

The Quartermaster
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FADE IN:

EXT. LONDON - DAY

A police horseless carriage speeds through the streets. A man can be seen through iron bars of the carriage's rear transport cell.

The horseless carriage turns down a street startling birds feeding on garbage in the street. The birds take flight, flying high above the city, past airships.

From the birds view the city far below is alive with activity

SUPERIMPOSE: "London, October 31, 1883"

EXT/INT. SCOTLAND YARD - DAY

The police horseless carriage stops in front of a building. 4 Whitehall Place. Scotland Yard.

ARTHUR MORRIS, a late-20's handsome inventor, steps out of the carriage's rear cell and escorted into Scotland Yard by two constables. He is taken up several flights of stairs and down a hallway to an obscure door.

INT. ROOM - DAY

The constables escort Arthur into a small room through the obscure door. CLARISSA LIVINGSTON, mid-20's pretty with long auburn hair, sits behind a desk typing.

Clarissa stops typing, looks up at Arthur, and nods to the constables. They smooth out his clothes and exit the small room.

Clarissa gives Arthur an amused sensual smile and speaks quietly into a telephone receiver.

CLARISSA
He will see you now.

A hidden door opens revealing a secret office.

Arthur steps through the door into a large office as the door closes behind him.

WILLIAM MELVILLE (M), early-30's slightly balding with thick mustache, sits behind a large desk.

M

Ah, Mr. Morris, welcome to Scotland Yard. I assume you were taken good care of you in your transport here?

ARTHUR

I, yes the constables were most kind to me Mr...

M

Melville. William Melville, but call me M. Please.

M gestures with a hand to a chair in front of his desk. Arthur sits in the chair. M pulls a newspaper out of a drawer, tossing it onto the desk top.

M

Have you read this morning's paper?

ARTHUR

No, I don't pay much attention to the news.

M

Then please, read the center column's headline.

Arthur leans forward reading the paper.

"EXPLOSION ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAY. STOPPAGE OF THE TRAFFIC. FORTY PERSONS INJURED."

Arthur's head jolts up.

ARTHUR

Sir I assure you I had nothing to do with that.

M

I know and that's not why you're here. Not entirely. Have you heard of the Fenians?

ARTHUR

The Irish Republican Brotherhood? Only rumors.

M

And what rumors would those be?

ARTHUR

That the Irish Republican
Brotherhood, the Fenians, are
fighting for Irish independence
from Britain.

M

Those rumors are true Mr. Morris,
(points towards a wall map)
and they're bringing their fight to
our city.

Arthur looks at the map. It shrouds an entire wall. It is
made from hundreds of small aerial photographs. Arthur sees
part of the map is incomplete. Arthur points towards it.

ARTHUR

Why is that section missing?

M stands and walks to an open window, calmer now, lighting a
pipe. Arthur continues to study the map

M

That, Mr. Morris, is our
problem. We've narrowed our search
of the city, we believe the Fenians
are working from a factory in that
area. Our airships can't get
photographs however. Not without
being shot down.

ARTHUR

Shot down? By who?

M

That is what we don't know.

M retrieves a small brass object from his pocket. It's
scorched. He tosses it across the room to Arthur.

Arthur studies the object, rubbing his finger on the objects
edge. It's the shape of a woman's bracelet.

M

That's the only evidence we found
from the bombing.

ARTHUR

(to himself)
A socket.

M
I'm sorry?

ARTHUR
I was just saying it looks to be a
socket of some sorts. Do you have
any idea what it's from?

M
No, but we're certain it came from
that factory. We've lost too many
good men trying to get photographs
and we need to know what we're up
against. That's where you come in.

ARTHUR
Me? What does any of this have to
do with me?

M puts out his pipe, returning it to his jacket. He walks
back to his desk and sits.

M
I've been informed you have a map,
a map similar to that one, but
complete.

ARTHUR
I... I do. I made one, but how did
you know that?

M
I have my ways. I'm more
interested in how you took
photographs above the factory
without being seen however.

ARTHUR
I'm not sure. I just took the
photographs. I wasn't aware the
factory was being watched.

M
Please Mr. Morris, indulge me.

ARTHUR
I used a small flying device I
invented. It is really quit
brilliant. It takes aerial
photographs using a small modified
Lancaster pocket camera I mounted
on the devices underside.

M

How do you pilot your devise? Our airships haven't reported any civilian aircraft flying over the city recently.

ARTHUR

They probably couldn't even see it. I don't fly it like your thinking. It flies itself.

M

Interesting, very interesting. How would you like to assist me?

ARTHUR

Assist you?

M

Yes, as a temporary member of Special Irish Branch.

ARTHUR

Special Irish Branch?

M

Of course the job would be temporary, unless your inventions prove useful.

Arthur looks at M, the brass object in his hand, the map and back to M.

ARTHUR

Agreed.

M

Very good. Now, lets take a look at this map and flying device of yours and put them to good use.

EXT. STREET - DAY

M drives Arthur in a horseless carriage. They stop outside a building.

Down the street a horseless carriage stops out of sight.

EXT/INT. ARTHUR'S FLAT - DAY

M and Arthur enter the building and walk up stairs to Arthur's flat.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The passenger of the horseless carriage following M and Arthur exits the carriage. He is STEAM MAN, his features concealed under a top hat and black overcoat except for a brass pipe in his mouth producing constant puffs of smoke. He walks toward Arthur's building omitting a mechanical sound.

People turn as he passes them.

INT. ARTHUR'S FLAT - DAY

M meanders around Arthur's flat, examining gadgets of Arthur's creation.

Arthur clears a table and spreads out his map of London. M makes his way to the map and examines it. He frowns, squinting at the map.

M

These photographs are extremely too small to be of any use to us. I can barley make them out.

Arthur makes a coughing sound off screen.

M looks up. Arthur holds out a pair of goggles with magnifying glasses attached to them.

M takes the goggles and puts them on. He reexamines the map. The photographs are highly detailed. M Looks up.

M

These photographs are brilliant. Where is the flying device you used?

Arthur retrieves the flying device. It resembles a large bird with the pocket watch camera mounted underneath it.

M takes the flying device from Arthur and examines it.

M

What do you call it?

ARTHUR

A dirigible rig operated nacelle engine, or DRONE for short.

M

Special Branch could use this in so many ways.

M hands the drone back to Arthur and turns back to the map.

M

Now lets see what your drone has found for us.

M locates the factory and flips a magnifying glass into his view. The factory focuses into fine detail.

Man shaped beings are strategically positioned on the factory's roof. They all look the same. Top hats, pipes in mouths producing smoke, black overcoats and all standing next to Gatling guns.

M

I count twenty men on the roof but they all look the same. What do you make of this?

Arthur takes the goggles from M and locates the factory.

ARTHUR

I've seen these men before, but...
I don't understand!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Steam Man's metallic hand knocks on Arthur's flat door.

INT. ARTHUR'S FLAT - DAY

Arthur and M look at one another and then the door. Smoke drifts under the door into Arthur's flat.

ARTHUR

Do you have any weapons on you?

M

Just a revolver.

ARTHUR

We need a bigger gun.

M

Why?

The door bursts into shards as Steam Man storms through it. Arthur dives to the ground to avoid being trampled.

Steam Man stops and looks at Arthur and then M.

STEAM MAN

William Melville you must be eliminated!

Steam Man advances towards M.

M shoots Steam Man with his revolver. The bullets ricochet off Steam Man's iron body.

Steam Man grabs M by the throat, lifting him off the floor.

Arthur lunges at Steam Man trying to knock him over. Steam Man looks at Arthur before throwing him across his flat.

Arthur sluggishly regains his footing. He watches as suffocates as he kicks and swings at Steam Man.

M struggles on the brink of loosing consciousness.

Steam Man suddenly stiffens as arcs of electricity race around his body. He drops M, falls to his knees and then to his face.

Arthur stands behind Steam Man holding a large ray gun.

M clutches at his throat, sucking air into his lungs.

M

What the hell is that?

ARTHUR

I told you we needed a bigger gun.

Arthur drops the ray gun and helps M up. They roll Steam Man onto it's back.

M

What is it?

ARTHUR

It's called a steam man, except, it's not really a man.

M

Then what is it?

ARTHUR

An automaton, invented in the 1860s by Mr. Zadock Deddrick. He invented a steam powered man that could pull a carriage it was attached to.

M

A steam power man?

ARTHUR

Yes, but this one looks heavily modified, as if to act alone. Shh!

(beat)

Do you hear that?

A ticking sound can be heard coming from Steam Man. Arthur pulls open Steam Man's over coat. Both Arthur and M step back.

Steam Man's chest has explosives built into it, a clockwork timer ticking.

M

Can you stop it?

ARTHUR

I don't know.

Arthur tinkers with Steam Man's chest. He can't get his fingers through Steam Man's chest grating.

"10 seconds"

Arthur frantically looks around his flat. He grabs a screwdriver and stabs it through Steam Man's chest grating into the clockwork timer.

"2 seconds"

The clockwork timer's second hand stops counting down but continues to tick in place.

Arthur closes his eyes and lets out a sigh of relief as he kneels over Steam Man. Opening his eyes he notices Steam Man's shoulder.

ARTHUR

Do you have the brass socket from the bombing?

M retrieves the brass socket from his pocket. He hands it to Arthur. Arthur holds it next to Steam Man's shoulder socket. It is identical.

Arthur rushes back to the map, looking at it with the goggles.

ARTHUR

If all these are steam men, the same as this one, they are all walking bombs! That factory has to be destroyed.

M

We can't get anywhere near it though. What about your drone?

ARTHUR

What?

M

Your drone. What if we could return the Fenian's bomb?

Arthur looks at his drone and the bomb in Steam Man's chest.

ARTHUR

It could work, but the iron grating is too thick for my tools to cut through.

M

I have the perfect workshop you can use.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Arthur and M exit Arthur's building carrying Steam Man.

The driver of the horseless carriage following them sees them alive. The driver steers the horseless carriage towards Arthur and M.

Arthur and M leap out of the way, dropping Steam Man. Steam Man is run over but it's chest is intact.

The driver speeds away, long auburn hair fluttering in the wind. M sees the hair.

M

We need to hurry.

INT. WORKSHOP - DAY

Steam Man lays on a worktable as Arthur cuts the chest grating. Sparks light up Arthur's goggled face.

The workshop door opens, DUNCAN QUINN, late 30's, walks towards Arthur.

DUNCAN

Excuse me! What do you think
you're doing?

Arthur looks up, pulling the goggles off his dirty face.

ARTHUR

Me?

DUNCAN

Yes you. Who let you in here?

Arthur points his tool behind Duncan. M walks into the workshop.

DUNCAN

I must protest Sir. This is my
workshop, he has no right being
here, much less using my equipment.

M

He's assisting me on a mission of
utter importance.

DUNCAN

Mission?

M

To save London.

ARTHUR

(interrupting)

I'm sorry to interrupt but I do
have a bomb waiting to explode and
I won't be saving anything if that
happens.

DUNCAN

A bomb?

Arthur removes the chest grating exposing the bomb and clockwork timer still ticking at two seconds.

M
 Courtesy of Ms. Livingston.

DUNCAN
 That's impossible.

M
 She works for the Fenians. We found their factory and she knew it. She sent this to kill me. We don't have long now before the Fenians will attack all of London.

M hands Duncan a file of photographs, enlarged photographs of the factory. An army of steam men standing in ranks is visible.

DUNCAN
 How did you get these?

M points to Arthur's drone on a separate worktable.

Duncan examines the drone, turning it over to see the camera.

DUNCAN
 This is ingenious. Very cunning.
 (to himself)
 Why didn't I see this?

Arthur removes the bomb from Steam Man and carefully carries it to the worktable laying it next to his drone.

ARTHUR
 What's cunning is we're using it to give back their bomb.

DUNCAN
 Give it back?

M
 We will destroy the factory, the Fenians and their army of steam men with their own bomb. They will never see it coming.

DUNCAN
 No, they won't.

Duncan moves away from the worktable. With his back to M and Arthur he removes a gun from his coat.

He turns and points the gun at M.

DUNCAN

I'm sorry Sir, but I can't let you do that. It's not part of our plan.

M

Not part of your plan?

DUNCAN

No. The underground bombing was just a test. All of London is next. Clarissa's mission was to keep you from finding the factory, but you were so damn persistent.

(pointing gun towards Arthur)

Then you had to involve him. You think you're so clever. But if he's dead his little toy can't help you.

Arthur suddenly jams his finger into the clockwork timer and removes the screwdriver holding it for Duncan to see.

ARTHUR

You're not going to shoot me. You do and we all will die.

DUNCAN

You're right. I'm not going to shoot you.

(shifting the gun towards M)

But I can kill him.

M pulls out his revolver. Duncan pulls the trigger twice, M's body twitching from the gun shots. M falls to the floor, his revolver clattering across the floor.

Duncan points his gun towards Arthur.

DUNCAN

Get rid of the screwdriver.

Arthur hesitates. Duncan cocks his gun. Arthur tosses the screwdriver towards Duncan.

Duncan backs towards the workshop door, holstering his gun in his coat.

DUNCAN

I wouldn't stay here too long, bad men are coming.

Duncan exits the workshop. Arthur looks for something to jam into the clockwork timer.

M coughs, sits up and puts his hand on his chest.

M

I knew there was a reason I didn't like him.

ARTHUR

I thought you were dead.

M

No, it takes a little more than a bullet to kill me.

M unbuttons his jacket revealing ballistic armor on it's inside.

M

It hurts like hell, but it's saved me more than once.

ARTHUR

That's great. Now can you please hand me the screwdriver, my finger is about to be cut off.

M hands the screwdriver to Arthur. Arthur reinserts it into the clockwork timer and removes his finger, flexing it.

M

Sorry. How long will it take to arm your drone with the bomb?

ARTHUR

An hour at the most. I'm not sure. My drone wasn't built to carry that much weight.

M

We don't have that long. The Fenians will unleash their steam man army on London when Duncan tells them of our plan.

Arthur looks at the bomb and then his drone.

ARTHUR

Give me thirty minutes.

EXT/INT. FACTORY - DAY

A horseless carriage speeds through the gateway of the factory's outer brick wall. Steam men guard the gate, closing a large gate behind the horseless carriage.

The horseless carriage skids to a stop in front of the factory's main entrance. Duncan exits the steam car and enters the factory. Clarissa rushes up to him.

CLARISSA

M and the man are still alive. I fear they know our location.

DUNCAN

Don't worry about M, I dealt with him, permanently, and the man is indisposed at the moment. But to ensure our victory I'm activating our army now.

Duncan and Clarissa walk through the factory and exit into the outside court yard filled with the steam men army.

Clarissa climbs stairs to a balcony over looking the army. A large control panel on the balcony comes to life. Duncan nods to Clarissa. She flips a large lever.

The steam men's eyes light up. Smoke puffs from their pipes. They begin marching.

DUNCAN

Go my children. Cleanse this city.

STEAM MEN

(in unison)

London must be eliminated.

INT. BIG BEN - DAY

Arthur and M climb stairs inside Big Ben. Arthur carries his drone with the bomb attached to it. They reach the bell tower.

M rushes to the bell tower's openings.

M

We're too late.

A circle of expanding explosions around the factory can be seen through the openings.

ARTHUR

The first thing about any machine is there's always something controlling it. We destroy that and we stop the steam men.

Arthur carries the drone to the bell tower opening and sets it down. He pulls goggles over his eyes and determines the distance to the factory with a set of gauges on them.

Arthur looks to M.

ARTHUR

Are you ready? We only get one shot at this.

M

Launch the drone.

Arthur resets the clockwork timer to thirty seconds and removes the screwdriver. He throws the drone out of the bell tower's openings. The drone slightly drops and then begins to fly itself.

Steam men can be seen nearing the Palace of Westminster, exploding one at a time as they get closer.

Arthur and M brace themselves as Big Ben shakes.

M

It's over. We are too late.

Arthur looks at his pocket watch and looks up.

ARTHUR

Not entirely.

In the distance a great explosion can be seen as the factory explodes.

Below Big Ben, the steam men stop. Arthur and M watch as all the steam men they can see begin falling over.

ARTHUR

God save the Queen.

INT. ARTHUR'S FLAT - MORNING

Arthur is cleaning his wrecked flat from Steam Man's attack.

M knocks on Arthur's doorless doorway and enters, looking around Arthur's flat.

M

The factory was obliterated, much like your flat apparently, and there were no signs of Duncan or Clarissa surviving.

ARTHUR

What about the steam men and the rest of the Fenians?

M

The steam men will be melted down after their bombs are deactivated. The Fenians however are not entirely gone, but they know we're watching them.

M helps Arthur flip up a worktable.

M

Your drone worked perfectly yesterday, Special Irish Branch could use more of your inventions.

ARTHUR

Are you offering me a job?

M

Duncan was Special Irish Branch's Operation Quartermaster. He was in charge of inventing and creating all our equipment and weapons. That position has recently become vacant.

ARTHUR

Will I get to use the workshop?

M

It will be all yours.

ARTHUR

When do I start?

M smiles and spreads his arms to Arthur's wrecked flat.

M

You already have. Welcome to the life of Special Irish Branch, Quartermaster.

FADE OUT.