

# Parson's Academons

by Mark Sysson

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Invitee's Guide & Glossary



## Preface

Not unlike computer adventure games of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Parson's Academons is an adventure taking place on several levels simultaneously. It is a compilation of the people, places, and history of the world during the explosive years following the American War for Independence and culminating with the demise of the Napoleonic Empire. On the second level, it is a personal quest of the transformed spirit of Mary Parson, the female founder of one of the very first private academies in New England, to gain absolute freedom from wrongful judgments held against her during her lifetime. On the third level, it is a story of discovery and wonder; five freshman student Invitees at Parson Academy are mysteriously drawn in to become *part* of Mary's quest. They witness and experience the restructuring of history itself while being able to understand their own family history more fully.

Just in time for the Bicentennial of June, 2012, I offer this adventure story with hopes of attracting young readers to this intriguing, yet unvoiced, time on planet Earth. Two hundred years ago, the powerful Western nations collided with the cloistered Eastern civilizations of the Indian Subcontinent. Mary Parson's time in India had much more to do with the War of 1812 than any accepted theory of how the conflict between the United States and Britain started.

Mary Parson was America's spokesperson of her day. She is certainly an unsung Daughter of the American Revolution and a true Renaissance woman. She was a leader of the young nation for justice and diplomacy. She served as unofficial U.S. ambassador to British Colonial India, and taught young Hindus, Muslims, and the children of European royalty. Teaching young inquisitive minds was her passion. She knew how to talk to children, and somehow, that made it easier for Mary to converse with the prominent international diplomats, men who represented the nations of the world.

Think of Mary Parson as your personal Avatar. In return, help her understand a few things that did not exist in her lifetime. As we journey, you will be thrown back and forth between two time periods and several levels of action. So- don't be surprised if amidst all the fireworks, you will walk away with a new set of historical facts. To best guide you through the ever-changing plot line, I use three distinct symbols to shift between the sequences:

Ω Ω Ω .... signifies *Mary Parson's revelations in her Heavenly Realm.*

♣ ♣ ♣ .... signifies the events and locations taking place in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

♠ ♠ ♠ .... signifies the events and locations in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

I encourage you to use the Invitee's Guide & Glossary to help you navigate through the indigenous terms and places mentioned in this Adventure.

The Spirit of Mary Parson, although weakened from two centuries of trial and tribulation, is able to hear the voice of Aella in the wind. *"You must remain resolute!"* Aella's words repeat in Mary's

fragile, ancestral memory. A synthesis begins, giving her the strength she will need in the thirty earth days that lay ahead. Now, she is about to create a little chaos, but think of it in the most positive way.

In the higher regions of the atmosphere over New England, a storm arrives. Sharp droplets of rain plop into ponds and pools, on the red and gold leaves of maples and birch. The placid waters of the Connecticut River churn grey as the final stage of the Twelve Trails unfolds during a November Nor'easter, over the Pioneer Valley, on the hallowed grounds of America's first preparatory school, America's first Academos.

I hear Mary now, so let's begin the Adventure.

## Introduction: Mary Parson's Apprehension

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*"Oh Aella, I miss you...you who kept me on the most vigilant of paths -always on course. You, who knew the way to prepare my spirit – who understood how much vigilance was needed for all my trials...,*

*So by grace, it was you who said" Mary, please, we must deal with one world at a time." Yes, one world at a time...one microcosm at a time... Now, I can feel the waning of my force, or should I say "your force, Aella"...I am separated -fragmented with my perfect memory gone...Am I not a fighter? Was I not known around the globe to be a famous reformer and educator? A Botanist? A world traveler? Friend to the "different ones"? I was that.....*

*"Mary...May-reeee...One generation at a time! You must remain resolute." Aella had told me.....yet I am split – if I am to free myself, will I have the strength to reach this new generation? Will they actually find my buried "time capsule? - Oh and yes, the twelfth trial requires more than the last .. It requires technology! How will I know what that is, without you, Aella?*

*Unearth the evidence!" ..yes, my Invitees must  
Unearth the evidence!" ...yes, they must, Aella.  
Find the Inquizator who will open their eyes to assist  
Think, and it will be transmitted  
To those five Invitees who may think they dream.  
But in the end, there will be one on whom  
You, Mary Parson can depend - Chanin, Chanin, Chanin....*

## Part I: The Virus



Stone Ledge of the Connecticut River, Paring County, Massachusetts,  
Saturday, November 26<sup>th</sup> 9:30 a.m.

**B**oston's most aspiring television weatherperson, Tracy Abrahms, reads the last text message sent from her station manager. She is assigned to cover the Nor'easter that has slammed the interior regions of Massachusetts. Slowly exiting the Boston Turnpike, the mobile broadcast truck slowly lumbers through the mud of the river access road. The last of the autumn leaves fly in every direction across the windshield, making a colorful birage. Chatter over the police scanner breaks the hypnotic cadence of the wiper blades. A loud crack is heard just overhead.

"What is that?" Tracy asks nervously.

"Don't worry." The driver replies as the truck approaches the scene of the school bus accident. "Must be a tree branch or something. I'll check it out as soon as we park."

Tracy Abrahms is overwhelmed by the turbulence of the normally gentle Connecticut River. Rescuers from the Paring County Fire Department scurry from their apparatus. Tracy's driver turns off the ignition and flips the switch that elevates the satellite dish tower. The cameraman grabs his gear, pans the scene, and zooms in close for a tight shot of the bus that hangs suspended by a crane's giant cable. "This is the money shot!" he murmurs under his breath as the footage captures the river water pouring out of the bus's rear exit door.

Tracy makes her way to the ambulance where the Emergency Medical Technicians treat a school teacher and a young child. The attending paramedic acknowledges Tracy as he adjusts the oxygen mask to the child's face. Tracy intuitively senses the child's desire to describe her frightful ordeal.

"Go ahead, Miss Abrahms." The paramedic says. "But make it quick. She's suffering from hypothermia."

The cameraman gives his cue to file the story. Tracy positions herself within inches of the girl on the stretcher.

"I hear you had quite an experience, young lady."

The excited child begins. "I swam out of a window and clung to a tree branch. I was so cold I could feel my lungs shivering, but I saw this soldier... on a horse... galloping through the water!"

"A soldier?" Tracy questions.

"He was an officer. From an army..."

"A soldier? Do you mean one of our troops who served in Iraq and Afghanistan?" Tracy prods.

"No, no! Much older. Like from the Revolutionary War." the child offers.

"Oh! You mean like George Washington?"

"Well, sort of. But he was with the soldiers wearing redcoats."

Tracy ponders the thought and looks directly into the camera. "Ah! The British Red Coats!"

"Well, yes. But he didn't have a British accent. It was some other language," the child slowly replies. "I didn't understand it!"

The paramedic forces the oxygen mask over the girl's face. Then with total sincerity, she looks at Tracy and innocently asks, "Was he real?"

Tracy exaggerates her compassionate side for the camera. “No, I don’t think so. You had a vision, an amazing revelation!”

The child begins to cough severely and the paramedic cuts the interview short, ushering Tracy out of the ambulance. Right in front of the reporter, the muddy school bus is gently lowered to the dirt embankment and sits like a relic as if it was a casualty of war. Taking his final shot, the cameraman stuffs his video gear into its waterproof case and before running back to the mobile broadcast unit to edit the footage, remarks, “Wow! That little girl is dead serious! Nothing is going to top this story.” He gasps, “Not even the Patriots game!”

A strong wind moves across the river. Trees bend and crack on the bluff and water cascades over the sheer cliff of the stone ledge. Tracy recognizes the grounds. She had been there once before covering the girls hockey team of Parson Panthers. Lights flicker on and off in Great Hall, one of the oldest structures on campus. The wind suddenly dies and the rain stops. The sound of a power saw fills the air.

On the main entrance road to Parson Academy, the maintenance crew stacks the cut tree limbs alongside the school’s prestigious Iron Gate. The ornate structure has served to welcome all to New England’s most famous preparatory school. It has weathered many a storm for more than two hundred years.

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*Yes, my friends, everything seems to be in place...chaotic, yet in order. No surprise . . .my adversary has already thrust the wheels in motion. Those markings are unmistakable, but who is this adversary? Someone from my past whose identity eludes me. . . I swore I would find the one responsible for the death of my father. It is a mystery so deep it has the power to change the course of history itself.*

*Instinctively, I survey the landscape before me. Thank goodness, here is the one thing that gives me strength. I have the tactical advantage. This is my native soil. By grace, it is good to be home!*

*I hear Aella’s voice coaxing me on, once again. . . “Take a deep breath, Mary. Begin countermeasures!” I shout at the top of my lungs, “I have arrived!” And as my cry echoes throughout the universe, I know it was heard by Aella and my peers. But was it heard down below in the Pioneer Valley? My adversary is dead set on making sure these young students would never hear of me. Whoever he or she was, I have to prove ‘em wrong.*

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Parson Academy Cafeteria, Paring County, Massachusetts 10:30 a.m.

The campus slowly returns to normal as the now historic Thanksgiving Nor’easter moves onward toward Boston. Dr. Winston Gallagher, Parson’s Headmaster, considers lifting this morning’s instruction that all students must remain confined to the cafeteria of the Student Activity Center. Dr. Gallagher stands in the foyer surveying his surroundings. He is manicured, his suit is impeccably pressed, and his magnificent gray hair is perfectly combed. He appears the picture of calm and order. In front of him, a handful of students parade in formal “class dress,” consisting of the traditional navy blue jacket emblazoned with the circular Parson Crest. Steel grey pants or skirts compliment the uniform. It peeks his curiosity. Today, being an informal day of school, class dress was not mandatory. Were they saving their casual clothes for a special occasion?

Dr. Gallagher carefully lowers himself into a rolling computer chair belonging to a set of a dozen. Above the forty foot counter, a distinctive gold sign reads “Computer Only Zone” designating the special restricted area.

During regular Parson meals, this area hums with the high energy of technology in motion. You would think you were on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. The flurry of digitized information is rushed to update laptops, palm pilots, or p.d.a. through wireless connection or usb cables. But today, in contrast, only two students sit working quietly at the computer counter. Dr. Gallagher's walkie-talkie clicks impatiently.

"Yes, Mrs. O., what is it?" the Headmaster answers in a whisper.

"Winston, I checked the local weather forecast from Springfield. The storm is weakening and there will be breaks of sun this afternoon. Your appointment is on their way to you now."

"Thank you."

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*By grace, here I am, back on the Parson campus! It is wonderful to be back in my element... but my, things have changed! What are these marvelous inventions? Aella was right! Just like Erasmus Darwin and Benjamin Franklin corresponded about! So this is how communication is done these days... an electronic device for transmission! Thank goodness Aella transcribed these technical manuals for me! In this digitized world, I have assumed the post of Apple@Parsonacademy.com. I was thankful that the academy's tenured and semi-retired social studies teacher, Homer Applegate, created an email address that was abandoned long ago, but still very much alive. The doors of the Five Paths have been opened! My success rests entirely in these young scholars sampling my wares. They must receive my journals.*

*I summon my strength and envision what the Apocalypse would look like. I shudder at the thought. And so, it is done! If I have performed this task to the letter, all my work should be on its way to the Invitees through the Five Paths. Yes, the 'Parson Invitees'... the traditional name I gave to the scholarship winners back in the early days when the academy was first chartered. Yes, my friends, it has always been my wish that Parson be a safe haven, for all young people, from every background around the world, to come and enjoy a rewarding education. Here they are, the newest brood of gifted scholars.*

*Alas, for the moment, I can only pray my Invitees will be mesmerized by the power of my secret journal transmissions, and that they will transmit safely beneath and out of sight of the realm of my adversary... And now to identify my Inquizitors... the allies who will assist me... Yet, I fear these Invitees will not consider my works to be a gift, far from it. I can only pray they will thank me later.*

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In the lounge, adjacent to the cafeteria, a ten by four foot plasma screen mounted on the mezzanine wall displays a digitized image of a strutting turkey pecking its way across the scroll followed by a cheerful message that reads "HAPPY THANKSGIVING!" Dr. Gallagher picks up his walkie-talkie and calls for his secretary.

"Mrs. O. Let's resume normal activities for this afternoon."

"Your wish is my command!" immediately replies Mrs. O.

Instantly, the screen is digitally shuffled and the scroll displays the prescribed, original daily schedule.

**PARSON ACADEMY DAILY EVENT ...FOR NOVEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>...DEBATE CLUB @ COLBY HALL... / ...FACULTY MEETING @ GREAT HALL... / ...ICE HOCKEY TRYOUTS @ TANSEN RINK... / ...MRS. B.'S GREEK MYTHOLOGY EXTRA HELP... / ...MRS. J.'S BRITISH HISTORY EXTRA HELP... / ...LOQUITUR MEETING @ S.A.C. ... / ...THANKSGIVING DANCE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING @ WPAX...."**

No doubt, all of this ‘up to the minute’ school information is the nourishment and the heartbeat of Parson Academy. Anything and everything of importance to the Parson student body appears on the scroll and is simultaneously broadcast to all thirty-five strategically placed screens around campus. The feed to these devices is controlled by the Security Department and only two sources can furnish the data to the scroll; the administration office or “The Loquitur,” Parson’s student newspaper.

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*My friends, what a gift it is to have this electronic bulletin board in the middle of my campus. Astonishing! A magic scroll! I can only imagine how during busy school days, anticipation of the latest announcements on that device will prompt an observance worthy of the great religions of the world. Those gathered in front of it stand mesmerized as I did... something to rival the Great Awakening sermon of Evangelist Reverend Jonathan Edwards... yes, that will be some sight! Or perhaps something more subdued like that of Sri Gujapti’s ritual Hindu bathing along the banks of the Ganges. Marvelous!*

*By my grace, the worst of the storm outdoors was over, but indoors, I sensed another one brewing.*

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The cafeteria explodes with half a dozen voices chanting, “*R.R.G.! R.R.G.!*” The recitation of those three initials comes from the back tables where Parson Academy’s rowdiest students assemble during meals. These are the tables reserved for the group that called itself by the endearing name, ‘The Detonator Club.’ The most vocal of the brilliant misfits hovers around a computer that plays the popular video game that has captivated the entire gamer world. Across the campus quad, another drama plays out at that very moment.

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Thurber Hall Auditorium, Parson Academy

Theater enthusiasts generally received special treatment. They were routinely handed a hall pass and were excused from class early so they would have ample time to rush over to the auditorium for practice. Once again, the theater teacher vouched for her half dozen students who chose to wait out the storm in the security and comfort of her building rather than face the unpredictable rough and tumble of the general assembly gathered in the student cafeteria.

“Hey Crystal, Mrs. B. is supposed to assign our parts today!” Kelly McCallen, a freshman student exclaims in her thick Scottish brogue. “Look! The local paper already wrote an article about us!”

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*My friends, there are my ‘objets de desir’, Kelly McCallen and Crystal Perigord, the first two of the five Invitees. That one sitting at her piano must be Kelly. Interesting! Her keyboard is attached by a cable of some sort to an electronic music desk. Those knobs control and emit the sound of her piano. Her notes are so sweet, each fills the entire auditorium. It gives me pleasure to hear her play. Thinking back to my years when I played classical music, it reminds me of that great*



organ on Boston's Brattle Street that was retrofitted by that talented young Mr. Goodrich. Yes, I remember that song, 'Simple Gifts.' I used to perform it right here in Truscant Hall. Perhaps Kelly is practicing it for the school's upcoming Christmas concert.

It is wonderful that youngsters are still interested in music. In fact, Miss McCallen won her Invitee scholarship this year in the 'Most Artistic' category. But wait... what is Kelly playing now? It has an awful shrill to it. Certainly a drastic departure! This is what Aella warned me about. That must be what they call 'Rock and Roll.'

And that is our second Invitee, Crystal Perigord. She is from a proud native family on the island of Saint Martin. Always dressed in the height of fashion, Crystal dons a stylish Donatella Versace rawhide fringe dress accented with Navajo turquoise jewelry to match her amethyst eyes. For the love of god, upon closer inspection, amethyst is not her real eye color. There is a film resting on her eyeballs! I would soon come to learn not only of corrective contact lenses, but cosmetic ones as well!



Crystal grabs the newspaper from Kelly and with a distinct French West Indies accent, hastily replies, "Yeah, and they spelled my name right this time!"

Kelly continues, "'If These Hallways Could Talk'! I like it! Students from around the world join in the web chat."

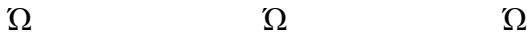
"Yes, I think it's a great twist on the game show concept."

"And Crystal, look at all these stars! You arranged all this talent?"

"Yes." Crystal casually answers.

"Wow, imagine, interviewing King George, right here on this stage!"

"I told the 'The King' this would be a great plug for his new video! Besides, he's Parson Alumnus. How could he refuse me?"



By my grace, I am amazed how modern teenagers are hopelessly star struck. And who are these young girls falling head over heels for? An artist who wants to be known only by some concocted stage name! Who is this 'King George' fellow? Why, I'm certain he's not even related to royalty! Those linear notes say that he's from Memphis, Tennessee. Everyone knows there aren't any kings from the United States! The King George I knew was Great Britain's Prince Regent. I digress! Well, in retrospect, I guess personal titles aren't so new after all...

Yet, I have to admire young Miss Talleyrand de Perigord. She entered this musical composition in something called 'Battle of the Bands.' Apparently, it is a musical contest. Crystal's quartet is known as 'Mental Block'! There is another curious name! Yes, Crystal has what it takes to make things magically happen, being of hearty Agent Provocateur stock, you know. Does the term 'Agent Provocateur' fascinate you? Pay close attention and I will explain as we return to the action.



"Mrs. B. told me how much time you put into this project," Kelly continues.

"Don't be silly! It's what I live for!" Crystal answers.

"You'll be great as the show's moderator. You know, I applied for the stage manager position."

"Well, good luck!" Crystal replies matter-of-factly as she opens the door to the auditorium.

"Luck? Hah! Come on Crystal, you of all people know it isn't about luck."

The drama teacher storms past the two students. Both girls chime together, “Good morning Mrs. B.”

Mrs. B. replies with a West Indies accent more obvious than Crystal’s. “Girls, you’ll have to excuse me. I’m expecting a very important call.”

The intercom announces, “Samantha, you have the Brava Network on the line.”

“Ah! Hello, Mr. Schupf. Right on time!” The drama teacher turns and stares at the girls. “Ms. Perigord, Ms. McCallen, I’ll see you in class. Go on now. Run along!”

Mrs. B. settles into her desk chair, clears her throat, and takes the call.

“Good morning, Mrs. Bindersweig-Linski.” the masculine voice booms over the phone speaker.

“Please, I’m known around here as Mrs. B. or just call me Samantha!”

“Well, Samantha, if this production goes off like we think, the Parson Academy Drama Department will be the buzzword for every aspiring thespian on the planet! Congratulations, we loved your submission.”

“We won?” Mrs. B. bites down on her finger to control her desire to shriek with delight.

“Yes. And, as promised, the studio equipment we agreed to furnish is already on the truck.”

“Honey, that’s one generous offer. How in the world did you know we were in the market for a new recording console?”

“You can thank Mr. Melvin Bellingham for that.”

“Well, you tell Mr. Bellingham we think he’s incredible!”

“You think he’s incredible? Wait until you get a load of our ‘Hollywood Provocateuress!’” Mr. Schupf continues.

Mrs. B.’s enthusiasm lets out like a spent party balloon. “You mean Judith Perigord is on this job?”

“Yes, she’s the executive producer. Samantha, tell me you didn’t get my email last week?”

“No, today is my first day back from the Thanksgiving Break. I’ll open it now.”

“There is one caveat. The network is thinking of substituting the content with something a little different. Of course, we would still use Parson for it, but we’ll need to scrap the kids’ original outline.”

Mrs. B. bolts up out of her chair and screams, “Scrap the outline? The students are ready to block their assignments this afternoon!”

“Brava wants a commemorative piece, a prelude to the Bicentennial anniversary of the War of 1812.”

“The War of 1812? No offense, Mr. Schupf, but who’s going to be interested in that?”

“Melvin Bellingham, that’s who! Did you read last Saturday’s Hollywood Reporter? Brava inked a big contract to cover London’s 2012 Olympic Games. Between you and me, Bellingham wants this show to be his launch pad for an internationally televised U.K.-U.S. commemorative celebration to be aired during the Olympics! He’s already created a team of writers to research the origins of the war. Perhaps you’ve heard of one of them, Glen Barss, the British Royal Society historical expert.”

Samantha glances over the bullet points of the e-mail and throws her copy of her original school production script into the trash can. “Mr. Schupf, are you saying we’re supposed to take our direction from some London historian? You want my lead man to be the King of England?”

“Well, to be more precise, his title is ‘King George the Third of the United Kingdom!’” Mr. Schupf answers. “And no, your lead man will play U.S. Senator Henry Clay!”

Samantha grabs her copy of the script. “Senator Henry Clay? Nice!” Samantha snickers as she peruses the character outline. “Will we be addressing the War Hawks on the Washington Capitol steps?”

“Just remember, Samantha, you can’t get too patriotic. Melvin Bellingham is a Brit from head to toe, from his Regatta boater down to his Northamptonshire Barkers!”

“Excuse me, Mr. Schupf, but you have an Indian Sultan as one of the lead characters. What does the War of 1812 have anything to do with India?”

“Yes, Mr. Bellingham’s research team has come up with some very revolutionary ideas!”

“Revolutionary?” Samantha snorts. “The word ‘radical’ is more like it. You aren’t trying to make us the laughing stock of America, are you?”

“Just read the script, Mrs. B.”

“Ok, Mr. Schupf, I’ll read your precious little email as soon as we get off the phone.”

“Thank you, Samantha, and by the way, Judith Perigord is scheduled to arrive a week from today.”

“Judith is coming here?” Samantha collapses back into her desk chair.

Mr. Schupf continues, “Brava is already promoting the ‘Ten Thousand Dollar Question of the Century,’ the biggest cash prize ever awarded to high school age students.”

“A Ten Thousand Dollar prize? Wow! Talk about buying your audience!”

“Samantha, everyone is counting on you. Don’t disappoint us.”

“Of course not. Thanks!” Samantha hangs up the phone and talks straight at the wall. “Who could refuse a wealthy British businessman who wants to rewrite America’s history books! And what an appropriate touch! Right here in America’s Pioneer Valley. Good God!”

Samantha prints out the Brava production script and takes her yellow highlighter to the pages. Wasting no time, she downloads the new project into her freshman class curriculum computer folder, and with some cutting and pasting, she assigns the new roles. Samantha takes a deep breath and posts the revision onto her e-bulletin board. Talking to the wall again, she remarks, *‘It is done! I certainly know one child who’s really not going to be happy. I don’t want to be anywhere around when she learns her own mother pulled the plug on her very own project. Good God.’* Mrs. B. types a brief comment that automatically is displayed on the school news scroll.



## Miami-Dade Shopping Mall 11:45 a.m.

Within an hour of the initial 9-1-1 call, the mall parking lot contains no less than fifty press vehicles. Miami’s news community has already constructed its makeshift media camp to broadcast their breaking news reports.

With a flash of his badge, F.B.I. Agent Strummer ducks under the yellow crime scene tape and threads through the circular racks of the clothing store in search of the sales counter. A police photographer is huddled over the crime scene behind the cash register. A sword is among the items scattered on the floor. Strummer waits for the photographer to finish his work.

“Can I see?” Strummer asks.

The photographer manipulates his digital camera and zooms in on the picture of the sword showing it in great detail. Etched into the highly polished blade just under the hilt, the inscription reads ‘October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1812 ‘U.S.S. Wasp.’

“She’s a beauty!” the photographer exclaims with obvious admiration.

“If you’re into commemorative swords.” Strummer replies, having seen his share of criminal activity.

“Oh, I’ve got quite the collection myself.” the photographer continues. “But this one here is something special. If my knowledge of American History serves me correctly, it was a gift from the U.S. Congress to Commander Jacob Jones.”

Agent Strummer scrolls through the balance of the pictures categorizing the physical evidence.

“But if you ask me my opinion, if this kid really intended to do some damage, he woulda’ used a samurai,” the photographer concludes.

The service door of the stock room swings open to the parking lot, revealing a girl sitting in the ambulance with a bandage around her upper right arm. Strummer walks outside.

“Luckily, it was a superficial wound.” The E.M.T. offers, “Go on in. She’ll talk to you.”

Agent Strummer steps up into the ambulance where a female Miami Dade police officer comforts the salesgirl. Behind them, a detective is busy taking notes.

“He’s crazy. I know him from my high school. I think he was targeting me.” the girl whimpers.

Agent Strummer listens to her story of how the teen ran through the store and slashed her. The detective signals to the agent to follow him out of the ambulance.

“The girl said he was part of some cult.”

“Was it a ritual?” Strummer asks.

“Don’t know yet. We have the suspect in the squad car.”

“Did you find out why he was dressed up as a pirate?”

“He doesn’t like us using the word ‘pirate.’ He prefers the term, ‘Swashbuckler.’ Oh, and this you may find interesting, he did mutter the letters R.R.G. Almost a chanting under his breath.”

“R.R.G.?”

“Yup. Just those three letters,” the detective offers as he walks towards his car. “You probably want to know my partner is already dusting for prints at the boy’s house.”

“Did they interview the boy’s mother?”

“Yes. She says her son suddenly became infatuated with a distant family relative.”

“Distant? How distant?” Strummer asks.

“Seven generations.”

“Seven generations!” Agent Strummer is stunned. “I’d say that’s distant enough! Let me ask you that again.” The FBI agent does some quick math and begins to put the pieces of the puzzle together. “Seven times, let’s say, every thirty years. Yeah, two hundred years ago. So that’s the connection to Commander Jacob Jones!”

“Yeah, now you’re getting the hang of it. You saw the evidence in the crime scene photos! The inscription on the sword? The decorated Commander of the War of 1812.”

The detective’s partner announces his news over the car radio. “*Frank, there’s a computer link to some school up in Massachusetts.*”

The detective reaches for the radio mike and says, “I’ve got a Federal agent on the way.” The detective turns to Strummer and says, “They’re waiting for you. I’ll have one of my men drive you out there. Funny, I’ve met my share of intense Civil War reenactors, wild Revolutionary War reenactors, but a deranged War of 1812 reenactor, never!”

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*For the love of god. Is wreaking havoc my adversary’s only purpose? Is it my fate to forever implement countermeasures? Is this what my education had become... a tool to combat dark forces? A strong force is pulling at me from across the Atlantic. Come, my friends, I ask you to follow me to the older continent. There is someone we must observe.*

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The Killjoy Residence, London, England 3:45 p.m.

In a dark London flat, all window shades are drawn. A computer wizard surrounds himself with the tools of his trade; a half dozen computers, software programs, military timetables, and top secret government intelligence communiqués printed in English, French, various southern dialects of Hindi, and Arabic languages. There are dozens of illustrations of scathing animated graphic video game avatars plastered on a bulletin board. This room had all the markings of chaos unleashed on earth. Historical posters of British military engagements of the Colonial British Empire, a priceless original White Line company leaflet announcing the maiden voyage of the ill-fated Titanic, and antique military wall calendars from the British East India Company.

His name is Martin Moorgrave and his penchant for a morbid sense of international notoriety has just been satisfied. A breaking news story plays on one of his monitors. Moorgrave is captivated by a glimpse of the Miami High School student dressed in his pirate costume being whisked into a police cruiser. He lets out a mean spirited

laugh. With his curiosity peaked, he turns up the volume just in time for the CNN reporter to deliver his closing line. *"It seems this youngster took a video game challenge too far."*

A swift push launches the wizard's rolling swivel chair to an adjoining desk. Moorgrave highlights his list of Miami high school students in yellow marker. *"Hmm, let's see if our little pirate is one of my players."* His industrious fingers seize the terminal screen, pointing through a scroll of online credit card transactions. *"How about purchases within the past seven days? Bingo, there he is. Accepting a challenge that had to be carried out in a busy shopping mall! Ingenious touch!"*

A third computer screen displays a video game. The initials 'R.R.G.' cyclically revolve in flaming letters. The screen now loops from scene to scene, each magnificent illustration more fantastic than the next. Colorful cells featuring white Arabian Stallions, the Taj Mahal, a turbaned Sultan, and a multi-colored fireworks explosion are just a few of the graphic artwork.

Moorgrave opens the program and types feverishly on the computer. *"Ah, and here we are! Parson Academy has accepted the Miami High School's challenge. This is too perfect to be a mere coincidence"* Another round of his mean spirited laugh echoes around the room. *"Ok, let's release my cyber army!"* He says, hitting the enter button. *"Just a few more strokes. Shall we activate the bot herders?"* Moorgrave sits back and watches the program whirl. Thousands of I.P. addresses scroll in a flash. *"Now, let's release the virus and cash in on this little venture, shall we?"* Moorgrave closes the program, being careful to avoid a trace that will link his location and identity to his infamous cyber nickname, 'Killjoy.' *"Forty five thousand troops! A new record... not bad!"*

Moorgrave stands up from his desk chair and comments, *"My work is done. It is time for me to get ready. This is one appointment I cannot miss."* He walks into his bedroom and places a brochure on his dresser. Moorgrave gazes at himself in the bathroom mirror. He removes his glasses and admires his clean shaved head. He wonders if he should cut off his handlebar moustache that has long been part of his guise. *"Yes, it is time for a new look!"*

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*By my grace, why would this wizard need such a large army? Forty five thousand troops? That's as many warriors as the Sultan of Mysore commanded against the Duke of Wellington. He best not be targeting high school children! He will have me to deal with if that is his game!*

*Little pinpoint spotlights illuminate four magnificent oil paintings. Each painting centered perfectly on each wall. That is a nice touch. Oh by grace, I know this artist. It is J.W.M. Turner. Interesting! They all bear a common theme; burning British warships caught in the midst of violent, fiery explosions... such magnificent coloration, but such a devilish morose feeling.*

*What is in that glass display case? Let me look closer. It is a collection of grasshopper specimens. It seems to be his prize possession. The Grasshopper! Ah, yes... I seem to remember someone from my past with that nickname.. Let me think about this connection for a second... Yes, this wizard reminds me of that pesky good for nothing insect. He was nothing but a bane on the human race. His name will come to me!*

*There is a travel itinerary on his bedroom dresser. It says the port of embarkation is London-Heathrow Airport. What is an airport? And this contraption in this picture flying through the clouds. A flying ship... quite similar to that strange invention Dr. Erasmus Darwin flaunted.*

*The eminent Dr. Erasmus Darwin was a charter member of Britain's Lunar Society, that great think tank for the most brilliant Western minds of the Industrial Age. Its colonial America members included Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson to name a few. When Erasmus Darwin was asked by the American attaché in Britain if he would consider emigration, Erasmus adamantly rebuked every request. But that was no surprise. Erasmus even rebuffed an invitation to be appointed England's Royal Physician to King George the Third. You may be interested to know, Erasmus passed down all his theories, inventions, and biological collections to his grandson, Charles, the most famous of the Darwin clan.*

*Yes, an airship! I remember now! Darwin called this one his 'artificial bird'! Is this possible? Why not, imagine that! Erasmus's invention is an airship on which our Mr. Moorgrave will be a passenger. That is how he will rendezvous with his appointment. Can I make out where he is going and who he is planning on meeting? It looks like his destination is a place called Logan Airport. By Grace, I must figure out where that is!*



Brava Network World Headquarters, New York 12:00 p.m.

From the fifty second floor of his Manhattan corner office, Melvin Bellingham takes a temporary leave of absence from global events. He watches a barge pass under the Queensboro Bridge heading down the East River toward the Verrazano Narrows. Despite patches of rust, the steel structures glisten in the mid-day sun. He absentmindedly twirls a pencil through his fingers.

"Mr. Bellingham, you have a Mr. Glen Barss on line three."

Melvin quickly closes his office door and picks up the phone.

"Barss, what did you find out?" he calmly asks in his thick English accent.

"Mr. Bellingham, I sent you an email." The fellow Englishman asks, "Did you open the attachment?"

"Give me a second," Mr. Bellingham says as he downloads the document. "Ok. Got it." He reviews the chart and says, "This looks pretty good."

"Yes, well, naturally, your ancestry is well rooted here in Great Britain. The Bellingham family all has verified documentation that goes back to 1820."

"1820?" Melvin questions, twirling his pencil effortlessly between his fingers. "Does it stop there?"

"Well, I tried to go back further, but there is a complication."

"A complication, what are you talking about?"

"Your paternal line ends there. Only your maternal line survives."

"Yes, I see that. 1812. Why is there no name on that branch? You don't know why there's an abrupt end to that side of the family? Is there something you're not telling me?"

"Well, my sources indicate there is a possibility of death by unnatural causes."

"Barss! You're still beating around the bush, damn it!"

A lengthy pause is finally followed by, "Melvin, you might be directly related to a very dark character in your family tree!"

The pencil snaps in two. Melvin Bellingham has gone through extraordinary measures to keep his family history a secret. Glen Barss was no doubt someone quite capable of tracing Melvin's heritage back to the beginning of England's earliest written record. But the researcher was now on Brava's payroll. If he wanted to maintain his handsome salary, Melvin's ancestry would never come to light. Millions of dollars poured in to promote this much

hyped, new reality TV game show. In fact, this entire ‘Hallways Could Talk’ production was designed to perpetuate a myth, and Barss knew it.

The CEO regains his composure and says, “You’re on the panel of experts, Barss.”

“Yes, Mr. Bellingham. I know.”

“Well, do I have to have you go over the script with Judith?”

“No that won’t be necessary.”

“Good! I’m counting on you to make this very convincing. Your job is to verify that our play tells the world that Senator Henry Clay was primarily responsible for convincing President Madison to declare war on Great Britain.”

“Yes. I know.”

Melvin hangs up the phone. Bellingham knew that may not have been historically accurate. Returning to the window overlooking the island of Manhattan, he says to himself, “*I am sure I won’t be the first in history to reconfigure a family tree!*”



Parson Academy Cafeteria 12:00 p.m.

Rays of sunlight tease the students who have been confined to the lunch area since breakfast. They are anxious to venture outside and explore the storm damage around campus, but Dr. Gallagher encourages them to remain indoors if they didn’t have an extracurricular activity scheduled for the afternoon. At the table closest to the headmaster’s dais, three boys talk quietly in Hindi, their native language.

One of the boys is focused on the latest CNN coverage of yet another nuclear standoff between Pakistan and India. But an even greater struggle is just off the coast of the southern peninsula of India. Of little interest to the general population of the world with even less to those living in New England’s Pioneer Valley, the Tamil people have been involved in a civil war on Sri Lanka that has officially waged for more than fifty years.



*I can tell you, unofficially, it has been waging for two centuries! A recent assassination of the Indian Prime Minister was the latest casualty of war. Both sides accuse the other of terrorist activity. This boy knows the situation all too well, but for now, he would much rather listen to downloaded MP3 files that play in his i-pod. Visions of his imminent escape off campus dance in his head as his bike races toward the skate park.*

*So, that is Chanin Dar-Yazeer, the Invitee from Bangalore! He does physically resemble to the child I originally brought here. Is it possible that this boy is the seventh generation of Tipu Sultan... The Tiger of Mysore? Where is that sense of dignity and confidence of Taraki, the leader of the Tamil people? The boy seems to be a mere shell of that great, haughty lineage! Nonetheless, he is one of this year’s Invitees, so by grace, he must have some endearing quality.*



Chanin looks up from his i-phone and notices a few of his dorm mates are returning from the short holiday recess. Through the cafeteria window, he can’t help but notice an unsightly creature parading in front of the science building.

He recognizes the face as a fellow freshman, but the costume is beyond description. Chanin finds it difficult to warm up to the majority of his classmates, but he has come to like Hussar Hassik. Hussar is a fellow Invitee who also displays a quiet demeanor and is more serious than most. His large frame envelopes a meek personality that make Hussar the perfect target for those who crave a defenseless victim.



## Colby Hall, Parson Academy's Science Building

Dressed in a yellow neoprene chest wader with matching waterproof gaiters, Hussar Hassik clumsily removes plastic milk crates and containers from the back of a Parson pickup truck. His outfit is completely caked in mud. Mr. Matts helps carry the last piece of cargo into the science building before driving off. Hussar hangs his waterproof garments to dry in the bathroom and changes into more comfortable jeans and his favorite Parson Panthers wrestling sweatshirt. Hussar realizes he is alone in Colby Hall and tries to not let the eerie silence get the better of him. His thoughts return to his previous location just an hour earlier.

As the storm subsided, Hussar and Mr. Matts stand just a few miles north of the Parson Campus inspecting a topographic map of the Pioneer Valley. Before them was 'Bhasin Reservoir,' a submerged potato field the locals named when the dam was released in 1965. Parson's land was beginning to show evidence of an environmental disaster. Hussar's research suspected its culprit. He recalls Mr. Matts' forewarning. *"One word, Mr. Hassik, 'Aldicarb.'"* Aldicarb, a popular pesticide heavily used in the 1950s and 60s, was designed to protect the local potato crop from the voracious nematode. Hussar circled the greatest concentration of pesticide in a bold red marker on the map. No doubt the pesticide leached into the soil and is now showing up on his slide cultures of the local watershed. Headmaster Gallagher authorized Hussar's request to continue his independent research project off campus. He needed to complete one more experiment to prove his theory correct.

Hussar confirms his global positioning satellite coordinates to pinpoint his exact spot. Sloshing around in waist-deep water, clad in his waterproof attire, Hussar pokes through the reeds and submerged debris of the pond. Hussar's thesis caught the attention of the state department head of the Environmental Protection Agency. He needed ten samples from various locations of Bhasin Reservoir. As Hussar dips his test tubes into the muck, his boot slipped on the smooth surface of some kind of material buried in the mud. Immediately his thoughts drift to dark, spooky suspicions. His mind races. *What will happen if I touch this thing?* Nervously, he pats down and around his gaiters to make sure his protective gear is secure and watertight. He feels for his spare pair of gloves and goggles. He kicks away more of the muck under his boot and verifies the smooth stone runs many more inches down into the mud. Hussar throws caution to the wind. He removes his latex glove so his bare hand can feel the smooth stone. The vertical slab has two distinct sides, one with etching, the other not.

*"By grace, with all my might, I want to instruct him. "Hussar! Put on your spectacles!"*

Careful to make sure his test tube samples are safely secured in his plastic container, there is only one way for Hussar to verify the object he has found. He puts on his goggles, takes a deep breath, and plunges his head into the still water.

*"Yes! Do it! Hussar, you must find what is there beneath the water! Open your eyes!"*

Underwater, like a curtain, Hussar pulls apart the swamp grass. He feels the etched letters of the stone slab. The letters formed a name. He can read it.



*“Yes. That is my name, Hussar.”*

Coming up for air, Hussar gasps. Grabbing his samples, he lumbers toward the bank as quickly as he can. Mr. Matts notices Hussar’s urgency. Hussar doesn’t mention a word of his discovery to Mr. Matts. *Boy, am I ever sorry I made such an audacious request. Pesticide poisoning was difficult enough, now I have to face making this horrific discovery public!* The letters are permanently etched in his mind. ‘M. A. R. Y. P.A.R. S.O.N.’ Mr. Matts respects Hussar’s silence and doesn’t ask any questions on the way back to school. He has observed Hussar’s characteristic moodiness in the past.

Hussar’s reverie is interrupted by the class bell ringing in the hallway. He cautiously steps into the lab, spreads out his collection of incubated samples on the granite lab table, and switches on his computer. He only has a few hours to complete his assignment. He punches up a computer file that contains the recorded growth of slide samples to perform a comparison. Waiting for the images to sync, he takes in the spooky silence of the empty building. Trying to keep his mind focused on less anxious affairs, Hussar wants to access his email on the Parson school website but even that poses a problem. An error message indicates there is a problem with the computer connectivity. *What’s going on? I’ve never seen this happen before. The server must be on the fritz!*

A muffled ringtone immediately plays from Hussar’s backpack. The four heavy Gothic notes that open Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony indicate an email message from one of his teachers. Hussar pulls out his phone. He doesn’t recognize the [apple@parsonacademy.com](mailto:apple@parsonacademy.com) address but there is an attachment waiting to be downloaded.

*“Yes, Hussar... Open it!”*

Thinking anything being sent through the school website is completely safe, Hussar opens it.

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*By grace, I have done it! Hussar has also received my transmission! He is reading my journal! Why do they refer to it as an ‘attachment’... fascinating use of terminology. Look how Hussar stares at my document! Aella was right! My work is visible on those little hand held devices.*

*Yes, I see how this is affecting Hussar. He may be experiencing a temporary bout of depression, but he’ll get over it. I’m certainly entitled to have a little happiness after all I’ve been through, don’t you think? Is it my destiny to be considered a renowned educator with a legacy well beyond that of the mere wife of the Academy’s founder and first headmaster? These new Invitees will learn of me, and yes, that is my name down there on that submerged tombstone. I should be worthy of some small epitaph, don’t you think, my friends? So, excuse me. The clock is ticking. We have much more unfinished business to attend to.*

Hussar scrolls through a few pages and pauses on the richly colored hand-illustrated family tree. He reads a journal entry about the House of Habsburg, one of Vienna’s royal families. Handwritten comments of the prominent Austrian family are all written in Germanic language. *That’s gotta be German,* Hussar thinks to himself, never studying or exposed to the language before. He enlarges the image to one specific branch. The name Hassik appears as large as day. *That’s my name!* With closer inspection, he notices a heavy line drawn from the upper left to the lower right over the coat of arms. *That looks an awful lot like a ‘No parking’ symbol.* Knowing little of family trees, Hussar’s scientific mind can only deduce there is a questionable relationship between the Hassiks and the

Habsburg line. A symbol originally devised by the author Sir Walter Scott to indicate illegitimate birth in a family lineage. In heraldic terms, the symbol was known as the "bar sinister," Hussar scrolls back to the earlier pages. The more he inspects, the more disturbing it becomes. *How could I be connected to royalty?*

Meanwhile, the laboratory computer beeps as his lab file download is complete. Hussar closes his i-phone and starts the time-lapse photography of his slide samples. The video progresses through transformations of strange shapes. Indeed, his research verified a strand of poison. *Wow, my theory of the Aldicarb molecule is not a theory anymore.*

With his head buried in the microscope lens, Hussar feels he is being bombarded from every angle. Multiple images replay in his head. Hussar's imagination runs rampant. With so much new data, he cannot distinguish what is from the slide samples and what was displayed on his i-phone. In either case, he can't shake the thought that every root of his being has indeed been poisoned one way or another.

At first, his imagination distorts the heraldic symbols of the Habsburgs across the lens landscape. Instantly, the distinct silhouette of an older woman appears.

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*My friends, that 'silhouette' looks an awful lot like me. My adversary at least has a sense of humor! But look at me! ...I was fond of my hair and my fair skin...I stood erect, and put up with the long dresses and high collars – oh so stiff and confining –under that was my female form which moved graceful and strong—women had little claim to the matters surrounding them- but if their beauty was combined with kindness, they could rise to intelligence - now...now I am a mere wisp of a spirit that is only energy ...but I do remember being proud of my physical being !*

Just as suddenly, another figure appears through his lens. Hussar is stunned. Reluctantly, he increases the magnification to the highest it will go. A masculine warrior on horseback offers an evil smirk. The apparition leaps across the lens landscape, engulfed by a sea of red that is immediately transformed into a field of poppies. The rider now stands defiantly in the field; a fistful of freshly plucked poppies in one hand, a scale for weighing them in the other. *What does this mean?* Hussar thinks to himself as he pulls away from the microscope. Desperate to escape, Hussar grabs his backpack and impulsively runs out the door of Colby Hall to what he thinks will be a place of refuge, the Student Activity Center.

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*I wonder... could this apparition be both, Hussar's ancestor and my adversary? That soldier could be anyone from my past, but I must be absolutely certain. Is this the warrior the little girl was describing to the reporter at the accident? I can only pray these Invitees are strong enough to stand up to such dark forces that will come with each discovery. Whoever the adversary, the wrath these poor students will encounter will darken their paths for the next thirty days... and thirty days is all I have to make things right in the world.*



## Parson Academy Cafeteria Lunch Hour

Hussar wipes the perspiration from his brow and tries his best to compose himself. But today, there is no comfort. Opening the SAC door, Hussar immediately encounters Parson’s number one tormentor who he knows only by his nickname, ‘Hacksaw.’ With a gift for pen and ink, the self-appointed leader of the Detonator Club found a weapon more lethal than a rocket propelled grenade. Hacksaw created a lasting impression with the entire Parson student body. Doodling Hussar’s likeness as the famous green “Hulk” character from Marvel comics, Hacksaw’s caricature of Hussar is outfitted with large reading glasses, graduation cap and gown, and a laboratory beaker. Hussar’s interest in science defined his passion. Indeed, most of his time was spent peering through microscopes. At least in the field, he could ignore the verbal jabs from his schoolmates, especially the Detonators. Hacksaw waves his latest work of art in Hussar’s face.

Hussar tries his best to ignore Hacksaw’s taunting by staring directly toward the ceiling where the digital scroll welcomes the students back from the Thanksgiving recess. It was the next bulletin that catches his eye. The line reads, *Drama Department Update: Mrs. B.’s Winter Production changed to ‘The War of 1812’. See e-board for immediate details.* A collective groan comes from a table where all the drama students are assembled. The young thespians are all busy clicking open Mrs. B.’s online bulletin board.

“Hey Hussar, check out this ridiculous script!” Kelly McCallen complains as she simultaneously texts on her cell phone. “OMG! I mean really, come on!”

“It’s not fair!” says one of the other students. “There goes my 97 average this quarter!”

“Why? You don’t think you can change your talk show set design to look like the interior of Buckingham Palace?” Kelly says with a giggle.

“Yeah! But forget about the Prince of Wales. Do you see this?” Chanin whines. “Talk about type-casting! I’m supposed to play ‘The Tiger of Mysore’ the Indian Sultan?”

“No offense, Chanin, but who really cares about British Colonial India?” Hussar finally speaks. “Give me a break!”

“Well!” Kelly laughs. “At least one loyal British subject is willing to stand up and say his country won that war! Give him some credit for that!”

Chanin’s cell phone chime indicates a new email from apple@parsonacademy.com. Like his fellow students, Chanin assumes the file download is part of the new drama assignment that just scrolled across the campus news wire. Chanin opens the email attachment.

*“Yes, Chanin, read it!”*

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**Mary Parson File: The French Colony of Puducherry, Tamil Nadu region of India  
June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1793 A.D. (27 Jumaada al-awal 1208 A.H. Islamic Calendar)**

*Once a year, it was customary for the Muslim Mughals of the Deccan Peninsula to convene in the port city on India’s southeast tip. The Kings of Mysore, Hyderabad, and Travancore would organize large*

entourages to journey to the annual bazaar. The piece de resistance was the incomparable assembly of stallions on display for sale to the highest bidder. A King never left with less than one hundred prized specimens. It became a festive experience for Muslims and Hindus alike. As far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Tamil coastal towns were filled with Arab merchants who imported the finest Arabian and Persian horses. Intermarriage with the locals developed a trust between Muslims and Hindus. Their offspring were referred to as "The Half Muslims" by the ruling Muslim Mughals. It was not unusual for a Tamil king to appoint an Arab to be his Prime Minister. Tipu Sultan, the Muslim leader of the state of Mysore, in his own fashion, reciprocated by naming a Hindu as his Prime Minister.

Tipu Sultan, The King of Mysore stands on the edge of the promenade, high over the Bay of Bengal. He looks out to the large neighboring island where Adam's Peak rose majestically in the distance. Tipu was quite familiar with Serendib's legend. But now, he can only wonder about the rumored stories of the Tamil people suffering under the new British regime. Mohammed Ali, King of the Travancore, joins Tipu Sultan without uttering a word. Finally, the Sultan speaks.

"I know what you are thinking, my friend." Tipu Sultan whispers calmly to his compatriot. "I have no time to venture off the mainland nor can I be champion to our brothers on the other side of the land bridge."

"Tipu, the Sindhalese hunting grounds increase by the day under the eye of their British protectors. It is difficult to imagine our tigers helplessly watching their meals being devoured by these pretentious cubs." Mohammed Ali remarks.

"It was prudent of the old Dutch to allow the Tamil and Sindhalese to be self-governed. Now, the British deliberately pull down the walls separating two conflicting cultures."

"Mixing oil and water." Mohammed Ali complains. "And they knew who would rise to the top!"

Tipu Sultan exclaims, "I fear Serendib will always be 'India's teardrop'. It worries me that our Muslim brothers come and go with no particular concentration on the island. This will come to pass to our detriment."

Mohammed Ali looks longingly into Tipu's eyes.

"Perhaps you think me worthy of amassing a navy, Mohammed? You know my predicament. My sons are British hostages. I cannot jeopardize their release. Come, we are here to trade horses."

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Chanin ponders the fantastic possibility that he could be of royal ancestry. If anything, Chanin's family is left with nothing of a majestic past let alone a few treasured trinkets. He has a vague memory of his father's mention of a drop of royal blood from two centuries ago, seven generations removed. But a descendant of Tipu Sultan, whose bloody epithet was 'The Tiger of Mysore', the very character Mrs. B. assigned him to play? He laughs at the thought. Somehow, the old historical scene is familiar to him. And why not? It is of his homeland. Still, there was something deeper than the location that really appealed to Chanin. "Is it possible my lineage goes back seven generations to The Tiger of Mysore? My parents never told me about this!"

Not getting much of a rise by teasing Hussar and Chanin, Hacksaw has given up his taunting students for now. He straightens his tie, brushes his hair back, and rejoins his club members at the very last table in the cafeteria. Colorful names typically identify Detonator members. The Dastardly Duo playfully knuckle punch The Bombardier. The Detonator's newest pledge, and our fifth Invitee, Maya Estes, sits absorbed in his laptop. Every inch of the computer lid is plastered with decals. The most pronounced is the large Louisiana Vocational student i.d. that swallows the smaller stickers of punk rock bands and extreme sports logos. Under a spiked tuft of blonde hair, his blue eyes dart over the screen. If you look

closely, you can see the pierce marks where various studs and earrings once adorned his body. His cohorts often kid him that his stutter was caused when he had his tongue pierced.

As part of his freshman initiation, Maya was designated the one responsible to answer the R.R.G. challenge. Maya responds to the pressure. "Give mmm-me space!" he shouts. Like Moses parting the Red Sea, the anxious gathering of Detonators separates. Maya sits back down to continue his work. Dozens of cryptic messages suddenly appear from his school email account, all sent from [apple@parsonacademy.com](mailto:apple@parsonacademy.com). His fingers are temporarily frozen as he watches in amazement the files filling up his screen.

*"Yes, Maya. Open it!"*

Maya opens the first one. The subject line contains one word, 'Houndstooth.'

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*By grace, I have not only achieved transmission, I have championed technology and surpassed the most radical inventions of my day. To think how primitive my original method of transmission was compared to this! During the War for Independence, my carrier pigeons were the talk of every New England towns. I would routinely pack the message capsules with notes from our scouting parties and send my two birds, Iliad and Odyssey, to find their way back to their cage of the Continental Army encampment. As word spread through the thirteen colonies, our little band of renegades were America's new symbol of the patriotic movement of the defiant nation; Henry Knox's artillery train was on its way to free Boston and rid the country of the British Colonial Empire.*

*Yes, I must proclaim I have that Boston Brahmin, Houndstooth Houseley, to thank for my immersion into technology and invention. Houndstooth was Henry Knox's right hand man. He was the master handyman, one of the reasons why the Continental Army won the war against the British. Not only was he a skilled tradesman and a student of artillery, Houndstooth was seeped in Masonic ritual, following a universal order and code. I always respected him for that. His son had that quality when he attended Parson as one of the first Invitees. And now, perhaps Maya will thank me for being the Grand Dame of Inquizators who gave him the clues to learn about his ancestors seven generations removed. Yes, Maya will soon learn he is a direct descendant of Houndstooth Houseley. In some convoluted fashion, I have Houndstooth to thank for being my spiritual connection to the students' computers.*

*Yet, I digress! In one fell swoop, I rocketed past Emperor Napoleon's giant semaphores that dotted the hilltops of Italy, Samuel Morse's telegraph, and Alexander Graham Bell's telephone. I am immersed in the world of global telecom. I have learned that computers not only transmitted information, they are capable of doing battle. No doubt, my adversary has learned this all too well. I have quickly learned my history lesson; as it was back in my day, large corporations were quietly in the forefront of war, either because of their technology or in hopes of possessing it.*

Maya thinks to himself, *What is this? A link to a genealogic search website? Could this be any more lame?* He quickly opens the download. It is a copy of an original journal entry dated 1776. He is impressed with the beauty of its antique quality and Old English penmanship.

*Little did Maya know, the scanned image was almost as crisp and clean as my original! The only difference was you couldn't feel it. Alas, what matter is that to me now? I couldn't feel the soft texture of the parchment even if I wanted to!*

Maya then notices the names buried in the document. *They all sound like they're from old Boston families!* Adams, Houseley, Clay, and there's Estes. *I thought I was one hundred percent Louisiana pedigree! This must be a joke. Someone from the R.R.G. challenge, no doubt!* Maya sits ready to arrow down through the document to inspect more of the 'Houndstooth' journal. *How are all these files being sent to me?* He types a few strokes of computer code, allowing him access into the Parson website. Staring him in the face is an internal email memo from the Massachusetts Department of Education warning all administrators across the state of an impending computer virus. His jaw drops to the floor. Maya is privy to the program code belonging to the cyberhacker nicknamed 'Killjoy.' He looks up into the sea of glaring faces. The Detonators grow even more impatient.

"Come on, Estes, what's it gonna' be?" exclaims Hacksaw, loosening his tie under the pressure.

"O.K." Maya finally responds. "I think I have sss-something our friends in Miami will nnn-never forget!"

"Well, hurry up with it!" Hacksaw screams close to Maya's ear. "Howard's coming and he looks pissed!"

As Maya rushes to put the finishing design touches on his Avatar for the R.R.G. game, his screen suddenly goes dark. The R.R.G. website was gone. There was no more game. The Detonators are totally baffled. Edgar Howard, the school's chief of security, storms right up to the table. Breathing heavily through his nostrils, he assumes his trademark nose-tackle stance, white-hot knuckles embedded firmly on the table surface. The security chief holds his tongue while the walkie-talkie chatter speaks volumes. *"Mr. Howard!"* one of his deputies exclaims, *"Every computer on campus just went down. The main server has been compromised!"* Maya quietly closes the lid of his laptop and awaits his fate. It was common knowledge that Edgar Howard's authority was even greater than Parson's headmaster.

"Gentlemen!" Edgar Howard bellows. "Dollars to donuts you had something to do with that Miami student!" Every club member's face dons a patented blank stare. Mr. Howard continues, "The boy is under arrest and the F.B.I. traced emails back to our server. Our server! Here at Parson!" Mr. Howard leans across the table, coming millimeters within Hacksaw's nose. "Now, which one of you is responsible for this?" Not getting a response from anyone, he pulls back and wags his finger at the entire table. "None of you leave this room!"

Edgar Howard exits as quickly as he came. Indeed, Massachusetts Department of Education demanded all school websites be shut down for fear of continued viral attack. What was even more devastating was a phone call to the headmaster that announced the arrival of the CAT unit, the fabled Cyber Action Team of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. On the overhead television monitors, CNN's reporter was providing an update of its continued television coverage of the criminal act by the Miami high school student.

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*My friends, at first blush, this Edgar Howard individual is rather unsavory, but certainly not as dangerous as that locust-loving character, Martin. Moorgrave? I don't sense Howard is one of my adversary's agents, but he falls into the category of 'malevolent multi-taskers', that's for sure! By grace, what were these words I just uttered? Am I so affected by these students that I now speak in totally modern phrases which I have absorbed? Am I so affected by these students in my midst?*



Loud rumbles of rumor and innuendo fill the cafeteria, but not a word is uttered of the secretive R.R.G. episode. As all internet savvy gamers know, the strictest adherence to the rules of the challenge must be followed. Maya tries everything. His computer connection through the school server has been lost.

“This is a problem! We have nnn-no more internet!”

Maya looks around the room. Suddenly, every face on campus has changed. He returns to his blank screen. *This Houndstooth attachment was the last thing on my computer... is there a connection?*

Out of frustration, Hacksaw defiantly climbs up on his chair straightens his tie, and brushes back his hair. In this realm, all are subservient to their leader. With muscular arms folded, he peers out over the room. Someone must take the heat. Someone has to pay. Like a hawk, the senior spies his target.

Oblivious to the events surrounding him, Chanin sits huddled over his food tray, totally absorbed in another world. The rock band Green Day pounds through the earphones of his i-phone. Something draws Chanin’s eyes to lock with Hacksaw’s. The diminutive Asian student knows what is coming. He is regularly bullied by the gamer circle. In times like these, his thoughts immediately journey back home, to Bangalore, India. Indeed, Chanin was one of the ‘Half Muslims’; his mother being Hindu, his father Muslim. Such a label was not uncommon in the Tamil region of India. But even there, half way around the world, he was the target of choice in his old school as children taunted him about it.

As Hacksaw approaches, Chanin’s swift exit is the most prudent.



Parson Woods Road 2:00 p.m.

Chanin rushes to unlock his bicycle that is chained to a light post outside the Academy’s Humanities Building. Chanin sneaks off in the direction of the town skate park. Just off the road, through a clearing, he spots an old apple grove surrounded on all sides by a thick population of oak, birch, maple, and pine. The reds, yellows, and oranges of accumulated fallen leaves are vivid on the forest floor. He enjoys the rare opportunity to light a Sandalwood incense stick that he has secreted in his backpack. He shuts off his cd player and ducks into the woods to hide his ritual. A gusty breeze runs through the tall pines. Chanin likens it to a whisper. *It sounds like a woman’s voice.* he thinks.

*“Follow me!” I shout with all my might.*

A circle of leaves pulled from the treetop branches whirls downward, forming a distinct spiraling pillar of visible energy, yellowish green in color and sulfuric in smell. The leaves surround and circle his smoke ring, as if summoned by an angry god. He drops to the forest floor and eyes something under a fallen tree. A flannel cloth sticks up through the leaves of the Ground Laurel. The cloth has some weight to it and he gives it a good tug. It

still won't release. Chanin discovers the wet cloth is in the shape of a sack. He gently tugs and shovels away some more earth. The sack is free at last, free after so many years. Lifting the leather pouch into the light of day, holding it by its leather strap, he examines the contents. A textbook, whose binding and cover is softened and moist with age, is curled tightly inside the satchel. He extracts the book and tries to read the faded Old English handwriting. He tires of the language and returns the book to its original rolled position in the flannel cloth bag. He carefully places the satchel into his backpack, not having a clue as to what he has just found. After these many, many years, this wonderful gift has finally been unearthed.

The wind starts up again. Snuffing out his incense stick, he gathers up his bundle and runs as fast as his legs will carry him back up toward the road, trying to escape his tormenter.

*My Friends, I was not Chanin's tormenter, my mission is simply to connect Chanin to his ancestry.*

The wind summons more voices. "*Adi Shakti. Adi Shakti. Kundalini. Hari. Hari.*" He turns up his ipod. Green Day makes him pump his bicycle faster. His mind races with the thought of revving motorbike engines and the vision of mud flying around him. Relieved to think he is now more than halfway to the high school, Chanin knows he can coast most of the way downhill from here. He has a sudden flashback to the first round of last year's European BMX Championship that he attended in Sainte Maxime, France. He visualizes the spill that ended his dream of winning the competition.

Climbing up the hill alongside him, the television news broadcast truck that transmitted Tracy Abrahms' report earlier that day, passes him on the narrow two-lane road. Chanin doesn't hear the truck's horn over his i-pod, nor does he notice the satellite-transmitting dish shaking loosely on its roof mount.

The road levels out for a few hundred feet. Chanin spies a paved driveway and a tempting concrete street curb just up ahead. An enticing jump! Gathering up all his power, he decides to take it. Launching off the curb, the bike soars skyward. Chanin hangs in mid air for a few seconds, catching a terrific glimpse of the huge valley below and the heavily treed mountains and pine forest beyond. A gold thread of a long thin river stretches down from the mountains. His wheels come down and gently touch the road surface. The asphalt vibrates violently with two large, earth-shattering thuds. With the winter sun generating its blinding light very low in the sky, Chanin never saw the large rolling disk approach him. As Chanin and the oncoming object collide, the last sound he hears is like that of a concert piano's final chord landing crisp, sustained, and perfect.

*The tremendous crescendo climax rockets skyward toward the heavens. After traveling halfway around the world, the faint energy source touches down softly in the most unpredictable of spots.*



C.I.A. Station, Calcutta, India 1:30 a.m.

"Sir, a cell phone message has just been sent to that tagged number in Paris," exclaims the Cryptologist with a French accent. "That group, the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam, is holding a fundraiser at The Musée Baccarat."

"Mr. Olan, we are recording that overseas call to Princess Noor." the American agent reports.

"The initial cell call from Amherst was made only half an hour ago."

"Je suis allée pour voir mon sunrise!" Olan's cryptologist shouts.

"English, please!" the American agent pleads.



“It means ‘I have gone to see my sunrise,’” he says in English, passing the transmission to his station chief. Mr. Olan looks at the words, snickers at the obvious double entendre, and places the communiqué in his shredder.

“What it really means is that our good doctor has gone to see his son rise. He is on his way to visit his youngest boy, Chanin. Let’s see. University Hospital. Amherst, Massachusetts. The boy’s been in a bad accident.”



Truscant Hall, Parson Academy 3:00 p.m.

Despite Mr. Howard’s direct instruction, Maya Estes bolts from the cafeteria table and runs out the door of the Student Activity Center. He takes just enough of a glance at the news scroll to mentally register the four p.m. Drama Department meeting later that afternoon. Maya has staked his reputation on completing the R.R.G. challenge. There was always that ‘fail safe’ that even the Detonator Club did not know about. He kept that secret to himself. Hoping the rumors heard in the Grounds Maintenance Shed were true, Maya immediately hatches his plan.

*“Yes, Maya! Truscant Hall! Go there!” I encourage him.*

With the help of his friend in the Maintenance Department, he secures the key that opens the front door of the oldest structure on campus. Ignoring the ‘No Trespassing’ sign, he stands in the isolated hallway of the condemned building. Armed with a flashlight, Maya climbs the rickety staircase of Truscant Hall. *I don’t want to meet the ghosts of the school founders! This is where they slept! And here are the dorm rooms of the first students back in 1795.* Indeed, Maya was standing at the threshold of my beloved residence.

*“Yes, Maya! Open the door!”*

Looking at a hastily drawn floor plan, Maya follows the arrows and enters the first room on the third floor. There sits the proud ancient relic, the thirty year old IBM XT computer. Its monitor is switched on. *How weird is that?* Maya thinks to himself. The screen is black except for the square, green cursor blinking in the upper right corner of the monitor. No modern accessory. No connection to any modern network. Maya unscrews the face plate. Fumbling with the hundred feet of computer cable for the Hayes Compatible 2400 Baud Modem, he attaches the modem cable into the slot, connects the phone wire and types a few strokes on the keyboard.

Maya waits patiently hoping to witness the modem’s successful attempt at a handshake with the outside world. He recognizes the Internet Explorer logo, but cannot get used to its monotone display. *I’m on line!* Maya thinks to himself. *It may be ancient, but it works!* Maya’s curiosity had him wondering about the connection between the historic files and the hacker’s cryptic code. *That’s weird! “More of those stupid files, again! It’s taking up way too much space on my hard drive!”* Maya exclaims. Maya leans back and thinks to himself, *another file with the same name of ‘Killjoy’? That is some coincidence! Ah, here it is. It was the last email attachment I received before the school shut down the website.*



*Interestingly enough, Moorgrave also used Maya’s term ‘Killjoy.’ I hope there is no connection between them. That would be devastating. I ponder the thought of such connections. What has my adversary layed out before my Invitees? It is my task to*

learn the meaning of the actions of Melvin Bellingham, Martin Moorgrave, and even Edgar Howard. Can a single individual deliberately or inadvertently change the course of time? At the turn of the nineteenth century, I asked what was the significance of individual contributions; a great philosopher, a ruler of a nation, a captain of Industry? No doubt, there is a connection to something. My journals will tell you what I know... Yes, my friends, Maya opened that electronic doorway that invited a world of possibilities... my possibilities. Thank goodness Maya correctly assumed a modern day virus could not harm a computer built in 1980.

Maya arrows down the list of subdirectories found in Mary Parson's folder. Maya holds his breath, crosses his fingers, and opens it. He was right. The journal entries appear.

"Wow! Look at this! Is it possible this can be the hacker's code buried in these journal files? 'Mary Parson Journal Entries?' Maya murmurs under his breath. "Who is Mary Parson and what are her letters doing here? OK, Houndstooth, here I am... What do you have for me?"



## Mary Parson File: U.S. Armory, Springfield, Massachusetts, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1793

*The beleaguered, once outspoken leader of the British Lunar Society stands dripping wet on Henry's carpet, his eyes surveying the Great Seal of the United States emblazoned on the fabric under his feet.*

*"Mrs. Parson, please advise Dr. Priestly I will see him now." Henry Knox bellows.*

*I escorted the prominent scientist into the Secretary of War's office. "On behalf of the Washington administration, may I officially welcome you to America."*

*One of the world's most renowned chemist removes his raincoat. "I thought I was leaving the precipitation back in the Isles?"*

*"Ah, Dr. Thomas Priestly! You've arrived in one piece!" Harold 'Houndstooth' Housely exclaims.*

*"Quite an unfortunate incident in Birmingham."*

*For decades, even before the War for Independence, Houndstooth was Henry's closest friend and associate.*

*"Yes, King George isn't the only one going mad, my dear fellow." Dr. Priestly quips.*

*"We read all about it in the papers." Houndstooth continues. "I could have told you that you wouldn't find any sympathy for the French people's cause in England!"*

*"Dr. Priestly, tell me what you know of the stolen diamonds of the French crown?"*

*"I heard the Garde-Meuble of the Royal Treasury was ransacked. Mr. Housely, you're not implying...."*

*I immediately jump in. "No! Of course, he's not. Please excuse my friend, Houndstooth here." I whisper.*

*"He has a fascination with anything that glitters, especially one hundred forty carats!"*

*"France has paid dearly!" Dr. Priestly utters. "That Indian stone is cursed!"*

*"Nonetheless, it is still the bargaining chip of choice amongst the European Royals." Houndstooth remarks. "We know two carriages left Versailles during the height of the Reign of Terror. One brought Marie Antoinette and King Louis the Sixteenth to Temple Prison. The second carriage ferried the Prince of France into the Rhine Valley."*

*"The Prince who may be King Louis the Eighteenth!" I interject.*

*"Yes, now, the entire House of Bourbon was on the run. It was the Austrian Bourbon family, the Habsburgs, who harbored the French royal children in Coblenz."*

*"And the Habsburgs convinced Austria's Duke of Brunswick to attack France."*

*"But Brunswick was repelled. So that is why the Directorate in Paris wants its revenge on Austria?" Priestly surmises.*

*Henry offers an additional political nugget. "From what we heard, through secret channels, 'Le Blue' was offered by members of France's National Convention as a bribe to Austria to leave the French border."*

*"You mean Brunswick retreated with the diamond in his pocket while his cousin Marie Antoinette was left to be executed?" Dr. Priestly asks innocently.*

*"Precisely!" Houndstooth gloats. "But mark my words, Le Blue will never disappear. Maybe a cut or two shaping them into perfectly separated sisters, but disappear? No! Once the twenty year statute of limitation runs out, psst, wah-lah! The French Blue will reappear, and draped around one very pretty Royal neck! You'll see!"*

*"That makes the year Eighteen hundred and twelve!" the Secretary of War grunts as he hobbles around his desk. "It is good you decided to accept our invitation to emigrate."*

*"Yes. I will be staying with relatives in Pennsylvania." Dr. Priestly answers.*

*"Pennsylvania?" Henry replies with a huff. "Nonsense, I have a business proposition to offer you!"*

*"What kind of proposition?" Dr. Priestly questions.*

*"What would you say if I could procure U.S. patents for your inventions?" Henry offers. "And there is a school right here in the Pioneer Valley where you can teach. With pay, of course." I add, "Not only could you advance your studies in chemistry, your children deserve a quality education, don't you think, doctor?"*

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*My friends, Henry Knox and Houndstooth Housefly saw the need to attract Lunar Society members to emigrate to America. In these early years of the United States, it was the country's only key to compete with Great Britain. Understand, the Lunar Society was routinely characterized as a hotbed of political and philosophical empathy toward the sworn enemy of Great Britain. Stories of Dr. Priestly's support for the bloody French Revolution not only filled the pages of the London Times, it filled the street in front of the Lunar Society building with staunch protest. Dr. Priestly was singled out by an angry mob. And it might be this pivotal moment in the waning dusk of the eighteenth century that set the stage for the next twenty years. Global war was beginning to take its toll on Britain.*

*During this time of global upheaval, I served as administrative assistant to Secretary of War, Henry Knox in President Washington's Cabinet. As a young child, Aella Abernathy was my teacher at the Massachusetts Dame School. As the major benefactor of the school, Erasmus was Aella's employer. From Birmingham, England, Erasmus directed Aella to take the most promising of the class under her wing, advancing the curriculum to a higher level. Aella was not only my school teacher, she was England's botanical collector and illustrator assigned to the Massachusetts colony. I was that one lucky student! The American War for Independence changed all that. Vowing loyalty to the Crown, Aella joined the British exodus from Boston. Ever since, Aella and I remained pen pals and the best of friends.*

*But even with my busy schedule, posts to my friend Aella Abernathy continued weekly. Aella also served as diplomatic attaché, but for the British Colonial government in India. I know her knowledge of political, economic, and social developments in the United States was greater than that possessed by any average American. Thank goodness... she was*

*my sounding board. Aella was the only one I could expressed my desire to leave government office and return to another life I once held so dear.*

*And little did I know as I boarded a square rigger in Boston Harbor, Britain's military and economic loss in its North American colony was still fresh on the minds of all British subjects. What bolstered the pride of the British motherland were the reports from British Colonial India of victorious triumph. The spicy newspaper reports from the Orient were tantamount to the turmoil in France. Headlines read, 'Britain's military governor declaws the 'Tiger of Mysore.' King George's Privy Council thought it was better to humiliate the Mysore King rather than simply killing him.*

*So, my friends, here we are... as the Grand Dame of the Order of Inquizators, my mission is unquestionably tied to the Parson Academy's new Freshman Class. It was obvious that part of my task was to ward off the evil of men like Edgar Howard, Martin Moorgrave, and Marvin Bellingham and protect these new Invitees at all cost. Talk about a virus unleashed... it was worse than a plague of locust! I wasn't sure if any one of these three men could be the reincarnations of my adversary. But I was thankful that now it wasn't entirely up to me... I had my own army... my five new Invitees! By grace... one of them will discover my time capsule! Yes, history is about to be re-written, but it will not be Melvin Bellingham's... no, it will be mine.*