

Captain Trouvier's

chronicles of forgotten histories &
bewildering events



Written, Illustrated, Designed and Produced
by Matt Johnson

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www.artofmattjohnson.com

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Founding Contributors:

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Mita Beach	Felix Ison	The Sall Family
Richard H Blaising	Thierry Lafontaine	Ryan Smith
Adam Broadway	Jason and Brittini Potter	Bobby Strayer
Matt Brooner	Becky Johnson	Mallory Swain
Erin Brown	Jamie Johnson	Gabriel Thorn
Jessie Burris	Vicky Johnson	Robin Thornhill
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Kendall Falkner	Shane Nishibun	Charles Walters
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Christine Cherry	Rebecca Hill	Annette Samford	Donovan York
Isa Cunanan	Johnny Jaroslowski	Caitlin Smith	Anna Young
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“Being a Time Journalist is not about changing what was, or indulging fantasies about what might have been changed for the better. Bad things happen. Journalism is and always will be the sacred task of shining light into the fog of time, so that we may reveal truths, and understand ourselves better than ever before.

Those dark and undesirable moments in human history are what shape us into the great race of people we become. As individuals, and as a race, without those trying times, we are not whole. This is why altering the past in any way is strictly forbidden, without exception, and carries a penalty of immediate termination.”

Time Keepers Constitution,
Chapter 5 - The Role of Time Journalists
2143 A.D., Year 2 B.A. (Before Atlantis)

A Storyteller's Story

My encounter with the man I soon came to know as “Captain Trouvier” was brief, to say the least. During a stroll through my neighborhood one evening, I spotted a man in hiking gear looking like he just returned from a safari that turned into a military coup.

He was scribbling in his notebook, as though he was trying hard to remember something, reciting words aloud and getting frustrated with himself. I thought: “OK, I’m just going to swing wide and avoid eye contact.”

It was too late, he’d seen me. He began running towards me and whispering to get my attention. “Monsieur! Sir! Mi Amigo! Nakama!”

I quickened my pace. I had four illustrations due for work the next morning. All safety concerns aside, I didn’t have the time or energy for a loon that night. It became clear he was following me, and since there was no escaping the encounter, I turned to face him.

He seemed lost and desperately out of breath. He swigged water from his canteen, which already appeared dry, and that’s when I noticed the book in his hand.

“I must say, boy—is that any way to greet a stranger in need?” he spoke with a strong French accent. It added to the condescending tone in a way I almost had to respect, except for the insult to my manners.

“Can you read English?” he asked, which I took as another slight until I realized he was being serious. I nodded and started to speak, but he interrupted. “Take this. It explains much, but unfortunately not enough.” I looked at the dirty and beaten book.

I protested, “No, you better hold on to this. Do you need me to call someone, or—” I held out my water bottle. “Here, take this,” I said, trying to return his book at the same time, which he didn’t fall for.

“Take it! Read it!” he panted. “Make it mean something.

I beg of you. There is not much time. Well ... maybe there is. That remains to be seen.”

He plucked the water bottle from my hand. “Ah, how do you say, water boll-AY, yes? Bottle?! Bottle.” He seemed pleased that he figured it out on his own. “It is genius. Terrible, but genius,” he murmured, pouring its contents into the canteen and handing it back to me.

“What is the year?” he asked. I wasn’t sure if I was ready to ask why he didn’t know.

“It’s 2012, last I checked. December,” I said.

He thought for a moment, then looked pleased. “Très bon. Very good.” He nodded and ran away at a full gait. I caught up to him as he turned a corner, just in time to find out that the book was worth reading. Just in time to see him vanish into thin air.

I don’t expect you to believe me. It seems like a plausible enough theme for a book, and if that keeps me from the insane asylum, so be it. Of course it’s fake. Fiction. Delightful imaginings of a creative young man. I’m satisfied with that.

This is a collection of the stories I found most interesting in Trouvier’s hundreds of pages of encounters with men and women throughout all time. I presented them with artwork as close to their original forms as I could achieve. Many were faded and nearly destroyed, so I’ve brought them to life as I think the Captain would want.

You’ll see his final note at the end. Let’s just say, whenever and wherever that crazy Frenchman is—lost in time, or just lost in my imagination—I hope that his journey ended how he hoped—for the sake of our future, and for the sake of our children’s children’s children.

Pass this along, and share it as you please. Hopefully one day one of us will be lucky enough to encounter that man again. If you do, I’d love to know how he’s doing.

Thanks for supporting my delusions. I mean, fiction.
—Matt Johnson



The Artist and the Thaumatrope

I retired from my career in the Royal Navy of France at a young age, having completed my duties before I was thirty, and still having much of my life ahead of me, I decided to move to the great city of Milan in Northern Italy.

I wanted a peaceful and tranquil existence away from the frivolities of modern life, hoping to enjoy the fact that my most challenging days were behind me, and that I was to reap the fruits of my labor as any good sailor that leaves in due time should.

Perhaps for the better, I had no idea what new adventure would find me there. I took up residence in the heart of the city, and befriended a most incredible and peculiar individual who became as much of a brother to me as any blood relative, perhaps even more so.

I first encountered Leonardo da Vinci in a local market, where his peculiarities began, although they were but the tip of the iceberg with this complicated man.

I watched with astonishment as he carefully examined the birds and poultry available for purchase for what seemed like hours, but could have been minutes. His incredible ability to concentrate seemed to slow down time itself, whether this was due to his brilliant mind or his dashing good looks, I'll leave that for more insightful men than myself to decide.

He proceeded to purchase the prize bird of the day, the most beautiful living specimen in the market, and without hesitation, moments after handing a bag of coins to the merchant, he opened the bird's cage and watched it soar off into the air with a look of pure joy on his face.

When I asked him why he did this, his response was elegant in its simplicity. He shrugged and said: "It cannot be undone. And what would you have me do differently?"

Leonardo and I spent countless hours discussing my time in the Navy, and he took a keen interest in the engineering of the whole endeavor, both the virtues and the limitations of naval battle.

It struck me as peculiar that this man, who mainly earned his keep by patronage from the Duke of Milan, would take such an interest in my past. He made his living building parade floats and painting cathedral murals, he was by no means a military man. His quarters were littered with architectural diagrams, astonishingly beautiful drawings beneath paint tins and coffee mugs, mathematical formulas scratched onto the walls, and models of peculiar birds crafted in wood. Later this would all make sense to me, but in the early days of our friendship, it seemed like chaos.

We were friends for nearly two decades, and over that time I took up the practice of humbly studying his drawings and making my own meager attempts at the craft. It was then that I began to understand his mastery, and I was bewildered by his ability to excel so deeply at so many things.

The strange man that freed caged birds in the marketplace had become an artist, a visionary, an engineer, a musician, somehow more than human, and I knew that being witness to his life was a greater honor than a humble sailor like me deserved.

Near the end of our time together, after almost twenty years of friendship, his demeanor changed and he withdrew almost entirely from the charismatic oddball I had cherished.

In the fall of 1497, after almost nine months of dormant friendship, I had to see him again. When I knocked on his door that evening, I was not greeted by the now-usual sound of him muttering to himself on the other side, ignoring me.

Instead the door burst open — giving me such a startle that I caught my breath — and he jerked me inside by the collar of my newest shirt, which should have perturbed me greatly, but I was far too elated to have communion with my best friend once again.

I was struck by his age. He was not worn with stress or fatigue, he was just no longer the healthy, fifty-year-old man that holed himself up so many months ago. He had visibly aged by what seemed to me closer to ten years.

He gingerly hung a necklace bearing an octagonal medallion with a circular disk inside on a hook by the door beside me, and then he turned around and dashed through his belongings, spilling things over and storming about his studio as I tried to talk to him.

When he finally realized that he was alarming me, he stopped and put a hand on my shoulder, saying, “I have been a terrible friend, my dear Trouvier. I do hope you will forgive me. All these years away from you.” He sighed and looked fondly upon me, and I truly believe that he thought it had been years since we last spoke.

He left me standing in his living area, and darted off again. I approached the beautiful pendant he’d left hanging there so carefully, startled from my trance when he shouted: “Don’t touch that pendant!” from the other room.

He returned and collected his thoughts, rubbing his forehead in his characteristic way, and said, “Feed my cat, would you? I must be off.”

He moved toward the pendant, and seeing that was his intent, I seized it before he could, and demanded answers.

My oldest friend was acting like a madman, and I was concerned. He fell to pleading that I very carefully give him the pendant back—that I had no idea what I was holding.

“Trouvier, my dearest friend, please be careful. Also, you must leave Milan before the end of the year—war is coming,” he said, and grabbed for the pendant.

I fell backwards, crashing over a table heaped with drawings and pottery. Some of those discarded scraps of his were some of my favorites, surely lost to history

forever now, and this was what sent me into a rage all my own.

In an act of pure defiance, I held the pendant at arm’s length, taunting him with it, using all my faculties to plead with him to stop this madness.

He froze, petrified, more afraid than I’d ever seen him before. The papers he’d so frantically gathered earlier slid to the floor as his arms relaxed. With tearful eyes, and a trembling voice, clearly delusional to me in my limited knowledge of the situation, he said: “Whatever you do, brother—” he swallowed hard and waved one hand pleadingly toward me, “do not allow your breath to touch that pendant, for the sake of your life.”

How can life’s most pivotal moments occur in the smallest fraction of a second?

Why do we cause so much damage when hurtful words spill from our lips?

When does the first foot fall in our longest journeys? In a single glance, we find our soulmates. By writing one word, we begin a great novel.

Our lives are full of seconds, each one more impactful than the last.

In that moment, while I stood hurt and rejected by my truest friend, concerned for his health and well-being, I forgot that before me stood the most ingenious man that would ever live.

I forgot the artist, the visionary, and the inventor.

In a moment that seemed to last an eternity, with one exhale of my earthly breath, I blew upon the medallion hanging from my hand, and unwittingly embarked on a journey from which I may never return.



The Ancient Grove

For the first time in what seems like weeks, but may only be days, I have found myself in a safe place with access to paper and a writing device.

It was not easy at first to find a place that would respect my currency, and after a few nights of fitful sleep, I have collected myself well enough to catalogue my recent experiences.

At first I assumed it was trickery, some delivery devised by Leonardo to create a grand illusion. My surroundings had transformed. I watched Leonardo's face ripple and dim, as though he was sinking into a great body of water. I could hear him cry out, but his voice distorted and vanished, and for a moment, all was darkness and the sound of rushing wind. Feelings of hot and cold coursed through me, and just when I thought I would lose my mind, I experienced a falling sensation, then all was still.

I found myself in another place, a wide-open grove more beautiful and lush than any I ever thought I would see in my life: it was even more beautiful than the great Alps. When I realized that I was experiencing a transportation of some sort, and not some clever illusion to entertain or delight, I was filled with nervous terror and promptly gave my lunch back to the earth from whence it came.

When my mind and body calmed down, I took in my surroundings again. What struck me even more than the environment were the creatures who lived there. Large beasts towered as high as the tallest castle and grazed like cattle on the trees' highest branches. More species than I had ever seen in one place before were all living in harmony around a large, crystal-clear lake. The only sounds you could hear were mothers grunting for their young and snapping branches from the other creatures who dined nearby.

When the first creature spotted me, my reaction was to run, but there was no malice in the creature's eyes. I was seen, but not regarded.

I was with them in that moment. We were together, and despite my spinning head and racing heart, I found peace amongst the beasts of this wondrous land.

But the occasion was soon destroyed. A massive beast moving only on its hind legs leapt from dense trees surrounding the grove, sending the creatures into a stampede. It was in that moment—more than any time I had sailed the great seas in battle—that I feared for my safety like never before. I followed the lead of the beasts around me, running for my life as the howls of the monster pursuing us rattled my teeth and gave me a surge of adrenaline unlike any I'd ever experienced.

The beasts dispersed in all directions, their massive thumping footsteps causing me several times to lose my own footing and tumble to the earth. I ran until I escaped the sound and sight of them, until my own legs gave out underneath me. As we were trained to do during my time in service, I found what seemed to be a safe shelter—a cave where I could consider my situation and devise a plan.

I concluded that if I was to escape this predicament, I should retrace my steps. That's when I remembered the medallion. I don't recall placing it around my neck, but after searching my pockets and belongings, it caught my eye and I felt its weight upon my skin.

As fortune would have it, this deduction saved my life.

Just as I breathed upon the pendant again, two glowing eyes emerged from the darkness, outsized only by the razor-sharp fangs of a hideous creation. The beast lunged towards me as the world turned to water and dimmed.

If I didn't exist today, I would have thought that the darkness that followed did not owe to the medallion's charm, but rather meant that the abomination in the cave had gotten the best of me.



The Ink and the Butcher's Son

Upon arriving here, I took a few days to rest and collect myself before daring to meddle with the medallion any further. You will soon understand why. Using what little money I had in my possession upon entering Leonardo's workshop, I found an Inn that, despite not liking the look of my outdated and foreign currency, obliged to give me room and board, based on the fact that my money was made of pure silver.

Having rested, I thought it wise to collect myself enough to purchase a journal and writing instruments, and so recounted my first experiences. Now that I have gained my footing and understand the immensity of this situation, I feel it is important to note what type of mystifying journey upon which I find myself.

Based upon my first unsettling and amazing experience, At first I thought the medallion was moving me to distant lands untouched by human hands, and perhaps it was making it possible for me to travel great distances in the blink of an eye. In actuality, it is so much more than that. When I last activated the medallion, I fell nearly head-first into an alley, and after gaining my composure, I took a look around to find myself in the tucked away corner of a civilized place.

People bustled about in a flurry of activity not unlike the markets of Milan, and assuming I was transported to another location in my present time, I was quite unalarmed, finding myself making plans to find my way back to Italy (without daring to make use of the medallion to do so).

In an effort to find my bearings without causing much alarm, I quickened my pace and my spirits were high. I went into a local cafe to have a drink and investigate my most recent relocation. I was no longer afraid, and caught up in adventure.

I always fancied myself an explorer, one to enjoy finding new experiences and meeting people rather

than taking a more conventional or straightforward route to my destination, and I dare say that has made all the difference in my life. This seemed like a far more interesting approach, so I settled in to listen to the locals converse and relaxed with an exotic warm beverage called "coffee" which further enhanced my alertness and high spirits.

While I knew a great deal of english, I found it hard to follow the conversation at first. I soon realized it was because there was unfamiliar talk of revolution, war, and independence from Britain, something I found quite odd for an english speaking body to discuss in the open air. A couple of men that seemed to be directing the debate where discussing whether or not the "Colonies" would become its own sovereign nation, or if the British would overthrow the rebellion. When the debate finally seemed over, and all were convinced that the British would win, the cafe became morose. The man arguing for victory on behalf of the Colonies crouched down, looking over both shoulders, and whispered to me, as though he'd known me his whole life, and said "I know you get me. You've got faith that we'll pull off this revolution. I like you. Do you want to know a secret?"

I have never been one to discourage a stranger from sharing. Some of the most interesting and fulfilling friendships of my life started out with me lending an ear and letting someone tell their stories. Self conscious about my poor english, I nodded enthusiastically. The large man clapped me hard on the back, causing me to spit my coffee, and let out a laugh that shook the walls.

After he collected himself, and wiped a laughing tear from his cheek, he continued, "ok, my lad... listen here. That Declaration of Independence, you know it?"

"My brother's butcher's son worked as a scribe months ago when the first draft was put to paper before the real fightin' started. He swears to this day that Thomas Jefferson demanded he destroy the first copies of the

document as soon as they were copied, you see. And demanded the boy use a special ink. He swore him to secrecy, and demanded that not one drop be used to write for any other purpose until the paper was completely finished and all the members of congress had signed with it. When he asked Jefferson why, he promised to tell him what made the ink so special, but not until after the signing, you see.”

Several of the men in the cafe listening to this story scoffed and rolled their eyes at the man, who now had his arm wrapped firmly around me, drinking heavily from a beer stein larger than my head.

“Oh, quite you! You know its true, look outside and see, we’re gonna win this thing! You watch!” he berated. He blinked slowly once, belched loudly, and took another drink of his giant stein. “Now, where was I?? Oh, yes, Jefferson’s ink! Once the document was signed, he gave the last drops of the ink to the boy, and told him its secret. He said it had been given to him by a man with black eyes, skin like a reptile, with tentacles like a squid coming off his face. Said he was dressed in robes like a preist, he was.”

“Here it comes! It’s the squid head!” one of the men ridiculing the storyteller bellowed and fell off his chair. This was probably because the man telling me the story kicked it forcefully out from underneath him.

“I said quiet, you!! I’m almost done, would ye?” he shook his head, left out a heavy sigh, and continued. “Anyway. This man, this creature from some other place, you see... it gave Jefferson the ink, saying he had a job to do, more important than any other for a hundred years. It told him that anything he wrote with that ink, and if written with an honest heart and truest desires, was destined to come true, and that he must use it to draft the Declaration of Independence.”

He scratched his neck, sensing the jeers from the other patrons. “I know it sounds crazy, but that’s why I think we’re going to win this thing. The Colonies will survive!”

There were a few sarcastic cheers, and the man’s grip loosened. I finally worked up the courage to ask a question, realizing that all in the cafe were of different nationalities and my accent would arouse no suspicion.

“What did he do?”

“What did who do?”

I struggled for the words, “The, eh, brother’s butcher’s son? What did he do with his drops of ink?” I found myself gesturing, writing in the air to make myself clear.

The man got a shrewd glint in his eye, and said “Aye, I thought ye’d never ask, friend!” and with another swig said “He used the last drops of the ink to write the name of his true love, a girl that hadn’t given him so much as a bird’s wink in all his days. He wished to have her with all his heart, and I swear as I sit here today, they are to be wed in the spring!”

At this, the others in the cafe ceased their sarcastic ridicule of their friend, and let out a rousing cheer.

“The year 1777 is going to be a wonderous year, my new friend!” said the storyteller.

It was upon his announcement of the year that my head began to spin. I felt sick, and immediately made my way from the cafe.

I wandered back into the alley from whence I came, and held the medallion to my chest, not daring to let it spin again. That was when I realized this medallion was not simply transporting me from place to place, as so many of my journey’s at sea had done before. Moving from place to place was something I could comprehend, but moving through time was more than I could process.

Da Vinci’s medallion is moving me through time and place, from one when to another, seemingly at random.

I stumbled, dumbfounded, to the first place that seemed to have proper lodging for someone in my state, was probably presumed drunk for all my stumbling and mumbling, and no sooner was I let into a room than my head hit the pillow, and I slept for what seemed like days.

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

After taking rest and collecting my thoughts, I knew what had to be done. For better or worse, I was faced with two choices: stay here, or move on. In the end, I chose adventure and maybe finding home again, as Leonardo had.

I bought a few necessary supplies with the meager remains of my coin purse—mostly food, writing and drawing materials, and some basic survival tools.

Knowing I could find myself in a library of the distant future, or a dangerous ancient jungle, I had to be prepared for anything. I was about to embark on possibly the greatest expedition in history, and I intended to be ready.

I had another good night's rest and a wonderous meal, during which I enjoyed a fair bit more of the “coffee” beverage than was probably proper. After the meal, I said goodbye to the innkeeper and headed back to my room (which probably caused a bit of confusion for him).

Realizing that the last two times I had transported I'd fallen a short distance to the earth, I braced myself as though the floor was soon to fall out from underneath me. I must have looked quite silly, and even more so when I raised the medallion in front of my face.

At that moment it occurred to me that I may never find myself in such a decent and accommodating place again. Remembering the beasts from whatever time I'd visited previously, this caused great hesitation.

I stared at the medallion, examining its intricate engravings. One of the many latin phrases etched upon its surface, presumably by my old friend Leonardo, was Sic transit gloria mundi, which if I remember correctly, translates to “So passes away the glory of the world.”

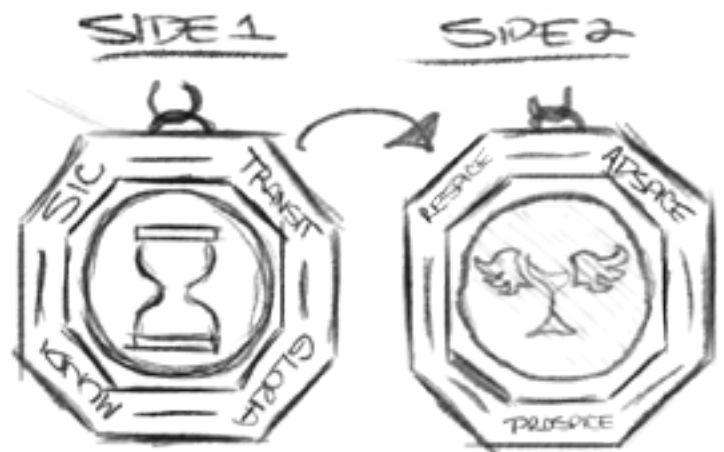
While this may not have been the intention of the phrase, I realized then that my journey was larger than

myself. If I clung to the earth, squabbling with men over goods and money—during my one and only life, and what could be my one chance at a magical experience—I would die a foolish and unfulfilled man, never having soaked up what adventure was bestowed upon me.

Earthly glory and seeking the praise of other men was no longer my destiny.

The thaumatrope swayed delicately, and with one final adjustment of my footing, I exhaled into its center, watching intently as the empty hourglass on one side flipped to the floating sand and wings on the opposite, creating the illusion that the hourglass had wings, and that sand was moving from one chamber to the other.

The familiar feelings of hot and cold returned and the strong winds crashed against me, and I tried with all my might to hold my footing so that I would not injure myself when I arrived at my next destination.





The Sands of Time

My theory proved sound, and as the sense of falling came over me, my position was firm. It was for naught, however, because I found myself falling upon a large dune of sand, from which I tumbled end over end for what seemed like minutes. When I regained my footing and looked back up toward the gigantic dune, I realized I'd found myself in the middle of the night in what appeared to be some sort of desert land. I had tumbled what looked to be roughly one hundred yards. My clothes were askew and many of my supplies had tumbled away from me, some of them already sinking in the sand that still poured down the path I carved in the silky smooth sand dune.

In a moment of panic I thought I had lost the medallion, but confirmed it was still safely around my neck before any further investigation would commence.

After stumbling around for a bit in the darkness, climbing the dune and sliding back into its valley, I had collected most of the items which I'd so carefully prepared. Seeing nothing in any direction, I feared for my safety in this hostile territory. At any moment I feared a large beast would leap forth from the sands, consuming me whole before I could so much as get my hand around the medallion.

As an astute navigator, I waited until nightfall, and using the guiding lights of the stars, to what ability I could recall, I made my way north even as the temperature dropped sharply. I felt the moisture being wicked out of my body by this dry climate, and desperately clung to the waterskin I had filled just hours prior.

I walked for hours, until almost daylight, until my legs could take me no further, and when my large pack finally pulled me down, I succumbed to the weight, and slept.

I awoke in what seemed like twilight, and to peculiar sounds. I couldn't tell what direction it was coming from, but the sounds of many people bustling about was too much to ignore. By the time I made my way to the top of a dune, I was exhausted again and more dehydrated than ever, but the sight before me overshadowed all distractions.

Massive structures were being erected before my very eyes. Thousands of people off in the distance, guiding beasts as large as those from the groves I'd recently visited, only resembling what I remember to be an elephant.

Hundreds of men were guiding these towering beasts with ropes and prodding at their feet to guide them in the right direction. The entire activity was barbaric to say the least, but the elephant-beasts seems docile, as though their movements were completely voluntary, and they didn't mind the pin-pricks and tugging strings of the men below.

The beasts guided stones many times larger than any stone I'd ever seen moved, and there were dozens of them, many at different levels on the structure. The entire operation was mesmerizing.

In my astonishment, I lost my footing and tumbled again, falling end over end down the dune toward the construction side. My fall caused quite a stir, and before I could even regain my balance, I was set upon by several men that appeared to be guards.

Sensing obvious danger, and with little time to explain, and with no other option, I quickly lifted the medallion from around my neck and blew as hard as I could.



The Ghost and the Machine

When the world gathered back around me, I immediately knew I was in a place far more modern than any I'd seen before. It resembled the highly urbanized streets of Paris and Milan, but only in function.

The roads were of impeccable craftsmanship, the buildings were monstrous, choking the sky, and wagons that moved seemingly of their own will carried passengers to and fro. It was almost a second too late that I realized I was standing in the midst of their traveling paths, and dived out of the way, luckily keeping myself and my belongings intact.

I almost barreled into the wall of a building, and looked at myself in the reflection of a window that touched the ground and rose just above the height of an average man. I could barely see myself, as it was night here just as it was in the desert.

I looked dreadful. I was covered in sand, and probably resembled a vagrant or a stowaway to the average passerby, of which there were many. At first I felt as though I was invisible, no one paid me a passing glance.

I examined the window further, and much to my amusement, I noticed a gripping mechanism and hinges, making it obvious that this was not a window, but a door. Upon it was inscribed in intricate letters, "Tesla Electric Company, 89 Liberty St., New York, NY 10006, Est. 1887."

Having little idea what to do next, I stood admiring the craftsmanship of the door itself for some time, until a voice broke my concentration. "You there! Sir!" the man was addressing me, and when he noticed I was startled, he quickly acted to alleviate my concerns.

"Good sir, no worries! I own that building. My name is Nikola Tesla. How can I help you?" Mr. Tesla said with a clap on my back. Then he looked at my disheveled

appearance as I adjusted my overcoat and brushed sand away from my hair, hoping he hadn't noticed.

"You look like you just came from an African safari! How interesting. You're obviously not homeless, your belongings belie your condition. I ask you again, how may I help you?"

"I... I am just passing through, I suppose, and stopped to admire this place," I said in my best English.

"Admire? This place? Ha, ha!" He erupted in laughter to the point I thought he may very well cause himself to be faint. "Oh, did that jokester Mr. Peck put you up to this?" he gasped.

Not knowing how to explain without causing him alarm, I stated simply, "The door, it is very nicely made." This only caused him to laugh even harder, exclaiming "*the door!*", eventually sliding down against the wall of the building, in tears and fitful, almost silent laughter, clutching his stomach.

I started to elaborate, not understanding the humor, but finding his hysteria amusing myself, stifled a chuckle. I smiled broadly and started to speak, and then he waved his hand in what I understood to mean "no more" while he calmed himself down.

"Ohh, that's too good, sir. Too good. A right good actor, you are!" he said, standing and patting me on the shoulders, adjusting my coat further, then looking into my eyes. I was a bit unnerved by this and surely it showed on my face. "There's something about you, good sir, what is your name?"

"I am Captain Trouvier ... well, retired now, I suppose," I said humbly.

"I'll still call you Captain, for as long as you feel you are

an explorer. I like you, Captain Trouvier, and I was just headed into my laboratory for some ... well, you should come see. Marvelous things will dazzle you this evening, things you are likely to never see again.” he started unlocking the door, and I accepted that this was the adventure upon which I was set at this time and place.

Upon entering his offices, it was far less glamorous inside, very utilitarian. After making our way through several locked doors and flights of stairs, we arrived at the top floor of the building, which opened up into a marvelous display of metals, glasses, and machinery. It made me think of my dear friend Leonardo, and what he might have thought of such a spectacle.

I noticed Mr. Tesla was frantically turning knobs and adjusting dials when he spoke again, saying, “Do you ever ask yourself why you strive? Why you struggle? Why you try? I will almost certainly die penniless due to my endeavors, and while the glory of men would be a great achievement, I certainly don’t do it for them. I do it because, well ... ” he paused for a moment adjusting some connections on his machinery. He shrugged and continued, “because I guess there’s a first time for everything. Someone has to do something no one else has ever done. I like the idea of being that someone.”

With a wild smile that flashed away in an instant, he moved around to the other side of the machine and continued.

He put on tinted goggles and handed me a pair, so I followed suit. They were uncomfortable over my eyeglasses but I was soon to be very grateful to have them.

With an almost insane tone in his voice, he said, “Prepare, Captain, to be amazed,” and gave a lever one giant push.

There was a large orb in the center of the machinery he adjusted, and it started to hum with activity. A moment later it glowed, and as the first electric sparks erupted forth, like lightning from the sky of a fierce storm, I gasped and ducked in fear for my life. Mr. Tesla let out a maddening laugh and brought me to my feet, saying: “There’s nothing to fear here, my dear sir! Enjoy the show!”

The lightning increased in volume and intensity, the entire room seeming to be made of deafening thunder.

He screamed over the eruptions, “Just watch there, in the corner! Magical things are happening!”

The sound faded, and the lightning erupting from the orb concentrated in one area of the room. At first I thought it was my imagination, but the figure of a woman, an apparition of some sort, took form before my eyes. Her hands were extended in an ambiguous manner, her hair and robes flowing as though she were under water. Her face was gentle, without expression, and one of the most beautiful I had ever seen.

“Wondrous, isn’t she?” his voice trembled with emotion. “I don’t know that I would say I love her, necessarily. But this is what some form of love must feel like. Just wondrous. She is my muse. I don’t know if she beckons me or pushes me away, but I know she watches me.” he sighed with pride. “My great mistress in the sky. She never moves, but never leaves my side. Everywhere I have performed this experiment, she is there, unmoving, unchanging. Somehow I have always known she was there, and that gives me great comfort.”

Then almost as if he’d commanded it, the apparition slowly rotated towards me. She only rotated about twenty degrees, but we both took notice of this contradiction of Mr. Tesla’s previous statement.

“By the grace of the gods, she sees you!” Tesla exclaimed. “Well ... do something!”

Without knowing any better, I just raised my hand in greeting. Her enigmatic pose remained the same, and after a moment, whether it was real or imagined, it seemed that a smile crossed her face. Just as suddenly as she had moved, she returned to her original position, the electric glow still pulsing through and around her marvelous figure.

“It appears you are well met, traveler,” Tesla said, and allowed the machine to wind down. The woman wavered and then flickered for an instant, and was gone, returning the laboratory to its former glory, albeit far more ordinary considering what just took place.

“Well, that was something, wasn’t it?” said Mr. Tesla as he reset his dials and levers to their former positions.

I found this man to be full of wonder, with a zest for

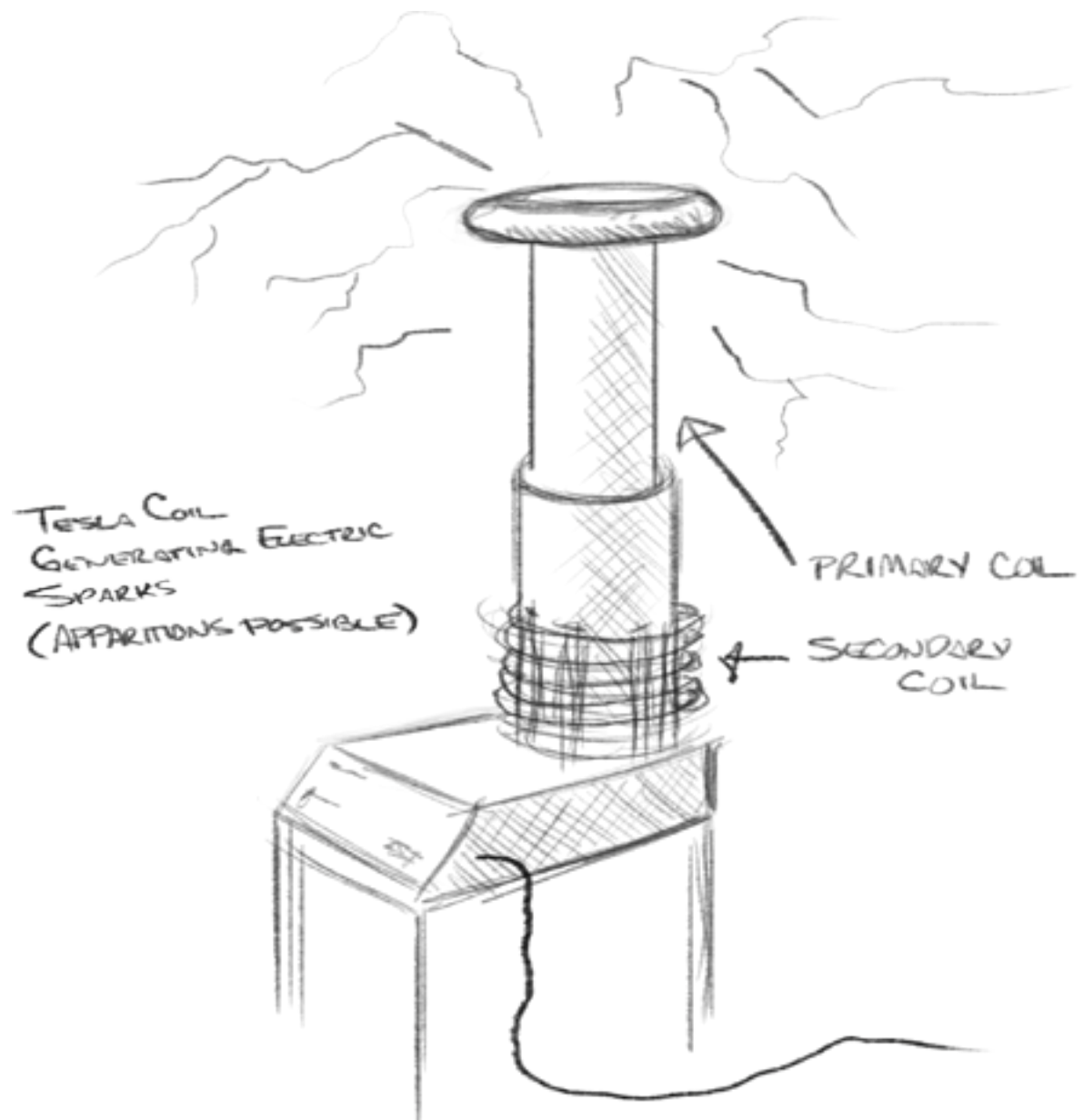
the unexplainable. I felt a great urge to speak of him about my recent experiences, but thought better of it. I still wasn't sure I was entirely ready to discuss what had transpired, let alone understand it. Then I had a marvelous idea, whether or not it was a foolish mistake, I'll never know, but it seemed like a good idea at the time.

"Monsieur Tesla, thank you for showing me your wondrous maiden. I wish you much success in your endeavors. And now, I would like to impart one thing to you before I go."

I raised the medallion in front of my face and continued, "You too, are well met, and for the sake of us all, create fearlessly, for I fear that men like you are rare amongst us. Now, allow me to show you something perhaps equally intriguing and mysterious."

Mr. Tesla looked upon me with great interest and seemed flattered by my previous statements. "To use your words if I may, Mr. Tesla, prepare to be amazed."

And with that, I breathed upon the thaumatrope, and was whisked away to my next destination.





A Brief and Terrifying Encounter

I landed more deftly than my last several transitions from one time to another. I found myself with both hands on the ground, on one knee. I was in a bedroom or changing room like those from my own time. There was something familiar about the place. I noticed a Fleur-de-lys on several of the room's dressings, and breathed a sigh of relief. Looking outside, I realized I was in the upper levels of Notre Dame in the loveliest city on earth, Paris.

Perhaps I was closer to home now that I had been in a long time. I noticed the look of my traveling gear and garments, matched with an unseasonable weathering of my skin and my general unkempt appearance. I was determined to make my exit as quickly as possible for fear of being accused of intruding where I didn't belong.

I made my way to the door. Soldiers marched by, and music could be heard from a great distance, mixed with the murmurs of what seemed to me hundreds of people.

I kept my head down as I walked. To my horror I found myself walking into the Apse of the great Cathedral, just behind the altar, during what appeared to be a coronation of a new King. Almost frozen, I thought first of the medallion. I thought better of it, and I calmly backed away, to avoid interrupting or being seen.

Just as I was backing away, I noticed a man in the massive crowd. I don't know what made me notice him, but I attribute it to the fact that he was dressed from head-to-toe in white formal attire with his eyes set upon me with intent. He bolted outright toward an exit at the back of the cathedral. While it appeared this man was running away from me, I knew without a doubt he was in my pursuit, and I aimed to get as far away as possible.

No sooner had I found myself in a corridor, looking behind me for the man in white, did I run square into his chest and into his capture.

"Ah, not so fast, you're about to miss something incredible." The man disregarded my panic and my resistance with an oddly pleased demeanor. I assumed that being of formidable size and strength compared to me, he found my struggles amusing. He escorted me to another door, where I was sure to meet my demise.

After dozens of stairs, we arrived at a balcony, so far up that I found it quite disorienting to look down at the coronation happening below. The man in white held me firm, and I was sure that I was to die a horrible and public death at his hand for intruding upon the coronation.

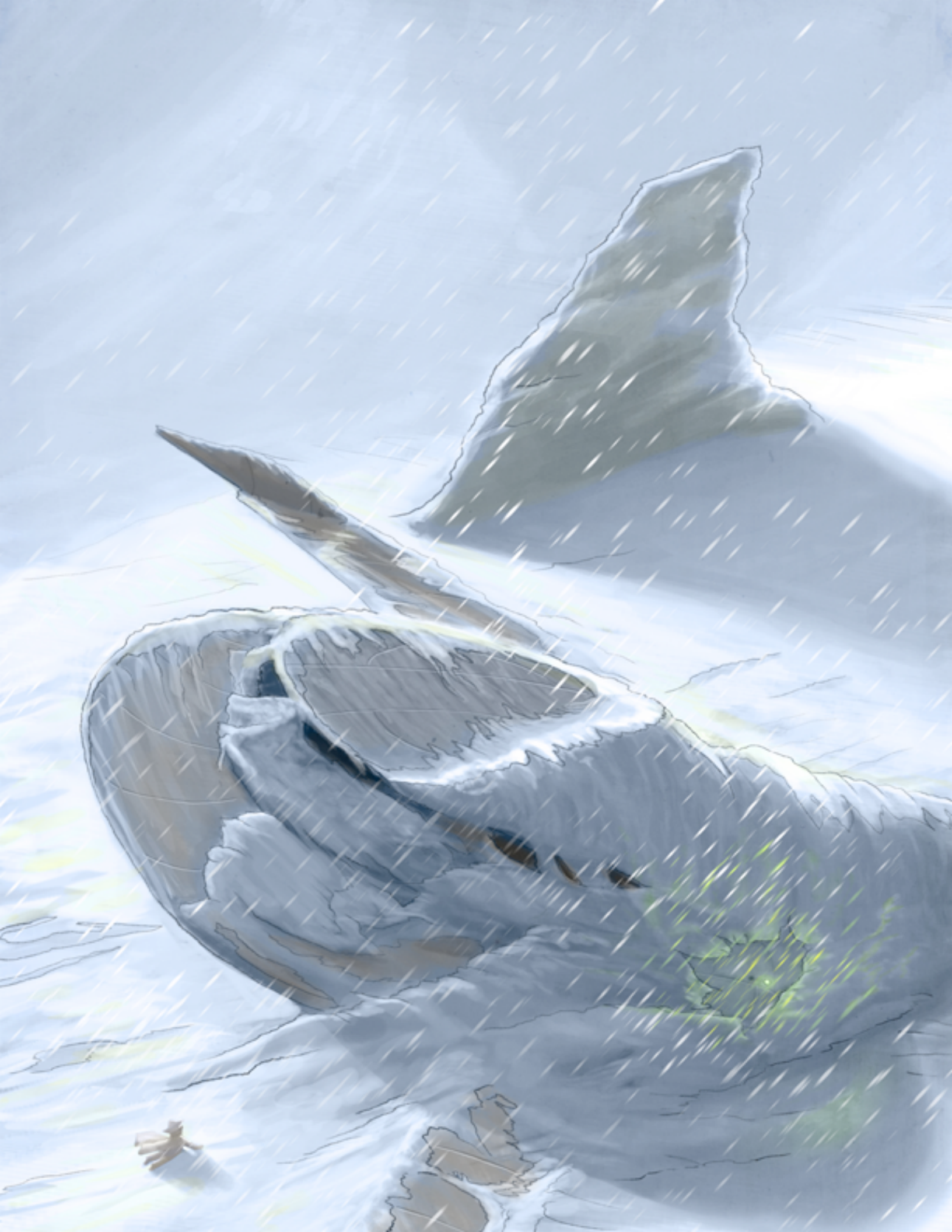
He smiled and adjusted his wardrobe as we watched. While I was in his custody, he seemed cheerful, and did not have malice in his eyes. He motioned down below, beckoning me to look down at the coronation.

I looked down, hesitant to lose sight of the man. "I mean no harm. You'll want to see this. The famous coronation of Emperor Napoleon I. Should be a good show."

As I looked down below, I was shocked to see this new ruler take the crown from the Pope and place it upon his own head, an utter act of defiance in any culture, for sure.

"That's something you don't see every day, I would say," said the man as he smiled at the gasps and awe of the multitudes below. "Now, good. We didn't miss the fun part. May I ask, what brings you to Paris on a lovely day like this, Captain Trouvier?" I had no idea how he could have known my name. I panicked and wrenched myself free. I lost my footing, and toppled over the balcony. The man in white lurched out to grab me just a moment too late.

As I fell, as luck would have it, or in this divine place, perhaps by the good graces of God, the air rushing past me caused the thaumatrope to spin. The world dimmed, and I would live to travel through time another day.



The Shipwreck

When I fell, I landed flat on my back, but luckily did not injure myself. When I was able to take in my surroundings, the first thing that I felt was painful, searing cold, a cold like I'd never felt before.

Looking around, I found myself in a great white mountain range. I quickly dismissed any possibility of knowing where or in what time I had arrived. I could be in some great ice age, past or future, or deep in the depths of the Himalayas, or any number of places on earth I'd yet to explore.

I could barely stand, and the cold was so intense that I started to be sick almost right away. My attention turned to getting away from this place as fast as possible, in hopes of processing what happened at Notre Dame in a less precarious situation.

Just as I started to use what little breath I could muster to activate the thaumatrope, something peculiar caught my eye just a few feet from where I lay in the snow. In this most remote and desolate place, there was a sign of life, or at least, activity.

Several small glowing lights of varying colors were pulsing on a large, smooth, and intelligently designed object. I had the impression that it was something made for transport, but it was made of metal and far larger than any vessel I'd ever seen. It was lodged in the embankment and obviously damaged.

My cursed curiosity got the better of me, and I dragged myself toward the thing to get a closer look before departing. There is a weight that comes with knowing you'll likely never see something again, a weight that draws me to savor the unexplainable for a moment longer than is probably wise.

I brushed some loose snow from the thing, which was still warm, and smelled of burning and metal. I noticed

several symbols on the craft that I did not recognize as any earthly language. Whatever this was, whenever this was, something had crashed here, and I was perhaps the only person that would lay eyes upon the site.

Recognizing no obvious way to investigate further, especially not in my dangerous circumstances where the cold was already immobilizing my arms and legs, I was left with no recourse but to burn the image of the thing into my brain to share with you in these pages once I found safety.

The pulsing lights slowed, and altogether ceased their ominous glow. I activated the thaumatrope, and welcomed the recourse from peril, even at the prospect of some greater peril awaiting me on the other side.

SYMBOLS ON
MACHINE FROM MEMORY



* PECULIAR + NOTEWORTHY



The Man in White

To my delight, I arrived on green grass, in a land of rolling hills and open plains. I could see nothing but green grass and vegetation in every direction, which lifted my heart, despite the dreary clouds overhead. I longed for the feeling of the sun upon my face, but the cold from whence I came still faded fast, the snow on my coat turning to water before I could shake it off.

I found no logical direction or course of action, so after recording several of my adventures in the sun and snacking on the bread and dried fruits I brought along with me, I rested under a tree, and found myself drifting off to sleep.

I dare not say that I dreamed, because the images that came to me were from places and times I'd never seen, never dreamed of seeing, and did not give myself the credit of being able to concoct in my imagination. The experience was a vignette of great wars, mysterious creatures, the changing of the earth itself, apocalyptic events, and the full range of human experience from despair to pure joy. The last image was a great city, a great city underwater, and the face of a man I had assumed I would never see again—the man in white.

I startled awake, and the sounds of beautiful music filled my ears from over the nearest rise in the almost flat land. I dared not attempt to sleep again, and proceeded to the top of the rise with great trepidation.

The music grew louder, and the source made itself evident in short time. Hundreds of men and women were chanting some nameless song in an unfamiliar language to my ear. I was growing accustomed to not understanding my experiences, hoping to better observe my surroundings and record them for later scrutiny whenever I could find myself with clarity enough to ponder their true meanings.

These people marched on slowly, as though their song

was more important than their destination. There's great symbolism in that, I realize now, and the experience must have been very cathartic for the participants.

As I gathered the courage to follow them, I noticed almost at once that they were dispersing. It was a gentle dispersion, the formal lines seeming to melt away, and before long, the procession was a scattering of people headed in all directions away from me.

I had decided instead to search out their source, and headed in the opposite direction of the beautiful song that had captured my heart a moment before.

I walked along what seemed to be a well-worn path for some time, until I found myself fatigued and in need of water. I drank the last of what was in my canteen, flecks of sand still falling from it as I turned it up. The clouds overhead were growing darker, and I feared I'd be caught in the rain if not for finding shelter soon, which meant I needed to rest now while nothing was in sight, so that I could continue my journey on fresher legs in a few moments.

I sat for some time, fighting off the urge to sleep as flashes of events unwitnessed clouded my concentration and urged me downward into slumber. I snapped back to life at the sound of horse's hooves clopping toward me.

The Man in White from my dream rode toward me, leading a second horse close behind him. My first impulse was to run, to hide, to escape, but having traveled through time and great distances in what seemed to me to be a matter of hours, I resigned myself to the fact that evading this person was of little or no further use.

I still sensed no malice from this man, and decided that for better or for worse, I would accept my fate as my own, and walked to meet the Man in White on the trail.

As I approached, he greeted me with a wave, and I noticed he was no longer in the traditional formal attire from the coronation, but was now wearing clothes of a more common man, perhaps the working garments of a carpenter or blacksmith. More likely, this was common of men on horseback in this time, and it occurred to me that he cleverly changed his clothing to match the common appearance of the time, albeit a stark white that certainly prevented him from blending in.

“Hello again, Captain. Please,” he spoke politely, “do take these reins and saddle up. We’ve got a long journey ahead.”

I paused at this, not certain what to make of his congeniality.

He looked at me expectantly, “You *do* know how to ride, do you not? I figured you for an outdoorsman.”

It was true, I did know how to ride, but I had not done so in many years, perhaps since my time in the Navy. Trying to adjust my attitude of discrimination toward this man, I took the reins from his hands, and mounted the horse.

“There you go. Good man. Now, let’s get on with it.” he looked up at the darkening sky above. “This T-suit doesn’t do well in the water. Older model.” he said, and without hesitating, set out upon the trail at an alarming speed, and I did my best to keep up.

We rode for more than an hour at a breakneck pace, stopping only once when I lost my footing and had to seat myself correctly again. After a time, as we darted through the plains, a peculiar structure presented itself on the horizon. As we approached, I recognized it immediately, but not by sight. Perhaps from tales travelers I’d met in the past, who had spoken of the great stone ring of Wiltshire, known as Stonehenge.

We approached the structure, and stopped short of it by about ten meters.

“Don’t go any closer, Captain. We have much discuss before it comes to that.” the man dismounted from the horse, and helped me down as well. He looked me over, and with an heir of camaraderie, said, “you have certainly had a time of it, haven’t you, Traveler?”

I clutched the medallion at my chest. I did not want to risk another perilous relocation, but I did not want the artifact out of my possession before my blood ran cold, if it came to that.

“You’re probably wondering who I am, and why I brought you here. I will be glad to answer the latter, and depending on what you decide to do next, I’ll answer the former as well. Suffice to say I am a Monitor, and I have been watching your expedition through time with great interest. After sizing you up, evaluating your temperament, your grit, and your intelligence, I made myself known to you, and I do apologize for that scare at Notre Dame, it was not my intention to put you in danger.”

He paced in front of me, reciting his next statements as though he’d done so a hundred times before, but with such sincerity and artistry that if I had it to watch again, I would have certainly done so with great admiration.

“I brought you here because you’ve lost your way, and I intend to help you find it again. Finding your way again can take one of two forms, and the choice is wholly yours to make. Beyond you lies an exit, of sorts.” He motioned formally toward the great stone circle beyond. Your time travel device, artifact, charm, rune, process, machine, or whatever it may be, will completely and instantly cease to function if you set foot in that circle. You will be taken home, and your journey will come to an end. It will be painless, it will be quick, and you will find yourself in your former life, with your former comforts, goals and failures, aspirations and regrets, loved ones and enemies, feast and famine, and all of the wondrous trappings of a normal life. I trust that after your experiences bouncing around through time, you’ve grown to appreciate those during your haitus, and can grasp the luxury of an unexamined life in a way that few men can.”

I blinked and listened for more, waiting for the second alternative. While I hoped to eventually return to my life, the prospect of some alternative, perhaps an improvement, was too great to bear. I watched with great anticipation as he considered me.

“The other alternative, Captain Trouvier, is that you come into our employment. You will continue to travel through time, but with intent. You will not be paid, the boss is a real grind, the hours are terrible, there is no

vacation, and imminent and immediate danger will become your *plat du jour*, if you will." I saw he stifled a laugh.

"If you choose to come under our employ, you will do so indefinitely and unconditionally, until the insurmountable task ahead is complete, or until you choose to resign. At that time, you will have all memories of your experiences erased, your body of work will be surrendered to the powers that be, and you will be sent back to your life an older man, but not one bit wiser than you are today."

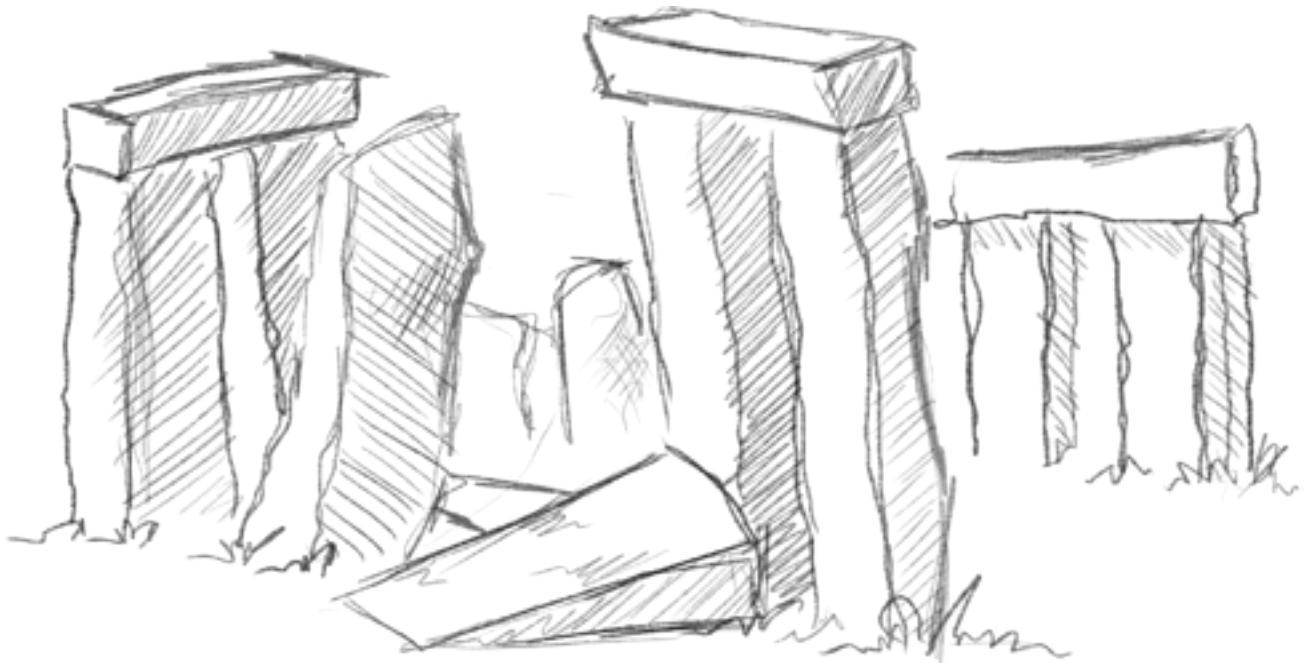
His face sharpened as he said, "There are no exceptions to this, no mitigating circumstances, no alternative resignations, and no escape. If you run, we will find you, and if you are responsible for any defiant act or derision of authority, escaping with your lost years, withered face, and empty head will be the most gracious punishment you are likely to receive."

"Now," he said with a sigh, and replacing his stern glare with the warm smile I'd been accustomed to, he continued, "the part I like best. That being said, you will see things no man has ever seen, journeying through time with an expressed purpose, to experience, to learn, and to report. You will witness the mysteries of the ancients, marvel at the innovation and rise of man, and find yourself astounded beyond what your vocabulary will ever be able to fully articulate. In the words of Captain James Cook, you will travel not just farther than any man has been before you, but as far as I think it is possible for a man to go."

I nodded, understanding the decision before me.

He flashed a grin that reminded me of Mr. Tesla, both a little mad and a little brilliant at the same time. "What say you, Time Traveler?"

And with that, it started to rain.



ROCKS WERE IN A ROUGHLY
CIRCULAR PATTERN. DO NOT ENTER

TOP VIEW (ESTIMATION)



*SIMILAR TO
RUNE ON MACHINERY
IN SNOWY LANDSCAPE





Atlantis: A City for All Time

It has been several weeks since my last entry in this journal, as so much has happened at once, I have hardly been able to pause for rest and food, much less reminisce and reflect in my private writings and drawings.

The Man in White, whose actual name is Jude, is part of an organization from the distant future, charged with governing time travelers scattered throughout the millennia. Part of his duty as a Time Monitor is to find people like me and recruit them, or send them back to their own time and place safely and quietly.

When Jude found me and gave me the opportunity to continue traveling, I couldn't refuse. If you're reading this, by now you have a decent grasp of my penchant for adventure, and I need not elaborate further.

Jude took me to an unmarked section of beach on the coast of England. We embarked on a vessel that traveled deep underwater. Words cannot truly describe this massive underwater metropolis encased in a glass dome.

I would later be told that this is a city that has taken on many names in human cultures, the most notable of which is the lost city of Atlantis. The Time Keepers very much liked this correlation, and adopted the name Atlantis permanently.

Atlantis serves as a nexus for all time travel, existing in all times simultaneously. Those under the employ of the Keepers are given several methods of transportation to find their way back to Atlantis using the stars.

The city is more remarkable than any mankind has been able to conceive, in my opinion. Not even the great cities of the twenty-third century, those at the height of civilization, can compare to the splendor of Atlantis.

After many evaluations, screenings, and aptitude tests, I was given my official duties. I am an official Time

Journalist of the third Assembly of Time Keepers of Atlantis. I find myself well-suited for this task, observing history and recording my findings, without editorializing or showing bias. I have always been an excellent documentarian.

The Time Keepers are a council of men and women responsible for the creation of Atlantis and the sovereignty of Atlantis as a secret member of the United Nations. They are seemingly ageless and ancient all at the same time. Popular opinion is that they have been so ingrained into the fabric of time that it doesn't affect their physiology in the same way as others, a theory which I'm very much in agreement with.

The only way Atlantis is allowed to function free of government interference is by adhering to strict standards for not altering history in any way, and that requires a good amount of due diligence.

Monitors watch for three types of activity that have to be dealt with quickly. First and foremost, the Time Traveler—people like me, temporal nomads—need to be regulated or sent back home. There are also Time Changers, those determined to alter the events of the past. These people can be particularly reckless and harmful, and must be stopped at any cost.

Perhaps the most menacing are the Privateers, individuals that have a mission, either self assigned or hired by some underhanded organization of the distant future, to capitalize on the past. They pose as clairvoyants, prophets, pioneers, innovators, intellectuals, or all-out conquerors. They are often subtle and cunning, and can easily disrupt the natural flow of human progress.

This whole endeavor has turned out to be far more organized than I expected, with an entire secret society at its heart. While I have mixed emotions about leaving, but I must resume my travels soon.



The Genius in the Jungle

In Atlantis, I was informed that time travel is rarely arbitrary, that every device is imbued with the desires of its creator and seeks in time that which would most please its maker. I take comfort in knowing that wherever I go is somewhere that would have inspired Leonardo.

My surroundings formed around me, and I found myself on a beautiful tropical beach, serene and crystal clear waters in every direction. There were creatures the likes of which I'd never seen scampering along the shore.

I walked along a small natural path through the trees. It wasn't long before I noticed I was being followed. Soft chirps collected behind me, and before long, birds the height of my knees with spindly legs and big beaks had filed behind me, matching my progress step for step. I led them in a circle, then a figure eight, and then got half of them to stand on one foot after a bit of trial and error.

I would have probably continued for a while longer, but I heard someone coming. The man that came through the clearing was young, hardly more than boy, and he was writing in his notebook. He didn't seem to notice me until he almost ran me over.

Nearly running me over, he yelped in surprise when he spotted me, and his notebook and pen went flying. I managed to retrieve his notebook quickly and he found his pen. After a tense moment of staring me down, I handed his notebook back without contest, and greeted him peacefully.

"My heavens, man, you nearly scared me to death. What are you doing here? You are not from here." He looked me over intensely, and made a note in his book. "Are you with another expedition? I have been wandering this island documenting the wildlife for weeks, I've never seen another civilized person other than those from our ship. My name is Charles." He extended his hand. I took it, and introduced myself as well.

"I started walking this way when I heard the Mirror birds.

That's what I call them, anyway. Have you ever seen such creatures? They will imitate almost anything to the best of their ability. I theorize that the best performers are the ones that find mates. The females put on the most elaborate displays, to encourage competition. It's unlike anything you've ever seen. Let me show you."

"I'm writing a book on the nature of these animals. Well, all animals. I can't even begin to document every creature I've found here. It's amazing to me how every trait, no matter how ridiculous, serves a divine purpose in the order of things." He spoke about the silly Mirror birds as if they held the key to life. But it was mesmerizing to listen to him—he was so full of fierce curiosity.

"We are all connected, after all," he murmured, pausing for a minute and then shaking his head, as if bringing himself back down to Earth from his lofty thoughts. "My ship leaves soon. I hoped to spend more time with these birds, perhaps another time. I have plenty of life documented here already." He raised his notebook with a grin.

I raised my notebook as well, and we both laughed. "I didn't catch your full name, sir. Charles ...?" I asked.

"Darwin. Charles Darwin. Farewell, Captain. May your voyages be safe," he said.

"And to you the same, sir," I said. He was already making his way back through the brush.

I watched the Mirror birds for another minute longer, very pleased to have met such a keen observer. I made a note to look him up when I returned again to Atlantis, and was astounded to see what an incredible impact this man of twenty-five years old made on biological studies. It just goes to show you, whether it be on a tropical island or a busy street in Milan, genius occurs in the most unexpected places. We must always remain vigilant and open to those experiences, they are the blessed ones.



The Elimination of a Privateer

I found myself in a market square similar to those in Milan, although clearly this was from another era. It didn't take long for me to place the surroundings as Ancient Rome, as I immediately spotted the immense Colosseum, in far better condition than I'd last seen it. The roar of the crowd could be heard within, and I couldn't resist the urge to see what the games might be like so many centuries before my time.

I noticed a sheet fall from a merchant's supply cart and quickly wrapped myself in it, assuming an appearance more like a common citizen of the day.

I made my way toward the crowd and drifted in with them, the roars of the contest inside growing louder. I found a seat, and observed the incredible contests in all their majesty, all at once a triumph of civilization and one of its darkest hours simultaneously.

A moment later, a familiar voice spoke from behind me. "You'd have to wander into this place, wouldn't you? Trying to make it hard for me to find you, Trouvier?"

I was delighted to see my old friend under such pleasant circumstances. His white suit—which I learned was a piece of incredibly advanced technology, capable of shifting appearances based any era or culture the Monitor wishes—was fashioned in the style of those sitting all around us. Today, it was fashioned as traditional Roman garb, although white and flawlessly clean.

"I won't be long, Trouvier. I'm looking for a certain Privateer. A particularly unsavory fellow. He's been wreaking havoc on this world for long enough. We hear he's been planning another power play soon. It's unfortunate how long it takes us to find these guys, most of them have become so ingrained in history it's all we can do to just stop them from doing more damage."

The crowd erupted as another battle finished below.

"Gaius Julius Caesar ... part of a long line of men that need taken out of the equation. Our analytics suggest

that if he continues at this rate, he'll set back civilization's progress by more than a century. Hard to believe he's just some gangster from the twenty first century. Well, I should be off. I've got a lot to put in place before I can get back to Atlantis. Unfortunately, ridding of the world of a man like him in the right way takes time. Be seeing you soon, Journalist. Take care."

And with that, he disappeared into the crowd. I started blindly into the center of the arena, somewhat dumbfounded at the news that Caesar of all people was from the distant future. In hindsight, it makes perfect sense, but the disillusionment was quite a lot to bear. I couldn't stomach the brutality of the gladiator fights any longer, and made my way out of the Colosseum just as I'd entered.





The Woodsman's Life Debt

Of all the peculiarities, odd happenings, and wonderful people I've met thus far on my journeys, none compares to what was going to happen next.

I found myself in a train, fortunately in an almost empty storage car. I collected myself, straightened my belongings, and wondered what in the world I was going to do with myself. I started to test the door to the next car when the train came to a stop. After waiting to make sure the coast was clear, I gently opened the side of the door just enough to see that I was almost entirely alone.

The crowds were distracted by something far more interesting than a random stowaway. Several cars away, I noticed the commotion was surrounding a disembarking passenger. I couldn't make out anything from where I was, aside from an individual that stood head and shoulders above the rest, wearing a top hat. From what I could tell he was a figure of importance, being ushered from the train immediately into a stagecoach.

I followed the procession of people to see what all the excitement was about. I took note of the train station's name, which read: "Gettysburg Station No. 1."

After a bit of a walk, we arrived at what was apparently a burial site. I took the liberty of standing behind the stage, looking out toward the crowd, witnessing the speakers from a lower vantage point, but getting a nice behind-the-scenes view of what was taking place. There was already one man speaking, a very moving and well prepared speech about a recent battle that had taken place there. The man with the stove top hat took the stage next. He was introduced as President Abraham Lincoln, and I immediately remembered him from my cursory studies of the United States while I was in Atlantis. It was truly amazing to be in the presence of such an influential leader, and the entire audience felt his energy. He only spoke a few sentences, but the effect of his words was immensely powerful.

The crowd erupted with an applause that seemed to have no end. That's when I noticed something peculiar. The hat upon his head seemed to adjust itself. It moved almost imperceptibly, but it was unmistakable. Just as I'd thought I was imagining things, a creature no bigger than a squirrel stuck its head out from underneath the hat and glared right at me.

Needless to say, I was taken aback. As the President came down off the stage, I did my best to get close to him, but to no avail. After a moment of watching him make his way through the crowd, he straightened up as though he had been struck with an idea. He turned around, looked directly at me, and came toward me at once.

"I'd like to talk with you, sir," the President said, extending his hand and towering over me like he did so many others. I shook his hand, and he led me to his stagecoach, where we embarked without another word until we arrived.

We went inside a house that looked like any other, except that today it would be the residence of this very special guest. He went into the lounge, and took a seat as though he lived there. He invited me to do the same, and I said opposite him on a sofa, not sure what would come next.

"I think that you are aware of my ... friend. There's no need concealing that for one second longer." And with that, an incredibly tiny creature that resembled a man came down from Lincoln's hat as he removed it, scurried down his arm, and greeted me politely on the coffee table in front of me.

"Meet Elmore. I came across him in the woods of Kentucky as a child. He was in a scuffle with a housecat, that's how he lost his fingers. Since then he has been by my side. His advice has been invaluable all these years. I fear not let many know of his existence, due to the commotion it might cause. He desperately wanted me

to meet you, though, so here we are.” He gave a wide, warm, and friendly smile.

The gnome hopped onto my knee and came close to my face, touching my clothes and face, until his hands landed on the thaumatrope. He looked at it with amazement, and when he started to rotate the disk, I gently but quickly retrieved it from him.

“You’re not the first traveler from another ‘when’ to come my way, but certainly the one he’s been most interested in.” After we both watched him gingerly hop back across the table and onto Lincoln’s shoulder, he continued. “What can I do you for today?” ready and waiting to answer any questions I might have.

I shrugged. “It’s just a pleasure to meet you, Mr. President. I’m still getting the hang of this, and I’m really not sure.” I considered for a moment. “Any words of wisdom from someone like you would be sufficient for me.”

He looked at me somewhat surprised. “Interesting. It’s rare to meet one of you that isn’t determined to impress me with their intelligent questions. Ironically, I find yours to be one of the better ones. I tire of talking about the same things. I think by the time I leave this earth, I will have said enough and not nearly enough about living life.”

“That being said, you strike me as a man that has lost his way. You don’t carry yourself the way the others always have. If I could impart one thing to you, it would be that I hope you’re truly free. I hope you are doing that which you want to do more than anything else in life. This battle we fight now, this cursed battle that I wish never befell the Union, is about preserving everyone’s right to live the life they want to live.”

I took a moment to reflect. I’d chosen this path in quite the rush of excitement, with little time to consider the options, and what I really wanted. I imparted to the great President that I feel this path was not the end for me, that there was more in my future than just exploring time. He nodded solemnly, allowing my words to sink in, truly listening and contemplating his response.

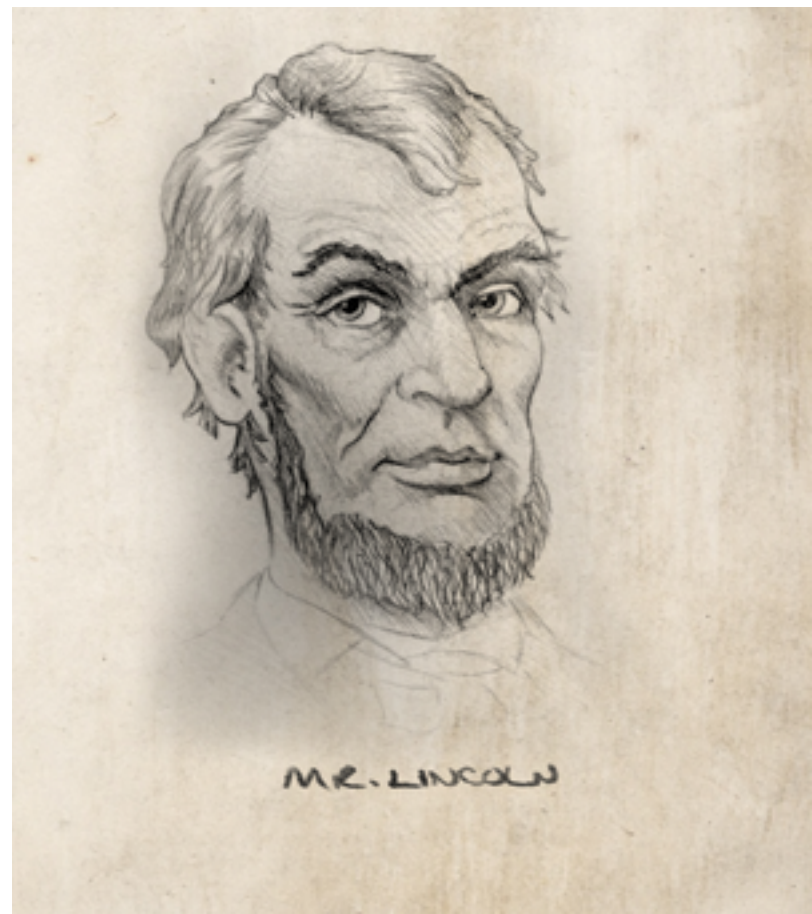
“Then to you, sir, I wish you the best. There will be a sweeping change in your life, probably when you least expect it, and it will be at a time when you’ve decided it is right, and not until then. I see a great deal of myself

in you, and just like me, when the time is right, you’ll know what your life’s work really is. At that time, let nothing get in your way. It is your solemn duty as a human being.” He spoke this last word with incredible gravity, like he was back on the stage giving his remarks to a crowd of thousands. I’ll never forget those words from such a great man.

I stood to excuse myself, as Lincoln sat there grinning, perhaps enjoying how the wheels were turning in my head. His gnome friend whispered something in his ear, and he started as if he’d just been reminded of something.

“Ah, traveler, if I may be so presumptuous as to ask this, Elmore has made a request. Before you go, could you show him how the necklace you wear works? He thinks its some sort of optical illusion, and has always been fascinated by such things.”

I smiled to myself, knowing this would be a spectacle for the both of them. “Mr. President, nothing would give me more pleasure than to give you both a show before I leave.” And with that, I showed them both sides of the thaumatrope, and let Elmore blow on it. I could see him and the President both light up with excitement as the world darkened around me and I was again submerged and taken away.



Faith and Perseverance

The weeks that followed my visit with the President were tumultuous and went by in a blur.

Kingdoms rose and fell, heroes and villains made their mark on history, times of great joy and great danger, incredible feats of creation and destruction. My spirit has been pushed to the point of exhaustion, my mind and body have lost all sense of rhythm necessary for a sane existence. I find myself hardly able to take a moment to reflect and record, much less find suitable rest and food.

The world is not a friendly place for a man with no country, no people, and no anchor in time. It moves on uncaring, and I find myself having to do the same in order to seek my next refuge from the onslaught of information.

After a particularly trying incident involving my capture and the seizure of my belongings by a band of nomads during some unknown time, I managed to escape with the thaumatrope, only to collapse somewhere in the Himalayas. I awoke in a temple, unaware of how much time had passed. The monks there took care of me in without much regard, seeing the condition I was in, and there has been little communication aside from their welcoming spirit and my attempts to express gratitude.

I'm now feeling closer to my original self, and my time at the temple have given me time to consider the larger scopes of my travels. The contrast of their way of life to the majority of modern man is staggering. I have started to take notice that the triumphs and struggles of people in all times are relatively the same. Love, power, success, and control occupy the spirit of man no matter the century. While these have their redemptive qualities, there's an element of great suffering that comes with that. These people seem immune to these temptations of man, a quality I greatly hope to embody as I continue. By my calculations, I've been traveling through time and documenting my findings for nearly six months.

I have been more than just a casual observer, as my experiences have affected me profoundly. Our lives are pinhole perspectives on a grand scheme, mere moments that give us the smallest glimpse of what humanity really is. My journey so far as given me an appreciation of the magnitude of our existence, how large and magnificent life is, and likewise, how fleeting.

I find myself wanting my old life back, but at what cost? If I return, stripped of my memories of what has taken place, will I have benefitted from the experiences? Will some piece of my soul remember this journey, and be grateful for it? Or will I be doomed to return to a life wanting more?

I have searched my heart and soul in an effort to form a plan. The logical conclusion I have reached, however, is that my initial decision was the right one. Though this task is formidable, and at times overwhelming, I choose the enlightened life, the life of experiences, the life of regrets and bold decisions.

This is my journey, and I don't wish any part of it be sacrificed or altered for the sake of comfort. I will press ahead, and hope that a solution presents itself. I have faith that since my decisions have been made with a true heart, the best solution for my dilemma will one day present itself.

Admittedly, that faith is an unfounded faith. There is little evidence to support such a commitment. However, if there is one thing I've learned, it is that we are a people of great faith, and I am a man of great endurance. Even if from time to time that turns out to be all that I have working in my favor, it is who I am, and I fully embrace that.



The Reformed Time Traveler

When I appeared on the other side, I landed on a hay bale and tumbled to the ground. I took a moment to collect my things, and that's when I noticed a man in the middle of the pasture by himself, apparently painting.

It reminded me of Leonardo, and my heart leapt at the opportunity to meet an artist. I made great haste in getting to him, announcing myself well before I was upon him in hopes of avoiding startling him.

The red-haired man looked at me without regard, as though a person appearing in this remote place to talk to him was nothing out of the ordinary. "Hello there," he said, returning to painting. "You've got straw on your coat."

"What you're painting here, it's unlike anything I've ever seen," I said, trying to break the ice.

"It is unlike anything I have ever seen either, friend, and with each stroke, we see a whole new painting neither of us have ever seen. Majestic process, isn't it?" He did not look up from his work for quite some time.

"I knew a painter once. His name was Leonardo," I said. At this, the man looked at me sternly, and then his stern look dissolved into amusement, and then laughter.

"Oh, Leonardo, you say!" he exclaimed, and continued to laugh. "Yes, he's a friend of mine as well. Although, not just some figment in books like you're saying. I actually met him. Impossible, right? You may think I'm crazy, but I met him. We painted together." He looked at me to gauge my reaction, and I could not mask my excitement.

"Did he visit you here? In this time?" I asked him, elated to have crossed the same path. Perhaps this meant I was on a path that would lead me to a familiar place, even if just for a short time. If Leonardo had been here before returning to Milan where I so fatefully embarked on this journey, perhaps I, too, could find myself back there sometime.

"Quite the opposite. I found him." He took notice of the thaumatrope around my neck and his expression visibly changed. "By God in heaven, you're a traveler, too." He went back to his painting with renewed fervor.

After painting awhile, and seeming to grow frustrated, either with his work or whatever was racing through his mind, he spoke again, saying, "I was like you, once. I was the one who shared my secret with Leonardo. That's how I know what you've got there around your neck. Have you met the Men in White? I met the Men in White. I refused their offer. I'd already been traveling for years, and when they told me I could keep my memories if I would return home, having done no harm to the course of events in the world, I couldn't refuse. By that time, I'd resorted to mostly mountain climbing and living in the woods on my own, anyway. I'd had enough and the beauty of nature never changes."

I did not tell him that I had done the opposite and accepted their offer, and listened as he continued. "I came home. It wasn't even a thought. After traveling through time for years, visiting great lands and meeting amazing individuals, I was disillusioned with the notion of striving for anything beyond achieving a connection with God. There's nothing for me that I need or want beyond what I already have. Beauty is everywhere. I don't have to travel to find it. I don't have to be rich, or more good-looking, or a better orator. All that life has to offer can be found right here." He pointed the brush in the air and slathered a mass of paint on the canvas again.

"Some might think this is a tragic life, out here, on my own, half-crazed sometimes, painting these things. I don't know why I should be so misunderstood. Everyone should want this life. I wake up where I feel most comfortable, my life's work is but an arm's length away, I have the love of my family, and the serenity of the stars at night. My life is full of wonder. To ask for more, to demand that the world share more with me than I have around me, well ... it feels ungrateful. Until you hardly have the time in a day to appreciate what is

happening in your immediate surroundings, you have not learned to truly appreciate the miracle that is life and beauty.”

He examined me for a moment before returning to his painting.

“You should consider this, traveler. What is it you’re seeking? What great mystery do you hope to unravel but to find yourself? That’s what those Time Keepers will never understand. Amassing knowledge does not make you wise. Living your life, making mistakes, and forging ahead through the unknown, now that will truly allow you to grow. That’s why I paint. The uncertainty of it all is a real journey. The canvas is blank, and then after struggle, failure, epiphany, inspiration, and a bit of luck, it is a piece of art. It’s a bit of life, forever recorded. You are not a painter, doing what you do. You are merely walking through a museum, admiring the work of others.” He looked at me and pointed with his brush as he spoke his next, unforgettable words. “You are here on this earth to do your own work, not to observe the work of others.”

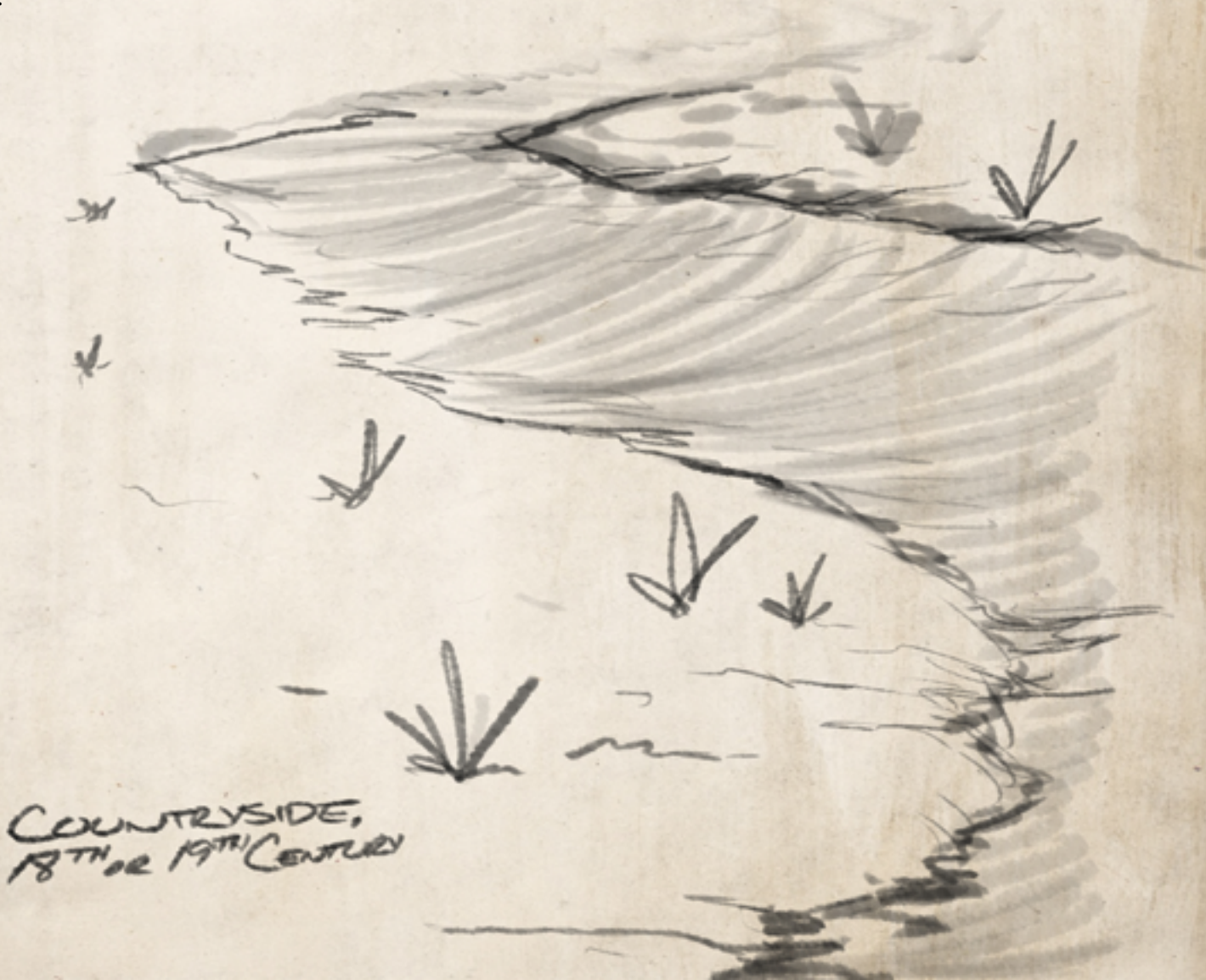
There was a long silence while I contemplated this. I had no words, because in so many ways, I knew he was right. This perhaps wasn’t the life for me, but retiring early and running from experience to live a quiet life in Milan, holed up watching someone like Leonardo make his own incredible art wasn’t the life for me either.

“If there will be nothing else, time traveler, I would like to politely request that you carry on. Time, for me at least, is a valuable commodity I cannot afford to squander.” He said this without looking up from his work, and I feebly bid him farewell, to which he did not respond.

I left his field, but I did not use the thaumatrope. I walked away from him, and kept walking. He had dealt a blow to my peace of mind, and I needed to process.

For the first time on my journey, even as I strolled through the french countryside, I had never felt so far from home, lonely, and uncertain of my decisions.

At this moment, more than any other, I truly felt lost.



COUNTRYSIDE,
18TH OR 19TH CENTURY



TROUTER



Time Privateer Blackbeard

Since none of this is a precise or predictable science, sometimes things don't go quite as planned. Imagine the fear of appearing ten feet over the water, in the middle of the night, in the open and treacherous waters of the Atlantic, for instance. That, I assure you, is not an experience anyone wants to have.

I hadn't noticed the gunship nearby, or I would have certainly flagged them for help. I have never been an excellent swimmer, despite all my time in the French Navy, but fortunately I was spotted as I was struggling to activate the thaumatrope.

The ship was no more than a great dark weapon of piracy. The Captain reeked of singed leather and rum, his long dark hair was matted from extinguished fuses.

"Tell me this, before we toss ye back to the sea from whence ye came ... why does a bobber in the ocean like you look so equipped for foot travel? Did ye spot land that we missed and forget to tell us?" A great laughter that erupted from the crew.

Then he took notice of the thaumatrope around my neck. His eyes met mine, and he spoke in a lowered voice. "Ah, perhaps it was the sea that found you, and quite unexpectedly, I presume." He asked to speak with me privately. We retired to his private quarters.

"My name is Captain Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard." He waited for a reaction, and when I could not satisfy him with surprise or awe, he continued, slightly dejected. "I find that being a bit dramatic incites just the right amount of fear and respect in these times." He paused and considered me before continuing. "More so than ... other times I've visited." At this, I feel he got the reaction from me that he sought. "I knew it!" He hit the table with his fist out of excitement. "Ye be a traveler, too, aye. I knew it when I saw that necklace of yours. Not the first time I've seen those Latin words, you see. Look here."

He removed a satin bag from a locked chest, itself inside a larger locked chest. The key to both hung around his neck. He lifted what appeared to be a human skull from the bag, and placed it on the table before me. "Meet Nostradamus. Forgive him for not standing." He erupted in laughter. "Ah, but anyway. I acquired this at an auction in the twenty second century. It was rumoured that a single drink of water from the skull would curse the subject to instant death. Well, that wasn't entirely true. Water might kill a man, but rum ..." he raised both hands and looked around the cabin. "Sure, I was scared at first, but I found my way. These people are so easily intimidated, so simple-minded. This time proved favorable for me, so I stayed. Ah, the riches, my boy, the riches!"

I thought about the Time Keepers, the Monitors, and wondered what fate would befall this man in due time. After he'd imbibed more than a healthy share of rum, it became clear to me that I needed to get away. His ramblings turned to the fate of man, the plight of his work, and something about an annoying parrot he'd recently acquired.

Blackbeard mumbled about wanting to return to his former life. It wasn't long before the ship rocked him to sleep, maps and papers scattered beneath his fuse-matted head.

Having sufficiently dried from my dip in the ocean, I felt it prudent to continue my journey elsewhere, or meet a fate worse than salt water upon his waking. I replaced the skull of Nostradamus in the bag and then the two chests, and picked his hat off the floor.

I know not what fate befell the privateer, perhaps the Monitors would catch up to him. Maybe he would meet his final days at the end of a sword. It was clear that this was no friendly place for a man in my position, so I blew on the thaumatrope, and left that vile ship sailing toward its next destination, or more likely, its next victim.

A Brief and Urgent Message to the Reader

This passage may be the last and most important item I write in this journal. I don't know who you are, but I trust that if you've made it this far, you and I are kindred spirits. You are one that values the mysteries of the world. I imagine that you, too, are unhinged in time without a proper home.

I saved a boy's life today. I appeared on a busy street in an urban area, perhaps New York City in the twenty second century. He slipped and fell, landing right in the path of a monstrous vehicle headed right for him. I reacted quickly, and snatched him away from his demise.

For a moment, I didn't fully realize the gravity of what I'd done, and I am still left with my head spinning at the thought of how such a noble and pure deed could have been the wrong thing to do, somehow.

The Monitors descended upon me from everywhere. Men in white business suits, a homeless person dragging his white tattered clothing like a stark white ghost, women in trendy casual wear of the day but for their lack of color, all with their eyes trained on me. There must have been fifty upon me within moments.

I ran. I ran through the streets in an illogical act of desperation. I knew that within seconds the monitors would overtake me, and that my adventure was over. Rather, far worse, my adventure would be missing. I'd be sent home without a single memory of this wondrous experience, fifteen pounds leaner, oddly suntanned for an Italian winter, and with a few mysterious scars.

I turned just in time to see one of them vanish. That was the last time I saw a Time Monitor. They were gone, as simple as that. I wish there was more to report, but that is all I know. I activated the thaumatrope, almost more out of panic than anything else. I found myself in a future unlike any I'd seen before. It was a demolished and ruinous place. Somehow, I'd changed history dramatically, whether or not that innocent child played

a part, his existence was a linchpin in the great scheme of humanity, one that leaves us without Time Monitors, perhaps without even the Keepers or an Atlantis. I searched, I looked in all the ways I was trained to look, for weeks.

I find myself with no recourse now but to undo whatever ill fate I caused. I know that saving a child's life was the right thing to do, but somewhere along the way there was a great catastrophe, and that can surely be rectified. It must be rectified.

So these are my final words in these pages, for I know not will become of me. Surely my journey will become more perilous, and now carries with it a new sense of purpose. I know what the world can be, what the world ought to be, and I intend to make it right.

So, my fellow traveler, my fellow lost wanderer, know that as I write these words, my resolve to rectify our shared future could not be any stronger. The fate of man rests in my humble and unqualified hands, a responsibility I have been unknowingly preparing for all these months.

Say a prayer for me, and make the most of your time—it is a luxury that even I cannot afford to waste. Allow me to leave you here with a final passage, something I took to heart while in Atlantis, something one of the Elder Time Keepers shared with me.

"The times in which people live are full of varied and random circumstances, from the most impoverished to the most decadent of lifestyles. Somehow, through all time, the human spirit is an enduring thing. The rarest thing to witness in all the histories of man is the individual who gives himself over to a cause greater than his circumstances or his place in history. Once in a great while, a man will rise above his circumstances to achieve something that transcends the ages, epochs, periods, eras and eons. This is the man who is worth learning from, for he is truly free from the bonds of time."

