

From the Files of the Time Rangers  
by Richard Bowes

PART ONE  
THE SWITCHYARD MASSACRE

Autumn dawn broke over a Hudson River. A tugboat maneuvered a string of barges up to a West Side pier. The cabin door of a barge opened. Out stepped a man in overalls and pea coat, a watchcap pulled over his red hair.

He looked around then locked the cabin behind him. His approach to this city had started in 1745 in Galway on a boat full of recruits bound for France and the Wild Geese regiments. At sea he'd hooked onto one of Napoleon's frigates sailing toward the Horn. Off her, he caught a steamer bound for Buenos Aires in 1900, then jumped far into the new century in a turbine freighter putting into Hoboken, where he signed on as a barge captain.

As he crossed the deck and climbed the ladder to the pier, he sang under his breath:

Through the Long Dark into dawning,  
Out of Time and into day.

He signed the name Jack Stanley on the list of those going ashore, walked down the wharf and into the city. Above an elevated highway, a Technicolor billboard displayed what looked like a scowling bank clerk. The Commander-in-Chief in full uniform glared defiance at the world.

Not even dictatorship and the threat of war could still the harbor. Longshoremen headed for the shape-up. trucks and freight trains got unloaded and loaded. On the tenement-lined streets of Chelsea, a corner building had a sign: ROOMS BY THE WEEK OR MONTH. The ground-floor shop sold newspapers, tobacco, sandwiches.

A skinny kid in his mid-teens swept the sidewalk. He glanced up as the barge captain crossed the street. For the space of an eye-flash, the man had in his open palm a spiral badge the color and size of a quarter.

The man entered the store. The kid finished sweeping and carried the broom inside. A woman, obviously his mother, was behind the cash register ringing up purchases. "T. R., show him the third-floor back before you go to school," she said.

The boy gestured toward a door which led to a stairwell. When they were alone, he turned to the man and flashed a copper spiral. "I knew you'd come!" he whispered. The man held a finger to his lips. "It's right up here," the kid said loud enough to be overheard. Captain Roger Deveraux nodded and followed him up the stairs.

From "Pride of the Rangers" by Daniel Ignace, Galaxy Magazine, July 1960.

1.

A few years up the Timestream from now, late in the afternoon of a drizzly April Thursday, a white guy in

a windbreaker and a black guy in a suit stand at Tenth Avenue and Thirty-Second Street. Inside the gate of the West Side Consolidated Storage Yards, a silver and blue New Jersey Transit train, its lights up, is set to roll east to Pennsylvania Station.

The man in the windbreaker is stocky and white-haired. He glances a couple of blocks downtown at the abandoned elevated railway tracks jutting out onto the Avenue. A kid skateboards around the steel pillars. The man looks familiar, though TV might not be your guess as to where you'd seen Robert Logue.

The black man is big, with a shaved skull. Louis Jackson says, "Most people, Robert, do not get to choose who in city law enforcement they're going to do business with. You, however, decide on an Assistant DA in the Manhattan Sex Crimes Unit," he indicates himself, "and everyone is happy. Grateful, even. I get pulled off my regular assignments to follow you around."

"Cops don't get stripped, killed, and mutilated either," says Logue. "But forty-plus years ago, about where that train is now, that's how officers Dennis Burke and James LaRocca were found. The Switchyard Massacre. Still unsolved. A major blot on the NYPD record. You weren't born when it happened, Jax."

"I feel like I should be hearing your voice dubbed over a long, lingering camera pan at the start of Buried Murder," says Jackson.

"Luckily, Americans love murders. Even old, forgotten ones. Uncover a crime, give it a name like Reverend Bluebeard or The Noonday Witch, and you've got an audience," Logue tells him. "The Switchyard Massacre is a natural."

"Yeah, I noticed the events of February sixth, 1963 are popular reading all of a sudden," says Jax. "This morning I saw the files. Besides the cops, a certain Ted Benez and Sally Dere, described as police informers, were also murdered."

"Kids. Seventeen or so. Hell, LaRocca and Burke were still in their twenties. They'd seem like kids to me now." Logue starts walking to the corner. "That's enough. I just need to get the feel of the scene."

Louis Jackson nods. They cross Tenth Avenue and head East on Thirty-Third Street. Mail trucks line the curbs around the Postal Annex. Workers sit in the cabs and on the tailgates, tabloids in hand, staring at the cop cars and news crews up the block.

Robert points to a New York Post headline:

### KID COP BUTCHERED

Under it is a picture of a bareheaded cadet in a police academy uniform. "A handsome young woman, Mirabel Gonzalez. You saw how the Times headline tied her death in with Olney's? By tomorrow they'll be writing about the Switchyard Massacre. TV may be there before then."

On the southwest corner of Thirty-Third and Ninth is

a parking lot. It's empty today of all but official vehicles and a line of official gawkers at the chain link fence along its back side. New York 1 scans the twenty-foot drop and the dozen sets of railway tracks. Just below that fence, Cadet Gonzalez's mutilated corpse was discovered in time for last night's news.

Robert and Jax look down on cops combing the area inside the yellow crime scene tape, on an Eyewitness News reporter interviewing a Deputy Inspector. The Jersey Transit train they just saw in the yards emerges from the tunnel under Tenth Avenue. It glows silver in the dull light before disappearing beneath the old Main Post Office building.

Robert stares at the wall on the far side of the railway cut. Jax follows his gaze. On the dark gray stone is a faded graffiti, a spiral. A later, brighter red X is spray-painted over it.

"Logue." A large, red-faced cop as big as Jax walks their way. "My favorite TV detective."

"Lieutenant Crawford. One of my favorite detectives in any medium," says Robert.

"You need to get down there?" asks the cop. Robert Logue shakes his head. "Any ideas about the corkscrew on the wall?"

"A reminder of an older and less orderly New York," says Robert.

"You ever meet her?" Crawford jerks his head

toward the murder site.

"Briefly. She was Olney's friend. Right now, I need to talk with Jax."

2.

A few minutes later, Robert and Jax are in a booth at the diner across the street, sipping Greek coffee. Jax drinks it straight. Robert has spiked his cup from a flask. The TV is on with the sound off. Cadet Gonzalez's face appears, then the railway tracks.

Robert stares out the window at a bunch of teens just sprung from school. Uniform ties are off, white shirttails hang out. Blazers are draped over their shoulders, skirts are hiked high, pants are rolled up to the knees. All their faces are painted with tiger stripes.

"War paint. The latest fashion trend," Jax says.

"That stuff washes off," says Robert. "They have to be scrubbed and back in uniform tomorrow morning. Tattoos and body piercing are illegal for kids. Not like when you grew up and anything went. I was their age circa 1960 and I kind of sympathize."

He produces a manila envelope and spreads New York Post clippings on the table. They show Brian Olney as a bright kid in a high school graduation photo, wearing a tuxedo at a brother's wedding, in a Police Academy uniform, in a body bag being carried off a West Side pier a few weeks earlier.

On top of these, Robert places a police photo of a corpse lying in the glare of lights. Three bullet holes are drilled in Olney's chest. His clothes are gone except for a blood-saturated T-shirt pulled over his head. It conceals the missing eyes. Invisible, unless one knows it's there, is the tiny spiral tattoo over the right bicep.

"A kid starved for adventure. A pre-med at NYU who went out of his way to audit a Buried New York course I gave at the New School last fall. Halfway through the semester, he disappears. At finals time he shows up in a police cadet uniform. Looking like the hero of a Boy's Own Adventure book."

Robert brings out an old police photo taken in the train yards. In the background is a baggage car and a signal light. In the foreground are the white of bare arms and legs, the black of the back of a head, of empty sockets. One victim is facedown. Another's mouth is open to the sky. Like she was killed in mid-scream.

Next is a shot dated 2/6/63. It shows a newsstand with the full array of seven New York City dailies. Even the Times features the murders.

"In those days, all the news did not get printed," says Robert. "But everyone in the city had a hot rumor or clever theory about what had happened. The NYPD went crazy, hauled every ex-con and current pervert in the Greater New York area in for questioning. They couldn't raise a lead. The Feds got called in. If they found out anything, they weren't telling."

"Fortunately for everyone's reputations, that fall Kennedy died in Dallas, made the Massacre look almost quaint. But we're in quiet, peaceful times. Again. The public is ready to be thrilled and horrified. The tabloids are champing at the bit for serial killers. The NYPD doesn't want a repeat of 1963. Getting caught between the Post and the FBI is real painful."

Robert drains his cup. "The only worthwhile thing to come out of the Olney murder was the possible sex-crime angle. That got you assigned to the case. Now, with Gonzalez dead, Crawford and company want to lean on me. It means they have no worthwhile leads. I have a couple of angles I'm working on. But if you want answers, you have to lay off. I'm a consultant, not a suspect."

Jax smiles. "Understand this, Robert. Most people don't get to decide who their contact is. But nobody gets to decide whether or not the cops trust them. What are you offering?"

"Olney and Gonzalez's killer. And maybe a lot more. If you give me two weeks."

"Two days," Jax says. "Time's tight. As you pointed out."

Robert says, "Four. Monday morning." He's staring over the other man's head. When Jax looks, everybody in the place is watching the TV. On screen is a live shot of the West Side Yard. The sound gets turned up. "... two blocks from the site of the infamous Switchyard Massacre." When Jax turns



back, there's a ten on the table and Robert is gone.

3.

Half an hour later, Louis Jackson stands under the huge glass dome at the center of the old Main Post Office. A big chunk of the interior of this massive building has been refurbished and turned into an approximation of a 1900s railroad cathedral. The Post Office itself was built to complement the original Penn Station. Now, it will contain within itself Penn Station Three.

Above the new train gates hang huge blow-up photos of the first Station at its opening in 1909. Pearly light falls on the Waiting Room where people are dark specks, ticket windows mouse holes. The glass and steel of the old Concourse ceiling is like a web. The Arcade's shops glitter.

Without taking his eyes off the photos, Jackson tells Lieutenant Crawford, "He claims you're cramping his style."

"His style!" Crawford says. "Unusual parlay, consultant and suspect. He was hanging around this neighborhood weeks before the Olney murder took place. Any idea where he was last night?"

Jax nods, still looking up. "At a family dinner in Westchester. I know because I was there. Anything new on Gonzalez?"

"Indications that she didn't die on the site where she was found. No sign of how she got there. Just like

Olney. Unlike him, though, it seems she was stripped and blinded after she was shot.

"One other thing. This is a copy of a snapshot we found in her locker at the Police Academy." Jax sees five males, three in their late teens, two a bit older, facing the camera. Clothes and hair place this in the early '60s. Behind them are twisted steel beams, the smashed statue of an eagle.

"The original's authentic as far as we can tell. The two adults are officers LaRocca and Burke. We don't have any ID on the kids."

Jax sees a snotty preppy, an amused young tough, and a jumpy-looking kid in a dorky crewcut who seems oddly familiar. Jax looks again. Only because he has spent the better part of the last twenty-four hours with Robert Logue does he recognize the face. He hands the photo back and says nothing.

## PART TWO THE SONG OF THE TROLL

One Friday afternoon in mid-December, a merchant seaman in pea coat and watchcap walked up Seventh Avenue to Penn Station. He carried a duffel bag over his shoulder. Up the wide stairs and past the huge pillars he went. A Federal Police guardhouse lay just inside the front door.

Not even the glorious Commander-in-Chief in the twentieth year of his Perpetual Administration could totally dampen the holidays. Police lounged at their

station in silver and black uniforms, faces red, eyes glazed. As the sailor walked past them, a plumber's truck drove up fast. A man and his assistant unloaded tools and pipes.

The station was built in the gilded age before the Great War and the World Depression. Under a vaulted ceiling, the Arcade, big as a city street, lined with shops and restaurants, led from the Avenue to the Main Waiting Room. As the sailor passed, the proprietor of a cigar store hung up a CLOSED sign and hurried in back.

A flight of wide stairs flanked by monumental statues brought the seaman into a room vast as a city square. People seemed tiny beneath huge banners bearing the likeness of the Commander-in-Chief. High school kids heading to a rally passed through the gates of the Concourse. T. R. was among them. The sailor put down his bag behind two Federal cops, fumbled in his pockets for cigarettes and matches.

A short, sharp boom echoed through the building. Then another and a third. Pipe bombs had blown up the guardhouse at Seventh Avenue and sealed that entrance. The two Feds started toward the Arcade. A Thompson submachine gun appeared out of the sailor's duffel bag. He shouted, "Everyone, get down." The cops turned around and immediately put their hands in the air. Shots rang out in the Concourse. Commuters revealed themselves as gunmen. Baggage handlers broke rifles out of broom closets.

The sailor's hat was off. "Secure the exits. All non-combatants out of the building." Captain Deveraux's red hair was like a beacon. He raised his weapon and fired a series of short bursts through the face of the Commander-in-Chief. T. R. ran up to tell him, "We've captured all the guards on the train platform."

"Lock them in the baggage area."

A banner was raised. On it was the spiral emblem of the Time Rangers, a circle and within that another circle and within that still another. It always seemed to have one more twist than was possible. It drew the eye irresistibly.

Friday night saw half a dozen badly coordinated attacks on the building. Saturday morning, helicopters appeared, flying low, firing through the Waiting Room windows. One was shot down over Seventh Avenue. Another crashed through the skylights and burned in the Concourse. Saturday afternoon, a homemade land mine took out a tank in the Thirty-Third Street carport. Sunday morning, warships opened fire from the Hudson River. Columns buckled on the Eighth Avenue façade. A two-ton eagle, blasted off the roof, fell into the street.

Deveraux crouched in the machine gun position commanding the main entrance. T. R. brought up the last of the ammunition. Suddenly, the artillery fire stopped and they heard helicopter motors, felt tank treads grinding toward the building.

The captain put out of his mind all thoughts of the Alamo and the Paris Commune and the Dublin Post Office and other times when brave men held out and help did not come. He whistled a fragment of 'You Will Hear Me.'

No trains had arrived or departed the station for the last forty hours. But, as if the song had evoked it, Deveraux felt the rhythm of steel on steel beneath the city. T. R. stopped and listened.

You will hear me in the nighttime,  
Look around to find I've gone.  
Over empires, over lifetimes,  
Look around, my will is done.

Then everyone felt the engines under the Concourse, heard the tramp of Sherman's infantry and Clousson's Marines marching off the trains. Artillery was manhandled from flat cars. Spiral medallions shone on the uniforms of the Rangers who had led them there from Upstream and Down.

From "Pride of the Rangers" by Daniel Ignace, *Galaxy Magazine*, July 1960.

1.

Half an hour after Logue leaves Jax in the diner, he leans on a pillar of the abandoned elevated railway on Tenth Avenue. He has a baseball cap pulled down over his face. Nearby, a skateboarder in black and maroon school colors bounces on and off a curb. He has olive skin and a spiral design on his cheek. He makes a point of ignoring Robert.

Down the Avenue from the tracks is a stretch of decayed tenements and parking lots, of gas stations and tire shops. A woman pushes a baby carriage full of handbags past them and pauses under the elevated. A muscle man walking west on Thirtieth Street stops and sets down a heavy backpack. An Asian boy and an Hispanic girl on bikes pass by the el, turn and ride back.

A guy gets out of a truck and opens the back to reveal TVs. A pair of junkies carry a carton of CDs. A fat girl pulls up the sleeves of her Ralph Lauren parka to display bracelets and watches. The kids get off their bikes and start showing them around. A Minute Market is in session.

Customers appear from the housing projects further down the Avenue. Cars cruising by suddenly double-park. Their drivers get out. Constantly turning to keep an eye in all directions, they buy and sell.

"Whadayaget?"

"Fiftyeven."

"Giveyatwenny."

"Fugoffmotha."

"Giveyatwennyfive."

A slightly worn Ford Explorer pulls up and sits with its engine running. The rear door opens. Robert

steps around a carton of cell phones, crosses the street and heads for it.

A dark man with a bad eye sits at the wheel. The woman inside the open door is dark and wide with bright yellow hair and a Kool stuck in her mouth. She buys a pair of suitcases, hardly used, from a jumpy guy. She snaps up the carriage-load of handbags. She does business fast, palming bills, tossing her goods in behind her.

"Angelica Podesta?" murmurs Robert.

"Get lost," she says not looking at him. The driver has turned in his seat.

"Old Trollo's grandkid?"

"Like I said, get lost." She raises her voice, looks past Robert to a guy in a sweatshirt who stands with briefcases in both hands. "Ten each," she says. The dark man is out of the front seat. He holds an antique tire iron.

Robert pushes the cap back. "Is that any way to treat a fellow Time Ranger?"

"Jesus!" she breathes and holds up her hand. The man halts just behind Robert.

"Hey, I got twelve more!" The guy with the briefcases says. "Hundred the lot."

Angie looks at Robert. "Jesus Christ," she says. "Seventy-five," she tells the seller without turning

his way. The deal gets struck. Working fast, Angie buys a leather jacket off a man's back. The guy with the tire iron watches the transactions, shifts the merchandise around in the Explorer. His good eye is always on Robert Logue. Then it's over. The market disperses.

"Like to buy you a couple of drinks, maybe talk about times and places," says Robert.

"With the news, I expected questions. But not from you." Angie seems a little stunned as she gets out of the car. "Okay, Geo. Move 'em. Talk to you tomorrow," she says. Geo does not look happy. He drives away slowly, like he's not going very far. The skateboarder, bouncing down the washboard street, stays even with him.

Robert smiles and takes Angie down Tenth to Moran's. Perched at the edge of the lovely Old Chelsea blocks around the Seminary, it is safely in her neighborhood but upscale enough to be off limits to her. Angie looks around, self-consciously, at the suits at the bar.

"I'm a slum goddess, only the slum is disappearing," she says, and he tells her she looks fine. "I'm dressed for work," she says. But with a fast piña colada inside her, she smiles a bit and says, "Holy shit you look like what's-his-name who played Archie Bunker. But you look like him later when he was that Southern sheriff."

"Carroll O'Connor? Gee, I thought I was more the Paul Newman type." Logue seems genuinely hurt.



"Ah, you look great. I mean is you look like a celebrity. I saw you once" she says. "On TV. But even with the same name I couldn't believe it. You had uncovered some guy murdered his family years ago. Me, I look like garbage."

Robert Logue shakes his head meaning she doesn't. He keeps looking right at her, that classic technique of a seduction or an interview, seeming unable to take his eyes away. Angie says, "When they talk about LaRocca, Burke, and the others, I expect cops." She gives a sly smile. "And I guess that's what I got. Kind of." Logue doesn't say no.

The place is noisier than he wants. So, after getting a few drinks in her, he takes her to a Szechuan place on Ninth. It's on the ground floor of a small, leaning building with high ceilings, old wooden floors. The night is rainy, with the delivery men in plastic ponchos and the occasional take-out customers carrying umbrellas. A double table of artists and their boyfriends occupies most of the restaurant. Robert and Angie are way at the back. He sends one of the delivery men out for a bottle of Jameson's.

"All these places right in my neighborhood where I never go," she says amid the dumplings, the shredded chicken, the asparagus and hot shrimp. "All the old places are gone. Like the Hudson Cafeteria. You remember the Hudson." He smiles but says nothing. "Nobody's bought me dinner in a long time," she says. "The kind of guys I know, I buy for them. How'd you know where I'd be?"

"It wasn't easy. But recently, I've been thinking a lot about all of us and everything that happened."

"That kid last month, the cadet, started you off, right?" she says with a big, dumb grin.

"I remembered," he says, "that you were like the resident spirit of the neighborhood."

"Meaning I'm too crazy to leave," she says. "I remember LaRocca called you a bloodhound. Said you could snuff stuff out." Looking deep into her glass, she says, "It's weird, people I see every week or two, I can't remember their names. All that stuff forty years ago is so damn clear." She talks and Robert smiles as if they both know the story but her way of telling it is best.

2.

When my grandfather got asked what we were, he always said, "All-American." Like people think because I'm dark I'm Italian or Spanish. One guy I went out with said Albanian. And he was right and all the others too. There's gypsy blood. Jewish. All-American.

We've been here forever. I mean right on this spot. My great-grandaunt that I can just remember, said her father owned a farm on the river. He was Dutch. And Indian. It's screwy, nothing in New York stays the same. But we're still here. Some of us can leave. My older brother went in the Air Force. He lives in Montana and never talks to us. My father could leave

and did. He was in the merchant marine. My mother couldn't. But her sisters did.

It's more than not leaving. My grandfather who had this same problem? He used to take me to school up at St. Michael's Academy on Thirty-Fourth Street. And those buildings, the church and school, bothered the living hell out of him. Because back in 1900 whatever it was before they built the first Penn Station, St. Michael's stood over on Ninth. It got taken apart stone by stone and put back together where it is now. "It's like they changed a tooth," he'd say. He couldn't even get used to the original Penn Station being there.

The same thing's happened with me. It's at least forty years since they tore down the first Penn Station. And I can't get used to it being gone. St. Michael's was about as far North as grand-dad could go. That's another thing that's the same. Thirty-Fourth to Eighteenth, Seventh Avenue to the River is where I can go. When I was little it wasn't as bad. Even later I could leave for days at a time. But mostly I was only comfortable here.

When I was little was before the projects went up. It was lots of cold-water flats and boarding houses. One thing that lasts in any neighborhood is the rackets. And my grandfather had his hand in those. Nothing big that would get him noticed: betting, numbers, sharking. Van Trolle, his name was. "Old Trollo," Italians used to call him. Like he waited under a bridge for someone to come past to rob.

He saw I was the same as him. And I was a tomboy,

hung out, boosted stuff. Nothing major. Auto parts: hubcaps, rearview mirrors. Then we'd keep watch on your car for a quarter a day to make sure that didn't happen to you.

Ted Benez who got killed was from around here. He was, maybe, six months older than me. I thought he looked like James Dean. We got into more serious stuff, Teddy and me, lifting wallets near the queer hotel on Thirty-First. We thought we were so cool.

All of a sudden, these two guys in plainclothes shoved us in a hallway. James LaRocca and Dennis Burke. New in the neighborhood. Not famous the way they got around here even before they were dead. Their story was they were on their way to work and happened to spot us.

Burke grabbed Ted. LaRocca had me. Burke was a cop with a capital K. He had the front of Teddy's shirt and leather jacket balled up in his hands, shaking the kid and yelling in his face.

LaRocca had more personality. He laid his hands on me like he thought I was a boy. Hard to believe now, but I was thin and I was dressed in a loose sweater. He pulled it up, patted me down. "Hey," he said. "This is a girl!" Like it was a big surprise. "A cute girl." He did a double take. "Vanny the Troll's grandkid."

He and Burke were laughing. It was all an act, rehearsed. All I could see was his eyes. I've always been a sucker for a guy with great eyes. You know that, right? It's in a Time Ranger file somewhere?

After that, anyway, they saw us regularly. Teddy they allowed to hang around because of me. I was the one they were interested in.

They said it was what I knew about the neighborhood. Like where all the railway tracks went and where the tunnels were. My grandfather had showed all that to me.

LaRocca's asking me helped him and Burke catch this fugitive. He'd gone underground over near the Pennsy yards. Planning to hop a train maybe. They caught him and it got them noticed.

But it was the other stuff that really interested them. In the neighborhood, longshoremen and railwaymen sometimes whispered about guys going "Upstream," finding Friday's number, next September's World Series scores.

LaRocca got me to tell about that. And I discovered I knew more than I thought. Then he showed me these stories, the Time Rangers. Normally I didn't read that stuff or go to monster movies or anything. I got into this, though. It was all Three Musketeers, you know. Action. Intrigue. Battling evil. Kids were always getting inducted into the Rangers. And there was one guy in most of the stories. Roger Deveraux. However he was described, I always pictured him as this big Italian-American cop.

Later, I saw how it was only because of Old Trollo that LaRocca got interested in me. My grandfather, by never moving from this one spot, became a kind

of landmark. All kinds of rumors spread about the people he knew. My father, for instance, the story was he didn't just sail the sea but to somewhere beyond that. I think about it, Trollo probably brought my father home to meet his daughter who couldn't go anywhere else and meet guys.

You know how in the magazines, the Rangers got in a plane or car and sang some little song and whoosh it's 1492 and they're on a boat giving directions to Columbus or something? I told LaRocca how once or twice, standing on a subway grate, or under that railway el when a freight was running, I'd feel like I was about to step into this forest or onto a train traveling like a rocket.

We talked about it. Then we did a little exploring. Just the two of us. We saw the wreckage of Penn Station which hadn't happened yet. Weird. LaRocca couldn't do this stuff, but he'd know that you could and he'd show you how.

Around then, he introduced me to the one who wrote the stories. I thought it would be this big, romantic guy with a British accent. Instead it's in the old Hudson Cafeteria over on Eighth and he's this commie. You know, with the jacket open and the shirt buttoned up to the neck and no tie and the hair sticking up off his head and these glasses with metal frames like they, maybe, issued back in Moscow. He was a nosy guy. Knew some stuff.

Then there were the other kids. We all had some special talent. Like Alan Goodwin. He was supposed to be in private school. A real snotty bastard. I

remember the first time they brought him around, he was wearing a blazer with a crest and this sneer. Lots of abilities. Also secrets, it turned out. LaRocca thought he'd spotted Alan by accident.

Eddie Brown was another one. I liked Eddie okay. He said he was a drifter. Never talked much about where he came from. Eddie was hard, you know. But soft. I remember he was by my house once and my little brother, who's retarded, was watching The Mickey Mouse Club and Ed caught sight of it and couldn't take his eyes off the TV. Like he'd never seen one before. Which maybe was so. Like Alan, Ed was a plant.

One day, I remember, they brought by this skinny, scared little kid. LaRocca says his name is Bobby and he's a college student. Teddy and me, who were sixteen, didn't believe it. We were older than you.

A little after that, I helped take you up a branch of the Stream I knew about. Saw Penn Station all leveled. Took everyone's picture. You were real shook. After that you weren't around. Too scared, LaRocca said. That's when he told me you were like a bloodhound.

You never meet Sally Dere. Which she pronounced Dare. Kind of an All-American herself. Blond and tall but with a touch of black. Opposite of you. No john could ever have told she was underage. She showed up that fall. LaRocca and Burke said they rescued her from some pimp. Rescued the pimp from her is more likely. It turned out she had more talent than me or anyone else. Swam the Stream like a fish. Not

from around here. Not at all.

From the first, Teddy was attached to her like those little magnet scotty dogs. I was the only reason LaRocca had him around. He was so stupid, he didn't know she was using him as a beard. So nobody'd figure out that LaRocca and her were the real news. LaRocca didn't need the rest of us. He was getting everything he wanted. Prize pupil and prime tail.

Old Trollo got sick about then and I started taking care of his candy store. I wasn't coming around and LaRocca didn't even notice. Then came the Massacre. A clean sweep, all four of them dead. The neighborhood got flooded with cops.

My alibi was tight if I even needed one. People swore they saw me all that day and night in the store. Everyone knew I hadn't spoken to LaRocca in months. And none of those cops paid any attention to weird neighborhood gossip.

It bothered me, though, because LaRocca and Teddy I once had really liked. And Burke never did me any harm. After a while I found other stuff to do. I got married. To this pig. Mike Podesta. He had no trouble leaving the neighborhood once he cleaned me out. I kept the name, which makes me harder to track.

I had a little trouble and I had to go to a clinic. They called it agoraphobia. Gave me pills. Everyone my age moved. No one left but old people and nuts. Everything got torn down. Penn Station. The whole



neighborhood when they put up the ILGWU houses and the projects and the postal annexes.

Ships stopped coming to the piers. It was like one day the tide went out and never came back. For a while the empty warehouses and factories were sex clubs, artists' places, crash pads for runaways. The streets were whore runs. Now that's all going. I'm the only thing left.

3.

All the other tables are empty. The kitchen crew has eaten and is departing. The waiter has taken away their last glasses and thanked them for the tip. Angie shakes herself as if she's coming out of a dream. She says, "I never asked about you. How have things been?"

"Fine. Been married. Lots of other activity. Buried Murder's been a nice living for me. I'm away from the city a lot. California, London, some other spots. Once or twice I thought of looking you up."

"Yeah, well officially I'm in the ILGWU co-ops over on Eighth. My mother was a seamstress in the Garment Workers. She's real weak now. It's her and my brother who's retarded. And me."

He helps her on with her coat. They walk to the front door and he suddenly asks, "Anyone else talk to you about the cadets?"

"A Lieutenant Crawford looked me up after Olney bought it. Because of my Switchyard connection. I

didn't give him anything. He's asking around for me again. But there's places I stay when I don't want to see people."

He nods. They stand under the awning. The street is bright with rain and headlights. The neon restaurant signs go out behind them.

"Brian Olney found out about me. Came by asking about the Massacre and I told him what I remembered. I had that old snapshot I took of you and LaRocca and Burke that I gave him. Sweet kid, Brian. Not like the Gonzalez bitch. I spotted her as one of the Sisters."

Robert's smile has gone away. "What else did you show them?" She says nothing. "Show me," he says. She shrugs. Robert flags down a cab and says, "Penn Station."

On their ride, he watches Angie. Her eyes are out of focus. "I knew this was going to happen," she says as the cab bounces into the covered way. "Same as I knew what was going to happen to Brian soon as he began asking about the Stream."

They descend by escalator into a cellar. Cramped, low-ceilinged and graceless, even in its last days Penn Station Two is liked and admired by no one. After midnight it's quiet, mostly empty, smelling of fried food and ammonia. A few intercity travelers and some New Jersey commuters who have stayed very late in town, watch the clock and the train board. Amtrak police are present in uniform and undercover.

"Attention arriving or departing passengers," says a Spanish woman over the loudspeaker. "Please be cautious and entrust your luggage only to uniformed Amtrak Red Caps. Thieves posing as luggage handlers ..."

Robert, with his hand on her arm, feels Angie flinch at the announcement. They step briskly to the window. Angie studies him as he buys the tickets. The departure of the 1:05 Twilight Shoreliner out of Boston, bound for Newport News, is announced.

"Perfect timing," says Robert. She shrugs.

Their tickets are inspected before they're allowed down on the platform. It's a short train with mail cars up front and the seats half empty. They sit all the way at the back of the first coach. College kids bound south from New England are asleep. A woman in a raincoat takes infinite care arranging and rearranging her shopping bags. An Asian man with a gray buzzcut sits very straight at the front.

A conductor hollers, "All aboard!" After a short pause, the train gives a little bump and starts to roll. For the space of half a block, they are out of the tunnel and in the glare of the lights set up at the Gonzalez crime scene.

Then they're back underground and under the river heading for New Jersey. Angie puts her hand on his, hums off-key and asks, "You remember the song?"

Together they whisper, fitting the words to the click

of steel on steel:

Through the Long Dark into dawning,  
Out of Time and into day,  
Catch a glimpse of silver running;  
Now I'm here then gone away.

The dark of the tunnel explodes. The Twilight Shoreliner fades. They are on a tramway arching over the Hudson. Above them, fireworks burst. Their sparks are caught and dance on curtains of water pumped by fireboats. On the riverfront, a Ferris wheel, twenty stories high, spins at impossible speeds, runs through the spectrum of color. Music swirls, echoing from one shore to the other.

Robert feels himself being pushed towards the light. He grabs hold of Angie with both hands and hears her yelling. "Let go asshole! You're breaking my arm." Suddenly he's back on the train and an Amtrak conductor stands over them. Even the Asian man has turned to stare.

Robert speaks with great effort. "We're fine," he says. When the conductor finally leaves, Robert says without looking at Angie, "You just tried to dump me down there where I would have gotten killed. Any particular reason?"

The dark Meadowlands pass outside the window. Angie, suddenly sober and terrified, twists around trying to look back at Manhattan. "You came on like you knew everything. Like you were the Rangers. Look at you now. Still shaking. Just like after we took you up the Timestream. Or when they had you

sniffing out the Massacre site."

A few minutes later, they get out at Newark, the first stop. In the faded, almost empty old station, they wait for a train back to the city. Angie can't sit still. Like she wants to jump up and run all the way back to Chelsea.

Logue reaches into his jacket and takes out the flask. She looks away then comes back and takes a swig. She makes a face and drinks again. "You do to Olney and Gonzalez what you just tried to do to me?" he asks.

"Each one wanted to go Upstream. Real bad. What you just saw is Geo's turf. He's the guy who was with me this afternoon. Because Olney asked really politely, I showed him the way. With Gonzalez, she held a gun on me. Her, I dumped off the train. Made no difference. Both got caught. With her I didn't mind. Olney, though, was a nice kid. Great eyes while he had them."

She watches his reaction. "You going on TV and tell the world? They'll lock you away. Who are you going to tell? Last I heard I was in charge of watching the Stream around here."

"Get you for possession of stolen property, maybe?"

"Even if you knew where we had it, the merchandise doesn't stay around. By now Geo's taken everything Upstream. Leather. They're crazy for it where he comes from. trade you gold, even weight. Shoot you for your wallet, dump the money and cards walk

away with the leather."

On the train back, she says, "Forty years ago they tell me make sure nobody's using this place to go in the Stream. Keep everything nice. That's the last I hear. Now, my mother's dying. Nothing's left that I know. A troll. All I am is an ugly troll waiting under a bridge."

"You talk to any of the others?" Robert asks.

She shakes her head. "Not in a while. The closest I came, until you, was Gonzalez let it slip that she knew Alan Goodman. Or whatever that freak is called now."

They pull up in front of the ILGWU apartments on Ninth. Angie is crying as she slides out of the cab. "I'm so dumb, at first I actually wanted to think you were going to help me." Robert leans over and kisses her on the cheek. Angie waits until the cab is out of sight then crosses the Avenue heading west to a hiding spot. A figure holding a skateboard follows her.

### PART THREE THE EYES OF TIRESIAS

"Deveraux," said the chief, a grizzled veteran of Iwo Jima and the Gaspay Salient, puffing on his cigar, adjusting the toga all staff wore at headquarters in Second Century A.D. Tiers. "Nice work with the Christmas Rebellion. Your promotion and decoration were temporarily held up. Seems you

violated a couple of regulations."

He held up his hand in response to Roger Deveraux's expletive. "Spare me, Captain. I was raised on a horse farm in Kentucky. And I've seen lots of it. Mostly since leaving home. I've learned that the best answer to bureaucrats is action.

"The Commander-in-Chief was more than an aberration," he continued. "Rot has set in all along that Branch of Time. We've traced it to a particular world and a particular man. Lubenbacher. Styles himself as the Prophet. Mind control is his weapon. He's systematized and electronically coded it. Brain washing, Pavlovian conditioning, are rudimentary compared to what he's developed."

He pushed a box of cigars over to Deveraux who selected one. "I'm violating all kind of regulations. Agents have died getting this information. But if you're willing, I'll show you all we know and tell you what we intend."

Shortly afterwards, a night coach pulled by four matched bays rattled out of Varennes one spring night in 1787. A figure in a tricorne and cloak sat in one corner, eyes closed. The other passengers slept as he opened his eyes and whispered:

Passengers will please refrain  
From waking as I catch a train.

Time shifted, the rhythm of sixteen shod hooves was replaced by the clacking of wheels. At Calais in 1902, a figure in an Inverness cape transferred to a

Channel ferry. On the water, Roger Deveraux threw off the cape as he hooked onto a Pan Am Clipper and landed in a peaceful and prosperous Toronto in 1963. On Bloor Street in that city, an elderly gentleman with a military mustache sat behind a desk as Deveraux flashed a spiral medallion.

In 2016, a jetney powered by an atomic generator glided above the rail on a molecular cushion. It slowed to a stop at an elevated station. Posters, bright and cheerful, displayed the face of the Prophet and his words. **TO ALL MY CHILDREN, TRUE CARE MUST BE GIVEN.**

Seating on the jetney was arranged by hierarchy. Crowded in the rear, sitting if they could find seats, were Children of all ages in skimpy tunics. In the middle sat the Functionaries, clerks and technicians in gray uniforms, enlisted rank legionaries in black. All stared straight ahead not making eye contact with their betters. At the front, in white robes, the Votaries of Lubenbacher sat as near as they ever came to their ease. Each passenger had headphones firmly in place. All kept their eyes lowered before the Colonel of Wardens.

Right behind the driver sat Roger Deveraux, straight and tall in uniform. He wore headphones like all the others. Soothing music was interspersed on the hour and the half hour with the day's lesson. "Each mind is a world to be tamed as this world has been tamed," the Prophet began. A high school class got on the jetney, boys and girls in knee length tunics, tonsured so that the serial numbers tattooed on their skulls could be read. At each stop, Deveraux



felt the glancing probe of a mind scanner searching for disruptive mental patterns.

From "The Prophet and the Last" by Daniel Ignace, Amazing Science Fiction, December 1961.

1.

Flying west on Friday morning, Robert Logue, mildly hung over, reads the story. He has one scotch at lunch and whispers "Through the long dark into dawning" to himself. But the American Airlines flight out of New York remains a turbojet all the way to Kansas City. As the landing light goes on, he sticks the old magazine inside the plastic bag in which he bought it.

Heading north on Route 435, the rental Saturn does not transmute into a Conestoga wagon. The State University at Aline has a certain period charm. It was founded before Kennedy died and the Beatles sang and modern history began. But Robert realizes that he is older than the campus.

Styles are a few years behind New York. Aside from the girls' hair and the boys' jewelry, their attire is unisex shorts and sweatshirts. Robert spots no one in face paint. He parks the car and makes his way to a library bearing the name of a vaguely remembered Senator. An elevator takes him to Science Reference on the third floor.

At the center of the room is a circular desk lined with computer screens. Inside it, librarians are like a besieged garrison. Phones ring, printers hum.

Around the desk are carrels with terminals. All these are busy. Students wait their turns to use them. In the middle distance are shelves of unbound journals. Farther away, receding into twilight, are tall, dusty stacks of books.

Robert's eyes follow the librarian who is clearly in charge. She appears to be in her late thirties. Her hair is lightly blond and tightly coiffed. She is tall and uses that well. In this place, a blouse, skirt, and high heels look like formal attire. Her voice is clear as a clarinet, "How serious a paper is this?" she asks a tiny, flustered girl. "Knowing that can save us both time."

At a moment when nobody is near the woman, Robert steps forward and asks, "What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon and three legs at evening?"

Without looking up from a screen, the librarian answers in an undertone, "Wrong question, Logue. You're far from being the Sphinx. And I'm not Oedipus. I'm Tiresias. As you'd know if you'd gotten an education instead of boasting on television about not having one."

"I just did that to make you mad, Ms. White."

"The truffle hound of homicide," Sandra White murmurs. A clerk approaches with something for her to sign. Several nursing students appear. "I'll be with you in a few minutes," she tells Robert. "You can spend the time looking up your press notices."

"Thanks, but I already have all the clippings at home."

Half an hour later they sit in a comfortable coffeehouse in the mildly shabby neighborhood that adjoins any large campus. They drink black coffee fortified with brandy from Robert's flask. "You're looking terrific, Sandra. It's been like, what? Twenty-four years since I saw you last?"

"Time is good to me. You look ... prosperous."

"How long can you be away?"

"As long as this takes. I'm Head of Reference. I was at that desk because someone had jury duty and someone else had a dental emergency. I have a simulacrum that normally would deal with dull routine. But I knew, of course, that events would lead you to appear today without calling ahead. trying to catch me unaware."

"Like Tiresias, you know the future."

"As does anyone who doesn't allow hopes and fears to muddle their judgment."

"In that case why did you and the Sisterhood allow Olney and Gonzalez to get butchered?"

She grimaces at his simplicity. "I like my day job well enough, Logue. Answering questions. But answers can be dangerous things. Zeus and his wife Hera once argued about whether man or woman got the greater pleasure out of sex. Each claimed the other

did. To resolve the dispute, they asked the one who had been both genders. The answer they received was, 'Women by the ratio of nine to one.' Hera became enraged and blinded Tiresias. Only then did Zeus bestow second sight, that most perilous of gifts."

She sips and sips again before continuing. "So far, I still have my eyes. But for a change, I'll ask the question, not answer it. How much do you remember, Robert?"

"More than I did just a couple of months ago. On the plane, I read a Time Ranger story I haven't seen since it came out. It's one where the Rangers have to clear up this branch of Time. It's polluted, full of bad stuff that has to be kept away from the Main Stream."

Sandra White leans forward expectantly, gestures for him to continue.

2.

I remembered the first time I read that story. I was on a bus headed south through Connecticut. My family lived on Long Island, New York, and I was coming home from school in Boston for Christmas vacation. Sizing up my fellow passengers, I imagined a needle gun slung from my belt and a Ranger insignia on my jacket.

Kind of old for that kind of fantasy, maybe, but let's say I was a little immature. We pulled into the Port Authority Terminal. New York was eight million

stories and at least that many deaths. And I could feel every death on my nerve ends. That was a little talent I had. One that had me traumatized.

But the city was also the place where I could get a drink with the draft card I'd been issued the week before. It took me a couple of hours to make my way the ten blocks from the Port Authority to Penn Station.

When I got there, I swaggered in the Seventh Avenue entrance and walked down the Arcade, trying to smoke a cigarette, looking for another bar sleazy enough to serve a kid who was eighteen going on twelve. I'd already found one or two.

All of a sudden, an arm looped around my left arm. Another had my right. Two uniformed cops, Irish and Italian, walked me into a doorway. The Italian took the duffel bag and opened it. The Irish cop pulled the butt out of my mouth and threw it away. "Don't you want to grow up big and strong? What's your name? Where are you going?"

The two of them thought, or pretended to think, that I was running away from home. The Irish cop scared me by saying, "Take this one to the youth center? See who claims him?"

But the Italian, big, intense, stared right in my eyes and nodded. "Ah, he's okay. Look at this." He held up the magazine. "You're looking for Roger Deveraux? He's not here. We're just simple enlisted men in the Time Wars. Let's take a walk, Bobby."

So we crossed the Main Waiting Room lit by lamps and winter light. The Irish cop carried my bag. And the Italian had his hand on my shoulder like I was, maybe, a cousin met by chance. "Oh yeah, the Stream flows all around here," he said.

Suddenly an emotionally damaged kid's interior life and the outside world had merged. Bedazzled, I walked downstairs between them. On the Long Island Railroad platform, before the train came, LaRocca hooked his fingers in my belt and swung me aside, the eternal dance of punk and cop.

He said, "I've got ways of telling which kids have potential. And you are one. What do you see, Bobby?"

So I told him the kind of stuff that ran through my brain day and night. "Back when the building got put up, a workman got crushed right about where we're standing. He slipped and a railroad car full of rocks ran him down. There's a graveyard over there." I gestured towards Eighth Avenue. "It's filled up with old people, children. Everybody. They died in a kind of plague back in colonial times."

LaRocca seemed fascinated. He handed me a slip of paper with a telephone number on it and said, "I want you to call the next time you pass through town."

I was hooked. By the time Spring semester ended, I'd seen LaRocca half a dozen times, told him stuff I never thought I'd tell anyone. Burke was usually around. I'd met Angie and her boyfriend Teddy

Benez and a big kid named Eddie Brown. There were hints of secrets. Scary ones. But then again, just about everything scared me.

By the end of May, my college career was over. Somehow, school hadn't caught my attention. Not the way death did. Walking through the Penn Station Arcade, I noticed that half the stores were vacant. The station was due to be torn down. That's where LaRocca met me. Today was going to be my initiation.

LaRocca was off duty, wearing a sports jacket and a shirt open at the neck, but still looking like a cop. With him was a preppy in a school blazer and horn rims.

"Alan Goodman's going to Columbia in the fall. He's coming with us." Alan nodded, remote. As we crossed the Main Waiting Room, Angie and Ed joined us. We went into the Concourse where the roof was all steel and glass and trains ran under the floor.

Downstairs, the Broadway Limited to Chicago was boarding passengers. We were on the platform as the train, once legendary, now tired and bedraggled, began to roll. We walked alongside it. Everyone but me had done this before. An arm went around my shoulder, a hand touched my back. Someone hummed Casey Jones very softly. The train picked up speed and it felt like I was standing on a conveyer belt.

In the Time Ranger stories there were Portals, places where traffic came and went. The constant

movement flattened molecules and created a fusion that pulled past and future in all their variations into a vast Stream. Or something like that.

With my next step, I stumbled on broken concrete. Above me, the former Concourse was roofless. A cold winter sun shone down on rubble and ruin. "A few years Upstream. And in a much different world," LaRocca whispered. I was aware that something massively awful had happened. Lots of violent deaths. LaRocca went up the wrecked stairs and we followed him. It wasn't just Penn Station. Ruin stretched in all directions. Angie took out a camera and the rest of us posed. Right then everything I had consumed that day decided to come up and see the world.

They laughed because I was shivering and green. After a few minutes they brought me back Downstream. I promised LaRocca I'd be back, but I knew I was too scared to see him again. It felt like I'd lost my best chance of finding a group I could be part of.

Stunned by what I had just seen, I rode the Long Island Railroad. At my stop, my parents waited downstairs with the car, worry and anger on their faces. That summer, I was in bad shape. I remember lying awake at night, feeling a lonely suicide in a farmhouse that had once stood in the development where we lived, a couple dead a few years before in a traffic accident. That fall, I didn't go back to school. I lost the ability first to leave the house, then to leave my room.



In that simple, stupid place and time, kids who didn't function properly were sent to the hospital for rewiring. Lots of awful things happened to me there, among them shock treatment. My brain got wiped clean. Memories returned only if something evoked them. Lots of stuff I was content to let slide. Especially certain events that occurred when a visitor got me out on a day pass.

My special talent remained. It was terrifying, but it was all I had when I left the hospital. By then, I'd begun to learn how to tame it. Slowly, I made a career discovering and solving old murders.

About twenty years ago, I was in Cleveland, working on the case I called The Noonday Witch when a woman called Sandra White asked to speak to me. Sandra was attractive and as haunting as *déjà vu*. She knew flattering amounts about my career. We had dinner and I had plenty to drink.

Everything was going fine. Except that out of nowhere flashed a memory so old and hidden that it could have been a dream. In it, I was young and I stood under a harsh light in a stuffy room. Two other kids were with me. We had all been stripped and were being interrogated. I realized the other two were Alan Goodman and Ed Brown and that we were Upstream.

Sandra asked me what was wrong and I said it was nothing. I remember feeling again that I had seen her before. We went up to my room. I opened the door and remembered Alan and Ed leading me back and forth through what I knew was the ruins of New

York. I was scared and they were too. It was dark and we were in tunics and rubber sandals. Like Lubenbacher's Children wore in the story I read today. The ground held plenty of deaths but we were looking for very specific ones.

This memory shook me. But, when Sandra asked, I said everything was fine. Then we were in bed and I put it aside. An hour or so later, I got up to use the bathroom. I looked in the mirror and saw night in those Upstream ruins. Near a mound of rubble topped by the statue of a broken eagle, I felt LaRocca, Burke, Teddy Benez, and a girl I didn't know.

A few years before, they had been ambushed on that spot. Burke got off a shot before he was gunned down. The others surrendered. Their eyes were put out and they were executed on the spot. They screamed as they died. When I choked out a description of this, Ed Brown and Alan Goodman looked at each other and each raised a triumphant fist.

That night in the hotel room in Cleveland, I looked in the mirror and froze. The woman in the bed behind me, had caught my eye and made that gesture. At that moment, I realized that Sandra White and Alan Goodman were the same person.

Over the years I'd been acquainted with a few surgical sex changes. What I was seeing was something else. Alan had definitely been a boy. You were a woman.

You told me to sit down and I did. You explained a few things and told me what I was going to do. I followed your instructions, including making every effort to forget what had happened when it was over.

Recent events with Olney and Gonzalez have made that impossible. Yesterday, I spoke to our old friend Angie. She says Gonzalez knew you. I'd like to ask you about that. I need your help.

3.

It's dusk outside. Robert and Sandra's cups have been refilled for what will be the last time. A dinner crowd drifts in.

"Mortal man, mortal man," she shakes her head, refuses the brandy and almost smiles. "This is the third time you have crossed my path. For many of your sex, one encounter is more than is allowed.

"With Maria Czerny, you even surprised us. And lived. You appeared on TV claiming to have found a decades-old missing-child pattern in an immigrant Czech community outside Cleveland. A series of little girls had all disappeared without a trace. At midday. You identified a certain Maria Czerny as the murderess, described how years before she had kidnapped children in broad daylight and eaten their hearts.

"Old Bohemians believed in a witch that stole children at noon. Their fears had made them reluctant to cooperate too closely with the authorities. You called

Czerny 'The Noonday Witch.' Quite catchy.

"For the Sisterhood, witch hunts are a nightmare comparable to the Holocaust for Jews, lynchings for African-Americans. We were confronted by two facts. Maria Czerny was still alive, though senile and in a mental hospital. And in Europe, before the Great War, she had been one of us. We had severed our ties, then lost track of her.

"Of course, I recognized you and knew how you had actually sniffed out the crimes. Twenty years before, I'd passed up the chance to dispose of you. In a sense, you were my responsibility.

"So I visited Cleveland and used my powers of persuasion. It was too late to do anything about the name you had given the case. But I convinced you to make every effort to show that, in fact, so-called witches were harmless. Benevolent even. And that, in any case, no proof existed that Maria Czerny ever was one."

"And when you were finished with the evidence, that was true," Robert says. "Powers of persuasion? Try terror. You snapped your fingers and fifty miles away, Ms. Czerny died in her bed. Stacks of letters turned to ash inside locked safes. Then there was the way you reminded me of our prior meeting."

"I wanted you to see both my manifestations. Even when I was Alan, you aroused my sentimental side, Robert. And I find it amusing when you are afraid. Like now."

Robert says, "Tiresias, in one legend, sees two sacred snakes coupling and breaks them up with his staff. As punishment, the gods turn him into woman."

"As always, the patriarchs have it criminally wrong. Tiresias was righting an error along the Winding Stream you call Time. Womanhood was the reward, not the punishment. In my birthplace, the Sisterhood is the one thing worth aspiring to. An assignment arose for which only a boy would do. I was offered a rare chance, full of danger. I took it and triumphed.

"As Alan Goodman, I walked through Penn Station until I was 'discovered.' LaRocca had certain abilities. He found you but didn't know how to use you. The Sisters did. Eventually, I came, I won't say to like, but to feel sorry for LaRocca and Burke and even Benez."

"But not Sally Dere? Because she was a witch gone bad?"

"Too wise is too soon gone, Robert."

"Ignorance isn't a life-saver, either. Look at Olney and Gonzalez. Bright kids with very little idea of what they were getting into. You must have known what was going to happen. Why didn't you stop it?"

Sandra is impatient. "Mortal man, even to question us is unwise! Two deaths are nothing along the Winding Stream. It was their fate and it served a purpose. You will shortly learn more than you will

want to about the politics of Time."

She unzips a soft leather case. "As before, Robert, you arouse my protective side. It has made me generous." She pushes Xeroxed pages toward him. "Here's something you will want to read before you arrive at your next interview."

Sandra rises before Robert can. She leans over, kisses him hard on the cheek and says in a low, clear voice, "This will remind you, when you 'solve' the case, not to speak in any way of the Sisters."

## PART FOUR

### A VOYEUR AT THE GATE OF HORN

At the end of their R&R, three old companions in the Time Wars shipped out on a clipper plying back from a Bali circa 1820. From her deck, they leaped to a tramp steamer bound for post-Earthquake San Francisco. Out of Frisco they caught a Southern Pacific train that carried Garbo in a private Pullman and John Barrymore in the club car. Lastly, they made a leap into what had been New York's Penn Station.

Those walls still standing after the Christmas siege had been knocked down. The three soldiers stood on a marble floor under a summer sky.

"All your doing," said Lin Pao, drawing deep on a cigar.

"Three years ago last winter solstice," said Lucius Marcellus. "Hanging on by your fingernails, when I ferried in the combat engineers."

"We went over to the attack when I came up with the Long March Legion," said Lin Pao. "House to house fighting. We had to flatten half the city."

Roger Deveraux paid no attention. This was the rear area of a campaign being fought just Upstream. A trainload of walking wounded, all very young, had just arrived. Among them, the captain glimpsed a face, scarred and gaunt but familiar.

T. R., with his mother, had provided Deveraux with shelter while he organized a revolution. The boy had gone on to command a squad in the battle for New York, a platoon in the march on Washington. T. R. must have seen Deveraux too. But the young man looked right through the Captain. The words "time bomb" sprang into Deveraux's mind. He made his apologies and left his friends.

That night, before the curfew, Deveraux made his way through the blackout to where the remains of a neighborhood stood like a village on the edge of a wilderness. He wore a watchcap and pea coat just as when he first came to this New York. He paused at a revolving door and looked west and north. Where once there had been tenements, warehouses, hotels, offices, only piles or rubble, an occasional shell of a building remained. Then he stepped through the door.

The cafeteria was a vast space smelling of coffee

and bacon and humming with voices. Cab drivers and cops and couples sat at tables, stuck quarters in the slots, slid trays toward the cashiers. They talked Dodgers and the upcoming elections and rationing and above all war news from the ever fluid front. A terrorist attack had wrecked the city of Paris. Time Bombs they called the terrorists.

Against a far wall sat young people, mainly male, mostly in uniform. Some had scars, some had empty sleeves, some had vacant thousand-yard stares. Deveraux stepped around a busboy loading plates on a cart and approached a Lieutenant sitting alone with his eyes closed.

"T. R.," he said. No response. "I visited the place where you lived, where your mother died. Like I do each time I come here, I left flowers. I'll never forget the risks you both took." The young man's eyes flew open. And Deveraux stared into the face of an enemy.

From "Time Bomb" by Daniel Ignace, Star Tales, September 1963.

1.

Sandra has circled the last few paragraphs. Late Saturday afternoon, Robert reads them one last time and sticks the story in his jacket pocket. The plane's landing lights are on. The great American Southwest lies golden below. Robert looks as if he's missed a night's sleep somewhere in his travels. He touches his cheek.



The hotel's decor and staff are Hispanic. The decor is ersatz, the staff authentic. In the convention area, the faces are almost pure Anglo. Robert Logue passes a group of badly out of shape Space Fleet officers and a couple costumed, she as a dragon, he as a maiden.

Logue purchases a convention membership from a middle-aged guy wearing a Mousketeer cap. A woman in a silver pants suit and cat mask directs him past ballrooms where films are shown, down corridors lined with poster- and comic book-vendors, through spaces packed with Star Wars enthusiasts, to a small, quiet room where the printed word is discussed.

He seats himself at the back near the door and watches. An old man with a halo of white hair and a nose like some Caesar's is being interviewed in front of an audience of guys Robert's age and a small contingent of student types, several of whom are women.

The man addresses a tall brunette who asked a question about the computer technology in an early novel. "Remember above all," he says, sounding like a previously unguessed-at Marx brother, "that Cyril and me and the other guys were just a bunch of yutzes in cheap suits and bad haircuts scrambling to sell stories for fifty bucks a pop to editors crazier than we were." He smiles. "But maybe we could foretell the future. Those suits and haircuts came back and were quite trendy."

"I wonder," a very young man around forty in a

ponytail and earrings says, "about the political satire. In your Null Delta, written in 1970, Earth circa 2000 is authoritarian, regimented. Young people especially get repressed. Denied all rights. What happened with that?"

"I was in school in the forties. In high school yearbook photos, the children of the Depression, World War Two, the early Cold War all try to look middle-aged. Why? They're scared. Of not graduating, of not getting a job. Girls had to stay virgins. Boys had to deal with the draft. It was their children who felt secure enough to remake the rules."

"In other words, the novel is about then and not the future. Because the very opposite seems to have happened in terms of youth culture."

"So maybe I was off by a few years. Americans, you know, tend to dress for the rest of their lives the same way they did in high school. true for you maybe? Your look might not be allowed now. Schools have dress codes, lots have uniforms." He shrugs. "Being right about this would not please me."

The door behind Robert opens. People wait outside for the next event. Someone in the room says, "I know this is a discussion of your novels. But I have a question about your Star trek scripts."

"Maybe another time. They need this place to talk game licensing. For something so important, we shouldn't keep them waiting." The writer moves

towards the door amid a small entourage. "No. I love the Internet," he tells the brunette. "But how much freedom is it to be in touch with everyone if everyone is in exactly the same fix as you?"

Robert steps into their path and says, "Daniel Ignace? I've just been reading your Time Ranger stories. Fascinating. I'm sure people tell you that all the time."

"Not often," says Ignace. "Even at conventions." He tries to move on.

Robert puts a hand on the man's chest and lowers his voice. "My name is Logue. We met just before the Switchyard Massacre. Mutual friends brought me by the Hudson Cafeteria to talk to you about LaRocca and company. I've tried not to remember any of that. Something of yours that I just read reminded me."

"I guess we must talk," says Ignace aloud.

"Now. If you please," murmurs Robert.

Minutes later, they sit in one of the hotel restaurants. Logue has a double scotch, Ignace a chamomile tea. The writer stares at the Xeroxed pages and remarks, "A collector's item. I've never seen a copy. The magazine went out of business before the issue shipped."

Logue says. "It's not just your story. Since Brian Olney's murder, a lot of stuff has been coming back to me."

Ignace expression betrays nothing. He says, "You know with recovered memory they've found—"

"Recovered memory is bullshit. Nobody forgets stuff like this on their own. My brain got zapped shortly after our last meeting. That's what happened in those days to kids who didn't think the way they were supposed to."

"You poor—"

"Better than what you had in mind for me."

The waiter brings Logue huevos rancheros. He takes a few bites, shoves the eggs around, sips his drink.

"You remember that night. Ed Brown, Alan Goodman, and Angie snuck me around to the back door of the Hudson Cafeteria. They were afraid of being spotted by LaRocca.

"You came out to the alley. I was freezing. I'd just been in a New York that was stifling hot. But I managed to tell you what I'd found Upstream. You were angry. And scared. You pulled Ed aside. But I still overheard. You called me a time bomb. Said you wanted me eliminated."

Ignace winces. "You never did anything you deeply regret?" Logue involuntarily rubs the spot on his cheek where Sandra's lips touched him. Then he sits absolutely still and stares until Ignace starts talking.

2.

For kids today, mistrusting authority is an attitude. Delicious, bite-size paranoia. When I was young, I had concrete evidence the government was out to get me.

After the army and college, I moved from the Bronx to a walk-up in old Chelsea. Downstairs from a stevedore's family, next door to a brownstone turned into a flophouse. Senator Joe McCarthy still walked the earth. You know about that? Well, my family was leftist. Because of organizations I'd joined as a kid, the House Un-American Activities Committee took an interest in my past. I'd get a job, they'd call my employer, I'd get fired. So I was writing. SF mostly. Working some nights off the books for a printer.

A lot of the time I'd hang out. In the bars, the automats. The Hudson Cafeteria was open twenty-four hours a day. Full of sailors, longshoremen, taxi drivers, housewives, lovers, thieves, old Bolsheviks, cops.

Sometimes, I stayed there all night. And I listened a lot. Heard stories about neighborhood characters. Like old Trollo who ran a candy store and had never left Chelsea in his entire life and was supposed to have a fortune buried there. You'd hear stories about how he could predict the race results, that he knew in April who was going to win the Series.

Then there was Crile, the king of the barge captains. Barge captains were guys, old seamen or rummies, who got paid to live on the barges and take care of them. Crile was this big guy who'd get drunk and tell

these stories about visiting the Roman Empire. On his barge.

Like I say, I was writing SF and this kind of stuff fascinated me. Not that I believed the stories. But I began using them in the early Time Ranger pieces. It was the first stuff of mine to catch on. In a small way.

Old Trollo wouldn't talk. But Crile, once or twice when we'd had a few drinks, took me to this place where New York was half ruined. Like London and Vienna looked right after the war. trouble out of Time was the cause. Whole blocks in ruins. Little bars, kind of cabarets everywhere.

One of them had, outside its door, a smashed-up eagle saved from the ruins of Penn Station. The Busted Eagle it was called. Songs I heard there I never heard again anywhere else. One was:

None but the old are trusted,  
None but the young are brave.

So later, when I wrote "Pride of the Rangers," where the city becomes a battleground, I knew a thing or two. The rest was guesswork. Right after that, Crile disappeared. One day, the barge was there but he wasn't. It was said that was because he talked too much. The city cops weren't real interested, asked a few perfunctory questions, never talked to me at all.

Then a stranger appeared in the neighborhood, asking around about Crile. Nikolaus Eszterhaza spoke English with a Hungarian accent. He was most

thorough. I knew he was the Law. But not local. Not at all. When he talked to me, I told him everything I knew.

Our conversations were chilling. But fascinating. Crile's disappearance seemed to irk Eszterhaza. He mentioned that Trollo was getting old and that he needed someone reliable in such a busy Port in the Stream. That's how he described the neighborhood. All the movement of ships, trains, and trucks made this a spot with access to Time. My stories, when I showed them, seemed to amuse Eszterhaza. He didn't tell me to stop.

We reached an arrangement. Very informal at first. I'd observe what was going on. Like I had been. And make myself available to assist anyone who showed me the proper ID. Why did I agree? Curiosity. And insurance. Senator Joe was gone. But it could happen again and people who had been blacklisted still couldn't get work. I felt it behooved me to have some kind of law on my side.

Over the next few years, I got a couple of visits from Eszterhaza. He showed me things Downstream and Upstream. Our arrangement got more formalized. Then, in what turned out to be the last time we met, he gave me a sort of warrant, a commission, arranged for me to send and receive information.

About 1960, two new uniformed cops got assigned to the precinct. LaRocca and Burke were not your usual fuzz looking for a little graft and a pension down the line. Not LaRocca anyway.

My guess is he felt trapped in the job. He was too smart. All bright kids did not go to college in those days. LaRocca could sense abilities in others. But he couldn't do things himself. Must have been frustrating. He had a certain charisma, some imagination. And curiosity. An unhealthy amount as it turned out.

LaRocca heard about me. He and Burke came around. LaRocca mentioned that he'd read a couple of my stories that tied into things he'd learned. He wondered what else I knew. I told them what any old-timer in the neighborhood could have about Crile and Trollo. LaRocca stayed friendly. We'd talk, exchange gossip. But I felt like he had me spotted.

About then, LaRocca recruited Old Trollo's granddaughter and a couple of other local talents. Soon, I found out that they were dipping their feet in the Stream.

LaRocca, as a bright young cop, felt invincible. He didn't see himself as a target. But he was. Word came to me that major trouble, called Sally Dere, was heading his way and mine. What I was told was that her meeting with LaRocca could result in something potentially very bad in the Stream.

But I also was told that before that happened a Ranger operative was going to show up and infiltrate LaRocca's group. He would be called Ed Brown. One night I was waiting for a bus. Suddenly, this young drifter in a pea jacket and needing a barber was beside me. He flashed a medallion and said, "Looking for Sally Dere." So he was Ed Brown. And I was his



contact.

Alan Goodman appeared a little later. Supposed to be a prep school boy. All I got told about Alan was he was with an organization that was cooperating with the Rangers, but I was supposed to keep an eye on him. You I never got warned about at all.

That fall, Sally Dere arrived and there was no ignoring her. Apart from turning you on, she could read your mind. Once Sally was in place, LaRocca didn't need anyone else. She saw to it he cut everyone but Burke and Teddy Benez out of the operation. Ed, Alan, and Angie found it was them against LaRocca and Dere. It became a question of who'd get who.

Sally knew the Stream, especially that branch up which Crile had taken me. In the chaos after a Time war, local government up there had collapsed. It was wide open to smuggling. Goods for information. Always dangerous. Destructive. Imagine technology smuggled a hundred years into the past.

Old Trollo had kept his operation small enough that the Rangers chose to overlook it in return for his keeping them informed. Angie had her grandfather's old contacts. They didn't like Sally and company. They were willing to lay a trap. But would it work? If not, LaRocca and Dere were going to be alive and in a killing mood. That made me very cautious.

Then came a night as terrible and logical as a dream. It started when Ed Brown called me out back of the Hudson Cafeteria and produced this wild-eyed kid

with his nose running. You described the Massacre. Not the press event some hours later at the Switchyard, but the actual one that would take place Upstream, in a ruined New York, outside a smugglers' bar called the Busted Eagle. You were hysterical, crying. It seemed to me dangerous to leave you around. Ed, fortunately, had so much more sense than I.

My job was to bait the trap. At first my guts were jumping. But I told myself all this had been predicted. It was fate. That's how I managed to feed LaRocca the story that would send him and those others to their deaths. It haunts me still.

The discovery of the corpses in the Pennsylvania yards was almost an anti-climax. Cops tore the neighborhood apart. The FBI was in there too. And no doubt the CIA. Fortunately, they weren't as smart as LaRocca. Or as crazy. So they hardly talked to me at all.

Angie stayed on in the neighborhood, of course. Trollo had finally died and she succeeded him. The rest of us left. I moved to Los Angeles. Things had loosened up. No one cared how pink you'd been. I co-wrote some scripts. The Star trek about time travel and Shakespeare and Nimoy going on as Hamlet. The Gate of Ivory, you know, is where the pretty, false dreams come from. LA's the current location of the Gate of Ivory.

Through the Gate of Horn pass the true dreams. The night of February sixth, nineteen sixty-three was my one experience standing at the Gate of

Horn. It was more than enough.

Over the years, I've done some minor services for the Rangers. And I've been repaid. I got taken to a time and place where Hitler was hanged at Nuremberg. He squealed like a pig as he died. Then I remembered sending those people to their deaths, telling Ed Brown to get rid of you. How different was I from Hitler?

When I read that those cadets got killed, I wondered who would talk to me. I didn't think of you. But your reappearance has the terrible logic of a dream.

Apologies have no meaning in this situation. All I can do is put you in touch with someone we both know. And give you this. Take it. Isn't the paper exquisite! Like an insect's wings. I've seen nothing like it in this world. I'm handing over the warrant Eszterhaza gave me.

PART FIVE

A CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT DECODER RING

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

THE BEARER OF THIS LETTER AND THIS SEAL  
ACTS IN OUR INTERESTS IN THIS TIME AND  
PLACE.

SIGNED

NIKOLAUS ESZTERHAZA  
SECTOR COMMANDER

## TIME RANGERS

1.

Robert Logue, on a Delta red-eye to LaGuardia, rubs his cheek hard, examines the document Ignace gave him. Though the paper was folded, open it shows no crease marks.

Below the English text is the same message in Spanish, French, and what he guesses are Russian and Chinese. Last is a kind of rebus. Robert studies this with a magnifying glass he bought in an airport gift shop.

The rebus greeting is shown as an open eye radiating beams. The message starts with a stick figure human with a rectangle held in one hand. Close inspection has shown Robert that the rectangle is a tiny duplicate of the page he holds. On that is an even more minute page. Deeper than that the glass will not take him. But it seems to continue to infinity. As the landing lights come on, he studies the concentric spiral seal at the bottom of the page.

Instead of landing amid the shoddy tangle of the main airport, his flight touches down at the graceful Marine Aviation Terminal on the outskirts of LaGuardia. Its art deco flying fish motif evokes sea planes, guys in trench coats, women with their faces half-hidden by veils.

Debarking amidst a sleepy throng, he crosses the silent, circular rotunda. Out of the night, two figures with painted faces, students or maybe musicians,

walk through the front door moving against the tide of passengers.

They split as they approach Robert. Each grabs him by an arm. "I'm Justina," the one on his left says and flashes a spiral medallion. Justina is dark and in her twenties. Her English is Islands-tinged. The other face is younger and suddenly familiar. "This is Oman." Robert nods. He last saw him on a skateboard at the Minute Market.

They let Robert turn around and walk between them. The three pass through an "Employees Only" door and out a fire exit that's been wedged open. On the tarmac, a plane with all its lights on taxis toward a hangar. An Air Express two-engine freight flies low over Flushing Bay.

Without breaking stride, Justina says, "You'll relax." Robert nods and before he can exhale, her medallion pulses and the three of them are sliding not walking. Then he's stumbling, catching his footing on rough sea grass.

His escort neatly disengage themselves and him from the slipstream of a prop-driven sea plane rising from the water. Robert gasps and tries to catch his breath. Marsh lies where he just saw runways. Barrage balloons hang in the noon sky. His legs buckle under him.

2.

Evening sun shines on the water as Robert Logue, wearing white robes over his clothes, looking rested,

approaches a Quonset hut. Justina, his escort, knocks, opens the door, gestures him in. As he steps inside, she stops and says, "I will go and set up the meeting. We have left the briefing to you."

A teletype rattles in a corner, the windows are open to the sunset. On the wall, A calendar identifies this as April 1942. A man sitting with his feet up on a desk opposite the door says, "Thanks." He's burly, getting fat, in shirtsleeves, wearing a holstered revolver and suspenders. His suitcoat is draped on another chair. A wide-brim hat is pushed back on his head. A Lucky hangs out of his mouth. He's as old as Robert, but he asks, "Feeling better after your nap, Gramps?"

"Thanks. It's been a long time, Ed."

Ed Brown rises. "Smoke? Have a seat. Things been going okay for the last generation or two?"

"Not bad," says Robert shaking hands. "Until recently." Above Brown is an oil painting. It takes Robert a second glance to recognize the idealized image of J. Edgar Hoover. He indicates the picture: "FBI?"

"In Peace and War. They lend us this office. But just about everything around here is FBI." He jerks a thumb over his shoulder. "President Hoover the Second."

"I'm wondering how he feels about those guys in feathers and beads I passed outside."

"You looked closer, you maybe'd see they had fins and gills. Uncle Sam's glorious allies in this particular go-round."

"Nice costume you're wearing."

"We follow local custom. The good citizens here want G-Men right out of the movies." He holds up Ignace's warrant. "Little Danny, on the other hand, wanted a Captain Midnight decoder ring. My predecessor was happy to oblige."

"Must have set the Rangers back a fortune in Ovaltine box tops," says Robert. "Nice of you to sort my papers." He rises with his hand out.

"Saves comparing notes." Ed Brown gives them back. "Seems you've been looking up old acquaintances." He watches Robert rub his face. Looks inquiringly.

"A little reminder from Sandra. There's a dream that goes with it. I see myself from above, lying on sun-scorched ground. There's a hole in my cheek right where she kissed me. Through the hole I can see bones and dry tendons." Ed grimaces. "A Witch's Kiss. Made you promise to stay clear of the Sisterhood, did she? I have lots more faith in your discretion than she does. The way you turn the spotlight on old, buried crimes and never drop a clue as to how you really solve them proves that."

His lighter has a spiral emblem. He uses it, inhales deeply on a Lucky. "All of a sudden everyone's interested in a certain old crime. But this time you're

not operating the spotlight. You're in it. You need a favor. You remember old friends."

Outside the window a fiery grid crosses the darkening sky. Ed jerks his thumb at it and says, "Another glorious ally. This particular USA is happy to have friends, especially ones with Upstream technology."

He reaches into a drawer and pulls out a bottle of Jim Beam. "Don't be shocked. This doesn't belong to the G-men." He locates a couple of glasses. "We have a little while. Let me try to explain our plans for you. Geez, we were kids when we met."

3.

My growing-up was in a South Chicago in a Great Depression. I was lousy in school. Never able to concentrate. Daydreaming they called it. Out the window, instead of bread lines and slums, I'd see bright cars and silver buildings. My family had nothing. I left school at sixteen. The police didn't need me. Likewise the Army and Navy and Marines.

So I rode the rails out of the city with a buck and change on me. I still saw bright colors just out of reach. Somewhere in the Dakotas, a Central Pacific boxcar load of hobos made an attempt on my dough, my shoes, my sacred honor.

My only chance was to swim towards a patch of silver light no one else could see. Wham! I was staggering and babbling on the median strip between a monorail and an industrial park. On that



world, certain authorities knew about the Stream. Before long, this foreign guy showed up and old Nicky Eszterhaza described to me dreams he knew I had. I grabbed his offer to become a cop.

Cop is shorthand, a thing everyone can grasp. Maybe we're closer to a secret order. People call us by different names in different places. Time Rangers is as good as any. Let's say the Rangers try to make sure unauthorized parties don't mess too much with the Stream. And that we try not to attract too much attention doing it.

They put me through something between basic training and a brain rewiring. There were a couple dozen of us. All from the mid-twentieth century. Young. Teens, mostly. "None but the young are brave," a certain song says. It was everything from history and algebra to weapons systems and swimming the Stream by land, sea, and air.

After a year and a half of that, they needed a volunteer. Immediately. And young. We all knew this had to be in response to a Primary Event, an unscheduled ripple in the Stream. And we all wanted the assignment because it meant becoming a Ranger faster. Olney and Gonzalez? I sympathize with them. Being a cadet is purgatory. You're any good, you want that badge.

Others were smarter or more adept. But I was the best fit. The Site was almost thirty years Upstream from where I'd come from. But it was the same world and country or close enough not to make a difference. With all of Time to play with, they had

only a few days to show me my Target Results and me give me a little background.

Then they revealed my contact and dumped me on Site with nothing but a change of clothes and five bucks in my boot. About all I had when I first leaped into the Stream. Except now I could speak French and kill someone with a tin spoon if I remembered to bring one.

Ignace was real jumpy when we met. And it bothered him a lot that I was so young. But mostly he was fine. Devised a cover story I could live with. Filled me in on LaRocca and Burke. Arranged safe spots for meeting him.

So, I let the cops find me. Then I let my tale dribble out. I was seventeen with weird dreams, on the run from trouble and not altogether swift mentally. Ignace insisted on that last because I couldn't always remember stuff like which was Elvis and which was JFK.

All I needed was to tell LaRocca about the other worlds I saw in dreams and he was hooked. They had me stay with Burke and his wife. She was okay-looking. But if she had two heads and both ugly, it wouldn't have mattered. As it was, I figured either she was as good as a widow or I was going to die trying to make her one.

Burke I felt sorry for. All he was looking for was a little graft. What happened? First the boarder screwed his wife. Then he got killed. Just an average, dishonest cop sucked into something by a partner

he saw as being smart. My Target Results, however, were very clear on one thing. Both of these guys and Sally Dere, when she showed up, had to go.

Toward the end, there was money in the Stream for them. But for LaRocca it was mostly adventure. The weird thing was that he never learned to move in Time. Burke eventually caught on, some. But LaRocca always had to be led. Even to his own slaughter.

People think policing Time is easy. You know a bank will get robbed on Thursday morning, so you go back to Wednesday afternoon to arrest the perpetrators. But unless it's a bank robbery that's going to seriously alter the Stream, it's not your worry. If it is, you need to find a way of stopping it that doesn't itself alter the Stream. Which means operating so no one on Site notices. Places, like your world, where almost nobody knows about the Stream are naïve, happy places. This one where we are, for instance, they know all too much.

Too bad about LaRocca. He was naïve. It got him killed. Still, He had a real talent for spotting special abilities in others. Alan was a plant, same as I was. But LaRocca found Angie by himself. And you. He didn't know what to make of you. Hell, I didn't either. You were this twitchy kid who just wanted to run home and hide under his bed or something.

It turned out, Alan understood how you could be used. Ignace had passed the word that Alan was supposed to be cooperating with us. Alan wasn't real warm. Not much to say. He was waiting, the

same as me, for Miss Dere to show up.

First glance at Sally, you wouldn't think this little chippie could cause a major Branch in the Stream. Second look, it wasn't so hard to imagine.

LaRocca, like I say, was trusting. Sally Dere put a stop to that. Along with being able to navigate the Stream, she could pick up your thoughts if you weren't careful. A trick of the Sisterhood. I had to watch myself around her. Alan did too, I'd guess. Ignace avoided her.

Once LaRocca had Sally, she made sure he didn't need the rest of us. Angie was in a bad way. First she lost LaRocca, on whom she had this huge crush. Then Sally appropriated Ted because she couldn't be seen going around all the time with LaRocca.

The three of us formed an alliance. I didn't care about Teddy but I had orders to nail all the others. Alan's only interest was Sally. The others could walk. Angie didn't care about Burke. But vengeance was going to be hers. Sally was going to get it, of course. And Teddy. And she wanted LaRocca real bad.

Angie wasn't in Sally's league in looks. But she was okay when she was a kid. And you may have gathered that the Rangers aren't a monastic organization. So I was in there as soon as she became available. Finding out what Angie was like when she got crossed took a lot of the zest out of that.

By the new year, my bosses were pressing me for results. My guess is that Alan's were too. But it got harder to track Sally and LaRocca once they started getting suspicious.

And the Stream can be a nasty place. You go looking for a spot where, maybe, they already have next week's Derby results and discover yourself in the hold of a slave ship. Or still in your hometown but now the big betting sport is football with human heads.

I was sent to stop something very wrong. Only instead of Roger Deveraux and a battalion of marines, I had Daniel Ignace and a handful of screwed-up kids. One of whom was me. The cops could eliminate us in a dozen different ways. We were in more danger than they were. The question was who was going to get the jump on the other one. I moved out of Burke's and didn't stay any one place for very long. Ignace was terrified.

Angie was the key. Old Trollo's connections Upstream kept her informed. Sally and LaRocca were seen in a New York about twenty years up a real bad branch of the Stream. The partly-wrecked New York that scared you was nothing. Further up, things were a lot worse and civil government was nil.

Because Sally and LaRocca were muscling in on their turf, Trollo's friends were willing to spring a trap. It was the best I could do. I let Ignace know. Word came back fast from HQ that it was okay. And my Target Results got changed.

Original Target Results are always optimum solutions. Neat and seamless. Something like, "The two police officers and Miss Dere die in a car accident that harms no one else."

As a sign of how desperate things were, all they wanted now was that the Rangers not be connected with the deed. Which seemed possible. And that I give Ignace evidence beforehand that it would work.

That was hard. Since this would be a Primary Event it hadn't happened yet in the Stream. Only further up that branch would we be able to tell if we had succeeded. And I didn't know how to be sure. Then Alan said, "We use the bloodhound." He had kept track of you. For just that reason.

My other problem was with the worlds on that particular branch. It's not like in Ignace's stories where everybody goes rollicking around the centuries. As you will discover, Rangers have definite beats. Up that branch things were wild and woolly, Rangers were few and unpopular, and the Sisterhood was openly hunted.

Headquarters had a contact about twenty years Upstream from the site where we had decided to ambush Sally and LaRocca. They told me how to get in touch with him.

We acted fast. Angie went to see her friends. Alan got you out of the hospital where you'd been stashed. You were shaky, haunted. Just seeing death all around had pushed you over the edge. I was afraid of what this was going to do to you. But

we had no choice. Alan and I brought you up the branch.

It was hot the way it gets Upstream even in winter. My contact was a kind of cop. He was not happy to see us. Order of a sort had been restored to that New York. Nothing and nobody from Upstream or Down was supposed to come there. As soon as we arrived we got stripped of everything off-world.

Partly too it was intimidation. And a way of showing contempt for Rangers in general and me in particular. I was afraid you were going to flip out.

We got questioned. They wanted to know if we were from the Sisters. Alan bluffed his way through that. Maybe they figured anyone hung like him couldn't be a witch. Kind of a waste considering what happened. If they'd found out who he was, we would all have ended up like LaRocca and company.

Finally, they made us dress as locals and let us lead you around. Most of midtown Manhattan was bombed out. And that seems to be how they wanted it. Shells of buildings. Piles of rubble. A kind of memorial. They had an amusement park on the river.

It was hard locating the spot we were looking for. Lots of dying had gone on around there. You were sobbing and puking. Then I noticed a sculpture sticking out of the ground, a chunk of a wing. The Busted Eagle. I led you toward it. All of a sudden, you halted and screamed. "They put LaRocca's eyes out!" That was what I needed. It took a while to

quiet you down.

Back home, Angie met us. Everything was set. Out in back of the cafeteria, Ignace was in a major lather. LaRocca and Burke had just been around looking for Alan and Angie and me. Talking about arrest. They'd be back shortly.

When he heard your story, Ignace was scared. Said you knew too much and were a security risk. "Like a time bomb," he said. And I should get rid of you. That I didn't like. Besides, where you were going, nobody was going to pay attention to anything you said.

I got Ignace's mind off that by making him work out a cover story about having just seen Angie and Alan and me. He'd say we were high and babbling about something called the Broken Eagle and the fortune we were about to make there. It must have been quite a performance because the four of them came after us.

Meanwhile, we took you back to Penn Station, the first place I'd ever seen you. Angie kissed you good-bye and Alan took you back to the hospital before we headed back Upstream.

With what you'd told us, springing the trap was just a nasty detail. Justice up that branch was mighty rough. Blinding is what they do to time travelers before they do anything else. So they can't see the future or something.

One thing Angie had agreed to was that the bodies



would be dumped back on the world they came from. A public display and a warning to others. She was enthusiastic. Alan didn't object. And that fell within my Target Results. What got called the Switchyard Massacre was the consequence.

In the aftermath, Alan disappeared. I guess what happened to him was his reward. Headquarters encouraged Ignace to stop writing Time Ranger stories and go West. We had connections in Hollywood. He did fine. Served us well until recently.

My commission came through fast. Your world was part of my beat. Angie stayed where she was, of course. We used her as a contact over the years. And I overlooked a lot because of what she'd done for me. What she can't understand is that time has passed and she's in someone else's jurisdiction.

A couple of months after the Massacre, I checked you out. You'd been given more shock treatments. An orderly told me you wouldn't remember your own mother unless she dropped a few clues. I figured that was good enough.

With luck that would have been the end of it. But forty-plus years later, one Brian Olney gets interested in the Switchyard Event. What we've pieced together is that he hears old rumors. Other kids, including his new girlfriend, Mirabel Gonzalez, are talking about Time. Ms. Gonzalez had some prior contact with the Sisters. And the Sisters feel they have reason to meddle with things up that branch of the Stream.

Brian and Mirabel think how hot it would be to solve this case. They start asking around. Olney meets you. We think it's Gonzalez who comes up with Angie's name.

But it's Olney who approaches her. Angie is scared. By now, she regards the Stream as a kind of dumping ground. Brian is young. As we see it, she throws him off balance, tosses him into Time immediately. Before he can tell anyone. Leaves him in a place where the civil authorities deal out summary justice and dump him back where he came from.

Cadet Gonzalez goes through shock, recrimination, anger, guilt. All the usual. She arms herself. Finds Angie. Maybe sticks a gun in her face and says show me where you took him. Angie does. Mirabel Gonzalez dies in a shoot-out. After which they treat her the same as her boyfriend. As a warning.

And here we are, you needing answers and me feeling I owe you a favor. With Ignace out of the picture and Angie clearly a liability, I'd want to be able to count on someone like you on that Site. But that's not up to me. Like Angie, you're on somebody else's beat.

Justina's the one who gets to decide if she wants you. For old times' sake, I put in as good a word as I could. It's late in your career, I know. But this is the best deal I can see for you. Oman's still in training. He's real bright. But he's a kid. There's a lot you can teach him.

Me, I've had long service. Lots of interesting stuff.

But right now anyone who stands between me and my pension is on the most dangerous spot in the Stream.

You know, I think Ignace used me in one of the Time Ranger stories too. The very last one. Good luck Bobby.

## PART SIX FROM THE FILES OF THE TIME RANGERS

"Reporting to relieve you," said the Ranger officer.

Colonel Roger Deveraux looked up from the reports he was reading. He saw the crisp uniform, rigid posture, eyes fixed on a spot above his head. The colonel couldn't get over how newly promoted captains looked like wise-ass kids. One more sign he was too old for active service. "At ease," he said. "I guess I could run on with all kinds of advice about what to do and how. But I'm heading upstairs and you're going to make your own mistakes. All I can tell you is there's a bottle of bourbon in the file cabinet under W for whiskey. And cigars under C for celebration. That's all, son." Roger Deveraux stood and handed his successor the spiral stamp of office.

The captain almost smirked as he scoffed it.  
"Thanks, sir."

## THE END

From "From the Files of the Time Rangers" by Daniel Ignace, Astounding Science Fiction, January 1964.

1.

Justina and Robert stand beneath a monorail in a misty dawn. Their white robes are what is expected in that place. Oman, eyes properly lowered, wears a knee-length tunic and holds a leather suitcase. A closed truck and an official car are parked on a paved access road. Several figures in helmets with opaque visors stand nearby.

All around are blocks of rubble with a few skeletal buildings here and there. A war memorial. Robert notices on one wall, a spiral graffiti with a red line drawn through it. A half mile to the north, thick gray towers fill the horizon. A few lights glow in windows. Over by the river, the amusement rides are dark and silent.

Two people are stretched out on the busted sidewalk before them. Both are still except for an occasional twitch that seems to start at the head and ripple down the body. One of them is an Asian woman Robert hasn't encountered before. The other is Geo, whom he last saw driving Angie's jeep.

"Not your worry," Justina says as if she knows what Robert is thinking. "Locals. These don't get dumped back in your New York."

"What does happen?"

Justina shrugs and says, "Smuggling Downstream? Caught in the act? They dance. The authorities," she nods toward the helmeted figures, "hate Time

Jumpers. They blame them for all this destruction. Only recently have they trusted us enough to cooperate. Olney and Gonzalez intruding almost put a stop to that. But they are willing to try one last time."

She gestures. Oman steps forward and opens the suitcase. Inside are pieces of police uniforms, a cadet cap, items of old civilian clothes, a service revolver, a badge.

"From their property office," says Justina. "Personal items from LaRocca and Burke, from Olney and Gonzalez. They turned this over to us. My young colleague will bring it back to your New York and make sure Angie receives it. You understand what is to be done after that?"

Robert grimaces. "I hang the murders on her and never mention the Rangers or the Stream."

Justina steps forward and grabs him by the front of the robe. "Olney and Gonzalez came to you. You were amused? You never asked who might have sent them? Or wondered if they'd go to Angie and what she'd do?"

"Why would I think of those things?"

"Mister, if you work for me that is what you will think about. You will not stand about anymore and watch people. You will make sure it doesn't happen. The cadets were pawns in a game of blackmail. The Sisters are not bothered that they got killed. It was their way of showing that they can destroy

the cooperation that I worked for here. They burn witches here and the witches want to burn this place. Mr. Brown from Downstream says you can be trusted. My young colleague will be watching you to make sure."

Justina has her back to the helmeted, impassive figures and she winks as she speaks to him, like this is a performance for them. But she shakes Robert so hard that his teeth rattle. Justina gestures and Oman hefts the suitcase and guides Robert into the truck.

Robert removes his robes. "This will be okay," Oman tells the older man. It's the first time Robert has heard him speak. His voice, at odds with his face, is deep, almost harsh. His accent is unplaceable. "I want to work with you. I like the people in your world. Where I come from is worse even than this."

He strips and puts on the black and maroon school uniform. "I will sell Angie the suitcase. You will have time to prepare. She will buy. I've sold to her before. She doesn't know what happened to Geo. Don't worry. The evidence will be in her possession. She will not survive." He sees Robert's expression and says, not unkindly, "Do not regret this. She would not hesitate to destroy you."

2.

Friday morning just before nine o'clock, Louis Jackson, with his ID displayed on the front of his gray suitcoat, steers a beige Saturn through the intersection of Eighth Avenue and Thirty-First

Street. It's sunny and warm. He's still grainy-eyed from being awakened after three hours sleep. Beside him, looking grim, Robert Logue is dressed for the camera in brown loafers, a blue Ralph Lauren jacket, fawn slacks, a light gray shirt and rep tie. He notices a slightly raw spot on Logue's cheek.

Jax says, "This weekend, as the media frenzy builds up around the old and new Switchyard Murders, you drop off the map. Then, early this morning, you reappear insisting you have a case-breaking lead and demanding immediate action."

"You're a lawman, I'm not, is what you're thinking," Logue says. He sounds distant. "And that, more than race, more than sex, is the ultimate distinction in your world."

"Actually," says Jax, "I was wondering how it would be to deal in a court with a hostile witness or a criminal defendant with your sincere blue eyes and nice white hair."

On that block, a grandstand is being erected for the dedication of the chunk of the Post Office as Penn Station Three. Tours are being given. Down the sidewalk comes a loose formation of about a hundred high school students, boys and girls, their hair military standard. They wear maroon jerseys with a school crest, creased black shorts, maroon socks, and shined shoes. They move surely, needing no guidance from the teachers with them. Kids out of uniform look uneasy and a little envious. Logue searches their ranks but doesn't see Oman. He thinks of Angie and Ed and Alan. He thinks of Brian

and Mirabel.

Jax follows Logue's gaze. "It's scary," he remarks, "Twenty-five years ago, we'd have burned the school down if they made us do that. Kids now have no trouble with it. For the first time, the future feels alien."

Logue looks at his watch as they drive across Ninth. At one minute after nine, sirens are heard south and west of them, the phone on the dashboard buzzes. "Going in," says a voice on the speaker. Jax activates the flashing roof light and they tailgate a delivery truck that thought it was going to double park, chase it all the way over to Tenth.

On that uptown avenue, a dozen uniformed police have stopped traffic. Jax turns downtown and parks where they can watch the action on Thirtieth Street.

Halfway down the block, cops in flak jackets have broken open a garage door. Voices crackle on radios.

"... inside the building."

"... someone moving! Halt!"

"... weapon!"

Robert and Jax hear the gunshot from down the street and over the radio.

"Jesus ... occupant down. Head wound ... self-inflicted." Paramedics in flak jackets hurry



forward. Robert sits blank-faced. Jax says, "Saw an interesting photo. Officers LaRocca and Burke and a very familiar kid."

Robert touches the Witch's Kiss lightly and says, "The woman inside took that picture. She's Angelica Podesta, aka Angie the troll. She lived around here her whole life. I think we'll be surprised by some of her souvenirs.

"Olney and Gonzalez were a pair of bright kids who got fascinated by the Massacre. They discovered her connection with it, went around to see her. Angie got frightened. Killed them one at a time. I think she wanted to get caught. Probably can't understand why it's taken the police so long."

"Why now?" Jax asks.

"She was old and crazy. For years she sat like a troll under a bridge. Her world was disappearing. I talked to her recently. About old times and people. She let some things slip. Once I confirmed a few of them, I called you guys."

"That story doesn't sound at all complete," Jax remarks.

"It will get filled in," Robert says. Outside, TV trucks pull up. From across the street a reporter notices him. Robert puts his hand on the door. "Right now, I need to say a few words to my public."

The End