

The Judex Codex

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Part One

Treasure Trove

Guatemala, 1929

Elegant fingers softly but deftly stroked.

Martin Mystere watched this strong, feminine hand admiration and, with all due honesty, amorous fascination as it moved up and down, holding the shaft in a firm yet tender grip.

Henrietta Demarigny, a petite, raven haired beauty was a sorceress, bewitching and enchanting. Martin thought she worked wonders with the wand in her hand.

Martin and Henrietta shared a smile as she wove her magic.

”Sacre bleu!” she exclaimed as the shaft in her hand quivered and slipped from her grasp sending a spray into her face.

Henrietta wiped off her lips and nose and with a satisfied smile surveyed her handiwork.

Her expert strokes had thoroughly cleaned the dust and grime from the petroglyph in the tunnel wall, cleanly exposing a line of Mayan pictoglyphs. Yet the brush had caught in an unexpected crack in the wall and spun from her grasp.

Martin Mystere handed Henrietta back her brush with a smile and a bow.

Henrietta paused as their hands momentarily brushed up against one another. Her blue eyes twinkled as she met his gaze.

Once the brush was in her hand however, she returned to her work with renewed vigor. Upon cleaning out the crack further, she soon realized that it was not a crack at all but rather a masoned edge. Concentrating her efforts on this edge rather than on the interior of the petroglyph, she uncovered a rectangular outline punctuated by five circular openings.

This then was not an ordinary petroglyph but rather a tablet which had been set into a niche in the tunnel wall. Henrietta was prudent enough not to insert her finger into the round holes so she reversed her brush and pushed the wooden part into one of the holes. She heard a small click and quickly pressed the brush end into each of the five openings.

Martin Mystere watched this operation with interest yet kept alert. Feeling a slight gust of

wind and a tiny rumble behind him, he leapt forward and pulled Henrietta to the ground, shielding her from harm by laying atop of her.

As he hugged Henrietta he heard several small objects ping off the stone wall above him..

After the immediate danger had passed he became all too aware of the full and supple body of the woman beneath him. The unconventional Henrietta had forsworn wearing stifling women's undergarments in the tropical heat, so even through the oversize cotton work shirt and baggy workpants, he felt more than was proper. Not that he was going to complain about it.

Her luminous blue eyes gleamed with excitement and amusement.

"While I would like to believe that you swept me off of my feet because you were overcome with passion, and could not longer withstand my charms, I am certain that there is another reason."

Martin Mystere chuckled. "While it has indeed been a great struggle not to do as you said, the fact is that while you were working I noticed several anomalous, tiny chips in the stone walls. You triggered a death trap when you pressed the brush into the holes. Apparently there is a sequence to opening the keystones."

Henrietta raised her head up from the floor and looked over his shoulder at the opposite wall, suddenly noticing that it was pocked with dozens of pinholes.

"Do you think that it would be safe to try and find the combination?"

Martin shrugged. "I cannot be certain. It seems that it would, the trap was sprung and needs to be reset."

" Then as pleasant as this may be, we should get back to work."

As Martin Mystere rose from the floor, Henrietta Demarignys arms encircled his neck so that as he rose, he also pulled her to her feet. She kept her arms around his neck after they were upright With a mischievous smile and sparkling eyes she said , "First however my hero deserves a reward." She covered his lips with hers and crushed her body against his. She kissed him passionately and when he was quite dizzy, she released him and pushed her away from him softly. Smiling playfully she turned back to the wall.

Her smile faltered a bit when she noticed that the floor beneath the tablet was littered with dozens of feathered darts.

Henrietta Demarigny and Martin Mystere spent the next couple of hours running through combinations of sequences for the five holes.

As they worked Martin wondered if Henrietta knew he had spoken the truth when he said it was a constant struggle not to give into the impulse to take her into his arms and

smother her with kisses.

Martin Mystere had met Henrietta Demarigny when they both arrived at the University of Strasbourg as first classmen. In the beginning they had not gotten on well together. Despite Henrietta's great beauty Martin had considered her too outspoken, too flippant, too saucy and to be honest, a bit of a tramp. It seems as though she was always enamoured of visiting professors such as Henry Jones, Thomas Swift and John Kenton. She had flirted with them outrageously but never seemed to be serious.

For her part Henrietta told Martin that he was aloof, self-centered and humorless.

Gradually Martin Mystere had realized that the basis for his dislike of Henrietta Demarigny was jealousy. He was first and foremost jealous of her brilliance. It angered him that he had to work much harder than she to keep up his grades. Once he had come to terms with the knowledge that she was more brilliant than he, Martin also realized that his dislike of her was a denial of his true feelings. He liked her all too much. Her many flirtatious bothered him deeply because they had never been directed at him. Martin realized that he had become enamored of Henrietta Demarigny the first time he had ever seen her. The first day of the semester she had walked into Professor Metraux's lecture when it was half over. Angered the Professor had asked her to come down and finish lecturing to the class about the discovery of the Neandertal. Without missing a beat, Henrietta had taken over the class and even answered questions.

Yet she seemed oblivious to his interest in her. When it was announced that Henrietta would be graduating top of their class, he had sent her a bouquet of a dozen red and white roses. He congratulated her and told her that he regretted that their relationship had been so adversarial.

After graduation, Henrietta and Martin were among two doctoral candidates chosen to study under the great Professor Pierre Montet. They had worked together on several archaeological projects. Their earlier rivalry evaporated and they became close friends. It was Martin to whom Henrietta had turned to for comfort when she received news that her brother had vanished.

Etienne-Laurent Demarigny was also an archaeologist although he specialized in what could be called arcane archaeology. Etienne's interest in this aspect of archaeology had been cultivated by their father's friend Pierre d'Artois. Henrietta was not so fond of Pierre d'Artois, even though he and his friend Barrett had saved her life once. A madman named Don Jose had kidnapped her to sacrifice to some dark god. Don Jose had previously abducted and killed Henrietta's twin sister Louise but his god had not been satisfied. Henrietta believed that it was their father's acquaintance with Pierre d' Artois and d'Artois' fascination with the occult that had contributed to the death of her sister. While Henrietta had cut ties with Pierre d' Artois, Etienne-Laurent's had become something of a protégé to him.

It was through Pierre d'Artois' influence that Etienne-Laurent had attended and earned his degree at the prestigious yet eerie Miskatonic University in the United States. Etienne had dropped out of sight in 1926 while investigating some ruins in the swamps of

Louisiana. He believed that these were a remnant of a Tcho-Tcho group that had come to North America during the Asian Migration. He turned up a few weeks later none the worse for the wear, physically at least. He was however emotionally and psychologically distraught. Etienne had run into a group of people who claimed to be Cajuns but whom he believed were descendents of the Tcho-Tcho. They had not taken a liking to his claims and locked him away until he recanted.

After this incident Etienne-Laurent put his talents towards collecting and authenticating artifacts, opening up a shop in New Orleans for this purpose.

During the period that Etienne was missing the friendship between Henrietta and Martin had deepened.

On this particular trip it had become something of a romance. Martin thought that Henrietta felt the same way about him as he did about her but was afraid to find out. He once had faced down a group of gun toting angry villagers who believed he was pilfering their sacred burial grounds yet he was afraid of the pain that this petite woman's words could very well cause him.

Martin shielded his reluctance to initiate a full blown romance with Henrietta on the grounds of propriety. It would not be seemly for them to become involved while on a dig. Yet it did not stop the way he felt.

Their patience and perseverance of trying the different combinations of pressing the brush into the holes paid off when on the fifty second try, there were several clicks and a rumbling behind the stone tablet. With a grating of stone on stone, the tablet was pushed forward from the wall. The tablet was two and a half feet long and one and a half foot wide. It was much lighter than Martin Mystere would have thought.

Before they left the area near the tablet, Martin told Henrietta. "I do not know if not getting the correct combination on the first time triggered any other death traps, if so it is possible that finally getting the combination correct may have once again disabled the triggers. So be careful and expect anything to happen. "

Martin Mystere discovered that he could carry the tablet under one arm. The other hand was grasped by Henrietta Demarigny, who carried the lantern in their other hand. Slowly and cautiously they made their way through the tunnels that led out of the Mayan temple.

When they had traveled approximately five yards from the area where tablet had been Henrietta suddenly stopped short. Pausing for a second she jerked Martin forward as hard as she could. There was a blast of air behind him accompanied by a stinging sensation in the back of his thighs.

A large stone disc attached to a pendulum swung in the tunnel behind him. The disc was made of flint shaped to be razor sharp.

Five yards later it was Martine who suddenly dropped Henrietta's hand, encircled her waist with his arm and jumped backwards. Several obsidian tipped stakes jutted up from

the floor where she had been standing.

Gingerly they threaded their way through the ankle high stakes. They began to travel into the mysterious dip in the tunnel that no one could explain with any degree of certainty. The tunnels abruptly narrowed and then slanted downwards, exiting in a concave room. At the other end of the room was a tunnel that abruptly slanted upwards.

Martin Mystere heard the distant trickling of water. When they reached the concave room, the floor was covered with a liquid that poured from a hole in the ceiling. The liquid was mineral oil, Martin had the thought to pause but Henrietta strode rapidly into the concave room as if trying to get through it before the level of the liquid rose. They heard grinding crashes in front and in back of them. Martin turned back to find that they could no longer go back the way that they came into the room. A stone slab covered where they had entered the room. Henrietta and he hurried forward only to discover that another stone slab had slid down to block that exit.

They examined the room for any means of escape but could find none. The room was smooth and round.

As the mineral oil continued to pour into the room, Martin Mystere blew out the lantern.

The only way out of the room was through the hole in the ceiling where the mineral oil poured in. The ceiling was about eleven feet above them.

The mineral oil finally stopped pouring into the room when the oil was waist high to Martin Mystery and nearly up to Henrietta's impressive chest.

Martin Mystere quickly outlined his plan to Henrietta, who at first balked at the idea but soon came to realize that this might be their only hope. He squatted so Henrietta could climb onto his shoulders. With her feet on his broad shoulders she could reach the lip of the opening in the ceiling. She pulled herself inside and looked around.

Henrietta told Martin that the hole was a tunnel about three feet wide, however it seemed to run vertically with a slight slant, so there was no place to cache the supplies or to tie a rope.

Martin Mystere lowered Henrietta back into the mineral oil pond. He emptied their rucksack and pulled out the eight foot length rope that they had brought with them. Henrietta tied one end of the rope around her waist and wrapped most of its length around her, Martin tied one end the rope around the tablet and cinched it to her waist. As he started to lift her once more, she grabbed his head and gave him a quick passionate kiss. He lifted her up once again. Henrietta pulled herself into the tunnel and slowly climbed it by bracing her arms, legs and back against the walls of the small tunnel, finding slight purchases in the cracks between the stones.

The plan was for Henrietta to climb the tunnel to the exit and if possible return to camp and get more rope or if that was not possible, to find a place to cache the tablet, then return to throw the rope down to Martin.

Shortly after Henrietta had left Martin began to hear pebbles falling from the ceiling near the blocked exits. Martin watched as a pebble shot out of a small tunnel in the wall near the ceiling with sufficient velocity to strike the other wall.

He wondered if the pebbles were a form of torture, if they were to fall in sufficient quantities to displace the volume in the mineral oil pond so that the level would rise and slowly drown the person who had the misfortune to be stuck in there. Martin Mystere believed he had little to fear on that account, his six foot frame was much taller than the typical Mayan, so where they would drown, he would merely feel uncomfortable.

However when he examined the pebbles a chill shot through him. The pebbles were flint if the level of the mineral oil rose sufficiently; one of the falling flints could spark and ignite the mineral oil.

Martin Mystere returned to the spot underneath the hole in the ceiling and hoped for Henrietta to hurry back.

After what seemed like hours of standing in the mineral oil, a line dropped out of the hole in the ceiling. It hung about three feet above his head. The liquid about his waist impacted his ability to jump and it took several times before he grabbed the line and felt it give and then stop.

He heard Henrietta curse, “Mon Dieu, you are a heavy one! Hurry my sweet, hurry”

Martin could feel the line giving as he climbed. Although it did not register at first, he realized that he was not climbing a robe but a line made of soft cloth.

Once he had poked his head into the tunnel mouth, what he saw almost made him lose his grip. The beautiful and voluptuous Henrietta Demarigny crouched in the tunnel, complete nude but for her boots and the line tied around her waist.

She gave him a hard look and said, “My darling, I promise you that you may have a much longer and closer look but you are so damned heavy, please hurry before you pull us both down.”

Martin then noticed that Henrietta was holding herself in the tunnel with all of her might, her arms and legs quivered with effort and exertion. He swung himself into the tunnel and braced himself. With his greater size, it was less of an effort to brace himself against the sides of the small tunnel. He crawled up to Henrietta and told her to rest on him for a moment. Without a word, she let herself fall against his broad chest and curled up against him, breathing heavily. Since the way that Henrietta had leaned against him placed her upper torso next to his face, against Martin Mystere was forced to watch the rise and fall of her bare chest, he was reminded of a pair of whales breaking the surf.

Martin knew that Henrietta was near to complete exhaustion because she noticed him watching the movement of her breasts and only gave him a tired smile. Usually she never passed up the opportunity to make a flirtatious remark.

She allowed herself two minutes of laying against his chest before she began the ascent up the tunnel. She was still very tired and so needed to pause every few minutes and support herself against Martin. Martin forced himself to keep his eyes on the walls when she leaned back against him since it was hard enough bracing himself against the tunnel walls without additional distractions. As they climbed, Martin asked where the other rope was at.

Henrietta told him that the tunnel was only one of their problems.

After they had laboriously climbed most of the way out of the narrow tunnel, Henrietta stopped and slowly turned around to face Martin. She told him to hold her up. She tied the other end of the line around his waist and then crawled out of the tunnel mouth and turned around backwards. Henrietta disappeared. Martin climbed further up and saw that the tunnel ended in a small stone ledge, a semi-circle about two feet wide and long. There was a three inch lip around the edge of the semi-circle. Henrietta was climbing backwards over the edge.

The small ledge projected over a sheer cliff. Henrietta was climbing down the mountain face. She called for him to get as close to the edge as he could. The rope tautened as all her weight pulled on his waist. She curse in a very unladylike fashion.

She told him that she was climbing back up. When there was enough slack on the line, Martin Mystere stood up and pulled Henrietta up to him. When she was near enough he grabbed her about the waist and sat down on the ledge with her on his lap. Untying the rope from his waist, he very carefully removed his shirt and draped it over her abraded shoulders. He knew that she might be warm and perspiring but would be chilled as soon as her body cooled.

Henrietta smiled as he draped the shirt over her shoulders and leaned back against his chest to provide him with warmth.

When she had sufficiently regained her strength, Henrietta told him that she had hurried out the tunnel and had nearly fallen to her death. She had tumbled over the edge but caught the lip of the ledge with one hand. The rope around her waist came loose and the tablet fell down, nearly dislodging her. When she tried to pull herself up, she discovered that the tablet was caught on something below. She could not work it loose and so untied the rope from her waist and hauled herself onto the ledge.

Worried about Martin she had hurriedly made a rope of her clothing and rushed down to rescue him.

After they had rested a while longer, Henrietta told him that she was going back into the tunnel so that he would have sufficient room to disrobe.

Shocked Martin asked her why. She said that she could nearly reach the tablet to work it loose but needed three more feet, his shirt and pants would provide that extra three feet.

Martin had an alternative idea. He had a longer reach, he could climb down and retrieve the tablet.

Henrietta shook her head forcefully. There was nothing to tie the rope onto and she was not about to try and bear his weight again.

Grinning wickedly, she poked him in the stomach with her finger.

”So my fine Monsieur, it is alright for me to stand about naked yet you refuse to return the honor. For shame!”

She shrugged out of his shirt. “Here is your shirt, should I also remove your pants?”

Martin held up a hand, “Thank you Mademoiselle, I believe I can manage that by myself”

”Of course you can, but it surely would not be as fun,” she said with a giggle and went back into the tunnel.

Martin Mystere disrobed and tied his shirt and pants onto the rope of Henrietta’s clothes. She emerged from the tunnel and looked him over. Her brow arched and she gave him a quizzical look.

Following her gaze, Martin Mystery quickly, retorted. “It’s chilly up here!”

Henrietta laughed and blew him a kiss. “That was not a critical look, cherie”

Martin moved into the tunnel to give Henrietta room to climb over the ledge and down the cliff faced. He moved close to the edge to give him as much line as possible and also to watch her progress. Once she had the tablet in her hands, he began hauling her up the cliff.

Once she was on the cliff she hugged him tightly and then sat down to start disassembling the rope she had made. Handing him his shirt and pants when she was finished unraveling the rope, she told him to get back into the tunnel while she dressed. Taking turns on the small shelf, they dressed. Climbing up the stone tunnel and using her clothes for a rope had taken a toll on them, there were rips and holes all through Henrietta’s shirt and pants, some in some very interesting places.

Averting his eyes from a particular hole in her shirt where something rather interesting protruded, Martin looked for a way down the mountain. Below the shelf was a sheer cliff face, naked granite rock stretching hundreds of feet straight down. Below this was a wooded area and a river that cut through the canyon. Above the shelf was another sheer cliff, however directly above the shelf was a groove cut into the rock face. This was about six inches wide and two deep, he believed that this was how the mineral oil had been channeled into the tunnel. The groove did not look as though it would provide any hand or footholds so climbing up was not any safer than climbing down the sheer rock walls.

Henrietta had not noticed any handholds or ladders near the shelf when she had climbed

down the line to retrieve the tablet. However just under the shelf there was a foot wide projection of a cliff face that stretched around the curve of the cliff.

Martin Mystere tied the tablet to his back, lowered Henrietta down to the small cliff that jutted out from the cliff face and climbed down to join her. Hugging the cliff face, they slowly and carefully worked their way around the cliff face.

For once fortune smiled upon them, just beyond the curve, the foot wide projection widened to become a large cliff. A short distance on the cliff was a trail leading down to the wooded area and the river. Martin was not certain but believed that they were on the opposite side of the mountain from where the temple and their camp were located.

As they walked down the trail, Martin Mystere wondered aloud if there would be a welcoming committee of hostiles when they reached the foot of the mountain.

Henrietta gave him a puzzled look, wondering if he were being facetious.

Smiling Martin said, "For all of your brilliance you are naïve sometimes, or else you focus so intently on the project at hand that you ignore peripheral evidence. Once the first trap was sprung I realized that this explained some of the puzzling marks and stains on the tunnel walls. This suggests that the traps have been sprung before. Since they were active for us, they must have been reset. The lack of skeletons is also telling. This points to an active presence in the temple, probably a cult of some type. Hopefully, surviving the traps proved that we deserved the tablet. I doubt it, however."

Henrietta gave him a wan smile and squeezed his thick shoulder affectionately. "My cheery, hero!" With a wink and a grin, she said, "Well, don't you worry. I will protect you. I won't let the beautiful High Priestess have her way with you."

The trail ended abruptly at a spire of rock that jutted over the river. There had been a rope bridge connecting this rock spire to another across the canyon however it had been cut.

Henrietta looked all around the spire after they had rested for a moment. It was late afternoon and the sun would be setting soon. She threw a rock over the side of the cliff. "It seems we must either climb down or jump. Well, I know I could certainly use a bath. Last one on the other side of the river is a rotten egg!"

With a laugh Henrietta dove off of the cliff to the river some fifty feet below.

Martin cursed her impulsiveness. There was no way to know how deep the river was or how strong it was. Damn the woman! He made certain the tablet was securely tied to his back before he made his leap.

Henrietta landed with a large splash and sank, she broke the surface seconds later. Grinning and waving up at Martin. Martin watched her swim a few feet and then stand up in waist high water. She slogged through the water towards the river bank. Martin was so distracted by how her ragged wet clothes fetchingly clung to her body that he failed to see five men erupt from the woods and grabbed her or rather made the attempt to do so.

Despite being rather petite, Henrietta was rather strong and knew how to fight. She held them off. However she was severely outnumbered and it was only a matter of time before she was captured.

Martin Mystere quickly untied and unwrapped the rope securing the tablet to his waist and jumped off of the cliff.

The cold water and a bad landing knocked the breath from him, yet he burst out of the water and hurried like a demon to where Henrietta was being dragged. Using the tablet on the end of the rope as a flail, he began to knock down the men surrounding Henrietta.

Although serials and adventure novels had made him have the preconceived notion that the cultist would be dressed in antique or outlandish garb, they were dressed like ordinary Guatemalan peasants. The weapons that they wielded were nothing more exotic than knives and machetes. Martin had knocked down three of the five men with broken head or broken bones. They either fell into the river water in relative silence or splashed about frantically trying not to drown while crawling to shore.

Martin Mystere did not have the luxury of following their progress. One of the men stood between him and the shore, he held a large knife which he waved about menacing. Another man held Henrietta in his arms, a machete against her side. He placed the edge of his machete against her throat.

Martin stood stock still.

”Give us the tablet, senor and we will let the muy bonita chicita go.”

There was no hesitation on Martin Mystere’s part, he pulled the tablet to him and untied it.

Henrietta saw what he intended to do and struggled but the man held her fast, although he inadvertently nicked her.

”Martin! Martin! That tablet is priceless, don’t trade it for me. You don’t even know that he will keep his word”

”Ah, I like the fiery ones, they are so good to tame!” exclaimed the one nearest to Martin.

Martin addressed the one holding Henrietta, “Do you swear by Vucub Caquix that you will allow the girl and I go unmolested, if I give you the tablet of my free will?”

With a sour look, the man holding Henrietta spat, “Si “

Martin tossed the tablet onto the riverbank next to the man who held Henrietta captive. He gave Henrietta a fierce push that tossed her back into the river near the other man. She landed hard and had the wind knocked out of her. Just as Martin moved towards her the other man let loose a shout of triumph. He rushed over to Henrietta and grabbed a hold of

her long, wet hair and dragged her to the shore. Sticking his knife in his mouth, he ripped off her ragged shirt and grabbed her naked breasts.

Martin frantically waded through the river towards her, shouting at the man with the tablet. "Is this how you honor your vow!"

"Hernandez, stop! Leave the girl alone!" yelled the man holding the tablet.

Hernandez waved him off and began to pull down his pants. The late afternoon sun flared golden bright across a machete blade as it flashed through the air and buried itself in Hernandez's back. With a scream Hernandez yanked the blade from his back and tossed it into the river. Martin dove for it.

When Martin emerged from the river with the machete in his hand, he saw the two men involved in a knife fight.

"...turn on me, Aguirre!" screamed Hernandez.

"We swore an oath before Vucub Caquix and I will keep that vow!"

"To hell with Vucub Caquix and you. I will take the woman and then I will take the tablet and sell it to some rich Americano museum." Hernandez stabbed Aguirre in the leg and received a knife in the throat in return. Picking up the tablet Aguirre staggered off onto a trail in the woods next to the river.

Martin rushed over to Henrietta. He watched her calmly try to arrange the tattered remnants of her shirt into some type of covering for her breasts. She gave up with short curse, throwing the tattered cloth into the river. When Martin reached down to give her a hand up he received a swift kick in the stomach that sent him sprawling backwards into the river.

Her usually humor-filled luminous blue eyes like gas jets. "Why the hell did you do that! You idiot! That tablet was irreplaceable. He will probably hide it where we can never find it."

Martin stood up and took off his wet shirt, wadding it up he flung it into her face with enough force to knock her down. With a scream of rage, she flung the shirt aside, she sprang to her feet and launched herself at him.

With a laugh, Martin caught her about her waist and picked her up so that her face was even with his while holding her at arms length. She beat her fists against his oaken arms. "Let me go you big lummo, let's get after him before he gets too far."

He kept his word, I will keep mine.

"So your honor will cost us dearly!" she shouted angrily, her flaming eyes burned into his.

Gazing into the endless depths of those incandescent orbs, Martin smiled and said, “No, if I had not made the vow, what I would have lost would have destroyed me. There was no choice. I do not care if it had been the Ark of the Covenant or King Arthur’s sword; nothing is worth endangering your life. My hands hold the only treasure that means anything to me, everything else is just old trash.”

Martin Mystere gathered Henrietta Demarigny to him. Henrietta gasped as their wet bare flesh met and as her bosom was compressed against his muscular chest. Her eyes blazed once again but not with anger. She hungrily sought his questing lips.

With a dreamy smile she leaned back, “Well, it certainly took you long enough to say that you love me. I’ve only been waiting for years.”

Years! Martin frowned, “You only started to show an interest in me recently.”

Henrietta laughed and took his cheeks in her hands, “You are such a lunkhead, of course I have been in love with you from the first and I knew that you loved me. I became tired of waiting around for you to court me so began to practically throw myself at you. It was getting to the point where I thought I might have to club you over the head like an Amazon clubs her man and drag you into bushes.”

She kissed him once more, breaking the kiss reluctantly. With a wistful smile she said, “We should try and get back to camp before dark.”

Martin Mystere set her down on the river bank. She picked up his wet shirt and put it on. Grabbing one of the fallen machetes in one hand, she grabbed his hand in her free hand and began walking down the trail that Aguirre had taken.

They had traveled about two miles when they the body of Aguirre. Laying next to him was the tablet. The cut in the leg that Hernandez had given Aguirre had severed his femoral artery and Aguirre had bled to death.

As Martin picked up the tablet. Henrietta bowed to the man who had held a knife at her throat. “Thank you, this will be a fine wedding present, Monsieur.”

”Wedding present?”

”Oui, there should be a priest in one of the nearby villages. Hopefully he can perform the ceremony tonight.” Taking his free hand in hers, she looked up at him and gave him a sly grin. “Otherwise, the wedding night will precede the ceremony.”

Part Two: Lost Treasure

Late 1929

Strasbourg, France

Curses that would make a sailor blush followed the sound of a pen clattering across a paper strewn desk. The pen flew to the floor and skidded to a stop against the shoe of Martin Mystere, as he stepped into Henrietta's small office. Another stream of curses erupted from a pair of lips better suited for kissing than cursing..

Delicate feminine fingers balled up sheets of paper as if Henrietta de Marigny Mystere were attempting to throttle something. She tossed the balls of paper over the drafting desk where they bounced against the wall and landed next to a trash can overflowing with wads of paper.

Catching sight of Martin Mystere, Henrietta struggled to calm herself. With a visible effort to keep from screaming, she spat out at him. "C'est Impossible! No matter how I translate it, all I get is gibberish."

Martin picked up the pen and handed it to her, "You should not let yourself get so upset, especially..."

"Especially because of the delicate condition that you put me in!" she exclaimed angrily, pushing herself away from her drafting table. The gesture would have been more dramatic if there had been room for her chair to sail backwards, as it was it moved only a few inches before clanging into the back of a file cabinet. As she struggled to extricate herself from between her chair and the drafting table, Martin took the opportunity to once again view his treasure.

As always Martine Mystere felt a catch in his throat as he saw the full beauty of Henrietta de Marigny. Her voluptuous form had grown even more so in these past few months since their wedding night. Henrietta's petite form dramatically showed the fullness of her pregnancy as she stepped towards her husband. Since her office was rather small this was only a matter of a couple of feet.

Martin laughed and picked her up by her expanded waist.

"Ah, now my sweet, if I remember correctly, once we had reached out camp it was you who followed me into my tent and had your way with me. It was in fact several days before you gave any thought to finding a priest."

Henrietta's anger evaporated and a merry light came into her bright blue eyes. Tossing back her long mane of raven hair, she grabbed onto Martins neck and hugged him tightly. Leaning back she gazed into his face and grinned saucily, "You know I don't think that anyone in the camp believed my story that we needed to be quarantined together."

"Not with all the noise you made," Martin said and cut off her sarcastic reply with a passionate kiss.

"Well, if I had waited for you I would still be an old spinster rather than a happily married woman." She hugged him again.

With a sour expression she nodded her head in the direction of her drafting table. "My

happiness would be absolute, if were not for that damned tablet we found. It is driving me mad.” Smiling softly, “And being the size of a steamship does not improve my disposition or patience.”

”Yes, indeed you are a heavy one!” Martin joked and regretted saying it immediately as he saw a flash of hurt and anger flicker through Henrietta’s eyes.

”I meant of course that there is much more of you to love”, and kissed her quickly. She responded perfunctorily at first but then with growing heat until she held the kiss until they both had to break for air.

Stroking his hair she had a pensive expression as she gave him a familiar look, “I am getting no where with the translation today. Perhaps we can take an early lunch.”

”Where do you want to eat?” Martin asked, knowing full well that eating was the last thing on her mind.

Henrietta just grinned and replied with another passionate kiss. “I’ll get my things and we can head on home.”

Martin put Henrietta down and she unbuttoned her smock, revealing her modest white blouse and calf length black skirt.

Even in her advanced state of pregnancy had not abated Henrietta’s sexual appetite. In fact it seemed to have whetted it. Not that Martin was complaining.

Martin and Henrietta had finished their summer dig and returned to the University at Neilly where they were associate professors of antiquities. In between her other duties Henrietta had taken it upon herself to translate the tablet that they had discovered. She was the acknowledged expert on Meso-American antiquities, whereas Martin Mystere’s expertise was in African and Asian antiquities. She often teased him about why he had decided to accompany her on the dig to Central America, saying that his theory about there being a Mayan-African connection through the Olmec culture was just a smokescreen, a flimsy scholarly excuse to be with her. Martin wryly had to privately admit that there was more truth to Henrietta’s claim than he would let her know.

While Henrietta went to the cloak room to get her coat, hat, gloves and purse Martin looked over the pile of material on her drafting table. There were rubbings of the tablet, drawings of the various Mayan pictoglyphs with their phonetic translations and photographic enlargements of sections of the tablet. One of the pictures caught Martin’s eye with a start.

As Henrietta returned to the table he said, “This is an odd looking Mayan. Why he could walk down the Champees Elyse without turning a head since he is wearing a fedora and an opera cloak.”

With a puzzled look Henrietta took the photo into her white gloved hand and studied it. Rolling her eyes and giggling, “You have a vivid imagination, my darling. This is

obviously a payi'aj and across his shoulders is a q'ub'el. Next you will tell me that he is the Man in the Moon.”

Martin smiled and then said, “Well, isn’t this the Moon next to him? and pointed to a circular object near the pictoglyph of the man.”

Henrietta shook her head with a smile, “No, the photograph did not pick it up but there is another circle inside this one, so it is a hole or entrance or possibly an eclipse.”

”So it could be the Moon”, Martin insisted with a grin. “What does the symbol underneath the moon say?”

With palling amusement Henrietta shuffled through the papers on the desk. “They are not Mayan words or at least not Mayan words that we know. The rest of the tablet is also of an unknown Mayan tongue which bears no resemblance to the Quecha language. According to my best translation, the symbols under the disc come out as ekakundala and the symbols underneath the man are duhrmrra, “

Startled, Martin said “Could you repeat the first word?”

Frowning, Henrietta did so.

”Again please, more slowly.” Martin said as he closed his eyes to concentrate on her words.

”Are we playing a game? If so, I had a much more enjoyable game in mind for this afternoon”. Henrietta asked with a laugh yet her comment fell on deaf ears, as Martin began to rifle through the papers on the desk and sound out the phonetic symbols Henrietta had written.

Throwing them down on the drafting table he turned to her with a stunned expression.

”C’est Incroible! Maybe Churchward is correct or not entirely wrong. Perhaps your brother is not the crank we always thought him to be! “

With an expression of equal parts exasperation and amusement, Henrietta put a gloved hand on his cheek and said, “My darling, what are you babbling about? I know this tablet drives one crazy but I thought it took a while.”

”These words seem to be Vedic. There are some scholars who believe that Vedic is the oldest living language, some of the more esoteric scholars believe that Vedic is a remnant of the language spoken on Mu and Lemuria. My grandfather claimed that his vehicle, the Electric Hotel was based on ancient Vedic documents. If so perhaps they were from the supposedly advanced civilization of Lemuria. Some believe that the civilizations in Meso-America, Africa and Asia were colonies of Lemuria or Mu or that they were begun by survivors of Lemuria or Mu. “

Henrietta gazed at him, unsure if he were playing a joke on her or not. With a laugh, she

said, “Certainly you are not suggesting that this is true, are you?”

”No, I do not believe that the Meso-American and other cultures were colonies of Lemuria but if Lemuria existed then I believe that it is possible that refugees may have founded some cultures that became part of an existing culture or were taken over by a newer culture; possibly both. Looking at your phonetic transcriptions, many of these words seem very familiar. If they are indeed Vedic, then we may be able to translate the tablet.”

With an exaggerated sigh, Henrietta put down her purse and pulled off her gloves, playing along with Martins game. However as they began to work, she began to see that there were indeed correlations between the pictoglyphs and the translation that Martin provided.

They worked all through lunch up until it was time for their afternoon classes and then returned to continue the translation. Working long into the night, they finally finished. Martin read the transcribed text.

Fifth World of the Sun
Tenth Age of Man
Spirits of evil unbound
Dark riders across the west
Justice of the last king
Reforged in virue,
the one ring.

Henrietta shook her head, “Even in translation it does not make sense, at least I cannot make any sense of it right now. Let’s start fresh in the morning. I am starving and tired. “

Martin felt guilty about making his very pregnant wife working so hard. When he became overly solicitous, Henrietta grinned and hugged him as tightly as she could. “As you can feel I am not made of glass. I am solid and sturdy, not a fragile little thing.”

After a quick supper at a late night bistro, Martin and Henrietta went directly to their little apartment, Exhausted Henrietta fell into sleep quickly. Yet sleep would not come for Martin Mystere. The image of the Mayan with the hat and cloak kept swimming before his eyes. The words of the translation reverberated in his mind as he tried to discern their meaning. He had flashes of imagery, of a great evil defeated, of great battles lost and won, of a red eye destroyed in fire yet whose gaze and influence lingered long after its destruction.

Perhaps because of his background Martin Mystere was not like many of his colleagues who dismissed anything not rationally explained by science. His father Cingale Mystere had many odd adventures as a youth and Martin's adoptive grandfather, Doctor Mystere was a Hindu Prince who was part scientist and mystic whose adventures had often delved in areas not readily explained by hard science. Martin had the nagging feeling that it was not mere fortune he and Henrietta had found the tablet. His grandfather’s teachings about destiny and karma had an undeniable influence on him. Martin believed that people had

series of pre-set destinies however the choices that they made in this life determined which destiny they would achieve. So there was pre-destination and yet also free will.

Martin and Henrietta had been placed on a life path together, with her lying next to him, it seemed as though they had always meant to be together. If so; their finding of the tablet was part of this destiny. Yet *why* had they found the tablet, what greater purpose did the tablet serve?

A couple hours after she had fallen asleep Henrietta felt a great call of nature as pregnant women are prone to have. Returning to bed she noticed Martin awake and staring at the ceiling. Crawling into bed, she laid down upon his chest and stared at him with a bemused expression.

"Can't you sleep, my darling.? It is that damned tablet! It is a puzzle that drives one mad.! Were it not for the fact that it finally brought us together I often wished we had never found it. "

"Yet, it did bring us together, so it cannot be so bad, hmm? Yet why did we find it? You an expert on Mayan writing and I who know Sanskrit. I was only there because you were there." Her eyes gleamed with love light yet Martin also noted that a flare of triumph also danced in her eyes. Grinning, he said, "Very well, I admit it. You were the reason I went on that particular dig. Yet I was there and it was the combination of our efforts that removed the tablet from the Mayan temple and brought it here. It was the unlikely combination of our particular translation skills that allowed us to decipher the document. "

"Do you suspect a hoax of some type?" Henrietta asked as the thought suddenly crossed her mind.

"No, I do not think that it can be a hoax, there are too many anomalies. The fact that the tablet is not stone but of an unknown metal. The tablet had been forged rather than carven, the words burned into the metal sheet. This lightweight yet extremely durable metal resists all efforts to analyze it, only a diamond will chip it. Yet it is pitted with age, it has to incredibly ancient. I feel that something else it at work here. Something like divine providence."

At Henrietta's quizzical smile, he said, "I know that as scientists we often put our faith in the divine on the backburner. Yet we are both religious people, we both attend Mass, albeit irregularly and we were married before a priest, and we pray on occasion. So to us science and faith are not mutually exclusive. I feel that there is something at work here, something that brought us together so that we could find the tablet together."

Henrietta wrinkled her forehead at that and smiled softly. "I am not certain what you are asking me, if you are asking me anything. I do believe that we were meant to be together, that our destiny is to be together. I disagree however that we were brought together just to find an ancient tablet. I do not know whether it was destiny, fate or even the Hand of God but I do know now, as I have almost since I met you, that my life and yours would be spent as one."

"Don't you feel in the slightest bit cheated, as if you had no choice in the decision?"

Henrietta placed her face just above his and stared into his eyes her eyes sparkling with amusement and affection. "Oh, my darling I *know* that I had no choice in the matter. When I first saw you I was entranced, when I heard you speak I was infatuated and when we had our first argument, I was in love. I knew even as we argued that we would wed and I would have your babies. And since here I am laying on top of you, big as house with our child that fate has proven kindly" Her face became serious and she said, "As for being cheated, no I never felt I was cheated because what I felt was fated to be came to pass. Do you feel cheated or trapped? Did I rush you into marriage? I did not expect to start a family so soon but I was happy it turned out that we would, because it seemed another piece of evidence that we were meant for each other."

"Or that you are as fertile as a bunny." Martin joked but Henrietta's face became even more serious.

"Are you truly thinking about the tablet or is it that you have second thoughts about our marriage or about having this child?"

Martin had become used to the fact that Henrietta's often mercurial mood changes were accentuated by her pregnancy but sometimes he was caught by surprise.

"Nothing I will ever learn will ever compare to the joy that was mine when I learned that you loved me. Nothing that I may discover will ever amount to the wondrous discovery I make each morning when I awaken and find you next to me."

Henrietta stared him for a long moment and then softly kissed his forehead. "Since you cannot get that tablet out of your mind, I think I can help you forget it for a while."

Leaning back, she straddled him for a moment, taking time only to pull loose the tie at the neck of her nightgown. She slowly unbuttoned his pajama top and began kissing her way down his chest. True to her word, Martin did not think about the tablet for hours.

Martin and Henrietta Mystere consulted with other experts on Mayan and Vedic languages to corroborate their translations. Once their work had been confirmed, they were encouraged to publish their preliminary findings. Although most antiquarians did not give credence to the diffusionist connection between the Mayans and Vedic India for the most part the responses were favorable encouraging them to continue their investigation to discover the truth about the mysterious tablet. There was one stinging rebuke from Professor Henry Jones who not only scoffed at their work but felt that he had wasted his time even trying to teach them anything. Martin Mystere took Jones acerbic remarks with a grain of salt, considering Jones well known Grail obsession.

Since Martin and Henrietta were among the more popular associate professors, the Chancellor prevailed upon them to give a public lecture about their adventure of discovering the tablet and discussing their findings.

The lecture was well attended by many students, their parents, alumni and interested parties.

After the lecture one of their students, Jean Aubry introduced Martin and Henrietta to his father, The Comte Jacques de Tremeuse. The dark lean appearance of the Comte struck Martin with such a cord of familiarity that Martin was prompted to ask if they had met before. Jacques Tremeuse smiled mysteriously and told Martin that to his knowledge they had not met but that the Comte might be familiar to Mystere. Comte de Tremeuse invited Martin and Henrietta to his estate outside of Paris for the weekend, he was very interested in their research would like to discuss in greater detail and he thought the young couple might enjoy a weekend away from the University.

Martin and Henrietta had a pleasant train ride through the countryside from Strasbourg to Paris. They were met at the train station by the Comte who drove his own automobile. Although Martin did not say anything to Henrietta he had the unpleasant feeling that they were being followed. He did not spot anyone specifically following them but rather attributed this sensation to his years as a young adventurer accompanying his father. Cingale and Martin Mystere were often followed, either by the authorities or persons with ill intent.

Martin and Henrietta spent an enjoyable weekend with the Comte and his family, meeting his wife Jacqueline and their two boys, Frederick and Roger. Also up for the weekend was an old family friend, Jean Cocantin, his wife Daisy and their young son Jacques, whom they had named after the Comte. Cocantin was the owner of the renowned detective agency, Celeritas Veritas. Their adopted older son had recently joined the family business and was busy with an investigation.

Little Jacques Cocantin was almost enough to give Henrietta second thoughts about having a baby. He was a bundle of energy but an extremely clumsy child, forever falling down or knocking something down. His parents indulged him, believing that their child was extremely delightful. He spoke in an odd accent, which his parents attributed to having French and Swedish parents. This accent became all the more pronounced by Jacques Cocantin's manner of speech which was slow and deliberate. Even at an early age young Jacques had a rather self important and arrogant attitude and believed that what ever he had to say was of the utmost importance to everyone around him. He told the Mysteres that digging up old bones was all well and good but he was going to work for the people of France by becoming a police officer and eventually Chief Inspector of the Surete

Martin found it very hard not to laugh at the pompous little boy, especially after having announced this to Martin, young Jacques strode out of the room with exaggerated dignity only to trip over one of his toys which he had left laying on the floor.

On Saturday afternoon Jacqueline took her boys and the Concantins to the cinema to give Jacques de Tremeuse a chance to talk with the Mysteres.

Over lunch, the Comte gave the Mysteres a bit of background of why he was so interested in their work.

This estate was the result of the second fortune of the de Tremeuse family, the first fortune had been wiped out due to the unethical business practices of a banker named Favraux. Unable to bear the shame of being bankrupt, Jacques de Tremeuse father had committed suicide. Shortly thereafter a messenger arrived and told Jacques' mother that one of the Comte's investments, a mine in Africa had yielded up a very rich vein of gold. Jacques mother had made her two boys, who were not yet in their teens, to one day avenge their fathers death by destroying and killing Favraux.

Jacques de and Roger Tremeuse spent years learning various skills that would allow them to penetrate the web of lies and deceit surrounding Monsieur Favraux. They became adept in the arts of disguise, mastered many of the sciences and studied many of the techniques of investigation. While they studied their mother directed the family fortune diversifying the fortune from the gold mine into many lucrative ventures. So that the boys would not follow their father's mistake of allowing another to steer their finances, the boys were also directed to learn all they could about the various aspects of their business ventures. To this end, Jacques de Tremeuse spent six months working in his African gold mine.

Jacques was on a drilling team opening up a branch tunnel when the wall they were drilling suddenly broke and opened up into a cavern.. After some initial exploration, Jacques and his engineers soon ascertained that this was not a natural cavern but an ancient mine shaft. The shaft lead upwards for some distance but did not reach the surface, an ancient cave in had sealed the ancient mine shaft. Although Jacques and his engineer expected this section of the mountain to have already been worked over for gold and precious stone, they explored as much of it as they could. The ancient mine shaft had a branch that also went for some distance downwards before abruptly ending in a stone wall of smoothed granite. Against this stone wall were granite receptacles, each containing clay tablets covered in writing. One of the receptacles however contained a large tablet made of metal. This metal tablet was also covered in writing yet also contained several pictoglyphs. Two of these pictoglyphs resonated with Jacques Tremeuse The image of a lean man wearing a slouch hat and a cape and that of a golden ring next to this man. Upon closer examination the golden ring was actually a golden ring set into the tablet. When Jacques touched it rolled out of the tablet and landed at his feet. When he tried to put it back into the tablet, he discovered that it would not fit. The ring was a simple gold band with an engraved interior. This script inside the ring however seemed different from that of the tablets.

Jacques Tremeuse knew that this was a momentous archaeological discovery but since the mission vengeance against Favraux was the first and foremost goal of his life, he kept silent about the discovery. Disruption of the gold mining operations could not be allowed, the money was needed to fund the mission. Jacques placed the ring into his pocket and had the tunnel placed off limits. However he kept having dreams about the tablet with the caped man and the ring and so had the metal tablet retrieved. Jacques dreams subsided once the tablet was in his possession however the image of the caped man stayed with him and when the time came for him to exact his vengeance on Favraux, he adopted a guise very similar to the pictoglyph and wore a slouch hat and a cape.

” Judex!” Martin Mystere exclaimed with sudden insight. “You were Judex!”

Jacques de Tremeuse acknowledged Martins discovery with a small smile and short bow.

Once Jacques had carried out his mission of vengeance, he tried without success to have the metal tablet translated. When Jean had told Jacques about the Mysteres discovery Jacques was exceedingly interested, especially when he learned that the symbols underneath the caped man meant Justice. Judex was of course Latin for a judge, the arbiter of justice.

”So this tablet is identical to ours? Do you have this tablet in your possession?” Henrietta asked with mounting excitement.

”I have it in my possession but it is not identical to yours. Rather it is similar but different.” With a grin, Jacques de Tremeuse, stood up from the table. “I will not torture you any longer. Please follow me.”

Jacques de Tremeuse led the Mysteres into his library where the metal tablet was lying on a table. Martin Mystere noticed that it was made of the same type of metal as the tablet and was the same dimensions that they had found however as Jacques de Tremeuse had stated the tablet was quite different. Although it did have the same picture of the man wearing a hat and cape and also the ring there were in different locations. On the Mystere’s tablet these symbols were in the center of the lower portion of the tablet, on Tremeuses they were on the center of the top section. Below them were captions but where the Mysteres tablet ended on Tremeuse’s tablet there were several lines of script and then a blank expanse. The script was unfamiliar to either of the Mysteres. de Tremeuse said that the most renowned linguists in the world did not recognize the language.

Martin looked at Henrietta and said, “At least we can start a translation.”

Jacques de Tremeuse looked puzzled. Martin said, “By using our tablet we may be able to decipher the script, if the captions for the pictures are the same, of course we will have to deduce most of the script and it will take some time but eventually we should be able to read the clay tablets that you found in the old mine. Will you allow us to take the tablet to the University for study?”

After a moments consideration, Jacques de Tremeuse would allow this but he wanted his family name kept out of any discussion of the tablet and wanted the location of where his tablet had been discovered to remain a secret. He also wished to help in the translation; he had some skills at cryptography. Although Martin and Henrietta burned to start translating the new tablet, they put their academic roles on hold for the rest of the weekend.

Shortly after their startling luncheon with Jacques de Tremeuse, the rest of the weekend guests returned from their trip to the cinema. Young Jacques Concantin was sopping wet, having somehow managed fall into the fountain in front of the house as he exited the

motorcar.

They spent the rest of Saturday and Sunday morning dining, playing table tennis, lawn tennis, croquet and card games. Martin and Henrietta left the de Tremeuse estate with some regret but were very excited to return to Strasbourg and work on the tablet. Jacques de Tremeuse had some business affairs that prevented him from accompanying them so he joined them late Monday.

When de Tremeuse brought his tablet into their laboratory the translation of the tablet almost immediately took on another unexpected twist.

They laid the two tablets on a table, one above the other, separated by about two inches, to see how similar the two tablets actually were. With the exception of the script used, the bottom of the tablet found by the Mysteres and the tablet found by Jacques de Tremeuse were identical. When Martin moved the tablets closer together to get a better sense of the exactness of detail, something amazing happened. The two tablets moved under their own power, as if drawn together by a powerful magnetic force. The crack separating the two tablets faded and the surface of both tablets blurred over as if they were subjected to some vast heat, yet the metal remained cool to the touch. The tablets had become one smooth piece of metal. The smooth surface however felt as though hard metallic insects were crawling about on the smooth surface. After a moment the smooth surface began forming lines and shapes. When it was finished the single tablet looked almost exactly as the two separate tablets had looked with some important differences. The script for the entire tablet was now in the unknown language that had been upon de Tremeuses tablet and the blank expanse that had been upon de Tremeuses tablet was now filled with what could only be a map. Below the map was a new line of script.

"If I had not seen it with my own eyes, I would have never believed it," Martin exclaimed.

"It is almost as if the tablet were magical." Henrietta said, her eyes wide with wonderment.

"Or the product of a science much more advanced than ours." Martin said hardly believing what he had just seen happen.

Jacques de Tremeuse was also surprised but not shocked at what had happened. He had taken the change with aplomb.

Martin regarded him for a second and then asked with an edge of suspicion. "You are not entirely surprised that this happened. Why?"

Jacques de Tremeuse looked at Martin and Henrietta pensively, he pursed his lips and said, "I was surprised at what happened but not entirely surprised that tablets did something unusual. You may recall the legends that Judex had the ability to become invisible or cloud the minds of people around him. These were based in part on my mastery of the art of disguise and an innate ability to charm and persuade people. Yet a good deal of the legend derives from the fact that I could indeed turn invisible for a short

period of time and also influence the mental processes of people near me. This ability derived from the ring that I found in the gold mine, how it worked I have no idea. So that the metal of the tablets were able to reshape themselves is not entirely a shock.”

They quickly made rubbings and took photographs of the altered tablet, just in case the tablet decided to revert to a smooth plate of metal. That the tablets script had changed into an unknown language was not the set back that it might have appeared. Since Martin had already translated the main portion of the tablet when it had been in Mayan symbols this provided their rosetta stone. They could then use his earlier translation as a key to decipher the new script. They soon discovered that was not to be as simple as using his translation to decipher the rest of the tablet. The new script turned out not to be phonetically rendered in Vedic Sanskrit but rather in an unknown language that seemed reminiscent of Basque. This was probably the language that the script was written in.

It took them two weeks to create a transcription of the known words because the word order in a few instances was changed. While their work progressed Martin Mystere’s sense that they were being watched increased. He mentioned it to Jacques de Tremeuse who admitted that he had also had this odd sense of being under scrutiny. They agreed not to mention this to Henrietta and to make certain that she was protected at all times.

After completing the translation of the known section of the tablet, they decided to go out for a celebratory dinner. Once they reached the car however, Henrietta discovered that she had forgotten her purse. Martin ran back to her office while Jacques de Tremeuse kept her company.

When Martin opened the office door he discovered one of the janitors was pouring over his translation. The man’s mop and bucket set off the side of the drafting table.

Hearing Martin’s approach the janitor grabbed the end of his mop and swung it at Martin. Hot soapy water and wet slippery mop strands covered Martins face, filling his eyes, nostrils and mouth. Martin flung the mop from his face, snorting and gasping for air as he rubbed the stinging water from his eyes. He saw the janitor sweep the papers onto the floor and throw a match on them. He then grabbed the tablet. Martin ran forward kicking over the bucket of hot water. He tackled the janitor who lost his grip on the tablet. The metal tablet flew across the room to smash against a blackboard. The blackboard’s slate cracked and fell to the floor in a shimmer of black shards.

Martin slipped in the water on the floor which allowed the janitor to struggle free of Martin’s grip. He lashed out with a kick to Martin’s stomach and then ran out of the room. Martin struggled to his feet and ran after the man but he had disappeared in the dark corridors.

The mop water had put out the fire that the man had started. Much of the translation had been burned but it would be a relatively easy task to recreate it now that they had memorized the script. Martin stayed in the room, knowing that Jacques and Henrietta would come there when he did not return.

After they arrived he quickly explained what had happened. They could only guess that a

artifact hunter had decided to take the tablet for his own and this is why they were being followed. Still why he would destroy their work was puzzling.

To ensure the safety of the tablet and their work Jacques de Tremeuse suggested that they continue their research at a property he owned called the Chateau-Rouge. It was well fortified so the tablet, their research and the researchers would be safe from attack.

When the Chancellor was informed of the attack of Martin Mystere by the janitor, he investigated the janitor in question. When it was discovered that the actual janitor had been killed the night before Martin was attacked and apparently replaced by an imposter he bade them take a few weeks off. The Chancellor was concerned about Henrietta's well being.

Chateau-Rouge turned out to be an old castle, apparently in ruins. However Jacques Tremeuse led them into on the towers. Inside was an elevator which descended into a modern complex that had been built beneath the ruins. This was, Martin Mystere realized, the secret lair of Judex.

In addition to Jacques de Tremeuse and his brother providing protection for the Mysteres, de Tremeuse also commissioned the Celeritas Veritas Agency to provide additional protection.

Jacqueline de Tremeuse insisted on taking Henrietta shopping for baby clothing and clothing that Henrietta could wear once the baby was born. Since Jacqueline was about Henrietta's size she could try on the clothing for her. Martin thought that it would be a pleasant diversion for Henrietta and insisted that she go. The person who drew the delightful duty of accompanying the ladies while they shopped was Michel Concantin. He followed them at a distance so as not to intrude. Michel Concantin was a young, well dressed man about town, who flirted with the shop girls and customers while keeping a sharp eye on his charges. However there was one place he could not go. While Jacqueline and Henrietta went into a changing room he sat outside the changing room, slowly chewing on a piece of licorice. After what seemed to a protracted time, he knocked on the door. Receiving no answer he burst into the room, kicking in the locked door. He found Jacqueline de Tremeuse lying in an unconscious heap on the dressing room floor. A quick check ascertained that she was breathing steadily. A hole had been cut into the dressing room and into the one next to it. Michel ran through the holes and out to the rear door of the shop. Henrietta Mystere was being forced into a black sedan by two men dressed in dark suits. Michel ran forward to help her but skidded to a stop when one of the men placed a wicked looking blade against Henrietta's bulging stomach.

Michel raised his hand to show that he meant no harm. The man holding the knife flashed him a quick grin. Once Henrietta was inside the car, the man reversed his grip on the knife and flung it at Michel. He stopped it from hitting his abdomen at the cost of a slashed arm. He chased after the car trying to staunch the flow of blood in his arm. He noticed that the license plate of the car was blackened out.

Michel ran to a phone to tell Jacques de Tremeuse what had happened.

After Michel Concantin had called Jacques de Tremeuse, Jacques and Martin had hurried to the hospital that Michel Concantin and Jacqueline de Tremeuse had been taken. Jacqueline recovered from her chloroforming but Michel Concantin was laid up in the hospital. The slash on his arm had taken several stitches and he was fighting off the effects of some drug that had been smeared upon the blade. Before succumbing to unconsciousness, he had described the men who had abducted Henrietta.

Jacques de Tremeuse hissed when he had heard the description.

Henrietta's abductors did not take long to make their demands. Notes were sent to the Celeritas Veritas agency and also to the de Tremeuse home.

Martin Mystere was to bring the tablet and all of the work pertaining to the tablets to a location outside of Paris He was to come alone. Henrietta would then be freed.

Martin could understand why a collector of antiquities would want the tablet but why would they want all of the research pertaining to the tablet.

"The people we are dealing with are Les Habits Noirs, an organization comprised of very influential people in France and Europe; politicians, military men, scientists and criminals. Ostensibly they follow some Masonic principles to bring enlightenment to the masses and seek to bring about social equality and justice for all, yet in essence they seek to have Europe and the world dominated by an oligarchy of several wealthy families. My great enemy the banker Faveraux was a member of Les Habits Noirs and so to exact my justice on him I had to make it appear as though he were dead, otherwise I would have had to deal with the entire organization first. However some members of the organization got wind that he was still alive and tried to retrieve him. It turns out that by removing the banker I had also dealt a serious blow to Les Habits Noirs because Faveraux had handled many of their finances. Fortunately for the world the members of Les Habits Noirs often work at cross purposes with one another as there is a constant internal rivalry for power and control of the organization. One of the branches of the Les Habits Noirs, it is rumored, works to acquire and destroy anomalous objects such as the tablet and to suppress any research on said objects. Apparently the ruling body of this particular Les Habit Noirs faction have certain doctrinaire beliefs about the history of the world and will work to ensure that this history is THE history for all of mankind. The agents for this group persuade researchers or people who find such anomalous objects to forget all about them or else disappear. Apparently they have set our tablet in their sights. This meeting may well also be a trap for you and you may be subjected to various forms of persuasion to ensure that you forget about the tablets."

Martins anxiety about Henrietta quadrupled. "Then Henrietta is in danger no matter if we give them the tablets or not!"

Jacques de Tremeuse nodded gravely. His eyes flashed with a fierce fire and a grim smile crossed his face. "Fear not however, my good friend. I will find Henrietta. It is time for Judex to once again take up the hunt for justice. If you are brave and steadfast we may rescue your wife and keep the tablet out of the hands of this insidious organization. You shall go to this meeting alone as they request, give them the tablets and all the papers they

wish. While you are meeting with them I will be rescuing Henrietta. Once Henrietta is safe, I will send a signal for my other agents to move in on your position. I cannot promise you however that your captivity will not be unpleasant, however short it may be.”

Martin Mystere readily agreed to the plan so long as there was chance that Henrietta would be safe.

Since Michel Concantin was in the hospital, his father volunteered to accompany Martin Mystere to the rendezvous. Despite being a dear friend Jacques de Tremeuse knew that Concantin was a singularly inept detective and quickly suggested that his services would best be served by remaining at the Celeritas Veritas Agency to relay any messages.

Jacques de Tremeuse dressed in a black slouch hat, a black tunic and a black cape. The resemblance between him and the man on the tablet was uncanny.

Judex gathered up his collection of dogs and set them on the scent of Henrietta Mystere.

Martin Mystere arrived at the broken down windmill where he was to meet Henrietta’s captors an hour before the meeting was scheduled to take place. Already there were two black sedans parked outside of the windmill.

As Martin exited his automobile, the driver’s doors to both of the sedans opened up. Out of each car came a man dressed in a black hat and suit. They walked towards Martin and motioned for him to walk forward. About twenty paces from Martin the two men stopped in their tracks and made a gesture for Martin to also stop walking. One of the men walked towards Martin while the other held a pistol on him. When the man was near to Martin he told him to drop the material in his hands and step back several paces. Martin did so. The man strode over to where Martin was standing, he thoroughly and professionally frisked him for weapons. Satisfied that Martin did not have anything, he walked to where Martin had dropped the tablet and briefcase of papers and picked them up. He carried them over to where the other man stood and placed them at his feet.

The man holding the gun handed it over to the one who had frisked Martin and then examined the materials that Martin had brought. He nodded his head at the other man.

The other man raised his gun and held it trained on Martin Mystere.

” Thank you for bringing the cursed object to us. We will make certain that the Devil’s work is destroyed or forever lost. Unfortunately much of the knowledge about this object resides in your head so it is regrettable that you and your lovely wife will have to disappear. You have been tainted by the works of Satan so in a sense, we are saving your souls.”

Martin started for the man but his sense of self preservation jerked him back. “Henrietta is pregnant, you will also be killing a child.”

The man in black looked shocked and offended, "Monsieur we do not kill the innocent. Mademoiselle Mystere will be allowed to live until she bears the child, then most regrettably she will be eliminated. The child will be trained as a soldier of the black."

Martin wondered why the man just did not shoot him.

As if reading his mind, the man said. "My associates are bringing in your accomplice. It would be better for us if it appeared as though you had a falling out and shot one another."

Martin Mystere looked behind him expecting to see Roger de Tremeuse, Jacques' brother who was supposed to be watching over Martin. However he saw a thin man accompanied by a small boy being urged along a dirt road by two more men in black. When both the thin man and the young man stumbled several times on their way down the road, Martin realized that it was Concantin and his son Jacques.

Concantin was made to stand by Martin. Concantin shrugged his thin shoulders and said, "I could not in good conscience allow you to beard the lions by yourself. And Jacques wanted to see how real detectives worked."

When Martin explained that they were going to be shot, Concantin paled and looked nauseous.

Jacques clung to his father's leg. Concantin's long fingers covered the boy's head. "Certainly you do not intend to kill my boy! He is simple and feeble minded, he will forget all about you in a moment. "

Concantin yelled in pain as Jacques Concantin bit him. The men in black laughed.

"Be at peace Monsieur we will not harm the boy. He will be raised as one of our own".

Jacques Concantin was forcibly pulled from his father's leg and made to stand by the man in black holding the tablet.

Two of them raised their pistols. Martin realized that they needed two guns to be fired so that Concantin and he would not have bullets from the same gun in both of them.

There was a high shrill shriek as young Jacques Concantin ran over to the gun men and drove his fists into the crotches of the men in black as they fired. Bullets whined past Martin and Concantin. The two gun men were off balance from the pain in their midsections. Taking advantage of this Martin launched himself at one of them, fully expecting to be shot. As he grappled with one of the men and desperately grabbed for the gun, he heard a gun shot. Martin drove his fist into the man's crotch much harder than young Jacques ever could. The man retched with pain. Martin's fingers found the gun but did not have time to get a proper grip on it. He grabbed it around the barrel. Martin heard two more gunshots and a car's motor turn over. He slammed the gun against the head against the man he was fighting against and was gratified when he slumped into unconsciousness.

Martin spun the gun into a proper grip as he stood up. Two of the other men in black were on the ground shot through the chests. Concantin was sitting on the ground stunned as he tried to stop the bleeding from a wound in his shoulder. Jacques Concantin was running after one of the black sedans which was speeding off down the road. Jacques Concantin tripped over his own feet and went sprawling in the dirt road, covering himself in road dust.

Martin noticed that the tablet and the briefcase filled with their research was gone. Signing with disappointment, he walked over to Concantin and examined the wound in his shoulder. A gash had been cut into Concantin's shoulder by the bullet that had otherwise missed him. Martin tore off a piece of one of the dead men's shirts and packed Concantin's wound. He then used the black ties of the dead men to truss up the unconscious man in black.

By the time he had finished, Jacques Contantin had returned. He ran over and embraced his father.

"Where did the little hero learn Vo Thuat?" a voice spoke up from behind Martin. He spun around with his gun at the ready to discover that he was aiming at Roger de Tremeuse. Roger stood there grinning and cradling a rifle in his arms.

Concantin smiled and ruffled young Jacques hair. "A young Annamese boy with the unlikely name of Cato has been teaching him a few tricks."

A raven cawed overhead and circled above them. It banked and flew down to land on Rogers shoulder.

Roger de Tremeuse put down the rifle and opened the message the raven's leg.

He smiled at Martin. Henrietta is safe and enroute to Chateau-Rouge. Rogers face fell and he lost his smile. "Pierre is dead." At Martins blank look, Roger said, "Pierre was one of our best dogs, my favorite whom I raised from a puppy. Bastards!" Roger wrote out a note, attached it to the Ravens leg and sent him on his way.

Roger then began going through the sedan that had been left behind. He spoke to them as he carried out his investigation.

"It is a good thing that young Jacques acted when he did. I could not fire before that because you two were blocking my shot at the men in black. When Concantin fell to his knees and Martin moved to attack, I was able to take out two of them. Unfortunately I only winged the other one and he took off with the tablet and your papers."

" This car is clean and I am certain that they will carry no identification papers as is typical. Lets get Concantin to a doctor so he can be stitched up."

Jacques de Tremeuse had taken his dogs to the spot where Henrietta Mystere had been abducted and put them on her scent. It was either arrogance that they would not be

discovered or due to the state of Henrietta's advanced pregnancy that had caused her abductors to hole up a few blocks from where they had taken her. The dogs surrounded a small apartment building and then led Jacques de Tremeuse and Jean Aubry to an apartment inside the building.

The raucous barking and baying of the dogs caused many doors to open, including the one the dogs had grouped about. When the door opened the dogs rushed inside enmasse, bowling over the man who had opened the door. Jacques and Jean followed after them. They heard a fierce growling, a sharp cry of pain and then the piercing whine of a dog in pain.

As Jean finished subduing the man had fallen underneath the canine wave, Jacques hurried after the dogs, his gun at the ready. He saw a man laying on the floor next to the bed where Henrietta was tied. The man clutched his throat, blood poured over the edges of his fingers. Next to the man was the body of a large mastiff dog a large knife stuck in its side. Jacques hurried over to the dog, it panted heavily, eyes rapidly dimming. Eyes sting, Jacques patted the dog on the head, "Good Pierre, good boy." The dog gave his hand a weak lick before breathing his last.

Jacques walked past the man with the bitten throat to untie Henrietta and remove her gag. Her first response was to spit at the dying man on the floor.

Henrietta confirmed what Jacques de Tremeuse had suspected. When the dogs had burst into the room one of Henrietta's captors had decided to kill her by stabbing her with a knife. Pierre had launched himself at the villain and torn out his throat before he could carry out the evil deed. The valiant Pierre had been stabbed as the man fell to the ground.

Jacques helped Henrietta to her feet. Amidst the pack of dogs, Jacques and Henrietta walked over to where Jean Aubry was slapping the face of the man he had just tied up. The man seemed to be unconscious. Jacques placed his hand on the man's carotid to confirm his suspicion, the man was dead.

Jean was shocked and protested that he had not hit him that hard.

Smiling grimly, Jacques de Tremeuse opened the dead mans mouth and showed Jean that one of his teeth was broken. "He had poison in his tooth. It is a common thing among the more fanatical of Les Habits Noires".

They rapidly left the apartment and drove towards Chateau Rouge. Jean de Tremeuse sent one of his pet ravens to search for Roger and deliver the message that Henrietta was safe.

Jacques de Tremeuse, his brother, Roger, the Concantins and the Mysteres all met up at Chateau Rouge.

Part Three

Lost Tales Found

Les Habits Noire had won a slight victory in stealing the priceless tablet but the Mysteres had kept copies of their work. They would be able to use their work to decipher the clay tablets that Jacques had found in the gold mine back in 1905. Thus this was one ancient civilization about which Les Habits Noire would not be able to suppress knowledge. Yet it bothered Jacques that if all Les Habits Noire wanted to do was to suppress the knowledge why had they wanted the Mysteres' research notes, they could have just destroyed them after killing the Mysteres. There was something else about the tablet that Les Habits Noire was interested in discovering.

They poured over their notes and recited the lines of the script found on the tablets.

Fifth World of the Sun
Tenth Age of Man
Spirits of evil unbound
Dark riders across the west
Justice of the last king
Reforged in virue,
the one ring.

Light leads to light
Like leads to like
Ages replayed
Cycles turn not true

Three great lands drowned
Due to fear, greed and hate.
The Bird in its nest
Protects the ivory gate
Lost tales newfound

Yet meaning eluded them. Concantin offered to look over the papers with his trained detective eyes, perhaps he could see something that the amateurs missed. Although the de Tremeuse family and the Mystere family doubted Concantin's deductive abilities, a fresh perspective might turn up something they agreed to let him. As Concantin poured over the papers, often nodding his head thoughtfully, little Jacques Concantin amused himself by alternating skipping about the room and looking over the papers that his father was finished with. He continually sang a song refrain, "Three Drowned Lands" based on the song refrain, "Three Blind Mice."

While looking at one of the papers, he said, "Three drowned lands. One, two, three! One, two, three!" Jacques then stabbed his finger at the piece of paper. More than slightly annoyed, Martin took the paper out of Jacques Concantin's hands and put it back in the pile of papers by Concantin. He noticed that Jacques Concantin's grubby little fingers had left three faint smudges on the paper.

Martin started to rub them off when he found himself riveted in place when he realized at

what he was staring. Jacques had seen what the adults had failed to see. The paper Jacques had held was the rubbing taken of the map that had appeared on the joined tablets. There were three spots on the map which had been hidden among the topography.

The map was of a single landmass surrounded by water. The three smudged spots spanned the breadth of the landmass.

Inspiration suddenly struck Martin and he began tearing through the atlases in the library to find one that had maps of a comparable size to the one on the rubbing.

While Roger and Jacques looked at Martin as if he had gone mad, Henrietta looked at him with an amused, knowing smile.

”What are you looking for, my darling?”

”Gondwanaland!”

Her eyes lit up with comprehension. “But of course!”

While Martin searched through the atlases, Henrietta explained to the others about Gondwanaland. Some theorized that the present day continents had once formed a single land mass named Pangae. When Pangae had broken up it had formed two smaller landmasses Laurasia and Gondwanaland.

Jacques de Tremeuse nodded. “I remember reading about this. However this took place millions of years ago, if I recall.”

”That is true however despite the lack of geological evidence, there is some anecdotal evidence that other larger continental masses that have formed and broken apart in more recent history. There are tales of the legendary landmass known as Hyboria , the legendary landmasses that made up Lemuria and Mu , and of course Atlantis. Remember Jacques that these tales of drowned lands may not necessarily be actual continental land masses but may pertain to simply islands that sank or became part of a larger landmass due to shifting tides or water sources or valley civilizations inundated by water. There may not be any solid connection between the three drowned lands except through the commonality of being drowned lands. A metaphoric connection may have been created by the writer of the tablets.” Henrietta explained as Martin continued his search.

Martin Mystere finally found for what he had been searching, which was a map of the world in which the continental landmasses were of a similar size to the continental mass in the rubbing. Martin placed the rubbing atop the map in the atlas and used a pin to mark the three spots that Jacques Concantin had found. Removing the rubbing he hissed in shock. One of the pinpicks was in the approximate location of the Mayan temple that he and Henrietta had found their tablet. Another was in Central Africa. Carrying the Atlas over to Jacques de Tremeuse he asked him if this was anywhere near where he had found his tablet. Jacques de Tremeuse nodded slowly, comprehension dawning on his face.

However when Martin and Jacques located the final pinprick, they discovered that it was

in the middle of the South Pacific far from island chains or any known landmass.

”If this last one refers to a genuinely sunken land why do the other points on landmasses?” Jacques de Tremeuse mused aloud.

”Perhaps they refer to the repository of knowledge from the drowned civilizations.” Henrietta Mystere said also puzzled by the last location.

” Or it refers to both a depository of knowledge and a drowned land. For example, the land where we found the tablet may have been the depository of knowledge from Atlantis. Yet at the same time that area where we found the Mayan temple was also near the region described by Ventidius Varro, as Atala which had ties with Atlantis as well as being mistaken for it. The area in Africa could have been the depository of knowledge about the sunken civilization that gave rise to the idea that Atlantis had colonies in Africa. I suspect that there was an civilization in Africa that gave rise to such a myth and was possibly the true parent civilization of such lost cities as Zu-Vendis, Kor, Opar and Zimbabwe. So possibly the last location refers to a land what was in the Pacific and was lost such as Lemuria or Mu. Perhaps we are not looking at an expanse of ocean but rather a fragment of a lost continent, an island perhaps.” Martin said thoughtfully, tracing the paths of the areas mentioned with his finger.

”Exactement!” Henrietta said with a glad shout, slapping her hands on the table. “Yes, Yes, it all makes sense. A script that has yet to be deciphered-that some claim is akin to the script found in the Indus valley. The rumors of being part of Lemuria. The location is Easter Island!” She jumped to her feet or rather made the attempt to do so. Off balanced by her gravid stomach she fell back into her seat. Mustering her dignity she slowly pulled herself to her feet. “It is imperative that we travel there and rescue whatever treasures were left before the Les Habit Noirs discern the riddle and either destroy or forever hide the artifacts of this lost civilization.”

”Time is of the essence I agree, but you are in no condition to travel with us!” Martin exclaimed, alarmed that Henrietta would even think of going with them in her condition.

Henrietta put her hands on her hips, leaned back and looked upwards to meet her husband in the eye. “Did you think that I was going to give up my career? Did you think I would be shut up in a house taking care of babies and keeping house while you were wandering about the world? Was that part of your plan, make Henrietta pregnant so you can go running off without her, hmm?”

”No, of course I did not expect you to stay home forever but you must admit that you are in no condition to travel, you are so close to birth.”

”Nonsense, babies have been while women have been traveling for thousands of years. I am going and that is final.”

Martin threw his hands in the air, knowing it was useless to argue with Henrietta once she had made up her mind.

Jacques de Tremeuse quickly made the arrangements for an expedition to Easter Island. To gain access to the island however he had to deal with the company that rule Easter Island. This was Compania Explotadora de la Isla de Pascua, which leased the island from the nation of Chile which had annexed it. They had turned the island in to a large sheep farm. Ostensibly, de Tremeuse through one of his firms, would be looking to buy wool and mutton.

The fastest route seemed to be to travel across Europe and Asia by train and then book a fast steam ship in China for Easter Island.

As Henrietta was packing her bag for the trip she suddenly dropped the clothes she had been folding and gasped. She clutched her swollen stomach. Martin raced to her side.

Henrietta smiled at him to show that she was not in any danger. She took his hand and placed it against her. He felt a tremor.

"Your son is playing football in there." With a slightly sad and wistful smile she began to unpack her bag.

Martin looked at her questioningly. "No, I am not about to deliver but nonetheless, I am not going with you. Yes, I will miss the adventure but I will not regret doing so. I was caught up in the thrill of the chase and forgot where my priorities lie. This is child of ours is much more important to me than all the lost cities in the world."

Martin began to unpack his things and had to jerk his hands out of the case when Henrietta slammed it shut.

"You are going! Jacques will not be able to find what we are seeking without you. As much as I will miss you, I do not want those bastard Les Habits Noirs to steal any more knowledge from the world"

Henrietta finished packing his bags and then after a long kiss sent him on his way.

Martin traveled alone by train to St. Petersburg. He met Jacques de Tremeuse in St. Petersburg. They hoped that by traveling separately they would keep Les Habits Noirs off of their trail. From St. Petersburg they Moscow and took the Trans-Siberian railroad to Peking. From Peking they traveled to Shanghai where they chartered a fast steam ship to take them to Easter Island. The ship was *The Pious Woman* owned and operated by Captain Own Kettle. He was old banty sea dog whom de Tremeuse did not entirely trust but believed could be bought. He bought the ship from Kettle with the condition of selling it back to him for a nominal sum.

Easter Island rarely saw ships since it was so isolated and it did not have a natural harbor. It was also notorious for the number of ships wrecked near its shores. The Captain Kettle was reluctant to get too close to shore and so Jacques de Tremeuse and Martin Mystere set out for the island on a cutter that they had to buy for an additional sum from Captain Kettle. Captain Kettle informed them that the ship could probably wait for them for two days but no longer otherwise they would use too much fuel and not be able to reach

another fueling depot.

Since most of the shore of Easter Island was made of rocky, craggy cliffs and rocks, Jacques de Tremeuse and Martin Mystere landed on Easter Island at the Cook's Bay. Located on the bay was the village of Hanga Roa, the only place of human habitation on the island. The story of Easter Island was in many ways a tragic and cautionary tale of human beings affecting their environment in an adverse way. The original settlers of Easter Island had found an island rich with lumber and wildlife. They began cultivating the land and clearing the land. As the population had boomed they had begun to carve the megalithic heads for which Easter Island was famous, using much of the wood moving and supporting the heads. The massive clearing of the forests led to the topsoil being washed away from island and this led the shrinking of arable land. As the forests dwindled so did the wildlife. The food sources became depleted and the human beings on the island warred for resources. Deforestation meant that they could not even build boats to escape from the island. Many blamed the giant heads for their troubles and many of the megaliths were broken in the lean years. Cannibalism began to be practiced. The population continued to shrink until it had fallen enough so that even the islands limited resources could support the few people living on the island.

The village had a wall around it and a locked gate limited even the native population's access to the main portion of the island. The natives were confined to the village and needed permission to leave it so that they would not decrease the numbers of livestock roaming freely on the island. The sheep and cattle were owned by Williamson and Balfour and the natives were not allowed to use them as food sources, the natives were forced to subsist on what they could cultivate in the village gardens, on fish and on supplies provided by the company on a semi-annual basis. Although Jacques de Tremeuse seethed at the injustice of making the inhabitants of Easter Island prisoners on their own home, he realized that there was little he could do about their situation.

Martin Mystere could sense the contained rage that burned in Jacques Tremeuse as they made their way through the village. The villagers greeted them cordially and enthusiastically. They were dressed in clothing that was the ragged remnants of clothes from Europe or South America.

They were escorted to the Manager of the Island or the defacto governor of the Island. Mr. Edmunds the Manager described in Katherine Routledge's book, *The Mystery of Easter Island*, had since retired and had been replaced by a Chilean representative of Williamson and Balfour. His residence was outside of the village. Jacques de Tremeuse noted that Senor Ortiz carried two sidearms on a holster. He was accompanied by two men toting powerful rifles.

Jacques de Tremeuse and Martin Mystere noted that at the approach of Senor Ortiz and his bodyguards the native contingent accompanying Jacques and Martin had evaporated.

Senor Ortiz welcomed them into his small hut offering them coffee or liquor to drink. Ortiz had been contacted by radio about their visit to the island. The Island was currently experiencing a glut of sheep and would be happy to provide de Tremeuse with as many as he needed.

Tremeuse said he would like to look them over as soon as possible. He also wondered if it would be possible to visit some of the sites described in the recent book about Easter Island. At this Ortiz frowned but said if de Tremeuse wished to waste his time looking at the pagan statues made by the heathen savages of the island, it was fine by him. Ortiz insisted on hearing the latest news from South America and Europe before he had one of his guards escort Martin and Jacques about the island.

Jacques and Martin spent the rest of the day examining sheep. There were three sheep herders patrolling the island, that is three men with shotguns who watched over the various flocks of sheep. During the course of their examination, they came upon the corpse of a sheep that had been killed and butchered. The sheep herders had apparently not seen this particular wolf. Martin and Jacques companion, Hernandez made a note of the location of the sheep.

When they returned to the Ortiz house, Hernandez informed him of the butchered sheep.

Ortiz sighed and smiled grimly "Hernandez go get one."

Lighting a cigar, Ortiz said, "Now, Mr. de Tremeuse I will demonstrate why Williamson and Balfour can guarantee any amount of sheep that your company would care to order. Great measures are made to keep the flocks safe from the depredations of the natives. Please come with me to see."

They walked to a spot just outside the village gate. There were two upright poles set into the ground.

Hernandez returned in a few moments. He and the other guard marched a native boy of about fifteen years up to the poles. The boy was quickly tied to the posts. When Hernandez uncoiled a long bullwhip it became apparent to Jacques de Tremeuse and Martin Mystere what was about to transpire.

"Ortiz, this is not necessary, Why I will pay for the sheep rather than have this boy beaten."

Ortiz was adamant however, if leniency was shown, even this once, the natives would gorge themselves on the sheep until it was all gone. Despite however many sheep de Tremeuse could buy, Ortiz had to think of the long term establishment of order on the island. Ortiz added with a grim smile that if either de Tremeuse or Mystere interfered that they would be shot, guests of the company or not.

The boy shouted at Ortiz in Spanish that he did not kill the sheep. Ortiz told him that it did not matter, everyone in the village was guilty; he would be the scapegoat for their sins.

Martin Mystere and Jacques de Tremeuse were forced to stand by while the fifteen year old boy received fifteen lashes with a bullwhip. Yet that was not the end of his punishment. He was to be kept tied to the posts overnight and then starting the next day

would work a week in the company gardens.

After the whipping Martin Mystere and Jacques de Tremeuse were invited to dinner by Ortiz. They excused themselves stating that they were exhausted from their trip and the excursion about the island. However they sent a couple of bottles of wine for Ortiz and his men to share. Jacques made certain that he handed one to each of the men. Jacques and Tremeuse repaired to their tent which they set up a distance from the Managers home. Once darkness had set however Jacques de Tremeuse donned his Judex outfit. Martin asked why he bothered, Ortiz would undoubtedly know it was one of them who had freed the boy. Jacques smiled and told him that , it just felt right that Justice should come to this island, even if only for one night.

Judex and Martin Mystere made their way to the Managers house and the bunker that the guards shared. As they had hoped all were snoring away from the doped wine.

They had planned to first make friends with the natives and then dope the company men but the brutal beating had altered those plans. They now had only one night to find where the third tablet was hidden.

They quickly went to the poles where the unfortunate boy was tied. Judex cut his bonds. Martin slung the unconscious boy over his shoulder as they made their way to the locked iron gates of the village. Judex quickly picked the lock of the gate and entered the village.

The people of the village had watched their progress. Some of the older people gasped at Judex appearance but they did not have time to make inquiries. Judex quickly bade the villagers to take the boy to the ship off shore of the island, they would make certain that he received medical attention. Jacques de Tremeuse wrote a note to the Captain of the vessel. Some of the villagers set off carrying the boy to a boat. Jacques de Tremeuse explained that the Manager and his men were sleeping and would sleep for the better part of a day. He explained what they were seeking but the villagers were ignorant of the tablet. One of the older men said that he would lead them to their greatest treasure that they had so far hidden from all other treasure seekers.

When Jacques and Martin set out they noticed that the entire village was following them. Jacques explained that while they appreciated the company, they did not need the entire village to help them. The old man explained that they were just traveling with them a part of the distance, the villagers had to go and hide in secret caverns on the island until the wrath of Ortiz had passed.

A few miles past the Manager's house the main body of the villagers departed and headed for the smallest of the three volcanic mountains.

The old man Raraku took Martin and Judex to Orongo, a deserted village on the far side of the island consisting of fifty or so stone buildings. The buildings were built in two rows on a cliff overlooking the ocean. In the ocean directly out from the village were three islets.

Martin and Jacques knew from their reading of the Routledge book that Orongo was

supposedly the center of the Bird cult. The bird cult had grown to prominence during the lean years of Easter Island, when the birds became a vital source of food. The ecological devastation had also caused a break down in the social order and the hereditary rule of kings had been abandoned for a rule by lottery. Each year the men would compete to be the first one to bring back the egg of the sooty tern from one of the nearby islets. The winner would be the ceremonial leader for a year.

Raraku explained that even though he was now a Jesus man, he still honored the old ways, as did many of his generation. This is why when Jacques had come into their village dressed in the Judex outfit, many of the older people had been in awe. With Jacques' large nose, dark hat, dark cloak and white face he had seemed like a human version of the sooty tern. This was the species of bird that the egg hunters had sought, which had black upper parts and white upper parts, seeming as if it wore a hat and cape. Jacques appearance had seemed like the living embodiment of tangata-manu. Rakaku told them that there were very ancient carvings that predated the Bird cult that looked very much like Jacques' version of tangata-manu.

Rakaku led them to a cavern beneath the village of Orongo. This was the cavern where the village elders would listen for the birds. Once they were inside the cavern, Raraku slowly felt his way among the petroglyphs on the wall. He pressed his fingers against one. There was a small clicking sound. He knelt down to the cavern floor and pulled a small section of stone upwards. A three foot by two foot slab of stone swung upwards as if on oiled hinges.

Raraku crawled into the opening and told Jacques and Martin to do so as well.

They crawled into a larger cavern which narrowed into a natural tunnel leading downwards. Raraku went down this tunnel which widened after about twenty feet. The walls were carved with petroglyphs. On the rear wall was a petroglyph of a bird-man. He had an egg where his navel should have been. Stacked on an altar below the petroglyph were dozens of small wooden slabs. These were covered with a script which Martin Mystere recognized as Rongorongo, the written language of Easter Island. He also noted with shock that it was indeed similar to the script found in Mohenjo Daro in the Indus Valley. It was also similar to the script that had been on the tablet found by Jacques de Tremeuse in Africa.

This was the treasure of the Rapa Nui. Jacques and Martin spent a while searching the area for possible entrance into another chamber. Raraku left them to their studies to go and check up on the rest of the villagers.

Jacques continued to look about the chamber that that they were in while Martin studied the wooden tablets for a possible clue. The language was tantalizing close to that of the script that had been on de Tremeuse tablet but not identical. Martin was so intent upon examining the wooden tablets that he nearly dropped one when he heard a scream out in the antechamber.

Their first thought was that Ortiz and his men had recovered from the drug already and had found Raraku. They hurried out of the chamber through the tunnel and into the

antechamber. Martin Mystere was shocked to discover the lean, whip cord form of one of his former associate professors flanked by three members of Les Habits Noirs. One of the men in black stood behind the slumped form of Raraku and held him up by claspings him under the arms. Raraku was unconscious and it appeared as though the fingers on his right hand had been broken. One of the men in black grasped Raraku's other hand. The third man had one arm fastened about the waist one of the young woman from the village, the other arm was about her neck.

" Ah, young master Mystere. If you would be so kind as to hand over the tablets. We will not kill the girl or the old man," said Dr. Rene Belloq.

Martin and Jacques were then told to sit on the floor of the cavern with their hands underneath their legs. Mystere had heard that Dr. Belloq had turned his knowledge and skills at archaeology to treasure hunting and looting but had not wanted to believe it.

" You killed a sheep yesterday. Since you did not put to shore at Cook's Bay, I guess you and your companions scaled the cliffs and kept watch on us with telescopes or binoculars."

Belloq looked a bit startled at Jacques de Tremeuse statement but replied with a bit of wry humor, "I prefer my lamb to be prepared by a chef but it was sufficient for a meal on the run "

"A boy was cruelly beaten because you killed that sheep. You will answer for that crime here or in hell."

Belloq laughed, "Monsieur de Tremeuse that is the least of my sins. I have powerful friends and shall never have to pay for my crimes. He then spoke more contemptuously, And I certainly do not fear the wrath of your so non-existent God! "

Turning to the men in black, Belloq said "I am going to examine the next chamber, gentlemen. If you try anything heroic, these two innocents will be killed." Belloq pushed past them to crawl down the tunnel into the far chamber. Martin looked to Jacques to see if he planned on jumping the three men in black. Jacques shook him off. It was too much of a risk to take with the lives of the two Easter Islanders.

After about an hour of searching Dr. Rene Belloq returned with two more wooden tablets in his hands.

Belloq spoke to the men in black., "If there is a third tablet, it is not here. I know that we will not get anything out of Monsieur de Tremeuse or Monsieur Mystere even if we tortured them. A pity his pregnant wife was not along, Mystere would have cracked then. The girl and the old man have told us all that they know. We can search some more but the people on this wretched island probably know less than we about their origins. They might be useful in showing us some hidden caches however."

The man holding Raraku dropped the old man on the floor like a sack of potatoes. "This

one will not tell us anything he is dead.”

The girl screamed and struggled against the man holding her. His laugh soon became a scream as she turned, fastened her teeth on his face and she bit out a chunk of flesh. Nails extended she attacked Belloq. Belloq shot her in the midriff with a pistol and quickly turned to train it on Mystere and de Tremeuse who had begun to move when the girl did.

Martin Mystere could not contain himself any longer. “How can you work with these Luddites, these evil suppressors of knowledge?”

When Belloq looked at Martin in a condescending manner, Martin remembered why had had not liked Dr. Belloq. “So naïve, Monsieur Mystere! First, they pay well. Second, they only suppress certain types of knowledge. Yet on the other hand they allow people in their employ to view their archives of stolen and hidden knowledge. Like Dr. Faust, I would, and perhaps already have, sell my soul for wealth, power and knowledge.” His eyes and face filled with loathing, “You and your so scholarly kind can spend your days sifting through dust, languishing in extremes of temperatures so you can pull out a few ancient bones and perhaps scribble something that no one will ever read. I prefer to use my talents more profitably.”

Martin Mystere was as shocked as everyone else in the room when Jacques Tremeuse suddenly disappeared.

One of the men in black suddenly bent over backwards as if unseen hands.

Dr. Rene Belloq calmly and fired four shots in the direction of the guard struggling with an unseen enemy. As the four shots slammed into the guard, Jacques de Tremeuse suddenly appeared directly behind the dead guard. He slumped forward. Blood leaked from his chest and head. Martin moved to help him but was stopped by Belloq pistol.

”That was bice try Monsieur de Tremeuse, but I have also trained at Rache Churan.”

Rene Belloq smiled expansively and bowed slightly to Jacques and Tremuse. Yet his gun never wavered. “Many thanks for giving us the treasure of Easter Island and of course for providing us with a means to translate the tablets. It will be interesting to see what secret knowledge they possess.”

Belloq waved the men in black out of the cavern. With a wild laugh, Belloq said, “Too bad the world will never know the secrets of Easter Island” Belloq kept his pistol trained on Martin as he stooped down to crawl out of the rectangular hole in the wall.

As soon as Belloq exited cavern the stone slab was pushed back into place sealing Martin Mystere and Jacques Tremeuse inside the cavern.

Martin rolled Jacques over to see how badly he was injured. Jacques had taken two shots directly to the chest. However Jacques had been wearing a chainmail vest that had stopped the bullets. The wound to Jacques’ head was a graze. He was in much better condition than Martin had at first thought, most of the blood was from the guard.

When Jacques regained consciousness they searched for a way out of the cavern. The slab door could not be moved. They went into the other chamber and once again began to feel about for hidden doors for a couple of hours. Frustrated they sat down to rest.

Martin was moved to ask de Tremeuse, "Did you study at Rache Churan?"

"No, I cannot say that I ever heard of the place."

"I have heard of it from my grandfather, It is a monastery in Tibet where mystic and mental powers were learned. However these skills take great discipline and from what I know of Belloq, I doubt that he had the wherewithal to make it through the front door much less through any of the training. Rene has always been a venal and materialistic man with very little discipline. He was always pretentious and prone to make exaggerated or entirely fictitious claims about himself or his work. You heard him rant about scribbling things that no would ever read. Belloq let his ambition and lack of discipline ruin his academic career. He published a series of monographs about ancient Egypt and Babylon, the only problem was that he falsified and fabricated his data. His bogus work was exposed and he dismissed from his academic post."

Martin found himself staring at the stature of the bird-man who bore a resemblance to Jacques. His attention was drawn to the egg shaped navel. He got up and examined it more closely. He discovered that the egg shape and been covered over with a thin layer of clay. Using his fingernail he cleaned it off. Inside the egg was a small circle.

"You told us that you found your ring inside the tablet you found, isn't that correct?"

"Yes," Jacques said a bit testily. "I think however we should concentrate on getting out of here first then we can think about the research."

"I am just wondering if anything would happen if you put your ring in the circle on the bird-man."

To humor Martin Mystere, Jacques pushed his ring into the small hole in the center of the egg. He did not expect anything to happen. After a minute his doubts seemed to be justified and he took the ring back. Once it was back in his hand the wall behind the statue quivered. Lines took shape forming a rectangle on the wall. With a slight grinding of stone the rectangle behind the statue began moving upwards creating a doorway. Martin and Jacques walked into a room in which there were two pedestals. On one sat a round glass ball which looked like the crystal ball of a gypsy fortuneteller, on the other pedestal lay three very thick books. One was bound in red leather, one in a shimmering cloth and the third in the metal that had comprised the tablets that they had found.

Jacques de Tremeuse felt as if the ball called to him. He placed his hands on its cool surface. The transparent interior clouded as if filled with white smoke. The white cloud coalesced into the figure of an old man. With a shock it appeared to Martin as if he were seeing Jacques de Tremeuse in old age.

”My child,” said the figure in the crystal ball. “I call you my child yet the generations that separate us are so vast that they cannot be counted. Yet mine lineage was imprinted with my essence so that it would continue however dispersed or diffused the Kingdoms of Man became. You are a Telcontari, a member of the house of Elessar Telcontar. This is why you look as you do and why you have strong sense of right and wrong. This was done with a singular purpose, so that the knowledge of my Age would not be lost, so that the triumph of Good over Evil would not be forgotten. When the time was right and the possibility arose that the Evil One might once again ascend to create a dark empire, we made certain that our history would be discovered anew by one in whom my essence was strong. We set in motion certain events so that our history would be saved by peoples whose histories paralleled ours as similar events cycled through history. Even with the vast power of this Palantir, which now holds but enough energy for this last message, we could not foresee how long it would be before our lost tales were found. The stamp of my essence led you to the tablets of precious mithril which in turn led you to this palantir. I now charge you to take Book of Thain, the Book of Kings and the Book of Mazarbul to the one who can best translate them for your people. We do know his name only that he is a descendent of the Ring Bearer. The ring of power you hold was once an instrument of evil. It was melted down in the fires of Mount Doom and the evil inside it was extinguished from this plane of existence. The lump of melted gold was found by a raven and brought to me. Although the evil is gone from the ring it still has some slight power which can only be wielded by a descendent of mine in the cause of justice. Other rings may yet survive and may call out to my descendants; this ring shall rule them all. So long as this ring you wield is used for the cause of justice mine other descendants may use their rings in a similar fashion.. Just as you serve the cause of justice, you have no doubt fought against the minions of the Dark Lord, the Black Riders. Even though their Lord has gone, he seeks always to re-establish his reign and blanket the world in darkness. Guard well against the Dark Lord and his minions. Stride forth and serve justice and the light.”

The image in the glass ball faded. The clear glass darkened and cracked. Martin and Jacques picked up the three books. These were written in scripts unrelated to the other languages that Martin had seen in the course of this adventure. They were unlike any script he knew. They discovered that the door that had let them in had closed. They found an exit in the back of the chamber, this led to a narrow passageway that wound around for several miles before exiting just above the crater lake of the extinct volcano that Orongo had been built.

It was noon when they exited the cavern they started their way back towards Cook’s Bay. However in the distance they saw Ortiz and his men riding horses towards them. Ortiz and his men spotted them and began galloping their horses towards them. Jacques de Tremeuse and Martin Mystere ran back towards the village of Orongo.

Once at the cliff they made the decision to climb down them. The further down the cliff they climbed they noticed that a dinghy was tied up at rock but had been hidden from view by an overhang. As they made their way to dinghy, they heard another group of shouts behind them. Rene Belloq and his men were scuffling down the cliff after them. Jacques and Martin jumped into the boat and began to row away. In the bottom of the boat were the wooden tablets that Belloq had taken from the cavern.

There were also a few other artifacts that Belloq had helped himself to as well. Such as a bundle of reeds known as a pora, which had been used by member of the bird man cult when they swam to the islets. The men in black and Rene Belloq began to shoot at Martin and Jacques. Bullets sang in the air, splashed into the ocean and plunked into the wood of the boat.

Ortiz and his men reached the cliff and they began firing at Rene Belloq and the men in black. One of the men in black was hit and fell into the ocean with a splash. The other two hurried down the cliff and began swimming after the boat. The water began to churn and a spray of reddish water founted up from the surface. One of the men in black screamed as a shark took off his leg. Calculating the odds, Rene Belloq put his hands up in surrender and walked towards Ortiz. Ortiz and his men began concentrating their fire on Martin and Jacques. Their boat began to sink as water filled several holes. They spotted their ship and began to row towards it with all their might. It was not going to be enough. When the boat was no longer able to be moved because it was so water laden, Jacques de Tremeuse and Martin Mystere jumped into the water, placing the wooden tablets and the books on the bundles of reeds. They swam towards the ship, pushing their packages before them.

The ship headed their way.

Captain Kettle was quite shocked to see them but recovered rapidly, telling his men to escort the fine gents to their cabins as he hurried off to make arrangements to get underway. Jacques de Tremeuse grabbed the Captain by his shoulder, spun him around and punched him unconscious. He then assumed command of the vessel and had Captain Kettle put in the brig on a charge of piracy.

Jacques explained that Rene Belloq and the men in black had not followed them in another vessel but rather had paid Captain Kettle to hide them on board *The Pious Woman*. The dingy that Belloq and his companion had come to Easter Island on had been from *The Pious Woman*. Jacques told Martin to keep an eye out for any member of the crew that might be a member of Les Habits Noirs.

Despite their vigilance, Martin awoke early one morning to discover someone had broken into the Captain's cabin and opened the safe, taking the books and wooden tablets. He alerted Jacques and they called upon crew members that they trusted to make a quick search of the ship. Martin spotted a man throwing things off of the bow. Martin tackled him and the man fought back with desperation. Overpowered he pushed Martin aside and jumped overboard.

The member of Les Habit Noirs had succeeded in throwing aboard all but six of the wooden tablets from Easter Island. A search for them failed to find them. Fortunately the three ancient books that they had been charged to take care of were still safe.

Martin Mystere and Jacques Tremeuse and Nestor, the young man that they had rescued Easter Island , from took turns watching the three books and the tablets for the rest of their voyage to Shanghai, to Beijing and on to Paris.

Jacques told Martin that they would never have any rest until the three books were out of their possession. He asked if Martin knew whom Elessar Tolcontar had spoken of as being the one to translate the books. Martin had no idea.

Upon arriving in Paris, Michel Concantin drove them both to the Tremeuse estate. Michel told Martin that he was a papa but would leave the details to Henrietta. While Henrietta presented Martin with his son, also named Martin, Martin regaled her with the tales of their adventures.

Henrietta cursed Les Habits Noirs for their interference and their destruction of knowledge. At least she said, Les Habits Noirs would not be able to translate the tablets from Easter Island, perhaps they would float back to the home. She looked over the three books that they had brought back with them.

”It is really amazing. I would never have believed your tale if I had not seen the tablet change before my eyes. These books are really odd as well. I recognize the script or at least part of it. Although I have never met him in person, I have corresponded with a professor of Anglo Saxon at Oxford who has such a love of linguistics that he made up his own languages. He sent me examples of these. One of these books is written in his made up language.”

”So he is really not creating them but remembering them! Martin picked up Henrietta by her narrowed waist and said, “He is welcome to them. We will have enough to do translate the clay tablets from the Tremeuse mine and the wooden tablets from Easter Island.”

”Khokarsa,” Henrietta said with distraction hugging her husband with all her might. She realized how close she came to losing him.

”Geshundit!” Martin said

”No, silly that seems to be the name of the sunken island civilization mentioned in Jacques tablets. However we have years to talk about that. For now...” her eyes glowed as she bent forward to kiss him passionately.

Little Martin picked that time to begin fussing. Henrietta sighed and gave Martin a promissory kiss as she slipped from his arms. Henrietta picked up the baby and cradled it in her arms, kissing him on the forehead she said, “Little Monsieur, I think you will have a knack for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Epilogue

The Mysteres sent the three books to the Oxford professor of Henrietta’s acquaintance. They formed the basis for a group of histories which were published under the guise of fiction to escape visitation from Les Habits Noirs, yet everyone who has read these works

knows them to be more than mere fiction. Some even believe the tale of Numenor to be his version of Atlantis rather than the story of an island empire that existed ages before Atlantis.

The tablets in the Tremeuse mine were unfortunately not as complete as the Mysteres would have hoped. They formed incomplete epics about the Khokharsan empire that flourished on an island in the central African sea approximately 12,000 B.C. This island empire also drowned. One particular epic about a hero named Hadon was popularized by an American author whose work was recommended to the Mysteres by the Ironcastle family.

The wooden tables that Martin Mystere had rescued from Les Habits Noirs turned out not to be in the Rongorongo found on all of the other tablets but rather on a script similar to that found in the Indus Valley.

These tablets formed the epic tale of a warrior-King named Thongor who lived in ancient Lemuria. According to this history, Lemuria possessed technology and magics similar to that described by the ancient Vedas.

Upon discovering that Les Habits Noirs were part of an age old organization with insidious plans for humanity Jacques de Tremeuse spent the next few years taking up the mantle of Judex with more vigor. His son took up the fight when Jacques perished in a final battle against Les Habits Noirs in a dirigible tethered to the Eiffel tower. However there could be but one Judex so Frederic Jean de Tremeuse was better known as Frederic Jean Orth, L'ombre.

Despite his influence and wealth, Jacques de Tremeuse was not able to exert enough pressure or influence to change the situation of the people on Easter Island. The Chilean government remained steadfast in treating the island as a territory and the natives as unwanted interlopers on the Island. Jacques de Tremeuse did secretly fund the Franco-Belgian expedition to Easter Island in 1934. An ethnologist named Alfred Metraux wrote about the information he gathered on Easter Island and his books resulted in focusing the world's attention on Easter Island. However even this was not enough to free the natives of Easter Island and it took decades for them to be able to once again freely move about their homeland.

Young Monsieur Martin Mystere would grow up to be the renowned Detective of the impossible, part private investigator and part archaeologist. Among the more acclaimed investigations Martin Mystere would be the true stories behind Stonehenge and the Tunguska explosion in 1908. Among his great enemies were Les Habits Noirs, the Men in Black.

Young Jacques Concantin would indeed grow up to become Chief Inspector of the Surete, succeeding to the position after the former Chief Inspector Dreyfuss became mentally unstable. When Jacques Concantin heard that Hollywood would be making a film about his most renowned case against Sir Charles Litton, the jewel thief known as the Phantom, Concantin was very pleased until it became apparent that the film made him out to be a buffoon. He demanded that his name be changed and so it was. However

many people in the know have stated that the actors depiction of Jacques Concantin was uncannily accurate.

The young man that Jacques and Martin rescued from Easter Island was sponsored to an education by Jacques de Tremeuse. However the oppression of his homeland in the name of blatant capitalism led him to become an anarchist during the Thirties. The horrors of the Occupation however led him to modify his views and he became a reformed left wing idealist. Trained by Michel Concantin, he also became a private detective and opened his own detective agency, Fiat Lux. Nestor Easter's adventures were fictionalized as the adventures of Nestor Burma. Jacques Concantin was also depicted in the novels as the bumbling Police Commissioner Faroux while Jacques might have liked the idea of making him the Commissioner he was not found of the bumbling characterization.

Dr. Rene Belloc would learn, quite dramatically, that he should have feared the wrath of God.