

"Gather around friends, gather 'round!" cried the storyteller. Child and adult alike ran over to the Grand Library's Head Storyteller. Once they were all settled, he doffed his top hat to a lady and spoke in a clear voice that could be heard above the clamour of the many steam-powered vehicles and airships outside.

"Tonight my friends I, Belstrom Armonde, The Grand Library's Head Storyteller will divulge to you a grand tale! Of twists and plots, secrets and discoveries! Men of the world and their miraculous machines, thwarting the plans of mad scientists, ancient beasts and even royalty! Friends, this is the tale of the twin inventors, Bert and Gregory Thatch, and the Thieving Woman of Vengeance!"

"Bert! Bert, wake up!" Gregory shouted to his brother. Bert brushed his auburn hair out of the way of his goggles as he looked around the smouldering wreck that was his most recent attempt at a steam vehicle.

"Ouch. I say brother, that one made a little more progress than my last attempt!" Bert said, rubbing a bruise on his lanky arms.

"Oh? How so?"

"The last contraption, my cow dung powered engine, exploded five seconds sooner than this one!"

"How could I forget? We had to scrub the walls of the Clockworker's Guild East Wing for hours after that experiment."

"That was unfortunate," Bert said, dusting off his brown leather coat. "But it made a significant impact on my later works."

"Yes, it taught you never to power anything with cow dung again!" Gregory laughed.

"Come on chap. Let's go inside. I need to do some work on my top secret schematics."

Unbeknownst to our intrepid heroes, a mechanical agent of maliciousness was watching everything. Satisfied with its gathered information, the tiny mechanical dirigible floated away to tell its master.

Gregory flicked open his copper pocket watch. Nine thirty in the evening. He stood up from the leather couch in front of the fireplace to see how much progress his brother had made. Knocking and letting one of Bert's tiny robots open the door for him, he stepped inside his brother's workshop, closing the thick hardwood door behind him.

"You forgot to lock the door again Greggy." Bert teased.

"Yes, yes all right." He grumbled, sliding the thick bronze bolt into the receiver. It was a professional habit of a Clockworker to lock their study doors. You never knew who might be spying, trying to

steal blueprints or prototypes of your hard thought-of inventions. Gregory walked over to his brother's desk, leather boots tapping against the wooden floorboards.

"Another weapon schematic brother? I thought you had stopped designing machines of death and war."

"I had." He grumbled "But the Guildmaster has ordered me to make some improvements to the existing designs in a letter he wrote. It doesn't make much sense to me."

"The Guildmaster? Are you sure? Was it properly signed and sealed?"

"Yes. Even the wax seal was present. He probably has a very good reason for--"

"Hang on brother. Do you hear something?"

A tinny buzzing had filled the air. Indicating for silence, Bert picked up a heavy pipe wrench and slowly tiptoed over to the window. Gregory knew what was happening and walked over to open the window. When he began to walk away, a small dirigible drone flew near-silently through the open window. Bert brought the wrench down upon the spying blimp with a solid thump as the air burst from the balloons.

"What in the world?" asked Gregory, rubbing his head in disbelief. This was quite possibly one of the worst attempts at blueprint theft he had ever seen, and given their reputations, he had seen quite a lot.

"Hold on Greggory, there's something on this Clocker." He said, pointing to an etched symbol on its fuselage. A symbol of two crossed wrenches, a gear in the background and a shield on the front, with a ribbon underneath bearing the words 'Ad Partum est Ad Succurre'. To Create is To Aid.

"Great scot! That's the seal of the Guildmaster!" cried Gregory.

"But why would the Guildmaster steal plans we were going to give him anyway?"

"I have no idea, but it sounds awfully fishy to me. I think we need to pay a little visit to the Guildmaster."

In a back alley somewhere close to our heroes, a shadowy figure was talking with a shivering man, but he was not shivering from the cold.

"Has it been done?"

"Yes mistress, we have done as you have asked."

"Good, good. Now go before anyone sees us together."

"Yes mistress. Your will be done."

The man scuttled away while the shadowy figure simply disappeared into the shadows.

"I keep telling you clowns, but you refuse to listen!" shouted the Guildmaster "I know absolutely nothing about any such letter or dirigible! Now clear out, before I have your Clockworker's Badges!"

The two brothers left the office of the Guildmaster and strode down the marble corridors of the Clockworker's Guild.

"Well this is an odd occurrence. I'm beginning to think that this might have been a complete waste of time." grumbled Gregory.

"Yes... I think you may be on to something there." pondered Bert.

"Whatever do you mean?"

"What I mean is that this might have all been a diversion."

"From what?"

"I'm afraid I might know the answer!" said Bert, breaking out into a sudden sprint with Gregory at his heels.

"What are you talking about? You haven't looked this terrified since that time you thought your rare Maltese diamond had been eaten by the cat!"

"I think the letter and the Clocker were distractions!"

"Yes, but to what?" he shouted, throwing open the doors of the Guild before quickly descending the stairs.

"To steal the weapon schematics I made!" Bert shouted, jumping on board their personal airship.

"Good heavens! We have to get home right away!"

The shadowy figure had finally broken down the door to the study. There on the table were the schematics that those two 'geniuses' had created. Striding over to the table, she rolled them up and put them in a metal holding tube.

"Freeze!" shouted Bert as he stepped into the room. He was pointing his handheld concussion cannon at the cloaked figure. Gregory entered the room and recognised the figure instantly.

"Emelia? What are you doing here?! I thought you had been killed by a gang of rogue Clockers!"

The cloaked figure spat and threw back her hood, revealing silken midnight hair falling over her pale skin, ruby lips and ebony eyes.

"Your rogue Clockers you mean! I've spent years plotting my revenge, and this time, you're not getting out of this one alive!"

"What are you talking about? Our Clockers?" asked Bert

"Don't play stupid you idiot! I know you saw me as a threat, so you arranged that 'accident' for me! But that failed, so you just had to go all out!"

"For the last time Emilia, those were not ours! We-"

"Shut up! Now you're going to pay for what you did! I'm going to give these as evidence to the guard, and they're going to arrest you for Conspiracy to Disrupt the Peace and you'll rot for the rest of your miserable lives!"

"Emilia, I'm sorry. But that's not going to happen."

Bert pulled the trigger and his concussion device knocked the iron tube from her hands. The iron tube clattered to the floor as she pulled out a long knife and charged at Bert, but Gregory stepped in front of her and twisted her arm around her back, forcing her to drop the knife.

"Eventually, the fighting was stopped by the Sentinels. Emilia was subdued and put on trial for Conspiracy for False Imprisonment, Theft and Fraud. The twins, Gregory and Bert Thatch went on to have many adventures with their miraculous inventions."

"But what happened to the schematics?" a young child asked, eyes gleaming with curiosity.

"The mythical weapon schematics, which have been said to be able to level towns, boil seas and even burn away the very skies, should they ever have been built, were never seen nor heard from ever again. Some say that they're kept hidden inside a locked drawer in the desk of the Guildmaster. Others think that they were destroyed in the great fire of 1653. Some have even suspected that they were buried along with their creators. But there are a very few people who think that the legendary Iron Canister had been placed in one of the vaults of the Grand Library, deep underground, guarded by invincible steam golems and the power of lightning itself! But wherever they are, rest assured, they will never see the light of day."

The crowd cheered as the storyteller finished before they all went back to their activities, but a sense of foreboding filled the air among the many library-goers as they pondered what they had heard a little deeper. Such weapons of great power, destruction and misery could never exist. Could they?