

Part 3

Previously on Voynich)

ANNOUNCER (voice-over): “Previously on Voynich...”

WILSON (holding Nimbus’s printout): “This is what he wrote right before he died?”

PROP: “Well, those are the keystrokes. If he translated or encrypted it, we’d have no idea what it was supposed to look like.”

Quick cut of WILSON’s hand holding the DEM2K print of bloody script.

Cut to ADMIRAL and COMMODORE walking through the NSA.

ADMIRAL: “Actually, you haven’t heard anything about Voynich being cracked or deciphered, have you?”

COMMODORE (unconvincingly): “Nooooo...”

Cut to COMMODORE in phone booth.

COMMODORE: “You got a spill.”

MUFFLED VOICE: “We got several.”

Cut to computer screen with email open:

Polaris
P.O. Box 51
Groom Lake, NV

Riggs (off screen): “Anyone from Area 51 would never tell assholes like us.”

Cut to split screen of MUFON/RIGGS.

MUFON: “But he might tell my guy.”

Cut to FRIENDISH.

FRIENDISH: “You’ve got copies of the missing Yale pages. These fell out of the book before Wilfred Voynich found it. Tell you what: fly me to Germany, and if I can find better copies, I’ll give ’em to ya.”

MOLEBACK: “Good, cuz I think they’re exactly what we want.”

Cut of Dawn’s greenhouse crop.

Fade.

42)

Cut to MUFON in a night-time parking lot, blowing out a deep breath, and then putting his mouth around a small aquarium tube. The other end of the tube is in the gas tank of a giant SUV. He quickly spits gas as a steady stream spews from the end; he quickly puts the end in the gas tank hole on Alana's car, which is noticeably dwarfed by the monster vehicle. Siphon set up, he quickly looks around. Half-full parking lot outside a Denny's-type restaurant just off the highway. No one is outside, none of the people inside the restaurant pay attention to him. The SUV is parked in front of a pay phone. MUFON plunks in change and quickly dials a number.

MUFON: "Alana, hey, it's me... *Uh*, Randy. Right. ...oh, good, good! H.R. liked me, so they want to give me an aptitude test tomorrow on a live system... ...No, it should be a breeze, but it depends what they throw my way. So I won't be back until tomorrow night though... ...yeah, I know, but like I said...
...okay, no problem. I know you have class on Monday, so I'll *definitely* be back by then. I'm sure you and Kim can entertain each other until then..." Holds phone away with look of disgust.

ALANA [faint phone voice-over]: "...*Destiny Island*..."

MUFON: "...*right*, so I thought I'd call you now, 'cuz Jim's gonna take me out on the town... ...naw, I'm not gonna get *too* drunk, 'cuz I have an interview tomorrow... ...right, well Jim's waiting, so I don't want to be rude. I'll call you tomorrow." Hangs up. Checks on siphon; still going.

Quick cut to the payphone as it *rings*.

MUFON quickly looks up, stares at the stand. Silence; it does not ring again. He looks around the lot. Across the asphalt, 2 EXTRAS are leaving the diner. Camera does slight pan-in to establish them in shot.

43)

Cut to interior of Rathskeller, focused on the front door. The same 2 EXTRAS are leaving into the night. The door has a sign on it, which is readable after it closes: 'Dieses ist ein NEIN Lederhosen Zone!' Camera pans back to show a massive bouncer sitting on a stool to the side, wearing (of course) lederhosen, leggings, white Alpine shirt, felt hat, etc. Pan continues, more of the Rathskeller becomes seen and heard: low German mutterings.

Camera weaves past proletariat patrons to a side table with FRIENDISH, KLAUS, and VV GROUPIE. KLAUS is in his 40s, has a scruffy goatee beard and oval wire spectacles; he has a scar on the forehead. He has recently dyed his hair flat black, and has a pirate-sized gold hoop earring in his left earlobe. He literally chain-smokes through the scene; he is also about 3 beers drunk. VV GROUPIE is also in her 40s, and is wearing brown tie-dyed jeans and t-shirt; her nails are 'Moleback green.' Over course of the scene, her shirt will change: same colors, slightly different tie-dye patterns [hopefully giving the impression that the design on the shirt is slowly moving. Alternately, shirt is color of a blue screen and cgi the slow shifts] She is also about 3 beers drunk. [FRIENDISH is sober; he had just arrived minutes earlier.]

In background at the bar is DOPPEL, passively watching them. She is in her 20s, cute (but not sexy), and dressed all in black: gypsy-ish frill shirt, tight designer jeans tucked into Doc Martins, and a smart black purse. She wears no make-up, and although attention is never intentionally drawn to it, her nails are unpainted.

KLAUS: “So, how is Kay?”

FRIENDISH: “Doing good; down at the Biodome. She says ‘hi,’ of course.”

KLAUS: “But no ‘hello’ from Moleback, eh? *Ahhh*, she hate me; she is convinced I have cast spell over Kay.” Laughs awkwardly, with unconvincing levity.

FRIENDISH (uncertainly): “So, you think it’s safe to talk shop here?” He looks around the crowd; **DOPPEL** is clearly watching him out of the corner of her eye.

KLAUS (dismissively): “Oh, ja, ja; they know me here, in that they *don’t* know me here. We can talk freely, as long as we keep our voices down and ignore everyone else.”

FRIENDISH: “I never do less.”

KLAUS: “*This* is the only permitted outburst in the Rathskeller,” and demonstrates: raises hand, waives gaily, and calls “oh, Cabannajugden?”

CABANAJUGDEN#1 appears immediately, a young punk with an aquamarine mowhawk and massive tattoos. “Ja?”

KLAUS: “Drei Biere. Überraschen sie uns.” [Three beers. Surprise us.]

CABANAJUGDEN#1 nods and disappears.

KLAUS: “Kay says you are a top-notch art dealer.”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, I deal in *information*. More often than not, that information comes in written form, and has artwork on it.” **KLAUS** and **VV GROUPIE** nod and smile appreciatively. “Information is the most valuable commodity in the world when it’s pure and truthful. It’s also one of the most scarce. I spend half my time trying to figure out who the players are, and what side they’re on. That’s actually valuable information in and of itself. Especially when choosing clients.”

KLAUS: “May I ask who your biggest client is? I am genuinely curious.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, it would depend on what you meant by ‘biggest’. Value, volume, or importance? I got three different answers depending on which you want.”

KLAUS: “Have you ever dealt with di Medicigan?”

FRIENDISH: “No. He’s in Zurich, and I’m Stateside. Plus he’s essentially a Referee, so he’s off limits from my own personal circle.”

KLAUS: “*Hehe*, he is Moleback’s biggest client.”

FRIENDISH (genuinely surprised): “No shit?!? Buying or selling?”

KLAUS and **VV GROUPIE:** “Ja.”

FRIENDISH (ponders this insight): “May I ask if Moleback and Kay ever do stuff for him that ended up in his auctions?”

KLAUS: “I honestly do not know for certain. I do know that di Medicigan has never had an auction winner dissatisfied with what he has won. He takes his duties as *versteigermeister* very seriously.”

FRIENDISH: “Do you know if di Medicigan can *read* Voynich?”

KLAUS: “Not to my knowledge; I believe he takes his duties as a Referee seriously, too. But I do not doubt he has surrounded himself with fluent flunkies.”

FRIENDISH nods, lost in thought for a second. He looks around the bar to survey their safety. DOPPEL is being hit on by a FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN, so he ignores her.

KLAUS: “So I take it you deal in the pictures as well as information?”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, I deal mostly in the text.”

VV GROUPIE: “Why? The text is irrelevant.”

FRIENDISH: “My clientele generally believe otherwise. In fact, they tend to go the opposite route: the pictures are just thrown in to disguise the book as an herbal or such, when the text has very different meaning. But remember, I’m American, and as I am sure you know, Voynich got a massive structural reworking in 1776.”

VV GROUPIE: “Ah, yes, the Adoptionists. They disgraced the purity and perverted the meaning.”

CABANAJUGDEN#1 returns, puts down 3 different bottles of beer on the center of the table. He is about to put down glasses, but KLAUS waves him to stop. KLAUS hands him 15 euros, and he quickly leaves.

KLAUS looks over the beer offerings; he takes a Heineken. VV GROUPIE takes an Amberbok. FRIENDISH is left with a Budweiser. They are already opened; they toast each other.

KLAUS: “Eweige Blumenkraft.”

VV GROUPIE (enthusiastically): “Eweige Blumenkraft!”

They *clink*, and look at Friendish, who has a startled look on his face.

KLAUS (as the pause grows awkward): “Why so quiet, my friend?”

FRIENDISH: “Back home, if someone said that to me as a toast, I’d fully expect my beer to be poisoned, or at the very least spat in.”

VV GROUPIE: “Do you know the meaning of *Eweige Blumenkraft*?”

FRIENDISH: “*Flower Power Forever*. I know because it gets used a lot by certain circles back Stateside. They use it as a sort of password. I wouldn’t have thought y’all were working that angle, too.”

VV GROUPIE: “At least two groups use it as a ‘password,’ as you say.”

FRIENDISH: “I know; there’s a schism within the movement.”

VV GROUPIE: “But they are all still Adoptionists, and your schism is recent. *Eweige Blumenkraft* was originally a Vegan Voynich logion, but then Weishaupt and his Illuminati imposters adopted it for themselves. We vegans were the first to use it, in relation to the flowers from the Voynich manuscript.”

FRIENDISH: “I gather it means different things to different Adoptionists. I never knew the origin of the saying, though.”

VV GROUPIE: “Eweige Blumenkraft is more than a saying, it is a way of life! Still, the Adoptionists use the term too, even if differently. So since you have not joined us in our salud to Eweige Blumenkraft, you are not an Adoptionist yourself?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, now that I know they’re different, I’ll drink to differences.” He taps the tip of his bottle against theirs. As he brings the glass back to his lips to sip, he says “and no, I’m not an Adoptionist.”

They all drink.

FRIENDISH again looks around. DOPPEL is watching him out of the corner of her eye while FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN writes something on a cocktail napkin. FRIENDISH looks over and past her, then returns his attention to the two at his table.

FRIENDISH: “So I gotta know: how exactly did you get those pictures you gave Kay and Moleback?”

KLAUS (grins): “About 2 months ago, a Count named Lugosovich threw a Rave at his place in Bavaria...”

FRIENDISH: “The *Count?!?*?”

KLAUS: “You know of Lugosovich then?”

FRIENDISH: “Yes I do; please, continue.”

KLAUS: “Ja, so the Count threw a Rave, and I was able to get spot as cabana boy...”

Blur/fade to Lugosovich Rave, being held in an off-season ski lodge. COUNT is at a banquet table with 4 others (including MR. EAGLE, dressed “normally”.) Among the partiers are a number of cabana boys in a Hitler Youth costume—minus the swastika armband.

COUNT (raising hand): “Cabana boy!!!”

KLAUS appears at the table. He looks slightly different: his hair is undyed (it is still black, but there is a grey streak up the top like a skunk stripe), his goatee is shorter, contact lenses instead of glasses, etc.

KLAUS: “Yes, Count?”

COUNT (intoning solemnly): “Downstairs at the main bar, on the top shelf, there is a glass bottle of clear tequila. There is a worm inside. Bring me the bottle, and something like chopsticks; long straws should do. We will also need...” (looks around for a table headcount) “...5 frosted shot glasses, and 15 lime slices. I want fresh, extra-juicy slices, got that?” KLAUS nods. “Oh, and be extra careful when you bring the bottle up to leave as much of the dust on it as you can...” (to group) “I want to show you all, *eh?*” The crowd of cronies nods hungrily.

KLAUS nods and turns.

COUNT: “And be quick with it, before I change my mind.”

Cries of “no!” and protest from the others at the table, including “tonight is a special occasion!” As KLAUS moves off, we hear them chanting “Worm! Worm! Worm!” and beating their fists on the table in tempo.

KLAUS leaves, and heads into a back room. Cabana boys and party support are working behind the scenes to make sure the Rave runs smoothly. One cabana girl (‘CABANA BITCH’) is not-so-covertly doing lines of green powder. She looks like a Hitler Youth Heidi with Moleback green nails. Down a flight of stairs, he reaches a floor with two doors on either side. KLAUS looks confused, unsure which one to take. He opens the wrong one, and goes into a deserted hallway. Looks around, disoriented, and is about to leave when PHIL THE MINION walks around the corner. He is holding the “Moleback” pages.

PHIL THE MINION: “Hey, cabana boy, come here. You got a second?” PHIL THE MINION looking on expectantly, wanting the cabana boy to solve his problems.

KLAUS shrugs, walks over somewhat guardedly.

PHIL THE MINION: “Know anything about paper shredders?”

KLAUS (momentary *pause*, and then a stoic, straight-faced nod that indicates he has absolutely *no* idea): “*Sure I do.*”

PHIL THE MINION: “Good. I need you.” He waves the pages, beckoning him.

Shot freezes.

FRIENDISH (voice over): “I’m guessing you don’t know who he was?”

KLAUS (voice-over): “No. Never seen him before.”

FRIENDISH (voice over): “Describe this guy.”

KLAUS (voice-over): “An American, with a thick New York accent. Bald. Maybe 6 feet...”

FRIENDISH (voice over, interrupting): “Sharkskin suit and a fish tie?”

Screen cuts in half: previous image on the left, on the right is a still of PHIL THE MINION at a gathering wearing a sharkskin suit and fish tie. He looks like an absolute dork.

KLAUS (voice-over): “No, Sax 5th Avenue formal suit.”

FRIENDISH (voice over): “You’re lucky. That’s Phil the minion. I ran into him once at a gathering in New Haven; he was all shark-skinned out. I made sure not to actually *meet* him.”

Phil-in-sharkskin side wipes back to original view, still frozen.

KLAUS (voice-over): “So you know of this, how you say, Phil the minion?”

FRIENDISH (voice over): “He’s the Count’s New York scout. It’s my understanding that the Metropolitan Museum of Art has a 1-block restraining order on both him and Lugosovich.”

KLAUS (voice-over): “So this Phil the minion is the Count’s minion. Naturally I had wondered as much, but we could never determine with certainty who at the Rave he was with.”

FRIENDISH (voice over): “Uh huh. So he had the papers. How’d you get them from him?”

Cut to **KLAUS** at the Rathskeller table, lighting a fresh cigarette with the butt of his last.

KLAUS (between starter puffs): “*Hehe*, I’ll spare you a blow-by-blow flashback and just say that Phil the minion knows nothing about paper shredders or copy machines. He had made bad black and white copies by accident, and wished to shred them. He said they were worthless; ‘Bolshevik Bullshit’. I pretended to fix the shredder and fooled him into thinking the pages were destroyed. He does not know that I have them. I saw he did keep a dozen pages for himself when he left.”

FRIENDISH: “Good.”

VV GROUPIE: “So you say you know *of* but do not actually *know* this Phil the minion? Do you think you can get the originals from him?”

FRIENDISH: “Phil’s just an underling for the Count, so that’s who I’d really need to talk to. I gather you don’t know Lugosovich yourself, or you’d have asked already...”

KLAUS: “Sadly, I am not on the list of people liked by the Count right now.”

Cut/flashback to Rave. Packed dance floor, with a busy bar on the side. Loud, percussive dance music; sounds like industrial surf guitar cover of “Pipeline” with a driving drum-machine beat underneath. **KLAUS** is behind the bar, holding a tray with a bowl of limes and frosted shot glasses. He is looking at the top shelf of bottles. There is a noticeable gap, dusty but with a perfect, clean circle in the middle.

BARTENDER: “You the cabana boy after the Montezuma’s Revenge for the Count?”

KLAUS: “Yes.”

Cut to Bartender, his back to the Rave. Behind him, on the dance floor, **ANAÏS** can be seen doing The Swim.

BARTENDER: “You took too long, and the Count came and got it himself. He was *very* displeased he had to do so. He said to tell you ‘*pah!*’ and ‘you’re fired,’ and if he ever sees you again, he will put your puny family jewels in the bottle with formaldehyde.”

Cut to **FRIENDISH**, wincing.

VV GROUPIE: “So you see why we need your help?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, obviously, I’ll see what I can do. But we have much to discuss still if I’m gonna do it *right*.”

KLAUS (glances at watch): “Well, I can tell you things over the course of this beer, but then we must depart for the opera.” Lights a fresh cigarette with the smoldering butt of his previous as camera pans to **VV GROUPIE**.

VV GROUPIE: “*Die Fledermaus*. My daughter is a diva in it. She has a beautiful voice, and it is still developing. Amazing range; I have hopes that she might even reach coloratura, but then all the broken and cracked glass around the house every time she breaks up with a boyfriend would be a nuisance.”

FRIENDISH: “Yes it would. Well, I’m sure it will be lovely, and I thank you for even squeezing in time to meet with me so soon.”

KLAUS: “*Oh*, no problem, it is all for a mutually good cause, so I am glad to help.”

VV GROUPIE (sincerely nodding): “Thank you.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I’d love to hear more about the Count and how you got those, but I gather it would take longer than a beer.”

KLAUS: “For it to take any less would be to dishonor him. And he does have his own code of honor, and he plays by the game rules. Or at least has never been caught cheating.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, it sounds like I need to meet him.”

KLAUS: “Hey, this is tricky thing. He’s a hard man to get to, and he’s always mobile; I don’t think he ever spends more than a week in the same place. Last I knew, he was at di Medicegan’s Swiss villa; I believe there was a literature auction, and he was invited.”

FRIENDISH: “I’d heard about the auction because a player I monitor flew over to attend. I didn’t know Lugosovich was there, too. You know what one of the items up for bid was, right?”

KLAUS: “Ja. Your American friend bought it. Di Medicigan called him Mr. Albatross.”

FRIENDISH: “Most everyone else calls him Pegasus. And by the way, he ain’t my friend. I said I *monitored* him; I did not mean to imply friendship. With him, *or* the company he keeps.”

KLAUS: “Ah, my English lapses, but I understand. ‘Friend’ is not a word to be thrown around lightly. The Count is proof of that. He always calls everybody ‘friend.’ It’s in almost every sentence he uses; so much so that the word ‘friend’ has lost meaning and just become a dead spoken syllable *Hehe*, you know who also do that a lot? Hassan. I assume that if you know Pegasus you also know Hassan?”

FRIENDISH (coldly): “Yes.”

VV GROUPIE (eagerly interrupts): “So you have met Hassan?”

FRIENDISH (said in a way that does *not* sound pleasant): “Yes.”

VV GROUPIE: “I never have, but I’m fascinated by him.”

FRIENDISH (shakes his head *no*): “That dude is downright creepy. I do *not* like being near him.”

VV GROUPIE: “Oh?”

FRIENDISH: “Once, I asked Hassan the *wrong* question. He gave me a smile I will never forget, like a starving animal finally finding a meal and going for the throat. I thought I was going to die. No joke: I thought he was going to kill me. And I knew that he could have, too. He had the drop on me. Instead, he just excused himself and left. Hassan scares the crap out of me.”

VV GROUPIE: “I have heard he is nothing but a perfect gentleman, but I will take your word for what happened. Though of course I do not know what question you asked. But perhaps he is a Jekyll with a latent Hyde? I wonder if that is but a side effect of the Voynich?”

FRIENDISH: “Y’know, that crossed my mind, too, but somehow I think you and I are looking at different pages of different Voynich books.”

In the background, FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMEN starts talking to someone on his other side; DOPPEL turns her head and watches the table.

VV GROUPIE: “Oh? What do you mean?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, what do *you* mean? What is your interest in Hassan?”

VV GROUPIE: “He is proof it works, isn’t he? Before all this secret society adoptionist crap got mixed in, pure original Voynich manuscripts were alchemical herbals. True alchemy isn’t turning base metal into gold; that’s just a pleasant side-effect when the real experiments go wrong. Alchemy is about making an elixir of life...”

KLAUS: “...the fountain of youth...”

VV GROUPIE (nods in agreement): “...it is the *Eweige* in Eweige Blumenkraft. Flower Power *Forever*. And Hassan is proof it works. Do you know how old he is?”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, I *do*, and I think the *real* answer would make you pee out that last beer you drank.” Smiles, and sips from his, enjoying it.

VV GROUPIE: “You know, I have a great suspicion that it was Hassan himself who wrote the Yale Manuscript.”

FRIENDISH: “That just so happens to be the question I asked him, the one that made me wonder if his grin would be the last sight of my life.”

KLAUS: “What did he say?”

FRIENDISH: “Nothing; like I said, he just smiled and left.”

VV GROUPIE: “I know that the art was done by La Nada, but we never knew who filled in the text ornamentation after it with certainty. Hassan is high on my list of suspected authors. Do you think he wrote the Yale book?”

FRIENDISH: “Good chance of it, actually, or at least he was friends with the author. Hell, he may have been one of the dwarves in King Rudolph’s midget room. But you know the Yale book’s not the only thing he’s written.”

VV GROUPIE: “You think he wrote most of the Voynich from that period?”

FRIENDISH: “Again, there’s a good chance of it, but that’s not what I’m talking about. Hassan wrote his most famous book about a thousand years ago, back in Persia.”

KLAUS has a coughing fit at this.

VV GROUPIE: “*What?*”

FRIENDISH: “*Hehe*, I told you you’d pee your beer if you knew how old he really was...”

KLAUS: “Has Voynich been around that long?”

FRIENDISH: “He didn’t write it in Voynich. He didn’t write it under the name Hassan, either. No sir, that book was called *Al Azif*, and his *nom de plume* was *Abdul Alhrazad*.”

VV GROUPIE shakes her head, unknowing. Quick check with KLAUS, who is equally ignorant.

FRIENDISH: “Necronomicon?”

VV GROUPIE and KLAUS shrug.

FRIENDISH: “Well, it’s decidedly non-botanical, so I guess it makes sense you wouldn’t know it. Don’t worry, actually: this is a book you’re better off *not* knowing about. That book’s bad news, and so is it’s author, Hassan.”

KLAUS: “I have met him once, and he was but a perfect gentleman. I have never heard others speak anything but good of Hassan, though the occasions he is spoken of are admittedly few. I am curious at this bad reaction of yours.”

VV GROUPIE: “I, too. We have a certain fondness for Hassan.”

FRIENDISH: “I’m guessing that must just be a European phenomenon, because back Stateside, one of the reasons Moleback and I get along is that we both don’t like Hassan.”

VV GROUPIE: “Oh? I did not know this.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I can kind of see why, ’cuz it cuts kind of personal with her. She never gave me specifics on it, and I had to work it out for myself. Curiously, the reason she hates him is directly relevant to how I figured out who Hassan *really* is.”

KLAUS: “This Abdul arab you mention?”

FRIENDISH: “No; I mean who he *really* is. Or more exactly, *what* he is.” Sips beer to prepare himself.

VV GROUPIE: “Okay...”

FRIENDISH (to KLAUS): “You’ve met him, right?” KLAUS shrugs and nods timidly. “How does he refer to himself when he speaks?”

KLAUS frowns.

FRIENDISH: “Third person.”

KLAUS shakes his head, not understanding.

FRIENDISH [imitates HASSAN]: “Oh, *Hassan* is so pleased to see you, *he* will get you a drink. *Hassan* hopes your flight was good?”

KLAUS and VV GROUPIE nod in comprehension.

FRIENDISH: “*That’s* the secret, and I never realized it because it was so open and obvious. Every now and then, he *will* refer to himself as ‘I’. *These* are the key.” Sips beer and smiles coyly.

KLAUS: “And?”

FRIENDISH: “You know what he once told me?” [imitates HASSAN] ‘*Hassan* no kill the girl. *I* kill the girl’.” FRIENDISH gets an intense look and points at the two. “When he said that, I *knew*.”

VV GROUPIE looks at him skeptically, then drinks from her beer. She looks around, sees DOPPEL looking over at the table. After a moment, DOPPEL looks past their table, and then acts like she is looking around for someone. VV GROUPIE finishes her beer.

VV GROUPIE: “We should probably think about going soon, if we’re to get there before first curtain.”

KLAUS: “Ja, her daughter is going to introduce us to the ensemble, and we may even go to the cast party after. I would invite you along, but I do not have an extra ticket, and the show is sold out. And I am sure you have things to do anyway.”

FRIENDISH: “Not a problem, I *do* got shit to do, so I’ll let you two enjoy your evening. When can we meet again? I still have many questions about this, but already I got a few ideas.”

KLAUS (finishes his beer): “Very well then! I can be free tomorrow afternoon to early evening. We will get together for more talk. You come to my place. I cook you dinner.”

FRIENDISH: “I’d like that; I hear you make a mean basil pasta.”

KLAUS: “Oh, did Kay tell you about that? I make it for you then.” Turns to VV GROUPIE. “You have fresh basil in your garden, no? Can I pick some when I drop you and Sonja off?”

VV GROUPIE: “Sure; if you think you can pick them in the dark.”

KLAUS (to FRIENDISH): “So I will call you.”

FRIENDISH: “Best way to get in touch with me. Actually, the only way.”

KLAUS: “So you are going back to Bavaria then?”

FRIENDISH: “No, I’m setting up shop near here. Most likely I won’t be here too long, and will have to move on to wherever the Count is.”

KLAUS: “Very good.” Gets up. They shake hands vigorously, and then VV GROUPIE gets up as well.

FRIENDISH: “Before you leave, there’s a blonde in black at the bar that’s been eyeing me periodically through the night. Don’t suppose either of you know her?”

VV GROUPIE: “The one talking to the fat drunk businessman?”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah. She still is, actually.”

VV GROUPIE: “Never seen her before.”

KLAUS: “Actually, I might I have seen her, as a regular here. Though I do not come to this bar as often as I like, and it is a somewhat common look that she has.”

FRIENDISH: “Thanks.”

VV GROUPIE: “Do you wish company to your car?” Now that she is out from behind the table and standing, it is clearer that she has a tough, muscled body.

FRIENDISH: “I think I’m alright. Thank you, though.”

KLAUS: “Be careful, my friend Friendish.”

FRIENDISH: “Mein herr, I am the patron saint of precaution.” Smiles, and gets up. “I’m also going to use the restroom, and then I am going home. Or at least back to my latest place. I look forward to good food and good conversation with you tomorrow.”

KLAUS nods, VV GROUPIE smiles, and he escorts her toward the door. DOPPEL seems oblivious, laughing with (or more likely at) FAT DRUNK BUSINESSMAN. FRIENDISH heads to the back, where the restrooms are.

Cut to: Rathskeller Men’s Room. Advertisements and graffiti in German. FRIENDISH zipping up at a urinal, then goes to the sink without flushing. Gives himself a look-over. Quickly spritzes water on his hands and grabs a hand towel for a tamp-down. Stretches, and we hear bones crack. As he tosses the towel into trash, the door opens and FAT DRUNK BUSINESSMAN comes in.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN: “Guten Abend.”

FRIENDISH: “Good evening.” He grabs for another handtowel and continues drying his hand.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN: “Ah, sie sind ein Amerikaner?”

FRIENDISH: “Am I an American? Yes. I do not speak German.”

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN (goes to the urinal, unzips): “Sie sprechen nicht Deutsches? Ich spreche nicht Englisch, auch nicht.”

FRIENDISH nods in understanding that they will not understand each other.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN begins a 5-stein-long piss. He looks over at FRIENDISH, smiling hopefully. (in passable Japanese): “Do you speak Japanese?”

FRIENDISH smiles and shakes his head no. He tosses the towel away, and turns to leave.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN (continuing in Japanese as FRIENDISH leaves): “I never learned English because the English as a people are too fussy and the Americans as a people are too brusque. The Japanese have the right manners and the right tempo. And besides, their pussies are tighter...” [etc. until bathroom door closes and Rathskeller crowd noise drowns him out.]

Camera follows friendish as he leaves and reemerges into the Rathskeller. He heads towards the exit, but when he nears his old table, he sees DOPPEL sitting at it, 2 frothy steins awaiting. He changes course and heads over.

FRIENDISH: “Is that for me, or for your fat drunken friend?”

DOPPEL (accented but otherwise immaculate English): “I had hoped to share one with you earlier, Friendish, but I saw you had important company and did not wish to disturb your business. I am sure it is important, though Lance did not tell me what it was. That would be prying, no?” She smiles. “I am Katrina.”

FRIENDISH (bows politely): “Katrina. So, you know Lance?”

DOPPEL: “We are in agreement on many things, and assist each other in common cause. He is in Bavaria, we are in the Stalk Forest, in the mountains south of here. The distance makes coordinating between groups difficult, but he enquired if we could help you out if you needed it.”

FRIENDISH: “Well that was right nice of him.”

DOPPEL: “Do you wish to sit? If that fat *Säufer* comes back and sees you sitting, he will probably either leave us alone or attempt to butt in, thinking you are cockblocking him.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I was planning to leave anyway. You two can do whatever you want.”

DOPPEL (gets up): “May I come with? As I said, I am here to offer assistance, if you need it.” She smiles.

FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN emerges from the bathroom, heads to the bar where he had been.

FRIENDISH: “Always glad to meet new people, especially in a land where I don’t know the language.” He begins heading toward the exit. She quickly follows. FAT DRUNKEN BUSINESSMAN sees her leave and shrugs; he seems happy she has left behind 2 steins; he heads over to partake as they leave.

Cut to cobblestone street at night. Streetlamps are designed to look like old gas lamps. Moderate traffic, street noises. FRIENDISH and DOPPEL walk along.

FRIENDISH: “How did you know to find me at that Rathskeller?”

DOPPEL: “I didn’t. The Goddess guided me there.”

FRIENDISH: “*Did* she now...”

DOPPEL: “She is wise in ways of fortune like that.”

FRIENDISH: “So you’ve never been to that bar before?”

DOPPEL: “No. But of course, neither had you. I did not like it. Too many fat drunken businessmen in it.”

FRIENDISH: “How did Lance tell you to get in touch with me?”

DOPPEL: “Actually he was very vague on the manner. But you are staying here, right?”

FRIENDISH: “About 5 minutes from here.”

DOPPEL: “At that hotel...”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah.”

DOPPEL: “I called and left you a message there. You were obviously out. So I trusted the Goddess to guide me to you, to tell you in person that we Fraulines of the Stalk Forest can assist you if you need it.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I might, but we’ll see. As you know, I just got here, and I’m still getting my bearings.” He stops at a street. “My car’s parked up there; where are you?”

DOPPEL: “I have a Triumph bike back behind the Rathskeller parking lot. Assuming no one has stolen it. But it should be safe; the Goddess watches such things. So I can ride with you, if you wish.”

FRIENDISH: “I *see*...” Starts heading up the street. She moves to join him. “So, this Stalk Forest Group, do you have male members?”

DOPPEL: “Oh yes. Why?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, all the Goddess talk, plus just wondering if you were like Moleback and Kay and her crew.”

DOPPEL (giggles): “I understand what you are asking. Men can acknowledge the Goddess, too. Look at Lance, for example. And no, we do not exclude from our partners anyone with a y chromosome.”

FRIENDISH: “It pleases me to hear you express such an open view towards sexual preference.” Finds his car, a late model low-end Mercedes. It has a rental sticker on the back bumper. He unlocks her door, then goes to his side. Checks first through the window to see what she is doing, then gets in.

Headlights come on, engine purrs to life, and car pulls out. Drives into camera; the headlight blanking the screen to white.

45)

Cut to: white elevator door (same color as headlights) pulling back. FRIENDISH and DOPPEL get off and head down the hallway of a seedy hotel; peeling wallpaper, water damage on the ceiling, etc. FRIENDISH reaches room 204, stops. Pulls out the key, unlocks, and pushes the door open. Room interior is dark.

FRIENDISH: “Frauleins first...” and sweeps his hand in welcome.

DOPPEL enters, flipping on a light switch. FRIENDISH does a quick check of the hallway, then goes in. A moment later, he reaches out and hangs a ‘do not disturb’-type sign [in German] on the knob. Door closes, *click* of deadbolt.

Cut to close-up of door chain getting slid in place. Pan back to show FRIENDISH doing this with his back to the door; he has not taken his eyes off DOPPEL. She is putting her purse on the simple single bed. She looks over at him and smiles.

FRIENDISH walks in to join her in the center of the room. The bed is against a wall that has a small door on either side: clothes closet and water closet. He glances at the nightstand, where a small radio alarm clock [11:11 pm] and a telephone are. The phone has a red light on the side, the type that lights when a message has been left.. It is not lit.

They stare at each other awkwardly. FRIENDISH walks around to the bathroom door. Inside is a sink with a medium-sized mirror; on the right is a cracked toilet bowl, on the left a stand-up shower.

FRIENDISH: “Actually, last shower I had was in Arizona, and I might be about due for my next one. If you don’t mind waiting.”

DOPPEL (smiles): “Bathing is good. So, is there anything I can assist you with? Toweling you off, perhaps?”

FRIENDISH: “Actually, I was hoping you could help me scrub some of those hard-to reach spots.”

DOPPEL (looks into the bathroom, sees the small shower stall): “I am not sure there is much room in there. We will have to press close together much of the time.”

FRIENDISH: “A sacrifice I am willing to make in the name of hygiene.” He flips on the light, and with his hand motions for her to enter. She does.

Cut to shot of bathroom, as seen in the dirty mirror. DOPPEL walks in. The moment she enters and has her back to FRIENDISH, his hand goes from his coat to the back of her head. She sees him make his move and starts to react, but is way too late. Sound of gunshot, starkly amplified by the small confines, and then blood and brain sprays across the mirror.

Cut to DOPPEL falling to the floor; a half-drawn Walther PPK falling from her fingers and landing to the side of the body. DOPPEL’s head is face-down; a puddle of blood quickly expands out around on the filthy linoleum floor. After a moment, FRIENDISH’s shoe moves the PPK away. He watches her body a few moments, making sure she is dead. Pistol still in hand, he grabs her by the hair, lifts her slightly, and then drags her over to the shower stall. Body lands with a *plop*. The blood continues to pool around the head, but slight gurgling sounds as it goes down the drain. FRIENDISH begins thoroughly patting down DOPPEL; there should be a hint of necrophilial enthusiasm in his procedure. He finds a knife in a sheathe at the small of her back; removes it. FRIENDISH stands up, and turns on the shower; water hits the back panel, and collects around the body; blood begins going down the drain in a centrifugal eddy.

Cut to FRIENDISH returning to the bed, where her purse is. Opens it carefully. Inside, pulls out a new wallet. German driver’s license for “Amanda Schwartz”, an address in Bonn; the picture is of a different woman who bares a superficial resemblance to DOPPEL. About 500 euros in cash inside; crisp new bills. Quick close-up of the serial numbers: they are sequential. FRIENDISH tosses it aside, pulls out a pair of brass knuckles that have been tinted non-reflective gunmetal blue. It has 2 foldout blades on it. Tosses aside. Sees a cellphone case. Pulls out, opens up. Hits a button; screen lights up.

Cut to close-up of cellphone display:

Last number called: १०४१११२८५११११

FRIENDISH (voice-over): “Schhhhhhhhhhheiße.”

Cut to bathroom, blood still swirling down the drain. Sound of shower fades out as music from next scene fades in.

45)

Cut to: the blood swirl from the previous scene, becoming cgi animated. A creepy, surreal cover version of ‘Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds’ starts up and runs throughout scene. Camera pans back to show a cgi landscape; the blood is a small whirlpool in a river of blood. By the time the lyrics reach “picture yourself in a boat on a river...” the shot has pulled back enough to reveal a cgi rendering of WILSON standing on a small gondola. It has a Viking-like prow, and Voynich script for “H.M.S. Pinafore” on the front. The gondolier is a cgi of HASSAN, dressed like a 1600s priest (match a historical portrait of Kircher if possible). Along the shore are beds of Voynich-like plants. The sky is impossible shades of yellow.

WILSON turns to HASSAN. His lips move as if asking a question, but a cartoon-like speech balloon appears over his head, filled with Voynich script.

HASSAN answers the same way: lips moving silently, but a caption balloon with Voynich, much longer.

They reach the far shore, where a small pier has been built out of interlaced elephant tusks. HASSAN docks the boat, then walks up to WILSON. He mouths something silently (with short speech balloon) and holds out his hand.



Cut to WILSON, nodding in understanding. He closes his eyes, and over his eyelids 2 gold coins appear. He shakes his head forward, and the coins fall out into his cupped hands. WILSON opens his eyes again; they are normal.

Close-up of him putting the coins in the HASSAN's hand; it is rotted, skeletal flesh, the robe sleeve is tattered, faded. Bony fingers close around the coins.

WILSON steps out of the boat, onto the tusks. They bob in the water slightly under his weight; bloody water splashes up in a few places. WILSON quickly walks to shore. There is a path away from the dock, between rows of Voynich plants. WILSON walks up it, and out of shot. Camera holds on plants; there are several large, green bumblebee-like bugs hovering around or flying between plants. After a moment, a large pelican-like bird dives down and scoops up a number of them in its bill before zooming off.

Quick overhead shot of WILSON walking up the path, towards an obviously fake-looking, stereotypical castle a few hills away.

Cut to WILSON walking across a drawbridge, over a moat patterned after Voynich illustrations of the aqueducts in the “biology” section. There is Voynich writing above the door.

Cut to Nimbus's Computer Room; out the windows, the previous surreal landscape can be seen. WILSON walks in, stops by the chalk outline.

The chalk outline begins to move; it gets up and sits in the chair in front of the computer.

Cut to computer: monitor on top half of screen, keyboard on bottom. The rough chalk outlines of the hands go over the keys. The letter 'v' depresses, accompanied by the sound of an alarm clock *buzz*; a Voynich

character appears on the screen. A half-second later, the letter ‘o’ depresses, with another alarm clock *buzz* and screen character. The word ‘voynich’ is spelled out thus. The printing on the screen is:

Atziflawuriz?

(Same as the bloody writing)

Cut to head shot of WILSON, eyes closed, on pillow. Alarm clock continues to *buzz* at same pace as in dream. The “real” version of “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” picks up at this point (with soft radio static). WILSON’s eyes fly open. After a moment, he reaches out to the clock. 5:50am. Hits snooze. His eyes close, but then after a second, he blows out a breath of bad air and reopens them. He reaches out and turns off the alarm. Camera holds on alarm.

46)

Cut to same type of alarm clock on KIM’s nightstand, showing same time. It begins buzzing. After a moment, KIM’s hand comes out and kills it. Camera pans back to show Kim’s Bedroom. On a queen-sized bed, KIM, BOYFRIEND, and ALANA are clustered. Under covers, BOYFRIEND grunts, and attempts to snuggle amorously with KIM.

KIM (sleepily): “Stop that.”

BOYFRIEND rolls over and attempts to snuggle amorously with ALANA.

ALANA: “Stop that.”

BOYFRIEND whines in defeat. Tries to go back to sleep, but KIM nudges him.

BOYFRIEND: “Stop that.”

KIM: “You’re the evil beastie who made me set it this early.”

BOYFRIEND (crawling under pillow): “I thought you’d want to play once more before...” [yawn]

KIM: “No; now use the snooze button time to take an extra-long shower. You smell like a catfish hoagie.”

BOYFRIEND (muffled by pillow): “There are 3 things that smell like fish. One of them is fish.”

KIM starts poking him into compliance. Grumbling, he rolls over KIM; kisses her, and then rolls off; brief glimpse of him leaving the covers, naked, before disappearing off-screen.

Sound of bathroom door closing.

ALANA lays in bed a few seconds, eyes closed. “Think he’s called?”

KIM: “Probably not, though we were kinda loud, and might have missed the ring.”

ALANA (giggles): “Yeah.” *Pause*. “Does he always call out his own name like that?”

KIM: “He’s usually pretty quiet, but he’s done that before when he’s really into it, like last night.”

ALANA: “He was okay, but I miss Randy.” (sigh) “Eight inches and change, baby.”

KIM: “Oooh. Well, you gotta share him now when he gets back. He is a hottie. He’d probably go for it, and not try to Greek me like that last guy Greg did.”

ALANA: “God, don’t even mention his name. Last time I ever date out of a chat room.”

The shower starts [will run through scene.]

ALANA: “Hey, I got an idea. I’ve got his keys. Depending what time he gets back, we can be naked and waiting in his bed for him later. Either to celebrate his getting the job, or console him if he didn’t.”

KIM: “Hmmm,” looks over at bathroom door, then back to Alana. “I’m not sure what Matt’s doing after work, but since he didn’t already say something, I might be free. But if the coast isn’t clear, we postpone it, okay?”

ALANA: “*Hehe*, okay. But hey, wanna go over and snoop through his underwear drawer, play ‘count the stains’?”

KIM: “*Ewwwww*.”

ALANA: “You know, I haven’t actually been over to his apartment yet; he just sort of moved into my place.”

KIM: “Sounds like a Deadhead my aunt knew for 10 years. Think Randy’s a Deadhead? Maybe those aren’t cigarette’s he smokes. Plus you said he keeps smelling and hearing things that aren’t there.”

ALANA: “No, I think he’s into ghetto rap. He’s always humming Public Enemy.”

KIM: “*Ewwwww!* Maybe we *should* go over to his place, and just check out his cd collection. Best litmus test I know for personality.”

ALANA: “*Hehe*, you wanna?”

KIM (looks at shower): “*Hmmm... ..oh* sure. But if he has that ‘I like big Butts’ song, the naked and waiting is off.”

ALANA: “And if he calls my cell from there on his way back, I’ll just tell him to come on over to his place.”

KIM: “Where’s he live, anyway?”

ALANA (*pauses*): “Oh shit. It’s just up the street from here, at Corners. 24 north something?”

Kim: “24? That’s not how they’re set up.”

ALANA: “Fuck, I forget. Well, I’ll either wake up and remember, or we can just check at the front office. Or just wander and look for the apartment with the mountain of cigarette butts on the patio.”

47)

Cut to ashtray with a mountain of crushed cigarette butts. All of them are unfiltered.

FRIENDISH (voiceover): “Damn, son, that’s a lot of cigarettes. And I thought Muffin Man chained away.”

Pan back to show Klaus’s Kitchen, where KLAUS begins finely dicing basil with a big-bladed knife, a lit cigarette nub in his lips. Ash falls into the basil; he doesn’t care.

KLAUS: “They are hydroponically grown hybrids, with an almost non-existent nicotine count. They are from a farm in the Harz Mountains run by some friends of mine. I am told I am one of their bigger customers, ranking somewhere between Byelorussia and Brazil in terms of annual sales.” *Puff*, realizes the cigarette is dangerously close to the end. “Excuse me.” KLAUS quickly takes the smoke out, pops a fresh one in, and lights it off the glowing nub. After a second, smoke comes out of his mouth as it catches; he puffs a few more times, then pulls the cig out to make sure it is lit. He smiles.

KLAUS (to lit tip): “Hello my friend, you are still there?”

FRIENDISH frowns at this. KLAUS sees his puzzlement.

KLAUS: “You know fire, it is alive? The Greeks thought it was an element, so did the Chinese, but fire is actually a life form. It is born, grows, and can die; it reacts to its environment, has a form of metabolism, reproduces,,,” (FRIENDISH nods) “,,right, so every morning I make a pet fire. Smoking is the closest you can come to fire without being physically consumed by the flame, so I use cigarettes to feed it and carry it around with me.” Puffs cigarette to make the tip glow, then holds it out for emphasis. “I call this one Alfie.”

FRIENDISH smiles politely.

KLAUS: “Here, take a puff, and pet Alfie.”

FRIENDISH shrugs, and takes the cigarette. *Puff*, and frowns at the flavor. Exhales seedy smoke, and hits it again.

KLAUS: “I wish I could house-train them, so they wouldn’t shit so much ash.”

FRIENDISH hands Alfie back to KLAUS.

FRIENDISH: “Surprisingly smooth.” A cough sneaks up on him, smoke comes out with it. “But stealths you on the exit.”

KLAUS smiles and accepts Alfie back.

KLAUS: “Hello again, Alfie.” (to FRIENDISH) “You know in my bedroom I got a candle with Veronica on it; she is 8 months old.” He resumes going nuts with the knife, clearly enjoying having a sharp blade in his hand. “Hey, you like hashish? I got some good nug in the Rumpus Room hookah.”

FRIENDISH: “Not while I’m working. Dulls the reflexes; especially the mental.”

KLAUS: “*Ah*, I see. I was going to offer you wine with the meal. Our friends in the Forest have a little vineyard, and they make it themselves. It is surprisingly potent, though. It ages quite well; I have several bottles from the 1920s I was going to open for us.”

FRIENDISH: “*Hmmm*, wine pressed by stinky vegan feet. Bet that has some earthy undertones and nice unshaven legs.”

KLAUS (smiles, scraping the basil into a wooden bowl): “I do not much care for it either, or at least its flavor. But the ladies seem to like it,” points with knife to the kitchen door, “so I try to be polite.”

FRIENDISH: “This is true, and when in Rome, drink as the Romans do, especially the local vintages.”

KLAUS puts the bowl by the stove, where pots are slowly simmering, and then heads over to a small wine rack.

KLAUS: “So you will join us for a glass or two?” He looks over the rack; several open and empty bottles are near by.

FRIENDISH: “One, perhaps two if I actually like it, but no more. As I said, it dulls the reflexes.”

KLAUS: “*Ah*, unless someone shoots a howitzer at us from 20 kilometers away, we are safe.” Grabs a bottle, looks at the label. “Later.” Puts it back, selects another, smiles in satisfaction. Uncorking it with practiced ease, he goes into the living room.

Cut to: Klaus’s Living Room. Nicely decorated with obscure kitch. A giant Voynich-style painting of a nymph with laurels hangs over the fireplace. VV GROUPIE is sitting in an open bay window, looking out. An MP-5 submachine gun rests across her lap. Through scene, her tone towards FRIENDISH is noticeably colder. However, at first, she turns, sees them, and smiles at the sight of the wine.

VV GROUPIE: “Oh, cabana boy?”

KLAUS: “I’m pouring right now.” Begins to do so on a table where there is a small pyramid of inverted crystal wine glasses.

FRIENDISH (examining the painting): “I still can’t get over that you got Moleback’s pictures through Lugosovich.”

KLAUS: “Why does that surprise you?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, it blows his cover story that he doesn’t have any Voynich, and is only in the game to round out his collection.”

KLAUS: “*Oh*, but Friendish, that is all true. At least the last part of it.” Smiles. “What, you did not know this?”

VV GROUPIE makes a snort of contempt.

KLAUS (amusedly): “It is the most poorly kept secret in Europe. Well, that or how Vatican City has The Bomb.”

FRIENDISH: “I’m from America, remember? I don’t know the European players. The Count occasionally comes to our continent to buy things, but he’s hard to get near, and I never could figure his angle out anyway.”

VV GROUPIE chuckles at this. KLAUS nods.

KLAUS: “You want to know the Count’s angle? He is one of the biggest collectors of Voynich in the world, but he is only after certain types. He is very picky.”

FRIENDISH: “What’s his criteria?”

KLAUS hands VV GROUPIE a glass of wine.

KLAUS: “Perhaps I should let you tell the story, as it is your great great grandcousin or something.”

VV GROUPIE: “In the late 1500s, there was a painter who did Voynich illustrations. La Nada. The Nothing. I am related to her on my father’s side. She was from Spain, but gypsied her way to Bohemia in her teens. She became quite famous in Voynich circles at the time. She was to Voynich what Pamela Coleman Smith is to tarot cards. The Count collects her work.”

KLAUS: “The Yale book was drawn by La Nada.”

FRIENDISH: “No shit?”

VV GROUPIE: “You said that the black and whites copies Klaus cabana boyed out of Lugosovich’s Rave are from the Yale book?”

FRIENDISH: “Yes. Well, that explains why he had them. Proxy placeholders.” The two Germans frown. “In a collection, it’s what you put in the gaps to fill the spot until you get the real thing. You said the Minion in the copy room was making a copy of a copy, so apparently he doesn’t have the originals, either, but placeholders. You also said he was trading those copies to someone, or even vice versa, so I would assume he has his copies still...”

KLAUS: “Presumably. But even the copies I saw were poor quality. Kay and Moleback want the originals, or at least better generation copies than what I was able to save from the shredder.”

FRIENDISH: “I’ll just have to find out how Lugosovich got what he got, and see if I can proceed from there.”

KLAUS: “And here our options become limited. Because of my poor cabana boy performance at his last Rave, my name is *verboten*, so I cannot get near him again, nor can any of the *Volksfrei* I am associated with.”

FRIENDISH: “That’s okay, because I have a cunning plan. And if it plays right, I’ll migrate back to Bavaria and out of your hair here.”

VV GROUPIE (sourly): “Danke.”

FRIENDISH (to VV GROUPIE): “Out of curiosity, I take it you buy the yarn that the Count is a couple hundred years old, like Hassan?”

VV GROUPIE: “Yarn? *Was ist* ‘yarn’?”

FRIENDISH: “Opinion.”

KLAUS (to VV GROUPIE): “Nicht zutreffend” [not true] (to FRIENDISH) “Oh yes, yes, he is more proof that the Voynich alchemy works...”

VV GROUPIE looks like she has had enough. She picks up a small walkie talkie and clicks it on.

VV GROUPIE: “Kann jemand zum Haus und zur Abdeckung für mich nach innen kommen? Ich benötige etwas Frischluft.” [can someone come to the house and cover for me inside? I need some fresh air]

VV#1 [radio distortion]: “Ich kann.”

Cut to view of bay window, VV GROUPIE’s legs jutting out from bottom of the screen. Out the window on the grounds below, VV#1 walks into view and nods up at VV GROUPIE. VV#1 is tall, bald, and dressed in black. He is holding a bo-staff in one hand, and has a leg holster with nunchuck handles poking out.

VV GROUPIE (to KLAUS and FRIENDISH): “I am going to stretch my legs for a few.” She sips her wine, then sets it down on the floor.

Off screen, front door opening.

KLAUS: “Fine, fine, we will be talking for some time, and the sauce takes time to slow roast, so get your legs nice and stretched for later.” Winks libidiously at her.

VV GROUPIE ignores him, and rolls out the open window. It is a half-story drop; she makes a 3-point landing (one hand holding the gun safely) and quickly recovers.

KLAUS (faint, off screen): “Ah, Hans! I had just opened a bottle of the ’78. The year you were born, no? Perhaps your tiny feet helped press this?”

VV GROUPIE walks toward the back of the house. A nicely aced place, with trees and a shaggy high hedge separating it from the next property.

Cut to her in back of the property; there is a drop-off into a forest with a dry riverbed at the bottom. She looks around briefly, sees VV#2 up in a tree with a scoped, bolt-action hunting rifle looking down at her. They nod at each other, and VV GROUPIE sits beneath a tree. She pulls out a cellphone.

Cut to cellphone; her green-nailed thumb is scrolling down a list of Voynich script. She ends at one and calls it.

Sound of five *rings*.

TRASH [phone distortion]: “Topiary Enterprises, how can I help you?”

VV GROUPIE: “Hello, this is [NAME] in Germany. Is this Trish? Or Tree?”

Cut to TRASH (in a blue/white tie dye that looks like clouds in the sky). She is talking on a phone mounted to a wall, next to a giant poster reading “Topiary Enterprises, how can I help you?”

TRASH: “Hey, [name], this is Trash!”

VV GROUPIE: “Hello, Trish. Are Moleback or Klaustina there?”

TRASH: “They’re both down at the Biodome. I can get you their mobile phone number. Did something else happen?”

VV GROUPIE: “Not since the shooting last night.”

TRASH: “What exactly happened? I just heard third-hand through Tree that that dude Friendish killed a femme.”

VV GROUPIE: “Yes. I do not know exactly what happened, but he and Klaus decided there was an immediate threat, and we have been hammerback since midnight. We, or at least I, do not know who the woman was, but it seems trouble has followed him from stateside.”

TRASH: “I guess.”

VV GROUPIE: “How well do you know this Friendish?”

TRASH: “He’s Moleback and Klaustina’s friend, not mine. Why?”

VV GROUPIE: “I do not like him.”

TRASH: “Of course not; he’s got a y chromosome.”

VV GROUPIE (laughs): “Besides that. No, it is just a hunch, a feeling, a...”

TRASH: “Woman’s intuition?”

VV GROUPIE: “Ja. His thinking is very strange.”

TRASH: “Like what?”

VV GROUPIE: “He thinks Hassan is possessed by a demon.”

TRASH: “Jesus, are you serious? This is the 21st century.”

VV GROUPIE: “Yes, my thoughts exactly. He has such a warped perception of the whole Voynich milieu that I wonder how much help he can *really* be to you, or us.”

TRASH: “I don’t know, but hopefully he can be of some help. Kay and Moleback know him, maybe that’s who you should talk to. I’ll go get their cell number for you, because they won’t be back until dark.”

VV GROUPIE: “What time is it there now?”

48)

Cut to digital watch, reading 8:23. Shot pans back to show the watch is on the writs of G&C#1, gripping the steering wheel of a utility van. Camera pulls out window to show G&C#2 in the passenger seat. Both are dressed in workman’s type clothes, cruising down a residential street. They reach a 4-way stop; through the window, the signs say “Dickens” and “Hunterbasser.”

Cut to exterior shot of intersection; the van [labeled “Philadelphia Gas & Coke”] turns and goes up the street to the first open space by Nimbus’s house.

Cut to G&C#1 and #2 getting out of the van. G&C#1 has a clipboard and takes the lead. They head up the steps to the brownstone. G&C#1 tries the door, finds it locked. After a moment, he buzzes MacLeod's flat.

Cut to: street-level shot of OFFICER FRIST looking through window. Looks down at them, presses com button next to window.

OFFICER FRIST [intercom distortion]: "Hang on; be right down."

OFFICER FRIST disappears, and a few moments later appears at the front.

G&C#1: "Morning, officer, who's here right now?"

OFFICER FRIST: "Just myself and officer Decons."

G&C#1: "Okay, well, " (glances at clipboard) "Detective Wilson wanted us to look at some things."

OFFICER FRIST (shrugs): "Sure."

G&C#1: "Yeah, well, I just need someone to sign off on this work order." Hands clip to first officer.

OFFICER FRIST: "Okay; you got a pen?"

G&C#2 pulls out a bandana from his pants pocket and grapples FRIST from behind, forcing the bandanna over his mouth and nose. FRIST struggles and grunts a second, but then succumbs passively. G&C#2 has already wrestled him inside the door; G&C#1 looks out quickly and closes it.

Cut to inside landing. Stairs going up; G&C #2 is dragging fir off (who has bandana shoved in his mouth) under the stairs; camera follows G&C #1 up the steps. G&C#2 reaches the top as G&C#2 finishes quick conceal and begins taking stairs 2 at a time (though quietly) to catch up. G&C#1 walks off screen into Nimbus's apartment. A few moments later, G&C#2 stealths in behind him.

Silence for 5 seconds

OFFICER DECONS [off screen]: "Be with ya in just a sec."

Pregnant *pause*, then sounds to simulate the following: karate kick to the head, muffled *oof*, body hitting the floor, someone jumping onto the body, brief grapple, *silence*.

G&C#2 [off camera]: "Cool. You got him?"

G&C#1 [off camera]: "Yeah."

G&C#2 [off camera]: "Let me check upstairs, then give me a hand getting that other cop from downstairs up here."

G&C#1 grunts acknowledgement. Sounds of duct tape unspooling.

G&C#2 reappears in the door and then walks up the final flight to the Naybors' door. Brief, faint BEELZEBUG buzzing. G&C#2 stops; *knock*. SCHNAPPS begins barking. Waits about 10 seconds. Walks to stair rail and calls down.

G&C#2: "Clear up here."

G&C#1 [off camera]: “All right.”

He is about to head down, but looks back at door. Faint sounds of paws on scuttling on hard-wood floor.

G&C#2: “Actually, what are your thoughts on dogs?”

G&C#1: “Why? They got one?”

G&C#2: “Yeah.”

G&C#1: “Awww, we’ll let it out before we go. Miracles happen.”

G&C#2 shrugs, and begins walking down stairs. Shot pans in on Naybor’s door, holds.

49)

Cut to door of eASIS, ideally as close to previous scene as possible. Shot holds of door, then it opens away from camera. Beyond is a daytime parking lot for a strip mall. EAC#1 holds the door for EAC#2; both are female, in their late teens, and dressed in pretentious cyberpunk style that tries *too hard* to be cool. Camera follows them as they enter eASIS. It is an Internet café that, like its patrons, is trying too hard to be hip and failing because of it.

Camera flows across the across the floor toward the opposite side of the café, passes one table that seems to exude darkness, as if sucking all the light from around it. THE SINGULARITY and DREEBLE sit in the dim shadows at a table. Objects on the table slowly gravitate toward THE SINGULARITY.

DREEBLE: “He was trying to hook up a cat-9 cable to it...”

THE SINGULARITY: “*Huh huh*. Cat-9.”

DREEBLE: “*Exactly*. So...”[ad lib with quick fade]

Camera continues on, toward the back wall, where a where a neon green sign spells out ‘liquids’. MUFON is walking toward it. Behind the counter, MILES stands idle. [Unless Michael Palin is available for the part, MILES is young, lanky, and has his hair buzz-cut in back but bangs slanting at an angle over his eyes.] No apron; white collared shirt with black string tie. Perpetually contemptuous sneer; he has an unlit cigarette in his hands and pantomimes smoking it throughout scene.

MUFON reaches the counter. He looks at MILES for service. MILES just stands there, arms crossed, looking at him smugly. The pause becomes awkward.

MILES: “I’m listening.”

MUFON: “Coffee. Strongest stuff you got.”

MILES: “*Soooooooooooo*, would that be the *Iris Widener*, the *Espresso From Hell*, or the *Uber-Tweak*?”

MUFON: “Whatever.”

MILES: “Pick one.”

MUFON: “Surprise me.”

MILES: “No; you *have* to pick one.”

MUFON (a ‘care less’ shrug): “Uber-tweak.”

MILES: “What size?”

MUFON: “Large.”

MILES: “*Ohhh*, we don’t have ‘*large*’. We have *petite*, *medium*, and... *...vente*.”

MUFON: “That’ll work.”

MILES: “Which?”

MUFON: “That last one.”

MILES: “The... *vente*?”

MUFON: “*Sure*.”

MILES: “So, you want a...” holds his hands out, palm up, fingertips beckoning an answer.

MUFON: “Biggest cup of your strongest coffee.”

MILES: “Say it.”

MUFON: “What?”

MILES: “Say the size.”

MUFON: “No.”

MILES: “You *have* to say it.”

MUFON: “No!”

MILES: “Say ‘*vente*’...”

MUFON: “Fine, gimme 3 mediums.”

MILES glares at him.

Cut to MUFON walking away from counter, three medium coffees in his hand. Behind him, Miles shifts the filter down his fingers to the web next to the knuckles, and uses this to flip MUFON a bird. MUFON takes a table on the side by the restrooms. Coffees go down on a lazy susan to the side that is shared by 2 other stations. The screen has the eASIS logo.

Cut to shot of MUFON from over and behind the monitor. Sounds of typing.

Cut to browser: junkmail login screen.

User name: muffin~mania

Password: *****

MUFON sips his coffee, reacts like it were cod-liver oil. Reverse angle shot of this with MILES in the background, watching him and grinning. MUFON does some clicking.

1 new message

Polaris [re: re: opt in](#)

Click, new window pops up; it is moderately lengthy, and not on screen long enough to read.

Cut to MUFON reading it, his lips moving slightly. After several seconds he frowns.

Cut to mouse moving over the print icon, *clicking*.

Cut to Mufon walking towards the smoking patio, a page in his hand. Glass door; there is a pay phone on either side. EAC#3 is on the outside one, talking and smoking. MUFON picks up the one on the inside, drops in some change, and dials a number from the printout.

Sound of 3 rings. *Click* of pickup.

AUTOMATED (FEMALE) VOICE: “To leave a message, press 1. To page this person, press 2.”

MUFON (presses 1, and then reads off of the printout): “I would like to order a dozen spicy bort wings. No ranch.” Waits a second; *silence*. Looks up from the paper. “Uh, please call me and let me know the total. It’s [looks at sticker on phone] “520-223-1467. Uh, thanks.” Hangs up; sound of coins dropping internally. MUFON waits a second, then heads back to his table. Sits down, keeping an eye on the phone. Drinks coffee; its flavor has not improved. Opens up a web browser, but then the phone rings.

MUFON quickly gets up, papers in hand, and heads for the phone. He makes it before anyone else.

MUFON: “Hello?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover; should not be immediately obvious it is him]: “You place an order?”

MUFON (looking at printout): “I would like to order a dozen spicy bort wings. No ranch.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Will this be cash or credit?”

MUFON (consulting script): “Do you take flax?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Absatively.”

MUFON nods, stops looking at the paper. “So...”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “We don’t deliver, so will this be dine-in or carry-out?”

MUFON: “You tell me.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Dine-in. So, can I have your name?”

MUFON: “Muffin. Can I have yours?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Polaris.”

MUFON: “Okay. But who *are* you, exactly?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “I’m a supplier.”

MUFON: “What kind of supplies?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Uh, things of a textual nature.”

MUFON: “Like books?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “I was Friendish’s source. But Friendish has disappeared, and I’ll bet he’s dead.”

MUFON: “I got an email claiming to be from him, but it was blatantly a fake.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Yeah, there are a lot of bad fakes floating around right now. Which is actually why I’m talking to you in lieu of Friendish.”

MUFON: “What do you mean?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Like I said, I supplied Friendish with text. I risked my ass to get him something, but then he goes and disappears or even dies on me.”

MUFON: “And I gather you still have these, and want to give them to me?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “*Give?* Well,…”

MUFON: “I’ll be honest: I have absolutely no cash on me.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Actually, I’m not going to part with them, at any price. But I can still show them to you. If you come out my way, I can show you a sampler, and we can take it from there.”

MUFON: “Okay.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “How far away are you from Vegas?”

MUFON: “You know, I don’t know; never been in this part of the country before. Not even sure where I am. I’m somewhere in the Sonoran. Maybe 6, 8 hours? Doubt more than 12.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Well, let’s see… if I skip sleeping tomorrow, I can probably meet you in Vegas for about an hour. Can you be in Vegas tomorrow night between midnight and 1?”

MUFON: “Barring the unforeseen, yes.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Okay, so there’s a place there called Area 69. It’s actually a gay bar.”

MUFON: “Oh, great.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Actually, Friendish picked it when he and I first met. He had a point: 2 men hunkered down in close, intimate conversation goes unnoticed, plus it’s easier to take someone into a bathroom stall and search them for wires and mikes.”

MUFON: “Oh, *fuck*...”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Hey, how do you think I felt? I was half-expecting someone I know from here to pop up there; fortunately the only gay guy I know told me he got 86’ed from there 2 years ago for knocking a cabana boy unconscious with a giant dildo... I dare-say he ‘cold-cocked’ him, but I don’t stoop to puns that low with complete strangers.”

MUFON: “You’re one to talk... I’m still not sure who the hell you are, or what you had for Friendish. So, I gather you work for the government?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Fuck no. Well, not directly. Indie contractor specialist.”

MUFON: “So you say you’re indie... But which side are you indie with?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “What do you mean?”

MUFON: “Well, it’s just that there are so many fucking sides in all this. Everyone’s in some conspiracy; I think I’ve seen everything but lesbians and librarians.

Quick cut to Library Cellar. **SABRINA**, **GLADYS**, **CLAUDE**, **JANENE THE LIBRARIAN**, and several other **LIBRARIANS** are gathered around a table that has a diorama of Dealey Plaza in Dallas; the Book Depository is a 6-story parking garage. All the **LIBRARIANS** are dressed in black combat fatigues, several have weapons.

SABRINA (moving a small model car along the street): “...so, when the bookmobile passes the auto depository, we jump out from these 3 spots...”

Cut back to **MUFON** at the eASIS.

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Everybody’s in some type of conspiracy, but somehow I bet that mine are in different crop circles than yours. Besides, I’m just in this for myself; I’m not so much “on” a side as just “against” every other side I’ve seen. Which is why I’m dealing with people like Friendish and you: to get the info out and bring these motherfuckers down. Or at least embarrass the hell out of ‘em.”

MUFON: “Well, if that’s true, then we have a lot to talk about.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Probably, but only an hour or so in which to talk about it. So, think you can find Area 69?”

MUFON: “I’ll manage by midnight tomorrow and be there. How will I know you?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “I’ll probably be able to spot you, so I’ll introduce myself. Same password drill we just did.”

MUFON: “*Uh*, whatever. Hey, what is ‘bort’, anyway?”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Save your questions for tomorrow; I really need to go.”

MUFON: “Okay, uh, Polaris. I guess I’ll see you tomorrow.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Not to state the obvious or scare you off, but come alone. If you have anyone with you, I will kill you all.”

MUFON: “Great.”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Hey, if you’re legit, you have nothing to worry about.”

MUFON: “Shit, I got tons to worry about. I got fucking mountains of problems...”

CENTAUR [distorted phone voiceover]: “Well, don’t bring those to the bar. See you tomorrow.”

Click.

MUFON hangs up, and goes back to his table. Sips his coffee, blanches at the taste, and puts it down on the table. Camera slowly closes in until it occupies full shot.

50)

Cut to: similar coffee cup on similar table. COUNT’s hand reaches out. Sounds of sipping.

COUNT (off screen): “*Pah!* This is *wretched!* Did one of the Cabana Clerks piss in it?”

Cut to JUDGES on a high bench. One of them bangs his gavel.

JUDGE#1: “Count Lugosovich, we grow increasingly weary with your outbursts, especially those which are unrelated to the proceedings at hand.”

Cut to prosecution table, where COUNT and his REPRESENTATION are sitting. COUNT is scowling at the coffee; REPRESENTATION addresses the bench.

REPRESENTATION: “I am again sorry for my client, your honor. The stress of this case has upset him, and the slightest wrinkle seems to be setting him off. I will counsel him to better restrain himself.”

COUNT (under his breath to REPRESENTATION): “You counsel me which clerk brought me this coffee. I torment his family for 10 generations.” REPRESENTATION nods politely, turning his attention to his briefs on the table before him.

JUDGE#1 (to defense table): “Please continue.”

Cut to team of LAWYERS. One is standing.

LAWYER: “Thank you, m’Lord. As I was saying, such claims as the Count’s have repeatedly been found to be without merit, not the least reason for which is that the Contract the Count is entering as Exhibit 1 is was signed by people long since dead. None of their descendants are obligated to honor it.”

REPRESENTATION: “Your honor, living contracts such as Constitutions are recognized the world over as being in effect long after the original signers have died.”

COUNT smiles and goes “*Heh.*”

JUDGE#2 leans over to JUDGE#1, and whispers something into his ear for several seconds. Judge#1 nods.

JUDGE#1: “I am going to call a half hour recess. Court is adjourned until then.” Bangs gavel.

A cabana clerk [in a legal tuxedo] comes up to him with silver platter; a cordless phone is on it.

CLERK: “Excuse me, Count? You have a phone call. The gentleman has been on the line, waiting until recess.”

COUNT: “*Eh?* Who is it?”

CLERK: “It is the Yale library in America. They wish to discuss an overdue fee with you.”

COUNT: “*Whah?*” Does a bizarre cross between a frown and a scowl. After a second, beckons for the phone. “I am Count Lugosovich. Who are you?”

Split screen to FRIENDISH.

FRIENDISH: “Count, my name is Friendish...”

COUNT (unexpectedly amused): “Friendish?!? *Ah*, yes, yes, I have heard of you! Hassan speaks very highly of you.”

FRIENDISH is stunned into silence.

COUNT: “I am glad our paths have finally crossed. I have never been happy with my American scouts, and your name had often been on the short list suggested to me for replacements.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I’m already contracted out at the moment, but that’s actually the reason I’m finally introducing myself.”

COUNT: “*Eh?*”

FRIENDISH: “I’d like to talk to you about the Yale Manuscript.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, go to New Haven and look at it yourself.”

FRIENDISH: “The pages I’m interested in aren’t at Yale. They fell out a few centuries before, and the buzz around the beehive seems to be that you might be able to help me in that.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, do you know that the proper name for a beehive is an ‘apiary’? Someone is making an ape out of you, Friendish.”

FRIENDISH: “Oh, I’ve known that since I was in diapers, but this is different. I’m in Bavaria right now, but I can be in the Hague in under 24 hours. Can we discuss this in person, without a judge hovering over your shoulder?”

COUNT: “*Hmmm...* you are in Bavaria?”

FRIENDISH: “Munich.”

COUNT: “I have place in Oberammergau. I meet you there when this is done. Maybe we talk, maybe I just kill you.”

FRIENDISH: “I think you’ll find talking to me would be more productive.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, we have to see what kind of mood I am in after this legal ordeal.”

FRIENDISH: “Fair enough.”

COUNT: “I will make arrangements tonight with my people at my ski lodge; I will fly there either tomorrow or the day after, depending on what delays the defense throws at us. The bastards are bleeding this for all they can.”

51)

Cut to: Hospital Room. ALANA is sitting on the examining table. CDC_DR (female) is tying a tourniquet around her arm while DR_CDC (male) asks her questions while writing on a clipboard.

CDC_DR [getting a hypo ready]: “Now, you’re going to feel some pressure...”

ALANA: “Oh my god, I just cannot believe this...”

DR_CDC: “Any nausea or headaches?”

ALANA: “Well *yeah*, but only because you guys are doing this to me.”

CDC_DR begins drawing blood.

DR_CDC: “Blurry vision?”

ALANA: “No. Oh my god, my father is going to kill me.”

DR_CDC: “Have you been moving your bowels regularly?”

ALANA: “What the fuck kind of question is that? Who the hell says *bowels*?”

CDC_DR: “Honey, try to calm down, or this part here will really hurt.”

ALANA looks over to see what she means, quickly looks away at the site of the blood being drawn.

ALANA: “Oh my god, I think I’m going to be sick. I can’t believe this.”

DR_CDC: “Now Alana, this is very important: did he ever get any of his bodily fluids on you or.... *um...* in you?”

ALANA: “Does spit count? We kissed.”

DR_CDC (writes furiously): “Yes! Anything else?”

ALANA: “Well, we had sex 3 times, but...”

DR_CDC: “Did you practice safe sex?”

ALANA: “Oh god yeah. My dad refuses to pay for birth control.”

CDC_DR (finishes drawing blood): “Well, that’s good. About the safe sex. Were they latex condoms?”

ALANA: “I dunno; whatever *Magnums* are. Probably.”

CDC_DR (smiles reassuringly): “I’m sure they were. But the three times, he wore one, right?”

ALANA: “Yeah, all he had on was a condom and that stupid hat of his.”

CDC_DR: “You’ll probably be fine. Latex can keep out any bacteria or virus.”

DR_CDC (to himself): “Any *Earthly* virus...”

ALANA: “What?”

DR_CDC: “Nothing.”

ALANA (to CDC_DR): “What did he say?!?”

CDC_DR: “Nothing.”

DR_CDC: “*Uh*, I said the N. E. Ürthlea virus...”

CDC_DR: “Jack...”

DR_CDC: “...discovered by, *uh*, Nathan... Edward... Ürthlea... with an *umlaut*... in Borneo...”

ALANA: “Oh my god, is that what I have?!?”

DR_CDC: “Oh, no, the N. E. Ürthlea virus is harmless...”

CDC_DR grabs an empty coffee cup and slams it down on the table next to DR_CDC. Camera begins a pan in on the cup.

CDC_DR: “Hey Jack, why don’t you go get yourself a steaming cup of ‘*shut the fuck up*’.”

Camera has zoomed in completely on the coffee cup.

52)

Cut to/continue shot of an identical coffee cup. A soft, rhythmic grinding sound starts. Camera begins to pan back, showing the cup to be on a richly grained, darkly stained wooden table. Coming into shot next to the cup is the source of the noise: an antique coffee grinder. A wizened hand (HASSAN’S) is manually turning the crank. Camera continues to pan back, showing HASSAN (back to camera) in a large, luxurious kitchen. On the stove next to him is a tea kettle; soft wisps of steam are beginning to seep out of the spigot.

HASSAN: “The secret is in the grind. Too coarse, and the coffee is watery. Too fine, and it is bitter. And she *must* be done by hand. The electric machines, they have no love to them. By hand is by love. Hassan can tell from how the handle turns when the beans they are ready.” Grinds a bit more. “And they are readyyy... ..now.”

Camera finishes backpan, showing the entire kitchen. HASSAN is the only one in it. He stops cranking, and pulls out the bottom tray where the rich brown coffee grounds had collected.

HASSAN: “Hassan once met a man in Madrid. He was a Hindu in exile from Calcutta. He had a nice grinder. It was fashioned like a Hindu prayer wheel, and even had a written copy of the *prachodayat dhimahi* prayer folded in the handle. Every turn of the crank brought you one lifecycle closer to Nirvana.”

PEGASUS quietly walks into the kitchen behind HASSAN. He stops, frowns, and silently watches. Oblivious to this, HASSAN empties the grinds into a fine mesh filter, and holds it over the cup. His free hand takes the tea kettle, and begins slowly pouring water into the mesh sieve. All-the-while, he continues his soliloquy.

HASSAN: “That Madrid Hindu, he would measure out how many beans would be in each cup by some arcane formula that involved astrology, gematria, and dice rolling. No two cups tasted the same or had the same strength. Now if you wanted a consistent cup of coffee, go visit Beethoven. He had to have 60 beans in each cup. No more, no less. Ludwig would count them out himself, just to be sure.”

PEGASUS: “60? That sounds weak.”

HASSAN startles, nearly splashes water from the kettle. He stops pouring and turns around. Coffee drips from the sieve into his cup.

HASSAN: “Oh, sir! You scare Hassan. He did not hear you come in.”

PEGASUS: “Who were you talking to?”

HASSAN (sheepishly): “Oh, you will forgive Hassan for occasionally speaking with himself sometimes. It is a habit I have been trying to break him of. Would you like a cup of coffee, sir?”

PEGASUS: “I can smell it from here, and it smells good. Your signature blend, I assume? Sure I would. Thank you.”

HASSAN: “*Hehe*, Hassan is glad you like his coffee. He learn from a master caffeine addict in Tehran. *Hehe*, back then, half the city was Islamic coffee martyrs. In the Christian Europe, the drink got guilted by association, because of all the arabs wired of Allah and coffee. It wasn’t until Pope Clement the 8th had a cup, and said ‘This Satan’s drink is so delicious that we shall cheat Satan by baptizing it’.”

PEGASUS (shrugs): “Didn’t know that.”

HASSAN: “Your predecessor did, or at least believed the tale to be true. He refused to drink coffee during his tenure when he learned that a Pope had once blessed his favorite beverage.”

PEGASUS: “Wow; never knew that about him.”

HASSAN: “No, but you would not, of course.”

PEGASUS: “I just met him the once. Before, and even now, I hardly know anything about him.”

HASSAN: “No, but he knew all about you, which is why he picked you to fill his place in the Game upon his passing away.”

PEGASUS: “I thought you picked me.”

HASSAN: “No, Hassan merely honored his wishes.”

PEGASUS sizes HASSAN up, skepticism in his eyes. HASSAN pours more kettle water into the sieve. The cup is about half full.

PEGASUS: “Actually, think you can Irish that up for me?”

HASSAN: “Certainly, sir.”

PEGASUS: “Good. Come to think of it, make it a *vente*. I’ll take it in the Library.”

53)

Cut to entrance arch to the Breckenridge Rare Book Library at Yale University. WILSON walks up steps.

Cut to front desk; JANENE THE LIBRARIAN is pushing a voluminous registry toward WILSON.

JANENE THE LIBRARIAN: “Here you go.” There is a fountain pen in the open spine.

Cut to WILSON signing in to see MS 408. The entry above his is Admiral [name], also to see MS 408.

JANENE THE LIBRARIAN: “Now, you will have to wear these when with the book.” Hands him latex surgical gloves. “It’s so oils from your fingers won’t damage the pages.”

WILSON: “Not to worry, ma’am, I know all about the subject of fingerprints.”

Cut to JANENE THE LIBRARIAN leading WILSON up a staircase to a private reading room. She opens the door for him. Inside, at a table under soft light, is Admiral, hunched over the Voynich Manuscript.

JANENE THE LIBRARIAN (pointing to a phone on the wall next to the door): “This will reach the front desk. That...” points at a no-frills computer in the corner “...has a chat program on it for the librarians here; you can usually reach at least one of us on it. So if you need any further help, those are the best ways to reach us.”

WILSON: “Thank you.”

WILSON enters, finds ADMIRAL is at his feet, gloved hand extended.

ADMIRAL: “Detective Wilson!” [sound of door closing] “Glad you were able to make it.” ADMIRAL motions him to the table. They shake hands warmly; both are surgically gloved. Wilson quickly turns his attention to the table.

WILSON: “Wow, so this is what the fuss is all about.”

Cut to The Voynich Manuscript, open.



WILSON: “It’s smaller than I expected. I guess I’m just used to seeing blown-up reproductions. We actually extrapolated what McLeod wrote, and I spent several hours yesterday going through scans to see if the phrase was in it.”

ADMIRAL: “Any luck?”

WILSON: “No, but I might have missed it. It’s burned into my brain, so I’ll keep an eye out.”

They turn their attention back to the Manuscript.

ADMIRAL: “Amazing this is over 400 years old. It’s 8 times older than I am.”

WILSON: “Do you think these plants ever existed? I wonder if the artwork itself isn’t a code, the plants are metaphors for something elaborated on in the text.”

ADMIRAL: “Well, there’s more to it than just plants.” Flips pages. “Here are the zodiac. All except Aquarius and Capricorn.” Finds the gap, and points at the folio. “You can see the gap; it fell out. Or was pulled out. About a half dozen pages are missing this way. And 2 were forcibly removed...” flips to one.

Cut to open page, a small stub above.

ADMIRAL (voice-over): “Here. You can still see the stub: someone cut it out.”

WILSON: “Someone not like what it had to say?”

ADMIRAL: “Hell, maybe it was the translation key.”

They turn pages randomly, half way through the book now into the ‘biology’ section.

WILSON: “I don’t like the artwork. Especially this stuff. The plants are creepy enough, but these...”

ADMIRAL: “I wonder if the artist was the author?”

WILSON: “They’re not the same? I’d always assumed...”

ADMIRAL: “The art was put on first, and then the text was written around it afterward.”

WILSON: “Has it actually been established that the text is about the pictures?”

ADMIRAL: “Well, it’s assumed, but not proven. Why?”

WILSON: “Just wondering... these pictures just don’t sit right, and my gut instinct is to discard them. Besides, my victim MacLeod wrote in Voynich, not paint a picture with his blood.”

They reach the “recipes”: single lines or paragraphs of Voynich text, each with a little star or flower in front of it, like a bulleted item.



WILSON: "I've seen this before."

ADMIRAL: "You have?"

WILSON (thinks a moment): "Well, this format, anyway. The Gospel of Thomas."

ADMIRAL: "I know Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but never heard of Thomas. Is that in the Apocrypha?"

WILSON: "Yeah, Thomas didn't make the canonical cut. Actually, MacLeod had a copy of it at his house. I remember glancing at it. It said it was secret sayings of Jesus, and then it broke them down like this." Taps each of the paragraphs.

ADMIRAL: "*Huh*, I always thought it was just some kind of appendix, or maybe a 'deep thoughts, by Jack Handyvich'."

WILSON: "Could be, but this makes me think. Suppose the text, whatever the message is in the writing, is the real key here, and the pictures are just window-dressing. Camouflage. It's disguised to look like an herbal, so if the book fell into the wrong hands of some inquisitor, it wouldn't be recognized for what it really was."

ADMIRAL: "Catholic Church didn't take a kind view on alchemy; only way to eternal life was through Christ via them, so they tried to eliminate the competition. If they caught you with this, they'd kill you."

WILSON: "I thought alchemy was turning lead to gold."

ADMIRAL: "No. It's trying to make an immortality mixture. Gunpowder was discovered by accident in the 9th century by a Chinese alchemist working on an elixir of life."

WILSON: "Maybe that's what all this is:" [moves his finger along text] "Eye of newt, wing of bat and a pinch of wolfsbane. put it in a silver bowl with a silver spoon under a full moon... [down to next bullet] "...add 1 crunchy frog, stirring it with the feather from a dead Norwegian parrot..."

ADMIRAL (grins): "Still, they'd kill you for that if they caught you."

WILSON: "Yeah, but if you were part of some heretical cult or secret society, better to be killed with them thinking you're just some lone nut alchemist than a member of a heretical sect or a secret society. Also, the Inquisition wouldn't bother putting too much effort into translating the text, as it pertained to things they did not approve of or use."

ADMIRAL: "I can see that."

WILSON: "If nothing else, the pictures are grouped thematically, so even if they're just window dressing, they could help serve as an indication for when one text ends and the next begins. Hell, this could be an alternate bible of suppressed gospels. First part's the Gospel of Peter, then maybe the 4th and 5th Epistles of John, a Gospel of Mary Magdalene, and the Gospel of Thomas at the end."

ADMIRAL: "Who said it has to be religious? It could be some weird philosopher. Hell, maybe the Roger Bacon story is true, at least in part: one of these could be a transcription of some lost teaching of his."

WILSON: "What do you know about secret societies back then?"

ADMIRAL: “When? 1600s Europe?”

WILSON nods.

ADMIRAL: “Next to nothing.”

WILSON: “But they existed, right?”

ADMIRAL (does his best not to laugh condescendingly, finally manages to say): “Detective Wilson, history is the chronicle of conflicts between various secret societies, written by the winners of those conflicts. This has always gone on. Remember, our Founding Fathers were all part of a conspiracy to overthrow the British government in the Colonies and start their own country. Even back in the caveman days, I guarantee you had Og and Grunt meeting in secret behind a boulder plotting to do something bad to Chunga.”

WILSON: “Chunga?”

ADMIRAL: “Gimme a fuckin’ break; *you* make up a caveman name.”

WILSON: “I’d have to check the poster on my son’s wall; I forget the guy’s name, but he sings for Sonic Lobotomy. Well, kind of grunts anyway. Sloping forehead and knuckles below his knees.”

ADMIRAL: “Gotcha. Maybe he’s the reincarnation or descendent of Chunga behind the rock.”

WILSON: “I thought Grog and Grunt were behind the rock?”

ADMIRAL: “That’s just what they *want* you to think.”

ADMIRAL: “Wow, and I thought all this time it was the neanderthal on the grassy knoll.”

54)

Cut to: street of Vegas bars. There is The Grassy Knoll, Boiler Room, Harkonen No-Globe, Axis Mundi, and Area 69. Night time, but lit up in neon. Moderate amount of traffic; this is the Vegas outskirts, off the strip.

Cut to interior of Area 69. Faux dive bar with a combination ufo and homoerotic theme. Fair amount of lasers and holos, tables look like flying saucers, all the slot machine handles are dildos, etc. Maybe 20 people inside, including several bull-dyke-ish women. 2 beefy bouncers in black police uniforms with mirrored badges and mirrored sunglasses flank the front door, arms crossed and expressionless.

MUFON walks in; looks around, and heads for the bar. He grabs a stool away from everyone else.

69TENDER: “What can I get you?”

MUFON: “Coffee. Lotta cream, lotta sugar.”

69TENDER (nods): “Anything else?”

MUFON: “Out of curiosity, about 2 years ago, did you have a cabana boy here knocked unconscious with a giant dildo?”

69TENDER (grins but shakes his head): “No, think I’d have heard about that. But 2 years ago? I’ve only been here a couple months. Why, was that you?”

MUFON: “No; just heard it happened, and was wondering if it was true.”

69TENDER: “Ask a cabana boy.” Winks and goes off for the coffee.

MUFON looks around, surveying the crowd. Everyone is ignoring him. Obviously uncomfortable, turns his attention back to the bar, intently studying the bottles. 69TENDER returns with his drink.

69TENDER: “Here.”

MUFON nods thanks.

69TENDER: “Coffee’s comp; let me know when you’re ready to upgrade.”

Again MUFON nods. Beside him, a customer wearing a black planter’s-style cowboy hat and black army jacket with a ‘Hanged Man’ tarot card painted on back walks up to the bar, next to MUFON. It is CENTAUR, but this should not be clear at first.

CENTAUR: “Hey, you got spicy bort wings?”

MUFON looks over.

69TENDER: “Pork rings? Uh, I don’t think so. Want a menu?”

CENTAUR: “No thanks.”

69TENDER leaves.

MUFON: “I hear bort wings are good with ranch dressing.”

CENTAUR: “Absatively not. Son, *nothing* is good with ranch dressing.”

They stare each other down. After a moment, CENTAUR tilts his cowboy hat back; the inside is lined with aluminum foil.

CENTAUR: “Okay, Muffin, I’ve shown you mine; you show me yours.”

MUFON tilts his hat back; it too is lined with tin foil.

CENTAUR (nods): “Okay then. Come with me.”

He leads MUFON toward the back, where some private rooms are. There is a long bank of them, labeled Hanger 1 to Hanger 18. Curtains are pulled on about half. CENTAUR goes to #13, which has drawn curtains, and holds them aside for MUFON. The booth beyond is empty; there is a single tallow candle lit on the table and an overhead ufo lamp. MUFON takes one side, by the edge; CENTAUR takes the other, and lets the curtain fall behind him.

Cut to “hanger” interior.

MUFON: “Thanks for skipping the wire pat-down.”

CENTAUR: “I figured just mentioning it would curtail you actually wearing one, if you were a trap. That, or some of the shit they got now, you need a fucking microscope to find, so let’s just get this over with. I have little enough time as it is.”

CENTAUR slowly opens his coat; inside is a holstered pistol. He reaches into a coat pocket and pulls out a small stack of mixed pictures. He does a quick fan of them; it is unclear what is on them. The top is a Polaroid of an oscilloscope chart [use the graph for the phrase ‘fuck you human’]

CENTAUR: “These are not only my credentials, but probably the proof you are looking for. The photos I took myself, and the Polaroids I got from either the photographer or someone who was in the room when it was taken.”

Quick cut of MUFON, straining to see what they are. CENTAUR closes the fan.

CENTAUR: “I’ll show you those only after I’m sure about you.”

MUFON (awkwardly): “And I’ll accept them as real only after I’m sure about you. Don’t take this personal, but put yourself in my shoes: everyone’s been feeding me half-truths and flat-out bullshit, and I’m the poster boy for paranoid skepticism right now. I’m getting set up to go down, and it’s scaring the shit out of me. And I’m not even sure why or by who.”

CENTAUR: “Hey, I don’t know you, so I can’t tell you who or why. But I hear your fear, so fine, I’ll go first.” Looks around, out the curtain. “I’ll start with what you already know: aliens are among us, and the government not only knows it but has samples on ice.”

MUFON (nodding, straight faced): “Yeah,,,”

CENTAUR: “These pictures deal with four types of them...”

MUFON (surprised): “Four? Or are you including...”

CENTAUR (raises a hand to stop him): “Keep your voice down. To be honest, I don’t know your group’s mythology, so what *we* call them and what *y’all* call them are probably way different; besides, we generally try to use *their* own name for themselves, not some new-agey creation. Anyway, four types here. Now, the aliens have their own languages, right? Well, I’m part of a translation team that deals with one of them. I do language analysis. I specialize in Hamaddi . So...”

MUFON: “They the Grays? Y’know, almond eyes...?”

CENTAUR (derisively): “Fuck no. What you call the Grays are... Actually, they’re one of the exceptions to our ‘call ’em by their own name’ policy. What we call them is... Extremely rude. It’s also irrelevant. Like I said, I deal with Hamaddi, and even then, just their language.”

MUFON: “What’s Hamaddi?”

CENTAUR: “The language or the species?”

MUFON: “Uh, yes.”

CENTAUR holds out a 3"x5" glossy print to the camera.

CENTAUR: "Hamaddi."

Camera does a close-up of picture. it is a close-up of a human-like back, with fine feathers for hair. Written across the back are characters similar to Voynich.

CENTAUR (off screen): "Like I said, I do their languages. They write tons of it, but occasionally they tattoo themselves, like this. They do their tails a lot, too."

MUFON (staring in wonder and puzzlement): "What's it say? I can't read Voynich without a translator program." Looks up at CENTAUR. "Sorry."

CENTAUR: "So you think that's Voynich?"

MUFON: "Well, yeah... Isn't it?"

CENTAUR: "No. It's Hamaddi . You can't tell the difference?"

MUFON: "Well, I've never heard of Hamaddi until now, and I've only known Voynich for a month or so, but it looks like Voynich. ...I guess... What's it say?"

CENTAUR: "It says 'obey your superiors,' but it says it in Hamaddi. That's not Voynich."

MUFON: "Actually, you might be right. It's Voynich-ish, but..."

CENTAUR: "Did Friendish tell you this was Voynich?"

MUFON: "I've never seen that before. But actually, I pitched the idea to him, and he seemed to go along with it..."

CENTAUR: "Hamaddi looks like Voynich, but isn't. They are demonstrably unrelated. Unfortunately, Friendish made the same mistake when I showed him these. I tried to tell him, but he thought it was at least worth looking into. I can see *why* he would think that, but he's still wrong."

MUFON: "Actually, some of it doesn't look quite right..."

CENTAUR (takes the picture back and puts it on the bottom of the deck): "Kid, it's not Voynich. I'm gonna guess that you got into this thinking it was because of Friendish?"

MUFON: "Yeah, but not at first. I saw the Yale book on-line, and recognized the pictures. The cosmology parts."

CENTAUR (shrugs, and a bit sarcastically): "The sun, the moon, the zodiac signs; pretty easy to recognize."

MUFON: "But the constellations and star charts... I thought if we could match them with an actual star pattern as seen from Earth, we'd find out something like where *they* are from and what-not."

CENTAUR: "Friendish asked me if any of the plants were from the Hamaddi."

MUFON: "I thought that too!"

CENTAUR: [shushes MUFON]

MUFON: (lower voice) “I thought the plants were extraterrestrial, or maybe hybrids with ours...”

CENTAUR: “I know the Hamaddi are very arboreal, and I gather their home planet is just one big tree-town. You know how Eskimos got like 20 different words for ‘snow’? Hamaddi have fifty words for ‘leaf’. Since Hamaddi are so into plants and half the Voynich pictures out there are weird-looking plants, Friendish thought that helped prove Hamaddi and Voynich were the same. But they’re not.”

MUFON: “So...”

CENTAUR: “So all this Voynich crap is irrelevant.”

MUFON: “Maybe, maybe not.”

CENTAUR: “Kid, it’s not.”

MUFON: “Okay, but on the bright side, it led me to those.” Indicates pictures. “I already knew about the... the Grays-which-cannot-be-named... Now I know about Hamaddi, and... and... you said there were four, so three others.”

CENTAUR (smirk): “Saladrin, Rathgeans, and The Conquered.”

MUFON: “The Conquered?”

CENTAUR: “Well, that’s the translation of what the Rathgeans call ‘em, and that’s a lot easier to pronounce. Rathgeans use ‘em for slave labor and cannonfodder. Apparently they fly, and sting like a *motherfucker*. Here, you can see the wound from one..”

Cut to: Polaroid of back of a humanoid head. most of it is gore-coated skull that has clean demarcation/cut lines with the flesh, which resembles a plucked turkey. Focus of the picture is spiky red tattoo, writing/script unlike any others. Below this is part of a huge, scarred-over welt the size of a quarter.

CENTAUR [off-screen]: “At the bottom, that’s part of a sting scar.”

MUFON [off camera]: “My god,” [Cut to MUFON, staring in repulsion] “What is that?”

CENTAUR: “Rathgean. You mean the *writing*, right?”

MUFON: “Uh, no. The... thing it was on. Was that a Rathgean?”

CENTAUR [putting picture on the bottom of the deck]: “Naw, that was a Hamaddi, named Steptujjin. He died in a Rathgean p.o.w. camp. They did that to him.”

MUFON: “Wow, and I always thought the Grays were behind the cattle mutilations, but I guess it’s the Rathgeans?”

CENTAUR: “No, actually that is the Grays.”

Blank look from MUFON.

CENTAUR: “Actually, this is a bigger dead end than I thought for you. These...” flips pictures “...aren’t the aliens you’re looking for.”

MUFON (awkward *pause*): “I don’t understand.”

CENTAUR: “Hamaddi, Rathgeans, they don’t bother with us, and our only contact is when we bother *them*. You’re after the Gray almond eye stereotypes, right? The ones that do the cattle mutilations, crop circles, abductions, and shit?”

MUFON: “I was abducted.”

Awkward *pause*.

CENTAUR (flat, unconvincing): “I’m sorry.”

MUFON: “They fucked me up bad.” [*silence*] “I’m dying from it.” [*silence*] (hint of desperation) “I need to find these motherfuckers and have them fix me.”

CENTAUR: “What did they do to you?”

MUFON: “I’m, uh, not really sure how to describe it. But they took things out of me. And ever since this lumpy stuff is filling up in the holes.” [*silence*] MUFON lifts shirt: his chest has an ugly arced scar, as if he had been stabbed with spoon and it never healed properly. “I dug some of the gunk out once, when I was 19. The shit smelled like an aquarium, and it shriveled up in the sun.” Lowers shirt. “It’s grown back since then. More of it, too. One of them is solidifying into a tumor.” Taps his scalp.

CENTAUR [*long pause*]: “Muffin man, get help.”

MUFON: “What, so the doctors can monitor my progress? No way.”

CENTAUR: “Well, if you don’t go, you’ll probably die, so what’s the worst they could do to you?”

MUFON: “You work at Area 51 and you don’t know the answer to that?”

CENTAUR: “Hey, I just do language analysis. But think about getting help. Or not.”

MUFON: “Streiber probably thinks I bailed with his money so I could get an operation.”

CENTAUR: “Streiber; he’s the head of your contact chapter, right?”

MUFON: “Yeah. He...”

CENTAUR: “Right, right. Is he interested in Voynich, or think all this is Voynich too?”

MUFON: “What? No. Actually, he didn’t buy it when I first brought it up to him, but he let me look into it.”

CENTAUR: “So has he seen any of the Voynich works, or translations?”

MUFON: “I showed him the Yale book on line, and told him about the one Friendish had, the one I thought proved it all. But no, he never saw it. Hell, I only saw Friendish’s book once. Last I knew, Nimbus had it. I don’t even know where it is now.”

Cut to CENTAUR's coat pocket. There is a bulge the size of a trade paperback inside.

CENTAUR [voice-over]: "Well, I wouldn't worry about it, because Voynich isn't an alien language, remember?"

MUFON: "Then what is Voynich?"

CENTAUR: "Who cares? There's no extraterrestrial connection, so forget about it."

MUFON: "How can I forget about it? I'm dying!"

CENTAUR: "Your cure isn't in Voynich, and actually, it's not in any of these, either." Waves cards. "You were abducted by what you probably call the Grays, am I right?" No answer. Fans cards out. "These aren't Grays. Wrong aliens. Sorry, but I can't help you." Puts cards away.

MUFON: "But..."

CENTAUR (holds up a hand): "You know, if I were dying of an alien-induced tumor, I'd hate to spend what little time I had left barking up the wrong tree. Unfortunately, near as I can tell that's exactly what you're doing. You're not being used, you're just confused."

MUFON: "Maybe... but people are trying to kill me."

CENTAUR: "You know why? I think it's because no one in power ever sat down with you to sniff you out, see that you're relatively harmless and well-intentioned, but extremely misinformed. I think you got guilted by association with Friendish."

MUFON: "Why? What'd Friendish do?"

CENTAUR: "No idea, but I'll bet it's *bad*. I haven't heard from him in a week; I'm actually guessing he's landfill."

MUFON: "To be honest, I don't know him that well. We met a couple weeks ago, and actually only in person twice. I'm actually half-convinced he's behind all this, the one setting me up."

CENTAUR: "Muffin Man, no one's setting you up except yourself by believing all this shit. Friendish bought it, and he's missing. I'd take a hint from that."

MUFON: "I still gotta wonder about that nigga."

CENTAUR (*pause*): "Did you just say 'nigga'?"

MUFON: "Oh sorry; I was just talking with a good friend of mine a couple days ago. He said he'd just hung out with his dad, and all they listened to was ghetto rap. Ever since he mentioned it, I've had this loop from a, uh..."

CENTAUR: "If you say 'Public Enemy' I will react *very badly*."

MUFON looks shocked. After a moment, grabs his hat.

MUFON: "What, am I having a leak?"

CENTAUR watches him.

MUFON: “Not that I want you to react badly, but how did you know?”

CENTAUR (look of dawning understanding): “Muffin, I need you to explain very slowly what you just said about your friend, his dad, and the ghetto rap.”

MUFON: “Why?”

CENTAUR (low snarl): “Because it’s fucking important.”

MUFON: “My friend Riggs said he spent the weekend with his father...”

CENTAUR: “Riggs... Riggert?”

MUFON: “Yeah. You know him?”

CENTAUR: “How well do *you* know him?”

MUFON: “Known him over a decade, since junior high school. We had a lot of classes together, especially computers. He’s interested in ufos, so I recruited him into Streiber’s network.”

CENTAUR: “Do you know who his father is?”

MUFON (shrug): “No. Shit, can’t remember if I ever met him, actually. I think Riggs just lived with his mom. Why? Who was his dad?”

CENTAUR: “He used to be someone very important out at Area 51.”

MUFON: “That’s Nevada. Riggs and I knew each other in Florida.”

CENTAUR: “Riggs’s dad was never home, remember? He was at work out here.”

MUFON: “Makes sense, I guess.”

CENTAUR: “Aw, shit.”

MUFON: “What?”

CENTAUR: “You know what? You were right: you are getting set up.”

MUFON: “By who, Riggs?” Look of disbelief. “No...” [pause to actually think about it] “You know, Riggs is who introduced me to Friendish.”

CENTAUR snaps his fingers and points at MUFON: “That’s it! Holy shit, you *are* getting set up.”

MUFON: “But why? Riggs and I are...”

CENTAUR: “In the wrong place at the wrong time. Hell, Riggs may not even know he’s part of this. His dad used Riggs to set you up... to set Friendish up... to Nimbus...” slams hand down. “Aw shit. We’re *both* getting set up!”

MUFON frowns at him.

CENTAUR: “Fuck! This makes sense now.”

MUFON: “Um, so explain it to me.”

CENTAUR: “Short version? *I’m* the target. You were just used to ultimately set *me* up.”

MUFON: “I still don’t get it.”

CENTAUR: “Your friend’s dad is trying to set me up to take a fall. Or... even *he’s* just a link, and I’m getting worked by a sinister little midget in a fez...”

MUFON: “Whatever. I don’t get why.”

CENTAUR: “Um,” looks confused a second, “Let’s just say it’s these.” Flaps the pictures. “Fuck, I can’t believe this. We’ve both been played like super-sized suckers. You were just part of the link to get to me. And I’ll bet the plan is that Pegasus kills you, makes it look like I did it, and then MPs storm in and machine gun me. Game over. Fuck!”

MUFON: “So what the fuck do I do, though?”

CENTAUR: “Try to stay alive: I don’t want to get pinned for your murder...”

MUFON: “Look, even if what you say is true and I’m just a patsy pawn in some weird scheme, you think they’re gonna leave me alone or alive? Especially now that I know about it?”

CENTAUR: “Muffin, you don’t know *shit*. Most of what I’ve told you is introductory level. I don’t have time to give you background, especially now that I realize I’m long along the road to getting scroaded.”

MUFON: “What the fuck am I gonna do?”

CENTAUR: “Well, tradition is to find the deepest hole to hide in and never come out.”

MUFON: “I’m connected to the death of a couple federal agents, and I lost five figures of Streiber’s money. So now I not only got feds and Streiber after me, but apparently Riggs’s dad as well.”

CENTAUR: “Streiber should be the least of your concerns. He probably knows the CDC have your money and you didn’t run off with it, and the CDC know you didn’t kill the two guys. No one knows we’ve just talked and figured this shit out, so no one knows you’re the wiser. But you can tell them the truth: Voynich is bullshit and has nothing to do with the Grays you’re interested in. Make Riggs and his dad believe that, and you might just stay alive.”

MUFON: “I’ll take my chances with the hole, thank you very much.”

CENTAUR (shrugs): “Well, your life, so live it out how you choose. To be honest, you’ve got your problems, and I got mine, and I happen to think mine are a hell of a lot worse.”

MUFON: “You got people trying to kill you too?”

CENTAUR: “The wheels are well in motion.”

MUFON: “How about a brain tumor full of grey goop?”

CENTAUR: “Ya got me there. But do yourself a favor: forget about all this. It’s all a red herring to what you’re really after.”

MUFON: “Why does everyone keep telling me that?”

CENTAUR: “Because it’s true.” Taps jacket where photos are. “I’ve shown you the truth. Think about it.”

MUFON: “I am so fucked... ..What am I going to do?”

CENTAUR: “Well, I’ve already suggested finding a comfy hole to hide in. Or you could hitchhike to Ecuador and become an alpaca rancher. Or maybe just sell *everything* you own for hard cash. Buy yourself a nice suit and a cyanide pill. Give the rest to a hooker to give you the best blowjob of your life, and then bite down when you spill.”

MUFON: “Fuck...”

CENTAUR (shrugs): “Well, sounds like you have some heavy thinking to do, so I’ll leave you to it. Just promise me, you’ll drop all this. Stick to Grays, at least.”

MUFON: “Well, I will, but only if you’ll tell me what it is you call them.”

CENTAUR smiles.

55)

Cut to COUNT.

COUNT: “[vile insult]!”

FRIENDISH: “Hey, Count, you ever think of taking an anger management class?”

COUNT: “*Bah*; I once had to teach one as community service sentence.”

Cut to large room in Ski Lodge interior. It is the ballroom from the Rave; the bar can be seen in the background.

COUNT: “So, Friendish, who auditioned you?”

FRIENDISH: “I got auditioned twice. First by Centaur, then by Pegasus.”

COUNT: “The Pegasus auditioned you personally?”

FRIENDISH: “No. He had Hassan handle it.”

COUNT (winces): “Wow, my friend, those are two of the toughest players to please. I am impressed.”

FRIENDISH: “I was up front: I’m not a player.”

COUNT: “And I am all the more impressed that they both bought such bullshit.”

FRIENDISH: “Hey, you have your cover story, I have mine.”

COUNT (laughs heartily): “I had actually heard that you were a referee.”

FRIENDISH (laughs, quickly contains himself): “Ref’s don’t get auditioned. That’s not how T.H.E.Y. run things.”

COUNT: “A player pretending to be a referee is a dangerous gambit, but not without precedent. I could name a few Borgia Popes for you!”

FRIENDISH: “Has there ever been a referee pretending to be a player?”

COUNT: “Pretending? No. But in it for real, of course! The other half of that Borgia brigade at St. Peter’s Basilica fit that category!”

FRIENDISH: “Well, I’m not a player, and I’m not on the Council. I’m just a spectator who trades in game-related paraphernalia.”

COUNT: “Ah, this I can appreciate. But even the fans in the stand are monitored, no? Do you collect Voynich, or just trade in it?”

FRIENDISH: “Just trade. If I started collecting, that’d be taking sides.”

COUNT: “Nonsense, my friend. You know who the biggest collector and owner of Nazi memorabilia was? Bob Hope. Flags, medals, he had it all. I hear even some soap and the lampshades. And why not? It was his glory days. I can appreciate that, as a collector myself.”

FRIENDISH: “Ah yes, the legendary collection of Count Lugosovich. Is any of it here? I’d like to see it.”

COUNT: “I try to spread a little bit of it about, so I have something familiar at each place I go to. But it is rare that I share it with others, including those I have only physically known less than 2 hours.”

FRIENDISH: “Fair enough. I gather most of the juicy nugs are stashed back in your homeland-in-exile, but I was rather hoping you had a La Nada or two lying around.” The **COUNT** cocks an eye. “I’ve recently become interested in her work.”

COUNT: “*Eh*, you have good eye, my friend. La Nada... Her work often seems amateurish to the untrained eye, but I see in it a whimsy, care-free attitude, and find her illustrations as beautiful as she was. I own the house where she was born, in Pamplona. I have built a warehouse around it to protect it.”

FRIENDISH: “I’m gonna go with a hunch here: you’re gonna tell me you two were lovers?”

COUNT (grins) “*Hehe*, you know something? I suspect Hassan had a romp with her in the Tent while I was out worshipping the Madonna.”

FRIENDISH: “La Nada did the drawings in the Yale Manuscript. Unfortunately, a dozen or so of those pages fell out before Willie Voynich found it in 1911.”

COUNT: “*Pah*, 12 of them were missing when Kircher received it in 1666. 2 more he removed himself with the straight razor he use to shave with. I do not know what was on those 2 pages that incited the Father to excise them at razorpoint. I have heard a story that they were sent across town to the Vatican and sit to this day in a locked box in the library archives. But my source on this is not reliable.”

FRIENDISH: “Who’s your source?”

COUNT: “Cardinal Spumoni.”

FRIENDISH shrugs, shaking his head at the lack of recognition.

COUNT: “*Ahh*, you will hear of him in a few years, when he change his name. Last I knew, he was deciding between Leo the 13th and Gregory the 17th. Curiously, he is decidedly disinterested in Voynich, which is quite likely why he was entrusted with the two pages.”

FRIENDISH: “What do you know about the 12 pages that fell out?”

COUNT (smiles): “*Ah*, those. You know, I do not know of their current whereabouts. But curiously, the same year Wilfred Voynich found the book that would bear his name at Yale, I found the missing pages in it a half continent away. You know who had them? Rasputin. He show me them one night; I almost crap my pants when I saw. He did not know what they were, but said they were what helped him heal the tzarevich’s hemophilia. I am guessing they were lost or destroyed during the Revolution a few years later; I have searched, but have not found.”

FRIENDISH: “Well, at least Rasputin was nice enough to let you copy them.”

COUNT: “*Hehe*, and why do you say that?”

FRIENDISH: “I saw some crappy scans that one of your underlings ran off and did a half-assed job of destroying.”

COUNT: “*Pah!* You mean Phil the minion, don’t you! I will chop him to chum, sew him in his sharkskin suit, and go fishing in Crete with his carcass!”

FRIENDISH: “Relax, Count. I’m just letting you know that I know. Like I said, my clientele already have bad scans of them; they were just hoping to upgrade.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, who is this clientele of yours?”

FRIENDISH: “We’ll discuss that and what they might offer after you discuss in a little more detail what it is you have.”

COUNT: “*Haha*, my friends were right to suggest you as a scout for me. You are doing an excellent job of scouting me out to sucker me into a deal.”

FRIENDISH: “Flattery will only get you off the subject. I think we were in 1911 Russia...”

COUNT: “*Pah*, Rasputin. What a smelly *starets* he was. Yes, he agreed to let me copy them. His fee was one virgin a page. Curiously, the week after he ask that price, a small plague hit a village in my home Bohemia, and wipe out all but 12 young girls. I felt bad for the catastrophe, and was nice enough to send them to St. Petersburg vacation to help in their grief.”

FRIENDISH: “So you have first-generation copies of the missing pages?”

COUNT smiles but does not answer.

FRIENDISH: “Are they in color? My clientele were very insistent on this aspect.”

COUNT: “Well, before we get into any more specifics, I would like to know who I am dealing with beyond you.”

FRIENDISH (pulls out cellphone): “May I make a call?”

COUNT: “Please do.”

FRIENDISH hits a number, waits several seconds.

FRIENDISH: “Moleback? It’s Friendish.”

The COUNT’s eyes widen up, and his grin grows huge. He leans forward in his chair, hand beckoning for the phone. FRIENDISH deliberately ignores him.

FRIENDISH: “Nothing bad, and in fact I have good news. Have you talked with Kay, or do you know if Kay has talked to Klaus? ...no, that’s okay. Short version: I have tracked down the pictures, and will be negotiating a price shortly. However, my hunch is this party will not take *cash*, so I’d like to talk *trade*... ..uh huh,, ...Actually, there’s *that*, but I also have a few ideas you all may agree to, too. I’ll get back to you with updates when I have more information... ..Right. Bye.” *Clicks* off. Smiles at the Count.

COUNT (greatly amused): “You work for *Moleback* and *Klaustina*?”

FRIENDISH: “Well, in this specific instance, I do.”

COUNT: “*Haahaa*, that is too funny. Those whores refuse to do business with me any more. I used to buy their reproductions all the time, but then we had a falling out. *Ahhh*, it is as much my fault: Absinthe and morphine should not be mixed, especially on Walpurgisnacht. But they do not know that I own any *real* Voynich. I am not sure I want them to know, either, or that I want them to have these in particular.”

FRIENDISH: “I’m sure you could work out a trade: you let them copy them, and they do all printing for you free for a year a page.”

COUNT: “*Pah*. No. You know what my price is? I want a 3-some with them.”

FRIENDISH: “I somehow don’t think they’d go for that, or if they did, they’d have razor-encrusted diaphragms.”

COUNT: “I do not doubt that, which is why I made the joke of the offer. They would not accept it, but no, I do not wish to sell these to them. Do you know of their vendetta genocide agenda against y chromosome carriers?”

FRIENDISH: “Not from them, of course, but yeah.”

COUNT: “*Pah*, I am hesitant to contribute something that might hasten their little horticultural experiment. You can lead a horticulture, but you cannot make her think, *eh*?”

FRIENDISH (smiles): “So you buy into that?”

COUNT: “My friend Friendish, I am too old enough as it is that I do not wish to risk my health to some fanatical brigade of vegan lesbian terrorists. You know, La Nada was one herself, at least at first. But then came her Egyptian years, and by the time she hit Bohemia she’d had 5 male lovers, including the caravan driver who gave her the lift into my County. Since she knew of the VLT plans and was still in transition, I am hesitant that some of that knowledge might have ended up in her drawings. Indeed, some believe that is why she died.”

FRIENDISH: “Whatever happened to La Nada, anyway?”

COUNT: “She drowned in Germany. One night, someone broke into the Tent, hit her over the head with the Lamp, and then took her to a river 100 miles away. There is a boathouse on the river, with a water wheel on the side. They tie her to it, let her ride all night. I hear she was huge when they found her next morning, bloated from all the water she drink and drown in during first few hours. She was buried at my family’s spring villa, but unfortunately those Hapsburg bastards accidentally destroyed the site.”

FRIENDISH: “You know who killed her?”

COUNT: “*Pah*, how would I know; I was not there, was I? I have heard many theories, have many more myself, but I do no know who did this to her. I have heard even that the VLT did this to her, for revealing secrets, much the way Masons killed Mozart for revealing their secrets in *The Magic Flute*. I have also heard that a rival side within the Voynich game made a move to take her out. She was a key piece, a queen, even, and her loss was felt on our side.”

FRIENDISH: “Was there retaliation?”

COUNT: “Always. A good name for the Game would be ‘I got you *last*.’ The retaliations continue to this day.”

FRIENDISH: “Like killing Nimbus?”

COUNT: “*Ah*, that hack writer in America, no?”

FRIENDISH: “Yeah.”

COUNT: “*Bah*, I heard he is dead. That is good.”

FRIENDISH: “So were you the one behind it?”

COUNT: “No, but I probably would not tell you if I were. But in this case, I tell you truth. I also tell you truth that while I did not murder the Nimbus, I do approve of it being done. Nimbus was not only pissing into the purity of Voynich, he was raping the quality. His translations were terrible at best, and in fact I bet he was at least ad libbing if not deliberately making up lies.”

FRIENDISH: “Nimbus was whipping off fakes?”

COUNT: “I do not know how large of an output he has produced, but the few I have seen of his seemed about as accurate as Kircher. In fact, I think in one he rip off Kircher word for word in few places. *Pah!* We are better off without him.”

FRIENDISH: “Just curious, because you don’t seem to mind fakes. Take Moleback and Klaustina’s output.”

COUNT: “*Ah*, but that is the difference. The question is not ‘is it real or is it a fake,’ the question is ‘is it a good fake, or a bad fake’.” **FRIENDISH** cracks a grin and nods. “You know who say that? American writer named Clifford Irving. Back in the ’70s, he wrote fake Howard Hughes biography that fool everyone until Howard call from his hotel room in his Vegas hideaway and say he never heard of Irving. His was a good fake. His artist friend Elmyr? His were great fakes. Moleback’s friend Tree? Hers are phenomenal fakes. But The Nimbus? *Bah!* He could not fake an orgasm.”

FRIENDISH: “You know, all this talk about good fakes and bad fakes has given me inspiration. Can I toss out a possibility offer, one y-chromosome’er to another?”

COUNT: “*Eh?*”

FRIENDISH: “Give Moleback and Klaustina fakes, or at least alter the pictures. If something’s painted brown, make it red; change the number of leaves on a flower, or take the thorns off... Their copies are so bad, they won’t know. They’ll be happy with it, I’m sure, but it should in practice be worthless.”

COUNT: “Hey, I like your thinking. I put that idea aside, might be nice to come back to. I still trying to decide what my asking price is, let alone if I even sell. One stipulation must be that Moleback and Klaustina cannot know from whom they are getting this. Tell them Phil the minion was selling it privately to Di Medicigan or something.”

FRIENDISH: “Hey, do you know if anything M.B. and K have done ever ended up at a di Medicigan auction?”

COUNT: (wry smile): “No, of course not. But there have been times when the di Medicigan has mentioned to me on the side before bidding that a certain item is not in a condition that would meet my standards, and I would be unhappy if I won. I notice these items are always paintings, and are usually bought by people I do not know at prices I would never pay. But such instances are very, very rare, and I have attended a lot of auctions, both with this present di Medicigan and his dynasty before him.”

FRIENDISH: “Just how long have these auctions been going on, anyway?”

COUNT smiles.

56)

Cut to Auction Room. **DI MEDICIGAN** and **AUCTIONEER** preparing plaques for next auction, on the table is a pad with a half dozen names, and an inverted derby full of slips of paper.

AUCTIONEER (looking at list): “Count Lugosovich?”

DI MEDICIGAN (pause, then smile): “Cumquat.”

Auctioneer writes that down on the list.

AUCTIONEER: “Hughes.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “No preference.”

AUCTIONEER reaches into the hat, pulls out a slip of paper.

AUCTIONEER: “Mango.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Mr. Mango? *Hehe*. Why not.”

AUCTIONEER begins writing. Laptop on the side, where DI MEDICIGAN was during Scene 3, *beeps*; its screen lights up with FRONT DESK’s face.

DI MEDICIGAN looks over, sees the screen.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Si?”

FRONT DESK: “Sir, you have a video call from the Centaur.”

DI MEDICIGAN gets up and goes over. Sits down in his former chair, enveloped in shadows except for dim monitor glare.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Put him on.”

FRONT DESK is replaced by CENTAUR. He looks clean, fresh shaven, and presentable.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Centaur?”

CENTAUR: “Mr. di Medicigan.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Where are you calling from?”

CENTAUR: “The Bat Cave.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “*Ah*, good.”

CENTAUR (holds up the cowboy hat, showing the foil to the camera): “I got your message.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Yes, I knew you would be smart enough to figure it out. So how went the audition with Robert Mufon?”

CENTAUR: “He failed.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Ah, most of us had suspected he would.”

CENTAUR: “I’ll be honest, though: I set him up to fail and guided him to flunk.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “And after he failed, did you pull another Penguin? Or Nimbus? Or Legion, of the many you have killed for their failure?”

CENTAUR: “No sir.” *Pause*. “He’s happy with forgetting about it and just hiding in a hole in Ecuador. He’s deprogrammed from Voynich, I think.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “You *think*?”

CENTAUR: “He’s not a player, nor is he trying to be one. I did my homework on him and made some correct guesses about his motives. I pointed out the error of his ways in a way that would sink in, and I’m satisfied he’ll steer clear of us from now on. I recommend leaving him alone; he’s got enough problems. I’ll file a full report later, of course.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Well if you are right and he is both harmless and going away, that is good for him, and thus good for you. Though of course, should that prognosis be wrong…”

CENTAUR: “I don’t think it will matter because he has a brain tumor which I suspect will be fatal within the year. I think that tumor goes a long way to explaining his interest in all this. There’s no need to neutralize him; he’ll handle that on his own in a year when he self-destructs. He’s a danger to himself, not us.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “*Ah*, if this is true, you actually sound like you have handled this well, then. The other Referees were upset with you, and one in particular had predicted you would mishandle this one as well.”

CENTAUR: “*As well?* How I handle auditions is my own affair; that’s part of the Rules.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Yes, but we interpret the Rules.”

CENTAUR: “Thank you for reminding me why 1776 was such an historic year. So let me ask, though: are we cool with this?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Excuse me?”

CENTAUR (holds up hat): “Am I out of the penalty box?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I will have to consult with the others in the Council, of course. And as I said, one of them is particularly displeased with you over the whole Penguin affair.”

CENTAUR: “Who’s the Ref?”

DI MEDICIGAN smiles.

CENTAUR: “*Is it you?*”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Truthfully, I tell you no. I actually have ambivalent feelings over the whole affair. I invited Dennis the Penguin at the request of a Referee. I did not like Dennis; he had bad form, and I would not have invited him back to another of my auctions.”

CENTAUR: “Actually, that’s the crackle around the campfire, Dennis’s disrespectful bad form. Well, tell you what: you tell me who the Ref is, and I’ll tell you what happened during the Penguin audition that made it end like that.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Perhaps you should talk to the Referee directly, as the Penguin was his nephew.”

CENTAUR: “*Oh?* Nothing like that came up during the interview, and he had plenty of chances.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Well then the Penguin was a fool.”

CENTAUR: “That was the third sentence of my report, if you’ll remember.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Yes, the Referee took exception to that, as well. Insult to the family honor, or some such thing. You did not even add him to your own who’s who libretto among the fallen.”

CENTAUR: “I see y’all’s point, but to be honest, I think you’re bitching to the wrong person.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “*Oh?*”

CENTAUR: “Like I said, he would have failed the audition anyway, but I was actually given some outer incentive to be especially harsh on him, and in the event he fatally failed, to relay a message.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “*Oh?* What message is that?”

CENTAUR: “Will you tell me who the Referee is?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “You first.”

Shot pans to the right, entering a field of darkness. Fluid cut to Interview Room [Scene 9.] From the rotating darkness, MR. PENGUIN swivels into view. He is looking down, hiding the damage to his face, but his hair is gone and scalp badly blistered. His clothes are badly burnt. More gasoline is being poured onto him.

CENTAUR: “Now that we’re done, I have a final message for you.” Can finally empties. “It is from the person who asked me to do *this* to you.”

MR. PENGUIN (just as he goes off-screen): “Who?”

CENTAUR (off screen): “Cardinal Spumoni.” *Pause.* “At first, he asked me to castrate you at the root, and to give you some bizarre speech about cockblocking, but I told him *no*. After all, I am a professional.” [swings into view, he is setting the can on the floor.] “So he settled for this, turning you the color of that yarmulke he wears. He also wanted to give you a taste of what to expect in the next life if you don’t change your ways in this one. Which, he would agree, you haven’t.” Lights match. “So...” uses match to light full book. Looks straight into camera, and solemnly intones, “Respect your heritage.” Flips the burning book at the camera; direct hit.

Flames blur/morph into a red light atop a web cam. Shot pans back to show CENTAUR at a computer in a cramped, dark confine. DI MEDICIGAN is on the screen, looking on with disbelief.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Spumoni assured me he had nothing to do with this.”

CENTAUR: “Well, depending how he worded his assurance, Spumoni is a lying sack of ranch dressing.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “So you are saying you killed the Penguin at the request of the Cardinal?”

CENTAUR: “Yes.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I would not have thought that of you. Might I ask, why would you do such a thing?”

CENTAUR: “In exchange for doing this for him, he has *not* agreed to do something for me at a later date. I’m thinking 5 moves ahead, and have just neutralized a bishop.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “What was it you wished the Cardinal to do?”

CENTAUR: “I wished him *not* to do something. So if all goes well, you’ll never know. And that’s only fair: what goes on at your auctions stays there, and what goes on in my private dealings stays there.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “You sound confident that Spumoni will keep his word to you.”

CENTAUR (shrugs): “He knows he’s fair game if he breaks his word. And he knows he wouldn’t last past a week.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Well, let me pass this on to the other Referee; he may wish to talk to you further about it.”

CENTAUR: “Who is it?”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I honestly believe you do not know him, but he will introduce himself, I am sure.”

CENTAUR glowers unhappily.

DI MEDICIGAN: “Not that it is much consolation, but I am having an auction in 5 days. Random historical objects. I would invite you, but Count Lugosovich will be attending.”

CENTAUR: “Right, I’ll pass. Thank you, though.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I thought as much. It is mostly European artifacts, anyway. The Count is particularly interested in a wine glass. It is the last one known to be used by Marie Antoinette. It still has some of her lipstick on it, though a previous owner had licked much of it off.”

CENTAUR: “Probably Lugosovich himself; he wants it back. But like I said, I’ll pass. I can’t *stand* that guy.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I know this, which is why I am careful in who I invite to what auctions.”

CENTAUR: “And it’s customer care like that which keeps all of us coming back.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “If you are finished, I must return to preparing for that auction, and then I must call a certain Referee.”

CENTAUR: “I’ll be here. But tell him to call first if he wants to talk; dropping by unannounced would be bad, and I don’t give a damn if he is a Referee.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “I understand, and will also pass that along. Anyway, good day to you.”

CENTAUR: “It’s night here.”

DI MEDICIGAN: “Then good night to you.”

CENTAUR: “It’s always night in the Bat Cave.”

DI MEDICIGAN disappears from the screen. CENTAUR reaches up and turns off the webcam; the red light dies. His hand goes down to the computer table, where Nimbus’s book sits. He removes the two pages that had originally printed. CENTAUR stares pensively at the pages, then with his free hand reaches over to the video console and enters a phone number. Four rings as he turns the web-cam back on.

Cut to monitor screen: distorted close-up of MOLEBACK's face.

MOLEBACK: "Hello?"

CENTAUR: "M.B., it's me."

MOLEBACK nods eagerly, and her face fades back as she holds her cam-phone away to set it down in front of her. As she leans back and starts to talk, view begins to pan back from the monitor to include CENTAUR.

MOLEBACK: "There you are. Hadn't heard from you, and was starting to get worried."

CENTAUR: "Something popped up since my trip to Philly, and I had to deal with it before I could call you. Actually, I got a lot I gotta deal with still, but I thought I'd better touch base with you. "

Camera continues to pan back behind CENTAUR. The conversation fades as it moves farther away.

MOLEBACK: "Thanks. So, what's the word on Nimbus?"

CENTAUR: "Nimbus now writes in the past tense."

MOLEBACK: "Good. And good job. Thanks."

CENTAUR: "Well, thanks for the tip. You were right: he was a hoax forger." He shows her the pages, plus several books, including the one Nimbus had last worked with. "I got enough evidence that I could justify killing him if someone bitched."

MOLEBACK: "Has anyone bitched?"

CENTAUR: "Actually yeah, and he's one of your customers, too. But he was peeved at me, not you, so you're in the clear."

MOLEBACK: "Good."

Camera pans past the room's light sphere; darkness creeps in around the edges as CENTAUR and the MOLEBACK monitor slowly shrink.

MOLEBACK: "Well, Centaur, thanks for taking out some of my competition. Whatcha gonna do with those books? Torch 'em?"

The scene continues to shrink into the center screen, surrounded by growing black.

CENTAUR: "Naw, I torched enough things lately. You know what's funny, I lied to Pegasus and told him Nimbus's book was for real."

MOLEBACK: "Nice. But he'd realize it was a fake if he saw it, right?"

The camera has entered into an unlit hall out of the phone room.

CENTAUR: "Oh like you said, these are terrible, and he'd figure it out fast. Hell, Hassan'd spot it in a heartbeat."

MOLEBACK (soft, disembodied whisper with echo): “That bastard’s black heart does not beat.”

There is an awkward *silence*, as the camera continues its backpan through the corridor (still holding on CENTAUR as focus). A hyperbola of light comes in from the sides as the camera passes dark grey walls with two wall lamps, fashioned like ensconced torches. Camera moves past, and that too shrinks in as hall darkness takes over. Another double-dawning of light from the sides as the camera passes two more “torches.” More hall darkness, and then through open double doors into a giant brightly lit room. The light comes from small rooms on each side. Each chamber is a 6’x6’ partitioning of fine mesh that goes to the ceiling. Each has a ring of high-power grow lights aimed directly down on the center of the chamber and its respective contents. There is a large sign above each door, with different Voynich writing. Hanging from the back screen/wall of each is a large photograph of a different person’s face. The chambers (and their contents) are:

(1st on left) [picture = PEGASUS] Room has five pots with (non-flowering) Voynich plants in various states of growth.

(1st on right) [picture = HASSAN] Four bowls with Voynich saplings, plus an enormous one with a fat trunk that almost reaches the light rig.

(2nd on left) [picture = COUNT] A sole spindly sunflowerish abomination about 4 feet high. The wilted stalk is propped to an anchored bamboo rod.

(2nd on right) [picture = FRIENDISH] A slanted trellis covered with some Voynich-ish cross between kudzu and creeping ivy.

(3rd on left) [picture = MOLEBACK] A black iron cauldron with two blooming Voynich plants. A (CGI’d) green bumblebee (like in Scene 45) is flying a lazy 8 around them; the buzz (in the left channel) is faint but there.

(3rd on right) [picture = KLAUSTINA] A similarly sized pot, though of nicely kilned-clay, holding five identical plants.

(4th on the left) [picture = DI MEDICIGAN] Unlit. There are several empty pots inside.

(4th on the right) [picture = MR. CARDINAL] A tall but slim fold-out table with several starter pots on top. (Tiny sprouts are there but probably not visible.)

(5th on the left) [picture will probably not be visible, but is of a white Castle chess piece] A pot of one heavily berried Voynich plant.

(5th on right) [picture will probably not be visible, but is of a black Castle chess piece] 5 shrubs that are peppered with tiny flowers. Happy bee buzzing and the occasional blur of green.

When camera reaches the point where the Castle pictures would be visible, stops as MARY walks by, carrying a woven wicker basket full of gardening tools, squirt bottles, etc. Her nails are Moleback green. She stops at the left and turns to the screen door. Camera follows her hand but swings upward, to a tight close-up of the door frame. The door opens, and from the crack a tiny green bee crawls out and up onto the outer mesh. The door closes, and after a moment, the bee takes off with faint buzzing. Camera quickly pans to track its upward ascent into darkness. Sound and size fade with distance, but the bee quickly comes back towards the camera. The buzzing is truncated as a bat silently swoops in and out of shot, snaps its mouth around the bee, and zips off. Camera holds on darkness then pans down to the original shot of the “canyon” of grow chambers. MARY emerges from the left room and goes across to the right. Camera turns and tows along as she goes through the screen door into the small chamber. She sets down the basket and examines

the first plant. A bee buzzes by, but they ignore each other. Mary takes several things from the basket, and begins clipping the ting flowers into a small test tube. One bee chases another past as she puts a cap on the tube and places it in the basket. As she takes out a squirt bottle, another bee floats by, and turns toward the camera. It becomes large enough to be seen clearly, then it flies off. Camera tries to follow, but it dips out of view. Camera holds on a vacant area of the mesh screen wall. A moment later, a bumblebee speeds by left-right; it's buzz shrilly rising and fading. Hold on wall for a second of silence.

57)

Cut to: dart landing on a dartboard with a loud *smack*. Camera pans back to show more of the board. Rather than a traditional 20-number pattern, it is the view of Dealey Plaza as seen from the 6th-Floor Depository; in the limo, JFK's head is the bullseye. Another dart lands, and the camera has backed up enough to reveal the board is on the wall of an NSA room full of cubicle quads. 2 ANALYSTS are having a game of "Oswald", shooting from the hallway.

ADMIRAL approaches down the hall, waits for the analyst to make his third throw, and then proceeds past.

COMMODORE (OFF-SCREEN): "Admiral! Glad I caught you."

ADMIRAL : "Let's see, I don't see a parachute, so how'd you get off the Alice Springs express?"

COMMODORE: "Marvin insists on having one of those cowboy hats with the dangling wine corks to keep the flies away, and he can't find one his size."

ADMIRAL: "Worst... brim... ever!"

COMMODORE: "Marvin and I stopped by your office to talk to you, but your secretary said you were up at New Haven."

They pass another cubicle room; CAPTAIN QUICKIE is escorting a nubile navy WAAV inside; door shuts as ADMIRAL and COMMODORE pass.

ADMIRAL: "Yes, at Yale. I met the Philadelphia homicide detective. Nice guy. We figured, if you're going to discuss the Voynich Manuscript, why not do it with it actually in front of you. That was the second time I'd ever seen it, and certainly the most in-depth I've looked. Brought back a lot of memories."

COMMODORE: "That's too bad, [first name]."

ADMIRAL: "Why is that?"

COMMODORE: "There are many reasons. One of them is a chalk outline in Jim MacLeod's Philly Studio."

ADMIRAL: "Nobody should have to die over a 400-year old book."

COMMODORE: "Muslims die because of a 1,400 year old book, Christians because of a 1,900-year old book..."

ADMIRAL: "The Voynich Manuscript is hardly in the category of the Quar'an or the Bible."

COMMODORE: “Maybe no single Voynich manuscript is, but take the corpus as a whole...” Smiles wryly.

Admiral stops walking. Long silence and staring contest.

COMMODORE (indicates a cubicle room): “Let’s discuss this in here.”

COMMODORE walks into the room, and after a moment ADMIRAL follows. Door closes, sound of lock turning. Shot holds on door for 10 seconds.

Cut to close-up of COMMODORE’s face.

COMMODORE: “[name], I can appreciate your position on this. I really can. You’re trying to help catch a murderer. Would you like me to tell you how the MacLeod murder case will end?”

ADMIRAL: “Time out. If this is one of those ‘I could tell you but then I’d have to kill you’ schticks, let’s drop this right now and never bring it up again. *Seriously.*”

COMMODORE (smiles): “I *like* your idea, so we’ll end this on a clean conscience for you. While you were up at Yale, MacLeod’s house blew up. Killed three people.”

ADMIRAL: “Oh my God.”

COMMODORE: “2 were police investigators. The third is, and always will be, a John Doe. Hey, you want to know something strange? The neighbors weren’t home, but they had a dog locked up in their loft. They found the dog a block away. Not even a scratch or a singed hair.”

ADMIRAL: “Wow. Miracles happen.”

COMMODORE: “I don’t know if Wilson has gotten back yet, but he’ll go to the scene and apparently find some sort of contextual evidence around where the John Doe was that links him to the murder scene; I think it’s a size 12 cowboy boot, but I’m not all that sure, or even concerned. Anyway, John Doe will become their best guess, and the case will be left open as a courtesy, but will slowly get moved to inactive and then quietly closed. During one of the downgrades, it will be inconveniently misfiled.”

ADMIRAL: “Impressive. You know, I hate to ask this, but do you remember that old OSS vet we met at Neutral Ground? Is he, or did he...”

COMMODORE: “Captain Sherman? He’s fine. No doubt drinking his cambric tea down there right now, making up tales.”

ADMIRAL: “Oh. Somehow I expected you to tell me he had a heart attack, and...”

COMMODORE: “[first name]! We would never do that. We look after our own. That’s actually why I’m talking to you. I like you. You’re a good guy, and I couldn’t handle Marvin without you. I don’t want to lose you over something as... over Voynich. I know just enough about it to know I don’t want anything to do with it, except to stay on the good side of the players.”

ADMIRAL: “Commodore, I *hear* you. So let’s drop it.”

COMMODORE: “Lets. Except for one small caveat: if you ever hear anyone mention Voynich, let me know about it. Then forget it again.”

ADMIRAL: “Wow, that tied up together rather nicely.”

COMMODORE: “Times like these are the only time in Voynich when they do.”

58)

Cut to DR_WHO and PROP in a beat-up yellow classic Volkswagen beetle. DR_WHO is driving down a country highway. Massachusetts forests whip by outside.

PROP: “I can’t believe how you untied Voynich with something so primitive.”

DR_WHO: “You’ll laugh your ass off when you see this thing; she’s still got the vacuum tubes and everything. But I say, if you’re just doing pure number crunching like this, a vacuum is better than a transistor, because the vacuum is purer; it’s zero, where-as your transistors are all zero or one binary. Zero is a void, and a vacuum is a void, so your answers are more exacting. So the only way to go is vacuum tubular.”

PROP: “Wow, wait till the world hears that you broke the Voynich code with a Cold-War number cruncher.”

DR_WHO: “I’m already talking to people about getting the vacuum tubes small enough for laptops, but that requires some bad-ass glass blowing, and no one has a budget to touch it for testing. But it’ll be the wave of the future.”

PROP: “So you brute forced Voynich, but I’m still not clear what you used as a base.”

DR_WHO: “Oh, those two email you sent me. The second one, with the random jumble of letters, to you and the detective. It was two lines, and the second line of each was identical. I worked from the assumption that the first line was your name. So I had the Succubus work out all the ways the first line of letters could translate into ‘Scott Prop.’ There were about 42,000 possibilities. I then saw if any of those combinations could also equal ‘William Wilson’ on the other email. Down to 88 possible combinations. I then had Succubus use each of those patterns to translate the second line. I had her use an unabridged dictionary as a filter; if more than half the words weren’t on there, move to the next combination. It found 23 possible permutations that made sense in English. But only one of them was a complete, intelligible sentence, and based on what it said, I knew this was the one.”

PROP: “What’d it say?”

DR_WHO: “If you can read this, you’re dead.”

PROP: “That’s comforting.”

DR_WHO: “How do you think I feel: I can read it. But based on that and your name as a key, I plugged in the 6 pages you originally sent me.”

PROP: “Okay, and what’s that?”

DR_WHO: “Very sketchy, and I’m not sure it makes sense.”

PROP: “Well, I’ll take a look at it.”

DR_WHO: “*Hehe*, you sure? Because ‘if you can read this, you’re dead’.”

PROP: “Well, fortunately I don’t have a font for Voynich, so I can’t read it.”

DR_WHO: “I do. Actually, I got about 3 or 4 from different academic sites that did work over the years. I had Succubus compare letter patterns against the actual Voynich Manuscript at Yale. I got a half-decent idea of how the language works. Enough that I think I know what Nimbus was trying to write.”

PROP: “Who?”

DR_WHO: “Oh, sorry; MacLeod.”

PROP: “And?”

Cut to exterior: dr_who’s VW driving under ornate iron gates with the sign, “Miskatonic University.” The campus is seen, up the road.

DR_WHO (voice over): “It’s easier just to show ya.”

59)

Cut to: dr_who’s office. It is a stereotypical mess; lots of paper, textbooks. Although attention is not drawn to it, on a table in the back is Mufon’s laptop, the pen still in it. Shot finally includes DR_WHO, standing in front of his desk and holding a small stone pipe.

DR_WHO: [lights match and hits hash pipe] (strangled voice): “Here.”

PROP: “I’m a *cop*, you asshole.”

DR_WHO shrugs, blows a sinsemilla smoke ring, then dissipates it with a full exhale. Looks inside the pipe to see if it’s still lit, then strikes another wooden match off of a textbook.

PROP: “Well, before you get too baked, tell me what that printout says.”

DR_WHO “*Au contraire*, this is the *only* state in which to properly read it is.” *Coughs*; sounds like MUFON. “You know, Succubus once discovered that if you take Lee Harvey Oswald’s date of birth, times it by his social security number, and then divide it by pi, you get his library card number with a repeating decimal remainder of what he owed in late fees.”

PROP: “Just give me the fucking paper.” Reaches across and snatches papers out of DR_WHO’s hand.

Close-up of papers: same random gibberish from Scene 17.

[off screen] DR_WHO laughs.

Cut to DR_WHO.

DR_WHO: “This is the translation.” Holds up several pages.

PROP: “You gonna tell me what it says, you copteasing fiend?”

DR_WHO: “Well, I could tell you but then I’d have to kill you. Besides, aren’t you more curious to know what he wrote in own blood?”

PROP nods.

DR_WHO puts a printout bitmap of the writing on the desk, turns to PROP.

Cut to printout, DR_WHO’s hand pointing toward it.

DR_WHO: “These two letters are the word for ‘time.’ The letter behind it is the 12th of the Voynich alphabet, so that essentially means 12 o’clock.”

PROP: “Ah.”

DR_WHO (points at the next three letters): “Now, these are the word for ‘color.’ This last letter is the 8th in the alphabet, so the eighth color...”

PROP: “Let me guess: blue.”

DR_WHO: “Fuck if I know; I don’t know what the letter sequence corresponds to. Unfortunately, this is where it gets blurry. These last 3 might be ‘fruit’ but I have no idea what letter that’s supposed to be at the end.”

PROP: “That’s okay, I think I got it.”

DR_WHO: “Do you? I’d be curious to know what it means then.”

PROP: “I’ll let you know after I read the 6 page printout.”

DR_WHO smiles wanly.

PROP: “You are going to give it to me, right?”

DR_WHO: “Well, I don’t think you’ll like it.”

PROP: “Try me.”

DR_WHO: “Well, okay, but then I’ll have to kill you.” Hands papers over.

PROP: “And if I read in here ‘The treachery of Typhon ends at the throne of Isis; the moisture of nature is guarded by the vigilance of Anubis,’ I will make you the focus of my wrath for many moons to come.” He takes the papers.

60) end credits

Continuation of previous scene.

PROP (reads from papers):

((Movie’s Closing Credits, cast in order of appearance. When the actor playing PROP gets to his own name, he is encouraged to ad-lib a comment. Likewise, when the listing for DR_WHO is mentioned, that actor is encouraged to ad lib a comment. SCHNAPPS and HERB get real credits or “themselves” as appropriate. Actors are encouraged to ad-lib derisive comments when “AUTHOR, himself” is reached.))

During the oration, DR_WHO goes over to the back of the room, where Mufon’s laptop is. He opens the lid with the pen and puts it aside.

Cut to screen:

Scrub successful.
Removed: **Voynich.ai**
Press any key to continue.

He presses a key, then ejects a disc labeled “Scrub 5”

Watches boot-up of screen (identical with this movie’s opening), then turns to make an ad-libbed comment about the cast.

Cut back to PROP, nodding, and then continues reading. When PROP finishes, he gets a look of disgust.

PROP: “What the fuck was *that?*” Looks in disgust at the papers in his hand, wads them up, and throws them at the camera. “What a load of garbage!” Direct hit: fade to black.

Silence for 8 seconds, then loud gunshot. Sound of body slumping to the floor.

Pause for 3 seconds.

DR_WHO [voice over]: “What, did you think I was kidding?”

Pause for 3 seconds.

End)