

The side door of the old brewery swung open with a bang, and there stood Seamus. He wore a tweed suit as green as his eyes and held a leather satchel stained black as the night behind him. He threw Molly a smile, full of roguish charm and come-hither devilry. Fog swept about him as he entered, but either the fog or the smile was so cold Molly could feel the chill in her dead bones. "Tell you what, Molly dearest," Seamus said, his eyes twinkling as he stalked across the flagstone floor. "The evening seems to have gotten away from me." He planted his leather case on the table next to Molly, with a thump that rattled the rows of bottles and distilling equipment, and flourished forth a set of bloody steel forceps. He frowned, waving the forceps to and fro. "I can't say as I remember using these." He tossed them on the table and plucked a slender metal tube with scissored finger-grips from the bag. He chuckled. "Now, this! The Southey tube. When he sold me this, Sober George told me it was," he contorted his face and put on a posh accent, "minimally invasive!" He laughed again, tossing it back into his bag. Blood spluttered from the tip as it disappeared. "Then you're using it wrong, I told him! How we laughed! You've met Sober George, right?" Molly realized Seamus wanted something complimentary. "He swears with great imagination," she offered, and that seemed to be enough. Seamus paused for a moment, an odd blank look coming over his face. It passed, and he turned to Molly and grinned. "Wouldn't go near Mrs. Choke's Guesthouse on Arble Street for the next few days, Molly-me-love. Between you and me, the landlady's lost her charm." He shrugged his city-coat off and threw it at her. "Bit of claret spilled. Get some lye on, see if it'll come out. Now, how's me brew getting on?" Molly handed off the coat to one of the Belles, who shuffled away behind the old sherry barrels, then she held out the papers she was carrying. Seamus, who was already toying around with the beakers on his table, took a few minutes to notice. "Mail?" he exclaimed. "Oh, no! Not again! Not after the last time! I don't care if this one's my biggest admirer in all of Malifaux, unless she's included a portrait--" "Mademoiselle Vestige delivered these," Molly interrupted, not wanting to stand through another re-telling of that sorry incident when Seamus had learned what it meant to have deluded ingenues falling in love with him by dark reputation, and wanting to meet. He'd been so disappointed when the lady in question, a Miss Abilene Shrivel of Number Twelve Clovequarter, had not quite lived up to her self-description – by several years and many, many more pounds – that he hadn't killed anyone for days. Molly placed the leaflets on the table, avoiding the spills that were already smoking gently. "Mam'selle Vestige?" Seamus bounded over to Molly's side of the table and snapped them up. He rifled through them, discarding several with loud snorts of derision, and then fanned three out on the table with a cry of satisfaction. Each leaflet contained an address at the top, a lithographic image of a building beneath, and a description, written in the Mam'selle's flowing, artful script. Molly had no idea what Seamus would want with a real estate agent, but something about one of the ones he'd discarded caught her attention. She picked it up while Seamus blathered on. Something was familiar about this building. She placed it on the table, on top of the other three. "This one." Seamus tried to brush the particulars away, but Molly's pale white finger pinned it to the oak. "This one," she repeated. Seamus straightened up, glanced at the Gorgon's Tear hanging around her neck then back up at Molly. He licked his lips. "You sure?" Molly just stared back.

Another grin split Seamus' face. "Course you are, Molly dearest. What would I do without you? Get me own way, like as not," he answered himself in a stage-whisper before doubling up in laughter. "You meet with Mam'selle Vestige – be nice to her, she's got angles, that one

– and she'll show you round that dump you've picked. Let me know what you find. And I've only just remembered what I used those forceps for." He fished around in the top pocket of his silk shirt and dug out an eyeball, dangling between finger and thumb by its own bloody optic nerve. The eye twitched and looked at Molly, the iris and pupil somehow conveying a look of utter bewilderment and terror. "Take Mrs. Choke with you. Show her round. Let her get a good eyeful, eh, Molly love?"

"CCC" Oh, I'm not just any real estate agent, Miss Squidpidge, as you are not just any shuffling, mindless Undead, n'est-ce pas? If it's not haunted, I don't touch it."

Mam'selle Vestige was a lot younger, and her French accent a lot less pronounced, than Molly had expected. She wore a lot more makeup, and in a much darker shade, than Molly would have been comfortable with – back when she'd been bothered about things like being comfortable. The woman's hair was as straight and black as an ebony waterfall, and she dressed in dark purple silk that had an Arabian air about them. Although they covered her from neck to toe, they seemed to be always promising to give a glimpse of scandalous flesh but, due to either remarkable dressmaking or impossible luck, the promise remained just that. Molly was also fairly certain there was more than one weapon hidden in those eastern folds, but she had a good feeling about Mam'selle Vestige. She hadn't batted any other heavily-blackened eyelashes when Molly had loomed out of the night fog pale as a sheet, her black hair piled atop her head like a thunderstorm, with dried blood crusted all down her chin and the front of her yellow, crinoline dress. She had also only offered a courteous, "Mr. Tombers, I presume," when Molly had introduced the reanimated head in question to see what reaction it evoked. On her way to meet the not-just-any real estate agent, Molly had grown tired of Phillip Tombers' protestations at her carrying him by the hair like "a child swinging a damned sack of marbles by her side," and had decided to teach him a lesson. One terrified mother later, whom Molly had allowed to run away screaming with her infant safe in her arms, and Molly had arrived for her meeting with Phillip Tombers' apoplectic head being pushed in a wrought iron baby carriage. The pink woolen bonnet with the rabbit ears, Molly decided, had been the crowning touch. As for the disembodied Phillip Tombers himself, he'd stopped sulking, and Molly could swear he was rather taken with the dark silk swishes and long black fingernails of Mam'selle Vestige. "My clients are few and select, Miss Squidpidge, as are the properties I handle. Seamus sent word that, as part of his new brewing endeavors – no, don't tell me," Mam'selle Vestige held up a hand, although Molly hadn't said a word. "I only ever drink whisky that's been shipped from Scotland unopened, so whatever Seamus is up to is none of my business. And I always mind my own business. Which brings us here," she waved at the imposing brick edifice across the foggy street, "and although I have skipped the part where I tell you what Seamus wanted with this place, I have a feeling it is you that it wants to see, and not him."

Footsteps sounded, bare feet on cobbles, and an urchin dashed out of the cold, coiling mist, carrying a leather-wrapped parcel in her hand. Dressed in rags, she was nothing but skin and bone. A length of dirty sackcloth was tied over her lower face, but from above it burned black bitter eyes that looked at Molly without fear. The fingers that held the parcel were strangely long, and their tips seemed to disappear into the fog. Mam'selle Vestige unwrapped the parcel, read the letter within and with a wave of her hand the words on it vanished. She bent close to the girl, whispering words in a language Molly did not know, and when Mam'selle Vestige straightened up, the girl was gone. "One of my Crooligans. Well, I say mine... they keep an eye on things for me. They don't usually show themselves when I'm with others, but I think she quite liked you. It seems Malifaux is a busy place

tonight," she added with a wink. "She tells me there's a former lodgings on Arble Street I might need to add to my books." Molly felt Mrs. Choke squirm in her pocket, and she gave her an admonitory slap.

The fog cleared slightly and gave her a better look at the building. Near the edge of Downtown, this was not prime real estate, and the building was worn and tired looking. Clumps of gray vegetation sprouted from windows and cracks in the brickwork, and thick, dark stains flowed from leaks and gutters. Grime coated the broken glass in the many windows. She knew this building, and started across the empty cobbles towards it, Phillip Tombers bouncing in the pram. "You won't be going in alone, Miss Squidpiddle," The lone working gas lamp on the street guttered almost on command, and Molly saw two people standing beneath it, next to a shuttered and barred door. She aimed Phillip at them and applied the brakes just outside the cone of gaslight. Mam'selle Vestige swept past in a tease of perfume and silk, a lit cigarette waving in her hand like a firefly on a wand as she made rapid-fire introductions. She had her business face on now, Molly saw. "Miss Squidpiddle, this is Mr. Clarifester Drove, an independent mortuary consultant and the creator of Drove's Spirit Cabinet, which can be seen weekly at the Star Theatre, and this is Ms. Divesta Honeychild, of the Mountbank Honeychilds. She is an authority on the Neverborn." "The Manifestata," the diminutive Divesta Honeychild corrected, with a frown. "The term Neverborn is not only incorrect, but offensive to these poor creatures. The writings of Dubious Peake on the subject in 1828 are--""--are no longer as widely read as they should not once have been," interrupted Mam'selle Vestige. "And this is Miss Squidpiddle, former reporter for the Malifaux Daily Record and now greatly skewing the average intelligence of the ranks of the Undead, and these are the earthly remains of Phillip Tombers, the hat is not his own." Clarifester Drove was taciturn, fat and sweating in the cold air, with a humorless face that looked like a boiled potato. Strapped to his back in a whaling harness was a whining contraption of brass tubes, gleaming condensers, and naked electrical connections whose end product seemed to be a brass apparatus attached to a wide-bore pistol holstered on his left leg. He didn't even look at Molly, but kept staring up at the building through an assortment of lenses mounted on spidery brass rods. With her tiny figure hidden under a full-length, black fog coat, her hands clasping a small, beaded bag, and her hair in a bun so tight it pulled the corners of her eyes up in a look of perpetual alarm, Divesta Honeychild looked like every stern choir mistress Molly had known growing up, although considerably smaller. She could actually see the moment where Ms. Honeychild dismissed Molly from her mind as being not worth thinking about, which only reinforced the memory. "It's an open viewing tonight," Mam'selle Vestige carried on, "but I won't be accompanying you. Try not to get in each other's way, don't damage the fixtures, and send any offers to me, care of any Crooligan you can catch. The owner of this one would appreciate a quick sale, no strings." She flicked a finger at the door, and it swung inwards, the loud creaking swallowed by the fog. "Take as long as you like, and neither the vendor nor I are responsible for any injuries, mental or physical, you may sustain etc etc including death or Undeath etc etc. D'accord? Oui? C'est tout." And she walked out of the light, leaving only the tip of her cigarette beckoning through the fog before that, too, was gone. Molly pushed the baby carriage through the open door, the wheels crunching over bits of rotted plasterwork and broken glass. The door was evidently a servant's entrance and led to a long, functional looking hall lined with doors and draped in shadows. Clarifester Drove took up position in the middle of the

hall, examining a softly glowing globe attached to the apparatus on his back. He stared up at the ceiling. "More than I expected. I'll be upstairs. You both stay down here for the next hour." He stumped off towards the stairs. "If you know what's good for you." Divesta Honeychild hurrumphed!, placed her fingers on her temples and spun on the spot three times. One hand snapped away from her head as if burned and pointed away down the hall, away from Drove. "The confluence is strongest when diametric!" She sent a withering glance at Molly. "You may glimpse aetheric fire from my coronic discharge. Do not be alarmed, if your kind are even capable of such reactions. It is how I communicate with

the Manifestata." She walked briskly away and vanished around a corner. Molly looked down at Phillip and, with a twinge of remorse, tugged the bonnet off his head and tucked it away. He looked up at her with a melancholy air. "Were people this mad before we died?" She shrugged, blood trickling down her chin, and pushed him slowly down the hall. "There are unquiet spirits here," said Phillip, keeping his voice low. "I reckon that's what Drove's looking for. More supplies for his Spirit Cabinet, perhaps. But it's you they're looking for. Be careful, Molly. This place has a lot of hidden faces, and they're all watching you." She could sense the same presences Phillip could, but Molly had more immediate concerns. She was certain she knew this building, but her memory was more full of holes than any one of Seamus' victims. This building had been important, once. An idea occurred, and she headed for the public entrance. It took a lot of raking around in the detritus of the main lobby, but she eventually found what she was looking for. The building's faded brass nameplate: Octavius Hall. She stood for a moment, desperately trying to bridge the gaps in her memory. Of course! Octavius Hall. "Are you feeling all right, Molly?" Phillip asked, and she realized she'd been clutching her head and moaning. Octavius Hall. She'd let them down. "Feel?" she asked, throwing the nameplate back into the pile of junk. "I'm feeling angry." She wrestled the pram back through the pile of rubbish and headed for the basement, ignoring the sounds of something watching her from the lobby balcony. !1'&,*'.*+"\$&.+,*#+,#&,-+\$\$'&.\$+&,%&*--+&+/*-+,"&+1'\$ \$1)-(" !"\$-0"\$1'!+&*,!+*"+'#*"%\$+1,!&,*'.*+"\$-+&+&*\$(!"&+,&-,!,-+,\$*\$1'+"&+,'.-+\$\$,'*,!1%1"&,!%+\$,-,'&,!+,*,,!"/"&,**-/"+"#&/'&*'-1"&-('\$'+&*"\$1.", "& ,&&+,%#/'1'5A white, wooden chair sat with its back to the main hall, and the pram knocked it on its side as Molly passed. Over the crash, a skittering sound could be heard from the floors above. "Unless that was Drove, and I don't remember him having that many legs, we're being followed," whispered Phillip, and Molly nodded mutely. More and more of the story was coming back to her, and her sense of anger was growing by the minute. The door leading to the basement stairs was just ahead. ,!1,.-+\$\$,'*\$3\$*\$',!'+&-**4\$*'*'.*&*+-\$-,*1'*\$+(!"&+,&-",!/1'\$ \$1)-(" ,&,'&*,! "&,*&,"&,'!"+&/(*&"+*-\$&\$1'(*,"*"++'\$ \$1)-(" ,! "\$-0"\$1'*\$".+!,!2&+"%('.*"+!+"#&*"\$ \$*\$1%&&/'%&/' ,!&\$". "& *\$,"+/'-\$!&.",5

The pram bounced from step to step as Molly steered it down the wide stone stairs, Phillip holding on to the bed clothes with gritted teeth to stop himself flying out. At the bottom of the stairs, huge stretches of brickwork and masonry had been removed and piled in the corners. Scaffolding and iron buttresses held up the walls and ceilings, and, where the tiled basement should have been, a dirt slope stretched away into darkness. The body of Divesta Honeychild lay like a collapsed doll at the top. &+&('!% % % &! % \$!)\$% !\$&+ % & % !&%\$&%+!+ #"" !*%!%&)\$ \$""%\$ (% % !&!!%(\$ &&!\$&+! \$+\$% &%!&('%(&\$!&\$% '\$%&!'*&&!

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/Molly propped Phillip up to get a better look and bent to examine Ms. Honeychild's corpse. It
looked like she had burned from within. Her fog coat was charred and smoking, and the smell
of scorched flesh filled the air. Her face was frozen in a rictus of horror, and a small flame
was slowly consuming the tightly-wound bun atop her head. There was no other sign of fire in
the room. Molly blew on the flame and put it out. "Make a wish?" suggested Phillip. Molly
closed the woman's eyes. Being careless and self-deluded in Malifaux was rarely a recipe
for long life, and she had clearly encountered something that cared little for her coronic
discharge. Molly picked her way down the earthen ramp into the darkness. This wasn't the
sewers - the air was old and dry as the dust in her mouth. What had they been doing
here? "You're just going to leave me?" Phillip shouted after her in an anguished voice. "I can't
defend myself, I'm a head!" His last few words dropped almost to a whisper, presumably as
he realized that, being all alone, shouting might not be such a good idea. Molly's undead eyes
could see fairly well in the almost total blackness, although the glow from the Gorgon's
Tear around her neck helped pick out the steep passage and low ceilings. Tools and
equipment lay everywhere, covered in dust and abandoned in a hurry. Reaching into a
pocket, she lifted out Mrs. Choke and tucked her behind her ear, making sure she got a
good view. She hadn't known Mrs. Choke before she'd died, of course, but everyone liked
exploring, didn't they? The passage ended where a sunken stone wall had been broken
through. Molly stepped through the breach. Inside was a chamber, the walls lined with rusted
iron plate, and the floor covered in shattered glass and scraps of machinery, buried under rust
and verdigris. Plinths of stone and brass stood at regular intervals and, from the
jagged spears set into the rims of each one, it was clear these were the source of the broken
glass. There was only one left intact, an enormous bell jar big enough to hold two women, lying
on its side next to a large pile of filthy canvas sacks. Molly knelt beside them, her hands
feeling the contours within. Skulls, bony bodies, stick-thin limbs. Long dead. She counted forty
one sacks.

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Earthside had any record of receiving forty-one patients from Octavius Hall when it closed,
and so she'd died while in the middle of one of her biggest stories. In Malifaux, that was no
longer the handicap for a reporter it had once been. She had let them down, and she could
feel the ghostly presences all around her. She had let them down, but now she'd come back. A
skittering sound made her turn, and she felt rather than heard Mrs. Choke scream and faint
dead away. The exit was blocked. For a moment she thought the scorpion the floor had
assembled itself while her back had been turned, but it still lay amongst the broken glass.
What she was looking at was the intact version of whatever the scorpion had once been. Four
legs gripped the broken masonry of the breach with steel claws, the stone fracturing under
the pressure. Two segmented arms, held as if in prayer, aimed twin hypodermic needles the
size of small harpoons at her. Between the many limbs, a head of ancient leather and brass
rivets nestled amidst an array of hydraulic pipes, its softly glowing eyes matching the green
venom dripping from the needles. It settled back on its haunches, ready to spring. Molly froze,
and then smiled. "Here, boy!" she said, holding out her hand. The machine paused, its head
moving in jerking motions as if searching the air, then it bounded forward, scattering the
detritus on the floor and curled its antique, rusting body against Molly's legs and dress. She

reached down and stroked its head, feeling the dry leather brittle to the touch. She scratched behind its pipes where they met in brass couplings faded gray-green with age, and the machine's hydraulic systems flicked on and off in pleasure. "Good boy!" she said. She bent down and rubbed its flaking metal body with both hands, and it rolled onto its back. "Good boy!" She could feel an energy coursing through this machine that fizzed and sparked wherever she touched it, resonating with something deep within her. Molly closed her eyes, and the machine stilled. The energies within them flowed as one, and Molly looked through eyes that had seen a thousand years pass, and more. Centuries of service to the necrotic power that animated them both, ending in this very room, not abandoned but stored, waiting, preserved in the huge glass specimen jars with its pack-brothers. Brief images of momentary consciousness flickered past, a fractured Kinetoscope of the years that followed as, one by one, the ravages of time destroyed the other jars and their contents slowly rotted away. And then - men came, picks and axes breaching the walls, the last jar being tipped on its side. Escape, confusion, screaming, running and hiding in the far reaches of the building, slowly regaining its power from the spirits of the dead who roamed the dark passages of Octavius Hall. Molly's sight returned to the near-pitch of the sunken room, and the necrotic machine wriggled again at her caress. She glanced at the bodies in sacks. Those were not this machine's doing, although this machine was surely the reason the building had been abandoned in such a hurry. Who, then, had killed the residents of the Hall? She had a feeling she knew exactly who. Molly stood and headed for the ramp, the machine settling in at her heel. Phillip was going to be thrilled. CCC

Drove was waiting for her at the top. Phillip could only moan a warning, his mouth stuffed with cloth, as Drove raised the wide-bore pistol and blasted searing lightning at the machine by her side. It was lifted off the dirt and slammed into the iron scaffolding. It lay curled and smoking, bits of its casing glowing red hot like embers in the dark. "What in the world was that?" Drove demanded, turning his lightning gun towards Molly, but still staring at the twitching remains of the necrotic machine. Molly didn't answer. She glanced back once, and continued walking slowly towards him. Drove smiled cruelly and adjusted a dial on his pistol. The whine from his backpack increased a whole octave. "Your master has no idea what he did when he made you, does he? Or when he gave you that." The scorched barrel of the pistol jabbed at the Gorgon's Tear around her neck. "I couldn't let that stupid woman live, after she'd seen me here with you. Word might have got back to Seamus, and I really don't want that maniac knowing my name. The Mam'selle won't tell - as long as she gets her commission, she minds her own business, and she's not afraid of Seamus. So you and that remarkable Soulstone are going to come with me, and I'll show this world what Clarifester Drove and his Spirit Cabinet are really capable of." He aimed the pistol at her face. "That's far enough!" Molly glanced a warning at Phillip and he screwed his eyes shut. With a smile, she lifted the Gorgon's Tear off her breast, and - with a whisper and a burst of green light from the Tear - let the unfortunate Clarifester Drove see what truly lay within. He'd been on his knees, lips frothing and body shaking, for a whole minute before he was even able to start screaming, and Molly waited patiently for him to stop. She took the cloth out of Phillip's mouth, set him upright again, and brushed his hair flat, while Drove raved and howled and sobbed behind her. When the screaming turned to whimpers and then to dry heaves of his chest, Molly went to him and clasped his tear-streaked face to her bosom. She retrieved Mrs. Choke from behind her ear, severed some of Drove's electrical cables and tied them to the former landlady's wriggling optic nerve. "Well, Mrs. Choke," Phillip said, grinning ear to

ear. "If you're feeling at all aggrieved at the way your life has recently turned out, you may feel the need to express some of that dissatisfaction in what I hope will be a cathartic experience for you. In short, I bet you could murder someone right about now, eh, Mrs. Choke?" The eyeball twitched angrily in Molly's hand, stretching to get free of her grasp. Molly imagined her being similarly infuriated at a guest not using a coaster, or putting his feet up on the furniture. "Attagirl, Mrs. Choke," Phillip crowed. "We've got a live one here, Molly!" Molly let go, and the Undead eyeball dropped with a sickening plop into Drove's gaping mouth, trailing the wires. His hands flew to his throat as his face turned red and he gasped for air, then his eyes bulged as he made a very surprised-sounding swallowing noise. He grabbed at the electrical cables protruding from his mouth, but just a moment too late, as Molly flipped the power switch on his backpack and stepped back. The whine of power was satisfyingly full-throttle, and Phillip whooped as flames shot from Drove's mouth and ears and his clothes caught fire. The sound of sizzling body fat filled the room as smoke roiled upwards in great clouds, and then the intestinal gases in Drove's voluminous belly ignited. His midriff exploded with a wet-ripping pop and Molly, in one deft move that raised a cheer from Phillip, caught a hurtling Mrs. Choke in one hand. Drove's corpse collapsed in a reeking ruin, and Molly turned back to the necrotic machine. "So what exactly is that thing?" Phillip asked. It was a simple matter, now the connection had been made, for Molly to reach out with a fraction of the energy within her, and pour strength into the dying machine. Its limbs ceased twitching, and it sprang upright a moment later, before bounding over to Molly and racing round and round her. Molly thought back to hazy memories of when she had been a child, and her father had produced a gleeful, scampering bundle of legs and soft hair with a very wet nose and bright, bright eyes from behind a glittering Christmas tree. "Ponto," she replied.

CCCThe little girl Crooligan came out the fog when she called, and led her by back alleys and zigzag lanes to the Mam'selle. "I thought I might be seeing you again," the woman said as Molly approached, pushing Phillip in the baby carriage- which he was now growing rather fond of, and had requested Molly add certain personal touches such as lanterns and a supply of cigars once they returned to the old brewery - with the machine pacing at her heels. Mam'selle Vestige was leaning with effortless ease against what appeared to be an upright but dead-drunk Guild Guard officer, watching an illegal bare-knuckle fighting contest in the cobbled yard below. Shouts, bets, oaths, and meaty thunks floated up from the pale ghosts exchanging blows and the gathered crowd. "Who owns Octavius Hall?" Molly demanded, dark blood spilling from her mouth as she spoke. "Perhaps you, mon cheri, if you meet the asking price." The Mam'selle turned back to the fight. "My money's on the red-head. Caledonians are so fiery-tempered, n'est pas? That, and I have poisoned his opponent." She gave a Gallic shrug of indifference. "I will ask only once." "Don't let us quarrel, Miss Squidpidge." A ring of smoke disappeared into the fog. "Neither of us would profit. I seek to make only friends in this town, and what would my reputation be if I gave away the identity of a client?" "Then I will pay the asking price..." Mam'selle Vestige gave Molly her full attention. "...but only in person." Vestige regarded her for a few moments between draws on her cigarette. "And what would my business be if I lost a client?" Molly produced a drawstring silk bag and placed it on the parapet between them. The presence of the Soulstone within was unmistakable. "That should cover your commission," Phillip said. "And a little bit extra to make sure he comes alone." A smile spread across the Mam'selle's face like ice across a winter pond, and Molly wondered if she really was as young as she looked. "A pleasure doing

business with you, Miss Squidpiddle. I will arrange the rendezvous. Octavius Hall, I presume?" Molly wheeled Phillip away, the voices of forty one ghosts whispering in her ears. "Tomorrow at midnight. I have a deadline." CCC He did not, of course, arrive alone. Unscrupulous, black-hearted businessmen were rarely so stupid. Molly had known who it would be. She had suspected long before she died, and the memories had come flooding back since the previous night. And there he stood, tall and stooped with a silver cane, a slick of receding white hair, a black suit and the air of a miser whose only problem was that everyone else had too much money. The seller of Octavius Hall, Elphinstone McTeague. It could only have been him. He had brought three bodyguards and a lawyer with him, all with weapons and lanterns. No matter. McTeague never saw what hit him. He was standing in the echoing lobby of Octavius Hall, facing the wrong way, when Molly wound up her arm and hurled Phillip out of the darkness. "Tally-hoooo!" He struck McTeague in the back of the head with a sound like two barrels banging together, and the tall man crumpled without a word.

"Right in the coconut, Molly!" hooted Phillip as he bounced off, and then let out a string of curses when his cigar went the other way. The lawyer took one look at Phillip's flying death-mask and ran screaming. As the bodyguards, thick-set men on hire from the Miners' and Steamfitters' Union with faces like bruised meat, milled around in confusion, the necrotic machine dropped from the chandelier above. The hypodermic syringes flashed and stabbed, snickety-snack, and it was all over before Phillip had stopped rolling. The whispering voices of the dead surged. Molly grasped McTeague's tongue in a vice-like grip and began to drag him towards the basement. CCC McTeague awoke in complete darkness. He was lying on something hard and lumpy, his head and mouth were in agony and he could feel rough cloth. It took only a moment to realize that the cloth was a hessian sack and that he was inside it, and then Elphinstone McTeague began to thrash and yell. The sack was closed tight around him, and terror threatened to rob him of his wits, but after a moment he found the neck and forced a thin arm through with a hoarse cry. He heaved, and the rope slipped loose. McTeague tumbled out, kicking and cursing the darkness, until he lay breathless and exhausted, his head throbbing in pain. "Thank you for joining us, Mr. McTeague," Phillip said, as Molly struck a match and lit one of the bodyguard's lanterns. She gave McTeague a moment to take in his surroundings. Molly sat on a white chair before the breach in the wall of the underground chamber, Phillip on a plinth to one side, and Ponto squatting on the other. Mrs. Choke looked on stoically from a vantage point high in Molly's bouffant hair. Molly held a notebook in one hand and a pen in the other. She had no need for them, but it felt good to hold them again. Elphinstone McTeague himself lay on a pile of forty-one hessian sacks. It had taken Molly all the previous day, but she and the necrotic machine had made certain changes to the Soul Gin Seamus was working on. Empty bottles lay scattered around the iron-walled room, and the effects of their contents on the remains of the forty one inhabitants of Octavius Hall were just starting to be felt. McTeague froze as the lumpen shapes beneath him shifted. "Aaaaah!" he cried as he scrambled to his feet, but the sacks were now all in motion beneath him, and he fell, cursing. "We're on the record, Mr. McTeague," said Phillip. "Mind your language, now." McTeague rolled to the side, kicking legs and flapping arms, until he slid off the pile of sacks onto the debris-strewn floor. He crawled away through the rusted metal and glass and cowered against the far wall, clutching his chest and wheezing. "Just want to get the facts down, Mr. McTeague," said Phillip. "Won't take long. Now, would it be fair to say you purchased the Hall in secret, lied to the Malifaux Daily Record and, indeed,

everyone else about it, and then killed the elderly paupers living here so you could dig around beneath the Hall for ancient relics and profit without anyone knowing?" "Saints preserve us!" McTeague moaned, as the mass of filthy sacks thrashed like a hive of brown maggots and began to writhe and wriggle across the floor towards him. "I would take that as a 'yes', Molly," Phillip said out the corner of his mouth. "And would it be fair to say that you broke into this chamber, awoke my colleague's many-legged friend and abandoned the dig and the Hall in terror, making up some story about 'emanations from the sewers' and sealing Octavius Hall shut for the last year?" "Help me!" McTeague gasped, his hand white-knuckled over his chest, all color gone from his pinched face. The sacks were like a tide of giant vermin now, lurching and twisting their way through the debris in silence, threatening to swarm him at any moment.

A grey hand made of bones covered in the most paper-thin of rotted skin burst from one of the sacks and gripped his ankle. He flattened himself against the wall and screamed. "Another 'yes', I would say, Molly," advised Phillip. "Would you like us to rescue you, Mr. McTeague? Get you safe from these upset former customers of yours? The press is always willing to protect its sources." McTeague's mouth worked open and shut a few times, but when he couldn't get any sound out, he started nodding as vigorously as he could. At a silent comment from Molly, the necrotic machine sprang forward, reaching McTeague in a single bound. It carried a letter in one hand, and a pen in the other. "Sign that, if you would," Phillip called. More hands burst from the rotting sacks, grabbing McTeague's feet and legs, and he snatched the pen and scribbled his signature, a low moan of terror escaping his bloodless lips. The machine retrieved the letter and picked up McTeague effortlessly. The hands grasping him released their hold. Molly rose, crossed the room and joined the machine next to the plinth at the far end. The necrotic machine sat the trembling McTeague on the plinth, then stabbed one of its needles into his chest. He screamed, as pale green liquid flowed out the reservoir and into his body. "No! Wait! What-?" he cried, and then Molly lifted the last remaining intact bell jar, taking all her Undead strength to do so, and brought it down around him, cutting his pleas off. The rim sank into the groove running around the plinth with a grinding noise, and Molly twisted it to lock it in place. Inside, McTeague banged his fists feebly on the thick glass, but all Molly could hear was a faint drumming as if from far away. She picked up Phillip and left the room, turning back for one last look. McTeague knelt awkwardly, hammering his fists against the confining glass walls of his prison. The concoction in his veins would not kill him. Instead, it had imbued him with some of the necrotic machine's Undead essence. It would keep him alive in that jar, even once their had been exhausted, for centuries. She turned off the lantern, and utter darkness fell. "Seal it up," Molly said to her faithful machine. "Bring the roof down behind us." As she walked up the steep slope, Ponto tore the metal scaffolding and supports from the dirt walls. Planks of rough wood crashed down, followed by multitudes of black earth that chased their heels all the way back to the basement and up the steps. When they reached the street outside, Molly realized she could no longer hear the voices in her head. Octavius Hall was finally silent. "Back to Seamus?" Phillip asked, as Molly settled him once again in the now rather dirty bedding of the pram. The one working gas lamp in the street spluttered fitfully. Molly folded the letter McTeague had signed and another sheet of paper into an envelope with the word, "Editor", on the outside. She would drop that into the night box of the Malifaux Daily Record on the way back to the old brewery. "Won't Seamus be, to put it mildly, a little annoyed that you took so

much of his precious Soul Gin?" Phillip wondered aloud. Molly gave her own Gallic shrug of indifference, and found that it agreed with her. Seamus had probably gotten bored with his brewing anyway and set off on some other wild pursuit. She lit Phillip's cigar using one of the matches she'd taken from the bodyguard and placed it in his mouth. There was a sizzling sound. "The other way around, Molly, if you please." Molly flipped the cigar over and put it back in, patting Phillip in apology. "Here, boy!" she called, and Ponto bounded out of the fog into the light of the gaslamp, pressing up against her. She rubbed the manifolds on the back of its head, and it quivered in pleasure. "You know, Molly old dear," said Phillip around the cigar. "I don't reckon that one is a boy. Just a feeling."

Molly thought a moment, and realized Phillip was probably right. She tore a strip off the pram's hood, and bent to the machine. When she straightened up, with a pleased expression on her face, the leather and brass head of her faithful companion sported a pink ribbon with a bow on top. It bounded happily away. She got the pram underway, the wooden wheels slipping on the wet cobbles, and with Phillip puffing contentedly, they walked off into the fog together. %""%+(&#&""(!&(%%"!&&"('&%"('&%"!!"*!","!%(#""%!",\$(#&!!*&"&&"(+&","(+,"%&(!")%%&,"#"!!(%%%