

Chapter Six: The 33rd Parallel

SCENE 1



Seen from a distance, a great helical Tower arises from a flat, featureless plain, which appears to extend infinitely in all directions. The top of the Tower extends beyond view through a cover of clouds. Heard from it is a cacophony of voices, all speaking different languages, which seem to merge into a low, sinister murmuring – like the intoning of a Black Mass. Huge stones are being lifted skyward using primitive blocks and tackle wielded by swarms of naked

slaves, many of whom are crushed when the blocks slip and fall. Approaching the base of the Tower from the plain are two figures, and the Tower comes into closer view as seen through their eyes. While the Tower's helix appeared uniform from afar, in proximity it's revealed to be a sprawling heap of topsy-turvy stones, constantly tumbling down as new ones are added to the top.

KRON. *(jumping back as a large stone rolls toward his feet)* Geez, I guess this is why they call this place Hell, because it's one helluva mess!

NOST. *(apprehensive)* Kinda reminds me of Pieter Bruegel's painting of the Tower of Babel.

KRON. *(gazing upward through the clouds)* After Jupiter overthrew me, my fellow Titans and I tried something like this. We piled one mountain on top of another, then climbed up to attack him on Mount Olympus. But Hercules drove us off with his bow and arrows.

NOST. *(peering through binoculars toward the summit of the Tower)* Wow! It looks like there's actually a repeat of that scene going on above us right now! Some guy dressed all in white, carrying a shepherd's crook climbing toward the top, where there's this enormous cross made of oak trunks. And now a troop of soldiers with bows are shooting at him with arrows. He's fallen down... I think he's dead!

(A body dressed in white bishop's vestments tumbles down the side of the Tower and falls at their feet, with the shepherd's crook beside it. To their shock and surprise, the Bishop rises and picks up the crook.)

PETE. *(making the sign of the Cross and addressing them)* Forgive my rather awkward entrance, fellas,... *(extending his elbow instead of his hand)* My name is Peter of Rome. I'm glad to make your acquaintance.

KRON. (*put off*) What's with the elbow, Pete? If those arrows didn't hurt you, I doubt if our viruses can.

PETE. (*gracefully*) Yes, of course. But you see, you two are alive. You're actual beings. All these others you see are just so much smoke. You can put your hand right through them... and their arrows too, for that matter.

NOST. (*intrigued*) ... Peter of Rome... You are the Last Pope, according to my grandfather's prophecies.

PETE. (*gazing about*) Your grandpa was around here just a little while ago. You just missed him. Besides, Saint Malachy foresaw the same thing long before he did.

KRON. (*inquisitive*) Listen, Pete, I guess the King of Jerusalem sent you to the stake right after us. I'm immortal, and my friend here's an apparition – so we came through intact. But what about you? How come you're not just a cloud of smoke?

PETE. (*patiently*) Like you, Knonos, I'm part of the eternal fabric of Reality. Time cannot dispel me because time is only a mode of perception – and a partial perception at that. I have lived in the visions of saints and holy men for ages. Even Our Lady has spoken of me... and of the scene you have just watched me enact.

NOST. (*reverently*) You seem very wise, Your Holiness. Maybe you can explain what's going on with this Tower. Are the demons building it so that they can escape from Hell?

PETE. (*somewhat hesitantly*) Well, that's what they *think* they're doing. But, as with most things down here, they're deluded. There is no spatial connection between Hell and the Earth, though Dante and Milton imagined there was. One has to travel across the branches of the Multiverse. It's like changing lanes on a highway. But if you lack free will, as all demons do, then you always wind up back in the cul-de-sac – which is, by definition, Hell.

KRON. (*realizing*) Solipsism?

PETE. (*affirming*) Exactly. That strait-jacket of non-entity in which there's only room for one ego. The only will that is truly free is that which partakes of the ultimate Will of the Supreme Being.

NOST. (*thoughtfully*) My great-great-grandfather, Jean de Nostredame, after whom I am named, was a scholar of the *Zohar*. He understood the branches of the Multiverse in terms of the Tree of Life. But he also taught that there was an inverted Tree – the Tree of Good and Evil – which connects with the Tree of Life at the level of the World *Malkhut*.

PETE. (*enthused*) Well said! You're on the right track now! Everything that manifests in the material World must have an inverted mirror-image on the Other Side – what your Jewish ancestors would have called the *Sitra Ahra*. Since the World *Malkhut* contains within it all 32 branches of the Tree of Life, so must the inverted Tree – but in the reverse order.

KRON. (*catching the drift*) I think I see where you going now, Pete. This demonic Tower they're building is the trunk of the inverted Tree, isn't it?

PETE. (*quickly*) Right! And they're almost done with it, except for one thing: There needs to be a path that connects *Malkhut* above with *Malkhut* below.

NOST. (*brightly*) And that would be the 33rd path?!

PETE. (*deeply*) It involves progressively superimposing the two Worlds, so that the World of Beings is gradually, imperceptibly replaced by the World of Vanities. The alchemical reconstitution of primal matter, in which one version of the World is substituted for another. Then comes the “Killing of the King” – the ritualistic murder of a man who represents God – which consummates the diabolical substitution.

KRON. (*darkly*) The murder of God... an idea of such immense horror that it even drove the arch-atheist Nietzsche mad.

PETE. (*resignedly*) And that's the very ritual I'm here to rehearse every day by climbing up this heap of stones and getting shot full of arrows.

KRON. (*sadly*) I sure wish there was something we could do to get you out of this, Pete.

PETE. (*carefully*) In fact, there is. While it's too late to stop the King Killings, there's still time to reverse their alchemy. But it has to be done for the two most potent murders.

NOST. (*eagerly*) And which ones are those?

PETE. (*regrettably*) That's something you're going to have to discover for yourselves. But I can give you a clue. (*taking a book from under his cloak and handing it to Jean*) Take this with you and begin climbing that heap of stones. Because it's the inverted Tree, it will take you back in time. When you get to the first killing place, you will know what to do with it.

KRON. (*somewhat skeptically*) And the second place?

PETE. (*starting to ascend the Tower again*) Just remember the 33rd path...

(*Kronos and Jean watch silently as Peter climbs above the clouds.*)

KRON. (*awkwardly curious*) So what does that mysterious book look like you, Jean?

NOST. (*gazing at the cover*) It appears to be in French. *Protocoles de l'Orde de Sion* – “Protocols of the Order of Sion”. It's signed by “the representatives of Sion of the 33rd degree”.

KRON. (*appalled*) Not the infamous “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”! Why would Pete have handed us that anti-Semitic trash?

NOST. (*leafing through the book*) Not exactly. Although these Protocols talk about the “Jews” subjugating the “Goyim”, those labels seem to be used in the way Illuminati-type freemasons have used them – in other words, identifying themselves as “Jews” and all others as “Goyim”.

KRON. (*connecting*) Like we heard Pike and Mazzini say at that Palladian congress just after we first arrived here in Hell?

NOST. (*intently*) Right! And the “Order of Sion” was not a Jewish group either. It was the shadowy cabal that originally established the Knights Templar and then controlled them from behind the scenes. (*reading the text*) These Protocols dictate that same hierarchal “Pyramid” structure, in which the lower “degrees” of the secret society operate as a front for the higher “degrees” – unaware of the actual mission of their “unknown superiors”, but nonetheless sworn to absolute obedience to them.

KRON. (*savoring the cynicism*) And ready to be thrown under the bus whenever it serves the interests of those “unknown superiors”?

NOST. (*emphatically*) Exactly! And that’s just what happened on Friday the 13th in October 1307, when the Templars were rounded up and burned at the stake for the heresies of Lucifer worship that the Order of Sion had promoted.

KRON. (*melancholic*) Sort of an awful prelude to what would happen to the Jews and regular Freemasons of Europe during the Second World War.

NOST. (*astutely*) On all of their nefarious operations, the Illuminati always leave their ritualistic “calling cards”. Friday the 13th was the crucifixion of Christ, and October 13th would be Our Lady’s Miracle of the Sun in 1917. The Templars had 13 degrees of initiation, and above them were the Order of Sion’s degrees up to the 33rd – as the signature on these Protocols confirms.

KRON. (*engaging*) And Christ died at age 33 on Golgotha, near the 33rd parallel of latitude. Which puts us on the 33rd path between the Tree of Life and the demonic inverted Tree we are about to climb here. It all begins to add up, doesn’t it?

NOST. (*smiling knowingly*) Yes, it does, especially when one considers that Kabbalistic significance of the number 33. In Hebrew, 33 is written *lamed gimel* לל . Inverting those letters gives us *gimel lamed* לג , which spells the word for a “heap” – more particularly, a “heap of stones”.

(*As Jean says this, a large stone rolls down that slope and both men have to scurry out of its way, with Kronos falling down in the process.*)

KRON. (*getting up and dusting himself off*) Remind me, Jean, to take a few steps back the next time you start expounding upon the Kabbalah.

NOST. (*struggling to maintain his concentration*) So where do we find this word in the Hebrew Scriptures?

KRON. (*kicking the stone, then hopping away on one foot*) Ouch! I thought everything was supposed to be made of smoke down here?

NOST. (*mischievously amused*) You perceive it as solid, so your body responds accordingly. Without knowing it, you’ve just reenacted Samuel Johnson’s supposed demonstration of “objective reality”.

KRON. (*exasperated*) Samuel Johnson be damned! In fact, I think I saw him pass by here a few minutes ago, with his foot in a cast... So let’s get on with it. The Scriptures say what about the heap of stones?

NOST. (*recollecting*) The story goes like this: When Jacob came of age, his parents sent him to land of his uncle Laban to court his cousin Rachel. Now, Laban was not a righteous, God-fearing man like Jacob. Instead, he was a sorcerer and an idol worshipper who dwelt in the metaphysical realm of the *Qlippot* – the demonic forces that oppose true Being. So Laban threw up every obstacle he could think of against Jacob’s marrying his younger daughter Rachel.

KRON. (*chuckling*) But, like a good Jewish negotiator, Jake turned the tables on his uncle and got the older daughter Leah thrown into the bargain.

NOST. (*kidding*) For a pagan god, you seem to have studied your Bible, Kronos!

KRON. (*playing along*) The Gideons were my nighttime reading when the folks in the adjoining hotel room were going at it too loudly for me to sleep.

NOST. (*trying to refocus*) Okay, so when Jacob was ready to depart his uncle's evil abode, he set up a heap of stones to mark the boundary, which was called *Gilead*. So the "heap of stones" and its gematria number 33 are symbols of the "Other Side" *Sitra Ahra*.

KRON. (*reciting drolly*) "Tell me, is there balm in Gilead? Tell me, tell me, I implore! Quoth the Raven, Nevermore!"

NOST. (*good-humored*) I think that last rock must have knocked you silly.

KRON. (*teasing*) Nonsense! *The Raven* is the definitive expression of Melancholy – one of the qualities for which I'm renowned.

NOST. (*bemused*) Actually, there *is* balm in Gilead, albeit of the snake-oil variety. The Quest for the all-healing Holy Grail – the Other Side's parody of Jesus Christ – is led by Sir Galahad, whose name derives from *Gilead*.

KRON. (*becoming serious*) So, very subtly, we see the outlines of Christianity being erased and slowly filled in with an anti-Christianity. Isn't that the "Great Work" of alchemy?

NOST. (*gravely*) It goes way beyond that. It's the entire realm of Being dissolving and reconstituted in its inversion – the realm of non-being.

(As Jean finishes his sentence, the helical heap of stones parts down the middle and surrounds Kronos and Jean, then closes again with them inside it. For some moments, they are encompassed by profound darkness. Then, suddenly, they find themselves in the midst of an

opulent drawing room in the Palace of Herod Antipas. Herod is entertaining a group of local plutocrats who have gathered to watch the execution of three notorious cut-throats. A balcony off the drawing room has a view of Golgotha in the distance. One of the guests, Ahasuerus, has captivated the party with his bizarre stories and clever quips.)

AHAS. *(boasting)* Truly, I have lived since before the Flood. I am of the race of giants who descended from the heavens and took unto themselves human wives.

HEROD. *(laughing)* Come now, my friend! I suppose we can call that a *tall* tale. But if you were a giant, you could hardly fit under even a palatial roof such as this one.

AHAS. *(scoffing)* Can I not assume whatever shape I please? In Homer's time, I was known as Proteus, the "Old Man of the Sea".

GUEST. *(wisecracking, inebriated)* Soooh... if this is some kind of disguise you're wearing, fellah, why don't you jus' show us what you really look like?

AHAS. *(dissembling)* My real appearance might disturb some of the ladies present. Why don't I just show you.

GUEST. *(slurring)* Mahh..my own purrivit show, eh? Shh..sure, I kuku..could dig that, heh heh!
(Ahasuerus manifests as a hermaphroditic goat, and Guest faints dead away.)

AHAS. *(disdainfully)* Anyone else here care for a peek?

HEROD. *(skeptical)* That guy passes out at my parties all the time. But here's another test for you. One of the three prisoners is a puzzle to me. He's so meek and passive. Definitely not the bandit type. Pilate and I both questioned him, and he seemed totally innocent and harmless.

True, he has some delusions about himself, but haven't we all?

AHAS. *(malevolently gleeful)* Yeah, I set that guy up. You see, he has a twin brother who's one of those revolutionary assassins, wanted for killing several Romans. So I sicced the Centurion on the good brother, and he's getting nailed up today.

HEROD. *(aghast)* Why did you want to do that?

AHAS. *(smirking)* He had one of my whores all confused. Made her think she was holy or something. Imagine, she stopped putting out altogether!

HEROD. *(incredulous)* And the twin is just letting his brother be executed in his place?

AHAS. *(wickedly)* Man, that's where it gets really rich. I had my henchmen "suicide" him – you know, hang him out and make it look like he offed himself.

HEROD. *(amazed)* But why would anyone believe he'd do that?

AHAS. *(proudly)* That's the genius part. We filled his pockets with Roman silver to make it look like he set up his own brother for the reward, then killed himself in a fit of guilt.

(A commotion is heard in the street down below, and guests rush onto the balcony to see what's going on. Jesus of Nazareth has fallen beneath his Cross, and a Roman soldier is flogging him.)

AHAS. *(pushing his way to the front of the crowd on the balcony, then pointing down at Jesus)*

There he is, my good friend Yesu Chrestos – a prize fool. Son of a whore by a drunken Roman soldier. Son-of-a-bitch thinks he's the son of a god. He picked up a few magic tricks when he went down into Egypt. Let's see him escape from this. *(Shouting down to Jesus)* Hey Geez, look up here – I'm the guy who fingered you. What do you say to that? Come on, get up out of that gutter before I piss on you, you sorry piece of shit! Get moving – you've got an appointment to keep with the hammer crew up on that hill yonder.

(As Jesus rises to his feet, time freezes for everyone except him and Ahasuerus.)

JESUS. *(placidly)* So we meet again Lucifer. You were my adversary in the Wilderness, where at least you conducted yourself with dignity. Now, you've apparently sunken to the level of a vulgar gangster and pimp.

AHAS. *(jeering)* Whatever... but I've gotten the better of you, haven't I?

JESUS. *(pointedly)* Quite the contrary. You've assured me of my greatest victory. After I had fallen here, I didn't know if I could muster the strength to go that last mile to Golgotha. But your pathetic banter revived me. Without you, I might have expired in this street and been forgotten. Now I go to a Glory that no man has known or ever will.

AHAS. *(sarcastically)* Well, if that's so, then you should give me a reward for my services.

JESUS. *(beaming)* Yes, that's only fair. I'm delighted to bestow this gift upon you: You will live to walk the Earth until I return. But you will do so as prisoner of that body which you now inhabit. No more shape-shifting for you.

AHAS. *(alarmed)* But, this body will age and die. How do you expect me to wait for you if I can't leave it?

JESUS. *(gravely)* I have taught my disciples to drink the blood of everlasting Life. You shall drink the blood of everlasting Death, and everyman's death shall be your death. You will experience death over and over again through the ages, but for you, death will bring no release. Your body will be preserved as your prison cell, and I will hold the key until we meet once more.

(Jesus picks up his Cross and carries it onward toward Golgotha. As he recedes into the distance, Kronos and Jean are again enshrouded in darkness, and the Scene ends..)



SCENE 2



As the darkness slowly dispels, Kronos and Jean find themselves floating in a hot air balloon above the clouds. In the distance, looming above the clouds, appears a huge, fearsome fortress rising from the top of sheer cliffs surrounding it on all sides. Originally built by the Romans, then restored by the Borgias in the 16th Century, the Fortress of San Leo is at this time serving as a prison for one man – Count Cagliostro, whom the Papacy regards as the most dangerous heretic in Christendom. The date is August 26, 1795, and Cagliostro has been held captive here by the Inquisition for over seven years.

KRON. *(rubbing his eyes in disbelief)* This is beginning to feel like a scene out of Homer's *Odyssey*. You know, I helped that old blind guy write that poem, and he never even gave me one word of credit. *(peering into the distance)* Maybe this is Circe's island that we're approaching?

NOST. (*amazed*) That's no island... we're in the clouds... in a balloon!

KRON. (*looking down over the edge of the gondola*) Oh yeah! Check it out, we're floating. I guess I had my classical references mixed up then. It's not Homer; it's Dante. While he was climbing Mount Purgatory, he remarked: "One can walk to San Leo, but here a man must fly."

NOST. (*recognizing*) Did you say San Leo? Because, as we get closer, that's what it's beginning to look like!

KRON. (*straining to see through the clouds*) Goddamn if you're not right there, Jean! I recognize this place now. Jupiter used to chain up some of his prisoners on top of these rocks when he ran out of room in the Caucasus.

NOST. (*pensive*) Due to its impregnable location, the Romans built a fortress here, which eventually fell into the hands of the Borgias and their Pope Alexander VI.

KRON. (*irreverently*) Known for sleeping with his sister and poisoning his enemies, as I recall...

NOST. (*amused*) ... and appointing his bastard sons as Cardinals, yes. But more relevant to us is the fact that he converted the fortress into a prison – a horrific, escape-proof prison to be used for only the most feared enemies of the Papacy.

KRON. (*recalling*) And the most feared and notorious of all the prisoners of San Leo was a Sicilian alchemist named Joseph Balsamo.

NOST. (*acutely*) Well, that was one of the many names he went by. He's best remembered as Count Cagliostro. Come to think of it, he was like you in a certain way, insofar as there were two sides to his persona which seemed irreconcilable.

KRON. (*intrigued*) That's interesting. How so?

NOST. (*slowly*) On one hand, he was an imposter, a swindler, a mountebank... all of which labels became synonymous with his name. He was betrayed to the Inquisition by own his wife Seraphina, who described him as a pimp, a lecher and a blasphemer, to boot.

KRON. (*grudgingly*) That part does sound a lot like my alter-ego *Sabbatai*. But how did Cagliostro resemble my better parts?

NOST. (*hesitant*) Not so much that, but he seemed to have genuinely supernatural attributes.

KRON. (*curious*) Such as?

NOST. (*adamant*) He could mesmerize people, just by speaking to them or making eye contact – completely subjugating their will to his own, so that they would see and think and do exactly as he wanted. I suppose “demonic” is a better word for it than “supernatural”. Dumas described all this in his novel *Joseph Balsamo*.

KRON. (*pondering*) Which was about the “Affair of the Necklace”, wasn’t it? That was Cagliostro’s scheme which brought down the Bourbon Dynasty and triggered the French Revolution.

NOST. (*astutely*) Yes, but I wouldn’t attribute it to Cagliostro alone. It was a conspiracy that can be traced back to the suppression of the Knights Templar by the French King and the Pope 500 years earlier. Templarism reemerged in the form of the Illuminati in the 18th Century, and its immediate aims were to destroy both the French monarchy and the Papacy. Cagliostro was instrumental in drawing a branch of Freemasonry – known as the Strict Observance Rite – into the Illuminati orbit, and he acted as its agent in the “Affair of the Necklace”.

KRON. (*incisive*) There was that eerie scene at the start of Dumas’ novel when the ghostly Invisible Superiors gave Cagliostro his marching orders in the form a signet ring bearing the

letters L.-P.-D. – standing for *Lilia Pedibus Destruere* “Trample Down the Lilies”. Lilies were the heraldic symbol of the Bourbon Dynasty.

NOST. (*enthused*) The Inquisition found that signet ring among Cagliostro’s effects when they arrested him, and they were very interested in it. In addition to the initials that you mentioned, it bore an engraving of a serpent pierced by an arrow and holding an apple in its mouth. That represents a step in the alchemical process that involves “fixating the volatile” – in other words, inverting Reality by switching ephemeral non-entity in place of perduring Being.

KRON. (*eagerly*) Advancing the qlippotic Vanities to the foreground of experience instead of God’s Creation. Swapping out the meaningful for the meaningless. Eyes on the virtual instead of the Living.

NOST. (*nimbly*) Exactly. And the diabolical swap needs to take place at the core of true Being – at its Heart. France was the heart of Europe, and the heart of France was its royalty.

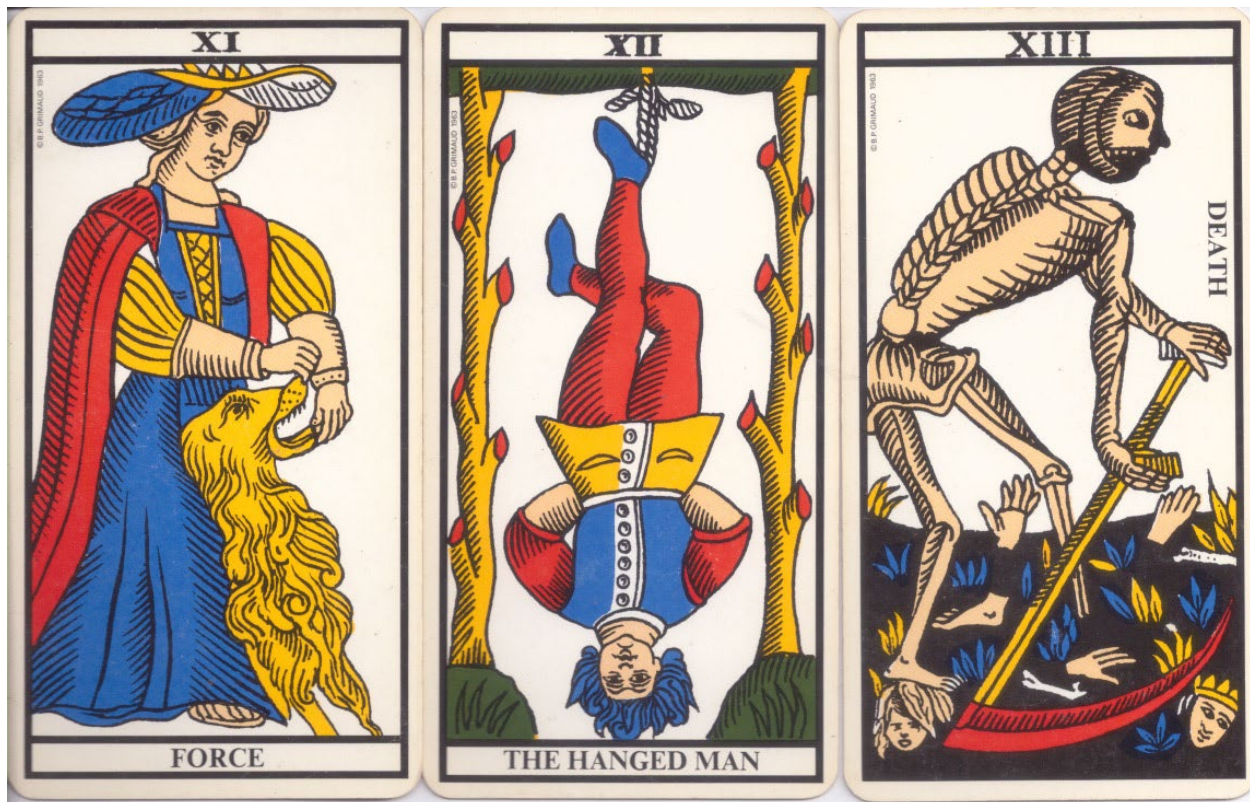
Cagliostro’s speared snake was a form of the Hebrew letter *lamed* ל, as was the letter L for Lilies. *Lamed* signifies *Lev*, the Heart, in Hebrew. It also signifies the King, *Melek*. To destroy divine Being and replace it with a demonic parody, the alchemist must not only fixate the Qlippot, but also kill the King – not just kill him, but ritually slaughter him with bloody viciousness.

KRON. (*catching on*) *Lamed* ל is at the center – the heart – of the Hebrew alphabet. It resembles



the sigil for my planet Saturn, as well as the “slanting serpent” insignia, with which Sabbatai Tzevi signed his name,... and the skewered serpent engraving on Cagliostro’s signet ring.

NOST. (*supportive*) And on either side of *lamed* in the Hebrew alphabet are *mem* ם and *kaph* כ, together spelling out *Melek*, the King. This sequence comprises the 11th, 12th and 13th letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which correlate to the 11th, 12th and 13th Tarot Trumps. The Tarot Trumps are pictorial renderings of the alchemical process we've been discussing. And the Tarot series 11-13 represents the inversion of Reality through the Fixation of the Volatile and the Killing of the King. (*He takes a deck of Tarot cards from his cloak and lays out three Trumps.*)



KRON. (*surprised*) I didn't know you'd been carrying those cards around with you all this time?

NOST. (*tongue-in-cheek*) Neither did I. I guess I just pulled a magic trick without realizing it.

KRON. (*nonplussed*) Hell, I can't explain how we got into this balloon either, so let's just assume anything goes from here on in.

NOST. (*pointing to the first card*) Here we have Trump #11, which corresponds to Hebrew letter *Kaph* כ. The next letter *Lamed* ל is constructed from the letter *Vav* ו attached to the top of the

letter *Kaph* כ . So, in a sense, *Kaph* represents *Lamed* decapitated – a foretaste of the decapitated King, whom we'll encounter at the end of this sequence.

KRON. (*perplexed*) This picture looks like Samson and the Lion, except Samson seems to be cross-dressing with Delilah.

NOST. (*affirming*) Yes, so the images are already signaling the inversion that lies ahead. Also notice the symbol of infinity ∞ formed by the woman's hat. That refers to primal matter, the subatomic structure out of which our Universe was created. This alchemical process ultimately strives to reduce this World again to primal matter, so that it may be re-formed in its mirror image. In his Egyptian Rite Cagliostro explained that, after the Fall, although mankind at-large was denied access to primal matter, a very small elect (including Solomon and the King of Tyre), could still know and enjoy primal matter, "a grain of which becomes a projection to infinity".

KRON. (*nodding*) I see. Hence the infinity symbol on the hat. But why a woman instead of a man?

NOST. (*persisting*) Okay. So Cagliostro outlined the steps in this diabolical process of "perfecting primal matter": (1) rejuvenate and repair the lost forces, (2) liquefy the solid part, (3) congeal the liquid part, (4) render the possible impossible, and (5) the impossible possible. This is the alchemical reprocessing of Reality into its opposite, restoring to primacy the lost forces which fell into the Other Side. The woman here represents the "lost forces" of the Qlippot – the so-called "vacuum fluctuations" of quantum physics, without sufficient energy to cross the threshold into Being... unless they get a boost from an actual Being.

KRON. (*fascinated*) So I take it that's where the Lion comes in?

NOST. (*energized*) Indeed, yes. The Yellow Lion was an alchemical symbol for Sulphur, which was thought to be the fuel that burned within the Sun. That was a Male Principle at the core of

absolute Reality. When Sulphur is heated in the presence of Mercury – representing the volatile, Female Principle – the solid Sulphur melts and the liquid Mercury solidifies.

KRON. (*completing the thought*) ... which is the beginning of the inversion process...

NOST. (*jumping in*) ... which is exactly what we are seeing in the picture of Trump #12, “The Hanged Man”. Notice, first, on either side of him the two trees, each having six branches lopped off.

KRON. (*speculating*) Doesn't the Kabbalah's Tree of Life have six branches?

NOST. (*eagerly*) Right! And those branches are arranged Right and Left – the Male Principle and the Female Principle – that which perdures and that which is mutable.

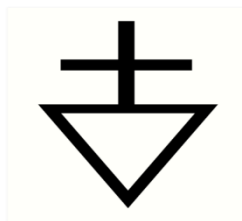
KRON. (*observing*) But the two Trees appear to be mirror images of one another?

NOST. (*keenly*) True. Both Trees are neutered, so that one may ostensibly replace the other.

But on closer inspection, one is the Tree of Life and the other the inverted Tree.

KRON. (*smiling in recognition*) And between them the connecting path – the 33rd Degree – from which the Man hangs. Strange, though, the way he's hanging... arms bent back so severely behind his back... and his legs, almost forming a swastika.

NOST. (*knowingly*) More alchemical symbolism. The man's body is twisted into the shape of



the alchemical glyph for Sulphur inverted.

KRON. (*puzzling*) Except that the Man's head doesn't quite fit the pattern, does it?

NOST. (*breathless*) Precisely! The head is the repository of the human Will. A Free Will is incompatible with alchemical processing. Hence Cagliostro's remarkable gift for overcoming the Will of his acolytes.

KRON. (*beaming*) And hence the picture on Trump #13, with those severed heads beneath Death's Scythe. There's my planet's sigil again. Can't seem to escape my dark side, can I?

NOST. (*consoling*) If you could, you wouldn't be a pagan god. But if you look more closely, you'll see that one of the heads wears a crown. The process that started with decapitating King *Kaph* has come back around full circle.

KRON. (*half-singing, half-reciting, in a gravelly voice*)

Got blood in my eye, got blood in my ear

I'm never gonna make it to the new frontier

Zapruder's film, I've seen that before

Seen it thirty-three times, maybe more

It's vile and deceitful, it's cruel and it's mean

Ugliest thing that you ever have seen

They killed him once and they killed him twice

Killed him like a human sacrifice

The day that they killed him, someone said to me, "Son

The age of the Antichrist has just only begun"

NOST. (*pondering*) That sounds familiar. What is it?

KRON. (*pointedly*) It's from Bob Dylan's song "Murder Most Foul", about the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Notice he mentions seeing the Zapruder film 33 times. And then there's this part:

We're gonna kill you with hatred, without any respect

We'll mock you and shock you and we'll put it in your face

We've already got someone here to take your place

The day they blew out the brains of the king

Thousands were watchin', no one saw a thing

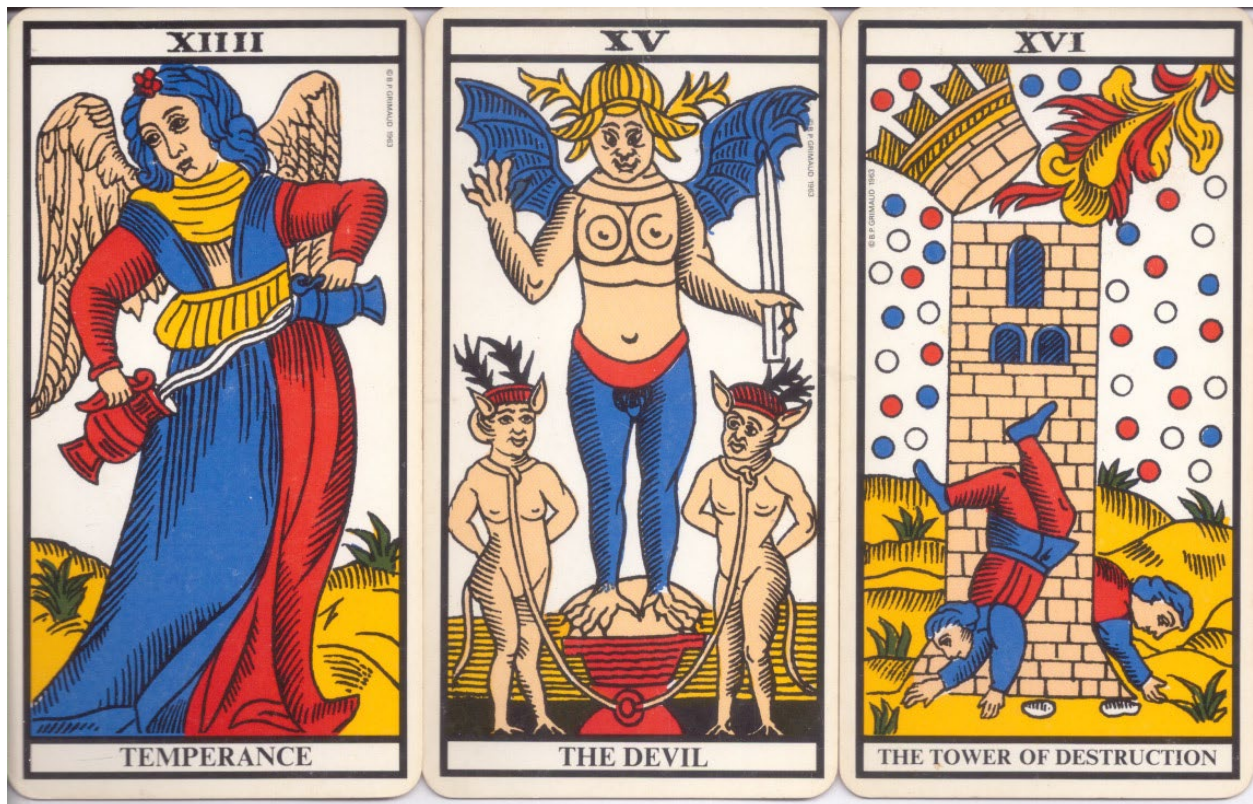
NOST. (*awed*) So you think his is one of the two King Killings we're going back to witness?

KRON. (*cagey*) Could be... I mean, as a retired god, I can sense certain things. Shapes of things to come... or in this case, things that came.

NOST. (*impatient*) Well, let's not get too far out ahead of ourselves. If we're not going to let Pope Pete down, we need to figure out the alchemy angle in all this before we arrive on the murder scenes.

KRON. (*spirited*) Right on then, Jean! We left off with Tarot Trump #13 – the King's head being chopped off by Death's Scythe.

NOST. (*flipping over three more cards*) Next we have the sequence of Trumps 14 through 16:



KRON. (*examining the first card*) Number 14 looks like Aquarius, the Angel pouring water from one vessel into another.

NOST. (*nodding*) So, now that the Heart of Reality has been ripped out and its Head cut off, it has become an empty vessel into which the qlippotic faux reality can be poured. Again, we see the Right-Left, Male-Female structure of the Tree of Life being reversed, so that the Angel is pouring water from the Left vessel into the empty Right vessel. Thus begins the process of completing the Inverted Tree.

KRON. (*keenly*) Based on the previous sequence, I guess I need to pay close attention to what the Angel is wearing on her head. That appears to be a five-petal rose.

NOST. (*confirming*) Good catch! The Rose of the Rosy Cross, which is the alchemical substitute for Christ's Cross. The moving spirit of the Rosicrucian movement in the 18th Century went by the name of Count Saint-Germain – another undying alchemist who enthralled and captivated almost everyone he met.

KRON. (*nimbly*) Sounds a lot like our Count Cagliostro. Weren't they rumored to be the same guy?

NOST. (*amused*) They were indeed, and for good cause. They always seemed to show up at the same time and disappear likewise. Many incidents from their lives overlap suspiciously. For example, both of them were supposed to have become confidants of Marie Antoinette, and both were supposed to have terrified her with premonitions of her execution...

KRON. (*keenly*) ... and both frequently identified themselves as the Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus.

NOST. (*avidly*) It goes on and on... Both at times disguised themselves as a Russian general, and both visited the court of Catherine the Great in St. Petersburg, attempting to recruit her as the

patroness of their new Universal Religion... the so-called Rite of Misraim, based on Egyptian sorcery.

KRON. (*chuckling*) Yeah, I recall that Catherine – who was intimate with enough men to know all their tricks – was one of the few who saw right through the Count and exposed him for the charlatan that he was.

NOST. (*solemnly*) And that led directly to the Romanov Dynasty being targeted for complete destruction by the Illuminati, just as the Bourbons of France had been.

KRON. (*sighing*) The King Killings sure seem to be piling up here. Let's get back to our Tarot reading and see what that tells us. We were on the trail of Aquarius and the Rosicrucians and Count St-Germain...

NOST. (*interrupting*) ... who wrote a most informative treatise on alchemy, entitled *The Most Holy Trinosophia*. In it, he refers to Aquarius as the "Sign of the Leg", and calls it the "Herald of Destruction". He writes darkly about a conjunction with the "Leg of the Waterman" taking place at the Equinox, when the "Secret Brotherhood comes forth from its obscurity".

KRON. (*prodding*) Well, you're the astrologer, Kid. Can you figure out what conjunction he was talking about?

NOST. (*hesitant*) So... on the autumn equinox of 2024, your planet, Saturn, which ruled Aquarius, was conjunct with the star *Skat*, which marks the leg of the Water-Pourer. The next year, one Master Rakoczi appeared to announce that he and 11 other "Ascended Masters" would be returning to rule the Earth.

KRON. (*puzzling*) I seem to remember that Madame Blavatsky, the Russian occultist, was involved in all this somehow.

NOST. (*reinforcing*) Very much so, both personally and through her Theosophical Society, which identified Master Rakoczi as an avatar of St.-Germain. In fact, among the aliases that St.-Germain was known to use were Rakoczi, Ragotzy, Rakoczy, Rackoczi, and Rachkovsky, depending on the country he was visiting. He was reputedly the son of Prince Francis II of Transylvania.

KRON. (*adeptly*) A Count from Transylvania? Didn't Bela Lugosi play that role?

NOST. (*smiling*) Rakoczi's ancestors did belong to the same Order of the Dragon as the infamous Vlad the Impaler. "Dragon" translates in Hungarian as *Dracul*, from which Bram Stoker derived the name of his vampire Count. Both Counts St.-Germain and Cagliostro were known to always dine privately, explaining that their food was not suitable for others. St.-Germain in particular was fond of telling vampire tales at the *soirées* he frequented.

KRON. (*musings*) This possibly ties in with an old urban legend of New Orleans concerning a Frenchman named Jacques Saint-Germain who took up residence in the French Quarter in 1903 in a house at the corner of Royal and Ursuline Streets. The story goes that one December night a woman flung herself from the second floor window of his house and told the police he'd attacked and bit her. Police kicked in the door only to find he'd escaped. But the place reeked of death, with bloodstains on the floor and wine bottles full of human blood. To the present day no one lives there, though the taxes are regularly paid. Property records show the house was bought in 1860 by one Francis Rakoczy.

NOST. (*gravely, pointing to the next Trump*) All of which brings us to Trump #15, The Devil. He's hermaphroditic, with a woman's breasts, just as Eliphaz Levi portrayed him.

KRON. (*scholarly*) As a Roman god, I know my Latin. *Elephas* is an elephant, the Biblical Behemoth – along with the Leviathan, a symbol of the Other Side.

NOST. (*appreciative*) This image represents the diabolic revelation, the penultimate step in the alchemical process. As in Levi's depiction, the Devil has beastly features – horns and clawed hands and feet. The unitary power of divine Reality is here replaced with a Dual Power, symbolized by the two subaltern demons at the Devil's feet. Demonic duality relates to the Beast and Woman conjoined. It also alludes to the double star Sirius, the occult "sun behind the Sun". The Dog Star is the emblem of the Dog Man, and it appears in occult iconography as the five-pointed Pentagram and the "All-Seeing Eye". Its alchemical role is to replace the natural Sun in the inverted version of the World.

KRON. (*getting it*) So that the Rebel Angels consigned to the Dark Side of the Vanities could reach from the metaphysical background into the foreground through fallen Man. Alchemy seeks to restore them to the foreground by transposing Light and Darkness.

NOST. (*poignantly*) The light of Lucifer, the Light-Bearer: The Light which is Darkness...

KRON. (*reciting*) "Yet from those flames no light, but rather darkness visible." Milton, *Paradise Lost*.

NOST. (*refocusing*) Notice how the subaltern demons are bound about the neck. If mankind is finally to worship the Devil, they must first be deprived of their ability to resist evil. This was made very clear in the Rosicrucians' Manifesto of 1615: "One day, when our victory is secure, we will confess our crimes to a ritually-bound public." As each step of the alchemical process is completed and its results secured, it is gradually revealed to a spell-bound populace – simultaneously deprived of their will, their memory, even their capacity to care about anything.

KRON. (*wondering*) I think those crimes involve the King Killings that seem to be the crux of our mission. Not only the brutality of the murders... the absolute vileness of them... but the brazen lies... the leering face of mockery daring us to challenge what is patently absurd.

NOST. (*delving*) Ordinarily, the demonic is powerless. Falsehood does not in itself alter Reality. It may have a passing currency, but it cannot endure. But a lie that persists, and even becomes more powerful the more it's debunked – that's a different thing. A lie that grows stronger the more thoroughly and totally it's refuted has the power not only to alter Reality, but to supersede it. All to the end that that which is not God – that which is the opposite of God – may be worshipped by a soulless remnant of humanity.

KRON. (*appalled*) This goes Goebbels one better: Not just the repetition of the Lie, but the concurrent slow unveiling of its falsehood with absolute impunity.

NOST. (*incisive*) Not surprisingly, the “sacred” occult text for this phase of the alchemical process is Aleister Crowley's *Book of Lies*, which reveals the conception of *Thelema* – an inverted rendering of the Garden of Eden. Notably, Crowley subtitled this *Liber CCCXXXIII*, Book 333. We have now progressed – or, better said, *regressed* – from “Nothing is forbidden” to “Nothing is true”. It's the apex of Nihilism, at which metaphysics consumes itself, like the Ouroboros serpent swallowing its own tail. Divine Creation is undone, and we return to the pre-Genesis formless state of *Tohu*. We've arrived at the alchemical step known as the *Nigredo*, the “blackening” that obliterates the real Earth and starts over again with an inverse order based on the Vanities.

KRON (*cleverly*) And that *Nigredo* step, I assume, is what I see depicted in Trump #16, The Tower of Destruction. I guess we can call this the “Trump Tower” (*chuckling*).

NOST. (*jesting*) Your humor seems to be just as outdated as your god status.

KRON. (*feigning offense*) How cruel you can sometimes be, Jean!

NOST. (*continuing to tease*) Well, however silly you are, you're sometimes right – as a stopped clock is twice a day. (*refocusing on the Tarot cards*) You see that the Crown of the Tower has

been blasted off. “Crown” in Hebrew is *Keter*, which is the topmost Sefhira of the Tree of Life. Before this, in The Hanged Man we saw the six Male-Female branches of the Tree lopped off. Now the Tree of Life is utterly destroyed and a temporary void – the Blackness – transpires, to be replaced with the reversed Tree of the Qlippot.

KRON. (*perceptive*) And the reversal leaves the two falling figures at the bottom of the card inverted like the Hanged Man. Like him, their heads are transposed from the top to the bottom. The Head, being the repository of the Will, is demoted and ultimately cancelled from the upside-down demonic rendering of the Tree.

NOST. (*spirited*) The alchemically processed Man – Nietzsche’s “Last Man” – is a torso without a head, bereft of Will. In the constellations, he appears as Orion, the headless hunter, identified with Nimrod, builder of the Tower of Babel.

(At this juncture, the balloon crashes into one of the Towers of San Leo and explodes, causing part of the cliff that supports the fortress to sheer off, exposing a cell in which a prisoner is manacled to the wall. The prisoner is unshaven, filthy and dressed in rags, and he is loudly ranting like a madman. Covering the walls of the cell are curses against the Papacy and French Monarchy, some scrawled in blood, others in excrement. Kronos and John, disoriented from the crash, stagger into the cell through a fissure in the wall opposite to where the prisoner is chained.)



Cagliostro as a real prisoner in chains.

CAGL. *(apparently oblivious to Jean and Kronos, shaking his chains and raving loudly)* I prophesize that Pope Pius VI will die in prison, just as he hopes I will die here! I myself created the instrument of his destruction, a young Corsican artillery officer whom I initiated into my Rite of Misraim at Lyons ten years ago! And my curse lies upon the King of France and his strumpet Queen, who will both forfeit their royal heads before a cheering crowd of my followers!

KRON. *(dazed, struggling to step through the smoke of the explosion)* I can't see much, but I sure as Hell can smell something awful. Did something die in here? I hope it's not you, Jean.

NOST. *(approaching Kronos from behind)* You forget that I died a long time ago. But, if we walk in the direction of the stench, I think we'll encounter our Count Cagliostro...

CAGL. *(proudly)* Giuseppe Balsamo, at your service. You two are representatives of the revolutionary French government come here to set me free? I heard rumors of the flying machines you had invented to rescue me.

KRON. *(drawing Jean aside, whispering)* Listen, this guy may hold the key to our mission. Let's play along with him for a while and see what we can find out that way.

NOST. *(hesitant, whispering)* Ohhhkay. But he seems too far gone to be of much use.

CAGL. (*angrily*) Stop that conspiring! You can't hide anything from me! I can read your minds! Before the World was, I AM! You've heard of the Wandering Jew, of the Count St.-Germain, of the Count Cagliostro? I'm all of them, and more. You were whispering because it's too incredible for you to believe.

KRON. (*humoring him*) You should know that the National Convention in Paris has sent us here to find Count Cagliostro and bring him back to France. So we have to be sure that you are who you say you are. After all, this could have all been staged by the Inquisition to throw us off the track.

NOST. (*playing along*) Yes, to prove your authenticity, why don't you relate some of the details of the Affair of the Necklace,... details that only Cagliostro would know?

CAGL. (*flattered*) The Affair of the Necklace, my crowning achievement ... so far, that is. My orders from the Secret Brotherhood were to discredit both the Monarchy and the Church in the eyes of the French people. I realized that the Church was the weaker of the two links, so I started there. Knowing that Strasbourg was a stronghold of the Illuminati in France, I went there and befriended Cardinal Louis de Rohan – a wealthy, libertine dabbler in alchemy and occult sciences. He had a very feeble mind, which I had no problem controlling totally. The Cardinal aspired to be appointed Prime Minister, and I convinced him that I could arrange that if he obeyed all my directives without question. Now, I had been a favorite of King Louis XV – even went on a few spy missions for him – and he had commissioned the Court jeweler to design a fabulously expensive diamond necklace for his paramour, Madame du Barry. Unfortunately, the King died before he could pay for the necklace, so the Court jeweler offered it to Louis XVI as a gift for his Queen. But Marie Antoinette forbid the King to buy it, because she knew such

extravagance would provide fodder for the Duke of Orleans, who was angling to depose the feckless King.

KRON. (*curious*) So the former Queen was not as bad as her tarnished reputation would suggest?

CAGL. (*scoffing*) Are you kidding? She was actually a saint compared to her enemies. But I was the one who really gave her a bad name. I planted rumors that Louis was impotent, that she was promiscuous, and that her son the Dauphin was illegitimate. The public ate it all up, and the necklace thing was the *coup-de-grace*. I persuaded the Cardinal that the Queen was secretly lusting after him, and that all he would need to do to win her was to get her that necklace. I even found a Marie-Antoinette look-alike to meet him for a midnight tryst. Using a forged letter from the Queen – provided by me, of course – the Cardinal got the necklace from the jeweler. When he was unable to pay for it, the whole thing went to court, where I was the star witness for the defense. From the witness chair, I aired all the imperial laundry – which I myself had soiled – and overnight I became a revolutionary hero, the victim of Bourbon tyranny.

NOST. (*sardonic*) Based on that account, you could write a new chapter for Machiavelli, Count. (*handing him the Protocols*) Speaking of which, are you familiar with this document?

CAGL. (*paging though the Protocols*) What, is this another test? The Inquisition seized my copy of this when they arrested me.

KRON. (*prompting*) What is it? Where did it come from?

CAGL. (*off-handely*) It's a plan to rip down the existing structure of human society and start over again from scratch. It originated with the Bavarian Illuminati – you know, Adam Weishaupt's gang – but when one of their couriers was struck by lightning, it fell into the hands

of the authorities. That was when the Illuminati were officially shut down and then had to work through front groups, like some of the spin-offs of Freemasonry.

KRON. (*pushing*) Like your Misraim lodges in France?

CAGL. (*accommodating*) Sure, we have a document like this. In the secret archives, of course. You have to be initiated into the 33rd Degree to have access to this. Some of the French revolutionists – Mirabeau, for example – had read it.

NOST. (*sharply*) So, what is your understanding of this plan, Count? Is it something you personally endorse?

CAGL. (*waving the Protocols*) Endorse? I wrote most of it myself.

KRON. (*cynically*) Wrote or copied? The *Protocols* were largely plagiarized from a political satire written by Maurice Joly.

CAGL. (*dismissive*) Joly belonged to my Misraim Lodge. He had access to this manuscript. He copied from me, not the other way around.

NOST. (*firmly, taking the manuscript from Cagliostro's hand*) If you authored it, tell us what it says, without reading from it.

CAGL. (*self-assured*) Fine. It's a program for undermining and ultimately destroying Gentile civilization.

NOST. (*clarifying*) I assume you are using the term "Gentile" to refer to those who don't adhere to your Universal Religion, not to non-Jewish people?

CAGL. (*peevish*) I use it to distinguish the Secret Brotherhood from the rest of humanity who must serve and follow us. It doesn't relate to the commonplace distinction between Christians and Jews – that's all the same to us. Those religions will all be wiped away.

KRON. (*scathing*) But the confusion of these labels proves useful to you in creating scapegoats, doesn't it? I mean, when the public becomes outraged at your "plan", you can lay off the blame on the Jews or the mainstream Freemasons, right?

CAGL. (*calmly*) That which advances our goals is justified, absolutely. By the way, you mentioned Machiavelli before. I knew him well, helped him write his essays, as a matter of fact.

NOST. (*impatient*) Very well, so you were telling us about the destruction of Gentile society...

CAGL. (*contemptuous*) The Goyim are to us – the Ascended Masters of the 33rd Degree – as cattle. They are to own nothing, be nothing but what we allow them to be. Think nothing but what we allow them to think. But we must convince them that it's in their own self-interest to enable us to enslave them. So, as we undertake to concentrate all property and all wealth in our hands, we say we are acting to abolish the privileges of private property.

KRON. (*caustically*) Selling Synarchism repackaged as Socialism. Sounds like Leninism.

CAGL. (*complacently*) Ideology is just a tool. Tools are to be controlled. All sources of information and opinion – news outlets, media, education, popular culture – are to be monopolized in our hands. Established institutions will accede to our demands – even to their own undoing – because the *vox populi* will appear to demand it. No social structure that is independent of us must survive.

NOST. (*pressing*) So I suppose that your first target is the family?

CAGL. (*wickedly*) Units of biological reproduction, no different than the breeding of cattle. Mother, father, sister, brother, wife, husband, son, daughter ... not only the relationships, but the very words connoting those relationships are to be ripped out of the soil of society like so many weeds. The Gentile family must be viewed as anti-social, the source of idiosyncrasies that engender divisions – ethnic, racial, sexual, religious, regional. After the Third and Final War,

mankind will yearn for peace above all. We will offer them that peace – the peace of homogeneity.

KRON. (*barbed*) Homogeneity in the name of diversity. Then, logically, your next target is national sovereignty.

CAGL. (*engaged*) Nationhood rests on a shared identity. For our purposes, multiple identities are inadmissible. National identity is based on leadership. That's why political assassination is such an indispensable tool for us. And where assassination is not feasible, ruination of the reputation will often serve just as well. The Goyim must have no leaders other than us and those we control. There can be no aristocracy – whether based on birth, merit, wisdom, virtue, or learning – except for the aristocracy of wealth, for those who pursue wealth must ultimately do our bidding.

NOST. (*searching*) I suspect even the nature of wealth becomes reversed under your dispensation.

CAGL. (*brightly*) Quite true! Our plan is to impoverish and ultimately liquidate the Goyim. Productive wealth is inimical to that goal. We strive to financialize all wealth, so that its expansion only increases the burden and misery of debt upon the Goyim. So that all benefits of wealth flow only upward to the echelons of the chosen Elite.

NOST. (*repelled*) But surely there will be some surviving moral core of humanity which will cry out against this injustice!

CAGL. (*scoffing*) And therein lies the third prong of our plan – the most successful one to date, as a matter of fact. I believe Nostradamus referred to it as the Great Translation. Along with the social and political revolutions comes the religious – I won't call it a revolution, more like an earthquake... nothing left standing in its wake.

KRON. (*skeptical*) The successes you speak of... give us some examples.

CAGL. (*puzzled*) Need I inform you gentlemen of the National Convention that human Reason has already replaced God in the French pantheon? And this is only the beginning. We will promote a popular conception of Science that characterizes religion as a vestige of primitive ignorance and superstition. Using our grip on the Press, we will attack the priesthood incessantly, exposing them to ridicule, scandal and opprobrium, until that once honorable vocation becomes execrable – leaving it open to our infiltration that will hasten its demise.

NOST. (*reading from the Protocols*) “It is indispensable for us to undermine all faith, to tear out of the minds of the unenlightened the very principle of Godhead and the Spirit, and put in its place arithmetical calculations and material needs...”

CAGL. (*vindicated*) Just as I said. I told you I wrote it. So our first target was the religion of the Hebrew Goyim, since it’s the source of the others. We’ve nurtured an entire network of crypto-Jews who actively seek to undermine all the spiritual content of their erstwhile faith.

NOST. (*gravely*) The Abomination of Desolation that the prophet Daniel foresaw entering the Holy Place – a purely secular version of Judaism.

CAGL. (*satisfied*) Secular and fervently nationalistic... the source of the Third and Final War.

KRON. (*plucky*) And what’s next on your religious hit list?

CAGL. (*avidly*) The First of the Great Wars will cripple Western Christianity and topple Eastern Orthodoxy as well. Of all our enemies, however, Russia is the foremost, the most resistant to our occult agenda. That is why, during the First War, we will concentrate all of our forces against it.

(*indicating the manuscript*) Even these so-called *Protocols* – properly edited, of course – will become one of our weapons in overthrowing Tsarism and turning Russia into the world’s first militantly atheist regime. Which reminds me that there are still many things I need to attend to.

When will we be leaving?

KRON. (*extemporizing*) Well, we sort of blew up our planned escape route getting in here.

CAGL. (*becoming suspicious*) How about that hole in the wall you guys walked in through?

KRON. (*evading*) See, that's what I'm telling you. The cliff on the other side of that wall gave way, and now it's a straight drop down a thousand feet. We can't go through there. (*Looking around*) Aren't there any doors or windows in this place?

NOST. (*alert*) No, this cell was known as the *Pozzetto*, meaning "Cell of the Well". The only access is the trap-door in the ceiling, through which they lower his food. The guards are forbidden to talk to him or make eye contact, lest he capture their minds.

CAGL. (*more suspicious*) How do you know all that? You guys aren't from the National Convention, you're from the Inquisition! This has all been a ruse, hasn't it?

KRON. (*dropping the pose*) We're not from the Inquisition, but we're not here to rescue you either. I guess you'll just have to wait until you die to get out of here.

CAGL. (*aroused*) Thank you! That's a terrific idea! (*Screaming*) Guard, Guard – I'm dying, dying! Send down a priest to administer my Last Rites!

(*After a stirring among the guards up above, a chair bearing a cleric is lowered down.*)

PRIEST. (*unable to see Kronos and Jean*) Count Cagliostro? Can you understand me? You called out? Are you dying? (*He makes eye contact with Cagliostro and suddenly falls silent.*)

CAGL. (*exulting*) No, I'm not dying, but you are. Tell the boys upstairs it's too late, the Count has passed away. Tell them to drop down the keys to the manacles so you can bring my body up. (*The Priest repeats as he's been told, then falls dead. Cagliostro picks up the keys, unchains himself, and exchanges clothes with the dead Priest. Then he sits in the chair with the corpse and motions for the guards to pull him up. All this while, Kronos and Jean stand dumbstruck.*)

KRON. *(slowly recovering his senses)* Crap! We let him escape!

NOST. *(resigned)* I'm beginning to comprehend how this all works. We really can't change anything that happens.

KRON. *(frustrated)* Then what's the fucking purpose of all this, Goddammit!?

NOST. *(pensive)* If we did change anything in history, we'd switch off the main line of Reality into a side rail of the Multiverse. We'd go from resisting the Vanities to joining them.

KRON. *(flummoxed)* So we're wasting our time?

NOST. *(concluding)* I think... We can't alter the foreground picture, but we can touch up the background. The same events that occur can mean something different because we're here.

KRON. *(resolved)* You mean we can still stop that alchemical process you were talking about... Stop the substitute reality from taking hold?

(Before Jean can answer, they are shrouded in darkness again, and the Scene ends.)

SCENE 3



Kronos and Jean find themselves standing in a large square in the city of Yekaterinburg in Siberia. The square surrounds the Church of the Ascension. Facing them across the square is an opulent two-story stone mansion, formerly the home of a wealthy merchant. A crude wooden stockade screens the front of the house up almost to the eaves. Windows are painted with whitewash, and machine guns protrude from the garret. Armed guards patrol the entrance and within the stockade. Imprisoned in the building are Tsar Nicholas II, Tsaritsa Alexandra and their children, Olga (age 22), Tatiana (age 21), Maria (age 19), Anastasia (age 17), and Alexei, a hemophiliac (age 13). Although it's late in the evening, darkness has not yet fallen in this high latitude summer. The date is July 16, 1918.

KRON. *(looking around)* Well, I can tell we haven't arrived in Times Square. Short of that, your guess is as good as mine.

NOST. (*perplexed*) There's something familiar about that house across the street, though I can't quite place it ...

KRON. (*glibly*) Why would anyone want to block the view of that awesome mansion with that ragged fence? Some kind of funny business must be going on in there, for sure.

(A Russian peasant woman peddling vodka approaches Kronos and offers him a bottle. He takes it and pays her with a Ruble coin he pulls out of his pocket. Kronos examines the label on the bottle, then opens it and takes a swig.)

KRON. (*pleased*) Ahh ... That's more like it. Have a shot, Jean. Genuine Russian vodka, the good stuff.

NOST. (*wary*) No thanks. Where did you get the money to pay her?

KRON. (*offhand*) Beats the hell out of me. Anything we need at the moment, it just seems to appear – like those Tarot cards of yours. Still got 'em?

NOST. (*searching in his cloak*) Yes, they're still here. We might need them to figure out what to do next. I take it we're in Russia someplace?

(A car pulls up to the entrance of the house and out steps an official-looking goateed man with penetrating dark eyes behind pince-nez spectacles. Overhearing Kronos and Jean conversing, he crosses the street and approaches them.)

SVERD. (*formally*) I am People's Commissar Yakov Sverdlov. You appear to be foreigners. What brings you to Yekaterinburg?

KRON. (*improvising*) We're merchants from America, here to purchase some of the local vodka for export to our country (*showing him the bottle*).

SVERD. (*rudely*) I don't think you know anything about vodka if you're drinking that stuff. I suspect you may be American spies. Your government is hostile to our Revolution.

NOST. (*giving Sverdlov a bear hug*) Comrade! We are friends of John Reed. Lenin and Trotsky are our heroes.

SVERD. (*pulling himself away from Jean with evident contempt*) Very well then, let me see your identification papers.

NOST. (*taking a document from his pocket and handing it to him*) You see there, Comrade – we are officials of the Socialist Party of America.

SVERD. (*skeptical*) I will check this out when I return to Moscow. Why are you two “socialists” so interested in the former Tsar?

KRON. (*awkwardly*) Tsar? You haven’t executed that bastard yet? Too bad. I’d like to get my hands on him. Is that who they’re keeping across the street?

SVERD. (*ominously, jabbing his index finger into Kronos’ chest*) If I were you, I wouldn’t ask so many questions, or we might invite you and your friend to stay in that building yourselves.

NOST. (*trying not to panic*) It’s alright, Comrade. My friend here has just been drinking too much cheap vodka. We’ll just be one our way, then. (*pulling Kronos along with him toward the Church*) Long live the Revolution, Comrade!

(*Sverdlov sneers as them, then crosses the street and enters the house. Meanwhile, Jean and Kronos go inside the Church and sit down in a pew.*)

KRON. (*relieved*) How could you be so sure those phony ID papers would be there when you reached for them?

NOST. (*jesting*) Phony? What are you talking about, Comrade? (*turning serious*) But at least we’ve found out where we are now.

KRON. (*affirming*) Yeah, the Tsar and his family were sent to Siberia before they were all killed. Yekaterinburg, he said. So we know where, but how do we know when?

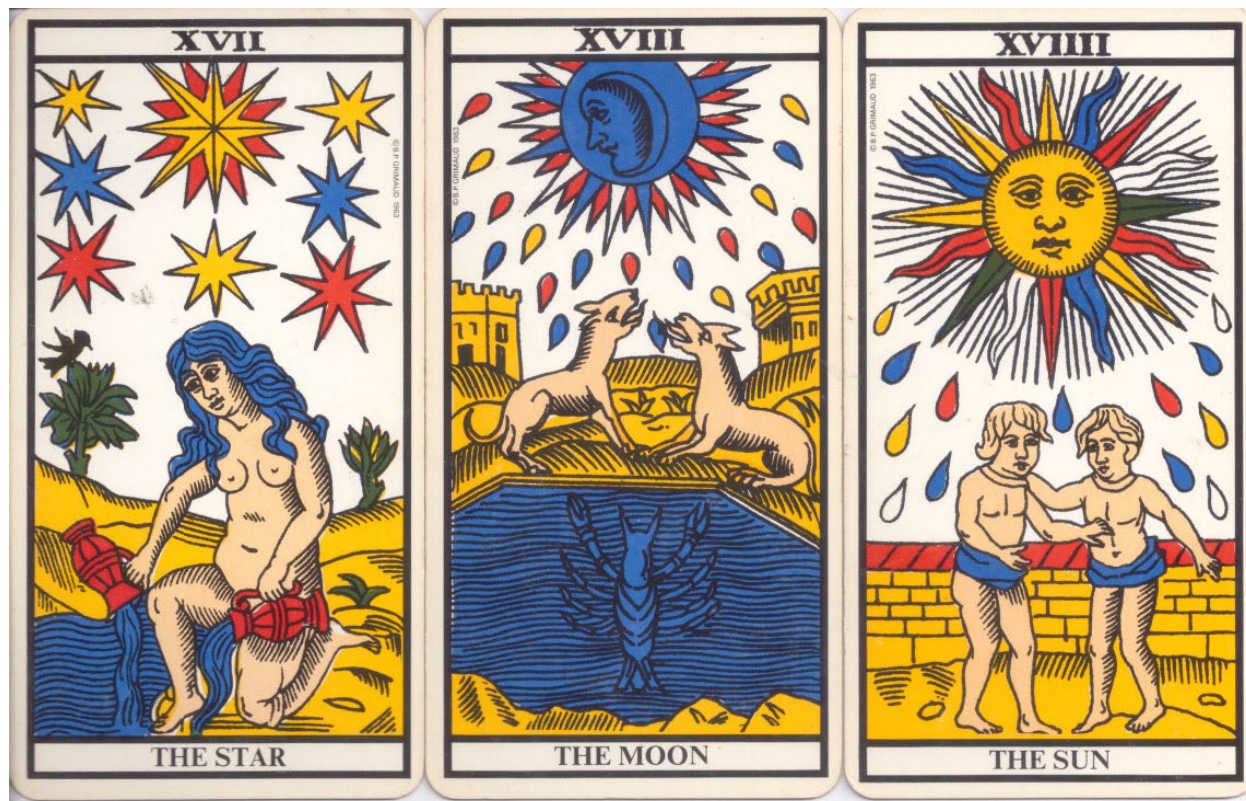
NOST. (*concentrating*) I think I can deduce that from the circumstances. They were brought here in the spring of 1918 and murdered that summer – in July, I believe.

KRON. (*observing*) Well, the Church clock says it's past eleven, and there's still light outside. So that tells me it's June or July.

NOST. (*connecting the dots*) Then this has to be the first of the two assassinations we're supposed to witness. And if that's true, there's only a few more hours to go before it happens.

KRON. (*losing hope*) If we're going to somehow turn aside the alchemical workings here, we'd better figure them out pretty damned quick. Where did we leave off with the Tarot cards?

NOST. (*flipping through Tarot cards*) It was the Tower of Destruction, Trump #16. Let's look at the next three (*turning over cards*).



NOST. (*pointing to the first card in the sequence*) Here we have Trump #17, The Star.

KRON. (*alert*) And there's the Water Pourer again, like in Trump #14, but this time she's emptying out both urns into a Pond.

NOST. (*roused*) Right! Now the Tree of Life has been destroyed and solar Light obscured, and we have passed through the "blackening" *Nigredo* phase. From the darkness, we now emerge into the false Light, the Light which is Darkness, the Light of the Other Side. And that false Light is represented by the star Sirius.

KRON. (*recollecting*) The double star, one of which is dark. It's the alchemical substitute for the natural Sun in the occultists' upside-down World, where Lucifer likewise replaces God.

NOST. (*converging*) "Upside-down" as in the reflection from the Pond into which the two urns are being poured. After the *Nigredo*, the *faux* Universe of the Qlippot begins to come into focus, as we see in the next card, Trump #18, The Moon.

KRON. (*hamming it up*) "*O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon, That monthly changes in her circle orb*". (*dropping the act*) Source of delusions, of distorted takes on reality.

NOST. (*pedantic*) So here we again see the Pond – the inverted reflection of the Real.

KRON. (*energized*) And the Dog Duo baying at the Moon ... But shouldn't they be howling instead at the Double Dog Star? Could be that's it I see it hiding behind the Moon on this card?

NOST. (*good humored*) My, but you're on your toes today, Kronos.

KRON. (*slyly*) Maybe I'm up on my toes trying to peek over that stockade fence across the street?

NOST. (*ignoring his attempt at humor*) That is indeed the star Sirius being occluded by the Moon. Hence, this depicts a Solar Eclipse, but with Sirius taking the place of the Sun.

KRON. (*precise*) And the Scorpion rising through the Pond to greet it. That would be the constellation *Scorpius*, I would imagine.

NOST. (*gaining momentum*) Now we're getting somewhere. This card portrays the celestial tableau of a Total Solar Eclipse in which the claws of the Scorpion are reaching upward toward the eclipsed Sun. It's part of the alchemical meme of emerging from the *Nigredo*. But when the Sun emerges from the darkness of the Total Eclipse, it's no longer the natural Sun – now it's been transformed into Sirius.

KRON. (*glumly*) And mankind into the Dogs blindly obedient to their Unseen Masters. (*more hopefully*) You're the star-gazer Jean. Has there been a Total Solar Eclipse that corresponds to this card?

NOST. (*informed*) There was a Total Solar Eclipse one week before the Great Mutation on the Winter Solstice of 2020, which marked the end of the Great Year.

KRON. (*warmly*) I remember it well. It was my last, and greatest, Saturnalia.

NOST. (*taking a tablet computer out of his cloak*) I have an astronomical app on here, let me see if I can find a sky image for that Eclipse.

KRON. (*unnerved*) Wait a minute... While I'm duly impressed by this unending magic routine of yours, just for my own edification, I'd like to know if you can just pull anything you wish for out of that cape?

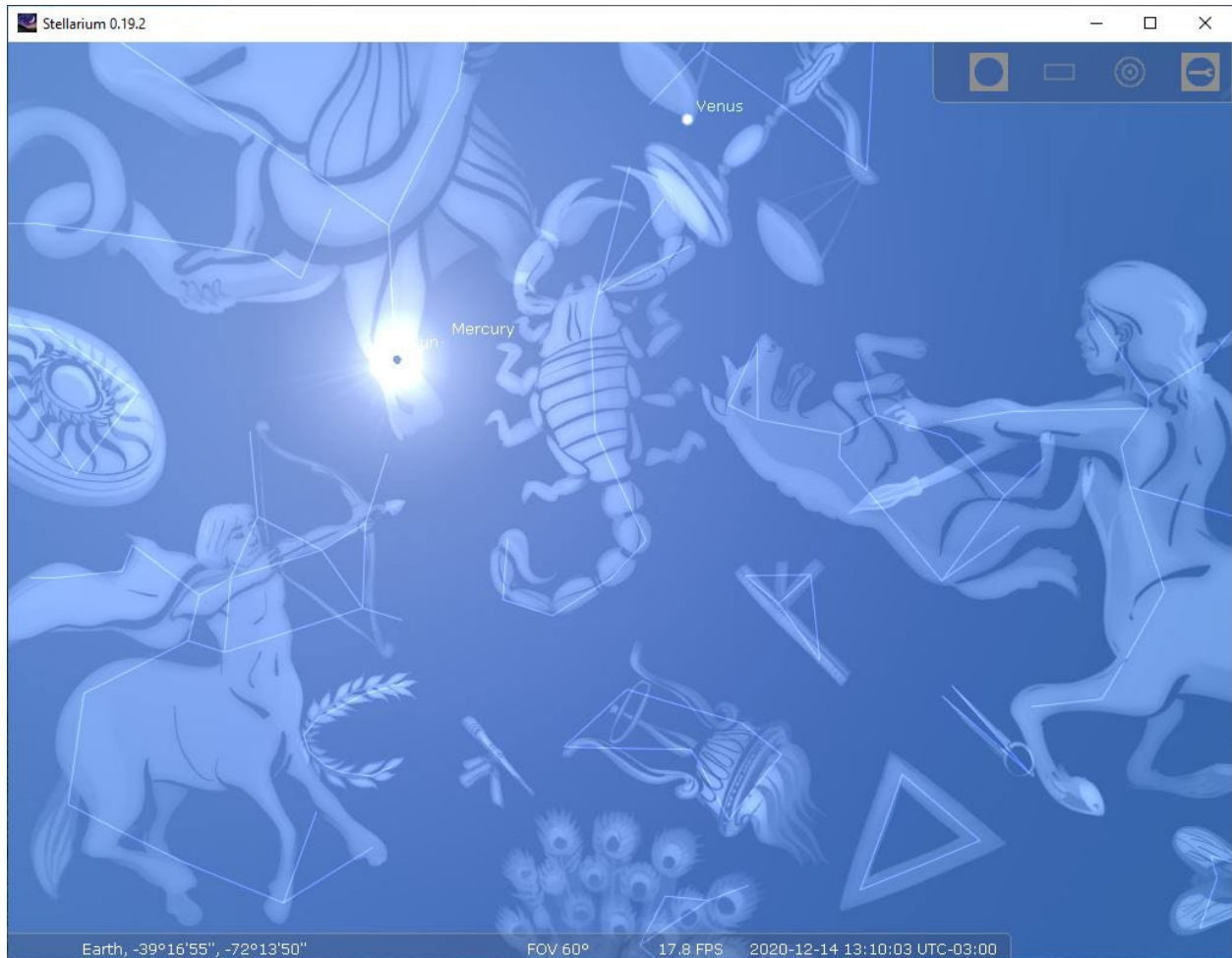
NOST. (*assured*) The rules of engagement of in this mission of ours appear to allow us anything we truly need to advance that mission, as long as no harm is done. But, I surmise, if we were to ask for something completely unrelated to our job, we'd get denied.

KRON. (*fooling around*) Well, in spite of your theory, it's worth a try. (*closes his eyes and makes a wish, then reaches out his arms and embraces Jean*) Oops... Guess you were right, pal.

NOST. (*prudish*) I take it that intimacy with me was not your wish.

KRON. (*laughing*) No offense, but I wished you'd turn into Aphrodite for a half-hour.

NOST. (*fiddling with his tablet*) Okay, so the maximum totality of the Eclipse occurred at Villarica, Chile, on December 14, 2020, at about 1 pm local time. Let me see if I can generate sky image for that ... Yes, here it is:



NOST. (*amazed*) Wow... this can't be just a coincidence?

KRON. (*pouting*) Mind sharing the excitement with me? Though it'll be a poor substitute for Aphrodite.

NOST. (*teasing, handing the tablet to Kronos*) There she is right above the right claw of the Scorpion. Maybe you can save her.

KRON. (*attentive*) So this Total Eclipse appears to have happened on the right foot of the constellation *Ophiuchus*, the Serpent Handler. My mythical background tells me that the Babylonians saw this constellation as representing Tiamat, a sea-serpent which ruled over the Chaos that preceded the creation of the World. That's the formless *Tohu* state of primal matter which the alchemical *Nigredo* seeks to restore.

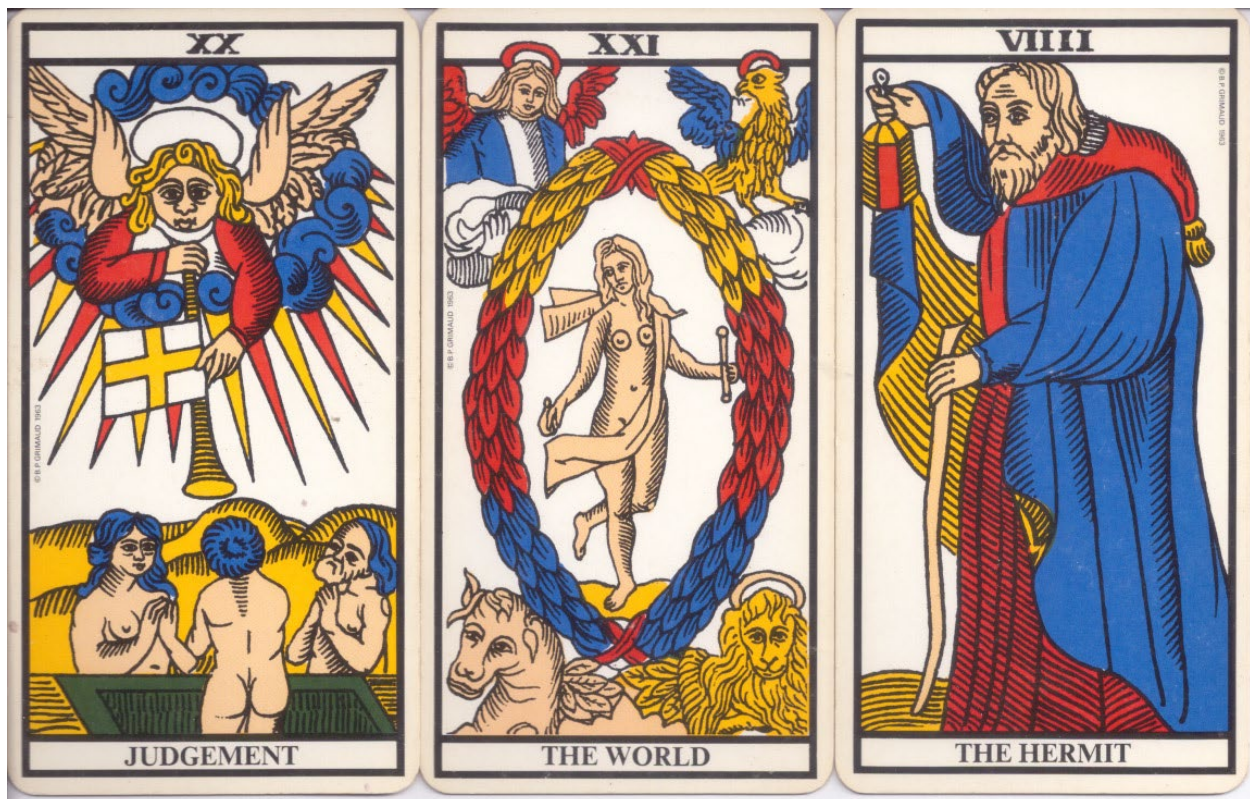
NOST. (*engaged*) Not only that, but the Eclipse location corresponds exactly to where the Supernova known as Kepler's Star appeared on October 9, 1604. "Kepler's Star" was the last supernova observed in our galaxy up to the present date, and it was for several weeks the brightest star in the heavens, surpassing even Jupiter. You may remember the anonymous Rosicrucian "manifestos" which proclaimed that the Supernova of 1604 was a heavenly sign signifying the discovery of the tomb of one Christian Rosenkreutz — "Christ of the Rosy Cross" — the alchemical substitute for Jesus Christ.

KRON. (*perspicacious*) All of which I believe sets us up for Trump #19, The Sun. This, then, must represent the false Sun that emerges from behind the Moon after the Eclipse's "blackening".

NOST. (*relating*) And the false Messiah whose symbol is that false Sun. Notice the continuing theme of Duality in the Trumps: the Devil's two subaltern slaves, the two men falling headfirst from the Tower of Destruction, the Double Star Sirius, the two Dogs baying at the Eclipse, and now the pair of boy-and-girl infants. Ostensibly, they're born out of the soil, the elements, not a mother's womb. They're alchemical *homunculi* — artificial humans to replace natural Man. Nurtured by the occult Sun, the false Light, they are constrained by a brick wall that negates their Will.

KRON. (*nimbly*) That also connects with the mythology of *Ophiuchus*, which was identified with Aesculapius, Apollo's son who learned how to restore the dead to life. But the revived dead lacked the signal attribute of truly human Life – a free Will. So, when he tried to revive Orion the Headless Hunter, even my son Jove had to draw the line. When Jove would strike people down with his thunderbolts, he didn't know how to dispose of the bodies, so he'd hang them up in the sky as constellations.

NOST. (*satisfied*) That's a great introduction to the last two Trumps, which deal precisely with the *faux* Resurrection you've just described. (*He lays down Trump #20, Judgement, and #21, The World; as he's doing so, Trump #9 falls out of the deck.*)



KRON. (*inspired*) I think I have a unique perspective by which to interpret the Last Judgement.

NOST. (*curious*) Sure, I'd like to hear it.

KRON. (*confessing*) Well, I'm different from mortals not because I have a Dark Side, but because my Dark Side *Sabbatai* has split off and operates as a distinctly separate persona. But mortals are also cursed with a duality, they are all "Twins", which is why that meme shows up so often in the myths and legends of all cultures. Even Jesus was a Twin, if you believe some of the apocryphal stories. His Twin was separate, like mine, because he too was immortal.

NOST. (*confused*) So where are you going with all this?

KRON. (*intensely*) Conventional religion has lost sight of the true meaning of the Last Judgement. It's not about the good people getting wings and the bad ones getting horns. It's really the last chance for all of us, the Living and the Dead, to cast off our Devil side, our Adversary – the side that mocks us when we're trying to be sincere, the side that wants us to loathe ourselves and give up, the side that's always looking back at what we did wrong and forward to our worst fears. The poet William Blake called it the Specter. Without the Specter, we are all One, and that One is the Messiah. And that's the true Resurrection. We need to understand what that is if we're going to stop these last two alchemical steps as shown on these cards.

NOST. (*breathless*) *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

KRON. (*as if on cue*) When Queen Gertrude confesses to her son: *O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.* He responds: *Oh, throw away the worser part of it, and live the purer with the other half.*

NOST. *(enthralled)* At last, Trump #21, The World – the final stop in the alchemical process – the inverted World of the soulless, artificial man, product of a demonic genesis. Around the border we see the symbols of the four Fixed Signs of the Zodiac, which are transformed into the Cardinal Signs of the *faux* Zodiac in the “Aquarian Age”.

KRON. *(insightful)* Strange, though, that the #9 Trump, The Hermit, practically jumped out of the deck into your lap, Jean.

NOST. *(amused)* Like all the other things that have been jumping out at us just when we need them. We can’t tie all the loose ends together without this fellow. We met him on the way here. He’s the Wandering Jew, or Count St.-Germain, or Cagliostro, or Master Rakoczi or General Rachkovsky. This is his calling card. He’s here in Yekaterinburg right now.

(Several loud volleys of gunfire ring out in the night from the house across the street. Kronos and Jean run out of the Church and watch a lorry pull up in front of the entrance. The guards drag eleven body bags out of the cellar and load them into the lorry. A small dog tries to leap into the lorry, and they shoot it. After the lorry pulls away, Kronos and Jean walk across the street, where they encounter one of the Russian guards.)

GUARD. *(distraught and weeping)* It was the Letts that did it! They took our revolvers away from us, the Russian guards, because they knew we wouldn’t do it! But I watched through the basement window! I saw it all! The five children, shot and then bayoneted... over and over again... screaming, screaming... It took Anastasia so long to die! *(He bends over and vomits.)*

KRON. *(aside to Jean)* Who are these Letts he’s raving about?

NOST. *(absorbed)* That’s what the Russians called Latvians. Our friend Sverdlov brought in foreign guards during the last days of the Tsar’s captivity because he feared that the Russian guards were becoming too sympathetic to the plight of the Royal Family. At that time, most

foreigners in this area of the Urals were Latvians or “Letts”, so the Russian guards mistook them for that. But they were actually Magyars – what we would call Hungarians – from what was then the Austrian Empire. They spoke German, as did the Letts.

KRON. (*befuddled*) So it was the Germans who had the Tsar murdered? What were the Germans doing in Russia? I thought Russia and Germany were at war?

NOST. (*slowly*) It gets pretty convoluted. At the time we’re in now, Soviet Russia had pretty much surrendered to Germany and signed the humiliating Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The Treaty stripped Russia of its territories in the Baltic, Ukraine and Caucasus and made the Soviet government a virtual vassal of the German Kaiser.

KRON. (*ruminating*) Hadn’t the Germans bankrolled the Bolsheviks so they could get Russian out of the War?

NOST. (*attentive*) Right, although the Russian Revolution itself had deep roots in the injustices of Tsarist society. But, that being said, even our friend Sverdlov had been a paid German agent. And he was the real power in the Bolshevik government at the time we’re in right now. The Bolsheviks couldn’t make a move without German approval. So, while the Bolsheviks had wanted to bring the Tsar back to Moscow for a “show trial” for propaganda purposes, the Kaiser had other plans.

KRON. (*intrigued*) Plans which involved bringing the Royal Family here to Yekaterinburg?

NOST. (*nodding*) Yes. Here Germany’s ally Austria-Hungary had military forces – the so-called Letts – that had invaded Siberia during the War, and the Kaiser could draw on these forces to control the situation.

KRON. (*ambivalent*) But I thought that Tsaritsa Alexandra was the Kaiser’s first cousin. Why would he throw her and her children under the bus like that... and so brutally?

NOST. *(alertly)* Actually, he had them diverted here so that he could attempt to strike a deal with Nicholas. You see, the Kaiser got more than he had bargained for when he financed the Bolsheviks. Their radical agenda had spread to Germany in the form of Rosa Luxemburg's Spartacus League, which was destabilizing the Kaiser's regime. So he decided to offer his cousin Nicholas an arrangement to restore him to his throne – as a German puppet, of course. In fact, the Kaiser's secret envoy had been here this very day to give the Tsar one last chance to save his family from the "bloodthirsty Bolsheviks".

(Just then, a man emerges from the building's cellar, carrying a bloodied sack in one hand and a revolver in the other. He is Yankel Yurovsky, who has just directed the assassination of the Royal Family.)

YUROV. *(malignantly, holding up the sack)* I've seen enough blood tonight to satisfy my thirst for quite some time.

KRON. *(shocked)* Cagliostro... it's you!

YUROV. *(forefinger to lips)* Please Comrade, don't blow my cover. I still have my task to complete. *(opening the sack and showing its contents to Kronos and Jean)*

NOST. *(aghast, sputtering)* Ugh... the...the... Tsar's head!

YUROV. *(proudly)* Commissar Sverdlov has appointed me his special courier to bring this trophy back to Moscow. A pretty sight, isn't it? The rest of him is being taken to an old iron mine outside the city, where it will be dissolved in acid, then burned, then thrown down the mine shaft. Same for his wife, son and daughters. Servants, too, while we're at it. *(pulling jewels out of his bulging pockets)* And just look at all this loot I've come away with from their bodies. So much fun!

KRON. *(disgusted)* I misjudged you. I thought you were at least partly human, Cagliostro.

YUROV. (*feigning offense*) Please! But I long ago gave up the identity of Count Cagliostro – over a hundred years ago, when last I saw you two gentlemen. Since then, I’ve been General Pyotr Rachkovsky, head of the Russian Secret Police, the Okhrana. What mischief I was able to do in that role! But I was attracting too much attention, so I had to stage another one of my “deaths” eight years ago. Now, you can just call me Yurovsky.

NOST. (*producing his copy of the Protocols from his cloak and showing it to Yurovsky*) Do you remember this?

YUROV. (*paging through it*) Sure. This is the original French version of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, which you showed me back in San Leo. As I told you then, I wrote most of it in my role as Cagliostro. I knew a copy was kept in the archives of the Misraim Lodge in Paris, so in my role as General Rachkovsky, I had my agent Yuliana Glinka steal it and get it translated into Russian.

NOST. (*curious*) For what purpose?

YUROV. (*candidly*) To bring down Tsar Nicholas II, as I had brought down King Louis XVI. And my line of attack was exactly the same – through their wives. Both Alexandra and Marie Antoinette were unpopular foreigners in the eyes of their subjects. And Alexandra had the added problem of being easy prey for charlatans, particularly of the occult variety.

KRON. (*cynically*) Yourself being a prime example.

YUROV. (*false modestly*) Myself as Rachkovsky, yes, but also Rasputin, of course, and also Gérard Encausse, better known as Papus – another member of the Misraim Lodge. In the leadup to the Great War, both the Entente and the Central Powers were maneuvering to draw Russian into their respective orbits. Alexandra’s weakness for occult swindlers gave them the perfect entrée into the Royal Court. Rasputin was working for the Germans, Papus for the French...

NOST. (*nimbly*) ... and you?

YUROV. (*sniggering*) Outwardly, General Rachkovsky was an ally of Sergei Witte, the Tsar's Prime Minister, who was Madame Blavatsky's cousin. Blavatsky was involved with British intelligence through the Rosicrucians. The Brits feared Rasputin's influence over Alexandra and her ability to manipulate Nicholas, so they eventually decided to undercut the Tsar. But, of course, as always I had my own agenda.

NOST. (*probing*) ... which was?

YUROV. (*intensely*) For my purposes, it wasn't enough to bring down the Tsar, in the sense of just letting him abdicate, just like that wasn't enough for me with the Bourbons of France. What I was aiming for was the complete collapse of civil society, and with it the repudiation of traditional religious faith. In Western culture, traditional religion is anchored in Judaism, so it was above all necessary to victimize the Jews to the extent they would feel that their God had abandoned them, so that they would embrace materialism and secularism. Rachkovsky's anti-Semitic "edits" to the Misraim *Protocols* were the perfect vehicle for accomplishing that.

KRON. (*catching on*) I see... The pogroms made the Tsar hated by his Jewish subjects and drove them into the arms of the revolutionaries...

NOST. (*following up*) ... who would later turn on them and send them into the arms of the Zionists...

YUROV. (*savoring*) ... who are destined to rebuild the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem and thus lay the groundwork for my Universal Kingdom. So far, my plan is working like a charm. To have turned Russia within the space of a few years from the most fervently religious nation in the World into the most militantly atheistic one – I deserve to be credited with a miracle.

KRON. *(boldly)* The true Miracle is yet to come – when it turns back again in the space of a few years.

YUROV. *(dismissive)* I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for that to happen. Well, gentlemen, it's been a pleasure chatting with you, but I must not keep Commissar Sverdlov waiting in Moscow. Please enter the cellar and satisfy your morbid curiosity. I think the Letts have finished mopping up the blood. Don't forget to check out the writing on the wall.

(Yurovsky gets into a sedan and is driven away while Jean and Kronos descend into the house's basement. Once they enter the Death Chamber, they see and hear images of what has just transpired there.)



KRON. *(awed)* Some deeds are so corrosive that they burn into the fabric of Time and hang there indefinitely for all to see, until the sight becomes too painful, and even the most fearless of us have to turn our eyes away. It's like Dylan's lyric of seeing the Zapruder film over and over again. 33 times ... Frame 313, when the skull explodes... *The man standing next to me, his head was exploding; I was hoping the pieces wouldn't fall on me...*

NOST. (*badly shaken, trying to collect himself*) How Anastasia kept screaming for mercy! Her screams will fill my ears forever! What about the writing on the wall?



KRON. (*examining the wall*) It looks like a dividing line on the right, and to the left of it three letters. Do you recognize them, Jean?

NOST. (*studying the inscriptions*) As a student of the Kabbalah, I can see a pattern here. The Hebrew letter Lamed ל is clearly visible in the center of the three. Lamed has the numerical value of 30, and so we have our number 33, as in the signature on the Protocols, and in the highest degree of Illuminati initiation, and in the heap of stones that marks the boundary of the Other Side.

KRON. (*receptive*) That boundary seems to correspond to the front slash on the right. But what are the other two letters to either side of the Lamed?

NOST. (*enlightening*) Recall that Lamed is the 12th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and so corresponds to Tarot Trump #12, which is the Hanged Man – the alchemical inversion of Reality. That's the key. The letter on the right is the Greek Lambda written upside down, and the one on the left is the Samaritan Lamed written backwards. Therefore, this inscription functions as a magical talisman to consign the souls of those that died here to the Other Side.

KRON. *(slowly sinking in)* So... we must be here to counteract that magic spell. But how are we supposed to do that?

(At this point, the ghost of Tsar Nicholas II appears, carrying in his arms the body of his dead son Alexei.)

NICK. *(as yet unaware of Jean and Kronos, speaking to his son)* Don't worry, Alyosha, the Czechs are right outside the City, and Kolchak's White Army is on its way from Omsk. We will be rescued, my Boy! That's why the Reds are trying to move us out of here tonight. *(Lifting Alexei's lifeless body)* What's wrong, Alyosha, have you fallen asleep? It's so late, I know, but we must all stay awake so that we may be prepared when our rescuers come. *(Now becoming aware of Kronos and Jean)* Yes, I think I see two of them approaching us now.

NOST. *(bowing reverently)* Your Majesty, allow us to introduce ourselves. I am Jean de Nostredame, and this is my friend Kronos.

NICK. *(disoriented)* But... you are not Czechs... you're not even Russians. How did you get in here? What happened to the Guards?

KRON. *(sympathetically, setting up an overturned chair)* Listen, Nicky, why don't you just sit down here for a minute so we can explain.

NICK. *(looking around, becoming alarmed)* What happened to this room? All these bullet holes? Where is Alexandra? Where are my daughters?

NOST. *(gently guiding him into the chair, then blurting out)* They're all dead, murdered, and so are you.

NICK. *(disingenuous)* I must have fallen asleep and be dreaming this! *(shaking Alexei's body)* We must awake now, Alyosha! We must both wake up!

KRON. (*firmly*) You'll both wake up at the Last Judgement, which is what we've come to talk to you about.

NICK. (*feeling his body*) But I don't feel like I'm dead. I don't remember being killed.

NOST. (*with empathy*) It takes a while to get used to, even when you see it coming. And yours was so sudden. The Letts literally just pulled out their pistols and started blowing you away.

NICK. (*beginning to recall*) Wait... Yes, now I remember... Yurovsky had the Letts bring us down here in the middle of the night, telling us we had to be evacuated for our own safety. We only had the chance to grab a few belongings. Fortunately, Alexandra and the girls had the foresight to sew their jewels into their dresses...

KRON. (*aside to Jean*) That explains what we saw a few minutes ago. It was like the women were wearing body armor, because the bullets were bouncing off those jewels inside their clothes. That's why the Letts had to bayonet the women after they'd shot them.

NICK. (*continuing his recollection*) But then the Letts entered the room with their revolvers. And Yurovsky stood in front of them. He was reading from something he called *Protocols*. It said that the Romanovs had been condemned to extermination, and with them Holy Russia.

NOST. (*solemnly*) By this time tomorrow, all of your relatives will be murdered.

NICK. (*frenzied, standing up*) Then all is truly lost! When I abdicated, I honestly believed it was for the good of my people. Now I see that I have delivered my people into the hands of devils who slaughter, enslave and torture them! Alexandra was right... I was a coward!

KRON. (*consoling*) The voice of the Accuser had found its way into Alexandra's mouth through her occult entourage. All of us have within us the side of weakness, the door through which cowardice, deceit, treachery and a thousand other spiritual viruses can attack our Soul. But the medicine of Redemption is always there if we seek it.

NICK. (*despairing*) But I'm dead now. It's too late to redeem myself. It's too late to undo my errors... the false pride, the pointless wars, the political tyranny, the religious persecution...

NOST. (*taking him by the hand*) Those are crimes that came along with your role as Tsar. But God granted you the reprieve of allowing you to abdicate the dark, political side of that role and retain the spiritual side, the side that makes you the Soul of Holy Rus.

KRON. (*putting an arm around his shoulder*) It's not too late at all, Nicky. That's what we're here to teach you. What goes down here can be seen two different ways – the Devil's way and God's way. The demonic take on it is that you die a blood-soaked despot, struck down by his own vengeful subjects, in a *Gotterdammerung* that plunges once-Holy Russia into an eternal Abyss of spiritual Darkness. That's the story that the writing on the wall tells.

NICK. (*scrutinizing*) The writing on the wall? What are you talking about?

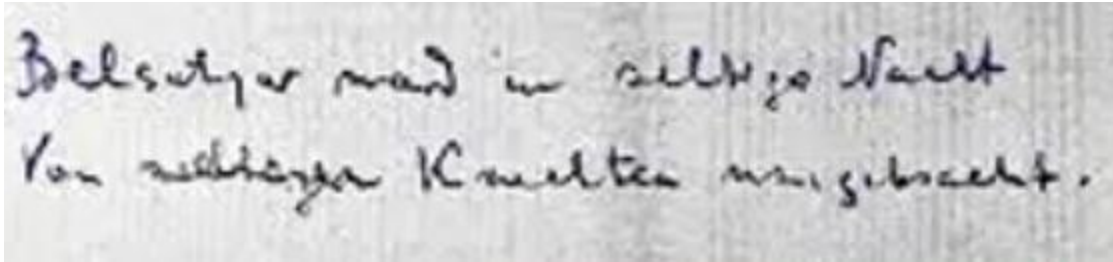
NOST. (*leading him by the hand to the inscriptions*) These represent the Hebrew letter Lamed, which has the numerical value 30, repeated 3 times, so as to represent 33 – the hallmark of the Other Side – to which your Soul and the Russian Soul would be consigned.

KRON. (*interrupting*) Remember, Nicky, the *Protocols*, signed by the “representatives of Sion of the 33rd degree”? General Rachkovsky blackened your name when he turned that into an anti-Semitic screed.

NOST. (*continuing*) Yes, when it's original text would actually have exposed the occult conspiracy to destroy your family and your nation.

NICK. (*examining the wall*) There's some other writing on this wall, as well (*pointing to it*).

KRON. (*looking over his shoulder*) Yeah, we saw that too. But we don't understand it.



NICK. (*carefully*) It's written in German. From a poem by Heine, if I'm not mistaken. It says: *Belsazar ward in selbiger Nacht Von seinen Kuechter umgebracht.* "Balthazar was, in this same night, killed by his slaves."

NOST. (*animated*) That poem refers to the Book of Daniel, the part where Daniel interprets the "writing on the wall" to foretell the murder of the Babylonian King Belshazzar and the destruction of his Kingdom. According to Daniel's prophecy, the captivity of the Jews in Babylon was to end after 70 years, at which time the Jews would return to Palestine and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. But when that time was up, Belshazzar scoffed at the prophecy and desecrated the Temple vessels during one of his lavish feasts. In the course of the feast, an angelic finger wrote a warning on the wall, and Belshazzar was murdered that night by one of his servants. Soon thereafter, the Persians conquered Babylonia, and the very name "Babylon" became synonymous with the Other Side.

NICK. (*precisely*) Strange, though... Heine spelled the King's name *Belsazar*, but here it is written *Belsatzar*, so that the last syllable spells *Tzar*.

KRON. (*acutely*) So as to equate you with the evil King Belshazzar and to curse Russia with the same fate as Babylon.

NOST. (*enthused*) I'm seeing some new connections here, myself. My grandfather called Soviet Russia the "new Babylon" when he predicted it would last 73 years and 7 months. That

seems to relate to Daniel's 70 years. And as the fall of Babylon ushered in the Second Temple, the destruction of Russia would – in the occult reckoning – set the stage for the Third Temple.

NICK. *(hopefully)* But Mr. Kronos said that my death could also be rendered another way – God's way.

KRON. *(boldly)* Tonight, when you were wakened by the Guards and told you must quickly leave this place, you packed the things that were important to you, and left the rest behind. Now, in the same way, you must assemble the essential things of your Soul, and leave the rest behind. *And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* When an artist carves a figure out of stone, it's the stone that he takes away that defines the figure.

NICK. *(humbled)* And what remains of me when I set aside my Crown, my Royal Blood, and all the trappings that go with them?

NOST. *(quietly)* The Father of a Family and of a People, who accepted imprisonment, degradation, and ultimately death rather than betray those sacred obligations. Holy Russia will have her holy martyr in you, if you will it to be so.

NICK. *(moved)* Then I and my people can escape the Pit into which our enemies seek to cast us?

KRON. *(contrite)* I sure wish we could tell you that, Nicky, but the "sentence", so to speak, can't be totally suspended at this juncture. It can only "commuted".

NICK. *(uneasy)* "Commuted"? Commuted how?

NOST. *(directly)* From the eternal dissolution of Babylon to the 73 years and 7 months foreseen by my grandfather.

NICK. *(encouraged)* After which, I and my people will emerge purged?

KRON. *(insightful)* Russia will experience suffering such as no nation has before, with deaths in the tens of millions under a reign of ruthless Terror. But, with your Soul to guide them, they will emerge out of this tunnel of Darkness unsullied by the moral depravity which will have taken hold of the rest of the World in that interim.

NICK. *(resigned)* Very well, then. My will is to submit myself to God's Will. If I cannot lead my people in Life, I will lead them in Death... back to Life. *(Picking up Alexei's body)* Come, Alyosha, our Kingdom awaits us.

(Nicholas walks through the basement wall, and the scene dissolves into darkness.)

SCENE 4



Out of the darkness suddenly erupts a blinding light on the western horizon. It appears to be a Sun rising behind a dense, luminous cloud. Jean and Kronos find themselves facing this “Sun” across a desert landscape and immediately fall down on their faces in fear. As they fall, a fierce wind blows sand and debris over their bodies.

KRON. *(still lying face down, gasping)* What kind of inferno did we drop into now, Jean? Is it safe to stand up yet? *(lifting his head)* That was one helluva sunrise, wasn't it? But why is it still dark?

NOST. *(getting up and shaking sand from his clothes, looking toward the horizon)* I think we just witnessed the first Sunrise.

KRON. *(perplexed)* Maybe that wind blew away your wits? Whattayah think, we've gone back to the Creation?

NOST. (*bemused*) In a sense, yes we have. The alchemical false Creation. You remember Tarot Trump #19, The Sun?

KRON. (*standing, wide-eyed*) Yeah... the sun behind the Sun... the Dog Star... the Light which is Darkness. (*pulling a compass out of his pocket*) I got what I wished for this time. (*reading the compass*) That's the West we're facing. It's all ass-backwards. This Sun rises in the West.

NOST. (*mysteriously*) If what my intuition tells me is right, we've arrived here on the same calendar date that we arrived in Yekaterinburg – July 16th. But this is the year 1945, and what we've just witnessed is the first atomic bomb test at the Trinity site in New Mexico.

KRON. (*amazed*) ... when Man first broke down the atom and reassembled its parts. It's that alchemical process we spoke about: the destruction and re-creation of primal matter. I wonder... the physicist who designed this, J Robert Oppenheimer... he was here to observe this test... I wonder if he's around here somewhere.

(A tall man with devilishly protruding ears wearing dark goggles approaches from the direction of the blast.)

OPP. (*casually*) Did I hear my name? In case you fellows didn't know it, this is a restricted area.

KRON. (*ironically*) You could say we got lost. The desert's a real bitch when it comes to finding directions. For instance, we took that light over there for Sunrise, but I guess it was something else, right Mister...?

OPP. (*amused*) Oh, you can just call me Oppie. I work here. Yes, it was something else, but I can't tell you what it was. You'll read about it in the newspapers one day.

NOST. (*defiant*) This is the Trinity test site, and that was a nuclear explosion.

OPP. (*nonplussed*) Well, at least now I know you're not spies. Spies wouldn't be so brazen... or stupid... doesn't matter which. You're not from another planet, are you? We've spotted some strange objects in the sky around here these last few days.

KRON. (*candidly*) As long as we're among friends here, Oppie, I'll be totally honest. My friend Jean here is an apparition, and I'm a pagan deity.

OPP. (*waggishly*) Oh, splendid! So you're just down from Olympus for vacation here in New Mexico?

KRON. (*put off*) I never lived on Olympus. My realm was right here on Earth.

OPP. (*still teasing*) You don't say! So then you must be a Hindu god. You know, that's such a coincidence, because when I saw that light a short while ago, I thought of one of the Hindu scriptures.

NOST. (*curious*) Really? Which one?

OPP. (*becoming pensive*) I remembered the line from the *Bhagavad Gita*. Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and, to impress him, takes on his multi-armed form and says, "Now I am become Death, the Destroyer of Worlds."

NOST. (*gravely*) So you've already begun to fear what you've unleashed here today?

OPP. (*deliberately*) I can see that the fight against the great evil of Nazism has perhaps drawn us into an even greater evil – one that removes all limits to the totality of war – one that would threaten the very existence of life on this planet. Beyond this bomb is another, much more destructive, which the military men are already pushing me to design. But that is where I must draw the line. God grant it's not too late.

KRON. (*moved*) The forces of Darkness work that way, Oppie. They set up enemies for us to hate. But as vile and poisonous as our human enemies may be, they are nothing compared to the great Enemy of Mankind, to the enemies of Being itself.

OPP. (*becoming uneasy*) Yes, well, I must be going. They're all celebrating back at the test shack. Must put on a jolly face for the occasion. ... But I will remember this encounter, gentlemen.

KRON. (*expansively*) We'll always be around if you need us, Oppie.

(*Oppenheimer turns and walks slowly back toward the horizon.*)

NOST. (*ruminating*) ... Sooooh, we've just seen the rise of the false Sun, which is Tarot Trump #19, and then we heard Oppie pronounce it to be an avatar of Death, as in Tarot Trump #13.

Hmmm... maybe things are pointing toward the midpoint of #19 and #13, which would be Tarot Trump #16, The Tower of Destruction. Like the tower from which Oppie's bomb "Jumbo" was suspended before it was detonated.

KRON. (*sharply*) And the Tower of Destruction stands for the ritual binding of the human Will – the goal of the alchemists' Great Work. From the top of the Tower descends the decapitating flash. Isn't that an image from one of your grandfather's prophecies?

NOST. (*avidly*) Yes, it's one of his most prescient ones, about the assassination of JFK, Century VI, Quatrain 37:

The ancient work will be consummated.

From the roof evil ruin will fall upon the great one:

An innocent one made dead they will accuse,

The guilty one hidden in the tumultuous copse.

Several witnesses at the scene saw the real assassins firing from behind a stockade fence surrounded by a copse of small trees on the infamous Grassy Knoll. It became a tumultuous scene as a crowd ran up the Grassy Knoll to apprehend the killers, only to be turned back by men with phony Secret Service credentials who were covering their getaway. Self-described "patsy"

Lee Harvey Oswald was conveniently “made dead” and framed as the lone “fall-guy” for the shooting. JFK’s killing had many earmarks of a ritual slaughter – his brains splattering onto his wife’s dress while a throng of thousands looked on in horror. Theatrical enactments of such gruesome rites have been central to the “ancient work” of the secret societies, to which my grandfather alludes in the stanza’s first line. Their aim is to traumatize the population in preparation for mass mind-control.

KRON. (*urging Jean*) Pull out your tablet again and look up which latitude line we’re near here, Jean.

NOST. (*reaching in his cloak and fidgeting with the screen*) Not exact, but just north of the 33rd Parallel.

KRON. (*quickly*) And the Trinity River, the Triple Underpass, Dealey Plaza, Dallas?

NOST. (*fidgeting some more*) Just south of the 33rd Parallel.

KRON. (*smiling*) Okie-dokie, then. I can see our 33rd Degree arrows pointing us straight from Trinity to Trinity. Whattayah say, pal?

NOST. (*skeptical*) Alright. But how do you propose we get there? We don’t seem to have been in control of our itinerary so far.

KRON. (*confident*) I say we’re meant to go there. To be there for November 22, 1963. And, if that’s true, we just need to wish for something – a nice big airplane would do it.

(As he speaks these words, they find themselves on the tarmac of Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, DC. On the tarmac stands a C-54 transport plane, having no Air Force markings, but instead bearing on its tail a rust-brown globe graphic with white latitude/longitude lines. The plane is being prepped for take-off by a young soldier wearing olive drab coveralls with no insignia.)

KRON. *(quietly to Jean, pointing to the tail of the plane)* If I'm not mistaken, that globe is a CIA emblem.

NOST. *(approaching the soldier)* Can you tell us where this plane is headed?

SOLD. *(looking at a manifest)* It says here Denver, Lowry Air Force Base.

KRON. *(impulsively)* We're stationed near there, can we hitch a ride?

SOLD. *(suspicious)* I don't know, you're out of uniform. Can I see some papers?

NOST. *(handing him a document)* Sure, here are our orders.

SOLD. *(reading the papers)* Okay. These look like they're in order. We'll be going in about ten minutes. You can just get on. It's just you two, the pilot, and some cargo. *(handing back the papers)* Have a nice flight.

NOST. *(taking the papers back)* Sure, thanks.

(Before they get on the plane, Jean draws Kronos aside.)

NOST. *(alarmed)* What do you think you're doing? Why are we flying to Colorado?

KRON. *(quietly)* Look, I asked for a plane to Dallas. Either this plane is going to Dallas, or I shouldn't have asked for it. Either way, we've got to go with it.

NOST. *(hesitant)* I guess that makes sense, in a sort of convoluted way.

(They board the plane. A few minutes later, a pilot wearing unmarked coveralls boards and walks past them, without even acknowledging their presence. They take off, and about four hours into the flight, the pilot makes an announcement.)

PILOT. *(emotionless)* The President was shot and killed in Dallas at 12:29 PM local time.

KRON. *(shocked)* What time is it now, Jean?

NOST. *(checking his wristwatch)* It's 12:30 PM CST.

KRON. *(baffled)* How the hell did our pilot get word of it so fast? Besides, JFK wasn't pronounced dead at Parkland Hospital until a half-hour after the shooting.

NOST. *(looking out the plane window)* Yeah, and we seem to be changing course. He's turning us south. Maybe your hunch was right about this.

(After another three hours in the air, the plane lands in the floodplain of the Trinity River, just west of the Triple Underpass in Dealey Plaza. Kronos and Jean descend from the plane amidst a melee of people running in all directions. They envision a flash-back of the President's motorcade, followed by lyrics sung by the voice of Bob Dylan.)



I'm riding in a long, black Lincoln limousine
Riding in the backseat next to my wife
Heading straight on in to the afterlife
I'm leaning to the left, I got my head in her lap
Hold on, I've been led into some kind of a trap
Where we ask no quarter, and no quarter do we give
We're right down the street from the street where you live
They mutilated his body and they took out his brain

What more could they do? They piled on the pain
But his soul's not there where it was supposed to be at
For the last fifty years they've been searchin' for that
Freedom, oh freedom, freedom over me
I hate to tell you, mister, but only dead men are free
Send me some lovin', tell me no lies
Throw the gun in the gutter and walk on by
Wake up, little Suzie, let's go for a drive
Cross the Trinity River, let's keep hope alive
Turn the radio on, don't touch the dials
Parkland hospital, only six more miles
You got me dizzy, Miss Lizzy, you filled me with lead
That magic bullet of yours has gone to my head
I'm just a patsy like Patsy Cline
Never shot anyone from in front or behind

(A yellow jeep with no markings drives onto the riverbank and two men wearing beige coveralls jump out and sprint to the plane, its engines still running. One of the men is a tall, stocky Latino, and the other is a shorter, slender Caucasian, with blue eyes and sandy hair. The pilot opens the passenger door, and they board, walking right past Kronos and Jean without a word or look and taking seats in the cockpit. The plane then takes off again.)

NOST. *(to Kronos, jaw slackened)* Did... did you see who that was? ... the blue eyed one?

KRON. *(rubbing his eyes)* Either that was Lee Harvey Oswald or his identical twin!

NOST. *(bewildered)* But by now Oswald is in at the Dallas City Jail being interrogated.

KRON. (*cynically*) Yeah, they questioned him for 12 hours, but the recordings went missing.

NOST. (*stunned*) So who was that who just walked right in front of us?

KRON. (*defily*) That has to be the “second Oswald”—a dead ringer whom the CIA used to set up Lee Harvey as the patsy for the assassination. He appeared all over the Dallas-Fort Worth area in the days leading up to the shooting, calling attention to himself and making incriminating statements. But his CIA handlers overdid the masquerade a bit, because the “two Oswalds” were sometimes spotted in different places at the same time.

NOST. (*consulting his tablet*) Right. I see here that one of those “overlaps” occurred when the Oswald double was in Mexico City in early October 1963, visiting the Soviet Embassy there. It was set up so the CIA recorded his conversations with Valery Kostikov, the director of KGB assassination operations in the Western Hemisphere.

KRON. (*smirking*) Very clever, eh? At the same time they’re setting up Oswald as the fall-guy, they’re setting up the Russians as his co-conspirators. Voila, they eliminate Kennedy, who stood in the way of their plans to nuke the Russkies, and simultaneously create the pretext for the preemptive attack.

NOST. (*grudgingly*) Clever, granted, but in some respects they seemed to be intentionally tipping their hand, so to speak. For example, the second Oswald spoke very poor Russian, as evidenced by the CIA tapes, yet the real Oswald was known to be fluent. So when CIA Director McCone called LBJ the morning after the assassination to brief him on the “international conspiracy”, that call was followed by one from J. Edgar Hoover, who had gotten his hands on the CIA tapes. He as much as told Johnson that those tapes would not implicate Russian, but the CIA instead.

KRON. (*realizing*) I see. So now, in his first day on the job, Johnson has to decide whether he wants to wade into World War III or take on the CIA. Based on Kennedy's attempt at the latter, he crosses off that option. But neither is he prepared to press the nuke button.

NOST. (*nodding*) Exactly. Which is why his next move is to pick up the phone and call Earl Warren, to launch the "lone gunman" cover up.

KRON. (*incisive*) It all makes sense... Except, what stops the CIA – which has just staged a coup d'état – from forcing LBJ to strike Russia?

NOST. (*assuredly*) After LBJ had set the cover up in motion, it would have taken too much time to backtrack and re-establish the case for Soviet culpability. Pentagon and CIA analysts saw the window of opportunity for a successful preemptive strike as closing in 1964, after which the Russians would have so many hardened missile silos that they could inflict unacceptable American losses in retaliation. They gave Kennedy one last chance to relent and order the attack in September 1963, but in his eyes, 12 million US casualties and 140 million Russian dead were not "acceptable losses". At that point, his fate was sealed.

KRON. (*somberly*) Like our friend Tsar Nicky, he sacrificed himself and his family rather than become an instrument of unspeakable evil.

NOST. (*intrigued*) And therein lies the hope of Redemption that has brought us on this path, Kronos. It seems to apply even to as unlikely a hero as Lee Harvey Oswald himself. The original plot to kill Kennedy had him getting shot by snipers in Chicago on November 2, 1963, but that was broken up at the last minute thanks to an anonymous informant named "Lee".

KRON. (*amazed*) Could that have been Oswald?

NOST. (*firmly*) Very likely, because at the same time the CIA was opening a “201 File” on Oswald. Such files pertained to CIA assets who fell under suspicion of turning against the Agency.

KRON. (*nimbly*) I get it now. One of the two Oswalds would have to be thrown under the bus after the shooting. Lee Harvey’s eleventh-hour moves to save JFK settled the choice on him, then?

NOST. (*focusing*) I believe so. After the assassination, the second Oswald was seen leaving through back of the Texas Book Depository and getting into a car that took him to the Oak Cliff section of Dallas. There he shot Patrolman JD Tippit four times at 1:15pm, ejecting the cartridge cases on the street so as to leave a trail of evidence. He then sneaked into the Texas Theater movie house without paying at 1:45pm, intentionally drawing the attention of the ticket-vendor, who called the police. The real Oswald was already inside the Theater, where he had bought popcorn from the concession stand operator at 1:15pm. The real Oswald moved around in the orchestra section of the Theater, sitting next to several different people in an apparent expectation of a rendezvous. Meanwhile, the second Oswald sat waiting in the balcony.

KRON. (*following the story*) Waiting for what?

NOST. (*intently*) If things had gone according to plan, the police would have entered the Theater, found the “patsy” Oswald, killed him while “resisting arrest”, and let the other Oswald escape.

KRON. (*enthralled*) But something must have gone wrong, because they captured the real Oswald alive instead of killing him.

NOST. (*breathless*) I believe that what went wrong was due to the last minute switch in the CIA’s choice of which Oswald was to live and which was to die. The Dallas police were

uncertain, so rather than risk killing the wrong man, they took the real Oswald into custody. Their confusion was reflected in the police report of his arrest, which stated that Oswald was found sitting in the balcony, where the second Oswald actually was. In fact, the mix-up was such that the police also arrested the second Oswald in the balcony and – according to eye-witnesses – took him out the back exit of the Theater. After the police finally got things sorted out, the second Oswald was seen being driven away by a Latino man who matches the description of the other man who boarded this plane.

NOST. *(deliberately)* And two days later, a Mafia strip-club owner completes the job that the Dallas police botched... But, isn't ironic, Jean, how all this alchemical processing ultimately falls short in the final step. Sure, they can kill the true King and insert a false one in his place, and even switch the identity of the King's fall-guy "assassin". Yet, somehow, at the last possible instant, the human Will – which appeared to be irrevocably erased – miraculously reasserts itself and turns aside the Hidden Hand. So strong and enduringly Real is the Promise of Salvation, that it persists, no matter what.

(Dusk has now fallen, and the plane makes a landing. The three men in the cockpit hurriedly depart. After a few minutes, Jean and Kronos also disembark and find themselves standing alone on the runway.)

KRON. *(disoriented)* This sure as shit ain't Denver, Jean. *(spying a light across the runway)* Let's head for that building over there.

(They enter the building and find a man wearing the uniform of an Air Force Colonel standing behind the counter.)

COL. *(grinning malevolently)* Welcome to Roswell Air Force Base, boys! I thought you'd never get here.

KRON. (*angrily*) Son of a bitch! It's you again! Cagliostro, or St-Germain, or Count Rakoczi, or whatever name you're going by now... Roswell, eh? So now UFOs are part of your game, I suppose.

COL. (*mockingly*) Well, you know, I have to anticipate the next wave of mass delusion, after having successfully completed this one, as you've just seen. Yessir, we're just one step away from the New Babylon, delivered to your door on flying saucers.

NOST. (*bitterly*) Don't be so cocky, Count. The game isn't over yet. It may interest you to know that we've been following your trail through history, reversing the inversions of Reality that you've been conjuring, leaving the path open to an ultimate Redemption.

COL. (*scoffing*) I've been well aware of every move you've made, and it's all in vain. For example, you were so proud of yourselves for uncovering some of the discrepancies in the execution of our plan back there in Dallas. What you don't understand is that's part of what you call the alchemical processing. Nowadays, we call it "psychological warfare". We leave obvious clues so as to let the public know that we're lying to them, and that they've no choice but to accept being lied to.

KRON. (*sardonically*) So, is it fair to assume that bringing the "second Oswald" back to Roswell was meant to drop another of those "obvious clues"?

COL. (*condescending*) Your powers of deduction are actually quite good... for a failed god. Yes indeed, Roswell and Area 51 in Nevada are the two air bases in the US under the total control of the CIA. So we couldn't have signaled the Agency's hand in the assassination more clearly than to have Oswald's "twin" escape from Dallas to here.

NOST. (*aggressively*) But there's more to it than that, isn't there, Count? I mean the whole Twin meme that's been your sort of calling card throughout the ages. When you were

Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, you incriminated Jesus using his Twin, the same way you set up Oswald using his twin in Dallas. And you yourself have taken on the personas of countless individuals to whom you became the controlling “twin”.

COL. (*smirking*) We’ve been experimenting with mind control here and at Area 51, trying to create automatons – ostensibly human beings, but with the capacity for independent thought and free will extracted. The method involves planting a second persona – a Twin, as you put it – in the subject’s psyche, and having that Twin gradually grow to take over and replace the original identity. In the short term, we can use them as assassins, as we did to kill Jack Kennedy, and as we eventually will do to kill his brother Bobby too.

KRON. (*defiantly*) But Lee Harvey Oswald broke free of your sorcery in his final days, as will Bobby’s assassin in the future. The false personas that you instill can be eradicated, but the spark of Divinity cannot. It’s a legacy from our Savior that cannot be cancelled, a birthright that is always there to be redeemed, if we choose it. We witnessed the imperious Tsar of Russia in his very last hours embrace humility and martyrdom, walking away from the side of Darkness.

NOST. (*impassioned*) Yes, and Jack Kennedy himself, the spoiled wealthy playboy who won a rigged election and brought the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation... He found it in himself to turn away in horror from the Abyss and to find common ground with perceived enemies.

COL. (*bluntly*) That’s one of the reasons we had to terminate him. Another was that he had started asking questions about what the Agency was doing at Roswell and Area 51. The last President who had asked about that was Ike Eisenhower. He threatened us with an armed incursion into our two bases, so we finally lifted the curtain a little bit. After that, he didn’t want to know anything else. But Kennedy... he persisted. Someone must have tipped him off that our

PSYOPS program included contingency planning to take him out. Must have been that rat Oswald.

KRON. (*curious*) So where do UFO's fit into this picture?

COL. (*haughty*) Well, here again we make what's really going on obvious to anyone who doesn't actually *want* to be deceived. Where do these so-called flying saucers appear? Here, around Area 51 in Nevada, around the Trinity site – all areas that we control. True, we have some advanced experimental aircraft that we're keeping under wraps. But the more important purpose is Psychological Warfare directed at the US population.

NOST. (*pressing*) Of what nature?

COL. (*ominously*) Our PSYOPS program has gone beyond producing individual automatons. We are aiming for an entire society that is organized like a bee-hive, with each unit programmed to perform its role unswervingly, predictably, without reservations. Traditional religion is irreconcilable with that goal. It teaches a benevolent Creator who endowed his Beings with the capacity make their own decisions, even if that meant disobeying the Creator himself. Of course, that just proves, as I have always contended, that such a Creator is flawed, because he leaves the field wide open for my work.

KRON. (*sadly*) I guess this is where I have to “give the Devil his due”. The aftermath of the coup you've pulled off today will see the American populace rapidly withdrawing from Free Will into slavish dependency on technology and authorities that make their decisions for them. False-flag terrorist attacks, social media, hyped pandemics... it will all have them performing like trained seals, very close to the bee-hive model you have in mind.

NOST. (*inspired*) Not so fast! Count, what's our current location, in terms of latitude.

COL. *(offhand)* 33 degrees North, almost exact. One of the reasons we chose this location, if you must know. Another of our “calling cards”... We, the “Representatives of Sion of the 33rd Degree”.

KRON. *(to Jean)* So this must be where Pope Pete meant for us to finish our trip?

NOST. *(enthused)* Yes! And from this place to pronounce a Judgement upon the New Babylon that has been so vilely generated today. It's a reassertion of the Judgement my grandfather laid upon the New Babylon of Soviet Russia. *(Turning to the Count, proclaiming)*

From the day that you blew out the brains of the King,

To the day that your undoing will bring,

Years seventy-three and seven months shall pass,

Alas, O Great Babylon, Alas, Alas,

(Upon completion of the Judgement spoken by Jean, the scene fades and resumes again in Jerusalem. The date is June 21, 2037, 33 days after Kronos and Jean were executed by King Sabbatai. Although their remains have lain since then in the outer court of the Temple, they now arise intact, among the first in a general Resurrection of the Dead. The Risen Dead and the Living then march to the Temple, where they seize Sabbatai and bind him in chains. A Chorus of the Living and Dead forms around the Temple and offers Kronos the Kingdom. Kronos approaches the Chorus, carrying a crowned infant in his arms, and kneels before them.)

CHOR. *(exclaiming)*

The world's great age begins anew,

The golden years return,

The earth doth like a snake renew

Her winter weeds outworn:

Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

FINIS