

Episode 5
ORPH Six in route to New Orleans
4:30 PM, March 7, 1885

ORPH Six was likely the first train to have a voice intercom (a two-piece phone in each permanent car). ORPHs four and five have buzzers for communication.

As Colin entered “the clinic car” (Tesla’s mobile laboratory), Nicola worked on several pearl-sized rocks as Lemont quietly watched.

Lemont was quick with a finger-over-lip “shush” when Colin started to speak. So, he began watching Nicola over his shoulder. Tesla ignored them as he did Hungarian spies in Croatia.

As Tesla bonded thin copper wires to one of the stones, he felt Colin’s breath warming his neck; he leaned back to scooch Colin.

Nicola then held up a wooden block about the size of a deck of cards. It had a spring button switch and a round gauge that resembled a pocket compass. He attached the little crystal to a slot in the wood and wired the device to a pocket-sized battery.

“When one crystal transmits, its identical copy receives,” he told them.” Today, I intend to cause that needle to point at the loose crystal each time I apply current to its twin.”

“From how far?” Lemont asked.

“I’ve got matched stones to pulsate from 20 miles away. Today’s goal is making this needle to point at the loose crystal.”

“Amazing!” Lemont responded.

“Watch what happens when I put the receiver crystal in my mouth.”

The needle suddenly pointed at Tesla.

“Damn,” Colin reacted.

Lemont asked, “If Sara and Liz had these, would this find them?”

“If we were close enough, it would point at them, but it wouldn’t tell us how far.”

“It won’t work as well in a dry mouth. Water and salts carry electricity through our bodies.”

The two agents looked at each other in amazement.

“If one of those big men had one, could we find that hidden Island base?” Lemont asked.

“Hopefully, if we are within 20 miles of them.”

“Are you planning to be abducted, Agent Freeman? You certainly fit the description.”

“I have not considered that.”

“If I were a big brownie, I’d volunteer,” Colin added.

“That’s easy for someone as white as a cracker to say.”

“It’s better to die as a hero than as a wimpy old turd.”

“I’ll see what Hayes has to say this if we get that far,” Lemont decided.

Upfront, in the ORPH’s locomotive, Yeager told Conrad, “It will be dark at 6:15 Central. If we stop at Nashville, we will lose daylight. We have enough fuel oil to reach Memphis.”

“Memphis it is.”

ORPH Six’s three weapon systems were fully operational from the control console inside this ORPH’s weapon control car. This message was posted on its exterior door:

WARNING:
Deadly Disease Confinement Car!
DO NOT TOUCH!

This car’s walls, floor, roof, doors, and hatches were forged from a still top-secret carbon-steel alloy called stainless steel.

Two-inch tick sheets divided this car into two rooms. The control room took up eight feet of this forty-foot car; the remainder held the weapons and their deployment systems.

The control console used two new inventions for aiming devices called “periscopes,” which rose above this car. Other dynamos drove mechanical arms and lifted three weapons above this car.

The flamethrower was a defensive system that sprayed flaming oil from the ORPH’s oil tank. It was mounted on a rotating arm and could lay a fire ring around a six-car ORPH.

The fifty-caliber Gatling gun had a rotating turret for defensive or offensive action. While activated, water (for the steam engine) was pumped around its barrels, keeping them cool enough to fire up to fifty-five thousand rounds.

The third weapon system was purely offensive. Its howitzer could slam exploding 12-pound shells into targets up to six miles away. This was also the first cannon that mechanically reloaded itself. Because Tesla's water pumps also keep it from overheating, this cannon could fire every 15 seconds.

The following car was for storage. Half of it was a vapor-compression refrigerator, which could keep food, beverages, and a pile of dead bodies fresh.

Only the last two cars, besides the locomotive, had windows. The fourth was a low-profile passenger car that could haul cargo or up to forty agents, troops, or prisoners in retractable seating.

The fifth car (today) was a low-slung caboose. It had a kitchen, dining booth, and six sleeping compartments designed for extra-tall men, as was the case for ORPHAN. Tesla, the second tallest man aboard, was 6'4", Colin was 6'2", and you already know Lemont is 6'9".

This ORPH also had seven toilets, basically holes hidden under its built-in seats. But, unlike that phantom train, plumbing was not involved.

Each folding seat also had the newest commercial technology, Joseph Gayetty's toilet paper dispensers.

Thanks to Orphan's massive budget, Nicola and George had been working on a special storage car for this ORPH that even Hayes knew nothing about.

Although not yet attached, "the flite car" would soon release a folding dirigible inflated with the newly discovered helium.



It could carry a thousand pounds in passengers and cargo and provide agents with a bird' s-eye view for reconnaissance.

A balloon would have been easier to use. However, Tesla wanted an airship that could be directed.

Tesla did not design this dirigible; his engineering body, Jules Henri Giffard, built this custom fold-up version for him in France, and then Cross Shipping delivered it to Westinghouse's New York facility.

Memphis Naval Base

7:14 pm March 7th, 1885

As Naval engineers excitedly replenished ORPH Six's liquids, someone informed Lemont, "You are the first Black man to use the Admiral's telephone."

"Wow, a major advancement for mankind," Lemont responded before the switchboard operator connected him to Commander Hayes at Sullivant Hill.

"We have not found that train yet,' Hayes told him.

"We assumed they were taking the most direct rail to New Orleans. However, finding the girl's coach near DC proves they took a more easterly route."

"The New Orleans evidence continues piling up, so X has the Service only stopping trains around DC. They will let their guard down if they think they fooled us.

“Good move. What else did we learn, Boss?”

“Something so strange it has to be true.”

“What's that?”

“Two weeks ago, the federal marshal in New Orleans questioned a Jamaican beautician about \$200 the local police found on her.”

“She claimed a masked man paid her to clean up several pretty northern girls inside an old jail.”

“She was told to act like she could not speak English, so not to discuss anything with them.”

“Hum.”

“She said she was transported inside a locked cargo coach, so she could not say where the old jail was. She claimed the ride took less than an hour, so she was still in or near New Orleans.”

“The day after he questioned her, he went to her home to ask several more questions. It was emptied, and she was gone.”

“Wow.”

“Lemont, just like those two big men that escaped, a story about captive Northern girls is not something they would just invent.”

“Twice is beyond coincidence,” Lemont added.

“It also verifies New Orleans.”

“You knew it, Boss.”

“We have your morning scheduled.”

“Go ahead.”

“At 8:00 AM your time, that federal marshal..., ah, Clyde Dupree, will meet you at the New Orleans Navy base. He will fill you in on this beautician and help you move around the city.”

“Excellent.”

“Dupree thinks that jail is an old French fort on the Mississippi River. The ORPH will roll past it four miles before the New Orleans Navy Base.”

“You want us to stop and check it out?”

“Look it over from a distance. The fort is an official consulate of Morocco; I can’t even get a search warrant, and it could be considered an act of war if we blast our way in.”

“Isn’t it an act of war for a nation to kidnap another country’s citizens?” Lemont asked.

“That’s for judges to decide.”

“Boss, they would remove any evidence before allowing us in.”

“That’s the way it is. But since you roll right past it, tell Yeager I want him to stop long enough for you to look the place over.”

“Will do, Boss.”

“Keep your cover. You are the manager of a famous band hunting for its leader's kidnapped girlfriend.”

“If those White Knights think that you are federal agents, they could expose ORPHAN to the world.”

“What are you talking about? I manage a band, Boss.”

Then Lemont explained Tesla’s tracking device and possibly going deep undercover to find those big brown men.

“You are there to rescue our girls," Hayes said before asking, “Is Nicola near the telephone?”

“I see him outside. He has a swarm of navy engineers crowded around him.”

“Pry him loose; I need to talk to him.”

“Hold on.”

Lemont stepped outside and yelled, “Nicola, Hayes wants you.”

“Tesla here.”

“Nicola, are you sure your tracking gismo can point someone out from 20 miles away?”

“If nothing interferes with it. I feel better about ten miles.”

“Do you know this stuff well enough to trust it?”

“Dozens of my designs already use this.”

“If I heard this from anyone else, I would not even consider this. Hell, I would not even believe it.”

“It’s simple science, sir.”

“To you, maybe. But if you say it works, I’d bet on it.”

“Okay, put Lemont back on this thing.” The word telephone was only a few years old.

“Yeah, Boss.”

“Are you up for something this risky, like being abducted if we get that far?”

“It’s my job to stop organized crime under disguise. I am America’s only big Black secret agent, me or nobody.”

“I’m just not going to send you off halfcocked.”

“Never been accused of that before.”

“Right.”

“Is Colin thinking straight?”

“He’s normal for someone punched a few thousand times.”

“I know how he feels about Sara; it’s just as personal to me.”

“How so?”

“Eliz and I have been very close for years, but we keep it behind closed doors.”

“Yeah, I understand.”

“We are okay. There is no one I would rather have on a mission than Colin.”

“I will deny I ever said that if you tell him I did.”

“My lips are sealed. Adapt your standard cover.” (Lemont plays Road Manager when the Irish Orphans tour).

“Call me as soon as you arrive at the New Orleans Navy base. I live here until they get one of these telephones in my home.”

“Got it, Boss.

“Find them. Hayes out.”

9:42 PM, Saturday, March 7th, 1885

Every off-duty mechanic, engineer, and nerd at the Memphis Naval base showed up to see NORA’s amazing ‘railroad ambulance’ and to meet Nicola Tesla.

They had seen earlier ORPHS, but comparing this to prior versions was like comparing a Subaru to a Corvette.

As he put down his abacus, Conrad told Yeager, “40 miles an hour should have us beside the old fort by five in the morning.

Before pressing it, Yeager spun Tesla’s intercom dial to ALL CARS.

“Yeager announced, “HOLD ON TIGHT! Let’s give those engineers a thrill.”

Yeager fully kicked both drive systems. Had drag racing been a thing in 1885, ORPH Six would have also been Earth’s fastest drag racer. Yeager could not hear or see the navy engineers jumping and cheering as he launched this rolling rocket, but it felt so strong; he knew they were.

“God, that’s so fun! I’ll never tire of it,” Conrad told him.

Yeager had locked Lemont and Colin out of the locomotive, so they continued watching Tesla work on his little crystals.

“It's nearly ready to evaluate,' Tesla soon told them.

He had set two pearl-sized crystals inside a pink finger-sized chunk of rubber gum. The thin copper wire that connected the crystals extended beyond both ends of the clump.

That second crystal only allowed the current to flow one way, which should have allowed the nervous system to keep the crystal charged.

He told Lemont, “Before we harden it, you must shape it. Press it against your lower gum until it feels comfortable enough to wear.”

As soon as it entered his mouth, that needle on the locator began pointing at Lemont.

“It's working.”

Tesla then walked around the car to see if the needle continued pointing at Freeman. “Excellent!” Tesla excitedly proclaimed.

About 30 seconds later, Tesla accidentally pulled the wire loose from the battery in his pocket. The instant he reconnected it, “Lemont yelled, “Ouch! The thing just shocked me.”

“Did that minuscule voltage hurt you?” Tesla asked.

“No, no, it surprised me like a quick sting.”

Tesla then reconnected it again, “Did you feel it?”

“Plain as day.”

“This is fascinating!” Tesla remarked.

“Tell me how many times I complete this circuit.” The inventor tapped the connection six times with his back turned to Lemont.

“Six.”

“Excellent!”

“This is like a bonus from God!” Tesla said.

“A bonus from God?” Lemont asked as he shared the same confused expression as Colin.

“I’ll explain after we can verify a short distance,” the excited inventor replied.

“Take out your watch,” he told Lemont.

“Wait exactly two minutes for me to reach the caboose.”

“Then, just during the third minute, count how many shocks you feel.”

“Fine.”

“Start now,” Tesla said while checking his pocket watch.

Nicola opened that circuit from the caboose twenty-three times before returning to the clinic car.

“I got 23 ticks,” Lemont told Tesla as he opened the door.

“Excellent!”

“Are the sensations only quick snaps?” he asked.

“Yes, like little pops.”

“Do you realize what we just created?”

“The agents just looked at each other.”

“I could send you messages without wires!”

“This is unimaginable importance for our work!”

“Both agents suddenly realized the value.”

Tesla then mumbled, “We need a code of just dots. So, Morse Code won’t work because it needs dashes.”

Colin, the world-famous musician (in his mind), suggested, “Maybe not.”

“If you send dots at a steady tempo, then skip one for dashes, twice skip for the next word, we could send Morse Code, with only dots.”

“You got an inventor hiding in you, Mclaughlin,” Tesla complimented.

“Normally, he normally writes turds,” Lemont added.

Tesla then asked Lemont, “How’s your Morse Code?”

“Fine, we’ve both been tapping for 20 years.”

“Give me a few minutes,” Tesla said.

He then ran the battery wire through a rubber-coated switch, which only connects when squeezed.

Colin interrupted just as Tesla was about to pinch the first words. “Hey Nicola, May I send the first wireless words ever?”

“Yeah, go ahead. Tesla said as he handed Colin the switch.

“Okay, ready, big boy?”

“Squeeze on!”

“Read it and weep, - - .- - ..- .- -..”

“(i.m.a.t.u.r.d)” slowly rolled off Lemont’s lips.

“You also smell like one,” Colin replied.

However, this hour’s inventing spree was not quite over.

That protruding copper wire began jabbing Lemont’s lip, so he picked up one of Tesla’s jewelry screwdrivers to manipulate it.

Tesla noticed his locator’s needle jump as the tool touched the device.

“Oh, do that again!”

“Do what again?”

“What you just did with my tool.” He did, and it jumped again.

“Try that with this nail,” Tesla said while handing him one. It worked the same.

“You know what this means?”

“Ah, sure, what?” Lemont asked.

“Two-way communications, like telegraphs without poles and wires! What a wonderful ride,” Tesla gleamed.

A few minutes later, the slightly less impressed agents retired to the caboose for some sleep. Tesla spent the rest of the night charging batteries, hardening Lemont’s mouthpiece, and proving more possibilities.

He only took short naps when he felt tired.

New Orleans

Saturday, March 8th, 5 AM



Although the phantom train and its happy hostages were less than three miles away, they might as well have been four hundred miles away.

The quickest route from Columbus ran south along the Mississippi River's west bank. However, Cross's Crosswinds plantation was east of this river. It would be another fifty years until Louisiana had a bridge over the Mississippi River.

That 200-year-old French fort they were targeting was on the river's west bank. The nearest bridge over the Mississippi was about 200 miles north of them; they used it on their way down. They did not know that the Buckeye Beauties were east of the river.

In 1812, Morocco's Sultan Slimane bought the old fort to house his nation's greatest exports. The fort was all but abandoned after slavery was abolished in the USA during the Civil War.

However, because this is a Moroccan consulate, it was governed by the laws of Morocco, not the USA.

The 20-foot wall around the fort had two ornate wrought iron gates. Its main gate faced the Mississippi River. Morocco installed the second gate on the inland side gate when this railroad opened in 1848.

Morocco added a curtain track so trains could stop without blocking the mail rail. This curtain track was still 1200 feet west of the old fort's western wall.

As soon as Yeager parked the ORPH on that sidetrack, he called Colin and Lemont on the intercom.

Colin then told Lemont, "I got this. I run like the wind."

"Just don't start an incident."

"I'll go for a stroll, then come back; it's no big deal," Colin said while slipping into dark overalls.

With only the light of the waning Moon and stars, Colin mentally noted, "No sign of activity."

"The wall has four sides, at 300 feet each: eight watchtowers rise 15 feet over the 20-foot wall."

"One tower per corner and two more beside each gate."

"When he got close enough to look through the inland gate, he noticed "the sandstone fort only covers a quarter acre."

The walls around it are topped with rusty, jagged blades; the ornate iron gates are topped with rusty spears."

Going through instead of over the wall seemed more fun to Colin.

Stumbling like a drunk, he walked to the main gate overlooking the Mississippi River.

The main gate was also chained up. However, the fort was not completely abandoned; some light was flickering inside a wooden guard shack about 20 feet inside the gate. The place was important enough to keep at least one guard there.

He grabbed the gate and yelled, “Help, sir, I need your help!”

The uniformed man looked too old to defend anything as he slowly walked up to the gate, unarmed.

Colin was capable of witty lines, but not this morning. “Sir, Clementine, my Chihuahua just chased a rabbit under your back gate. So now he’s lost in there somewhere. I need to get in there to find him.”

“This land belongs to the Moroccan Republic; you will need Prince Charles or Ambassador Johnston's written permission.”

“Just to get my dog?”

“He got in; he’ll come out the same way!”

“Well, he is an easily confused dog. Why don’t you just let me come in and find her? You can hold my gun here,” Colin said as he dangled that prototype revolver from two fingers.

“Without permission, no one enters.”

“Come on, sir,” Colin yelled as the old guard returned to his shack. “I won’t tell anyone you helped me.”
“I will even give you fifty dollars.”

He turned and said, “I’ll take your money when you get permission.”

“Where is your ambassador?”

“In Washington,” the watchman said as he turned back towards his shack and closed its door.”

Colin slowly walked beyond the guard's view and sprinted back to the ORPH. He entered the Infectious Confinement (weapons) Car and flipped on the power. He sat at the control console and pulled the “Boom lever” to ready.

One of the car's roof hatches flipped open, and seconds later, a 12-inch howitzer rose above the car.

Using the control panel's periscope, Colin spun a wheel to aim. Once satisfied, push the red fire button on the lever behind the wheel.

About one second later, a 12-inch cannon slammed through the center of the western gate.

Unlike steel, wrought iron is far too brittle to bend, so the gate exploded like glass. A few seconds later, iron shrapnel had spread over a half-mile; some even pelted this brand-new Orph.

Lemont reached the weapon car just as Colin was rushing out.

“What the hell are you doing!?”

“I'm going to get her!” Colin yelled as he ran off.

About a minute later, he ran through the big opening that used to be the back gate.

Tesla and Lemont grabbed shotguns and torches before cautiously moving. As they crept around the ORPH Six, they noticed a rusty iron spear stuck into one of the ORPH's brass Light Cannons (Tesla used for its headlights).

“Damn! I have not even painted it yet!” he complained.

By the time Nicola and Lemont reached the gate, Colin had already found several barred cells, but no one was present.

Even the watchman had left. After the blast, he slowly trotted off to find a local deputy.

Several minutes later, Lemont and Tesla joined the torch-lit search. Within minutes, they found a wooden crate loaded with corroded iron shackles.

Lemont smacked the cell bars with a shackle, and it shattered; he then twisted another with his large-pizza-sized hands, and it crushed.

“Even you could break these antiques,” Lemont said as he handed a set to Colin.

As he picked up his torch, Lemont told Tesla, “We should ask Edison to make pocket-sized light cannons for us.”

“I invented a far more efficient electric light than he has. No one complains that his light bulbs waste 90% of the electricity they burn. My Florent lights are 80% efficient! I’ll put some together when I get back to New York.”

“He is smarter than Edison, but he’ll never be that rich,” Lemont realized.

“Come here, look at this!” Colin yelled.

“What is a beauty salon doing inside an old, abandoned jail!?” he asked them as they entered that room.

The salon looked active. It was the only clean, nearly dust-free cell, and its body oils smelled fresh. It looked ready to use.

As dawn broke at 6:20 AM, mounted police finally arrived at the old French fort. However, the agents and ORPH Six were already inside the naval base, several miles away.

Northern ladies and those big men were here. Yet, there was no trace of the Buckeye Beauties.

Crosswinds Plantation,
7:00 AM, March 8th, 1885



Although The Phantom train arrived at 5:00 AM, Cameroon did not wake the sleeping beauties until 7:30.

“♪I let you rest past the sun, so get up; it's time for fun.”

“♪Don't clean up here; your suites have make-up mirrors. ♪”

“♪Your fancy new wardrobes are already there. ♪”

♪” Along with world-class beauticians to do your hair♪.”

It was 80 degrees (Fahrenheit) when they stepped off the phantom train into a stunning garden. Five days earlier, they had trudged through three inches of snow to reach rehearsal. Stepping into this tropical paradise felt magical.

Because most locomotives still belched black smoke in 1885, Ty built Crosswind private train station east of the mansion. An open-top electric rail car carried passengers from the station to the mansion.

They rolled past millions of flowers, waterfalls, fountains, rows of ancient Roman statues, and Egyptian obelisks. The grounds also featured an entertainment pavilion and three swimming pools.

Two eighty-foot blue ship sails shaded the beach area. Groundskeepers continuously adjust them to protect these pasty-white Buckeye Beauties from the hot southern sun.

A stunning twelve-foot white wall enclosed this 1.5 square mile plantation's three dry sides. It was made of Alabama White, the world's brightest marble.

Twelve feet beyond its western wall ran a half-mile-long canal that Ty's father built so ships could reach Crosswinds from the Mississippi River.

Crosswinds also featured the only white sand beach in the USA. Ty had the sand shipped in from the Bahamas.

However, this was not a typical beach; this sign was posted:

Danger!
Only Swim in Pools!

Lake Pontchartrain is the only lake in North America that is both fresh and salty. It is home to many deadly creatures, including sharks, alligators, amoebas, and poisonous shellfish.

Ty Cross was obsessed with beauty and technology. He had architects continually upgrade his opulent homes; his Tyberian Technical

Center's engineers (at Sainte Marguerite) ensured that all his estates offered the latest technologies.

Like the rooms on Ty's Train, the suites inside this mansion were all inspired by royal palaces. When the girls entered their private suites, one of their new lightweight dresses (and matching attire) was already selected for this day.

However, mannequins were wearing these dresses. Each dummy was a gorgeous yet creepy copy of the Buckeye Beauty assigned to its suite.

These new silk dresses weighed less than one pound. They were again reluctant, but it was an excellent idea since they were used to ten pounds of cold spring clothing.

They became excited after their electric-lit mirrors exposed how gorgeous their dancing bodies looked.

At 9:50, black butlers in white tuxedos led the girls into the lake-facing garden to await Ty's arrival on his spectacular white and blue ship. Ty liked making impressive entries.

A band played Ragtime music from a pavilion beside Crosswind's main pool. The band's youngest member, Scott Joplin, invented this happy new style.

Seven flags flew on an 80-foot sail mast above that gazebo. The top flag featured a white background with a blue Saint Andrew's Cross and a white six-sided star where the blue lines intersected.

The other flags had the first name of each Buckeye Beauty in their favorite color.

Cameroon never mentioned the Maximus V to the girls but said Ty would arrive by boat. The girls gasped at the beauty and size of the Maximus V as it turned into view.

“I had no idea a ship could be so attractive!” said Sara, who had spent almost her entire life inland.

As the mighty vessel moored against its two-story dock, the Chief of Crosswind’s staff led a parade of chefs, butlers, beauticians, maids, acrobats, and jugglers (juggling) to welcome Tyberious back home.

As soon as the gangway lowered, the house band played an instrumental version of “Big Daddy” from Sara’s musical.”

Ty’s workers welcomed him like a returning war hero after a three-year conquest, even though he had only departed two hours earlier.

Sara and her girls saw what appeared to be two Ty Crosses looking down at them from the ship’s bow.

“Oh, my God!” Dorothy yelled, “Ty has a twin!”

“No, that is Ty’s son, Max,” Cameroon explained.

“Which one is Ty?” Sara asked.

“Ty is the one waving at me; Max is the one yawning” (Ty was waving at Sara). “On his thirteenth birthday, Max was appointed the Prime Minister of Tyberia.”

“They elected a thirteen-year-old kid?” Sara responded.

“Most nations do not allow citizens to choose their leaders; that is still an American thing” (1885).

“Hum, I guess I never thought about that.”

“Normally, Max stays in Tyberia, at his Palace in Sainte Marguerite. Ty runs hundreds of worldwide operations from here or his ship.”

“Oh.”

Since there were suddenly two Cross men, the ladies looked at each other with even more excitement. Max was even around their age.

They already realized that Ty felt something extra special for Sara. She was always first on the train; her jewelry box held a platinum ring with a diamond far larger than any other, and her flag over crosswinds was twice as big as the other five.

However, having a wife had never crossed Max’s mind. Since his first trouser disruption at age twelve, Ty supplied Max with a steady stream of females, just as Ty’s daddy did for him.

However, Sara was the first woman to melt Ty’s heart. After that show in Columbus, she never completely left his thoughts.

He had Animus seize Sara and her girls in front of the world’s press, believing that would impress her. Love can be very confusing.

Noting how giddy Ty became when he saw Sara from the ship’s bow, Max growled, “You’ve lost your mind at the worst time. You spent far more on her than we could ever recover selling them.”

“They’re not merchandise! All great men deserve love; she completes me.”

“She does not even know you. You come from a loveless, hate-filled family, just like me. You’re only capable of loving yourself. You can’t even remember my mother’s name.”

“Don’t be ridiculous.”

“You spent five minutes with that bitch eight months ago. You had her kidnap during the most important time of our lives.”

“Wrong!”

“You are going to destroy the liberation plan over her!”

“The plan is on schedule and perfect. She does not affect it. She will make me better at everything.”

“That’s bullshit! She is a massive distraction when you need full-time focus. You probably don’t even realize she’s younger than me.”

“Fine, I like them young.”

“You did not even try her out?”

“You are overreacting,” Ty replied.

“If I knew you told Animus to nab her in front of the press before, I would have locked you up!”

“Relax, loosen up.”

“If Washington learns you brought them to our American Embassy, they could discover the plan before we execute.”

“We worked most of my life to keep Morocco taking our heat!”

Ty responded, never taking his eyes off Sara, “I had to make my move for her now. If I waited, it could take years for another chance.”

“In two months, she will despise you, as will all Yankees.”

“Just look at her,” Ty said from the mighty ship’s bow, about seventy feet away. “Isn’t she the most beautiful woman you have ever seen!”

“Which one? I don’t see anyone bitch standing out.”

“She must be one of those two since you have a thing for redheads,” Max said as he pointed at Sara and Elizabeth.

“Sara is auburn, not copper.”

Max pointed at Dorothy, “That blond is by far the prettiest one.”

“You don’t understand true love, son.”

“True love is not something money can buy. It means you can’t do as you please; she gets an equal say. Your money might keep her happy enough to fake a rapture or two for you.”

“You just don’t understand, son.”

“You must buy everything you believe is the prettiest, biggest, or fastest.”

“That’s not true!”

“Yeah. You are having the Maximus VI built just because someone said Alfonso’s new ship is more beautiful than the V.”

“His new ship is just a copy of this! Alfonzo even used the blueprints that I paid for!”

With his eyes glued on Sara, Ty responded,

“She will be deeply in love with me within a week.”

“Oh, she will loathe you in a month, no matter how much you give her.”

“I will give you till Mayday (May 1st). If she is not your forever-loving queen by then, agree to sell them in Morocco!”

“She will be!”

“Then you have no problem agreeing!”

“Agreed! Just don’t embarrass me in front of them.”

“You are doing a fine job of that by yourself.”

After the gangplank latched, Ty and Max walked down to greet their lovely hostages (special guests).

Ty ignored everyone else as he rushed to the girls. His first words were, “Please forgive the crude way we all came together!”

All six girls looked excited, happy, and forgiving as they stood side by side. Dorothy stood to their right while Sara stood to their left, so Ty introduced Dorothy to Max first.

After kissing her hand, Ty said, “Hello, Dorothy Schmidt; allow me to introduce my son, Max.”

Looking disinterested, he said, “Pleased to meet you.”

“Her father owns a German Sausage company in Columbus.”

“Yum,” Max mumbled.

Ty then kissed Dotty’s hand.

“Dotty Nordstrom, I am pleased to introduce you to my son Max.”

Max yawned as he said, “Nice to meet you.”

“Dotty’s father owns several general stores in Cleveland.”

“Wonderful.”

Ty then kissed Elizabeth’s hand.

“This is Elizabeth Hyde. Her family runs a large farm east of Columbus. Sadly, her father was killed in the Civil War.”

“That war should have never occurred,” said Max.

Next, Ty kissed Dolly’s hand. “Dolly Cavendish, this is my boy Max. Her father, rest his soul, was a fine surgeon.”

Max almost smiled, “Nice to meet you.”

“Now, this next gorgeous creature is Daisy Wolf. Her daddy runs the daily newspaper in Columbus.”

“Well, you must be well informed,” Max responded.

Finally, Ty kissed Sara’s hand, “This is the incredible Sara Kilbourne, their leader.”

“I have heard everything about you, even things my father does not know.”

“I hope it was all good,” she replied.

“I am a day older than you,” Max answered as he motioned toward his father.”

Max then turned to them and said, “Nice meeting, y’all; now excuse me,” as he walked off with their 6’7” masseur, Animus.

Max whispered a few words to the shaved giant before heading to the mansion.

Ty had not let go of Sara's hand since he reached her. He led her a few steps away, far enough for the other beauties to act like they were not trying to hear.

"You have not left my thoughts since last September," he revealed. "I still hear your voice singing, even after I wore out your wax records" (Edison's phonograph tubes). "I have fallen for you. Now, I intend for you to do the same for me."

Not knowing how to respond, Sara changed the subject. "What a beautiful ship; I never imagined they could be so lovely."

"Well, few ships are, my dear. This is the most beautiful ship on earth and has the finest of everything."

"You have many beautiful things, Ty."

"Great wealth has privileges; she is also the most expensive ship ever built."

"Oh," Sara acted impressed.

"However, it is no longer me; I just gave her away."

"You gave this ship away?"

"Yes, as of yesterday, it has a new registered owner, you. It is a gift for you, "Ty told her.

"No, I can't accept this; you have already given us far too much!" Sara responded loudly enough for her lovely companions to hear.

"Oh, I can't stop what has already happened. I do not have a time machine; you are already its legal owner." Sara hoped he was joking.

“This vessel is like you. Allow me to show you.”

Still holding her hand, he led her out the dock, then up the gangway into the wondrous ship.

He then informed Captain Funk, “Pull the gangway and set sails. We will be taking the Lady Sara for an afternoon excursion.”

“Yes, sir,” The captain responded, flashing his biggest smile toward Sara.

When Ty said, “The Lady Sara,” Sara assumed he was referring to her, not The Maximus V.

Mr. Cross, she said, “I need to run back down there to tell my girls when I will return. They are my sisters, just from different mothers.”

“Of course, It will take ten minutes before your new ship is ready to leave. But please call me Ty.”

“Okay.”

“Tell them that we will return in a couple of hours.”

With the grace of a dancer, Sara jogged back ashore.

“Ty is smitten with me,” she said.

“He wants to take me on a three-hour cruise, so just have fun at this beautiful resort until I return.”

“I told you he’s in love with her,” Elizabeth said to the others as Sara jogged back aboard.

“We are here to be her bridesmaids!” Dotty excitedly and insightfully declared.