiraleko had taken. Kiraleko's taillights were just barely visible as he drove through the dark forest and they started down the rutted road after him.

Tom kept an eye on Kiraleko's taillights until he suddenly turned into the woods and parked. Immediately Red stopped and pulled into the woods also. Red, Fixx and Tom got out of the car and hurried down the road in the dark. Kiraleko had parked near some other cars, his trunk was open and he pulled a lantern out, lit it, closed the trunk and then started walking upstream carrying the lantern in front of him.

They followed him as he made his way through the dark woods and fog rising off the river, but soon lost sight of him. They continued upstream, walking along the edge of the cliff bordering the river and then Fixx tapped Tom on the shoulder. He pointed at Kiraleko's lantern being carried over the river on a swinging footbridge. They quickly made their way there.

Right before the bridge was a wooden sign with a skull and crossed bones painted on it and Red brought the small flashlight out of his pocket and shined it there.

„*Graviora manent*,“ Red said reading it.

„What's that mean?“ Fixx asked.

„Means like, worse things lie ahead.“

„I'll wait here,“ Fixx said. „Maybe you should let me have the car keys just in case,“ he said holding out his hand.

„In case of what?“ Red asked.

„You know,“ Fixx said not wanting to elaborate. „In case... you don't... make it back out.“

„You just wait here.“

Tom grabbed hold of the bridge's railing which was just a rope and started toward the other side of the river. The bridge sagged and the boards creaked, but it seemed sturdy enough. They had lost sight of Kiraleko, but when they reached

the other side of the bridge, Red shined his flashlight around the ground. A good number of footprints were there, one big enough to have been Frankenstein's that Tom was certain belonged to Stone. The shoeprints all headed the same direction and Tom and Red started following them.

„Tourists are warned not to enter the woods out this way,“ Red whispered as they followed a narrow, winding path through the dark forest. „There's been a few wolves seen out here, but I don't think there's such thing as hell hounds.“

Red shined his flashlight ahead at the path littered with fallen logs, slippery moss and mushrooms as tall as footstools. The light only shone a few feet ahead as darkness and fog seemed to swallow it up. They were headed straight toward the base of the cliffs that rise nearly a mile straight up and enclose the valley like a fire pit. When they came to them after a few minutes, water dripped down and puddled along the ground as Red shined his flashlight around their base, but spotting no more prints, they continued along the bottom of the cliff.

After a few minutes, a flicker of light could be seen coming out a small gap in the cliff wall. They approached it and found the light was coming out a narrow passageway, no wider than one person could pass through at a time.

„Somebody's back there,“ Red whispered pulling his gun. „And I doubt they're just roasting marshmallows.“

Tom pulled his pistol also and started down the passageway first. After squeezing through the first part of it, the passage widened and the firelight shone brighter. On either side above them were narrow ledges. A most awful baying sound began as they turned a corner and Tom looked ahead and saw a small chamber where the passageway dead-ended. There were a number of creatures standing around the fire, but then two fires alighted on the ledge above him and started moving toward Red and Tom.

„I don't believe it,“ Red said as the two balls of fire picked up speed. The flames came down the ledge quickly before leaping into the air and coming straight at them like some flaming objects shot out of a medieval catapult.

„Hell hounds!“ Red shouted, pulling Tom back into the passageway.

Red scrambled out of the passageway back into the forest and Tom was about to when a blast of heat hit him as if a door to a steel furnace had been thrown open behind him. Something heavy landed on him and knocked him down. His pistol slipped out of his hand when he hit the ground, but fortunately his raincoat kept him from being burned by the flames rising off the hell hound—at least for the moment. Red fired at the dog and it backed a little ways back down the passageway and Tom got up and scrambled the rest of the way out. The bottom of his coat was on fire.

„Run,“ Red yelled.

Tom went to, but the hell hound came flying out the passageway and knocked him down. He rolled over and kicked at the dog, but all he could see were flames with a pair of fangs jutting out from them. Red fired at the dog again, but the other hound sprang out and snatched hold of Tom's coat sleeve and dragged him away. The other dog chased after them and Tom kicked at it, trying to keep it from sinking its teeth into him and ripping him in two. Both dogs were as big as Great Danes. Tom was dragged along the forest floor and bounced off roots as the first dog ran at a frantic pace, trying not to let the second dog snatch its prize away.



The sleeve of his raincoat caught fire just as Tom managed to jerk his hand free. He fell and slid along the ground. The second dog's momentum carried it past him, but as Tom rose and started running, it quickly scrambled to start after him.

Tom looked back over his shoulder to see a flame chasing him. He was headed for the river, thankful for once to jump into water. He jumped over roots and fallen trees with the grace of an Olympic hurdler, but the hell hound was just as skilled and stuck to him like a flame burning along a fuse. The hound caught up to him just as he jumped off the cliff and both of them sailed through the air; the dog so close, Tom could feel its heat. Tom landed in the water and heard the dog smack just beside him.

Up came the hissing sound that a very hot object immersed in cold water makes and a cloud of steam, but the dog began whimpering, finding itself in cold water. Tom turned around to see the second hell hound come hurtling through the air like a Messerschmitt shot flaming out of the sky. He slipped underwater to avoid it and his new bowler hat came off, but he grabbed it and began swimming away. Still, the hell had been taken out of the hounds now and they were like cats in water—wanting nothing but to get out, but the current had hold of them all.

He swam toward the wall and tried to grab hold of something, but it was slippery and the current carried him back toward the middle of the river. His suit and shoes were beginning to drag him under, so Tom slipped off his coat.

As he was swept downstream, the footbridge they had crossed came into view. It was too high to reach up and grab hold of, but then someone came running onto it. It was Fixx. He lay down on his stomach and reached down and caught hold of Tom's hand as Tom passed underneath the bridge. Fixx began pulling him up, but the first hound floating by caught hold of his pant leg. For a moment the three of them hung suspended from the bridge like trapeze artists, the weight too much for Fixx to pull up out of the water, but then Tom's pants ripped and the dog fell and floated away, whimpering.

Fixx struggled to pull Tom up, but finally he did far enough that Tom was able to grab hold of the bottom of the bridge. Lanterns appeared in the forest then, coming toward them, and Fixx, seeing them, ran back into the forest and hid. He motioned for Tom to hurry and join him there, but when Tom made it atop the bridge, he waited there.

Stone was the first to appear at the end of the bridge. He held a lantern in one hand and a pistol in the other and when he spotted Tom soaking wet, he started laughing. Stone was reluctant to step out onto the swinging bridge, so he used his gun to indicate for Tom to come to him. A good-size vampire and Gibraltar arrived next and between them was Red as they each had a firm grip on him. Jack arrived then, dressed in a tuxedo and when he spotted Tom—he smiled.

„Your weapon please,“ he said.

„Lost it,“ Tom said showing Jack his empty holster.

„The other one,“ Jack said pointing at Tom's ankle.

Tom bent down and removed the small revolver strapped to his ankle and handed it to Stone who promptly tossed it in the river.

„My dogs!“ Zlata yelled arriving at the edge of the cliff and looking for them in the water, but they had floated out of sight. She quickly chanted some spell and a small light appeared in her palm. She threw the orb out over the river, where it

hung a few feet above the water as it slowly floated downstream. Zlata started running along the edge of the cliff after it, looking for her hounds.

„Help her,“ Jack ordered the hobgoblin and vampire who arrived next and then more and more creatures arrived until there were nearly forty of them, all of them armed. Jack signaled Gibraltar and the big vampire then, and the two of them started dragging Red to the edge of the cliff.

„No. Wait. Red!“ Tom yelled as he tried to get past Stone, but Stone shoved him back as Red was thrown into the river below. Tom looked across the bridge then and saw Fixx starting off downstream to help Red.

„You are welcome to take your chances with Inspector Meriwether and hope to save yourself before plunging over the falls or you can die along with your love here,“ Jack said gesturing at Rebecca, just as she was brought there.

„Rebecca!“

„Tom! You should not have come here,“ she pleaded.

„Falls? What falls?“ Tom asked as Red floated away.

„Not too far downstream are some,“ Jack told him.

„I’ll stay, but I wouldn’t bet against Inspector Meriwether,“ he told Jack.

„I already have,“ Jack said shrugging his shoulders. „Krakov. Bring her here,“ Jack the Ripper said, indicating for the vampire who had just thrown Red into the river to bring Rebecca to him. Krakov grabbed Rebecca by her arm and rudely dragged her toward Jack. „Inspector Flynn, I just realized we have not been properly introduced,“ the Ripper said speaking in an accent and manner that belied an Oxford or Cambridge education. He made for a stylish figure in his tuxedo and carrying a top hat by his side, carrying it around because he did not want to spoil his neatly combed hair.

In contrast Tom was soaking wet, he’d lost his raincoat and suit coat, his hat was ruined and his pants were ripped.

„My name is Jack,“ he said bowing towards Tom like an actor coming out on stage. „And I will be killing both of you today. I must admit I am impressed you not only found us, but that you managed to avoid the hell hounds. Do you, though, have any idea what we are up to? I believe your love here does. That’s why I had her brought to me. She was easy to identify from the photo in the paper.“

„We figured it out,“ Tom said. „Clever of you to realize a page from one of the old spell books was in the evidence room in the Realm Royal Court building. I guess you’re headed back to England. Is that the idea?“

„Precisely.“

„Got everything you need? Didn’t forget to pack anything did you?“

„Well, let me think. Frog, poisonous serpent, a witch, plenty of goblins and my toothbrush. No, I don’t think I’ve forgotten anything.“

„I thought maybe you had.“

„Did you? What exactly?“

„Your scalpel. Last of the ones made for St. Thomas Hospital 1888.“

Jack stared at Tom. Tom was counting on Jack to want to have his scalpel returned to him—Tom had bet his life on it. In officer training school they’d warned him to keep an eye out for soldiers taking unnecessary risks to earn a medal, and he’d seen it happen. Tom had done so himself, and he recognized the

same fault in Jack. That scalpel was a shiny medal to him; at least Tom hoped to make Jack see it like one.

„Oh yes, but no, I hadn't planned on taking that with me,“ Jack said finally, but Tom could see he was thinking about it now.

„I thought you'd like to leave it on your first victim.“

„Did you?“ Jack asked. „Tell me what else you were thinking?“

This was Tom's chance to make an argument for Jack the Ripper to take the scalpel back to England with him. Tom needed to make him see the value in doing just that. He stared him straight in the eye and began his pitch.

„Just think what would happen if Scotland Yard found it on some victim of yours. They'd wonder where it came from. They'll match it to the other two you left with them half a century ago. No one else knows the facts of your murders back then. Just think of the mystery that scalpel could cause. Think of the headlines—the speculation,“ Tom said, and Jack was listening intently now, watching the faces of the others there.

„The dread and horror that scalpel would cause as word of it spreads. Panic will follow. The public will want answers. And then, in due time, you'll announce to all of England you are the same Jack the Ripper as before. That scalpel is proof that you have accomplished the impossible—that you have returned from the grave, that you managed the greatest feat of all time, having come back from the dead,“ Tom said lifting up his voice. „And then no one will ever doubt you again,“ he said pointing at Jack.

For a moment Jack stood there looking back at Tom as every creature there looked at him, waiting to see what he would say.

„Oh my!“ Jack said finally. „That would be quite stunning, wouldn't it? How did I not think of that? Very dramatic indeed. You, Inspector Flynn, do not disappoint.“

„I know where it is,“ Tom said. „I have it.“

„A trade then?“

„I'll get it for you and you'll set both of us free,“ he said pointing at Rebecca.

„Not quite a fair trade, is it?“

„More than fair.“

„Still,“ Jack said. „I require something more.“

„What?“

„A body.“

„Why?“

„The portal,“ Jack said. „You see it requires someone die in order for it to open.“

Tom remembered the drawing in the spell book then—the young woman lying dead at the foot of the witch.

„Ask your minions here for a volunteer,“ Tom said knowing Jack would not go for that.

„I think not,“ he said. „In fact, now that I think about it Inspector Flynn—I think you are at fault here and thus you should be the one to find me someone to sacrifice.“

„Fault? What fault? How could it possibly be my fault?“

Jack smiled. „You have proved yourself to be a most remarkable hero and as such you deserve an equally sinister villain. So far I have disappointed—last night

you managed to foil me—and now I am leaving this place. But before I go I plan to do something that will cause me ... in fact both of us,” Jack said waving a hand at Tom, „to not be forgotten. I need to strike back at you. I need a victory. And yet,” he said, „since I would like that scalpel and since I am a man of my word—I will live up to my end of the bargain and let you and your love go free. That is once you’ve brought me the scalpel and found a suitable replacement for her,” he said bringing a thin finger around toward Rebecca. „A different young... pretty... girl.“

„I can’t do that,” Tom said.

„You can.“

„You want me to be a hero, don’t you?“ Tom said. „What kind of hero would do such a thing?“

„A fallen hero,” Jack said. „That will be my victory.“

„What if I don’t?“

„You will or I’ll cut her throat right now,” Jack said moving toward Rebecca and letting his voice rise for the first time. „Who knows what Realm she’ll end up in? You may spend a hundred wasted lifetimes looking for her. Do you want that?“

„Don’t do it,” Rebecca shouted before Jack grabbed her throat and shut her up.

„I’ll do it,” Tom said before Jack got any angrier.

„Very good,” Jack said calmly. „I know you think you will figure a way out of your predicament,” he said causing Tom to worry because that was just what he was thinking.

„All great heroes think they can escape the peril they are placed in,” Jack said. „And usually I would like to see you try and fail, but this time, in exchange for the return of my scalpel, I will give you one hour to bring it to me along with a new girl. Exactly one hour or I will kill her. I would recommend you take my offer and not try something,” he said staring at Tom like he was trying to read his mind.

„Stone and Watson will accompany you,” Jack said, finally removing his gaze off Tom to look at the goblin standing next to Rebecca. „Kiraleko and Krakov will follow you,” he added. „Krakov—when Inspector Flynn has given you the scalpel and secured a stand-in for Miss Howard. Then you will call Gibraltar at...”

Jack went and whispered into Krakov’s ear while smiling at Tom like they were playing some silly game. „When Gibraltar receives your call,” Jack told Krakov. „Gibraltar will let you know where to go next.“

Jack turned towards the golem, Gibraltar, and made it clear to him that if Inspector Flynn didn’t return with a new girl as well as everyone he sent along with him, or if anyone appeared to be following them. Then he was not to show himself at the spot where they were to meet him.

Tom wanted to say something to Rebecca, to reassure her, but the best he could do was take off his wet hat, place it under his arm and rub his hands together like Wolfgang had in *Werewolves—The Musical*. Rebecca recognized what he was doing, that he had a plan, and she smiled ever so slightly.

„I would be careful not to upset Krakov,” Jack told Tom then. „It wouldn’t take much to make him angry. That was him you shot in the cemetery the other night and he’s sworn to make you pay for it. He doesn’t seem to like you.“

Tom looked at Krakov and found he was staring coldly at him, trying to intimidate him, but Tom wasn’t intimidated. Not that Krakov was to be taken lightly, he certainly didn’t look scared of Tom either, but he was nothing compared

to having to rush across a bridge while under withering machine gun fire and Tom had done that three times in the past year and half.

„Hold a lantern out the window of your car so Gibraltar will know it's you returning,“ Jack said as Tom and the creatures accompanying him, started across the bridge. Just then the first bell of the five o'clock cathedral ringing could be heard. It was just loud enough to reach that part of the forest, but it was unmistakable. „Oh, that is just wonderful. You have until the end of the six o'clock peal to return, Inspector Flynn. Godspeed,“ the Ripper shouted after him.

## Chapter 16

### One hour, exactly

They walked through the woods and arrived back at the cars. Stone threw Tom some keys and ordered him to drive, pointing at a candy-apple red car flying a bald eagle. Stone and the goblin, Watson, climbed in back while Krakov, Kiraleko and the other vampire followed in another car. Krakov was good size for a vampire, nearly as big as Tom.

„Be careful driving my car,“ Stone told Tom. „Scratch it and I'll drag you behind it a full mile down a dirt road. Understand?“

„Yeah.“

„You get that globe I sent ya?“ Stone asked as Tom started the car. Stone's hoarse voice and the car starting sounded about the same.

„Yeah,“ Tom said. „It's very nice.“

„Maybe I should have sent your girlfriend one. It looks like her luck is about to run out.“

„We have a small problem,“ Tom said as he backed the car out onto the road.

„You've got all kinds of problems,“ Stone said. „None of them are mine though. You and I still got a score to settle. Don't think I've forgotten about that.“

„We can settle that score afterwards. First let's make Jack happy. You work for Jack right?“

„Not at all,“ Stone said. „Truth is if the Vampire Council asked me to get rid of that psychopath I'd gladly do it. He's a nut job, but they support this plan of his because they want to get rid of some of these trouble-making vampires they're sending with him. My job is to see to it that he steps through that portal. Anyway you owe me a new suit and then we're going to settle our score, but I believe in fair play so I'm going to give you a decent chance of living through the little contest I've planned for you.“

„What's that?“

„After you buy me a new suit, assuming you live through the rest of this day, you and I are going to go to some quiet bridge somewhere. I'm going to chain a good size rock to your foot and then hand you it. Then I'm going to pour gasoline all over your pants, have you step up onto the railing of the bridge and then light you on fire. If you can jump into the water before you burn to death and then

manage to get out of the river before you drown, then we're even and there will be no hard feelings. I know you were just doing your job. Then Krakov has a score to settle with you."

"Anyway my problem is; the scalpel is in my locker at the police station," Tom said. "We're going to have to go in there and get it. You're not scared to go in there are you?"

"Not at all," Stone said. "But we'll go in through the garage entrance. You got a key right?"

"Yeah I got a key. We can go in that way."

"You'd better not be thinking of trying something if you want to see that skinny girlfriend of yours again," Stone said. "You better show up with all of us in tow—remember? Gibraltar ain't smart enough to do things any different than exactly how he was told to do things. So if you forget to have a lantern hanging out the car window, Gibraltar won't show. If you don't have everybody with you that left with you—Gibraltar won't tell you where Jack's waiting no matter what excuses you have for him or threats you threaten him with," Stone explained. "He's too dumb to be scared and too brainless to think for himself. I doubt you got enough men on the force to take me down anyway. I used to be a boxer you know," Stone said slapping Tom on the head lightly with his fingers, but it felt like a rock hitting him. "I've never lost a fight."

"Once," Watson said before wishing he hadn't mentioned it.

"He hit me after the bell rang!" Stone said angrily, reaching over and grabbing a fistful of Watson's coat and jerking him up off the seat. "I had dropped my hands and was turning to go to my corner. Even then it was a lucky punch," Stone said dropping Watson and looking at Tom in the rearview mirror.

"Is that right?" Tom asked.

"Yeah," Stone said. "And someday I'm going to find him and finish it. His name's Rollo and he wouldn't give me a rematch after that because he's too scared to. We might not fight in the ring again, but we're going to in his place. He's second on my list now. You moved up to number one," Stone told Tom. "Maybe I'll use you for a punching bag to warm me up before I do go settle things with him."

Stone didn't realize it, but he had just given Tom an idea of how to be rid of him—from there Tom just needed to figure out how to get back to Jack in time, stop him from escaping Purgatory and save Rebecca's life, but it was a start.

Tom drove the car as fast as it would go, headed toward the east end of Queen Anne's Way. When he made the turn there, he could see the lights of the Oxford Crossing Bridge a few miles ahead. They passed by a small country store and he remembered he needed to get a lantern, but that could wait for now. Stone was busy telling Watson about some of his fights. "I used to file my knuckles to make them sharp," Stone was saying.

"Doesn't that hurt?" Watson asked.

"You bet, but I don't let pain stop me. Someday I'm going to write a book about my time as a boxer."

"I'm going to have to stop and say something to the bridge constable or he might get suspicious, chauffeuring around a golem and goblin and all," Tom interrupted.

"Be careful what you say. If I see that constable get on that call box after we go by I'm going to snap your neck and cancel this rest of this charade," Stone said.

„Think about that if you want to say goodbye to that stick of a girlfriend of yours,“ he said as he hid his machine gun under his trench coat.

Stone was smarter than he looked, but Tom wasn't going to let him scare him out of doing what he needed to do. Right then Tom needed to pass on a message without tipping Stone off. As they crossed over the bridge, he was happy to see Sergeant Hightower right where they had left him.

Sergeant Hightower saw the car coming to a stop on the bridge and he looked over and recognized Tom behind the wheel, but he seemed a little puzzled that he was in a different car now and had a golem and goblin in the backseat. Tom rolled his window down and spoke before Sergeant Hightower could ask anything.

„These two fine creatures are helping me out with an investigation,“ he told Hightower. Tom wasn't about to try winking or anything because both Stone and Watson were watching him in the rearview mirror. „I'm taking them to the station. Who has armory duty today—Rockmonovich? Rockmonovich knows me and I wouldn't need to fill out a bunch of paperwork if he was there,“ Tom said not wanting to overdo it, and right then he felt like a defendant waiting for a jury to announce its verdict. „I'm in a hurry,“ he added.

Sergeant Hightower leaned back from the car and glanced away. „I'm pretty sure he'll be there,“ the sergeant said looking at the next car wanting to cross the bridge like his attention was there. Right then Tom thought Sergeant Hightower deserved a medal—that or he had no idea what Tom was trying to tell him.

„Thanks,“ Tom said pulling away.

Stone looked back, but Hightower either was going to wait to head for the call box till they were out of sight or he was not going to head there at all. Stone became less suspicious the further away from the bridge they got, thinking that even if something was up, he could, at the very least; escape.

## Chapter 17

### 45 minutes left

Just past the bridge, on the next block, there was a clock above the Hotel Romania, and it told Tom he had forty five minutes to get back to Jack with a young girl in tow.

„I want to talk to the guys following us before we go in the police station,“ Stone said.

„No problem.“

Tom drove slowly then, wanting to give Rollo time to get to the station. Even if Rollo was there waiting for them; Tom wasn't sure how it would go down, but whatever happened, he knew he needed to take Stone out of the picture. A few more blocks and they came to the entrance of the TCPD garage, and Tom rolled down his window as Krakov pulled up alongside them.

„What's going on?“ Krakov asked.

„The scalpel’s in his locker inside here,“ Stone told him. „I guess I’ll have to go in with him.“

„What do you want us to do?“

„Take this,“ Stone said handing them the 49er out his window. „If you see me come running out—use it on anyone behind me. Park just outside the entrance here and if you guys take off without me... we’ll, you better hope I never catch up to you.“

Stone was of course warning Tom too, letting him know that he was prepared for trouble. Tom hoped Rollo didn’t come walking past right then, but he didn’t and then he started thinking Rollo might not show at all.

Stone ordered him to go then and Tom drove down the ramp and parked in a spot by the armory door. Stone told Watson he was coming inside too and they got out and started for the door, but then Tom stopped and turned around to face Stone.

„I need to slap these cuffs on you,“ he said, holding up his handcuffs. „It’s regulations,“ Tom lied.

„I could bust those in about two seconds,“ Stone said and Tom knew that already. The handcuffs were not golem grade. Carrying around irons fit for a golem would have made him look like Scrooge’s dead partner, Marley.

„I know,“ Tom said. „Just following procedures. I don’t want the officer stationed in the armory to get suspicious. The locker room is just next to it. Nothing’s going to happen.“

„You’re betting your girlfriend’s life on it,“ Stone said holding his hands out and Tom slapped the cuffs on him.

Tom took his key out, unlocked the door and opened it slowly, thinking Rollo might pop out. He didn’t. They went down the hallway to the shooting range and found the RCO sitting behind his counter. He looked at the cuffs on Stone, but didn’t say anything.

„Taking them upstairs,“ Tom said and the RCO nodded. Stone stopped and peered over the counter, making sure no trap had been set for him, but he found none. The RCO gave him a curious look at they started toward the locker room. Stone was just as careful entering there; he told Watson to go in first and look around, even ordering him to check out the shower area, but Rollo wasn’t there. When Stone was satisfied everything was okay, Tom led him to his locker. He took his time opening it, but then pulled the scalpel out.

„See, nothing to worry about,“ Tom told Stone slipping the scalpel in the breast pocket of his suit.

Even if he had tried to cut Stone’s throat with it, the scalpel would not have caused any more harm than a paper cut. Watson, standing a few feet away, was nervous and was ready to start firing at anything that moved.

„Time to find a girl now,“ Stone told Tom. „I got a pick-up line you can use.“

„What?“

„Tell her you’ll die without her,“ said Stone, causing Watson to laugh. Tom smiled at the remark, but actually he thought it was pretty clever.

It was looking more and more like Rollo wasn’t going to show. Maybe he had been hiding in the garage and seeing Stone; decided he didn’t care to get involved. Tom could yell for help and if a couple of dozen officers were handy right then,



they might—with some difficulty—take Stone into custody, but that almost certainly would get someone killed.

He decided if Rollo didn't show by the time they got back to the garage, he'd make a run for it. He would need to get to Krakov and knock him out and the other vampire too. Kiraleko, despite his size didn't seem too tough and he figured he'd probably run. He'd have to do all this before Stone could catch up to him. Then he'd have to force Krakov to call Gibraltar and then deal with Gibraltar one way or another. Then when he did find out where Jack had gone, he would have to free Rebecca somehow without getting her killed. It wasn't much of a plan, but it was all Tom could think of right then. The clock in the locker room said he had less than forty minutes to get back to Jack.

They went out the locker room—Watson in front and Stone pushing Tom from behind. As they came back to the shooting range, Tom noticed the RCO had moved from the counter to the furthest shooting stall to take target practice. Stone stopped and leaned over the counter again, but found nobody hiding behind it.

„Put your gun at your side,“ Stone whispered to Watson. „If that officer points his weapon at us, you let him have it.“

„Okay,“ said Watson.

„I wish I had Fixx with me, but if there's one thing about Watson,“ Stone told Tom. „He's a real good shot.“

All the lights in the armory were off, except the one on the RCO's counter and a few at the back of the shooting range. There were three shooting stalls and Stone looked into two of them to see if anyone was hid there. Right then the RCO pulled the empty clip out of his gun and gave Stone a puzzled look, like he didn't understand what he was looking for.

They were just steps from the hallway now and Tom figured Rollo wasn't going to show.

When they reached the hallway, Stone stuck his head around the corner and looked toward the garage door. He told Watson to go check out the garage.

„I thought you might be stupid enough to have tried something,“ Stone told Tom whose hands were sweating now. As soon as Watson came back he was going to make a run for it. „Better start turning on the charm, Prince Charming,“ Stone said as he and Tom waited for Watson to return. „Time to...“

Stone didn't finish. Tom saw his eyes open wide and his jaw drop as a large fist shot past Tom's head headed for Stone's face. Rollo must have hidden in the last shooting stall with the RCO and now he had snuck up behind them. It took Stone less than the two seconds he'd guessed to bust the cuffs, but it was a second Rollo had to land the first punch. Rollo's fist colliding with Stone's head made a sound like a sledgehammer smashing into concrete.

Stone stumbled into the hallway and Rollo pushed Tom out of the way to get at him and Tom went flying across the floor. Rollo delivered shot after shot to Stone as Stone tried to cover up. Finally Stone threw an elbow and was able to get Rollo off him some.

They grabbed hold of one another and started slamming each other into the walls of the narrow hallway, causing as much damage as if a wrecking ball was bouncing around there. Part of the ceiling collapsed, the whole building shook, and several fire alarms upstairs went off.

Tom spotted Watson coming back through the door and figured he'd better get to him. That required him to slip behind Stone just before Rollo slammed him into the wall again. Tom narrowly missed being crushed, but he got to Watson before he knew what was happening and disarmed him.

There have been many great fights in the history of boxing—right before Tom shipped out across the Atlantic to England, he saw Joe Louis fight in New York and he'd seen newsreels and heard stories about Jack Dempsey and Jack Johnson, but the fact is the greatest fight ever fought took place, Saturday, September 23, 1944 on the bottom floor of the T.C.P.D. building.

Stone released his grip on Rollo and landed an uppercut that sent a piece of Rollo's chin flying away and caused his head to snap back and hit the wall. The lights in armory were swinging back and forth and wild shadows were thrown across the room. Rollo blocked Stone's next punch, drew back and slugged Stone in the mouth. Stone's face split open from his lip to his forehead—and caused Stone to slide across the floor like a block of an Egyptian pyramid being slid into place. When Stone hit the wall, the glass by the RCO's counter shattered.

Rollo grabbed Stone by his raincoat then and drove him out the hall. Stone was off-balance and stumbling backwards as Rollo shoved him all the way across the shooting range towards the foundation wall. When they rammed into it, the whole building shook and glass could be heard falling upstairs. A water pipe broke and sprayed water across the shooting range. Stone got his feet under him then, grabbed Rollo and drove him backward until they both crashed through the locker room wall. They tripped coming through the wall and fell and the building rumbled again. Tom handed Watson off to the stunned RCO and told him not to let him get away. Rollo could use some help and Tom knew what to do.

Just by the stairs was a fire hose and Tom ran for it. He had to pass by the locker room entrance and just before he did, a locker shot out, just missing him, as Rollo and Stone kicked them out of their way to get at one another. Tom stepped over it, got to the fire hose and yanked it out. He opened the valve all the way and water sprayed down the hallway.

As he dragged the hose back toward the locker room, Rollo and Stone were circling one another, delivering short jabs. Stone ducked Rollo's punch and caught Rollo on the side of his face with a hook. Rollo stumbled sideways. Stone followed him to deliver another blow and that's when Tom aimed the hose at his face. Stone was blinded by a column of water hitting his eyes and Rollo stepped forward and smashed him in the gut. Stone doubled over as Rollo hit him again and again.

Stone tried to keep the water out of his eyes as the sound of Rollo punching him in the back of the head was like a walnut being cracked open. Stone was dazed and wobbling as Rollo shoved him into the wall and hit him in the ribs, but Stone didn't go down yet.

Rollo grabbed Stone by his coat, spun him around and delivered a knockout punch then. An upper cut that actually lifted Stone a couple of inches off the ground and caused his face to fracture like an ice cube dropped in warm water.

The RCO was so stunned by the sight, that he forgot all about Watson. Watson slipped free and began running for the armory door, but Tom turned the hose on him and blew him all the way across the shooting range floor until he slammed into the back wall.

„Turn this off,“ Tom shouted and the RCO ran and turned the water off while someone up stairs finally shut off the fire-alarm bells.

Tom looked at Rollo and thought about yelling at the RCO to turn the water back on, because Rollo was steaming mad at him now. He looked at Tom like he was next.

„Why in the name of earth’s core did you set me up for that?“ Rollo yelled.

„Rebecca,“ Tom shouted as Rollo came toward him. „Rebecca! Jack has Rebecca and they are going to kill her unless we get back there.“

„What?“

„Yeah,“ Tom said, „and right now I need you to put Stone’s hat and coat on and get ready to do your best impression of him, because I won’t know where to find her unless I come back with him,“ he said, pointing at Stone out cold on the floor.

„Okay,“ Rollo said calming down. „I’ll do it for Rebecca, but you owe me.“

„Oh and you’ll find a scalpel in Stone’s breast pocket,“ Tom said. „Find it and put it in your pocket.“

Tom told the RCO to call some help down there and get some golem cuffs on Stone before he came to. Then Tom went and picked-up a dazed, soaking wet Watson off the floor and handed him to Rollo. Tom told Rollo not to let him get away, because they needed him still. Rebecca’s life depended on it.

„I’ll be right back,“ he told Rollo as he started up the stairs.

Tom hurried to the desk sergeant and ordered him to call the Oxford Crossing Bridge. Sergeant Hightower answered the call box there and Tom told him to run over to Miss Kensington’s home and get her on the line, but not before he told Hightower that Officer Rockmonovich had made it to the armory and everything was fine for the moment.

„Have her call right back to the desk sergeant,“ Tom said as Red limped into the station, his clothing damp. „I knew you’d make it,“ Tom said running up to him and smacking him on the shoulder.

„I have Fixx to thank for that,“ he said. „I owe him a new suit for saving my life. I doubt I’ll ever hear the end of it. Where’s Stone?“ he asked.

„Downstairs,“ Tom said. „I’m going back to meet Jack. He’s got Rebecca and he’s going to kill her at six if I don’t get back there with his scalpel and another young girl to trade for Rebecca.“

„You can’t do that!“

„Sure I can,“ Tom said grabbing Red by his wet sleeve and leading him out of earshot of anyone else, „Miss Kensington.“

„Oh,“ Red said catching on.

A minute later, the desk sergeant announced Miss Kensington was on the line and Tom told him to send the call to Red’s office. He ran upstairs then, Red just a few steps behind him. Inspectors Jones, Dunne and McElroy happened to be in the inspectors’ offices and he ran past them to grab the phone.

„Miss Kensington,“ he shouted. „I have not got a lot of time, but I saw in the witches’ handbook a potion that can turn you into a young woman. You’ll need that cobra. That’s what it’s going to take to save Rebecca’s life and keep Jack from opening a portal to Earth.“

„Fine,“ she said, „anything else?“ That’s what Tom liked about Miss Kensington, she caught on quickly.

„Then get over to the Hotel Romania as quick as you can and hang out in front there. How long do you need?“

„Fifteen minutes,“ she said.

„Okay,“ Tom said looking at the clock on the wall, thinking that was all the time he could afford to give her.

„You won’t recognize me.“

„Wear a flower on your blouse or something—and Miss Kensington?“

„Yes?“

„Think about what you could do to Jack to stun him for a moment, something more than a bad cold—maybe that electric shock Zlata used on me in the cemetery.“

„I know just the thing.“

„Oh, and Zlata will be there too.“

„I understand,“ she said.

Things were coming together nicely, but Tom had thought that before when dealing with Jack. Every time he was sure Jack couldn’t possibly know what card he had slipped back into the deck, like a good magician Jack knew what card to pull out.

As Red and Tom, and Inspectors Jones, Dunne and McElroy headed downstairs, coming up the stairs were four constables dragging a groggy Stone by his feet. They’d slapped shackles on him that looked strong enough to hold an ocean liner to a pier. His head bounced on every stair as they dragged him toward a specially built cell. More constables held up his arms while others held their night sticks at the ready, just in case Stone came to and resisted. They stepped over him and went downstairs.

Rollo had on Stone’s coat and hat now as well as Stone’s pistol.

„You got the scalpel?“ Tom asked and Rollo patted his pocket. „You look just like Stone, except for the black marks,“ he told him. „Just keep your head down until you can get near Jack, maybe we won’t even need Miss Kensington to do anything. Remember he’s a vampire now and he’s got that vampire premonition thing working for him, but if you get close enough, maybe you could grab him and snap his neck.“

„Burn me,“ Rollo said.

„What?“

„Got a match? Hold it up to my face.“

Both Red and Tom’s matches were ruined from their swim in the river, but Inspector Dunne lit one and Tom took it and ran it along Rollo’s face until the match burned down to his fingertip. Rollo winced, but it didn’t seem to hurt him much.

„How’s it look?“

„Can’t tell you two apart now,“ Tom said. „Does it hurt?“

„Not so much, and it will heal in a week.“

Red suggested then that he hide in the trunk of their car.

„Jack will think of that,“ Tom said.

„What makes you think that?“

„Because I thought of it, and if both of us did, so will he. Let’s face it, he’s smarter than us,“ Tom said. „I got an idea though.“

„What?“

„Get on the phone and call every bridge constable. Tell them to keep an eye out for me driving a candy-apple red sports car flying an eagle. As soon as one of them spots me, have them call you back here and let you know what bridge we left the city by.“

„Okay,“ Red said. „How will I find you after that?“ he asked.

„I need a lantern still. We’ll stop to pick one up at some store and that will give you time to catch up to us.“

„I still won’t know where you went next. There’s a lot of roads that lead out into the forest.“

„I know,“ Tom said. „I’ll leave some kind of marker for you to follow. Just keep an eye for some kind of sign.“

„Like what?“

„I don’t know yet. You told me the trick was not to know what you’re going to do till right before you do it.“

„That’s not exactly what I meant,“ Red said.

Red went upstairs to get word out to all the bridge constables as Tom headed for the garage with Rollo and Watson. He decided not to place a gun on his person, since he had no coat to hide it and he didn’t want to take a chance that Jack might spot it and figure things out. They got in the car and drove up the ramp that led out of the garage as Tom filled Rollo in with some details. The first being Krakov and Kiraleko and another vampire were outside waiting for them.

„Stone, what took so long?“ Krakov asked when Tom pulled up next to their car.

Rollo didn’t say anything.

Tom turned around and looked at Rollo, but he still didn’t say anything.

„He got sick,“ Rollo finally said gesturing at Tom and laughing, „threw up his lunch.“

Krakov laughed too. „You get the thing Jack wanted?“

„Got it.“

„Where to?“

„The Hotel Romania,“ Tom said. „Lots of young girls there.“

„That okay with you Stone?“

„Yeah.“

Tom stepped on the gas and headed for the Hotel Romania. It would take five or six minutes to get there. He’d picked that hotel because it was close to Miss Kensington’s home.

„Who’s this?“ Rollo asked meaning Watson seated next to him.

„His name is Watson,“ Tom said.

„From Sherlock Holmes?“

„I guess.“

„Well my Dear Watson, try escaping and I’ll crack your skull open like a peanut and thumb out your tiny brain and eat it,“ Rollo said, under the impression the more colorful the metaphor, the more frightened the goblin.

## Chapter 18

### 25 minutes left

As Tom pulled up in front of the Hotel Romania, he looked at the large clock above the entrance and saw he had twenty five minutes. He looked for Miss Kensington standing in front of the hotel, but didn't spot her, so he parked and got out the car. He looked down the street, but didn't see her in the crowd coming down the sidewalk. Krakov pulled up behind his car and parked.

„Better hurry lover boy, time's a'wasting," he told Tom as he stepped out of his car.

Krakov followed Tom inside the hotel. A few young ladies sat in the lobby listening to polka music floating out of a pub. Only one girl there was wearing a flower, but she was with her husband and the others were all part of the same party, so Tom stood by the revolving door looking around for Miss Kensington.

„Time's a'ticking," Krakov said tapping the glass on his wristwatch with his finger. „I'd love to take a bite out of that one," he said looking over Tom's shoulder then and Tom turned around to see a young lady coming out of the ladies' room. „She'll do just fine," Krakov said, smiling at the attractive young woman with blond hair.

She had a rose pinned to her blouse and she seemed to smile at Tom, so he walked over to her, leaving Krakov behind. „That you?" he asked.

„I'm not sure," she said a little uneasy, and Tom took that to mean, she had just been looking at herself in the bathroom mirror and was surprised to see her old self—or young self again.

„I'm going to show you my identification," he said taking his TCPD photo out of his pocket and showing her it.

„Okay."

„I need you to come with me," he said loudly so Krakov would hear.

„What for?"

„About your train ride up here, got some questions for you about some men on the train."

Tom took hold of the young woman's arm and began leading her toward the revolving door. He stopped when he got back to Krakov. „Go make your call," he said and Krakov started for the bank of phone booths by the hotel desk.

„I really didn't speak to anyone on the train," the young woman said, but Tom was busy watching Krakov.

„He's got to make a call, so we know where to go next," Tom told Miss Kensington. „Wait here a moment," he said heading over to Krakov to make sure he hurried.

„I'd like to have my husband come with us," she said as Tom walked away.

That would be just like Miss Kensington—to play her part so well. He watched Krakov speaking on the phone and then Krakov hung-up and signaled that he knew where to go to meet Gibraltar.

„Oh, we won't be long, have you back before he misses you,“ Tom said turning back to Miss Kensington before grabbing her by the arm and leading her out the hotel. Krakov was right behind them.

„Here comes my husband,“ the young lady said just before Tom placed her in the car. Tom looked over his shoulder to see a very surprised-looking man coming out the revolving doors. The man and Tom exchanged confused looks.

„What's going on here?“ the man asked.

Tom didn't answer; he looked to his right and saw a young lady hurrying down the sidewalk. She had red hair and a flower pinned to her blouse. She stopped and looked at him and Tom knew he had made a big mistake.

„Wait, mam,“ he said to Miss Kensington. „Police officer,“ he said flashing her his badge. „I need you to come down to the station with me.“

„What's this about officer?“ Miss Kensington asked as the husband joined his wife by the side of the car.

„I'll tell you on the way there,“ Tom said. „You can go, mam,“ he told the other young lady.

„I'd like an explanation,“ the husband said.

„Police business,“ Tom said motioning for Krakov to get in his car, but Krakov didn't move, he was looking at Miss Kensington.

„I like the blond,“ Krakov said glancing at the first young lady. „Not the redhead,“ he said shaking his head at Miss Kensington.

„There's no time,“ Tom told him.

„I'll get rid of him,“ Krakov said starting toward the blonde's husband.

Tom stepped in front of him before Krakov was able to punch the guy. Krakov's cold stare from out his black eyes moved to Tom before he shoved him out of his way. He swung at the husband then, but Tom quickly stepped forward and blocked the punch and then he slugged Krakov on the jaw. Krakov fell like he'd slipped on a bar of soap, but he got up quickly and stepped toward Tom.

„The redhead will do,“ Rollo yelled from the backseat. „Let's get going.“

Krakov and Tom stared at one another a moment and then Krakov smiled, revealing his fangs. „If you say so Stone,“ he said. „We'll settle this later,“ he told Tom before heading for his car.

„I do not understand what is going on here,“ the husband said nervously, his hands shaking, but still standing his ground. „I'd like your badge number, officer.“

„Triple 7,“ Tom answered as he opened the car door for Miss Kensington.

„You should not get in that car,“ the husband advised Miss Kensington reaching out and grabbing her arm. Another couple, coming out the revolving doors of the hotel, stopped to watch what was happening. Tom looked inside the car and saw that Watson had his hand on the door handle. He tapped Rollo on the shoulder and pointed at Watson and Rollo reached over and grabbed Watson and pulled him closer.

The husband started shouting at a constable at the corner and when the constable looked up the street, the husband started waving him there. Tom punched him in the gut and the husband doubled over, his breath knocked out of him. Tom shot the couple by the revolving doors a look, and they retreated inside.

„Let's go,“ Tom shouted at Krakov who was doubled over laughing that it appeared he'd been punched also. „Sorry,“ Tom whispered to the husband and wife as he opened his car door and climbed behind the wheel.

As he sped away, looking in the mirror, he could see the constable running after them blowing his whistle. Tom turned at the corner and then turned up an alley. He drove to the next street, turned again and drove another block quickly. Krakov was right behind him. Tom stopped then and waved him alongside his car.

„Where we going?“ Tom asked.

„Just follow us slugger,“ Krakov said laughing.

Krakov headed toward the Oxford Crossing Bridge. Traffic was heavy near the bridge and Tom got impatient and started honking at every automobile and carriage ahead of him. He looked at his watch every few seconds. He thought to ask Miss Kensington what she had planned for Jack and she explained that if she could get close to him, she could cause Jack a temporary paralysis, but while it would persist on a human for an hour, it would only work on a vampire for a minute.

„Some kind of flash of light might be nice too,“ Tom said, „Something Red can spot.“

„I can do that,“ Miss Kensington said.

Finally they reached the Oxford Crossing Bridge and Tom spotted Sergeant Hightower standing near the call box. Hightower nodded at him as he drove slowly past him and then, looking in the rearview mirror, Tom saw him pick up the phone. Red and half the Flying Squad would soon be on their way. He just needed to give them a little time to catch up, but not too much as it was twelve minutes to six.

Krakov sped down Queen Anne's Way toward Horseshoe Road. Up ahead, Tom saw the small store that sold things farmers would buy. He had nearly forgotten about the lantern, but he could get one now. Tom honked at Krakov and waved at him until Krakov pulled over.

„We need a lantern,“ Tom said.

„That's right,“ Krakov said smiling like he found everything funny. „You'd better hurry.“

Tom looked at his watch as he hurried toward the store; it was nine minutes till six. As he came inside an elderly couple was coming out and he grabbed the gentleman by his coveralls and dragged him back in the store.

„I'm going to need you,“ he said showing the man his badge.

„What's this about?“ the man asked.

„Life and death,“ Tom said as he approached the store's owner. „I need a lantern quick.“

The woman behind the cash register pointed and Tom quickly went down an aisle and found one. „You'll need some oil too,“ she said.

Tom looked for oil on the shelf while he felt inside his pocket and realized he didn't have any money on him. He shouted for the cashier to show him where the lamp oil was, but as he did he spotted a lantern with oil in it already, setting on the shelf behind her.

„Give me that one,“ he shouted running toward her.



„That’s mine,“ the lady said as Tom climbed over the counter, knocking a candy rack down and grabbed it. He grabbed a pack of matches too.

„I’ll pay for all this later,“ he told her. „I need you to wait here till I drive away,“ he said returning to the elderly man. „Watch what direction I go and then as soon as I’m out of sight, run out into the road and stand there. A bunch of officers will be along any minute and you make sure and show them which direction I went. Understand?“

„You in some kind of trouble?“

„The worst kind. Peoples’ lives depend on you getting this right,“ Tom told the man. „Including yours if you don’t show them officers which way I went.“

Tom ran out into the parking lot as Krakov leaned out his window and tapped on his watch. Tom lit the lantern before handing it to Kiraleko, who acted like he might drop it—messing with him.

„Drop it and I’ll drop you,“ Tom said and Kiraleko nodded like he believed him.

He hurried to his car while Krakov pulled out of the parking lot and turned north on Horseshoe Road. As Tom drove out of the parking lot and turned onto Horseshoe Road also, he looked back and saw the elderly gentleman jogging toward the road.

Tom was sweating bullets as they drove north, looking at his watch every few seconds. Finally, after about three miles, Krakov turned onto a road leading into the forest. There was sign at the turn; Stormy Night Road, and Tom came to a stop next to it as Krakov started down the gravel road.

„Rollo,“ he shouted into the backseat. „Bend that sign over so Red will know which way we went.“

Rollo quickly got out the car and bent the sign so it pointed the direction they were headed.

„I can do better than that,“ said Miss Kensington, rolling down her window. She raised her arm up and chanted something in Latin and a glowing orb appeared in her palm, just like the one Zlata had made by the river. She tossed it toward the sign and it hung there in the air.

„How long will it last?“ Tom asked, starting down Stormy Night Road.

„Long enough.“

„I hope that’s Red back there,“ he said looking back about a mile and seeing the headlights of a couple of cars.

Tom drove quickly after Krakov. In a minute and a half the cathedral bells would start ringing. The road headed straight toward the cliff walls, which were less than a mile away, so Tom figured Gibraltar had to be close now. Miss Kensington sat wringing her hands. Ahead of them, Kiraleko was holding the lantern out their car window with two hands so as not to drop it. Krakov drove slowly down Stormy Night Road, too slowly for Tom, so he caught up to him and honked for Krakov to speed up. Krakov wouldn’t, so Tom put his fender to Krakov’s and pushed his car faster. Finally, about a quarter mile further, a large silhouette stepped out from behind a tree holding a lantern. It was Gibraltar.

Krakov slowed to a stop to talk with him by the side of the road. Tom honked at them to hurry up, and Gibraltar pointed at the tree he had just stepped out from behind. Krakov drove there, turned and Tom went to follow him, but Gibraltar stepped in front of his car.

„Hey Stone,“ Gibraltar said coming up to Rollo’s window and shining his lantern there. Rollo rolled his window down just a little. „I’m supposed to make sure no one followed you...“ he started to say, but then he trailed off. „There’s some cars stopping by the turn-off,“ Gibraltar said looking back toward Horseshoe Road. He reached inside his coat. „I’d better warn Jack,“ he said pulling his gun out.

At the sight of the gun, Rollo slammed the car door into Gibraltar, causing him to stumble backward and fall. His gun landed on the road and Tom hurried to beat him to it, but Gibraltar rose and grabbed hold of him. He lifted Tom into the air and shoved him toward the car. Tom flew past Rollo, who was headed for Gibraltar, and smacked into the side of the car like a snowball. His elbow broke the window causing Watson to scream as broken glass landed on him. Tom slumped to the ground as Rollo grabbed hold of Gibraltar.

„You’re not Stone,“ Gibraltar said, ducking Rollo’s punch before wrapping his arms around Rollo.

Gibraltar shoved him back across the road toward the car and Tom dove out of their way just before the two golems rammed into the car, lifting it up on two wheels. Both Miss Kensington and Watson screamed as the car tottered precipitously, ready to fall either way until Tom grabbed a wheel and pulled on it to keep the car from tipping over. Rollo slipped free from Gibraltar’s grip then and landed a punch as the car landed on all four wheels. Rollo followed up with a series of short jabs to Gibraltar’s face until Gibraltar was dazed enough that Rollo could pull back his right hand to deliver a knockout punch right smack to the middle of Gibraltar’s face.

Gibraltar’s face and nose split into a hundred tiny cracks like a windshield hit by a rock. He fell straight over then like a pillar of the Temple of Dagon pushed over by Samson. Gibraltar lay in the middle of the road out cold as the first bell of St. Paul’s rang.

„That was before the bell too,“ Rollo said pointing down at Gibraltar.

Tom grabbed Gibraltar’s lantern and ran toward the tree. He set the lantern down there for Red to see where to turn. And then he turned around when Miss Kensington shouted. Watson was opening his car door to escape. Tom ran after Watson as he ran for the edge of the dark forest. Luckily Watson tripped and fell and Tom caught him. He dragged him back to the car as the bells were halfway through their peal now.

Tom threw Watson into the car and Rollo grabbed him by his coat and jerked him across the back seat. Tom looked back toward Horseshoe Road to see the cars by the sign turn their headlights off. Red was coming, but Tom had to get to Jack before the bells stopped, and he got in his car and sped toward the dirt road where Krakov had turned.

„You’re going to pay for trying to run,“ Rollo told Watson, „As soon as I get the chance I’m going to launch you into a tree.“

„No!“ Watson pleaded.

„And you’re going to pay for that too,“ Rollo told Tom. „You owe me a steak over at Dempsey’s—the big one.“

„Deal.“

„I used to get paid hundreds of pounds for fights like these.“

Tom drove quickly down the dirt trail which was more like a cow path than a road. The car bounced all over the place and Watson was thrown around the back seat like a rag doll. Rollo found this amusing. Up ahead, Krakov's taillights were being swallowed up by the forest, but then his headlights shown on about a dozen cars parked just ahead.

Tom slammed on the brakes and slid to a halt when he reached the spot. Looking through the windshield, a little ways out in the woods, right next to the cliff wall, there was a bonfire roaring. Nearly forty creatures stood by the fire throwing shadows across their faces, on the base of the cliff wall, and on the nearby trees. Jack was standing just next to a bubbling caldron holding onto Rebecca's arm as Tom opened his car door and shouted that he had made it in time.

Jack didn't respond, he had an ear tilted toward the sound of the bells and was listening intently to them. Zlata stood next to him throwing something into the caldron that caused it shoot flames skyward. Her two hounds were lying at her feet. On the whole the scene looked like a local staging of Macbeth.

The hounds stood and growled as Tom came around the car to grab Miss Kensington, but Zlata spoke to them in some ancient language and they lay back down. Tom caused Miss Kensington to hurry as the bells were about to finish, dragging her toward a spot on the opposite side of the fire from Jack.

„Good show,“ Jack said when the bells ceased just then. „Your timing is impeccable, Inspector Flynn.“

Jack had already looked over-dressed in his tuxedo and top hat, but now he had added a white carnation to his ensemble. Zlata had on an elegant black dress and even the pointy witch hat, but she actually looked quite stunning. Two rows of suitcases and other luggage were lined up just behind them. Krakov went and pulled some luggage out of the trunk of his car. Just over Zlata's shoulder, on the branch of a tree, sat a large raven. Tom looked down at the forest floor and saw a large pentagram drawn in chalk dust on the ground. For a short while the bells continued to echo off the cliff walls.

„Lovely sound,“ said Jack. „I will miss it—the scalpel?“

Rollo, standing behind Tom, had flipped his collar up and pulled his hat down and in the dim light it was difficult to detect that he was not Stone. He had hold of Watson's arm and Tom heard him whisper that if Watson so much as twitched he would throw him so high into the air that he would get bored waiting to come back down. Rollo didn't realize Jack was talking to him when he called him Stone, so Tom looked at him and gestured at his coat pocket. Rollo remembered then. He reached in and pulled the scalpel out and showed it to Jack. Miss Kensington was putting on a good show, sobbing softly.

„Krakov, bring me it,“ Jack said and Krakov walked over to Rollo and took the scalpel from him. „While you're there check Inspector Flynn for a weapon.“

Krakov walked over and roughly patted Tom for a weapon, but didn't find one. Jack told Tom to hand Krakov the car keys too, which he did and then Krakov delivered the scalpel to Jack.

„Some light please, dear,“ Jack asked and Zlata spoke a short chant in Latin, threw her arm up and a glowing, blue orb appeared. Jack looked at the scalpel in its light and seemed pleased.

He used it to point at Stone's car before ordering Krakov to check the trunk. Krakov went there, opened the trunk and shouted that nothing was inside. Jack seemed surprised.

„I try and think of everything,“ Jack told Tom as Krakov returned to his side. „You know,“ Jack said bringing the scalpel slowly up to Rebecca's neck. „I never liked the actual act of murder. No never—bloody mess really.“ Jack lowered the knife from Rebecca's throat then. „I hate the sight of blood. What I do enjoy is scaring people—causing them fear,“ he said and then he quickly brought the scalpel up to Rebecca's neck again like he meant to slit her open this time. Everyone gasped—Tom's heart skipped a beat. Watson jumped, Miss Kensington screamed and Tom took two steps toward Jack before realizing that Jack had only been bluffing, stopping just short of actually hurting Rebecca. A number of guns were swung towards him, ready to fire if he moved any closer.

„People love to be scared,“ Jack said amused, lowering the scalpel. He put his hand on Rebecca's back and gently pushed her away. „Go my dear.“

Rebecca ran to Tom as Jack put the scalpel in his pocket and took the 49er from the vampire next to him. He pointed it at Tom.

„Did you not feel terribly alive just then?“ he asked, starting to circle around the bonfire. „My father scared our little family to death most every night when I was a boy. It was rare when he did not come home drunk and in a foul mood,“ he said circling around toward Rebecca and Tom. „The nights when he was well overdue were the worst, the waiting. Knowing the later it got, the angrier he'd be. I would sit watching the clock on the wall, listening to it tick until the sound of it alone was torture enough. There were times when the *tick...tick...tick* of that clock was exactly like the *drip...drip...drip* of Chinese water torture,“ Jack said. He had circled completely around the fire and stood a few feet behind Rollo. „Stone,“ he said.

„Huh?“ Rollo answered.

„Please step forward, away from our love birds,“ Jack said and Rollo took a few steps forward, making Watson accompany him. „Oh, and if I could borrow your weapon, please—just hand it to Krakov,“ he said and Rollo handed his gun to Krakov. „Some nights my father would come home late and nothing would happen. Other nights,“ Jack said beginning again, „he would beat us, even threaten to kill us. He could become very angry. Disappointment can do that to you if you let it and my father was so very disappointed by his own failure in life. Do you know what happened after many late nights of watching the hands of that clock? The fear building up inside me, watching the terror on my mother's face, my sisters' faces?“

No one answered him.

„I started to love it,“ Jack said answering his own question as firelight danced across his face. „Absolutely loved the thrill of being frightened and then I wanted to share my joy with others.“

He was still standing behind Rollo, his machine gun pointed at Rollo's back.

„There is a cost though for such... excitement. Occasionally a life must be sacrificed. I myself just spent a lifetime in the Dark Realms. As part of my redemption I was required to serve others there. I was an excellent surgeon to them—very dedicated, very skilled and as I said—I hate blood—nothing stains

worse than blood. Do you know how many lives I saved there?“ he asked jabbing the barrel of his machine gun toward Tom. „Too many to even try and count. I tried to take joy in helping others, but I just could not. I felt cold inside—like a vampire,“ he joked. „Now I want to take a few of those lives back—that’s fair isn’t it? I’m sure you killed in that awful war that is going on right now did you not Inspector Flynn? I’ll bet you were proud of yourself for taking them. I’ll bet they gave you a medal?“

Tom did not answer or even turn to look at Jack.

Jack went on, „I’ve paid for my sins now and I’m free to do as I will and I love it that people down in Essex are bolting their doors and windows tonight for the first time in... well... maybe ever. They’re tucking their children into bed tonight, telling them there is nothing to fear, when they perfectly well know there is. It does not even matter that you, Inspector Flynn, managed to spoil last night’s entertainment. They know I’m still out there somewhere. Maybe just outside their door or hiding under their bed for all they know. Their imagination tells them I could be anywhere—their fear is my ally. That is why we have the power of imagination—to conjure up things to scare us. The very first drawings man ever made on a cave wall were of the terrifying beasts that frightened him.“

Jack suddenly opened fire, hitting Rollo a dozen times in the back. Miss Kensington and Rebecca screamed; everyone else jumped, especially Watson who was just next to Rollo. Rollo stumbled into the fire before falling to the ground just outside it. He did not move, but he was not dead of course, just stunned. Like a good blow to the head might cause you or me. Tom spun around, but Jack brought the gun to bear on him.

„I knew you would try something,“ Jack said circling back toward the other side of the fire. „I saw the little signal you gave her,“ he said pointing at Rebecca. „I saw *Werewolves—The Musical*. You could not even let her dangle for even a little while. I figured you would take down Stone and replace him somehow. I’m sure you were hoping he could get close to me,“ Jack said gesturing at Rollo lying on the ground moaning. „I hope it makes you feel better that at least you tried. I hope that eases your conscience some. They tell me it’s an awful thing—a conscience that is. Krakov,“ Jack yelled then. „Bring our lovely guest here,“ he said pointing at Miss Kensington and Krakov went over and grabbed Miss Kensington and dragged her toward Jack. „Tie her hands,“ he said, producing a rope from out his sleeve like a magician. Krakov looped the rope around Miss Kensington’s wrists.

„I’m just an entertainer,“ Jack said when Krakov had finished and everyone’s attention was on him again. „Nothing more. The greatest show in London once. What fun is Halloween if none of the monsters are real?“ Jack asked. „I’m real.“

Jack motioned at Zlata then, who reached into her dress and pulled something out from her pocket. It was the third frog. Zlata stroked it lovingly a couple of times before suddenly tossing the small frog into her cauldron. A flame ten feet high shot straight upwards. Jack reached into a satchel by his feet then and pulled out a sack. Zlata helped untie the string holding the sack shut and then reached in and came out with one of the stolen cobras. It wrapped around her hand and sunk its fangs into her wrist, but she was unconcerned by this.

She grabbed the cobra by its head and tail and stretched it out like a piece of string. Jack took his knife out and cut the snake’s head off and Zlata held the

cobra's body over the cauldron while its blood and poison dripped into it. The cauldron began to hiss and boil, and smoke and vapors rose up and hung just above the cauldron. A dark cloud formed over hers and Jack's heads. Zlata stepped back as the cloud grew bigger and darker and then when she was satisfied with it, Zlata pulled from her dress a worn-looking sheet of paper. It was the spell from the evidence room. She read from it out loud, and when she was done, the mist seemed to come alive—like a storm cloud suddenly filled with lightning.

Jack looked on with awe as Zlata made a big, sweeping motion with her arm, at the same time repeating some ancient phrase thrice, and the lightning shot out of the cloud then, causing everyone to shield their eyes.

The bright, white rays of light shot out into the dark forest all directions and then they disappeared. Tom hoped Red and the rest of the Flying Squad were around to see it. When he looked again at the cloud over the cauldron, Tom saw it had changed from a dark cloud into a shimmering veil. It was a portal to another place now. It looked much like a giant, soap bubble as it slowly sank to the ground and sat there. You could see inside it, but not yet pass through its milky-colored veil. Rebecca whispered the name of the place enclosed inside it—Stonehenge.

„Absolutely amazing my dear,“ Jack said causing Zlata to smile. „It's time I returned to England. With a show bigger and better than I ever imagined was possible,“ he said swinging his arm around at the vampires and goblins he was taking there with him.

Zlata went and stood by Jack as he handed the 49er he was holding off to Krakov. Jack took hold of Miss Kensington then by her slim neck. He reached into his pocket with his other hand and produced the scalpel.

„It's a shame someone has to die in order for this portal to fully open,“ Jack said in such a way that Tom thought he actually meant it. „I'm sure this young lady is one of your policewomen,“ Jack said eyeing Miss Kensington. „Probably trained in Judo or some Eastern art of self-defense, but I anticipated that,“ he said fingering the rope tying Miss Kensington's hands together.

Jack continued, „Of course if no one was to die I would be no better than one of those cheap magicians who pretend they are going to saw their pretty assistant in half. They lack the will to actually do so, disappointing their audience to no end. And you, Inspector Flynn,“ he said holding the scalpel out toward Tom, causing it to catch the firelight and shine, „will be known as the greatest prop assistant ever for bringing me this. And the most fallen of heroes for being the cause of this young woman's demise.“ Jack brought the scalpel to Miss Kensington's neck. „Its time to open the portal. It is time to saw the young lady in half for real,“ he announced as he smiled wickedly just before he drew the blade across Miss Kensington's throat. Everyone gasped, the goblins threw their hands up to cover their faces, but then, looking between their fingers, they stared at Miss Kensington in disbelief.

Jack was the last to realize nothing had happened. The young woman before him did not die, she did not even produce a single drop of blood. Suddenly the rope wrapped around her hands caught fire and fell to the ground.

„A witch!“ Zlata screamed.

Miss Kensington turned around quickly and touched Jack on his cheek and Jack was completely unable to move. He had a frozen look of surprise trapped on his face as he stood as rigid now as a wax figure.

„You have exactly one minute,“ Miss Kensington shouted at Tom as Zlata commanded her hell hounds to attack.

The dogs caught fire and leapt at Miss Kensington, but Miss Kensington reached out towards them and blasted them with the same kind of electric shock Tom had received in the cemetery. The dogs were thrown through the air and landed whimpering on the ground, their flames extinguished. Tom grabbed Rebecca’s hand and began to run.

For a moment, all of Jack’s minions were so stunned by what they were witnessing that it seemed they could not move either. Krakov was the first to come out his stupor. He lifted his machine gun and fired at Rebecca and Tom as they ran, but he was too late—they had made it behind a Black tree. At the same time, Zlata grabbed hold of Miss Kensington and they began pulling at each other’s hair and kicking at one another’s shins. You might think witches would battle one another more spectacularly—but no.

Tom and Rebecca huddled behind the tree as Zlata and Miss Kensington wrestled each other to the ground. Watson grabbed the pistol from Rollo’s coat and used it to shoot at Miss Kensington, but the bullets passed right through her. Occasionally, as they rolled across the ground, Miss Kensington and Zlata threw off sparks, like battery cables coming in contact with one another, but that was all. Tom heard Jack whisper some order to Krakov and Krakov ordered the creatures to kill them. Rebecca and Tom looked at one another.

„We should run,“ she said.

„No,“ he said pulling her back.

„It’s too late now,“ she said, scared, seeing the stretched-out shadows of goblins and vampires, moving toward them.

„They’re coming,“ Tom promised, grabbing hold of her. He looked around anxiously. „Come on,“ he yelled into the dark forest surrounding them.

Jack’s henchmen were just steps from them now. The bonfire cast long shadows and the goblins and vampires’ forms were thrown on the ground around the tree. And then a vampire stepped into view. He lifted his gun and Tom shielded Rebecca, but Krakov reached out and stopped the vampire.

„Let me do it,“ Krakov said as he pointed his gun at Tom.

„Now, Red!“ Tom screamed.

Krakov turned to look out into the forest. „No!“ he screamed, having sensed what was about to come from there. Suddenly a machine gun opened fire from out the darkness and then a half-dozen more followed from other spots. Bullet after bullet caught fire as they zipped through the dark forest. The vampire with Krakov was hit and he stumbled backwards and fell.

Krakov was hit too, but he was still able to take off running through the forest. The rest of Jack’s army began returning fire, and bullets zipped through the air all directions. The streaks of light were like a billion stars in the night sky suddenly exploding and falling from the sky in one last flash of brilliant illumination.

Tom pulled Rebecca to the ground as bullets smashed into trees and burned into them like tiny rockets having crash landed. Others bounced off and lay

scattered on the ground, glowing like coals in a fire. Sometimes even, bullets smashed into each other in mid-air to tumble through the air and break apart into glowing embers that fell to the ground.

Red had managed to follow all of Tom's markers, and now his and the rest of the Flying Squad's accurate and sustained fire caused Jack's men to flee. They ran through the woods and tripped over logs and roots, they banged their heads on low-hanging branches, but they continued to fire their weapons, sending bullets burning through the forest like comets, but mostly they ran. The Flying Squad chased after them and from here or there would suddenly come the rat-a-tat sound and flashing barrel of a 49'er and then more bullets could be seen zipping through the air.

The vampire, who had fallen inside the pentagram, must have died from his wounds, because the portal suddenly became alive. It made a sound like a zap of electricity. Tom peered around the tree and saw the portal turn clearer. It was able to be passed through now—in fact Jack had tipped himself over and was slowly crawling toward it.

Zlata had managed to regain her feet, but Miss Kensington had hold of her dress and would not let go. Zlata reached into her dress pocket and brought something out. She threw it toward the ground. There was a flash of blinding light and then a large cloud of smoke. Zlata vanished, but then Tom spotted her running away, her two hounds chasing after her.

Rollo still lay on the forest floor. All the machine gun fire, except for some scattered fire off in the distance, ceased, as Tom ran toward Jack. He was halfway to him when suddenly there was loud bang and his leg shattered and he fell as if into a hole. He'd been shot. Tom looked to his right and saw Watson step out from behind a tree holding a smoking gun.

„This is your fault,“ Watson screamed at him showing Tom where he had been shot in the leg.

Watson hobbled closer. His evil grin let Tom know he was going to enjoy finishing him. Tom looked toward Miss Kensington, but she was furiously rubbing her eyes, trying to get whatever Zlata had thrown on her from out there. She could not help. Watson aimed at Tom's head as he turned to find Rebecca, wanting to tell her goodbye. He saw her start towards him, but then Watson whistled to get Tom's attention. He wanted Tom to watch what he was about to do. Watson smiled evilly as he pointed his gun at Rebecca.

„Please no!“ Tom pleaded, but Watson laughed as he pulled the trigger.

The gun went off like thunder as Tom turned toward Rebecca. The sound bounced off the cliff walls and echoed. He expected to see Rebecca fall, but instead she continued running toward him. She came to his side and knelt next to him and threw her arms around him. For a brief second Tom thought she must be a witch, but then he looked again at Watson and saw his arm had been knocked up in the air. The bullet meant for Rebecca had sailed over her head.

A worried look came over Watson's face then, for he knew without benefit of premonition what was about to happen to him. Tom nodded and smiled at him, goading him just like he had done to him seconds before. And then Watson was launched into the sky as if he had stepped on a giant spring. He rose almost as high as the tops of the trees before starting to fall back towards the ground.



Fortunately, for him, Watson bounced off a few branches and fell and dropped again and again before he finally managed to reach out and grab hold of a branch and hold on for dear life.

Rollo stood where Watson had just taken off from, laughing. He slapped his leg in delight and pointed at Watson, shouting that he had told him he was going to do just what he had—throw Watson into the highest branches of a Black tree.

Tom looked towards the portal then and saw it was closing; slowly collapsing on its self like a deflating balloon and Jack was half-way through it. Rebecca saw this too and she ran toward Jack, to try and pull him back out of the portal.

Tom went to stand up, but he could hardly move let alone run, but he could cross the distance to Jack quickly still. Rollo was just feet away.

„Throw me,“ Tom yelled pointing at Jack who, slowly regaining his strength; began dragging Rebecca into the portal with him.

Rollo didn't hesitate. He picked Tom up and tossed him like a fish in a fish market and Tom flew through the air and landed right on top of Jack. Both of them screamed in pain, but then Jack flipped over and went to slash Tom with his scalpel.

Jack the Ripper was a skilled surgeon, but Tom was an Army Ranger who had parachuted into France on D-day and seen plenty of combat since then and some scrawny doctor didn't scare him in a hand to hand scrape. He caught Jack's thin wrist and twisted it till the scalpel went flying and landed inside the portal.

Then Tom slid his fist up into Jack's beak of a nose, causing him to fall back flat on his back and looking up; Jack must have realized the portal was finished. As it came down on his neck like a guillotine, he smiled.

Jack the Ripper was about to die a third time, and he knew a very dark Realm awaited him, but he took delight that at least his head would return home to England. About the only pleasure he enjoys, in whatever dark realm he's in now, is thinking on the mystery that must have been created at the discovery of a head rolling around inside the Stonehenge Circle and an unaccountable, half-century old scalpel found beside it. A scalpel exactly like those used by one known only as Jack the Ripper.

The portal vanished and Tom was left holding onto the headless body of Jack the Ripper. Rebecca screamed at the sight of it, Miss Kensington, having regained her sight, stared at it blankly, Rollo shrugged and Red, just then arriving among them, remarked that Jack had a head-start on his next evil scheme.

## Chapter 19

What remained of Jack was buried in the Transylvania Metropolitan Cemetery—the Vampire Council would not claim him as one of them and allow him to be buried in the Strigoi Cemetery. Without ceremony, and during the night, he was buried in a section of the cemetery referred to as The Black Mark, which is reserved for the worst fiends and evil-doers of Transylvania City. A permanent black mark is stained onto their headstones. His read, *Jack R.—Nevermore*.

What became of his head and scalpel is not known here, maybe you know, but it seems their discovery was kept a secret and never revealed to the public, because new people arriving here in Purgatory said they'd never heard anything about it. It is a certainty though that Jack is scheming up some plan that will bring him among decent folk again, even if takes a millennium for him to pay for his sins a second time and is required to accomplish a Clara Barton-like number of good works, but one thing Jack is—he's patient.

On Sunday evening, Chief Hall's funeral was held inside St. Paul's Cathedral. All of Transylvania City's most prominent citizens were in attendance. A black hearse and team of eight (eight being a lucky number when having to do with death) black horses carried his coffin from the cathedral to the cemetery past hundreds of constables and firemen lining the route like sentinels, each holding a lantern while all other sources of light were extinguished. He has a granite headstone six feet tall in the most favored section of the cemetery not far from the footpath. If you ever find yourself in this Realm—and some life you very well may—do him the honor of visiting his grave when you visit Transylvania City and Dracula. While you're there you can spit on Jack's grave.

Monday morning, Commander Rogers was sworn in as the new Chief of Police and a Captain Gates replaced him as Commander of the Watch. After the ceremony, wearing a cast and on crutches, Tom hobbled into the shop of the Frenchman—Pierre, and asked to buy a raincoat. Pierre was surprised to see him buying yet another coat, but was happy to make a sale and he asked if he should order some more in Tom's size. Tom said that might not be a bad idea.

Also that day, Tom drove out to the country store by Horseshoe Road and paid for the lantern and apologized to the lady there. She was very understanding. It did not hurt that Tom had brought Rebecca along—she can be very charming. That night, Red, Rebecca, Miss Kensington and Tom took Rollo to Dempsey's for the thickest porterhouse they had, and all the beer he could drink. Tom had to borrow some money from Rebecca and then, as Rollo kept ordering beer, one time for the whole crowd there, Red had to ask Miss Kensington for some money to cover his half of the bill. Both of them would have gladly taken Rollo there the next night too, if he'd wanted.

Rebecca and Tom married just weeks later. They visited much of Britannia on our honeymoon, including Londonium which is like London, circa 1922. Tom finished reading *The Transylvania City Policeman's Handbook* on the train ride there. They also visited Tom's grandparents in Dubhlinn and some of Rebecca's relatives too and then they returned to Transylvania City just in time for some more trouble, starting with Stone being broken out of jail. What followed was possibly be the most intriguing, dangerous case of deceit and shadowy dealing ever waged between a group of detectives and a ruthless, clever organization intent on controlling an entire people.

