The side door of the old brewery swung open with a bang,and there stood Seamus. He wore

a tweed suit as greenas his eyes and held a leather satchel stained black as thenight behind

him. He threw Molly a smile, full of roguishcharm and come-hither devilry. Fog swept about

him ashe entered, but either the fog or the smile was so coldMolly could feel the chill in her

dead bones."Tell you what, Molly dearest," Seamus said, his eyestwinkling as he stalked

across the flagstone floor. "Theevening seems to have gotten away from me." He plantedhis

leather case on the table next to Molly, with a thumpthat rattled the rows of bottles and

distilling equipment,and flourished forth a set of bloody steel forceps. Hefrowned, waving the

forceps to and fro. "I can't say as Iremember using these."He tossed them on the table and

plucked a slender metaltube 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 andput on a posh accent, "minimally invasive!" He laughedagain, tossing it back into

his bag. Blood spluttered fromthe tip as it disappeared. "Then you're using it wrong, I

toldhim! How we laughed! You've met Sober George, right?"Molly realized Seamus wanted

something complimentary."He swears with great imagination," she offered, and thatseemed

to be enough.Seamus paused for a moment, an odd blank look comingover his face. It

passed, and he turned to Molly andgrinned. "Wouldn't go near Mrs. Choke's Guesthouse

onArble Street for the next few days, Molly-me-love.Between you and me, the landlady's lost

her charm." Heshrugged his city-coat off and threw it at her. "Bit of claretspilled. Get some

lye on, see if it'll come out. Now, how'sme brew getting on?"Molly handed off the coat to one

of the Belles, whoshuffled away behind the old sherry barrels, then she heldout the papers

she was carrying. Seamus, who was alreadytoying around with the beakers on his table,

took a fewminutes to notice."Mail?" he exclaimed. "Oh, no! Not again! Not after thelast time! I

don't care if this one's my biggest admirer in allof Malifaux, unless she's included a

portrait--""Mademoiselle Vestige delivered these," Mollyinterrupted, not wanting to stand

through another re-telling of that sorry incident when Seamus had learnedwhat it meant to

have deluded ingenues falling in love withhim by dark reputation, and wanting to meet. He'd

beenso disappointed when the lady in question, a Miss AbileneShrivel of Number Twelve

Clovequarter, had not quite livedup 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 spillsthat were already smoking gently."Mam'selle Vestige?" Seamus

bounded over to Molly'sside of the table and snapped them up. He rifled throughthem,

discarding several with loud snorts of derision, andthen fanned three out on the table with a

cry ofsatisfaction. Each leaflet contained an address at the top,a lithographic image of a

building beneath, and adescription, written in the Mam'selle's flowing, artfulscript.Molly had

no idea what Seamus would want with a realestate agent, but something about one of the

ones he'ddiscarded caught her attention. She picked it up whileSeamus blathered on.

Something was familiar about thisbuilding. She placed it on the table, on top of the

otherthree."This one."Seamus tried to brush the particulars away, but Molly'spale white

finger pinned it to the oak."This one," she repeated.Seamus straightened up, glanced at the

Gorgon's Tearhanging around her neck then back up at Molly. He lickedhis lips. "You

sure?"Molly just stared back.

Another grin split Seamus' face. "Course you are, Mollydearest. What would I do without

you? Get me own way,like as not," he answered himself in a stage-whisper beforedoubling

up in laughter. "You meet with Mam'selle Vestige– be nice to her, she's got angles, that one

– and she'll showyou round that dump you've picked. Let me know whatyou find. And I've

only just remembered what I used thoseforceps for." He fished around in the top pocket of

his silkshirt and dug out an eyeball, dangling between finger andthumb by its own bloody

optic nerve. The eye twitchedand looked at Molly, the irising pupil somehow conveyinga look

of utter bewilderment and terror."Take Mrs. Choke with you. Show her round. Let her get

agood eyeful, eh, Molly love?"CCC"Oh, I'm not just any real estate agent, Miss

Squidpiddge,as you are not just any shuffling, mindless Undead, n’estpas? If it’s not

haunted, I don’t touch it."Mam'selle Vestige was a lot younger, and her Frenchaccent 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 – backwhen she'd been bothered

about things like beingcomfortable. The woman's hair was as straight and blackas an ebony

waterfall, and she dressed in dark purple silksthat had an Arabian air about them. Although

theycovered her from neck to toe, they seemed to be alwayspromising to give a glimpse of

scandalous flesh but, dueto either remarkable dressmaking or impossible luck, thepromise

remained just that.Molly was also fairly certain there was more than oneweapon hidden in

those eastern folds, but she had a goodfeeling about Mam'selle Vestige. She hadn't batted

any ofher heavily-blackened eyelashes when Molly had loomedout of the night fog pale as a

sheet, her black hair piledatop her head like a thunderstorm, with dried bloodcrusted all

down her chin and the front of her yellow,crinoline dress.She had also only offered a

courteous, "Mr. Tombers, Ipresume," when Molly had introduced the reanimatedhead in

question to see what reaction it evoked. On herway to meet the not-just-any real estate

agent, Molly hadgrown tired of Phillip Tombers' protestations at hercarrying him by the hair

like "a child swinging a damnedsack of marbles by her side," and had decided to teach hima

lesson. One terrified mother later, whom Molly hadallowed to run away screaming with her

infant safe in herarms, and Molly had arrived for her meeting with PhillipTombers' apoplectic

head being pushed in a wrought ironbaby carriage. The pink woolen bonnet with the

rabbitears, Molly decided, had been the crowning touch.As for the disembodied Phillip

Tombers himself, he'dstopped sulking, and Molly could swear he was rathertaken with the

dark silk swishes and long black fingernailsof Mam'selle Vestige."My clients are few and

select, Miss Squidpiddge, as arethe properties I handle. Seamus sent word that, as part

ofhis new brewing endeavors – no, don't tell me," Mam'selleVestige held up a hand,

although Molly hadn't said a word."I only ever drink whisky that's been shipped

fromScotchland unopened, so whatever Seamus is up to isnone of my business. And I

always mind my own business.Which brings us here," she waved at the imposing

brickedifice across the foggy street, "and although I haveskipped the part where I tell you

what Seamus wantedwith 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 urchindashed out of the cold, coiling

mist, carrying a leather-wrapped parcel in her hand. Dressed in rags, she wasnothing but

skin and bone. A length of dirty sackcloth wastied over her lower face, but from above it

burned blackbitter eyes that looked at Molly without fear. The fingersthat held the parcel

were strangely long, and their tipsseemed to disappear into the fog. Mam'selle

Vestigeunwrapped the parcel, read the letter within and with awave of her hand the words on

it vanished. She bent closeto the girl, whispering words in a language Molly did notknow,

and when Mam'selle Vestige straightened up, thegirl was gone. "One of my Crooligans.

Well, I say mine…they keep an eye on things for me. They don't usually showthemselves

when I'm with others, but I think she quiteliked you. It seems Malifaux is a busy place

tonight," sheadded with a wink. "She tells me there's a former lodgingson Arble Street I

might need to add to my books."Molly felt Mrs. Choke squirm in her pocket, and she gaveher

an admonitory slap.

The fog cleared slightly and gave her a better look at thebuilding. Near the edge of

Downtown, this was not primereal estate, and the building was worn and tired

looking.Clumps of gray vegetation sprouted from windows andcracks in the brickwork, and

thick, dark stains flowed fromleaks and gutters. Grime coated the broken glass in themany

windows.She knew this building, and started across the emptycobbles towards it, Phillip

Tombers bouncing in the pram."You won't be going in alone, Miss Squidpiddge,"The lone

working gaslamp on the street guttered almoston command, and Molly saw two people

standing beneathit, next to a shuttered and barred door. She aimed Phillipat them and

applied the brakes just outside the cone ofgaslight.Mam'selle Vestige swept past in a tease

of perfume andsilk, a lit cigarette waving in her hand like a firefly on awand as she made

rapid-fire introductions. She had herbusiness face on now, Molly saw."Miss Squidpiddge,

this is Mr. Clarifester Drove, anindependent mortuarial consultant and the creator ofDrove's

Spirit Cabinet, which can be seen weekly at theStar Theatre, and this is Ms. Divesta

Honeychild, of theMountbank Honeychilds. She is an authority on theNeverborn.""The

Manifestata," the diminuitive Divesta Honeychildcorrected, with a frown. "The term

Neverborn is not onlyincorrect, but offensive to these poor creatures. Thewritings of Dubious

Peake on the subject in 1828 are--""--are no longer as widely read as they should not

oncehave been," interrupted Mam'selle Vestige. "And this isMiss Squidpiddge, former

reporter for the Malifaux DailyRecord and now greatly skewing the average intelligenceof the

ranks of the Undead, and these are the earthlyremains of Phillip Tombers, the hat is not his

own."Clarifester Drove was taciturn, fat and sweating in the coldair, with a humorless face

that looked like a boiled potato.Strapped to his back in a whaling harness was a

whiningcontraption of brass tubes, gleaming condensers, andnaked electrical connections

whose end product seemedto be a brass apparatus attached to a wide-bore pistolholstered

on his left leg. He didn't even look at Molly, butkept staring up at the building through an

assortment oflenses mounted on spidery brass rods.With her tiny figure hidden under a

full-length, black fogcoat, her hands clasping a small, beaded bag, and her hairin a bun so

tight it pulled the corners of her eyes up in alook of perpetual alarm, Divesta Honeychild

looked likeevery stern choirmistress Molly had known growing up,although considerably

smaller. She could actually see themoment where Ms. Honeychild dismissed Molly from

hermind as being not worth thinking about, which onlyreinforced the memory."It's an open

viewing tonight," Mam'selle Vestige carriedon, "but I won't be accompanying you. Try not to

get ineach other's way, don't damage the fixtures, and send anyoffers to me, care of any

Crooligan you can catch. Theowner of this one would appreciate a quick sale, nostrings."

She flicked a finger at the door, and it swunginwards, the loud creaking swallowed by the

fog. "Take aslong as you like, and neither the vendor nor I areresponsible for any injuries,

mental or physical, you maysustain 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 thefog before that, too, was gone.Molly pushed the baby carriage through

the open door,the wheels crunching over bits of rotted plasterwork andbroken glass. The

door was evidently a servant's entranceand led to a long, functional looking hall lined with

doorsand draped in shadows.Clarifester Drove took up position in the middle of the

hall,examining a softly glowing globe attached to the apparatuson his back. He stared up at

the ceiling. "More than Iexpected. I'll be upstairs. You both stay down here for thenext hour."

He stumped off towards the stairs. "If youknow what's good for you."Divesta Honeychild

hurrumphed!, placed her fingers onher temples and spun on the spot three times. One

handsnapped away from her head as if burned and pointedaway down the hall, away from

Drove. "The confluence isstrongest when diametric!" She sent a withering glance atMolly.

"You may glimpse aetheric fire from my coronicdischarge. Do not be alarmed, if your kind

are evencapable of such reactions. It is how I communicate with

the Manifestata." She walked briskly away and vanishedaround a corner.Molly looked down

at Phillip and, with a twinge ofremorse, tugged the bonnet off his head and tucked itaway.He

looked up at her with a melancholy air. "Were peoplethis mad before we died?"She

shrugged, blood trickling down her chin, and pushedhim slowly down the hall.“There are

unquiet spirits here,” said Phillip, keeping hisvoice low. “I reckon that’s what Drove’s looking

for. Moresupplies for his Spirit Cabinet, perhaps. But it’s you they’relooking for. Be careful,

Molly. This place has a lot of hiddenfaces, and they’re all watching you.”She could sense the

same presences Phillip could, butMolly had more immediate concerns. She was certain

sheknew this building, but her memory was more full of holesthan any one of Seamus'

victims. This building had beenimportant, once. An idea occurred, and she headed for

thepublic entrance.It took a lot of raking around in the detritus of the mainlobby, 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 thegaps in her memory.Of course!

Octavius Hall.“Are you feeling all right, Molly?” Phillip asked, and sherealized 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’mfeeling angry.”She wrestled the

pram back through the pile of rubbishand headed for the basement, ignoring the sounds

ofsomething watching her from the lobby balcony.,!1'&,\*'.\*+"$&.+,'\*#+,#&,."-+$$'&.$+&,'%&

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-($',+&'\*"$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. Overthe crash, a skittering sound could be

heard from the floorsabove."Unless that was Drove, and I don't remember him havingthat

many legs, we're being followed," whispered Phillip,and Molly nodded mutely. More and

more of the storywas coming back to her, and her sense of anger wasgrowing by the minute.

The door leading to the basementstairs was just

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The pram bounced from step to step as Molly steered itdown the wide stone stairs, Phillip

holding on to thebedclothes with gritted teeth to stop himself flying out.At the bottom of the

stairs, huge stretches of brickworkand masonry had been removed and piled in the

corners.Scaffolding and iron buttresses held up the walls andceilings, and, where the tiled

basement should have been,a dirt slope stretched away into darkness. The body ofDivesta

Honeychild lay like a collapsed doll at the top.&+&('%!%%% &! %$!)$%!$&+ % &%

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/Molly propped Phillip up to get a better look and bent toexamine Ms. Honeychild's corpse. It

looked like she hadburned from within. Her fog coat was charred andsmoking, and the smell

of scorched flesh filled the air. Herface was frozen in a rictus of horror, and a small flame

wasslowly consuming the tightly-wound bun atop her head.There was no other sign of fire in

the room. Molly blew onthe 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, andshe had clearly encountered something that cared little forher coronic

discharge.Molly picked her way down the earthen ramp into thedarkness. This wasn’t the

sewers - the air was old and dryas the dust in her mouth. What had they been doing

here?"You're just going to leave me?" Phillip shouted after herin 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, shoutingmight not be such a good idea.Molly's undead eyes

could see fairly well in the almost totalblackness, although the glow from the Gorgon's

Teararound her neck helped pick out the steep passage andlow ceilings. Tools and

equipment lay everywhere, coveredin dust and abandoned in a hurry.Reaching into a

pocket, she lifted out Mrs. Choke andtucked her behind her ear, making sure she got a

goodview. She hadn’t known Mrs. Choke before she’d died, ofcourse, but everyone liked

exploring, didn’t they?The passage ended where a sunken stone wall had beenbroken

through. Molly stepped through the breach. Insidewas a chamber, the walls lined with rusted

iron plate, andthe floor covered in shattered glass and scraps ofmachinery, buried under rust

and verdigris. Plinths of stoneand brass stood at regular intervals and, from the

jaggedspears set into the rims of each one, it was clear thesewere the source of the broken

glass. There was only oneleft intact, an enormous bell jar big enough to hold twomen, lying

on its side next to a large pile of filthy canvassacks.Molly knelt beside them, her hands

feeling the contourswithin. Skulls, bony bodies, stick-thin limbs. Long dead. Shecounted forty

one sacks.

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Earthside had any record of receiving fortyone patients from Octavius Hall when it closed,

and soshe’d died while in the middle of one of her biggest stories. In Malifaux, that was no

longer the handicap for a reporterit had once been.She had let them down, and she could

feel the ghostlypresences all around her. She had let them down, but nowshe’d come back.A

skittering sound made her turn, and she felt rather thanheard Mrs. Choke scream and faint

dead away.The exit was blocked. For a moment she thought the scrapon the floor had

assembled itself while her back had beenturned, but it still lay amongst the broken glass.

What shewas looking at was the intact version of whatever the scraphad once been. Four

legs gripped the broken masonry ofthe breach with steel claws, the stone fracturing under

thepressure. Two segmented arms, held as if in prayer, aimedtwin hypodermic needles the

size of small harpoons at her.Between the many limbs, a head of ancient leather andbrass

rivets nestled amidst an array of hydraulic pipes, itssoftly glowing eyes matching the green

venom drippingfrom the needles. It settled back on its haunches, ready tospring.Molly froze,

and then smiled. “Here, boy!” she said,holding out her hand.The machine paused, its head

moving in jerking motionsas if searching the air, then it bounded forward, scatteringthe

detritus on the floor and curled its antique, rustingbody against Molly’s legs and dress.She

reached down and stroked its head, feeling the dryleather brittle to the touch. She scratched

behind its pipeswhere they met in brass couplings faded gray-green withage, and the

machine’s hydraulic systems flicked on andoff in pleasure.“Good boy!” she said. She bent

down and rubbed itsflaking metal body with both hands, and it rolled onto itsback. “Good

boy!”She could feel an energy coursing through this machinethat fizzed and sparked

wherever she touched it,resonating with something deep within her. Molly closedher eyes,

and the machine stilled. The energies withinthem flowed as one, and Molly looked through

eyes thathad seen a thousand years pass, and more. Centuries ofservice 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 withits pack-brothers. Brief images of

momentaryconsciousness flickered past, a fractured Kinetoscope ofthe years that followed

as, one by one, the ravages of timedestroyed the other jars and their contents slowly

rottedaway. And then - men came, picks and axes breaching thewalls, the last jar being

tipped on its side. Escape,confusion, screaming, running and hiding in the farreaches of the

building, slowly regaining its power fromthe spirits of the dead who roamed the dark

passages ofOctavius Hall. Molly’s sight returned to the near-pitch ofthe sunken room, and

the necrotic machine wriggledagain at her caress.She glanced at the bodies in sacks. Those

were not thismachine’s doing, although this machine was surely thereason 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 machinesettling 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

withcloth, as Drove raised the wide-bore pistol and blastedsearing lightning at the machine

by her side. It was liftedoff the dirt and slammed into the iron scaffolding. It laycurled and

smoking, bits of its casing glowing red hot likeembers in the dark.“What in the world was

that?” Drove demanded, turninghis lightning gun towards Molly, but still staring at

thetwitching remains of the necrotic machine.Molly didn’t answer. She glanced back once,

and continuedwalking slowly towards him.Drove smiled cruelly and adjusted a dial on his

pistol. Thewhine from his backpack increased a whole octave. “Yourmaster has no idea what

he did when he made you, doeshe? Or when he gave you that.” The scorched barrel of

thepistol jabbed at the Gorgon’s Tear around her neck. “Icouldn’t let that stupid woman live,

after she’d seen mehere with you. Word might have got back to Seamus, andI really don’t

want that maniac knowing my name. TheMam’selle won’t tell - as long as she gets her

commission,she minds her own business, and she’s not afraid ofSeamus. So you and that

remarkable Soulstone are goingto come with me, and I’ll show this world what

ClarifesterDrove and his Spirit Cabinet are really capable of.” Heaimed the pistol at her face.

“That’s far enough!”Molly glanced a warning at Phillip and he screwed his eyesshut. With a

smile, she lifted the Gorgon’s Tear off herbreast, and - with a whisper and a burst of green

light fromthe Tear - let the unfortunate Clarifester Drove see whattruly lay within.He’d been

on his knees, lips frothing and body shaking, fora whole minute before he was even able to

startscreaming, and Molly waited patiently for him to stop. Shetook the cloth out of Phillip’s

mouth, set him upright again,and brushed his hair flat, while Drove raved and howledand

sobbed behind her.When the screaming turned to whimpers and then to dryheaves of his

chest, Molly went to him and clasped his tear-streaked face to her bosom. She retrieved

Mrs. Choke frombehind her ear, severed some of Drove’s electrical cablesand tied them to

the former landlady’s wriggling opticnerve.“Well, Mrs. Choke,” Phillip said, grinning ear to

ear. “Ifyou’re feeling at all aggrieved at the way your life hasrecently turned out, you may feel

the need to express someof that dissatisfaction in what I hope will be a catharticexperience

for you. In short, I bet you could murdersomeone right about now, eh, Mrs. Choke?”The

eyeball twitched angrily in Molly’s hand, stretching toget free of her grasp. Molly imagined

her being similarlyinfuriated at a guest not using a coaster, or putting his feetup on the

furniture.“Attagirl, Mrs. Choke,” Phillip crowed. “We’ve got a live onehere, Molly!”Molly let go,

and the Undead eyeball dropped with asickening plop into Drove’s gaping mouth, trailing the

wires.His hands flew to his throat as his face turned red and hegasped for air, then his eyes

bulged as he made a verysurprised-sounding swallowing noise. He grabbed at theelectrical

cables protruding from his mouth, but just amoment too late, as Molly flipped the power

switch on hisbackpack and stepped back.The whine of power was satisfyingly full-throttle,

and Phillipwhooped as flames shot from Drove’s mouth and ears andhis clothes caught fire.

The sound of sizzling body fat filledthe room as smoke roiled upwards in great clouds,

andthen the intestinal gases in Drove’s voluminous bellyignited. His midriff exploded with a

wet-ripping pop andMolly, 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 turnedback to

the necrotic machine.“So what exactly is that thing?” Phillip asked.It was a simple matter,

now the connection had beenmade, for Molly to reach out with a fraction of the energywithin

her, and pour strength into the dying machine. Itslimbs ceased twitching, and it sprang

upright a momentlater, before bounding over to Molly and racing round andround her.Molly

thought back to hazy memories of when she hadbeen a child, and her father had produced a

gleeful,scampering bundle of legs and soft hair with a very wetnose and bright, bright eyes

from behind a glitteringChristmas 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 theMam’selle.“I thought I might be seeing you again,” the woman saidas

Molly approached, pushing Phillip in the baby carriage- which he was now growing rather

fond of, and hadrequested Molly add certain personal touches such aslanterns and a supply

of cigars once they returned to theold brewery - with the machine pacing at her

heels.Mam’selle Vestige was leaning with effortless ease againstwhat appeared to be an

upright but dead-drunk GuildGuard officer, watching an illegal bare-knuckle fightingcontest in

the cobbled yard below. Shouts, bets, oaths, andmeaty thunks floated up from the pale

ghosts exchangingblows and the gathered crowd.“Who owns Octavius Hall?” Molly

demanded, dark bloodspilling 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 onthe red-head.

Caledonians are so fiery-tempered, n’estpas? That, and I have poisoned his opponent.” She

gave aGallic shrug of indifference.“I will ask only once.”“Don’t let us quarrel, Miss

Squidpiddge.” A ring of smokedisappeared into the fog. “Neither of us would profit. Iseek to

make only friends in this town, and what wouldmy 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 drawson

her cigarette. “And what would my business be if I losta client?”Molly produced a drawstring

silk bag and placed it on theparapet between them. The presence of the Soulstonewithin

was unmistakable.“That should cover your commission,” Phillip said. “And alittle bit extra to

make sure he comes alone.”A smile spread across the Mam’selle’s face like ice acrossa

winter pond, and Molly wondered if she really was asyoung as she looked. “A pleasure doing

business with you,Miss Squidpiddge. I will arrange the rendezvous. OctaviusHall, I

presume?”Molly wheeled Phillip away, the voices of forty one ghostswhispering in her ears.

“Tomorrow at midnight. I have adeadline.”CCCHe did not, of course, arrive alone.

Unscrupulous, black-hearted businessmen were rarely so stupid.Molly had known who it

would be. She had suspected longbefore she died, and the memories had come

floodingback since the previous night. And there he stood, tall andstooped with a silver cane,

a slick of receding white hair, ablack suit and the air of a miser whose only problem wasthat

everyone else had too much money. The seller ofOctavius Hall, Elphinstone McTeague. It

could only havebeen 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

theechoing lobby of Octavius Hall, facing the wrong way, whenMolly wound up her arm and

hurled Phillip out of thedarkness."Tally-hoooo!"He struck McTeague in the back of the head

with a soundlike two barrels banging together, and the tall mancrumpled without a word.

"Right in the coconut, Molly!" hooted Phillip as he bouncedoff, and then let out a string of

curses when his cigar wentthe other way.The lawyer took one look at Phillip's flying

death-mask andran screaming. As the bodyguards, thickset men on hirefrom the Miners' and

Steamfitters' Union with faces likebruised meat, milled around in confusion, the

necroticmachine dropped from the chandelier above. Thehypodermic syringes flashed and

stabbed, snickety-snack,and it was all over before Phillip had stopped rolling.The whispering

voices of the dead surged. Molly graspedMcTeague's tongue in a vice-like grip and began to

draghim towards the basement.CCCMcTeague awoke in complete darkness. He was lying

onsomething hard and lumpy, his head and mouth were inagony and he could feel rough

cloth. It took only a momentto realize that the cloth was a hessian sack and that he

wasinside it, and then Elphinstone McTeague began to thrashand yell.The sack was closed

tight around him, and terrorthreatened to rob him of his wits, but after a moment hefound the

neck and forced a thin arm through with ahoarse cry. He heaved, and the rope slipped

loose.McTeague tumbled out, kicking and cursing the darkness,until he lay breathless and

exhausted, his head throbbingin pain."Thank you for joining us, Mr. McTeague," Phillip said,

asMolly struck a match and lit one of the bodyguard'slanterns. She gave McTeague a

moment to take in hissurroundings.Molly sat on a white chair before the breach in the wall

ofthe underground chamber, Phillip on a plinth to one side,and Ponto squatting on the other.

Mrs. Choke looked onstoically 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 themagain. Elphinstone McTeague himself lay on a pile of fortyone hessian sacks. It

had taken Molly all the previous day, but she and thenecrotic machine had made certain

changes to the SoulGin Seamus was working on. Empty bottles lay scatteredaround the

iron-walled room, and the effects of theircontents on the remains of the forty one inhabitants

ofOctavius Hall were just starting to be felt.McTeague froze as the lumpen shapes beneath

himshifted."Aaaaah!" he cried as he scrambled to his feet, but thesacks were now all in

motion beneath him, and he fell,cursing."We're on the record, Mr. McTeague," said Phillip.

"Mindyour language, now."McTeague rolled to the side, kicking legs and flappingarms, until

he slid off the pile of sacks onto the debrisstrewn floor. He crawled away through the rusted

metaland glass and cowered against the far wall, clutching hischest and wheezing."Just

want to get the facts down, Mr. McTeague," saidPhillip. "Won't take long. Now, would it be

fair to say youpurchased the Hall in secret, lied to the Malifaux DailyRecord and, indeed,

everyone else about it, and then killedthe elderly paupers living here so you could dig

aroundbeneath the Hall for ancient relics and profit withoutanyone knowing?""Saints

preserve us!" McTeague moaned, as the mass offilthy sacks thrashed like a hive of brown

maggots andbegan to writhe and wriggle across the floor towards him."I would take that as a

'yes', Molly," Phillip said out thecorner of his mouth. "And would it be fair to say that

youbroke into this chamber, awoke m'colleague's many-leggedfriend 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-knuckledover his chest, all color gone from his pinched face. Thesacks were like a tide

of giant vermin now, lurching andtwisting 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 grippedhis ankle. He flattened himself against the wall andscreamed."Another

'yes', I would say, Molly," advised Phillip. "Wouldyou like us to rescue you, Mr. McTeague?

Get you safefrom these upset former customers of yours? The press isalways willing to

protect its sources."McTeague's mouth worked open and shut a few times, butwhen he

couldn't get any sound out, he started noddingas vigorously as he could.At a silent comment

from Molly, the necrotic machinesprang forward, reaching McTeague in a single bound.

Itcarried 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, grabbingMcTeague's feet and legs, and he

snatched the pen andscribbled his signature, a low moan of terror escaping hisbloodless

lips. The machine retrieved the letter and pickedup McTeague effortlessly. The hands

grasping him releasedtheir hold.Molly rose, crossed the room and joined the machine nextto

the plinth at the far end. The necrotic machine sat thetrembling McTeague on the plinth, then

stabbed one of itsneedles into his chest. He screamed, as pale green liquidflowed out the

reservoir and into his body."No! Wait! What-?" he cried, and then Molly lifted the

lastremaining intact bell jar, taking all her Undead strength todo so, and brought it down

around him, cutting his pleasoff. The rim sank into the groove running around the plinthwith a

grinding noise, and Molly twisted it to lock it inplace. Inside, McTeague banged his fists

feebly on the thickglass, but all Molly could hear was a faint drumming as iffrom far

away.She picked up Phillip and left the room, turning back forone last look. McTeague knelt

awkwardly, hammering hisfists against the confining glass walls of his prison. Theconcoction

in his veins would not kill him. Instead, it hadimbued him with some of the necrotic machine's

Undeadessence. It would keep him alive in that jar, even once theair had been exhausted,

for centuries. She turned off thelantern, and utter darkness fell."Seal it up," Molly said to her

faithful machine. "Bring theroof down behind us."As she walked up the steep slope, Ponto

tore the metalscaffolding and supports from the dirt walls. Planks ofrough wood crashed

down, followed by multitudes ofblack earth that chased their heels all the way back to

thebasement and up the steps.When they reached the street outside, Molly realized

shecould no longer hear the voices in her head. Octavius Hallwas finally silent."Back to

Seamus?" Phillip asked, as Molly settled him onceagain in the now rather dirty bedding of

the pram. The oneworking gaslamp in the street spluttered fitfully.Molly folded the letter

McTeague had signed and anothersheet of paper into an envelope with the word, "Editor",on

the outside. She would drop that into the night box ofthe Malifaux Daily Record on the way

back to the oldbrewery."Won't Seamus be, to put it mildly, a little annoyed thatyou took so

much of his precious Soul Gin?" Phillipwondered aloud.Molly gave her own Gallic shrug of

indifference, and foundthat it agreed with her. Seamus had probably gotten boredwith his

brewing anyway and set off on some other wildpursuit. She lit Phillip's cigar using one of the

matches she'dtaken 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, pattingPhillip in apology."Here, boy!" she called, and Ponto bounded out of the

foginto the light of the gaslamp, pressing up against her. Sherubbed the manifolds on the

back of its head, and itquivered in pleasure."You know, Molly old dear," said Phillip around

the cigar. "Idon't reckon that one is a boy. Just a feeling."

Molly thought a moment, and realized Phillip was probablyright. She tore a strip off the

pram's hood, and bent to themachine. When she straightened up, with a pleasedexpression

on her face, the leather and brass head of herfaithful companion sported a pink ribbon with a

bow ontop. It bounded happily away.She got the pram underway, the wooden wheels

slippingon the wet cobbles, and with Phillip puffing contentedly,they walked off into the fog

together.%'"%+(&)#!&'"!(!&(%%"!&&"!('&%"('&%!!"\*!,"!%(

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