

~ TENET I | TERNION II ~

OPEN I

Thursday, November 10, 1994

Archimbaud Lenneau Hardware and Glass

Glendale, Arizona

10:17 pm

The evening had been quiet enough, with only a few customers walking through the narrow aisles of Archimbaud Lenneau's Hardware and Glass store. The Glendale Archimbaud's—or Archie's, as it was colloquially known—was the ninth location of the small chain that had popped up in the Phoenix area over the past twenty-six years. As the story went, Archie had moved south from his native Quebec for 'personal' reasons, bringing his know-how and Canadian politeness with him, and earning himself a decent percentage of the rapidly expanding home improvement business. Even though the Glendale store was now a few years old, it remained the largest—and most popular—of the fourteen built, nestled in one of the hipper strip malls in the northwest Phoenix suburb. And with the holiday season fast approaching, the man who had grown his business by promising his customers can 'Save a Buck with the Kindly Canuck' had expanded the hours of operation in all of his stores.

Thankfully, ten in the evening had come and passed and, once the cashiers had chased out the last of the meandering customers, Dayne let out a sigh of relief. He was of average height, skinny build, and sported a head of all-the-rage dirty blonde locks, meaning he was the spitting image of almost every other twenty-something in the city. And as one of the few workers who had been scheduled for the evening shift, that meant he pretty much had the place to himself. Or, at least, the hardware section.

Dayne brushed his hands on his jeans, hardly noticing the dirt falling onto his ancient-looking Adidas Sambas and tugged at the faded green Archie's apron he wore around his waist, sliding it around to the side where it didn't bang on both his legs with every step he took. Content that he looked awesome for the zero-sum total people around him, Dayne got busy walking the aisles he was in charge of: the four rows east of the paint desk, where the proverbial hardware and glass were kept. Despite it being a slow Thursday evening, there were still enough little messes to clean up, from a dumped pail of sixteen penny nails to the replacement lock sets that always seemed to sell out.

How in the world people go through door handles so quickly is beyond me, Dayne considered. But the same could be said for mailboxes, he realized. The things that often seemed the most permanent in a house or apartment were all too often not. Whether that was from wear and tear or purpose-built failure, he couldn't say. As Dayne pulled a tall ladder out from behind the hardware desk his mind wandered to other considerations.

"The brave adventurer, River 'Hawk' Vermilion, cautiously climbs the rungs of the ladder, hoping against hope to find the Key of Antilles amidst the deadly ruins," he narrated in a soft whisper as he climbed the ladder, looking for a specific box of doorknobs. "Of course, the box he needs," Dayne grunted as he pushed aside box after box, "remained elusive, hidden somewhere in the vast,

secret alcoves.” With a sigh, Dayne leaned back, holding tight to the ladder and craning his neck to see further down the aisle. Two bays down he spotted a few similarly shaped boxes and so made his way back down the ladder.

What dumbnut put the boxes down there? he grumbled. Feet on the concrete floor, he grabbed the ladder with both hands, dragging it fifteen feet down the aisle, then began his climb again. Reaching the top of the ladder, Dayne ran a hand across the front of the box, wiping off the dust. *Georgian handle, brass... nope.* He moved the box aside. *Georgian handle, crystal... nope* He shoved the box out of the way. And then he spotted the box he needed, tucked away near the back ledge, teetering and threatening to be lost to the yawing canyon between the shelves.

“Hawk tentatively reaches out, his fingers gently brushing the ancient cardboard—or, um, worn *wood grain* box—noting the familiar, yet ancient, text chiseled into its side. This was the one, Hawk realized. He’d finally found the fabled Key of Antilles, long since lost in a box of Naples-era pewter levers!” Tucking the box under his arm, Dayne climbed down the ladder and began the long trek back to the lockset bay. With a practiced hand, he pulled the box cutter from his green Archie’s apron, twirling it once, then deftly sliced through the tape to reveal the doorknobs. “Another mystery solved by our hero, River ‘Hawk’ Vermilion!” He smiled, sliding the doorknobs onto the shelf. After a brief pause spent basking in the awe of his good fortune, Dayne took up his knife again and was about to break down the box when he read the front text.

A box made of Naples pewter... he considered in his mind.

“That’s too good not to use.” He realized, dropping the knife back into his apron and snatching out a click pen instead. With his free hand, he tugged the worn notebook from the back pocket of his pants, flipping through to find the most recent entries, then jotted the words down.

A box made of Naples pewter — possible resting place of the Key of Antilles? He scribbled beside the description of the box, pondering it even as he wrote the words.

Resting place for something, anyway... He shrugged. Content with the progress he had made, Dayne closed the notebook, slipping it back into the pocket, and rocked up off his knees to stand again. With the pen stowed away in his green apron, Dayne grabbed the knife once more, making quick work of the tape, then broke down the box before tossing it in a shopping cart with the other cardboard he had been collecting that evening.

“So,” he muttered to himself, glancing down the aisle. “What next?”

For work? Or for Hawk? his brain replied, answering a question with more questions.

“Nails it is.” He nodded, moving to the spill at the far end of the aisle.

But what about the Key of Antilles? He dropped to one knee beside the mess. He plucked one of the multitude of nails from the floor, inspecting its size and thickness, then spotted the same size nail affixed to one of the sliding plastic bins on the wall. He snatched the bin from its slot, placing it on the floor and began to backfill the bin with the wayward nails. *What secrets will this Key unlock for our hero?*

“Hmm...” he mumbled, biting his lip as he considered. “A gateway to somewhere?”

The past? his brain offered, to which Dayne visibly grimaced.

Fine, the future.

“Time travel just feels overdone right now. What if it just gives him a glimpse of the future?”

Why would a key give him a vision?

“Maybe to prevent a cataclysm?” Dayne offered.

Or what if it causes a cataclysm? he thought, his eyes opening wider.

“Like some kind of natural disaster or something...” he whispered. The idea began to manifest visions in his mind, flashes of surging floods and erupting volcanoes, virulent plagues and violent storms, each engulfing the Phoenix, Arizona of his mind’s eye and leaving not but woe in their wake.

It is about time for disaster films to make their comeback, he considered.

“Indeed...” He smirked, putting the last of the nails away and sliding the plastic bin back into its home.

Twenty minutes later, Dayne took his cart of broken-down cardboard boxes to the stockroom, stacking them neatly in the cardboard crusher. There were still a few minutes until the boss would let them leave, so he grabbed one of the floor mops and worked his way through his four-aisle fiefdom, gathering the dust and debris that had somehow accumulated in the last twenty-four hours since he had closed up the night before. He had just finished depositing the dust in the trash can when a loud clack resounded through the mostly empty store, and the overhead lights shut off, leaving only one light shining for every fourth aisle. Contented with his work, Dayne stowed the broom away for the next day, then undid the apron he wore tied around his waist—in that faded, gaudy green that old man Archimbaud loved so much—and put it in a cabinet beneath the desk. As he made his way to the front, he pulled the notebook from his back pocket and reviewed the notes he’d taken throughout the day.

- Hawk needs to sneak away from his captors at Montezuma Castle. ~~Riddle?~~ No, too complicated. Maybe he just knocks them out?
- His captors should be dumb, though, and accidentally let on that Prof. Bentling is close to finding the Key of Antilles, probably somewhere in the basement (or whatever a basement is called in a castle...). That way Hawk knows where to go.
- Hawk sneaks past Bentling, finds his way into some ancient catacombs.
 - “Been teaching too long, old man.” Hawk smirks. “No term paper is gonna lead you through the tombs.”
- A box made of Naples pewter - possible resting place of the Key of Antilles?
- Hawk thinks it will lead to treasure, but the Key actually brings about disaster!
 - Flooding? Fire? Super Volcano!
 - Aren’t there, like, 2 or 3 super volcanoes near here? Yellowstone, and Cali? Maybe NM?
 - Check the encyclopedias...

Dayne wasn’t the first to arrive at the customer service desk where the timecard clock was, so it was a brief wait to get clocked out for the evening. Watching ever-so-diligently over his wards, Mathieu Lenneau, nephew to the one and only Archimbaud Lenneau, yawned while he spun the ring of keys around his finger. Dayne tried not to fidget, but he was excited to get home to start typing out the newest of Hawk’s adventures.

Just need to get out of here without any delays.

“You got a lot of leftover energy, Dayne?” Mathieu spoke up. “The air conditioning aisle got hammered tonight. Could’ve used your help breaking down that shipment of Lotan-Enuma A/Cs.”

“Sorry, Mattieu.” Dayne gave him an apologetic look. “Had a lot of down stocking to do in hardware.”

“Whatever.” Mathieu looked away.

Whatever yourself, dude, Dayne thought to himself. *I put my time in tonight.*

“You know my uncle doesn’t like slackers.” It sounded like a thinly veiled threat, but Dayne took it for the desperate plea for control that it was.

Maybe, but he sure does love someone to polish the brass, Dayne thought, rolling his eyes.

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

Don’t let that jerkwad get to you. It’s a good night. You’re gonna get a lot of writing done, he reminded himself. It was finally his turn at the time machine, so he grabbed his card and made sure to line it up directly under the stamp, just as the sign implored him to do.

STAMP IT STRAIGHT!

If I can’t read it, you don’t get paid!

I need a new job, Dayne bemoaned as the machine clamped down on his manilla card. He slipped it into his spot on the rack, then headed to the door to wait with the others while Mattieu moved to the end of the line, intent on being the very last person to punch his card for the day. It was all Dayne could do to keep himself from rolling his eyes.

“Alright! Everybody out!” Mathieu announced over the clunk of the stamping machine. “I ain’t getting paid to babysit you no more!” He chuckled while everyone shuffled out the doors. Dayne stuck to the middle of the pack, focusing his thoughts on the notes he had written himself.

So, okay. Hawk uses the Key of Antilles, which somehow starts a chain reaction to begin the buildup of magma below the city... But, how the heck do you stop a super volcano from erupting? Dayne considered as he walked toward his car. Absently, he heard the jingle of keys as someone locked the front door, and he may have heard the track

shoes crunching on the stones on the macadam, but his thoughts remained on the notes in his pocket. At least they did, until a voice rattled through his brain.

"I really don't know how you conned that sweet thing into buying a house with you, but you definitely don't deserve her," Mathieu's raspy voice mocked as he put a hand on Dayne's shoulder.

"She's not my trophy," Dayne said, shrugging off the touch.

"She'd sure as hell be mine!" the assistant manager continued. "Sweet little piece like that, you better be doing her every night. Never know when she's gonna bail for a *real* man."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Dayne raised an eyebrow. Somewhere deep inside, the warmth of anger began to simmer.

"Just what I said," Mathieu stepped in front of Dayne, face to face. "She gets a taste of a real man's dick, you—"

Fuck you! A voice from deep within Dayne's soul rose up, and the anger came boiling with it.

"Shut up!" The words came out with just as much bite, but in decidedly safer language.

At least the filter still works, Dayne's consciousness warned him. *But keep your calm. You can't afford to lose this job over something stupid.*

It's not stupid if this dickwad deserves to be put in his place.

"Whoa, chill, dude," Mathieu said as he jogged in front of Dayne, stopping them both in their tracks. Their eyes met and Mathieu's usually smug face almost appeared concerned. Staring back at him, Dayne struggled to keep his anger in check, his fingers clenching tighter into a fist.

It's not worth it, his mind warned, and for the briefest of moments, Dayne felt the anger begin to ebb. That is, until the assistant manager burst into laughter, his face only inches from Dayne's. The rage erupted within, threatening to boil over and into the real world.

“You almost showed some emotion there!” Mathieu laughed, as if his joke would inspire Dayne to join him in the fun.

We will fucking end you, the voice from deep within growled, and Dayne could feel his mind seething with toxin as his eyes bored deep into Mathieu’s brain.

“Whatever.” Dayne bit down on the anger, stepping around the man as he willed the rage to dissipate.

“I’m just fuckin’ with you, bro.” Mathieu played it cool, falling into side with Dayne as they moved towards the back of the parking lot where their cars were parked. “This face could sell ice to Eskimos,” Mathieu boasted, his tone playful. “There’s a billion other women out there just waiting to catch a ride, so I don’t need to steal your girl... yet.” Dayne’s fingers started to tingle, and he realized he was cutting off the blood flow by clenching his fists so tightly. “But, seriously,” Mathieu continued, and Dayne felt his heart rate skyrocket.

I swear, if you don’t shut the fuck up... the thought seethed as he made eye contact with the annoying man.

“Want to pick up some hours tomorrow? More of those damn A/Cs are coming in.”

I mean, I could use the extra cash, but... he briefly considered the offer.

“No.” Dayne shook his head. “I have plans.”

“I mean, if you say so, but if you change your mind...” Mathieu shrugged. “You know we don’t offer overtime often.”

Because you always figure out a way to cheat us out of it anyway, the voice within said, and Dayne couldn’t argue the point. He had been burnt by the promise of time-and-a-half pay more than once in the time he had worked at Archie’s.

“I appreciate the offer, but no.” Dayne said, trying to break away from the other man to finally get to his car.

“Whatever floats your boat, man,” Mathieu said nonchalantly, then turned and headed toward his oversized—and over-priced—sports utility vehicle.

“Goodnight, *Matty*,” Dayne replied, knowing full well the man hated the nickname. Without looking back, Mathieu tossed up a middle finger and was grumbling some response, but the words were lost in the sound of a car starting up nearby.

“What a fucking asshole,” Dayne growled to himself as he slid into his ancient red station wagon, slamming the door with all the care he could muster so as to not break something. He could still feel the rage bubbling within, but at least in the safe confines of the car he could try to deal with it and, hopefully, put it behind him. He sucked in a deep breath over several counts, holding it for a few seconds, exhaling slowly, seeking whatever calm he could find. But after all of one and a half repetitions he realized he was just wasting time. He fished the keys out of his pocket and slipped the big, rubber coated one into the ignition. It took a few cranks of the starter, but eventually the engine caught and began to rev loudly.

Its newest trick, Dayne lamented. The car needed work, of course, but he also understood full well why that wasn’t going to happen any time soon. Barely two seconds after the car turned on, the speakers in the dash and door around him began to scream, filling the car with the heavy guitars of The Offspring and the voice of Dexter Holland intoning why he had no self-esteem. As much as he wanted to wash his anger away with the sound, Dayne leaned forward and, with a satisfying snap of the volume knob, the speakers cut off mid-sentence.

“Sorry, Dexter.”

But I need to preserve the battery to keep the engine running right now, he knew. With a depressed sigh he slumped back against the seat. The car heaved around him, the engine rattling as it errat-

ically revved up before nearly shutting off, desperately trying to find its equilibrium. *C'mon, car*, he thought, annoyed. *Just work long enough to get us out of here.* He really didn't want to be stuck in this place any longer than he had to. *Work. Mathieu. Stupid hours. Stupid air conditioners...*

"Stupid fucking car..." he bemoaned. While he waited for the engine to settle, Dayne picked up the cassette case from the passenger seat, looking over its strange, orange-highlighted skeleton, hoping to distract himself. He had heard The Offspring's single, 'Come Out and Play', on the radio a few months back and had enjoyed their sound, so he had saved a few bucks and visited the mall to snag the cassette. It had been the first new tape he had bought in ages, so even though the album had been on repeat since then, it still felt and sounded new enough to keep him entertained. Tonight, however, he hoped the silence would help both himself and the car, limiting any excess strain on the engine, and giving him some quiet headspace to think.

Okay, so Hawk grabbed the Key of Antilles from the box of, um... he paused, trying to picture the note in his pocket to remember what he wrote down but to no avail.

"I wrote it down so I wouldn't *have* to remember," Dayne mumbled in his best Sean Connery accent, absolutely failing to mimic the Scottish man's voice in every way.

Actually... his brain switched gears for a moment, thinking of the relationship between Sean Connery and his on-screen son Harrison Ford. *Should Hawk's dad get involved in this somehow?* He couldn't deny that the possibility was tantalizing. *Partnering up with Old Man Vermillion would certainly add another layer to the whole disaster thing...* He was considering, but then just as quickly shook it off.

"People would think you were just copying Indiana Jones."

There's nothing new under the sun, he thought, disappointed but accepting the realization as an absolute fact. *Alright, so Hawk gets*

the key from the box of whatever, then uses it in a random slot on a nearby wall, but instead of giving him some amazing prize, it begins a countdown to doom, activating a long-dormant super volcano. And now only one man can save the world!

“Never mind that it was his fault it happened in the first place...” Dayne whispered to himself over a particularly loud rumble of the car engine. “Well, *maybe* I’ll get home tonight.” He sighed, and the engine followed suit, falling into the comfortable rumble that meant it was finally ready to go. Content he wasn’t the last one in the lot, Dayne clutched at the shifter on the steering wheel column and slipped the transmission into drive.

A few minutes later, Dayne guided the aging car onto the highway to take him back to his side of town. There was some part of his mind still paying attention to the lines on the road, but most of his focus was envisioning what Hawk was doing.

Hawk is inside the ancient castle, where he sneaks past the guards and the evil Professor Bentling down into the catacombs. Alone, he finds the Key of Antilles in the box of whatever. But, fearing he won’t be able to escape the same way he came in, he looks for another way to get out. Instead he comes to a dead end—only, it isn’t really a dead end, it’s actually a wall with several key holes in it.

“It takes him a few minutes,” Dayne switched to narrating the story out loud, “and there’s some mystery as to why there are multiple keyholes... ugh. Something, something, clever riddle, whatever. I don’t have time to figure that out tonight,” he lamented, shrugging it off. “Okay, so Hawk thinks he has the riddle figured out, puts the Key of Antilles into what he believes is the right slot and turns it, just as Professor Bentling finds him and starts shouting.”

“You fool!” the Professor cries. “I don’t know how you conned that sweet thing into buying a house with you, but you definitely don’t deserve her!” The words issued from that dark place within

himself, and the anger that boiled with it caught Dayne completely off guard.

That's not what— Dayne tried to course correct his thoughts, shaking his head to try to clear the anger.

“She gets a taste of a real man’s dick...” Mathieu’s words rumbled from the deep within.

“That’s not—!” Dayne’s anger was surging through him, but a loud blaring from outside of the car grabbed his attention. He quickly glanced out the window to see another car mere inches from his.

Watch out! His mind shouted over another round of horn blaring as Dayne cranked the wheel and swerved back into his own lane.

“Fuck you, asshole!” Dayne felt the words tear from his throat as he instinctively slammed on the accelerator. The old car rattled in protest but sped up and away from the other car. For a moment, the rage began to settle back in Dayne’s chest, but it returned with a vengeance as the other car got in the lane behind him and began flashing its high beams, sending a searing pain through Dayne’s eyes and brain. “Fucking fuck!” Dayne spat, the muscles in his shoulders writhing with anger, and a firm hand seemed to grab at the base of his brain for control.

Slam on the breaks, the voice from deep within calmly instructed him. ***Make them hit you.***

You don’t have insurance! The reasonably sane part of his brain argued. *You’d be out of a car and a job!*

“But it’d be *fucking* worth it,” Dayne said through gritted teeth, his foot threatening to lift off accelerator and find its way to the brake pedal. He was nearly there when the car behind him stopped its erratic flashing and drifted back slightly, putting enough space between them that Dayne realized his opportunity had passed.

You weren’t paying attention to your driving and nearly hit them, his brain was kind enough to remind him, replacing his anger with

guilt. Dayne glanced in the rearview mirror, but the car was still there, tailing behind him.

They'll get your license plate number. Call the cops on you, the voice warned.

"It was an *accident!*" Dayne yelled back, but he knew it was one he would have caused.

Reckless driving. Endangerment of others... the voice continued, and Dayne could feel the paranoia beginning to take hold.

"Fuck this." He spotted an exit at the last moment and cranked the wheel, steering the station wagon into a slide. The car threatened to spin out of control, but Dayne held firmly onto the wheel, his lips curled, and he just barely made the turn onto the off ramp. It wasn't his exit—he didn't even know what exit it was—but he knew he needed to get out of the situation. He slowed ever-so-briefly at the yield sign at the end of the ramp, then continued ahead onto the unfamiliar road, and away from whomever was in the other car. He slowed down slightly, checking the rearview mirror to make sure no one had followed him off the exit, but it seemed like he was more or less alone. Leaning forward, he looked out the windshield and up at the buildings surrounding him.

And you wound up in Midtown, of all fucking places, the voice from within grumbled.

"At least this stupid town is based on a grid." It took a moment, but he spotted signs for seventh street, knowing that would lead him back to route ten and eventually to Highway 202, and home to Mesa. Shaking his head at himself, Dayne lightened his death grip on the steering wheel, flexing his fingers to get the blood flow back. His brain wanted to replay the whole incident, but Dayne decided he needed to focus on the drive, not his guilt. "Fuckin' a..."

Westby would have a field day with this. Dayne cringed at the realization.

"*It's imperative you let yourself feel in the moment, Dayne,*" he could already hear his therapist muttering.

“If I even tell him about this.”

“You almost showed some emotion there!” Mathieu’s words came to him, courtesy of the darkness within.

“You wouldn’t know what to do if I showed my fucking emotions.” It should have been a threat—in person it wouldn’t have been, he had too much restraint for that—but even here in the car, talking to himself, there was little umph behind the words. The irony wasn’t lost on him.

You’re a fucking mess, he thought to himself.

“Tell me something I don’t know.” Part of him wanted to try to get back to thinking about Hawk and his story, but he needed to clear his head before that was going to happen. With a sigh, he glanced at the radio in the dash. “Get me through this, Dex,” he said, then reached forward and snapped the volume dial back on, filling the car with the sweet sounds of angsty nineties punk.