

"But will it work?" the lawyer asked. Haim Clements, chief civil engineer of the Guild's Transport Department, folded the blueprints. He did not enjoy being where he was, speaking to who he was, but that question had put him on safe ground. "Yes," he replied.

"Absolutely! It's ingenious! It will improve throughput in the network by a factor of three or four, without re-cabling or erecting new towers. It's all down to the routing systems at the main branch stations. These gyroscopic hubs are admirable work. Where did we get it?" The lawyer held out a gloved hand with an oily grace, and Clements returned the blueprints with some reluctance. "Thank you, Mr. Clements," the lawyer said. "That will be all." Clements looked from the lawyer to the masked man sitting behind the desk and back again. Color rising in his whiskered cheeks, he left through the side door. The lawyer closed it behind him and handed the blueprints to the man at the desk. Lucius Matheson, Secretary to the Governor, put the folded blueprints on his table, then placed a brass paperweight on top. He saw his own silver mask reflected in the polished metal. "I want these put into operation immediately. Top priority." "As you wish," replied the lawyer, Olginous Flinch. Like all Lucius' lawyers, his deathly-pale face was fixed with a permanent, knowing sneer, and he wore an elaborate eye-mask. Today Flinch favored a courtly design, in the shape of two glittering, golden swans. His long fingers curled tight as he spoke, as if he captured secrets in his gloved palms. "Our man would like to return. He frets on his safety." Lucius stood and walked over to the window, his tall boots silent on the thick rug, his steps weighted and precise, like a hunting cat. He looked out over the City, following the line of the railway through its buildings, past the New Construction on its way towards the mines in the mountains. "There is one more task I require of him, Mr. Flinch. And when you do speak to him, tell him we all fret on his safety." He turned his head, and although the silver mask covered all, it was clear to Flinch that Lucius was wearing the devil's own smile. "Tell him I never cease contemplating the harm that might befall him."

Four Months Later Earthside; Breachworks Station

"You wanna see something?" Edward Estlin asked, his bony face sly and pale under the greasy Guild cap. "I mean, really something?" His young apprentice, John Cole, nodded mutely, eyes wide. Edward knelt and opened the iron hatch in the roof of the railcar, easing it back silently on oiled hinges. Impenetrable shadow hid what lay within, until the clouds parted and the moonlight fell. John Cole jumped back with a gasp, nearly slipping. He crept back to the hatch and peered over the edge. A shiver ran down his spine. "Never seen one up close?" Edward asked, glancing around. The enormous, fortified railhead was never silent, not even in the depths of night, but no one was looking their way. John Cole shook his head, blonde curls swinging. "This car is full of 'em, and the next," said Edward. "And the one after that." John Cole swallowed. "They all could start a war with that." Edward eased the hatch closed. "Good thing it's headed through the Breach then, eh?"

Sourbreak Supply Depot, Malifaux

"Message here for Master Waugh," sang out the runner. Guild Quartermaster Leon Stubbs looked her up and down. Small, like a wren, with tiny, grey eyes behind huge goggles and a thick pencil tucked in her hair. She was dwarfed by Stubbs' unruly bulk and more so by the vast munitions warehouse. Not a pick on her, Stubbs thought, nor a curve to grab. She was naught but a child, really. He returned back to his shipping list. "Never 'eard of no Waugh. Beat it." He thought he was imagining things, then he realized he really was hearing crying from the gangway behind him. He turned, angry. "That's enough of that! Girls your age should be down the mines, not getting lost in munitions yards and bursting into tears. A spell down the mines'd dry your eyes out for good." The sobbing

continued. "For good and plenty! Try over at the Mast. They'll know him." She sniffed, flipped up her goggles and wiped her eyes with her sleeve. "Beady Simmons'll skelp me if I'm late." She held out her message pad. "Could you? So he knows I was here?" As Stubbs hesitated, she added, "I don't want to get skelped again, sir. Please!" "Fine." It was probably quicker than giving her the back of his hand, and less chance of getting covered in snot and tears. "Give it here." The girl handed the pad over with another sniffle but got the pencil tangled up in her goggles strap. It spun out of her hand and fell, end over end, disappearing into the tightly packed crates below the gangway. The tears started again, and Stubbs hastily made his mark on the pad with his own pencil and pushed it back into her hands. "Off with you, you little wretch, and don't bother me again." The girl turned and ran, and Stubbs got back to planning the loading arrangements for the Munificent. When the girl was out of sight, she stopped crying, threw the pad and goggles away, and quickly made her way to the rendezvous point. Far below, the discarded pencil hissed so quietly that none could hear.   
Malifaux City "Not that I am offering any resistance," Leroy Billings said, his trembling hands still raised in the customary position, "but are you sure you know what you're taking?" The masked man holding the gun said nothing, but that did not make Leroy feel any better. What if they realized what they'd actually stolen and in a fit of rage came back to his shop and shot him. And his assistant, too, but principally him. "Look," he tried again, "you know what's in those bottles? It's not valuable. It's just--" He stopped as the masked man pointed the gun. His compatriot picked up the two large brown glass jars and left through the back of the shop. The gunman followed, and Leroy and his assistant were left alone and, surprisingly, alive. "--animal medicine," he finished in a whisper, as his young assistant fainted dead away.   
The Next Day Hollow Marsh Minehead English Ivan looked so aggressively out of place in the industrial chaos of a working mine that new recruits had been known to stop working and simply stare. Their more experienced comrades quickly fixed that with a belt 'round the ear, and the lesson was soon learned – one does not stare at English Ivan. Quite how he kept his black bowler and double-breasted frock coat so free of the dust and smoke that swirled around the great minehead complex remained a mystery among the members of the Miners and Steamfitters Union. No matter where he went, surrounded on all sides by laborers blackened by oil or made ghosts by ash, his pale, flared trousers and low, white boots seemed impervious to insult, and even in the dull light his blue

cravat shone like the summer sky. Outshining even that was the crystal clear soulstone on the top of his ivory walking cane. Pretty much all the workers and overseers at the mine knew about English Ivan was his name, and even in that they were doubly wrong. He was not English. As anyone who had been greeted by him with a rousing, "Hullo!" could tell, his accent was as Russian as a steppe wolf. And his name was not Ivan. There were rumors, of course, that he worked for the Washhouse. There were rumors that practically every stranger or oddfellow to pass through the mines worked for the Washhouse, and most of the old mine hands liked to hint that they had done work for the Washhouse at some point in the past, word-to-the-wise, say-no-more. As for the rumors about what the Washhouse did, well they ventured into the realms of myth and legend. The rumors about English Ivan happened to be true. He stopped on the sloped path leading up from Pithead Four, taking a moment to straighten his waxed moustache. Heavy steamboats pistoned past, their iron-shod feet kicking up clouds of dust as miners stepped aside in front of them. Ivan ignored them, and the steamboats walked around him. The building ahead was long, low, and tile-roofed,

and a steady stream of workers coming off shift were going in and out. It was, in truth, a normal washhouse, one of many around the mineheads. This one, however, had been built in front of the Rising Machine. Ivan stepped past the slow-moving queues. The chatter and splash of the washhouse quieted noticeably as he entered, and he walked quickly to a door in the rear. White Eye McGee, who sat on a stool by the door, nodded blindly to him and stopped playing his mouth organ long enough to flip the latch. Ivan walked out, onto the bare rock at the back of the washhouse. The door locked behind him. The rock trembled with the movements of the Rising Machine. It was like the inner workings of a giant's watch had fallen from the sky and embedded in the earth. Jutting from huge notches blasted in the mountainside, dozens of iron cogs the size of Ferris wheels rotated on deep-hidden hubs and axles. All of them, from the point of view of the outside observer, rotated upwards, hence the name. Look at it for long enough, and you would be convinced the whole assembly was climbing back up into the sky. The machine played a key role in the operations of the Hollow Marsh Pumping Station on the other side of the mountain, but the Washhouse had gotten involved at the planning stage, and the Rising Machine played an altogether more clandestine, secondary role. English Ivan drew his gold pocket watch from the breast pocket of his waistcoat and tapped time with his cane. At the right moment, he stepped forward onto one of the massive cogs. Standing comfortably in the man-sized gap between the iron teeth, he rose quickly. The teeth meshed with another great cog, but Ivan simply hummed a symphony to himself as they approached. He passed through unscathed; a missing tooth in the next, horizontal cog ensuring that he remained unharmed. It was all about timing, as he stepped off the first cog onto a hidden platform within the rock and straight onto another cog on the opposite side. So it went, from cog to cog, higher and higher, each step timed to perfection. If a man did not know precisely where and when to step during the ascent, he would be brutally crushed by teeth that weighed more than rolling stock. The last cog brought him to a door in a rock wall deep within the mountain. The sign on the door read, "Department of Ungentlemanly Affairs". He went in and waited for the others to arrive. The first was Gibson DeWalt. Very short, black, bearded and wiry, he wore oil-stained dungarees and a leather belt slung with tools. "English," he said in a slow drawl, before settling on a stool in the small room. He glanced around, attention resting briefly on the cream envelope sitting on the small round table, then leaned back against the wall and closed his eyes. "At least there'll be crumpets." Next to arrive was Hannibal Vholes. The door slammed open, and Vholes filled the iron frame. Even without his lifter's gear he would have been strong as an ox, but the powered harness that sat like a cage around his chest and shoulders enabled him to put a box car back on the rails all by himself. At his hip was a rifle with a barrel like a stove-pipe. DeWalt cracked an eye. "Look, English. We're saved. All we need now is a mission that involves lifting heavy objects from down there to up here."

Hannibal walked in, the power-plant on his back hissing softly. "I don't know you, little man. Maybe you should sit this out. The Union needs men for this one." "That'll be our little secret." Eva Havenhand shut the door behind her. She wore a welder's smock with a length of electrical cord at her hip coiled exactly like a whip. "What the hell is she doing here?" Hannibal demanded. "Bringing a little glamor to our happy family," she said. "Hi, English. Long time, and all that." She turned to DeWalt, stuck a gloved hand out and then pulled it back. "Eva Havenhand. We won't shake, no offense. You did come through a washhouse, though. Just a hint. Have we met?" "No," said DeWalt. "But a man's luck can't last

forever.” “Who the hell is she, English?” Hannibal said. “Eva Havenhand,” she said. “I would write it down, but that would just embarrass you further. I like your gun. I assume that was the biggest they had. Might want to sling it a bit more in front, if you know what I mean.” “Eva,” warned Ivan. “Play nice with your new friends.” “Sometimes it takes a stranger to tell home-truths, English. That’s all. You’ve put on weight. See? No one else would tell you but me.” “And there’ll be no coarse language, Hannibal,” Ivan said. “That’s my number one rule. I told you last time.” “Dammit, English, get shot of these two and--” There was a loud crack, and Hannibal stood in open-mouthed surprise. Ivan had slapped him. “No coarse language, Mr. Vholes. Of any kind.” Hannibal flexed his jaw. “What the hell?” Crack. “English! Stop slapping me, dammit!” Crack. Hannibal’s face darkened, and the pneumatics on his harness whined as his great shoulders flexed, but Ivan raised a school-masterly finger. “My number one rule.” Hannibal’s shoulders slumped, and he sat on a stool. “By all that’s – gosh and...golly.” Ivan walked to the small table in the middle of the room and picked up the envelope. He read the letter inside, and then passed it to DeWalt. “Our benefactor is upset. The Guild has taken something they shouldn’t have,” he said. “So, we’re going to return the favor.”

Later That Evening Guild Headquarters “They’ll be arriving at Dockmast One around midnight. I have already signalled for additional Guardsmen to report there in an hour, so you’ll have plenty of men. And no mistakes.” The Captain of the Watch nodded. “Sir, can I ask where this information came from?” The Governor’s Secretary tilted his head. “It came from far above your pay grade, Captain. Our enemies think they have a little surprise in store for us tonight, but I have eyes in places that would mortify them.”

11 Of The Clock It was night, and the stars were crisp and brilliant. English Ivan and the three members of his Washhouse team waited quietly in the shadow of a brick wall thirty feet high. Above, gas-powered floodlamps illuminated the underbelly of a Guild aircar. The aircar was an armored leviathan, with a cargo compartment of brass and wood slung beneath a bullet-shaped dirigible eighty feet long. Guns bristled from

one-man pods all around the rigid, gas-filled balloon. The gondola underneath was dwarfed by the brass-ribbed envelope above, but Ivan knew it was nonetheless larger than most boxcars that pulled into Malifaux Station. It too, bristled with guns and defensive netting – the inhuman denizens of Malifaux could fly, and these aircars took personnel and valuable cargo great distances for the Guild over some of the most dangerous parts of the City. The aircar did not float free, however. It was secured to a massive steel cable thicker than a man. The cable ran from the top of a dockmast two hundred feet tall and disappeared off into the darkness. Other cables led off in different directions, connecting dockmasts all over the City in a network controlled by the Guild. The cables shifted in the wind, and the scaffolding tower amplified the noises and groaned them into the night like the calls of some subterranean monster. “Hard to believe something that big and heavy could just float,” muttered Hannibal. “That’s because it’s not heavy, you oaf,” whispered Eva. “Or maybe it is. Maybe they call it lighter-than-air just to confuse deep-thinkers like you.” A door in the brick wall opened, and a head emerged. Owlish eyes blinked. Ivan stepped forward briskly, tipping his hat with his cane. “A grand evening to you, Mr. Pell. I hope you are well?” Mr. Pell stepped into the lane, looking nonplussed. His drooping mouth, hook nose, and bulging eyes made him look remarkably like a startled and ugly bird. “Ah, I am fine, thank you. Fine.” He glanced around. “Er. How are you?” Ivan nodded soberly. “It is a cold night, and sometimes my ankles get sore, but I wore warm socks. Otherwise, I can’t complain.” “Good for you, English,” said

Eva. "Never ask Russians how they are – they take it literally," she whispered to Mr. Pell before pushing past him and darting through the doorway. DeWalt and Hannibal followed. "Come along, sir!" Ivan called to Mr. Pell, heading after the others. "No time to dilly-dally." Pell closed and locked the door and chased after Ivan, who found his team gathered at the foot of the enormous dockmast. "Stairs?" said Hannibal, looking from the steps to the iron framework towering above. "I knew he was the clever one," said DeWalt. "Tell me, Hannibal, did you ever let a grave robber spend time alone with your head?" asked Eva. "I meant," hissed Hannibal, "can't we take the cargo hoist? It must be twenty five stories." "Mr. Pell says any use of the hoist will get noticed in the control tower," said Ivan. "We climb. Good for the blood." It took them a long time to reach the top, where the wind howled and the bare metal was like ice. From there, Mr. Pell led them away from the main docking tower and to an unlit rope ladder that hung from the rear of the gondola. They climbed one by one, Ivan going last. As he climbed, the main docking steps retracted into the dockmast, and the departure sirens sounded. He climbed faster. Once aboard the aircar, he hauled up the ladder and spun the hatch closed. He found himself in a cramped ballast storage room. The whole room shuddered briefly, and the superstructure grumbled. "I believe we're underway," said Ivan, rubbing his hands together. "Comrades, welcome to Guild Aerostat Impertinence. This is Mr. Solomon Pell, a friend of our Movement." "Hold it," whispered Pell hoarsely, "I'm no traitor. This is just about the money. You and yours can go hang for all I care." "Beg pardon. Money is, of course, a noble motive. Why don't you tell us about the money?" Pell's eyes lit up. "A million in mint Guild Scrip for the Treasury, coming in tonight. The Governor's office ordered all Treasury shipments of scrip onto the aircar network awhile back. It's a damn sight--"

Ivan held up a warning finger. "I mean, it's a clear sight more secure than trains, armored crawlers or, heaven forbid, wagons." "Unless you have an inside man," said DeWalt, staring at Pell. "Now for your part," said Pell to Ivan. "Which aircar is it coming in on?" "Aerostat Irascible." Pell's eyes widened. "But – but she's already docked at Guild Headquarters! An hour ago! They'll have offloaded the money!" Ivan tapped the side of his nose. "Never fear, Mr. Pell. You just get us to Dockmast One at Guild Headquarters, and we'll take it from there." At Midnight Dockmast One, towering above Guild Headquarters, was where all cables led. Halfway up the tower, Haim Clements was quietly pacing about the control room, from station to station, monitoring the aircar traffic. On a large glass display that dominated one wall, motorised rods and levers moved brass symbols along etched paths. Some symbols were small, denoting aircar taxis that ferried small groups or VIPs around. Larger symbols showed Guild patrol aircars, and the largest of all showed the mighty cargo aircars. If Clements had been looking at this board only four months ago, before the Governor's Secretary had ordered the cable hubs and switching systems upgraded with the stolen designs, there would have been a fraction of the traffic he observed. But now – "It is quite something, Chief Engineer," the shift supervisor offered, her voice warmly appreciative. Clements nodded. The brass symbols reflected in his gold-rimmed glasses. "The operators don't need to do much, I see." The supervisor shook her head. "Only now and then. The hub gyros sense the loads automatically and distribute according to scientific ratios and principles. It can be beautiful to watch. Mesmerizing, on a busy night like tonight." "Security has been doubled, at least," said Clements. "No one is saying why, but it explains the activity. Look – there, you can see the effects of a new departure ripple

through the whole system. Astonishing." The supervisor stepped forward, putting her own glasses on to peer intently at the glass display board. "Sometimes it feels like it's alive. Like it's thinking." She turned away. "Apologies, Chief Engineer. That is foolishness." But Clements was not so sure. The Dockmaster One bristled with secondary berthing masts, like a crown of thorns atop an iron tree. From below, powerful arc-lamps sent harpoons of light into the night sky. The great whale-body of the Impertinence was pinned by several as it floated above its berth. Pell came back from the hatch, his face ashen. "The berth is crawling with Guardsmen." Ivan nodded. "They suspect something is afoot. Or they are taking the security of this consignment very seriously indeed. It was always a possibility. But do not fear, we are not discovered." "But how are we to get down? We'll be seen!" Pell gnawed on an ink-stained knuckle. "We're lost. We're doomed." Ivan slapped him on the back and handed him a tightly wrapped bundle. "Put this on, old chap. And keep your chin up." Ivan had already put his on, and his team were nearly done with theirs. He checked his pocket watch. Timing was everything tonight.

"Think of it, DeWalt," Eva was saying as she donned her gleaming suit in elegant fashion. "This is almost certainly the cleanest thing you've ever worn." DeWalt's reply was lost in the folds of cloth, but Ivan was sure it would have broken his number one rule. "English," said Hannibal. "What the – er, good and golly are these things?" The clothing was a single piece of woven metal fiber that covered them from foot to head. It should have been heavy, but was as thin and supple as silk. Ivan felt his skin tingle where it touched the metal cloth, as if micro-currents of electricity raced through it. "DeWalt? This is your brainchild." DeWalt's voice was muffled as he donned the outfit. "They're Faraday suits." After an extended pause, Ivan realised DeWalt considered that a full and complete explanation. He elaborated. "They are immensely sensitive to even the faintest corpuscles of light, and display a quite extraordinary property when fully illuminated." DeWalt's head grimaced out the top of his suit. "Yeah, yeah, English. Do the thing with the match." Ivan struck a match. It flared brightly in the dark hold, but as it did so, every Faraday suit lit up like a firefly. "Approach the light, if you please." They took a step towards him, and he could see the surprise on their faces. They walked as if in a stiff gale. "These suits amplify the pressure of light, like a sail amplifies the effects of the gentlest breeze. With a strong enough light, these suits could turn a walk into a sprint, or," he gestured to the hatch, "a death-plunge into a gentle descent." Their expressions changed from bafflement to ghastly shock as they realized how he intended for them to reach the ground. "If you would all move over to the hatch, we shall wait for one of the great spotlights below to play across our location. When it does so, jump. The suits will do the rest." "But – but – won't we be seen?" "You saw how the suits lit up, Mr Pell. You will be a candle hiding in a fire. Hoods up, and let's go." Eva was the first to the hatch. The darkness flared electric white as a spotlight passed. "If I don't see you again, English," she said as she jumped, "I just wanted to tell you to go to –" And she was gone, her words lost to a howl on the wind. DeWalt was next, but he was pushed aside by Hannibal ("No midget is gonna jump before I do!"). DeWalt followed right after him ("Then you can be a midget's landing pad!"). Solomon Pell was already backing away, but Ivan had expected that, grabbed him by the collar, and jumped into the light. The Malifaux Sanitarium The door opened, and Matron Cynthia Goodchilde entered. Before she shut the door behind her, Doctor Pendergast heard the wailing and banging from the East Wing that had been building since morning. Matron Goodchilde bustled to the medicine cabinet, unlocked it, and started filling a box with tablets

before she even gave the doctor good evening. "Phlebotomy and sweating have not improved their condition, Doctor," she explained. "If anything, they grow more and more agitated. They need more sedatives. I have never seen anything like it, upon my word." "A noxious miasma from the river could be to blame, Matron." She continued filling the box, exhaustion and impatience giving edge to her voice. "The windows have been closed all day and all night. Three of the patients have had such excitations of their spirits that I have had to bind them hand and foot, but their strength is unnatural. More sedatives are the only option left before commotion becomes riot." Doctor Pendergast stood from his desk and walked over to help her. Then he saw the pills she was stuffing into the box. "Good lord, Matron! Tell me you haven't given those to any of the patients!"

She froze. "All day, doctor. The jars are marked, 'Sedatives.'" Doctor Pendergast grabbed the box off her and closely examined one of the white pills. They were stimulants, given to greyhounds and horses prior to races. He started sweating. The worst of Malifaux's criminally insane patients had been receiving massive doses of these since morning. He heard a distant crash, and the sound of a warden's whistle. He and Matron Goodchilde ran from the room, leaving behind the pills, and two large, brown glass jars. It was a timeless, otherworldly descent. Ivan's skin tingled as if electric eels swam there, while all around him was a blinding whiteness that the buffeting wind could not displace. He was aware of a downwards motion, but gentle, like a falling leaf, and before long, even that sensation became distant and unsure. He held his grip steady on Pell's collar, and waited to touch down. His feet bumped hard into something unyielding. He tried to stand, but lost his footing and rolled. The surface underfoot was smooth as glass and unpleasantly hot to the touch. The lens of the arc-lamp, he realised. Dragging an almost weightless Pell behind him, he bounced and scrambled to the rim. The moment he was out of the pillar of light, his Faraday suit dimmed, and his mass returned in an instant. This time he was surer on his feet, although Pell landed beside him in a twisted bundle that grabbed at its bruised parts and moaned. Two dockmaster workers who had manned the light were slumped unconscious by a railing. Eva stood over them, unwinding her length of electrical whip-cord from around their necks. Hannibal and DeWalt were crouched at the top of a flight of steps. Below lay a goods yard, speckled with yellow pools around gas lamps that revealed shipping crates and anonymous low brick buildings. On the left of the yard were the massive feet of the dockmasters, on the right larger warehouses that separated the yard from the Guild Headquarters, and past the high wall on the other side of the yard flowed the river. "Just like old times, English," Eva whispered, securing the men's arms and legs. "Remember von Neumann?" Ivan smiled. "The Brassheart! Yes, he had that aeronautical, robotic squid. Quite a contraption." "Till you blew it up. Things do have a habit of going up in smoke around you." "I couldn't possibly comment." Ivan gathered his team quietly. "The money is in eight wooden crates marked 'Billing Records', and the crates are currently in that hut." Ivan's cane picked out a red door with a gas-lamp above it. Pell frowned. "So what's in the Treasury boxes?" Ivan shrugged. "I do not know. Billing records, most likely." His eyes twinkled. "Warehouse agents had them swapped before they came through the Breach, and now all we must do is gather them up, and then it is back to here, up to the Impertinence again using reverse-Faraday suits, and we'll be back in time for crumpets before they know what happened." "I said there'd be crumpets," said DeWalt. "The devil take your crumpets, Mr. Ivan," said Pell. "My breakfast is a one-quarter share. Do I have your word?" "You have the word of a gentleman, sir. The

Empire was built on nothing less." Ivan led the way down the stairs and through the good yard, keeping to the shadows. When they reached the brick hut with the red door, he waved Hannibal forward. "I have no key, Mr. Vholes. If you would be so kind?" As Hannibal stepped forward, Eva's electrical cord lashed out and hit the gas-lamp. The light winked out. Hannibal placed both hands flat on the steel door, braced his feet and pushed. The power-plant on his back hissed violently, a ruddy light glowing behind the cowling. There was a

series of popping noises like champagne corks. Bolts of brick-dust shot out, and the sheared ends of metal pins riddled off into the darkness. The power-plant gave an ominous rumble just as the door squealed in protest, then with an oddly satisfying snap! Hannibal staggered forward, the buckled door held firmly before him. Ivan's comrades filed swiftly past into the hut, and then, once he was sure the noise had not drawn attention, he followed suit. "Hannibal, the door, if you please." The big dock worker leaned the door back in place. Ivan raised his cane, and a soft, creamy light grew from the soulstone atop it. The hut was empty. Pell turned, aghast, as the others looked to Ivan in surprise. "What in the name of--" was all Solomon Pell managed to say before Ivan rapped him smartly on the temple with his cane. He collapsed in a bundle for the second time that night. "Secure him, please, Eva. Gently. He has done us good service. Good, good, just place him over by the wall, there. He is not a sack of potatoes, Eva. He will bruise. Thank you." Ivan twirled his cane and then leaned both hands on it. "Gentlemen. Lady. The surprise has caused you great unease, so allow me to soothe your spirits with a dose of the unalloyed truth. There is no money." There was a stunned silence. Eventually DeWalt hawked and spat. "Figures. I knew something was up when you started talking about reverse-Faraday suits. Makes no sense at all. How you thought anyone would believe that bunkum is beyond me." Chief Engineer Haim Clements knew something was wrong. He had always had a gift for looking at a piece of new engineering and knowing whether it would work or not. Once he had started considering the ornate glass display panel in the dockmaster control tower as a mechanical operation, a hideous feeling started to grow in his gut. If the panel had been a train, he would have said it was about to derail. He called the shift supervisor over, waving at her urgently across the room. "Look at it! Tell me what you see." She perused the display for a few moments and shook her head. "A great deal of traffic around Dockmaster One, probably the most there's ever been, but--" "Ignore the loads for once, forget the direction they're going in for the moment and just look at the destination tags!" "But what does..." Her face went white. "Oh, my." She started yelling orders to the operators, but Clements knew it was too late. Three quarters of the aircars on the network, hundreds of tonnes of steel and brass, were about to converge on Dockmaster One at precisely the same time. Eva's face was unreadable. "Care to explain that to us, English? I don't like being played for a fool." Ivan raised his cane. "Explanations? No. Instead, I will do this." Bolts of white lightning shot from the soulstone on the tip of his cane. One speared Eva in the chest, knocking her backwards with a thunderclap. Another did the same to DeWalt. They both lay where they fell, smoke rising in thin wisps. "English?" Hannibal said, edging towards the door. His fists came up as his shoulder harness whined. "Put them away, Mr. Vholes. You have no idea how much trouble you're in, but the Governor's Secretary will explain it all to you when he arrives. And by explain, I mean feed you to his lawyers." "What?" Ivan twirled his cane, then kicked DeWalt's body. There was no reaction.



"Those plans you handed over, the ones for the autonomous hubs for the aircar network. They were a plant by our friends in the Movement. They wanted

you to deliver them to the Guild, and like a stupid oaf, you did exactly that." Hannibal said nothing, his expression close and wary. "Unfortunately, once I learned what you'd done, it was months after the fact. All the usual communication channels out of Hollow Marsh were shut down by the Movement. I contrived this mission so that I would be sent there and I could warn Lucius in person, but it's too damned late. Yes, Mr. Vholes, I work for Lucius as well. " "Lucius didn't--" "Didn't tell you about me? Why would he? You didn't think he would have only one spy in the Union, did you? Our contact in the Movement doctored those plans so that at a preset time on a preset date, the logic engines at the heart of it all would contrive a disaster big enough to bring the entire network down. He used you. And it is about to happen, right above our heads. Tell me, Mr. Vholes, when he arrives, whom do you think Lucius is going to blame for this?" Hannibal's face was sweating, and he had turned pale. He stammered several times, before saying, "It's not... that's not... I can..." "You can explain? I will certainly enjoy watching you try, as pieces of aircar rain down upon us. At best, you'll die painfully. At worst, Lucius will decide you are actually a double-agent. If he thinks that, there is no telling what he might do to you. Who knows, he might even take off his mask and let you see what's underneath." Hannibal's eyes were wide. He stepped forward, reaching out to Ivan, his power-plant whining softly. "You have to help me, English!" Ivan spread his hands wide, with a 'what can I do?' expression. "You have to help me! Wait! I have this. I have it here, hold on." Hannibal dismantled the ammunition drum of his rifle. Inside he pulled out a tightly folded bundle of papers and brandished them at Ivan. "This is the proof, English! If you tell him I'm not a double-agent, and he sees these, it'll all be fine! I know it!" Ivan frowned. "What on earth is that?" "Plans! For a prototype Leviathan! I swear it, English, on my mother's grave, I swear it. You have to tell him it wasn't my fault! I was going to break away from you all, first chance I got, and give Lucius these. I've been trying to get him to let me quit for months, and then you picked me for this mission, and I thought if I gave these to him he would let me get out. You have to tell him!" "Yes, Hannibal. I picked you." Before the huge dock worker could react, Ivan snatched the Leviathan plans from his outstretched hand. "You two listening to all this? Sorry, DeWalt. Apologies, Eva. Temporary paralysis only. I couldn't count on you not interfering. I picked you, Hannibal, because we knew you had these plans somewhere, and our benefactor really, really wants them back, but we knew we would never see them again if we just asked you. But if we gave you an opportunity to deliver them in person, for example, if I picked you for a mission that just happened to take you to Guild Headquarters, why there was a pretty good chance you would bring them along." Ivan slipped them into his waistcoat pocket. "Thank you, Mr. Vholes." DeWalt groaned and sat up. "Could you two repeat all that from the beginning?" Eva stood, groggily, her electrical cable-whip in her hand. "Vholes, you traitorous piece of--" Ivan raised a warning finger, just as Hannibal raised his rifle and clicked the trigger. Nothing happened. "You dismantled the ammo drum, sir. And I do believe that forcing open that door has depleted your power-plant considerably for now. However," Ivan leaned his cane against the wall and raised his fists, "if it's trouble you want, I have two good friends of the Marquess of Queensbury right here." Hannibal ran. He toppled the door and sprinted off into the night. DeWalt and Eva rushed to the open doorway, but Ivan called them back. "Let him go. We have bigger fish to fry tonight." Eva

turned. "Okay, English. You got me. What is there possibly left to do tonight? And don't think I've forgiven you for shooting me with that thing."

"Just so we're clear," said DeWalt, rubbing his head. "There's no money, right?" From across the river, a distant siren sounded, along with growing numbers of Guild whistles. "If I'm not mistaken, and I rarely am," said Ivan, "that sounds a lot like it's coming from the Sanitarium. I wonder what could be transpiring there at this hour." Those sounds were almost immediately drowned out as emergency klaxons blared into life across the goods yard, from the direction of the illuminated dockmasts. "That's a collision warning," said DeWalt. "Did you mean what you said about those plans Vholes stole being doctored?" Ivan smiled. "Come, we have one last job to do, and I am going to need your expertise, Mr. DeWalt."

The Aerostat Munificent was the largest class of military airship the Guild possessed. Fully one hundred feet from nose to stern, it carried huge cargos. At present, it was proceeding under full automation along the Soubreakline, heading towards the Guild Headquarters and Dockmast One. Its captain was frantically signalling the control tower as the Munificent and four other airships approached the same hub at the same time. Tethered to the cables that were pulling them along, there was nothing the captains of any of the vessels could do. In the underslung belly of the Munificent, crates of ammunition were piled high. Nestled between two of the crates, lodged deep where no one could see it, was what looked like a pencil. Inside, the pencil was hollow, and a very precisely engineered plate of tin separated an acid from a liquid accelerator. The acid had been eating through the tin for just over a day, now, and as the Munificent's collision warning sirens blared, the tin gave way, and the liquids met. The initial flare was small, but intensely hot, and the dry tarpaulins over the surrounding crates quickly caught fire.

The goods yard was in chaos. Dock workers and Guild Guardsmen were running back and forth as the huge searchlights played over the swollen bodies of the airships massing above. Already, two had collided and burst into flames, causing burning debris to rain down over the river. The top of Dockmast One was ablaze, and the gyroscopic hub of one of the secondary masts had failed in spectacular fashion, wrenching the connecting cable so violently that the mast was slowly, inexorably, falling over. The scream of tortured iron was ear-splitting. Ivan had led his remaining team members to one of the larger warehouses. If there had been guards present, they had deserted their posts, and Ivan and Eva were hauling open the main doors. Loud though it was, it went unnoticed in the panic and confusion. Then, from the direction of the Quarantine Zone, along the Soubreak line, there was a flash that lit the night like a new sun. Ivan had to look away, and then a few moments later, as the afterimages still danced in his eyes, the thunderclap of the exploding Munificent nearly knocked him off his feet. Eva whistled. "Sweet Bayou Rose! I just know you had something to do with that, English." The burning wreckage plummeted over the Quarantine Zone, ordnance and ammunition still cooking off as it fell. The sight would linger in the minds of every Malifaux citizen for a long time. "I couldn't possibly comment." They entered the warehouse. It was dark, and Ivan's eyes still tricked him with white ghosts of the explosion, so it was Eva and DeWalt who saw the inhabitants of the warehouse first. Eva gave a yelp of alarm. "Don't worry – they're not activated," DeWalt said, and then Ivan's eyes finally adjusted, and he gazed upon row after row of brand new Guild Peacekeepers. Each machine stood twice as tall as a man, with a heavy, squat armored body, two legs and four arms ending in claws that could

crush a railcar. Their heads were all looking straight ahead, but there were no signs of power in any of them, despite the thick cables running from iron cranium to iron cranium. "How many are there?" Eva asked, her voice soft with wonder. Ivan grabbed DeWalt and hurried him over to a control panel positioned in front of a large logic engine. The cables buried in the skulls of the Peacekeepers all led back to this engine. "There should be thirty-six. They came through the Breach only a few hours ago, and they haven't been activated yet. Security measure. Eva, watch the door. DeWalt, I need you to reprogram these." Ivan checked his pocket watch, grimaced, and handed a sheet of punched card to DeWalt. "This. Use this. Be very, very quick." Ivan ran over to Eva, and peeked through the doorway into the yard. The secondary mast had completely collapsed into the river, and fires and debris from the still-colliding air cars were everywhere. It was pandemonium. "All this just to get some plans back?" asked Eva. "You should keep copies." Ivan shook his head, as still more ammunition exploded in the distance, sending up fresh fireballs. "Yes and no. The plans were vital, but tonight is about Vholes. Lucius had him in our midst for a long time before we realized what he was up to. He was a member of the Washhouse. He had access to just about everything. Tonight is the Movement's way of warning the Governor. Once this is over, the Guild will blame it in public on pilot error or an engineering failure, but the point will not be lost on the Governor. 'Do not cause a mess in our own backyard.'" "This is some warning." "This? No, this is just the distraction." DeWalt joined them. "The engine has accepted the instructions, but what's the point, English? Those things cannot be activated from here. It needs Guild hardware to make them initialize, and I can't fake that." A new set of sirens sounded, these ones coming from the Guild barracks further down the river. "You know what that sound is, sir, madam?" said Ivan. "The skies themselves are falling right on top of Guild Headquarters. The hundreds of inmates of the Sanitarium have broken out and are wreaking havoc across the river. Taken all together, it might, to a panicked captain of the Guard, be mistaken for an outright attack by hostile forces. Right on their doorstep. It is time for emergency measures. They call out the troops. They barricade every road. They fortify positions and--" Behind them, the lights came on in the warehouse. Power hummed as a generator in the back coughed into life. Thirty-six metal pairs of legs hissed as their pneumatics warmed up. "--and they issue the emergency activation codes to all mothballed Guild assets," finished DeWalt. Ivan turned and spread his arms, welcoming the thirty-six armoured heads that turned to look at him. "One must hand it to the Guild. They are sticklers for procedure. It might not be a million in Guild Scrip, Ms. Havenhand. These are worth a lot more than that. Not bad for a night's work. Viktor Ramos does so love new toys!" Ivan walked over to the nearest Peacekeeper. It turned its massive head to look down on him, and he tapped his hat with his cane. "Hullo." He clicked his fingers. It reached out a hand and lifted him carefully, placing him atop its gleaming red carapace. "Choose a conveyance, Ms. Havenhand. Or, if you prefer, pick a horse, Mr. DeWalt. We have a long ride ahead of us." The cables detached as the last of the new instructions were fed to the Peacekeepers by the logic engine. They stomped forward, shaking the concrete floor of the warehouse with each step. The ones in the front row raised their massive claws, and the brick walls of the warehouse collapsed before them. The ones behind, including those carrying Ivan, Eva and DeWalt, scrambled nimbly over the rubble and kept going, heading for the streets of Malifaux and the mountains beyond.

Epilogue Solomon Pell awoke with a very sore head in a partially wrecked brick hut as the morning sun shed its light on a scene of destruction. Many fires still burned, and the roof of the hut had fallen in where tangled debris had landed on it, but other than his aching head, Pell was surprised to learn he was unscathed. Knowing that his part in the night's affairs would doubtless come to light before long, he returned to his lodgings, planning to be very far away when the Guild came looking for him. So it was with even greater surprise that Mr. Pell learned there had been a delivery for him the evening before. His landlady, who disapproved of practically everything, including, it seemed, deliveries, reluctantly handed him a note that had come for him just after dawn. It read simply, "A gentleman's promise kept. Enjoy your breakfast." His landlady advised Mr. Pell that he could find his two boxes of billing records up in his room.