The Peculiar Case of Mr. Rudow at 27 Landswhich Road.

The truth can be a very precarious thing and so I ask you, dear reader, to keep in mind that while words can conjure evocative images and thoughts, it is your responsibility without mistake, to decide what the truth is. For emotion and fact cannot be cast together in the cauldron of your mind like ingredients of a potion or mixture. And if they are, you dear reader, are playing a dangerous game, one which may very well spiral your mind into a never-ending series of questions, for which you may never find any satisfaction other than drinking that potion of which you yourself were the creator.

It would be irresponsible for me to recount the events of February 29th, 1934, without first providing you with the important knowledge of the circle of friends with which Mr. Rudow surrounded himself as well as the man himself. He was not very tall, and while his height would not attribute him to the part of the spectrum defined as short, it was close enough for some to make the mistake. His features were sharp and accentuated with high cheek bones and inner angled eyebrows. His eyes small and as black as the deepest abyss. And while his countenance was not very intriguing his personality proved to be quite the opposite. Mr. Rudow was a man of a strange and particular dichotomy. In my time of knowing him I have learned his tastes to be few and simple and his wealth and desire for more wealth to be quite the opposite. Mr. Rudow was not a banker, he was not a nobleman nor was he an investor or oilman, his zeal for gold and money however was still comparable to the men of those professions which I mentioned earlier, if not greater still. Of his close associates I cannot tell you as much aside from myself and my close friend Thomas Galois, who first extended me and invitation into Mr. Rudow’s inner circle.

I have known Thomas for quite some time now and we have grown somewhat close in the duration of our amicable partnership. Thomas Galois was a family man before everything else. I say that because he was one of the few men I knew that was content, and at times even eager and enthusiastic to return to his wife and young child at their home whenever we were invited to some event to celebrate or commemorate someone or something. That is not to say Thomas was unhappy, withdrawn or reserved when we attended different gatherings together. Quite the opposite in fact, he was sociable and pleasant, although I expect that was due to his appropriate understanding of the profession he chose and its ramifications into different social spheres. You see, Thomas was a journalist by profession, a quite good one if I may add. And so, as a journalist his work incentivized, if not even to say required, interactions with influential figures in influential circles.

As for myself it will suffice to say that I have previous military experience in different and distant parts of the world. To further disclose who I am would require of me to retell stories of what I have done, stories which I have long ago decided to never ponder on again. Although I suppose it would be important for me inform you that although my past life was engulfed in misery and despicable human sin ordered and governed by greed from men with pockets fatter still than their protruding cheeks, I have never directly taken a life. Nonetheless, I have carried and passed information into hands that have and so I bear that weight with me every day for that is my cross. Currently I finance my day to day affairs and pleasures through small investments using what little of my tarnished fortune, that I have made in my previous life, that still remains. It is in fact through this investment practice that I have met Thomas. He was investigating a company in which I was very close to owning some shares. As we met in the waiting area outside the company president’s office we exchanged pleasantries and Thomas, although I presume unintentionally, let slip that he is working on a story that will expose that particular company in forging and hiding their profits. I thanked him, wished him good luck on his story and promptly left the building to avoid any potential losses. A few weeks later that company president, outside whose office Thomas saved a hefty amount of my finances, was arrested and the company declared bankrupt. This started what I can say without a single doubt in my mind, one of the most pleasant and memorable friendships I have had the pleasure of being part, in my entire life.

As I mentioned earlier I cannot say much about the remaining members of the inner circle of Mr. Rudow’s friends. While indeed we made acquaintance the first time I was invited by Thomas to one of Mr. Rudow’s gatherings at his house on 27 Landswhich road, I never had the pleasure to further familiarize with them for introductions were kept short during that particular gathering. However, what I learned from that strangely brief, introductory period I will share with you here. Two bankers, George Salmsy and Michael Dallow, an aristocrat Samuel Mildreds and the son of a local politician Andrew Furrosi as well as myself and Thomas, this was the inner circle of Mr. Rudow’s friends. From what I understood Mr. Salmsy and Mr. Dallow were deeply invested in Mr. Rudow’s financial affairs assisting him with managing his vast wealth. Mr. Mildreds and Mr. Furrosi on the other hand presented no particular reason to be numbered amongst Mr. Rudow’s inner circle. I later learned from Thomas’ journal that Mr. Mildreds was the last descendant from a long line of nobleman that owned a considerable amount of land in the countryside ten miles away from Mr. Rudow’s estate. Coincidentally, Mr. Furrosi’s father and Mr. Rudow had a previously drawn up a contract which entitled Mr. Rudow to a particularly large amount of land in the nearby countryside. Mr. Furrosi’s father was never able to follow through with the contract however, due to his death from a heart attack which occurred three months ago from the date of that first gathering. As for myself and Thomas Galois I cannot say why Mr. Rudow indulged with us, allowing us to enter his inner circle. Initially I presumed that Thomas simply was able to get into the group as he always does with influential persons. However, how or why he was able to introduce me I do not know this day.

As a final preface before I recount the events of February 29th, 1934, I feel important to share what occurred after the brief pleasantries of my first attendance to one of Mr. Rudow’s events. The affair lasted from sunset until very late in the night as we dined and discussed different topics and different people. Sometimes Mr. Rudow would bring up conversations of peculiar subjects from religions and myths from distant secluded, and sometimes forgotten, parts of the world. I believe that this is where I made an impression on the man, as he seemed quite passionate about those subjects and I was able to provide an ample supply of anecdotes that I have gathered from my previous nomadic military life. Of all the stories I mentioned during that part of the event the tale of the Gobelinus was what attracted Mr. Rudow’s ear the most. His eyes began shimmering and his teeth started showing behind the peculiar smile which his face began to dawn. His own facial muscles seemed to fight off what seemed to be the beginning of a devastatingly devilish grin. Subsiding and forcing down his lips, creating the most peculiar smile I witnessed.

“Please, do continue Mr. Finch. Your story has truly enthralled us all.” I felt chills running down my spine as he remarked my name with a throaty and almost inhuman voice. Not even realizing I had paused my retelling of this tale, my entire body felt paralyzed, unable to move, to speak. I thought I would stop to breath at any moment. My eyes were fixed on his and although my brain was fighting with all its might to avert its gaze from that man’s countenance, but I was still unable to do anything but stare. It was only when Thomas put his hand on my shoulder that what felt like eons of capture to that man were over. Blood rushed to my head and my cheeks became flush, my palms were sweaty, yet the tips of my fingers were as cold to the touch of flesh as an icicle in the middle of winter. I was able to gather myself, and again press on with my story. Only later realizing that when conveying the rest of the legend I heard in Normandy, I was deliberately and specifically ensuring to never mention the name of Gobelinus, the daemon that was said to be haunting the countryside of Evreux, of Normandy.

While the rest of the affair was uneventful I often felt Mr. Radow’s gaze land on myself yet was never able to catch his eyes with my own. Partly because I was afraid to look for want of not being petrified and partly because he seemed to always know, as if he was taunting me. I was the first to leave, after making an excuse for an early morning tomorrow and thanking Mr. Rudow for his hospitality I left.

During the next couple of weeks Thomas acted as an intermediary between myself and Mr. Rudow, inviting me on his behalf to other gatherings. I attended some and made excuses during others, citing poor health and prior engagements. And although I wish I made an excuse, as I have done so many other times before, when Thomas invited me to, what I know now to be the last celebration Mr. Rudow will ever through for his inner circle of friends, I did indeed attend the affair at Mr. Rudow’s estate on February 29th, 1934.

The affair started with the usual pleasantries and discussion of current events in everyone’s day to day affairs over some white wine. Although this time Mr. Rudow brought in the wine himself rather than one of his servants, declaring that this is one he kept for a special occasion. When questioned what the occasion was Mr. Rudow promptly deflected diverting the discussion towards myself. “Are you feeling better Mr. Finch, I know you were unable to come to the indulge my two previous invitations due to your poor health.”

“Quite well, thank you for asking Mr. Rudow. It must have been the weather, I am much more accustomed to a warm climate.” I replied quickly, noticing myself to be unusually forthcoming about myself.

“Ah yes, this winter has been indeed viciously cold. Don’t you think Mr. Furrosi?”

“My judgment would be unfair Mr. Rudow. I have lived here my entire life and have seen many winters like this. You and Mr. Finch being relatively new to these parts and more traveled can give a much better account than I!” As Mr. Furrosi provided his answer I immediately saw an opportunity to illuminate this enigmatic creature that assumed the name of Mr. Rudow.

“I did not know you have recently come to Northern Iowa Mr. Rudow.” I sheepishly stated, hoping for an unguarded reply from my host.

“Yes, well my life has been quite long, and I have seen different places I suppose, this being one of the more recent ones I have had the pleasure of visiting.”

“Visiting you say? So, you plan to leave?” I became bolder, started to ask questions. I knew I caught him making an offhand statement.

“I cannot say Mr. Finch. I cannot say yet..” He grinned at me, his back turned to everyone else, allowing only me to see his hideous form. His countenance adopted the shape a daemon looming over me like I was an insignificant creature too frail to comprehend his might. His teeth yellow and stained, sharp at the tip like spikes, dripping with blood as if men have been impaled on them. His mouth so large it could bite off my entire head in one swift move, leaving behind a corpse with no soul. His eyes became darker and darker still by the second and I could feel myself falling into them like a black never-ending abyss filled with screams of long forgotten souls. And then, just like that one second later, as if time itself made a sharp turn at a crossroads presenting a different reality all together, he was back to normal. A simple smirk on his face. Thomas was staring at me. I was shivering, terrified of what I had seen, or what I thought I had seen, unable to explain any of it for no words would come to me to describe the devilish portrait that presented itself to me. I was certain I was losing my mind, and perhaps I have indeed, lost it.

As the affair continued and the sun had left the cloudy sky, completing its mandatory task for the day, the moon has shown itself through the clouds, shining with a pale white light. Meanwhile, the two bankers were having a conversation about their ideas on investors and the current state of general affairs, Thomas and I were having a particularly amusing debate on the continuously stalled state of my relationship with any woman, and Mr. Rudow had asked Mr. Furrosi for a private audience in another room, leaving Mr. Mildreds without a conversationalist. Not long after, Mr. Rudow had returned alone joining Mr. Mildreds, who at the time was enjoying a cigar alone in front of the fireplace. Although I confess I did not hear what Mr. Rudow said to Mr. Mildreds I can only assume it was again another request for a private audience, however this time it was in a different room. I should mention that others have noticed this as well. Thomas and I exchanged looks with Mr. Salmsy and Mr. Dallow that, I thought, revealed intrigue at what it is that Mr. Rudow could possibly have to discuss with the aforementioned members of his inner circle, that was so sensitive. A few moments later however Thomas and I noticed that the bankers were no longer in the room, leaving me and my friend alone. I could feel my body wash over with heat, my ears ringing, my muscle tensing up as they always have before I entered battle so many times before. These bodily responses of which I thought I was rid started kicking in, my body telling me that this is no longer a safe place no longer a place in which we were welcome. It was at this point that the lights, which had previously illuminated the beautiful room in which each gathering of Mr. Rudow’s inner circle of friends had taken place, left. The only light which provided any useful information about my surroundings was coming from the moon.

A voice began to speak, throaty, inhuman. It was similar to Mr. Rudow’s voice on the first night we met, but at the same time entirely different. It was so much more powerful, so much more commanding and coarse. I realized only too late that it was coming from my friend, Thomas, as his hands were wrapped around my neck slowly squeezing with a force of which I never thought him capable. I tried to beg, to plead but I could make no sound. I could say nothing, and I could breathe in nothing. I acted on impulse and often times when I think of that night I regret acting at all, perhaps I should have let him kill me. For whatever reason his body was doing what it was, Thomas Galois was a good man and I was not. After reaching for a vase that was a on nearby stand and breaking it on his head, I was able to grab a shard with my shaking hand and stab Thomas in the side of his neck until his arms gave up their strength and my neck was free. I felt his warm blood run down my arm, wash all over my face, and drip down my lips as I was gasping for air.

I killed Thomas Galois, concerning that there is no doubt. Although I do not know if in those final moments Thomas was even present in his own body, I do know that I in fact took away any chance he had of returning to it. However, I did not kill Andrew Furrosi and Samuel Mildreds. Their bodies were found by the police in two other rooms, mutilated, ripped apart as if by a savage animal. The most peculiar fact however is concerning the two bankers. When I asked the police if they found the bodies of George Salmsy and Michael Dallow they did not. In fact, after informing the police that the two aforementioned men were bankers that were also at the party an investigation was launched that revealed that no such men ever worked at the bank, or even lived in the area. As for Mr. Rudow himself I cannot say. You will no doubt have heard in the newspaper that I have murdered Thomas Galois, Andrew Furrosi, Samuel Mildreds and Mr. Rudow, and for my devastatingly insidious crime I shall be executed by the electrical-chair.

I have already confessed that I murdered Thomas Galois, however I deny having done any harm to the two other men that were found in the house of horrors on that night. Further, although this is only speculation, I am more than certain Mr. Rudow is not dead, in fact I truly wonder if he can ever die at all. For Mr. Rudow is no man at all, but some sort of apparition from the depths of hell itself. Another curious fact that you might consider, dear reader, is that the large parcel of land that Samuel Mildreds had partial rights to and that Andrew Furrosi was most likely keeping as a bargaining chip to follow in his father’s footsteps as a politician, was suddenly and expediently sold to a man by the name of Eldritch Moorcroft who built a children’s hospital there. As my last wish before being executed I asked to visit that children’s hospital and with the warden’s mercy, as he believed me to have been mad, he allowed me to go. I was strapped to a chair with my mouth gagged and with four officers surrounding me when I arrived at the front door of the hospital, it was there that Mr. Moorcroft met me and smiled that terrible and familiar smile I have seen before, the smile that will haunt me even in death.