# v1n1 — INCIDENT AT THE LONDON MUSEUM

## CHAPTER 1

### THE NEURI

CURATOR OF THE NEW SCYTHIAN EXHIBIT FOUND BRUTALLY MURDERED IN HIS OWN EXHIBIT Police suspect rival expert Colonel Aloysius Krill

On the evening of Sunday, August 28, 2054, police responded to alarms at the British Museum in London. Upon arrival, they found Sir Godfrey Markum-Dunn, reknowed expert on ancient religions and specialist in the Scythian people of the Middle East and southern Russian steppes. Standing over his mutilated body was one Col. Krill, unknown to this reporter but reportedly in a heated disput with the deceased over provedence of artifacts.

The deep voice richoted off the hard granite walls and floors of the museum and seemed to echo forever. Between bellows, the only other sound was the hard *clop-clop* of his hard-soled boots on the stone floor.

The voice came again. “Damn you, Godfrey! What in the name of all that is holy do you think this accomplishes. I knew you were a damned idiot the moment I heard your lecture of the origins of the Indra myth. Utter rot, you cad.”

A pause and the *clop-clop* echoed. Then …

“Where in the bloody, blue blazes are you, man? Speak up for yourself. Quit hiding in the shadows and face me, you rotter!”

He stopped and stroked his great walrus mustache and *hrumphed* before striding off in a new direction.

Sir Godfrey was running through the hallways of the museum. But it wasn’t the man with the walrus mustache that he ran from. Behind him loped a shadow … panting, huffing and the sound of nails clicking on the hard granite floors of the great museum. The moonlight through the high windows of the exhibit halls captured the creature as it loped past and cast a shadow darker than the rest against the cases and cabinets the held antiquity.

But the shadow was formless. Long limbs stretched across the great rooms; a head, mouth open grew and streaked across the walls. Even in the light of the moon shining through the great windows, only darkness.

And the smell of wet fur.

The squat little man hurried along a hallway between exhibit rooms, his hands fumbling with a ring of keys. He dropped them once and kicked them across the floor. The sound seemed to boom and echo and Sir Godfrey scurried after them, glancing over his shoulder.

Somewhere behind him in the darkness of the museum, the sound like a half bark and half growl. Ahead of him, but down a side hallway, the angry voie of the mustached man cursed him with a string of epithets.

Sir Godfrey grasped the keys in his hand and dashed into the next exhibit hall, nearly knocking over a mannequin dressed in a Scythian soldier’s meager armor. The spear held, no, leaned against the mannequin’s hand spun away and its iron tip smashed the glass of a nearby display case. Sir Godfrey didn’t appear to notice and skittered on across the room to a small display case at the rear of the room.

## CHAPTER 2

### TED PYNE — CITIZEN REPORTER

The squad car nearly knocked me off my bicycle as I rode down the lane from the Club after a long night shift. Its sirens *woo-woo*’d as it passed and after I righted myself again, I saw that it had stopped at the front entrance of the British Museum. Two bobbies leapt out and rushed up the front steps into the sprawling building.

I heard more sirens behind me and soon a procession of official vehicles roared past me. Several more patrol cars, plus a detective’s car — probably Scotland Yard, Special Branch. But no ambulance.

As I coasted my bicycle to the curb by the alleyway that led to the rear loading bays, I saw the Coroner’s van pull up and a somber man step out of the passenger side, followed by a lanky lad in a white lab coat. The man in the dark suit stalked up the steps and the lanky lad ran around back and pulled open the rear doors. A second man, older, stepped out of the rear of the van and dragged a gurney. With the help of the lanky lad, he maneuvered it to the ramp that ran along the front of the museum towards the front entrance. They weren’t in a hurry.

*Murder, at the British Museum?* I mused to myself and pulled out my Moleskin to make a note.

The rear of the museum was unguarded, presumably whomever was on duty there had been pulled away by whatever was happening inside, either by order or simple, morbid curiosity.

It was my opportunity to sneak inside and get the scoop for my blog, THE PYNE REPORT, and scoop all of the London papers and news bloggers. Whateve was happening inside the museum was my story. If I could get inside without being caught.

I leaned my bicycle against the loading dock wall and straightened my suit coat. If I could appear to be another detective …

A constable started to raise his hand to stop me as I sauntered towards the exhibit hall, past a sign that read SCYTHIAN RELIGION … ANCIENT GODS AND DEMONS. I pointed back over my shoulder and barked at him.

“Keep the reporters out of here, Constable. We don’t want them sneaking past while you’re gazing at the exhibit, do we?”

He stammered and balked as I continued past, not breaking my stride.

I smirked, thinking how easily that gambit had worked. *Who said you can’t learn something from the movies?*

Then I saw him.

The man, I later learned to be Sir Godfrey Markum-Dunn, half lay and half leaned on the floor up against the wheel of an old chariot. His eyes were closed but his chest laid bare. His stomach was ripped open, like he’d been hit by shrapnel. Or attacked by a viscious dog.

I almost reched but stomped my foot and swallowed hard.

*Professional reporters are immune to this kind of carnage,* I told myself and stepped forward as the lanky lad in the white lab coat spread a clean, white sheet over the remains. I winced as I saw the trickle of blood ooze out from beneath the sheet, which was already turning red.

Several detectives … I assumed detectives because they wore smart suits and held notebooks similar to mine … stood off to the side with an elderly gentleman in a suit stained with what must have been Sir Godfrey’s blood.

He was saying, in a loud and annoyed voice, “… of course I’m covered in blood, man. I came into the exhibit hall and found the poor blighter laying there. I rushed over to see if he could be saved. Alas, he was already gone. But one doesn’t worry about one’s own clothing or appearance when trying to save another.”

The detectives nodded and scribbled notes.

The old man stroked his enormous mustache and clucked his tongue.

“And he was already dead when you found him?” asked one of the detectives.

“How many times do I have to explain it to you before you get it right?” bellowed the gent. That’s when I noticed the small insignia on his lapel. Some kind of army emblem but I was too far away to see what regiment. His tie was black, probably blood staining the regimental tie colors.

He continued his rant. “I came to see Sir Godfrey at his request to discuss a paper he had written and I had taken issue with. He had invited me here to review his notes. Apparently he felt he needed to justify his ridiculous claims face to face. When I arrived, his office was empty but looked as if it had been turned over by a damned tornado. I went to look for him and found …”

He indicated the shrouded body and pursed his lips, making his moustache flutter.

I looked about the room and it was apparent that a great struggle had taken place. The chariot against which Sir Godfrey lay was knocked askew from where it appeared to belong on the exhibit floor. Inside, a mannequin in some kind of ancient armor lay on its side. Several display cases were smashed, contents and glass litering the floor.

Next to one display case, I noted what appeared to be a broken spear head, wet with blood.