

"Be not discouraged, and do not let your task overwhelm you. It takes but one loose nut to begin to dismantle the mightiest machine."

--Halting Paux, Xaverian Monk and Headmaster, School of Steam Mechanics & Aeronautical Endeavors

THE CAUTIONER'S TALE

Gabsy Pork & Salvo Diner
& Salvage Yard
#6.5 D... Alley
Old York, E... on Sq.
678.XU... 311

Order#: 31
Date: 3/15/47 7:82 PM
Server: GP

Table 2

#21 Beef Surprise w/ green	\$5.37
Starch	\$0.32
Water	\$6.23
Dessert-Pearange	\$11.14
	\$29.14
Subtotal:	\$5.59
Service Tax:	\$3.39
Cleaning Tax:	\$4.93
Gen. Public Tax:	\$51.73
TOTAL OWED:	\$40.00
Magistrate's Fee:	

PLEASE COME AGAIN.

The Dying Man
Ours is a story of a world gone awry
Where paper and pens are in short supply
Where all is coated w/ an oil sheen
From the big metal monsters that run on steam

The air is thick w/ low, hot clouds
And the streets are burdened w/ starving crowds
Our needs are many, but our choices are few
The jobs we were promised are overdue

Nothing is great as we were promised back then
The world's a disaster, but praying's a sin.
There's no time to ponder in dazed reflection
How we were bamboozled by a rigged election.

What can be done by the dying man?
Is there no longer hope for healing the land?
Are we doomed by God to die this way?
Or is there a hero who can show us the way?

--Anonymous Penn
2046 AD

Saturday, April 1, 2045

"Parsimonious" Creed, Head of World Leadership Council, Dead at 29

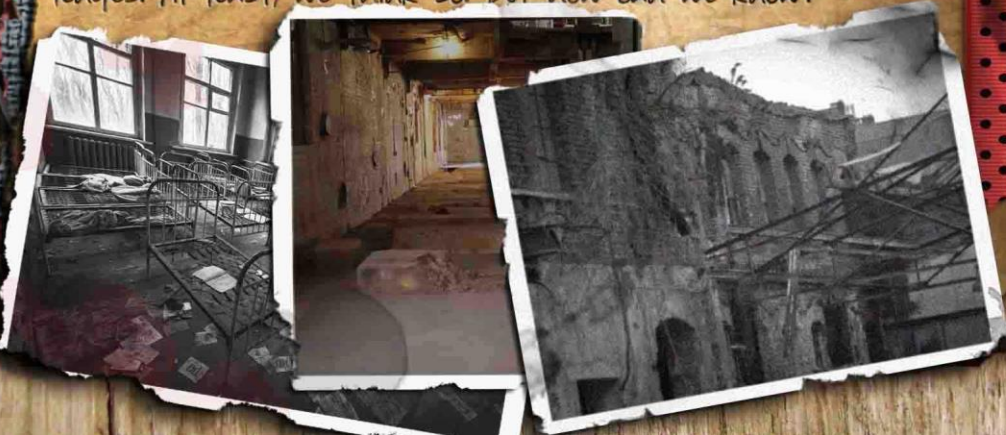
Dr. Creed found dead at home amidst evidence of a struggle
Police suspect foul play!

Upper Quadrant, New London - After an anonymous tip, police found Magistrate "Parsimonious" Creed dead in his New London

In case something happens to me, let it be known for the record: my name is Mary Morgan and this is my journal. Everything that follows is true, or is a safe assertion based on many truths. I've included evidence when possible, and changed names when necessary.

I have some catching up to do. I think Dr. Creed's death (over two years ago) may be where it began. This current predicament, I mean. It's hard to say, though, since there are so many factors that led us to where we are now. Even so, I'll start here with the death of my friend and colleague Dr. Parsimonious Creed.

PC was a scholar elected by the people to lead our world into an uncertain future. We were twenty years past the Last Great War, but with little advancement to show for it. It made sense to promote Dr. Creed whose passion and endless rhetoric centered on discovering our world's past so we could learn from our previous glories as well as our mistakes. Even though we lost most of our population to the war, and all major cities fell, possibly our greatest loss was our history. We are now a new world with new challenges. At least, we think so. But how can we know?



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NOTE: Most of us—myself included—were born after the Last Great War, to a generation called "Warriors." Scholars say we are a good sign that Mankind will survive. But many who were born before the war did not survive it, and those who did rarely talk about their "other" (pre-war) lives. It's possible they don't remember, but most likely, they just want to forget. There are, however, a rare few who insist on recovering our past. My friend and mentor Juggler Vein (twenty years my senior) was one and was the reason I worked for Parsimonious Creed, a like-minded colleague.

The three of us, along with a handful of others, were investigators searching for a past that could help us find our way forward. Ours was not an easy task, particularly for Dr. Creed, but also for Juggler Vein. (More on JV later.)

ATTN: MAIL BOY

I can already see that one of my greatest challenges in writing this for the record will be how well I can piece things together, so to speak. So much has happened that putting it all on paper in its correct order could be more difficult than I first thought.

My best hope is that you'll bear with me. It's critical this story is told and I know of no others willing to do it. Why bother? they wonder. I bother because I've seen firsthand the damage done by not knowing our past. Even if it's all for nothing, an account of our existence, a "history," must begin somewhere even if it's just in my journal.

Some of our past is blatantly obvious: there are ruins of great cities, and ribbons of roads that lead from one gray dust heap to the next, but for the most part, any structure that could be destroyed by fire, was.

Of course, this made Dr. Creed's job exceedingly difficult, but he was never one to complain. Instead, he put together a coalition whose sole purpose was to investigate the "magic" that led up to the Last Great War and use it to avoid such catastrophes in the future. (The word "magic," in this case, describes anything inexplicable, including pre-war technology that most no longer understand.)

Having worked alongside Dr. Creed for much of my time as a public servant, I was devastated by his death. But I also understood it to mean one thing: he was close to learning the truth of what really happened all those years ago.

My reasoning was based not only on the evidence of a struggle at the scene of his death, but also on the number of files missing from a secret chamber inside his home...

home where he lived with his seven guinea pigs and a vampire bat. His body was retrieved from beneath an overturned chair where an empty keybox was found. The key itself had apparently been used to open a secret room inside the doctor's home where it was evident he had stored files police can only assume were related to his investigations into Mankind's past. Based on the many near-empty file cabinets and debris littered about the room, one can only assume that most files were removed, likely by the murderous trespasser.

I was the only other person to know of this chamber's existence where PC stored evidence pertaining to the case he was building against a wealthy businessman. His theory was that this particular billionaire or one of his surrogates may have played a pivotal role in our past, but too many questions remained unanswered for the investigator to act.

It's possible I may not have been able to figure it all out after my friend's death had it not been for what took place immediately after the news became public...

"All the news,
like it or not!"

The New World Times

Saturday, April 1, 2045

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VOL. CXCVI...No. 4,327

SCRILLIONAIRE LAUNDERER HERR BIGLY RUMP OFFICIALLY VOLUNTEERS TO RULE THE WORLD

Quality reportage by Award Winning Leaker Yakity Max III - "You're welcome!"

Upper Quadrant, New Old York - It is officially official that multi-billionaire laundry tycoon Herr Bigly Rump has graciously volunteered to take over the top position on the World Leadership Council. Although Herr Rump's promise to make the world great again falls upon uncertain ears, many are offering their support based on his promise that he will loosen the laws that bind the use of magic despite the fact that it played such a devastating role in the Last Great War. Many believe that had it not been for the mishandling of particular nuclear technology, and the ensuing chaos that brought Mankind to the very brink of extinction, perhaps more would be known of our past. However, even after these twenty post-apocalyptic years, still very little is known of our roots.



Herr Rump's surprise announcement comes directly on the heels of our former leader's demise (murdered patriot Dr. Parsimonious Creed). As part of his sacrifice in volunteering to take over the world, Herr Rump has made it clear that no contenders need apply. "Only I," said a gallant Herr Rump, "can fix this. I will indeed take it upon my broad and chiselled shoulders to save the world and Mankind with it!" Unlike most, however, the billionaire claims to have no interest whatsoever in our past, claiming that any investigations into it are nothing more than witch hunts!

MIDWAY TO ELECTION: IS HERR RUMP'S HAPPY FACE WEARING THE

Thursday, March

Written by The Rabid Pollster with statistics from Unlikely Kahn, I

Latest poll finds voters confused of Rump's true color, sunset sienna, but amber, or...red dawn.

With the election quickly approaching voters are beginning to ask some very pointed questions about Herr Rump's temperament and true intentions if he becomes our next Magistrate. After a number of his past shady dealings have come to light, along with his penchant for bullying his opponents, people are asking outright if the businessman is truly fit to rule the world.

Although Herr Rump has made many gracious promises of accomplishments he

Herr Bigly Rump, the very person PC had been investigating, immediately announced his plan to take over the world. But in spite of his desire to run uncontested, others entered the race as well.

It wasn't until one of the Rump's opponents wound up dead and the other was jailed for the crime that I formulated a plan to stop him myself. Unfortunately...



The *I failed.* and Times

No. 4,327

Thursday, November 9, 2045

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A RUMP TRIUMPH!

written by Yakity Max III (tags: Oh, no! What have we done?!)



Despite all polls showing newcomer and Parsimonious Creed protege Mary Morgan with a vast lead to head the World Leadership Council, Herr Bigly Rump has won!

Perhaps the key to his victory was his outright and utter aggressiveness in the days leading up to the election. It was indeed a formative time for the billionaire launderer, a time during which he bullied and belittled all who stood in his path to victory. Making up the majority of his slander against his only remaining opponent, the Rump roared against pundits who argued against him. His angry mockery became so hatefully charged that many have come to know him as the Great Orange Beast (or the GOB).

Rather than happily celebrating this monumental victory for the new World Leader, people appear stunned and distressed. Many have taken to the streets to protest what they feel was a rigged election. How could Herr Bigly Rump possibly have won without cheating? Some find it likely that he had help from sinister sources.

Since the beginning of the campaign for World Leader, many have questioned the Rump's desire to lead, wondering what could have motivated him toward entering the race to begin with. Several reports have surfaced indicating a "special" relationship between Herr Rump and the evil tyrant Yankervich, although no proof has yet been disclosed.

I retreated after this, stunned by my loss and ashamed for having let down my supporters. But I wasn't done in. I learned many things from Parsimonious Creed, one of the most important being that no matter how bad I judge my life, someone else's is always worse. Unfortunately, I received evidence of this fact almost immediately.

Dear Mary,

My name is Ever Hopeful (which I chose in spite of our new magistrate, Herr Rump) and I am writing to tell you how very sorry I am that you lost the election. Since then, my father has been arrested for speaking out against the magistrate and he's been shipped off to the Arctic mines for hard labor (shoveling bat poo, I hear). Also my mother is very ill, I don't know what we will do without health-care. We are afraid of Herr Rump and what he will do to us. We are poor but hard working, but we are not beautiful, nor the right color or class. And, sometimes worse...we are just girls.

We've heard that even though Herr Rump won the election, he is still very hateful of you and is searching madly to learn your whereabouts. It seems no one knows where you are or how to reach you, but you have taught me that magic exists if we are good and kind and love one another. I believe you and I hope that magic will help my letter reach you wherever you are. Please come back, Mary. I'll do everything I can to help you, and as proof, I'm sending you my lucky button! (I know you crave color as much as I do!)

Love,

Ever Hopeful

P.S. Almost everyone I know has chosen new names for themselves in hopes their past good deeds will not set the new magistrate against them! (Maybe you should, too!)

P.P.S. I am sending you a wallflower who says everyone is as surprised as you are about the election. (Don't tell her anything you don't want her to blab about!)

P.P.P.S. Also, this is a ballot I found after the counting. Some say Herr Rump cheated. Maybe this is proof!



OFFICIAL VOTER'S TICKET
Please indicate your choice for Magistrate of the New World Empire by checking the appropriate box next to that candidate's name. DO NOT MARK BALLOTS OUTSIDE CHECK BOXES.
RESERVED FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY!

Herr Bigly Rump
Humanitarian Extraordinaire

Cankef Rump, *Minister of Summons*

Junky Caterpillar, *Militant Extremist*

Mary Morgan, *crooked lip*

IN JAIL

Under investigation by the
**FEDERAL BUREAU OF
INSTIGATION**
Deplorables Division

Dear Mary,
I've been told that even though you lost the election, you still might be able to help us. I live with my family under the Ghost Bridge on Upper Downey Street, Old Boston Ruins. Since the election, all the factories are being run by the military, so there is no work here, and very little food or medicine. I tried writing to Herr Rump, but all we're told these days is, "Button your lip or else be shipped off to the Arctic Mines!" I can't bear the thought of leaving my family with only their ration cards and monthly flea baths, so I do as Rump says and button my lip. Please help us!

Sincerely,
Flimsy Morsel

Herr Rump's government is not the "well-oiled machine" that he promised. Not one knows anything about the jobs they been assigned. They're nothing more than Herr Rump's rich friends and a lot of military muscle: Billionaires and Bullies, we call them! They don't care nothing about us starving. How can they help us solve our problem when they ARE our problem?

Dear Mary,
My name is Frumpy Mudder and I expect to be carted off to the Arctic Mines at any moment for God-knows-what reason so before I go, please let me say this: any so-called leader who fills his cabinet with his filthy rich henchmen like that villainous Gas Bag Weevil Scumly, or that Big Oil Boil Gobbledy Smak, or (WORSE!) Dastardly Gott--the monster whose "Coal Moles" have rendered the eastern seaboard swiss cheese--ought to have his head examined! And don't get me started on Rump's hand-holding pal Chain Yankervicht! Without that New Prussian princess, Rump would not have stood a chance in the election!



From the office of your Esteemed and Magnanimous Magistrate
Herr Bigly Rump
King of the World

Dear Family,

Now that I ~~led, bullied, cheated, and otherwise illegally~~ made my way to the top, you are left to run my many wildly successful corporations and vast financial empire from our glamorous headquarters in the Great Bigly Tower. Do not screw it up. The rules are as follows:

1. The poor ~~get poorer while the rich get richer.~~
2. There will be free health care for the rich and none at all for the ~~whining poverty stricken enslaved~~ lower class.
3. There will be no taxes for the rich and double for the poor.
4. There will be free food, clothing, and shelter for the rich, and ~~meager rations, nakedness, and leaky huts~~ for the poor.
5. Education costs will benefit the rich and crush the poor.
6. The poor ~~are prohibited from dying of overwork, lack of food, substance, fatal injury, or climate extremes while on duty in the coal mines without prior authorization. However, if an infraction occurs~~ the guilty party will be pardoned for all charges and will serve no jail time.

That is all. If I find out it's a disaster there, I will fire you all and appoint a legion of my bigoted, billionaire friends, and associates to ~~swindle, trick con, bamboozle, and otherwise mis~~ handle the masses.

Huggy and kisses,
Daddy

Hello, Friend,
Rummaged this from the garbage behind the Rump Scraper. Long as it's redacted (although poorly), it's no longer classified, right? Was never a secret anyway.
Regards, Max

The letters came suddenly, without warning or expectation.

TO: Miz Morgan
Portia's Hollow (I think)
Somewhere on Asia Minor,
in or near Colony #47
(or was it H...?)

Aside from magic, there was no certain means of finding me, so at least I could be encouraged by that. Contrary to his campaign promises, the new Magistrate had outlawed magic, but still, the letters came.

a concerned citizen

to: m morgan
lower west

Oddly, though, many of the envelopes I received contained nothing more than a single button. I paid them no mind at first.

Upon taking over the world, Herr Rump immediately ordered an end to all investigations into our past. And so, out of a job, I mostly kept to myself, still grieving the loss of Dr. Creed, but also my political loss, and the loss of one of Herr Rump's early opponents, the Adventurer Canker Raux. The police claimed he was offed by another campaigner: Junky Caterpillar who harbored a penchant for violence. It was an easy arrest and no one seemed to care if the "worm" did time. He was not a pleasant fellow and he smelled bad.

Canker Raux, on the other hand, had been a true ally. Political differences aside, we had been friends since childhood and all that was left of him was this box of odds and ends he had for some reason seen fit to leave in my care.

The contents meant nothing to me: a compass stuck on North, a small bloodstone with an infinity symbol etched into it, a nut, a broken old pocket watch, a pair of rocks, a chess piece, and a box of matches advertising... arson? Not even the note, with its unfamiliar digits and strange foreign language meant anything to

me. Canker was an explorer, so I supposed it all had something to do with one of his adventures. What made the least sense, however, was why he felt the need to give all these items to the bottom of the box! The only thing he hadn't qued was the single loose nut.

No matter, I decided. He'd always been an odd duck, so that's where I left it...

