

1930 Chicago, Irish American Life,
And Its Adaptation into Historical Fiction:
The Ups and Downs of Percival Dooley,
A Novella

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Abstract

The thesis examines and explains literary techniques of historical fiction. Observations and studies of historical photographs and handwritten letters, along with qualitative research through studies, journals, historical fiction pieces, and Chicago info-maps, provided accuracy for the historical fiction and a clear reflection of humanity, which is significant in understanding the argument.

Ultimately, the historical fiction shows not just 1930 American society, but where it is today. The thesis argues and proves that whimsical tones are appropriate and effective despite the uneasy time and setting and the foreboding conflicts during 1930.

The story is set in Chicago in the year 1930. The protagonist is an Irish American named Percival Dooley. Embedded within the story is the characters' lives during the time of Prohibition and enjoyment with the Roaring Twenties' results. Dooley is given the job as an elevator attendant during a time of Union formations, particularly in hospitality and service industries.

Dedication

The following thesis is dedicated to my family. I suppose you put up with as much as I did. Also, thank you for being proud of me.

I'd also like to dedicate this work to mothers. Two mothers encouraged me to take on this endeavor, despite the constant pushback from our culture and the world. Hopefully, I can inspire moms, too.

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Synopsis of the Historical Fiction Piece

In 1930, Percival Dooley lives in Southeast Chicago with his mother and older brother. He is restless to the point of becoming anxious in difficult moments. He is of Irish American descent. This quirky young man in his mid-20s with great optimism for building confidence and courage begins a new job as an elevator attendant at a posh Chicago hotel, located a half-hour walk from his home. The hotel is the dominant setting; however, the constraints of the elevator, in terms of space, are an unavoidable (and, at moments, inescapable) core.

The plot involves a strange assignment given to Percival by the hotel owner to trap a ghost in the elevator. The ghostly entity is a humorous and lighthearted part of the plot. Its result is an angsty Percival trying to decipher several elevator guests with a wide spectrum of personalities; which one is the ghost? The different personalities coming and going on the elevator in close presence to poor Percival will reflect or are parodied by the great number of angles and views of 1930. Consequently, this adds to the research; what else, besides the Depression, the Prohibition, racism, and a crashed stock market attributed character to the year 1930? These new findings can add to the personalities boarding the elevator, frustrated at different degrees with Percival's odd forms of engagement.

Along with Percival's stumped self-assurance, the fear of the elevator, the taunts and comments targeted towards the Irish, and the pressures of his boss, Percival stumbles even more when he becomes smitten with the beautiful ghost.

Artist Statement

Section 1: Writing Interests

Although fiction is not the truth, fiction does provide reflections of life experiences. Through fiction, truth can be evaluated and seen more clearly. Fiction such as allegories, fables, and parables generally have the purpose of providing truth through the telling of fictional stories. Jesus provided parables to help us understand truth of loving our neighbors, of how He will return, and of the brutal reality of Hell. Examples and scenarios are given to others in hopes of showing them the truth.

With historical fiction, historical occurrences are embedded within the plot and character construction. Therefore, diligent research is needed to avoid inaccuracies in the story.

Throughout Liberty University's Creative Writing graduate program, every piece of writing unfolds the need for more research. The need for research exists in each element of the fiction story as well. It includes elements such as historical lineages and the immigration of Irishmen to America. Also, other historical literature writings with similar aspects are introduced, particularly with Irish Americans and/or Chicago.

Angela's Ashes: A Memoir, written by Irish American Frank McCourt, tells his story beginning as a young boy with Irish American life embedded into almost every paragraph. Although the cultural aspects are written in the memoir intentionally, a writer's authentic character is always visible. For example, McCourt gives details of his mother asking her husband's employment for his paycheck before he takes it to the bar and wastes it away (Mccourt 28). The drinking Irishmen is indeed a stereotype; St. Patrick's Day for today's

Americans traditionally involves beer, often tinted green. Yet, for McCourt, the drinking Irishman is a memory. He simply shares his experiences from an inevitable Irish American perspective. McCourt's documented information shared in the memoir helps and will help to shape Percival (my antagonist) with accurate knowledge, perhaps even remold him entirely.

Why thoughts gravitate towards Chicago to pair with the early 1900s is uncertain. Carl Sandburg's poem "Chicago," besides the poetic elements and techniques Sandburg uses, his love for Chicago and the character of the city he conveys sways an admiration for the city. Chicago curiosity also stems from the bildungsroman *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, which is fictional, but highly reflects Cisneros' own girlhood. *Young Lonigan*, by Irish American James T. Farrell, was written with a Chicago setting of a young Irish boy.

The pieces of historical literature also incorporate the Irish Catholic foundation within the plot and dialogue. Charles Fanning, author of a journal article focused on Irish Americans in Chicago in 1933 and 1934, expressed how piously Catholicism was adopted into their life decisions (72).

Identifying the tones in the three previously spoken literary pieces teaches techniques literary techniques and identifies commonalities in the authors' writings. For example, the tone for the memoir *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir* remains innocent as a bildungsroman, providing sympathy and empathy within the reader for the narrator. For the potential historical fiction piece for the thesis, the tone initially created is lighthearted. The time was stained with much hopelessness. Several books from the time period carried a solemn tone, books of the early 1900s typically contain settings of struggles during the Depression, battling in the Great War, or living in Europe

with a rising Adolf Hitler. Nonetheless, a whimsical tone amidst foreboding uncertainty is not unbalanced or facetious. Furthermore, incorporating a joyful tone does not ignore the time period's struggles and historical landmarks. Happiness did still exist despite the strife; it is human nature to look for hope. The research includes literature with the commonality of inviting the reader to smile despite the bleak setting. The writers chose a whimsical, lighthearted tone. Young Lonigan is the least lighthearted, which is still an optimistic evaluation. However, the inclusion of Ferrell's brighter scattered scenes of goodness and love provide an anchor for the protagonist, even though he spirals downward anyway. So, the reason for adding happier times in the writing amidst bleak settings and experiences may reflect a theme: despite the struggling time period, the protagonists lived, and those lives are beautiful things.

Brian Fox, professor at Okayama University in Japan, provides an article of Irish American stereotypes, which are part of these studies. He asserts that Irish Americans are stereotyped as fighters and drinkers to the point they proudly sing songs about who they are. He includes works by James Joyce (explored in the Critical Paper section) that show and seem to support these stereotypes of fighting and drinking. Fox's research focuses on the first two decades of the 20th century. These stereotypes can also be seen in *Angela's Ashes*, as McCourt describes how he remembered his father, drunk and singing odes to Ireland.

The choice of the Irish American ethnicity for the protagonist is an attention-grabber in that Irish Americans in history is not seen often.

Another cultural artifact is the elevators in the 1930s. They varied in construction as they evolved with advanced technology. Research on elevators of the 1930s reveals a variety of

elevator parts, motors, and décor, along with how they ascend and descend. Findings also include mishaps or plummeting elevators of the past; there is an elevator mishap, and a booming crash planned in the story.

Section 2: Impetus

Details uncover more details, not in a pedantic sense, but more as a mesmerized experience with how often more interesting doors open to further discovery. Seeing intently in a forest, for example, can reveal where leaves are intact or not, where there's weeds, shadows, and dips in the ground. Details tell stories and deepen inquiry. The things placed in front of faces, such as the look of a car or an MVP football player, soak in attention. The story of the football player on the bench may be heard the least, but this is the life that can be most intriguing. Fancy cars are nice, but who is the driver? What's his story? This is more interesting than the car. Some might believe that the elevator attendant is not much more than a prop, but how did this prop get there? Who is he?

Philip Gerard's *The Art of Creative Research* inspired the process for the work. He nominalizes preconceptions in writing and encourages writers to prepare for research to take the writing intentions and reshape them. Gerard suggests allowing the research journey to write the story and not allow the story to dictate the direction of research.

Section 3: The vision for the work

The whimsical tone researched is adequate. Imagery provides revealed and honored historical details and therefore must be depicted accurately.

Basking in the masterpieces builds knowledge of how to write, as guided in Francine Prose's *Reading Like a Writer*. *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens offers studies of juxtaposition and paradoxes. In *Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, his connotation, whether hopeful, gloomy, or wicked, reflects the related scenes, themes, and the setting. In *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, the value of point of view and of the complexities of each character holds true to reflecting real life. Other writers, such as Chinua Achebe, author of *Things Fall Apart*, and H.G. Wells' *Invisible Man* reflect a great writing skill of creating an unappealing protagonist. Short stories by Anton Chekhov, such as "Misery," constructed the words to feel like a boa constrictor of misery wrapping around the reader. The main character, Iona Potapov, is sympathetic and admirable; he evokes feelings of remorse within readers for his time of misery, even though he was not even real. Every sentence of each paragraph is incredibly rich. Chekhov's protagonist, like the protagonist in the proposed thesis, was an easily overlooked man. F. Scott Fitzgerald's short stories, such as "Revisiting Babylon" and "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" show a great understanding of where exactly to position flashbacks in a story. Contemporary writer Edward Carey, author of *Little*, is a wonderful read. His writing style is whimsical with a noticeable amount of dark humor. He is a historical fiction author, with a writing style similar the style of the proposed thesis.

Reading a variety of writings, particularly by these writers, can be even more beneficial with a pen in hand and a journal nearby. A creative fictional writer should aim to write literary fiction and highly value its artistic quality.

There's a place for commercial fiction, as many best sellers are commercial fiction. Not all readers want to study what they read; they just want the enjoyment of reading.

Does the purpose of writing practices, studying, and learning ultimately come to how readers view the writer? In Liberty University's Contemporary Literature class, Professor Mark Schmidt explains how every popular, bestselling book is not required to be liked by everyone (Schmidt 2020). According to publishing editor Sol Stein, some bestsellers shouldn't be liked. In his book, *Stein on Writing*, he provides a look at some mediocre to bad excerpts from bestsellers. Sentences and dialogues in the excerpts were arranged and worded strangely, as if little thought was given for its development (Stein). Based on an appreciation for writing, to write well, above all, is preferable.

Acceptance and appreciation are two solid wants, yes; however, there's a beauty in the melody of words in the same way one stops to soak in the music of Bach. There's an expression which states, "music speaks where words cannot," but words can make us dance or cry, too. This is the purpose in writing – to create a connection so deeply with others through the art of writing.

An underlying message in the writing piece is a focus on the refreshing silver linings amidst the bleak times. In 1930, comfort and hope were either desires or precious possessions. What was also spread across the country were uncertainties, including ignorance. The literature creates a dramatic irony as these characters do not truly know what's ahead. Then again, neither do we.

Section 4: Its meaning to a Christian scholar

Fiction works may present characters who have different backgrounds than their readers do. Unless the protagonist is an anti-hero, readers will develop empathy for the character. Consequently, the reader gains an appreciation, or at least an understanding. For the values,

biases, and backgrounds of most of the characters. Similarly, Christians gain the same blessing when they value fellowship with other Christians, meet together, and ultimately, regularly attend church. Christians hunger and cultivate an intimate relationship with God, wanting to know Him and follow Him; however, who He is and His work can often be most clearly seen through the lives of others.

If Christian fellowship is transparent in sharing testimonies and making much of God, Christians will learn more of who God is and how He is working in the lives of not only oneself, but in the lives of others. those they know. Then, they leave knowing more of God.

Creating characters offers readers a similar blessing; writers introduce their characters who have new ways of life, different cultural upbringings, and a struggle. Writers also guide readers to take the journey along with their protagonist. A fellowship occurs within the pages.

Stopping to pay attention to those not personally known, and who others may overlook, such as an elevator attendant, puts others first. Servers of any type are quietly beside busy people for a small moment as they hurry alone, wrapped in their own needs, wants, and lives. Writers give readers the opportunity to invite people to pause and take a rewarding look at who they usually don't have time for.

Hopefully, the whimsical tone given at a time when the Great Depression was preparing to pummel Chicago shows the need to maintain hope. "So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18 NIV).

Lastly, writing for the end-goal of impressing readers with elaborate phrases does not help the reader. To plan on providing epiphanies and “food for thought” is not an honest approach. Also, syntax and the pull from imagery that takes the state of a frazzled mind and places it where the character is. There’s value in having awareness of careful and intentional diction, the construction of each paragraph, and the arrangement and type of each sentence. These attributes of the artistic qualities of writing have been an ongoing learning experience, and the experience explains the confidence in writing in a lighthearted tone amidst a bleak time.

Introduction to the Critical Essay Section

The critical essay section is divided into three parts: a qualitative study of Chicago in 1930; qualitative and empirical studies of Irish Americans in the early 1900s; and a qualitative look at historical fiction novels and short stories involving either an Irish writer and/or Irish characters.

Then, each part is subdivided into three repeated sections: detailed examination and evidence, analysis and interpretations, and the conclusions in going forward with the thesis.

The year 1930 was like spring; the newness of the Great Depression, a reset from the Great War, innovative schemes in attempts to derail the enforced Prohibition, and a stealthy weed of segregation spreading in America. Men wore suits and looked handsome in fedoras; women were beautifully ladylike in their dresses and cloches. Mobsters like Al Capone, the stagnation of President Hoover, and photos of unemployed men in line at soup kitchens give us understanding of the time. It seems the gray photos captured the truest color of the new decade, but it was the

most colorful year of our nation's history. The year 1930 is the basis, and setting, for the writing proposal.

In 1930, the Depression hadn't distressed everyone just yet; and peering closer, some places still thrived. For example, some hotels still ran with fervor. In peering even closer, these hotels were even able to pay for elevator attendants. An elevator attendant in 1930 is the protagonist of the creative fictional piece proposed for the thesis.

Chicago was booming in the Roaring Twenties, and for most of 1930, they didn't feel the heat wave from the Depression. Not yet. In this beginning of 1930, Chicagoans still danced, unaware they were on the edge of a cliff. Chicago is the location for my fiction piece. The dramatic irony is intriguing, and the ignorance to their future can at any time be parallel to the present state; no one knows. The fictional piece involves an elevator attendant in Chicago in 1930.

Chicago in 1930, the Setting

Section 1: Detailed Examination and Evidence

What piques interest in Chicago, Illinois? No wealthy couples on HGTV's "Property Brothers" dream of living in Chicago. However, when studying the acclaimed features of the year 1930 (the Prohibition, the Great Depression, racism, the Great War aftermath, new inventions, and an industrial and manufacturing sprint), the city of Chicago reflects the same altruistic heart as the year 1930 in America. In 1930, Chicago was a dream destination for many

Americans. In restoring and/or cultivating its value, Chicago is the setting for the historical fiction novel.

Chicago, Illinois was a leading city in the world long before 1930. Chicagoans had no reason to believe the new decade following the Roaring Twenties would not unfold more treasures. Research conveys their productivity progression, which included manufacturing workers and laborers as well as entrepreneurs, operated synchronously, and they proud of their hard work and successes. The Great Fire of 1871, which burned thousands of Chicago acres, did not shake their unity apart, but reinvigorated their love for their hometown.

Historian from a group called Yestervid compiled early 1900 footage of the city of Chicago (Yestervid 2015). From the footage, it is evident that Chicago was a booming and functioning industrialized city. Electrical power was in every tall building. The architecture of the buildings conveyed pride in the builders' work, with massive arches and castle-like roofs. Canopies were adorned above many doors of tall buildings, showing how small people were compared to the buildings. On State Street, tracks ran in the middle of the street for trolleys, as horses and carriages or automobiles traveled on the paved road on each side of the trolley tracks. The Maxwell Street Market was like a flea market, and it was mostly immigrants selling. The city was settled and confident.

Chicago was a big manufacturing city in 1930, the second largest industrial city in the nation (Cohen 11), and conveniently located at major American railways and on the coast of Lake Michigan. Along with Chicago's booming industry and the completion of stylish skyscrapers, Chicago gave the arts due credit. Jazz music was so popular that the 1920s were also called the

“Jazz Age.” Jazz had a function other than creating music. According to William H. Kenney in his book *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930*, although jazz was popular in the entertainment venues in Chicago, its roots were most predominant with “the working-class slum residents from Southside Chicago” (ix). The lower-class residents provided entertainment primarily to the white population throughout the Roaring Twenties, sharing experiences through the jazz music in dance halls and speakeasies. It bridged segregation and created fellowship on “college campuses, [in] country clubs, and [in] elegant hotels” (xv). Jazz was something to dance to. This musical intrigue of jazz music opened the door for the Chicago Black Renaissance of the 1920s, parallel to the Harlem Renaissance in New York City. Due to Chicago’s booming industry, many Blacks from the South moved to Chicago for job opportunities.

Carl Sandburg's poem "Chicago" depicts hometown pride. Those who knew Chicago knew its heart, like Sandburg did. He beamed as he wrote poetry about it, as if Chicago had veins flowing with sweat, dirt, and muscles while breaking and falling but boldly and happily getting back up. There were no nature elements in the poem, but plenty of laborious connotation revering people who love Chicago. The poem describes how the city continues to roar as it works hard unceasingly.

Sandburg has a theme in his poetry of giving ode to the working man. His message is welcoming readers to hear more about his fondness for Chicago residents. There must be unity amongst the people, like a team. An accurate demonstration of this Chicago attribute will be reflected in supporting characters within my fictional piece. This common thread of camaraderie is evident throughout research.

However, Chicago was far from a utopia, and their attempts for unwavering happiness and satisfaction would not be reality, and Chicago had a heavy share of stressors. The city was the home of the 1929 St. Valentine massacre involving the mob. Mobsters were a terror to Chicago residents, and the tragedy of the massacre increased the chilling fright. A map for sale online, titled “Chicago’s Gangland” (Slate 2024), gives locations of mobster residences and of illegal events and killing sprees. The map is thorough in mobster facts and specific addresses. The Chicago map indicates numerous locations where illegal mafia activities, from bootlegging to murder, took place. The mafia’s involvement in the Chicago streets, as indicated on the map, is spread out in countless locations, covering every few blocks of the city. Inevitably, the presence of mobsters resulted in several unsettled neighborhoods.

Uneasiness also existed amongst the working-class citizens. A distrust stirred in the 1920s and continued into the beginning of the new decade from manufacturing workers against employers and the American government. Chicago was growing, and workers had scruples regarding fair pay and work hours. They remained ardent in their self-defense and even formed a Labor Party, which, in less than the given decade, dissipated (Cohen 1990). Nonetheless, labor workers remained united.

Chicago neighborhoods naturally divided based on ethnicity and trade. Southside Chicago was a location repeated in several pieces of research focused on the working class, minorities, slums, and poverty-stricken populations. The fiction book *Young Lonigan* by Irish American James Farrell was written in the 1930s. Through his novel, Farrell explains growing up in poverty in Southside Chicago. Also, in William Kenney’s book *Chicago Jazz*, he repeatedly

referred to "black Southside Chicagoans" (xii), as if there was an understanding of who lived in Southside.

American historian Lizabeth Cohen studied the demographics of Chicago residences, and she found an interesting division in the composition. Chicago residents lived relatively close in areas based on where workers lived and worked. For example, workers of the steel industries lived near employment, mainly the southeast portion of Chicago. A noticeable number of Irish immigrants settled near the garment and clothing industries (Cohen 22). Chicago residents mimicked a classroom of assigned seats, sitting based on who they were, or who they presumably were.

The setting for the thesis, the interior of a 1930 Chicago hotel, is an essential focus. The Stevens Hotel in Chicago opened May 1, 1927, and was the largest hotel in the world (Historic Hotels of America). The owner of the hotel, James Stevens and his son Earnest Stevens, wanted to design "a city within a city." The hotel is now a Hilton hotel, and the hotel's website gives information on the original amenities of the hotel: "with 3,000 guest rooms, 27 chair barber shop, a pharmacy, a candy shop, a five-lane bowling alley, 1,200 seat movie theatre and an 18-hole miniature golf course atop the hotel" (Hilton.com). In 1929, Stevens was struggling, and the hotel was going into debt, so he used millions of insurance dollars to run the hotel. His charge for embezzlement did not catch up with him or those who were still able to enjoy the hotel until 1933 (Garrido 2014).

An interesting part of Hilton's history (which happened too late for the time period of the thesis) is that the hotel opened an authentic Irish bar in 1986. They even "brought over 13 staff members from Ireland" (Hilton.com).

The year 1930 introduced shaky grounds to Chicago's strong economy. Postel-Vinay states Chicago "experienced one of the country's highest urban bank failure rates" (2). Chicago had more to lose compared to Birmingham, Alabama, for instance. Subsequently, Chicago was bound to lose more. Percentage-wise research would be helpful. Nevertheless, along with lost revenue from saloons and alcohol sales due to the Prohibition, Chicago felt the reality of the Great Depression within the first few years of the 1930s.

Chicago's first banking crisis occurred in the late 1930s (Postel-Vinay 4). Considering the stock market crash occurred October 24, 1929, a year passed before many Chicagoans noticed or felt the effects of the crash. The year 1930 is the most intriguing moment of American history. The American citizens' existence climbed the top of the roller coaster, and were hovering at the epoch, blinded from what was to come. They hovered, lived, and dreamed in bliss. They were all sympathetic characters, engaged in a state of dramatic irony and ultimate tragedy.

Section 2: Analysis and Interpretation of the Chicago Setting

Chicago is an exciting setting for a number of reasons. The resources with a wealth of facts held a common bias: pride and the belief in an unshakable, unwavering unity of Chicago. From a macro perspective, there's no disagreement. However, research on the immigration in Chicago, specifically Irish immigration, the racism and struggles of the new residents depicted a cacophony—not a unity --of social interaction in Chicago. In conclusion, the unity repeatedly

indicated was cultivated in commonalities of social groups. The steel workers had unity. The packing plants had unity. The visionaries and investors had unity. Together, a patchwork of unity kept its own lines distinct and visible. Architectural historian Richard Longstreth gave a list of similes to pay ode to Chicago: “As a locus of business activity, as a hub of social engagement, as an arbiter of taste, as a stage for polite conduct, as an emblem of urbanity, as a demonstration of operational efficiency, and as a yardstick technical prowess the hotel affords a spectrum of avenues . . .” (Longstreth 1075).

A Bible reading from Exodus reflects the Chicago research. Exodus 1 explains how the Egyptian pharaoh and leaders relentlessly afflicted the Hebrews. Verse 14 explains: “And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor” (NKJV). Jen Wilkin, author of *God of Deliverance*, shared an ancient Egyptian description for enslaved Hebrew bricklayers:

“He is dirtier than vines or pigs from treading under his mud. His clothes are stiff with clay; his leather belt is going to ruin. Entering into the wind, he is miserable. . . . His sides ache, since he must be outside in a treacherous wind. . . . His arms are destroyed with technical work. . . . What he eats is the bread of his fingers, and he washes himself only once a season. He is simply wretched through and through” (2021).

The hard worker—particularly the immigrant workers—were not highly regarded nor valued. However, God blessed the Israelites with strength, perseverance, and a multitude of children.

The Hebrews' hard life of work in a home that wasn't theirs to begin with parallels to Sandburg's poem "Chicago"; however, the hard working laborers in "Chicago," despite their poor living conditions and treatment, were exalted in the poem for being "*cunning as a savage pitted against the wilderness, / Bareheaded, / Shoveling, / Wrecking, / Planning, / Building, breaking, rebuilding, / Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, / laughing with white teeth,*" (Sandburg, Poetry Foundation 2024).

Although the working-class Chicagoans were not enslaved, the two different accounts for hard work spoke of two powerful places of the world. Chicago and Egypt stand mighty because of the mighty, with one significant difference; God promised the Israelites a new land. How has Chicago feared God? Several immigrants in Chicago kept a fervent grip on their Catholicism, and that's a lot of immigrants. In 1870, the population in Chicago was "under 300,000," rising to "over 2.7 million in 1920" (Cantwell 2012). In reading *Angela's Ashes*, *Young Lonigan*, and *House on Mango Street*, all three authors make several mentions of their Catholic heritage and continued religious lifestyle. Despite questions as to whether their religious customs were Biblical or receivers of salvation through Jesus, the "least of these" in the slums of Chicago worked hard and held on to their faith.

In the 1920s, elevator attendants realized they shared similar struggles with being unheard by the corporate's ears and, subsequently, a lack of pay and work regulation agreements. By 1930, they had created a bond based on their unfortunate commonalities, and "workers leveraged their structural power to aid one another's struggles and, in turn, inspired other groups of workers to challenge employers, with or without union leaders' approval" (Parziale 2021). Unions formed, and elevator attendants felt strong in knowing they had a backbone if corporate was

negligent. The camaraderie of attendants and their security in the union will be reflected in the thesis.

There's no current data showing Chicago as a repressed or struggling state. Illinois is not any more dangerous than many other states, and there's no findings of financial or social struggle. Who in Chicago exhumed the light of Truth? A Christian celebrity? A well-known preacher or worship band? Perhaps it was someone forgotten, like a poor Irish elevator attendant.

Section 3: Conclusion in Going Forward

How is this incorporated in my historical fiction? Knowledge of specific characteristics of Chicago will be indirectly embedded in the narrative, the dialogue and interactions, and the characterizations of each developing and static character. Embedding truths of a location as well-known as Chicago gives the city due appreciation. The layout of Chicago residents in 1930 is essential in spatial relation to the story.

A hotel for the wealthiest in America will be a dominant setting for the novel. The palatial layouts of each floor, the engravings and artwork, the workstations and the complex hierarchies of each working position all give insight to what the protagonist and supporting characters will see. As an elevator attendant, he has a particular role and a façade of prestige to uphold while answering higher ranks who, like Mr. Stevens in 1929, knew unsettling things. Furthermore, the construction of the elevators of 1930 will play a major role in the plot. Although the Stevens hotel photographs showed mechanically sliding doors, a modern elevator construction, the elevators in my historical fiction will go into more depth of the workings of elevators and incorporate the plentiful number of elevators still in working condition in 1930 which were

equipped with a gate and a door, and a lever that pulled in a circular motion to climb and descend to different floors. Many elevators were designed with elaborate wallpaper and engraved wood trim. Some had mirrors on the ceiling and even a corner bench. In-depth imagery of the small space will hopefully welcome an appreciation, although an anxious desire for space and relief, for confined spaces.

Irish American Life in 1930

Section 1: Detailed examination and evidence

The setting of my historical fiction provides a rich backdrop of one of the most powerful spots in the world. The depth and layers fully lived in Chicago, and it seems that a setting so powerful would inevitably control the characters, particularly the protagonist. Although that will tentatively not be the case, Chicago will be a strong force. In addition, the homeland of Ireland shaped the Irish; therefore, we will also examine the Irish life as preceded in their own land.

A writer is always a character standing in the distance behind his words. Therefore, reading pieces from the Irish provide more qualities of not only who the individual writer is, but who his people are, and who they were. More is learned not from reading about the Irish but reading their own words directly.

Poetry often tells a much longer story than the few stanzas we're given. Poet Eamon Grennan was born in Ireland in 1941 and moved to the United States. In his poem titled "From the Pieces of Kate," the speaker makes an interesting statement. He indicates that Kate sings "in

French, the new language / making her strange, out there, full-fledged and / ready for anything.” He connects knowing a new language with being full of vim and vigor. In seeing through the eyes of this Irish poet, we see what he finds worthy – speaking a second language. Although labeling this perspective on the entire Irish population cannot be accurate, we can conclude that Eamon Grennan most likely adopted his value of second languages from the cultural direction he observed and was given.

In digging deeper into the history of Irish immigrants, a legal Irish census document, dated 1871, provides a table of landowners in the county of Tipperary in Ireland. The table shows names, the amount of land, and the price of the land. One name was Elizabeth Dooly. Ms. Dooly was one of the few women landowners; she lived at Elm Grove, Parsonstown. She owned 79 acres (www.failteromhat.com). Parsonstown contained several workhouses for even children and dwellings for the neighboring parsons. According to Houseofnames.com, many Dooly descendants left Ireland before the deathly spread from the Great Potato Famine in the 1840s. The site also mentioned Mr. Patrick J. Dooley. At age 43, Mr. Dooley (different spelling formed) boarded the Titanic. He died in the sinking on April 14, 1912.

In looking through postcards of Ireland, the landscapes and some admirable manmade constructions, we see what was considered valuable and lovely by the Irish. Regarding the Tunnel Glengariff (irelandpostcards.com), there’s no argument. Although beautiful, it could be remembered in confined places, like an elevator.

Photographs are full of stories, lives, and facts. A photograph titled “Mother and Son, 1890” shows the posing of an elderly woman and her elderly son, in overworn, unkept clothing and

weary looks. The man's wool coat missed buttons, and the lapel was frazzled and frayed as was his white beard. The weary expressions supported the unfair treatment imposed upon the Irish by England.

The Irish struggled in their homeland. One in four Irish children died at the end of the 19th century. (RareHistoricalPhotos.com). England oppressed Ireland heavily, perceiving their existence as futile, and stripping away their own hope. The Great Potato Famine was indeed a tragedy, but also a bittersweet blessing in disguise. In the 1840s, amidst the sickness and death, the Irish had hope -- three million Irish emigrants stood up and left Ireland, hoping for something better across the Atlantic. However, in their learned behavior of hopelessness, following suit of an American Dream was nothing they had ever experienced, and in many situations, they were never encouraged to do so, evidenced by the vast dwellings in slums and poverty-line housing. A reoccurring thread in my research is the strong loyalty to Catholicism of most of the Irish community.

As mentioned earlier, reading the direct thoughts of individuals from Ireland give us a clearer picture of who they were, particularly through letters. Letters are typically written to loved ones, and they often reveal an important piece of the writer's heart. They feel pulled to share what their thoughts are and what they value in a transparent way with those they trust. Here's where a true characterization of the Irish in the early 1900s gave a romantic depth.

Kevin McCormack, Irish musician and blogger for Irish history, provided a letter written by a soldier, possibly from the Great War. The letter was written to the soldier's uncle. The following quote are his exact words:

“I suppose – at least I’ve heard, that you did not approve of my action in joining the army, to do & die for England! Why not? After all though she has been a bad sister, she is a sister & we must help her.”

Several conclusions can be indirectly drawn here. Not all the Irish were in a patriotic manner regarding military enlistment. The Irish acknowledged their unfair treatment from England but still felt a pull to loyalty for the mother country. Also, the writer uses a metaphor in his letter, comparing England to “a bad sister,” showing an appreciation for literary elements even in an informal letter. He later expresses concern for a relative with “bilious bouts” and how he himself has overcome his own. If meant literally, there must have been a spread of illnesses involving vomiting at the time.

A second set of letters, shared by both the Mayo County Council and Robert Hynes, editor for Irish Mirror, present a romantic element as well as a wealth of Irish culture. The letters were written by Joe Plunkett in 1915 and 1916 to his beloved, Grace Gifford: “. . . *my sort of love is a poor thing beside the splendors of your love*” (via Hynes, written on December 2, 1915). By the end of the letter, he asked her to marry him.

He rewrote her in April of 1916, regretting he could not see that they met and married. He also requested everything he had to go to her. Although there’s uncertainty as to why this request was made, after studying these and other letters, several inferences were made, spoken of later in the essay. Perhaps more letters could give a clearer understanding of the Irish heritage, but in 1914, 1,385 bags of letters left Ireland and were boarded on the Titanic, letters that never reached their destinations in America (Mayo County Council).

In 2016 The National Library of Ireland shared with the Irish Times a collection of letters, documents, and photographs titled “The Joseph Mary Plunkett Papers.” From these findings and the Joe and Grace letters, the following treasures were found:

1. The mother was called “Mum” or “Mums” in the letters.
2. After a physical fight between two men, they shook hands.
3. Joe addresses letters to Grace as *Joe* and to his “Mums” as *Joseph*.
4. The word “commenced” was used for “began.” Not a distinct find, but interesting.
5. Father was called “Pappy.”

Section 2: Analysis and Interpretation of Irish Americans

The Irish culture overlaps with other cultures and ethnicities in their values, history, and mannerisms. The value of family is not a distinct value among cultures. Most ethnicities value family. Furthermore, it is not only the Irish that deem bilingualism to be an enriched way of life. But these attributes show us the commonalities of the Irish community and are worthy in shaping the Irish American characters in my novel.

In *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir* by Frank McCourt, McCourt takes some of the stereotypes of Irishmen, such as their overconsumption with alcohol and their strong accent, and makes them his own, despite how others deem his roots.

Section 3: Going Forward with an Irish American Protagonist

The studied literature conveys an appreciation for family. The protagonist of historical fiction will not be a deviant, so plans are to incorporate the quality of family ties in his character.

His name is Percival Dooley. If he's 25 in 1930, he was born in 1905. His parents, mother – 22 in 1905, and father – 43, yet passed away when Percival was 7, or 1912. How he died is not secured, the option of Titanic connections remains close in thoughts. The mother's date of birth was 1883. Percival's mother could be Elizabeth, although not the same woman mentioned in the estate and acreage data. The father's date of birth was 1862. Therefore, both parents were born after the potato famine, so the reasons for emigration were different. They seem to have no regrets according to a compilation of the Irish research – no regrets for family upbringing, no regrets from giving allegiance to the abusive mother country of England, and no regrets for beginning a new life in America. This is possibly pride which could be a flaw masked as a power stirring within my protagonist.

To remain true to what Chicago was in 1930, the city will cultivate the conflicts and give no mercy to the protagonist. As a posh hotel exhumes power, the protagonist will be encased and confined within these premises, literally and figuratively. However, the plan is to juxtapose the great capabilities of our lowly elevator attendant as he surmounts the unshakable wealth of Chicago and the hotel.

Percival is like the “underdog” of a game, the one everyone roots for. Percival is the overlooked Irishmen that can be a beacon for remembering how, in Egypt, God delivered the “wretched through and through,” and how God is our Deliverer.

Irish American Culture's Adaptation into Historical Fiction

Section 1: Detailed Examination and Evidence

The historical fiction novel is set in Chicago in 1930, and the protagonist is a young Irish American man who works as an elevator attendant at a posh Chicago hotel. Despite the predominant bleak tone of 1930 history due to the Great Depression, this novel carries a light tone with a whimsical personality of the narration. Is the chosen tone compatible with the message and the time period? Can artistic unity and accuracy for the new decade be produced? To study the macro style of the novel, a close look and close reading of comparable literary works can affirm or reject that the anchored writing style is positioned properly. Three historical literary pieces are analyzed: a short story by James Joyce titled "Grace," *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir* by Frank McCourt, and *Young Lonigan* by James T. Ferrall.

It is also important to note that several writers of the 1930s, such as John Steinbeck, reflect the depths of the Great Depression. This thesis will not reflect this particular time period, in that the story takes place in 1930. Research clearly shows how much of the nation, including the Stevens Hotel, had not yet seen, nor yet experienced, the aftermath of the stock market crash. Therefore, the thesis reflects the year 1930, not the decade.

James Joyce was an Irish author and author of several short stories, including "Grace." This story begins with the focal point of a passed out drunk man at the bar. His writing is a joy to read, soak in, and learn from. He writes in a subtle whimsical tone as he throws in off-the-wall adjectives that have nothing to do with the matter at hand in the story but invite a smile to the

reader. For example, in the thick of all the bar's guests circled around the unconscious man on the floor with a bloody mouth, the incoming constable is described:

The constable, a young man with thick immobile features, listened. He moved his head slowly to right and left and from the manager to the person on the floor, as if he feared to be the victim of some delusion. Then he drew off his glove, produced a small book from his waist, licked the lead of his pencil and made ready to indite. He asked in a suspicious provincial accent:

"Who is the man? What's his name and address?" (Joyce 1905)

The details of the constable are amusing and pleasantly droll, despite the setting of an unconscious man lying on the floor. With an austere lack of expressions, the authority figure's wild head motions do not seem to match his face. Also, if the immobility is "thick," he's not moving those facial muscles!

In *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir* by Frank McCourt, the author recounts his life in New York City and in Limerick, Ireland. His writing style uses incorrect punctuation in his dialogue; there's no quotation marks as the Irish immigrants speak to one another. This creates a bit of confusion as the reader deciphers where the narration stops and where the character speaks. Some of the dialogue is also written in a slang dialect, and the characters' conversations are humorous. It creates a reader's response of not taking these characters too seriously; there's no need to get too attached to the characters. With the dialect and humor, the initial analysis concluded that the reader is ultimately invited to judge the characters in a degrading fashion. The following is an example from the novel:

Och, I am, said Malachy. I am.

Nobody asked you to talk, said Philomena. You done enough damage with your blather, so shut your yap. [. . .]

Malachy said, Och, indeed, indeed. The right thing is the right thing and I'd be glad to buy you all a drink while we have this little talk. [. . .]

We have morals in Limerick, you know, morals. We're not like jackrabbits from Antrim, a place crawling with Presbyterians.

Jimmy said, He don't look like a Presbyterian.

You shuddup, said Delia. (McCourt 15).

Why does McCourt use this writing style? His subtitle indicates the book as a memoir, and he claims he wrote based on 40 years of journaling notes and on what he can simply remember (Forbes 2007). Academic author Shannon Forbes interviewed McCourt, and she concluded that McCourt blended his narration and position as a character and created intimacy with the reader, not a skeptical platform. Forbes noticed he changed his writing style depending on which perspective of his life he was speaking of: as an adult or his childhood perspective. She also stated that considering this is a memoir, the lack of punctuation was a stream-of-consciousness writing style, and the dumbed-down dialect was the way he remembered things as a young boy.

Why would he remember the voices around him as simple and humorous? Initially, the dialogue choices relayed as a disrespect McCourt had for his Irish family and upbringing. However, through research, nothing indicated he frowned upon his childhood as a whole. He even conveyed a bit of respect for his alcoholic father Malachy. As an adult, he expressed respect for his heritage. What's interesting about the dialogue is how it in fact reveals a foundation of respect in how he presented the raw truth and still admired it, despite a reader's judgment and bias. But if he remembered dialogue in such an unbecoming way as a child, what triggered his

perspective? Did his observations of other people disrespecting his Irish family and relatives form his own views? Was his knowledge shaped to think the Irish were incapable of speaking or thinking at a more intelligent level? Considering discernment is cultivated through wisdom which should increase with age, children believe what they see and hear as facts, including deserved scorn of his Irish family.

According to Charles Fanning, Irish immigrant writers of the 19th century had voices that “were in turn confidently satiric, cautiously didactic, and anxiously ambivalent” (1). So, he did not see a commonality in the tones. He contributes this to the pre-, post-, and during the Great Hunger in Ireland of the 1840s. These were three generations between the 1840s to 1930 who saw their Irish roots in three different ways: either #1, the tragedy and loss of lives, or #2, the aftermath of the Great Hunger, or #3, observing scraps, threads, and traces of the shaken descendants.

Fanning’s article points out how some Irish American writers, such as Flannery O’Connor, chose not to focus or give her heritage any attention in her writings.

James T. Ferrall, on the other hand, was an Irish American writer who grew up in Chicago. He wrote the historical fiction novel titled *Young Lonigan*. The setting is the southside of Chicago. The tone of the story is relatively lighthearted, written in third person omniscient point of view. In seeing the thoughts of the young 8th grade protagonist, we see his self-identity crisis as a tough boy, reflected through the first chapter which introduces his love for a girl. Ferrall uses unfamiliar lingo, in that, some of his terms are not used today: a “fag” is the term used for a cigarette, for example.

Section 2: Analysis and Interpretation of Historical Fiction Adaptation

McCourt's raw use of dialogue was not initially an admirable writing style, but it was real. This is a great attribute for any historical literary work. How often do writers shy away, possibly subconsciously, from flagrant parts of humanity, culture, and family in their writing?

Interestingly, Flannery O'Connor chose to write with the setting of the United States South, primarily Georgia. Through her writing, she showed how a setting can dominate over values and actions of characters. So, without categorizing all Irish Americans, Ferrall and O'Connor do give substantial regard to where one dwells.

Incongruities in literature can be a key to finding a satirical message. Such is the case with James Joyce's "Grace" as he portrays the Catholic Church as rather futile in helping the community with issues, such as alcohol problems. McCourt's dialogue pokes fun at stereotypes, including Presbyterians and Catholics. Incongruities give a serious scenario a lighter aura.

Humor is a common thread in the majority of Irish writers analyzed. The writing styles of McCourt, Ferrall, and Joyce are distinct, but in characterizing the writers through their work, they appear happy with their heritage and celebrate it through their historical fiction pieces.

Section 3: Going Forward in Historical Fiction Writing Style

Writing fiction is a service to readers, and reading fiction encourages empathy for cultures, places, struggles, and history. Readers read fiction for an appreciation and enjoyment of the art, but they gain an understanding of life, past and present. Writing is enjoyable; however, although it's a favorite pastime, creative writing work also conveys an appreciation for the art of writing.

An acuteness for a writer's surroundings and finding ways through writing to celebrate things in our lives develops.

The Irish life of Percival, going forward, will display reality in its raw form, encouraging readers to see and appreciate historical truth. Authenticity is believable, establishing trustworthiness in the reader, a worthy relationship for any writer. Authenticity is taught through McCourt's use of dialect and through Ferrall's use of cultural lingo. Appreciation for the culture requires an ongoing approach and immersion into the culture to be accurate. Although Flannery O'Connor's parents were from Ireland, O'Connor learned all customs and cultures of Georgia by totally immersing in it.

The year 1930 was an intense experience for many, and incorporating edgy flamboyant messages from the narrative or from the characters can divert a reader's feeling of hopelessness to amusing optimism. The writing style, therefore, is positioned properly as the thesis continues with a whimsical tone.

Conclusion

Literature explains humanity. In fiction, each character, setting, narrative point of view, conflict, dialogue, and tone is chosen to accomplish understanding and compassion and to ignite rigor and inspiration of not only where we have been, but of where we presently are.

The chosen fictional writing piece is a compilation of three valuable resources: guidance and lessons acquired in graduate school, my empirical research, and Christian worldview. Through research and studies, Francine Prose instructed the art of a word and the arrangement of words.

James Scott Bell inspired confidence in writing with plotting and characterization charts. Philip Gerard has ignited a fire to love and appreciate in-depth research to assure accuracy in the historical fiction piece presented as the thesis. The empirical research and qualitative data brightened interest and unfolded more curiosities, as it continues to do so. The need for research will continue as more information unfolds.

Additionally, the Christian view sets parameters that are, as paradoxical as it sounds, a freedom. Although the fiction piece is considered secular, there is a security in writing with integrity. Integrity is essential in writing because there are things in writing that displease God: darkness, glorifying sin, and taking attributes of the Holy God as less than holy and precious. These writing additives are aversions.

In the last few years, Bible reading has been enlightened by God, and there's a notice of the people who are barely mentioned: the widow whose son was brought back to life, King David's mother, the man who cared for the colt that held Jesus a week before His crucifixion, the mother donkey of the colt. Today, as disciple makers, whom do we overlook? In our busyness, the list is sadly endless. However, an encouragement to others to see how the overlooked are loved may be done through the life of the elevator attendant.

The Ups and Downs of Percival Dooley: A Novella

Chapter One: First Day of Work

Water cracked into a thousand drops and smeared in a thousand directions onto Percival's face. "Bonsai!" he proclaimed. With hands cupped, more water pooled to spark upon his face a thousand more drops.

"Bonsai!" he boomed! The force of "B," the authority of "on," and the intimidation of "sai" formed an army. And according to his mother's Vanity Fair where Percival read this hidden treasure of information, this army unit destroyed fear and jolted manliness. What a fierce -- not to mention, effective program Percival found! It was all about building confidence. A confidence exercise! And Percival faithfully partook in the exercise to be a mighty man, despite his narrow, boyish skull.

"Bonsai!" Percival's frailty slid away as he watched his reflection resemble a warrior, an Irish force. He carefully shaped his lips in the same oval for both syllables.

"Bonsai!" Percival leaned close to the surface of the lavatory mirror. He observed a drop of water wander down the curves of his nose and hang on the bottom of his upper lip. Other drops smeared down his temples and coated the outlines of his cheekbones and jawbone. Another drop rested on his inner eyelid like a child. He admired the theatrical exhibit of the dancing drops, and he imagined himself in battle overseas declaring war for Ireland with his threatening shout of manicured trees. The droplets, his back-up dancers, supported him in bloody battle. "Bonsai!" Percival's lips bellowed out as water danced and dripped down his face into the sink.

Percival and the rest of the Dooley family were graced with deep Irish voices. A tunnel of endless echo comprised the middle of their throats. This is what Mr. Michael Dooley loved about his bride, Mrs. Lena Dooley. The first sound they both expressed within each other's hearing range resounded as if one of them was going to sing. Then, their hearts made music, the mouths sang as beautifully as an Irish low whistle. Lena's voice gave her more confidence than any warrior Ireland had ever seen or wanted to see. She and her new husband left to find acceptance and money from a new world, Chicago. Their sons, Percival and Rex, were equipped with the same bold sounds, but Percival lacked the same bold heart.

Percival's brother Rex ambled by the lavatory door and piqued Percival's ears to hear the kitchen's morning motions.

"Why, a coal burner and a stove I see you have. . . Not . . . not common in Southeast Chicago, now, is it?" Mrs. Wright's voice shook each word. Dear old Mrs. Wright, a widow left with a wonderful young adult daughter Ida. Not wonderful as in grand, but wonderful in the word's original function – full of wonder, strangeness. Perhaps frighteningly whimsical.

"Whatsa' matter with it?" replied Mrs. Dooley in womanly thunder, now a widow. "One for warmth, one for food. 'Tis what's needed in life, don't ya' think?" She stood over the stove hollering over her shoulder with a batter for potato cakes and one hand on her hip.

Ida giggled. "I do. I think!" Ida skipped, rolled, and slid her feet flat across the kitchen floor to a lack of mindful cadence. More of a cacophony. She finally plopped in the booth beside her mother. Mrs. Wright entrusted Mrs. Dooley to keep Ida under her wing on selective days when Mrs. Wright was scheduled to work at the nylon factory.

“Well, don’t they perform the same expectations? Seems like . . . a waste, I dare say,” Mrs. Wright questioned. From the lavatory, Percival felt her eyes must have shifted as they usually did when her voice tremored so. Such useless fear he’d never succumb to.

He bolted out again, “Bonsai!”

“Me eldest Rex there found it for me. ‘Twas no waste,” answered Mrs. Dooley, giving her cakes a jolly toss of a flip.

“So, I am afraid that . . . they say, you know.” Mrs. Wright began, clearing her throat, “the Irish are adding things to their kitchens so they can—well, they say it’s so that—and this is just what I’ve heard, of course. . . The extra is to have a still right in their own home. Right in their own kitchen, making their own liquor, I suppose. You know, to hide from the Prohibition laws of the land.”

“What in the devil is that supposed to mean?” Mrs. Dooley paused a moment to turn and wrinkle down her daring eyebrows towards Mrs. Wright. Without missing a beat, she turned back around and continued with her potato cakes.

“Well, I don’t know, Mrs. Dooley. You are indeed Irish, though, aren’t you?”

“Mrs. Wright,” Rex rolled his deep and steady voice. As if a smooth pouring fluid, he joined Mrs. Wright and Ida at the kitchen table, leaning back yet protruding his neck as if to observe Mrs. Wright in depth. Either her voice tremored because he watched her so, or he watched her so because her voice tremored. “Mrs. Wright,” he repeated, head slightly tilted, “you have been in love, haven’t you, Mrs. Wright?”

Ida wailed a belly laugh before Mrs. Wright interjected, “I beg your pardon, Mr. Dooley!”

“Beg pardon, Mammy! Beg! And love!” Ida declared in passionate gasps with eyes focused on the air which supposedly provided a backdrop for her dream.

Percival strolled into the kitchen draped with confidence. The Dooley family never said so, but they were pleased with the low ceiling of their crooked home, fitted snugly and quite densely around the other box houses in the neighborhood. The small home trapped warmth and heightened their sense of – well, height.

Percival proclaimed, “I start my new job this morning.” He turned to Mrs. Dooley. “Me Mums,” Percival greeted her. Mrs. Dooley smiled and flipped thin potato cakes. She took one from the stove, folded and wrapped it in paper and handed it to Percival.

Mrs. Wright interrupted the mother-son greeting, “Mrs. Dooley! Your eldest son’s lack of respect! What absolute vulgarity!” Her eyes shuffled back and forth from Mrs. Dooley to Rex. She edged on the brink of crying. Something the Dooleys often witnessed, but the brink never bared the fruit of tears. Mrs. Wright only remained just on the brink; she wasn’t one to waver; however, moments like this were why many didn’t attend to those on brinks.

“Quite right, Mrs. Wright,” said Mrs. Dooley. “Rex, shuttup!”

Rex interrupted, “Apologies, Mrs. Wright. I’m just curious of love, you see. . . You see, I’ve never been” –

Rex was interrupted, in turn, by Ida: “Bonsai!”

“Mrs. Wright, should we not express love?” tried Rex again.

“Rex, she’s a widow! Shut ya’ mouth!” Mrs. Dooley clarified toward Rex.

“Yes, my dear beloved is in the presence of our Heavenly Mother and the Holy Divine,” expressed Mrs. Wright.

“I’m out,” Percival answered lowly, and he tucked the paper-wrapped potato cake into his coat. With a quick goodbye head bow toward the Wrights and his brother, and a dash of a hug to his mother, Percival exited the home through the side door. He was only a few feet from the neighbor’s home, where James Hamby sat on the gooey ground gurgling and moaning away last night’s drink. Percival quietly exited a small maze through the neighborhood to the outdoors toward the city. Puffs of steam and smoke sprang out of building tops all around. He secured his fedora on his head and continued down the gray air hovering over the road. He walked towards Lake Michigan, towards his new job, towards the hotel. Percival entered this new day, out of the kitchen, out of the house, out of the neighborhood, and out of his own expectations.

Chapter Two: The Secret of Potato Cakes

The Blaughvoyon Grand Hotel ensconced in the dense structures of Chicago. A rod-ironed boundary preceded the extravagant 30-floor getaway. The black rods worked as handlebars for those who stopped walking to stare, gape, and dream. Percival didn’t bother nor have time to do

such. He was given a piece of it. No need to dream; it was now real life. No time to dream; it was now his place of employment. Yet, a locked, twelve-foot iron gate stopped him. Upon catching the guard's eye and answering all security questions with confident accuracy, Percival was admitted within the exclusivity of luxury. The gate clanged shut behind him.

"You are to meet Mr. Hugenby in the Reading Room," the guard announced. "Straight through until you see books to your left. Straight through." He motioned a straight hand outward and repeated, "Straight, I say."

"Yes, sir," a mannerly Percival responded. "To the Reading Room, you say?"

"Straight to the Reading Room."

"The library? Same thing, sir?" inquired Percival. The guard stared at Percival and gave no answer. Percival walked on. He walked through a line of white stone beams which stood wider than live oak trees. Bold green foliage lounged immovably in perfect places. He continued under the arched entrance as if the hotel's façade had eaten him. The insides began in a long rectangular courtyard aligned with several floors of balconies scattered with lounging guests. He tapped his fingers on the front of his fedora and placed his hands in his pockets. On he strode, satisfied that no one knew his dear mother bought him the fedora in a boy's size. The hat should have been a bit bigger, and his mother told him so.

"Ah, nah, Mums," Percival explained to her, "A smaller fedora gives me a bigger head look. More manly. Don't ya' see?"

A grand set of doors now before him were taller than three of Percival's houses stacked on

top of each other. *Is this built for giants?* Percival wondered as he slowed down and stared. The doorman gripped a handle from one of the doors with both hands and opened the door for Percival.

Inside, he must have been at the heart of the hotel. He slid off his little fedora. A grand staircase welcomed him. The railing was carved into wings and feathers in gilt. The ceiling lights were encased in transparent gold jewels, and the air looked as if it was made of gold. The floor was black, and it shined so that the occupants looked as if they were walking on top of a black liquid. This lobby – what a feast for the eyes!

Straight to the Reading Room! he repeated to himself. Would he ever arrive? Perhaps not -- there was the still Parlor to see, the Dining Hall to see, distinguished guests – no doubt of their status – congregated around lit fireplaces smoking cigars. This landscape of hotel ambiance itself performed its variety of visual pleasantries for such a length of time, Percival noticed a thread of nerves in his chest. He was to meet with . . . whom? The name was wiped from his memory. Perhaps it would be the same man that interviewed him, but Percival didn't remember his name either. Furthermore, Percival did not know what position he was being hired for. He was told that he'd learn more on his first day of work.

What the heck is a Reading Room? Why not call it a Library? Must be the same thing, thought Percival, trying to pet his nerves.

A man in a dark blue uniform stood at the entrance of the Reading Room.

“Dooley?” he asked Percival.

“Yeah, Percival Dooley,” Percival answered.

“Knew it. Had to be you. You’re the last to show up. Here,” the man shoved a pile of folded clothes to Percival’s chest. He was instructed to dress in his assigned uniform in the employee’s lavatory. Percival dressed into the same uniform as the young man at the Reading Room entrance. He was then scooted to join a small group of men standing at attention, facing the man who introduced himself as Mr. Hugenby. On went Mr. Hugenby’s new-employee introduction:

“The Blaughvoyon Grand Hotel was built 38 years ago, in 1892, and is the most prestigious hotel in the country. Perhaps the world!” Mr. Hugenby strolled from left to right staring in space as he spoke, with a cigarette in one hand and a whiskey in the other. His entire head was symmetrically oval, with his jaw at the same curvature as his forehead. A well put-together head, thought Percival, and not necessarily in an admiring sense. A round belly complimented the head, reminding one of a bouquet of balloons.

“Whiskey at six in the morning? What a guy, huh?” whispered and leaned over the man standing next to Percival. Percival gave a quick nod and smile of recognition.

“We are among the finest buildings in Chicago, and you have been allowed to work here,” Mr. Hugenby cleared his throat, and coming to the end of the line of new employees, he turned to pace the other direction with a sip of whiskey. “You are our newest elevator attendants.” With the release of the employment position, scuffled feet by the coworkers and exchanged looks of nothing elevated respectfully and then subsided.

“Our expectations are strict and unwavering! Even your outward demeanor, your appearance,

your words, your faces. Certain . . . poses, I should say, are required.

“We’ll start with your faces. All facial expressions are to be worn as stiff as your uniform and are required to look apathetically professional. Only your few words shall show care, concern, a willingness to sacrifice anything for the guest. Now, let me see your apathetical professionalism. Relax the muscles in your face, keep your mouth closed. Do not narrow your eyes and do not enlarge your eyes. Rest all your face with a slight lift of your eyebrows. On your face, let me see,” the man commanded, and he approached Percival first. Percival slightly lifted his eyebrows and rested the rest of his face. He succeeded in appearing quite uncaring.

“Along with your professional face, you must greet all guests before they greet you. You must speak first. We lead, we don’t follow.” He returned his focus to Percival. Percival pasted on his professional face. Mr. Hugenby stared at him for a moment.

“What is your name?” asked Mr. Hugenby.

“Hi- yeah, it’s Dooley, sir. Percival Dooley,” he took the chance with an immovable expression.

“Well, Dooley, I was staring right at you! Why didn’t you greet me?” A laugh murmured quickly and then quieted. Mr. Hugenby continued his test with the other new employees. The other men offered creative greetings: “Good morning, sir,” “Good day, sir,” “How excellent to see you, sir,” “How can I be of service to you today, sir” (Mr. Hugenby didn’t care for that one indicated by a small groan.), “Top of the morning, lad,” – and with this, Mr. Hugenby replied, “Never say that horrendous greeting again.”

Percival's eyes raced around his surroundings. The walls were covered with bookshelves full of books with two to three wooden ladders against each wall. Two opposite-end wooden fireplaces complimented the bookshelves with their engraved wooded mantels. The rest of the room was sectioned with couches and chairs and small tables. A man in a similar uniform entered the Reading Room to light fires in both fireplaces. With this, Mr. Hugenby directed all the new employees out of the Reading Room, stating the guests will be arriving shortly to enjoy their cigars by the fire. They followed him down metal stairs to the bottom floor, another world missing the ambiance of luxury. The floor was drab cement, the bright lighting was unflattering, and everyone around wore uniforms and the professional face.

The group stopped in front of an elevator. Mr. Hugenby resumed his lecture. He informed them how there were two different types of elevators in the hotel. On the north wing, a newer version of automatic sliding doors and a luxurious cabin adorned and aligned with wallpaper, mirrors on the ceiling, a mini chandelier, and a corner bench. The elevator could fit five to seven passengers comfortably. The south wing held the older elevators valued by many of their stockholders. These elevators' doors opened manually, beginning from the hallway with a sliding door, followed by a brassy gate. These elevators were also controlled with a lever.

The mechanical lecture was lengthy and quickly uninteresting. At its end, the new attendants followed Mr. Hugenby into a class-sized room and instructed everyone to sit. Following an immeasurable list of dos and don'ts, and a countless number of questions by his fellow attendants, Percival learned of the thorough sophistication of being employed as a new elevator attendant.

However, training was not over. They were divided into groups to practice on site, inside the elevators.

As he was being placed, Percival remembered last night's dream -- an avalanche, and he awoke just as the relentless white death touched the top of his head, just before it pushed him off the cliff's crag, where he, to the best of his memory, cooked potato cakes. What panic and fear he awoke to! How dare a senseless dream bully him on his first day of work!

Misfortune at the Blaughvoyon Grand Hotel elevated this memory. A dreadful noise like a rushing train became neither louder nor quieter but crashed into each of their unprepared nerves. Now, on the ground floor, the explosive boom found its endpoint. People were screaming and shouting different interjections: "Earthquake!" or "War!" or "Ha, ha! It's the Union!" In a great panic, the men followed Mr. Hugenby to the source. Percival, Mr. Hugenby, plus two more new elevator attendants, Herbert Downy and Claude Mercier, stood panting in the dark pit and at an elevator's eternal resting place. A collapsed rectangle looked thin and weak scrambled on the floor. It had ingested a dark wooded, mangled mess of scattered pieces. Percival wondered how this frail box was entrusted with lives. Their eyes traveled from the mangled elevator box lying in the square room just at their feet and shifted upward, and upward. They squinched their eyes to see the empty shaft, hiding nothing, yet having nothing. They stood in either a sick part of the hotel or an evil part. Perhaps both. Eyes sank downward again to see a million splinters of what seemed impossible to have all come from the elevator. Now, the smashed box protruded everywhere. Then, Percival eyed a lifeless shoe attached to a leg in dark pants. The rest of the figure was hidden under the jumble. His keen sense of sight quickly found other motionless parts of life -- a bent elbow, hair, a set of curled fingers presumably on a hand, an eye staring at him.

Percival gasped and found that he couldn't speak. The eye then blinked at him. There was life, and Percival gasped again. His knees shook uncontrollably. People darted quickly with screams and shouts and bumped into one another. Medical rescuers quickly surrounded the scene, blocking the attendants away. Mr. Hugenby stood a few feet away and spoke with a group of men outside the elevator room. He walked into the middle of the mutilation and stared for a moment.

"Looks like your elevators don't work, Mr. Hugenby," stated Herbert, the same man beside Percival earlier questioning the morning whiskey. "You really expect us to ride in these crappy boxes?"

"Training must continue," Mr. Hugenby stated, and he motioned for Percival, Herbert, and Claude to follow him down a hallway. He explained what caused the wreckage. A heavy oak armoire belonging to Mrs. Dawn Mercier, Claude's own mother, was placed on the elevator this morning, insisted upon by Mrs. Mercier against the movers' suggestions. Fortunately, there was no room on the elevator for her to join the armoire. But two large men who helped Mrs. Mercier bring the armoire inside to place in her private room on the twelfth floor traveled with it. The elevator climbed nine floors before snapping at a joint and plummeting to the ground. Despite the horrifying scene of disfigurement, training continued there on the ground floor.

"Are they dead?" asked Herbert.

"Just had the breath knocked out of 'em, we hope."

"And my mother is fine, you say?" asked Claude.

“She’s in the lobby, quite angry, I was told,” Mr. Hugenby answered. Claude exhaled words of gratitude. They walked on, confusingly pleased to go.

“Emperor Nero of the Roman Empire,” Mr. Hugenby began as if he were introducing Nero before the ruler himself waltzed in. “He used a model of an elevator in his own palace. A pulley, you see. No doors and no sides to his elevator, just a floor – my, my!” Mr. Hugenby shook his head with a soft smile, stopped walking, and lit a cigarette. His three students loyally paused behind him and exchanged concern glances. He inhaled deeply, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and covered his forehead with his hand for a moment. Then he recomposed, led on the walk, and added, “The Roman model often – all of a sudden – would turn into a slide, and everyone would slide off. To their death, I suppose. Nero was known for such, indeed.” Behind them were shouts and screams and cries of shock and exasperation; the sounds were Percival’s nerves in audible form.

They continued walking down the long hallway which became like a narrow rectangular tunnel. Long and straight ahead, the end point was a blur. It was a main, unseen, dark vein of the hotel. Mr. Hugenby stopped in front of an elevator. He slid the door open to reveal a black scissor-like gate.

“By the looks of this elevator model, which wing do we now stand in?”

Silence.

Mr. Hugenby answered before guessing surfaced, “South. The south wing. You must know where you are at all times.” He slid open the gate, and with a gesture of his husky fingers, the

three attendants followed. Herbert mumbled some disapprovals. Mr. Hugenby ignored him.

“You must stop the elevator at each floor with precision. Flush with the floor – flush! -- beyond this door. Not a hair higher! Not a hair lower!” taught Mr. Hugenby.

“It doesn’t stop on its own? At each floor?”

“Not this model, no. You must stop it. It’s part of your job!”

“Any other . . . malfunctioning history I – we need to be aware of?” inquired Percival. He was unmasked. He felt it. No apathy in his professionalism. No confidence he wore. He only tremored, mostly on the inside, he hoped.

“Now, why would I tell you that! Clearly, you understand if it doesn’t work, the elevator simply doesn’t stop, not peacefully, anyway. Dear, dear Dooley, why dwell on such dreadful ‘what-iffers’?” He answered as he stepped back off the elevator. “For the next hour, you three are to get comfortable within these walls. Practice. Know the lever. Know your surroundings,” Mr. Hugenby explained as he walked into the hotel’s main body. He turned around and stared as still as a statue at the three pupils. Claude slid shut the door and the gate, locking it shut, locking out the stare of the fat man. He and Herbert quickly lit cigarettes and filled more empty air spaces with whiteness.

“Shall we go up, good fellows?” asked Claude between puffs.

“We gotta lose that guy. Big enough place to not have to see him every day, am I right?” Herbert said. “I don’t care if he is my boss.” Claude pushed over the lever. It began to lift.

Silence.

“What if we don’t work it right? It could break. We could smash to the bottom. . . . Smash,” expressed Percival.

Silence.

Percival pulled out his potato cake and noticed his hands were shaking. But the interrupting jolt to his fear was what he saw next: in the background of his trembling hand was a crack between the edge of the elevator floor and the edge of the top floor’s hallway. The latticed gate failed to veil this crack. What the crack exposed was the height at which Percival and his new friends floated upon. Their whole lives depended on the loyal clinches of the “automatic safety devices and double drums.” Was it loyal? Of course not! How can a contraption created by err-filled humans be loyal?

“Hey,” Herbert demanded, “Easy. You’re making me nervous!”

Perhaps mechanical perfection gives the elevator no choice but to be loyal, thought Percival as his hand and the potato cake shook fiercely. “No choice,” he said aloud. The potato cake tremored. How was it remaining in his hand? Percival stepped closer to see more from the crack and felt a flutter of terror through his legs and toes. His colleagues stared and blew smoke directly toward him; there was nowhere else to blow it. Certainly not at each other; one of them would notice! Besides, their attention angled toward Percival; naturally, so did their smoke. Herbert held an agitated expression, but not offensively; there was an instinct understanding that this was his natural, God-given look. Claude was as thin as Percival, but taller. It was difficult to

tell if he was naturally apathetic or practicing his professional face. Percival peered through the crack – just how far down did it go? His vision grew blurry with impending white smoke. A deep breath was more impending white smoke.

His potato cake tremored! Herbert rotated the lever to slow to a stop at the fourteenth floor. Percival unlocked the lattice gate and thrust it opened. Yet, in doing so, he dropped his potato cake through the crack. He saw it slip and sink through, helplessly away from him. He looked away. He couldn't watch!

He felt the ending of the potato cake fall into his soul. The terror of slipping through. Then, no foundation, no twelfth floor, no anchors, no guidance. Just emptiness to drown in. Four tall walls enclosing him, all too far away to help.

Down, down . . .

By the bottom of the tenth floor a numbness washed over him. Probably petrification.

Down, down . . .

But by the third floor, hope teased him for a split second, perhaps hope for survival?

Down, down . . . before the inevitable doom terrorized him again, just as he first gasped on the twelfth floor.

And then nothing. The pancake lay still. He peered through the crack again and was certain he saw a white motionless speck. A tragic end. A quiet mouse squeaked “Bonsai!” from the middle of his throat.

What a horrifying first day of work! Fearful even. Yet, he'd stay. How would he learn to do his job, and do it well?

There was no crash landing of the potato cake, no thud, no clunk, no boom. No tossle, nor toggle, nor tumble, nor bam. It was a fluffy potato cake. Mrs. Dooley crafted her potato cakes from her main ingredient being clouds, Percival was certain. Fluffy pancakes warrant soft landings.

Why, yes! They do! thought Percival. A beam of life's answers radiated from his face. Percival had a plan. He needed assurance for these first-day jitters, an anchor to keep a pivot point of placidity, and potato cakes were his anchored assurance. What if Percival contributed a daily potato cake to the elevator base? Just a simple drop through the cracks! This could be his time of affirmation, and a step toward more confidence. Perhaps the elevator would continue to work in pristine condition, and perhaps the construction of a mountain of potato cakes was as absurd as many of Percival's ideas, and perhaps even a mountain of potato cakes would not have the ability to cushion a 2-ton falling elevator. However, maybe potato cakes could save him.

He stepped out into the hallway for some invisible air. "I just need a moment," he explained as his coworkers agreed to put out their cigarettes. Percival glimpsed down the hallway, unfortunately.

A painting came alive before his eyes. She paused down the hallway's end. A woman in a flowing light-gray dress wore a dark red hat with a veil which guarded her delicate face and lips, colored dark red like her hat. She struggled with a portmanteau and a suitcase. Furthermore, a calico cat cradled at her chest in her left arm and suddenly pushed away and scurried into a blur

and then to nothing, gone!

Perhaps Percival was in the hands – or grip – of the hotel now. If so, the hand carried the chivalrous Percival to the distressed damsel. Now only two feet away from the lovely masterpiece in motion, the air was lighter. And full, too. Full of the blooms of air particles seeded and rooted thousands of years ago for the whole purpose of enveloping this couple the moment they would stand together, inhaling the breath of love and being caressed by the touch of serenity.

She was beautiful, and Percival's tremoring hands were forgotten and still. He stared at her white jawline and chin and her pouty, red-painted lips. She wouldn't look up at him; she kept her eyes covered under the brim of her hat.

"Madam, let me help you," he whispered. "I beg you."

"No, you mustn't," replied the lady. "My cat. I have to find her."

"May I help? It would be my honor, madam, just to help you."

She lifted her face a bit more, but careful to hide her eyes. "Thank you, but no. Good day, sir." And she dashed down the right end of the hall. Percival stood in fascination of the woman's existence.

"Dooley!" Percival turned to see Mr. Hugenby standing by the elevator. Percival hurried to his boss.

"Dooley, your first day of work, and you've managed to disregard my orders already."

“I’m sorry, my apologies, Mr. Hugenby. But- a woman with arms loaded, and a cat”—

“A cat?”

“Yeah, but it got away from her.”

“What?”

“A cat. Yeah, a calico cat slipped right out of her arms.”

“From whom, Dooley?”

“The woman. The woman had a cat. I tried to help. She was walking through this hallway, and her cat jumped out of her arms. She wouldn’t let me help her.”

“Where did she go?”

“Down the hallway, sir,” Percival answered pointing where the woman disappeared.

Mr. Hugenby pummeled down the hallway and turned his entire body both left and right at the intersection. As he dashed back to Percival, he demanded, “Describe the woman!”

Percival inhaled to prepare to speak, but then he focused on the air with a grin resting on his cloudlike expression.

“Yes, . . . I see,” responded an understanding Hugenby. “Dooley, . . . describe her eyes.”

“She never looked up. I never saw ‘em. They hid under her hat.”

Mr. Hugenby's face grew sour with wrinkled eyebrows and a scrunched nose. His face faded pink. His face swelled more than was normal. He motioned for Percival to board the elevator where the other two faithful attendants stood.

Chapter Three: The Horseshoe

"What the hell happened?" Herbert asked. All three men stared at Percival as they descended.

"I- I was just . . .," Percival quietly chuckled. "I tried to help a gorgeous woman." He beamed as Herbert and Claude gave "ahs" of approval. Percival looked at Mr. Hugenby, and his face was grave, and his eyes pierced at Percival. Startled, Percival remained focused on the beige walls in the elevator. Downy and Mercier stared as if waiting to be entertained, and Mr. Hugenby stared as if Percival was a ghost.

"Lunch is available daily in the back of the kitchen. Usually soup and bread. Don't touch any other food in the kitchen. Go enjoy. Except you, Dooley." Mr. Hugenby pulled up the lever to stop the elevator. "You follow me." Herbert and Claude tossed farewell hands towards Percival.

"You're kicking me out, sir?" There was no answer. Percival followed Mr. Hugenby. "Showing me the door? Am I fired, sir?" Percival asked and followed Mr. Hugenby. No answer was given to panicking Percival. They came to a locked door that contained a tiny blue door in the middle of it. Mr. Hugenby knocked and gave his name, and the small door opened from the

other side, revealing a man's eyes. He then shut the little door and allowed access. They walked to another elevator door and traveled up to the twenty-fourth floor. Is this where troublemakers like the Irish were thrown off balconies?

Such deplorable thoughts swarmed Percival. They walked through another hallway. Then another locked door. They were again given access to a waiting area almost as large as the front lobby. Percival was commanded to "wait here" as Hugenby disappeared behind a fourth locked door. The brains of the hotel, Percival sensed the knowledge thick in this place. He nodded to a woman sitting behind a large wooden desk, the only other living soul in the room. She looked to be in her twenties as was Percival. He sat on one end of a dark green leather couch covered with buttons that tightened away any possible comfort the couch offered. Ten yards or so separated Percival and the woman. After introducing herself as Luellen, she stared at Percival and looked stunning in the spotlight of her desk lamp. Shadows cast just under her blonde bob and shaded her eyes to look as if they had layers of depth. She picked up her slim cigarette holder from the ashtray and held it fashionably, moving the shadow of smoke like a puppet.

"I know you," Luellen started. "You're Rex's brother, aren't you?"

"Rex, yeah. He's my brother. A bit older than me. . . I'm- my name's Percy- Percival . . . Dooley," he stuttered out, noticing the wreckage. "You're friends with him?"

"Once upon a time, in the sky, yes."

"Oh, yeah. The birds. The 'Free on a Leash' program," he chuckled.

She nodded. A year ago, Rex created a bird-safety business involving a bird census program,

traveling great lengths and climbing greater heights to tag birds. He sold tags with the purchaser's name on them, tagging their bird of choice – juncos, warblers, wrens, mourning doves, and cardinals. He also received donations from bird lovers and girls. Critiques and complainers toppled upon him, and funds dissipated. Birders scattered to new endeavors. The business's plummet and loss of family finances inspired Percival to acquire a job quicker.

“Do you know why I'm here, why they brought me up here?” Percival inquired.

“How is Rex? Tell him hello for me, will you?”

Perplexed at her response, he agreed. She finally added, “Don't you know where you are? You're outside Mr. Blaughvoyon's office. Mr. Hugenby gave me this secretary job. You do know Mr. Blaughvoyon is the owner of this hotel? I've never even seen him! And he's building a second hotel presently. In France, I think. Funny, I thought he was there this week.”

“Miss Luellen, do you know why I'm here?”

“How should I know? Did Button not tell you?”

“I'm sorry, who? Did you say 'Button'?”

Luellen nodded, “Yes, Mr. Button Hugenby. He is the hotel's main hospitality manager. By the look of your uniform, you work for him.”

“It's my first day, hopefully not my last.”

After half an hour, Mr. Hugenby opened the large door and instructed Percival to enter the

room.

Inside the door and directly in front of Percival was an open space of nothing but marble tile floor, and then a wall of windows giving a mesmerizing view of all life in the city of Chicago and Lake Michigan. Percival indulged his eyes out the window. These were the kinds of views that switched off peripheral vision.

Mr. Hugenby's voice flipped it on again.

"Dooley!" huffed Mr. Hugenby.

Percival was startled. He was obviously out of his element, standing and gaping, dumbfounded in his blue uniform in which the inner layer was sticking to his entire body like glue due to the fountains of sweat produced throughout this first day of work. Only a fool blindfolded in stomachfuls of liquor would believe the hotel owner gave an exclusive invitation to the elevator boy so they could share cocktails. Percival's foreboding sense rattled his jaw.

In the lounging room, Percival felt the blood freeze in his feet as he stood yards away from hotel owner Mr. Nicholas Blaughvoyon. A tall, slim bald man with a narrow long head and a twirly moustache twirled in loops on each side stood so tall and still as he stared at Percival, he looked as if he would levitate. However, it was the height and depth of the man's long head that dripped a drop of taunting fear in Percival, for it looked familiar. The head, that is. Perhaps from an old nightmare.

Mr. Hugenby fabricated a clearing of his throat.

“Good afternoon. Come in,” Mr. Blaghvovon motioned for Percival to sit on an extravagant yet uncomfortable couch, once again, as the hotel owner introduced himself. He stood behind a chair caddy-cornered to Percival, staring at him, wide-eyed. Mr. Hugenby stood a few feet back. Standing over the nerves of Percival was even more intimidating. Percival curtailed his deep gasp with a placid face. The room had no other furniture other than the couch, chair, coffee table, and rug.

Bonsai, he tried silently, but it simply didn’t work the same.

“I’m”—began Percival. He then noticed a horseshoe hanging on the wall. A flood of nostalgia encased his mind. Percival’s father, Michael Dooley, believed in the Irish charm’s good luck like a religion. He kept it hanging on the wall of wherever they were living at the time. Mrs. Dooley told her sons that “Your Papa had it in his hands for both of ye births!” Before leaving for the day, he’d faithfully touch the horseshoe with the same simple chant: “Wish me luck!”

When Michael Dooley received word of his mother’s fatal illness, he packed for Ireland. Percival saw him give an admiring look to the horseshoe on the wall. Percival took it down and gave it to his father to pack.

“Oh no, me boy! With your frights, you’d better keep it,” Mr. Dooley said.

“But Papa,” answered seven-year-old Percival, “how will you get home without it?”

“Ah, ya’ know, me own father swore it protected the love between he and Mums from the plague. His horse was stolen, but this horseshoe was left. Right in front of their own home. Hope, you know? Maybe tis not the horseshoe, but what it stands for. Tis what brought me to America.”

He smiled and admired the horseshoe. He handed it back to Percival. "Maybe hope will keep you brave."

Percival handed the horseshoe back to his father and said, "But if you don't have it, I might become more"-

Mr. Blaughvoyon interrupted Percival's thoughts, "I know, shhh. I know who you are, Mr. Dooley. Percival Dooley. You work for me." Blaughvoyon slowly paced the width of an oval shaggy rug a few feet in front of Percival, staring at Percival as if he was mesmerized. "Dooley, our meeting is spiritual. Are you spiritual, maybe religious?" He sat on the edge of the other chair and leaned in closer to Percival.

"Ah, . . . Catholic."

"Well," Mr. Blaughvoyon answered with surprise. "I, Nicholas Blaughvoyon, am personally acquainted with President Hoover. Do you know, I believe in him. He's tossing this ridiculous Depression on its back, I tell you!"

"Good to hear, sir."

"Yes. And our President said, just months ago – if I can remember correctly – he said, 'Our dangers are having . . . complacency with evil,' Mr. Blaughvoyon repeated the last three words and stared at the air for a moment. "But our strength lies in the spiritual.' You understand, Mr. Dooley?" Percival didn't want to shake his head or to be taunted. "I can't allow evil to swarm its own song and dance and fancy in my hotel and I not say anything."

“Sir, I’ve done all I’ve been told since getting here. I walked straight to the Reading Room, . . . I don’t- . . . you don’t think- . . . sir, I’m not evil,” Percival managed out his defense.

“Well, I don’t know you. You might be. Either way, it doesn’t matter. I have a confidential job for you, Percival,” Mr. Blaughvoyon continued to lean close to Percival. “If you share even this meeting with anyone, including family, it will destroy the hotel and destroy you. Do you understand?”

“I beg your pardon, sir. You said you have a job for me? Are you going to fire me today?”

Mr. Blaughvoyon looked confused, and Percival was glad to see it.

“Your word, for now, I will trust. I need your word of silence, Mr. Dooley. Do I have it?”

“Of course.”

“Percival Dooley,” Mr. Blaughvoyon began and then paused to stare in Percival’s face, “I—we need you . . . to catch . . . a ghost.”

“Pardon – I beg, sir. A ghost, sir? You mean a missing tenant or guest.”

“No,” and a whisper escaped from Mr. Blaughvoyon’s twirled moustache: “a ghost.”

“I—what kind of ghost? As in a haunting? A demon? No, maybe an angel.”

“This is a lot to take in, I understand.”

A pause of silence was complimented with all three men frozen from movement, staring at

one another.

“What am I to take in, again?” Percival questioned.

“Percival, your Holy Mary did all she could to protect her Holy Son from evils, at great costs.”

“Yes sir,” Percival answered, ignorant of the statement’s verity. Mr. Hugenby agreed, voicing murmurs. Mr. Blaughvoyon stood and paced the rug.

“Mothers protect children from evil, of course. And this hotel is my child, Mr. Dooley. As if I’m its father. I’ve raised it to be strong, to shine and stand proud. I have no other children. Just this hotel.”

“And you want to rid it of evil? Why, . . .” Percival chuckled, “there’s no such thing as ghosts!” He huffed out another laugh.

“Percival Dooley, we have an evil in our hotel who cannot go unnoticed and must be squashed.”

“No, it cannot! Squashed!” chimed Mr. Hugenby.

“Who?” asked Percival.

“Who?” echoed Mr. Blaughvoyon.

“Or it?” Percival could not explain his questions, or even explain the moment at that moment. Nothing seemed palpable, as if he was stitched into a quilt of air. Where was reality?

Was he a ghost? “My apologies, sir. Did you say evil? You want me to catch a, an evil ghost?”

“Mr. Dooley, you must understand this is a top-secret mission within the walls of this hotel.”

Mr. Hugenby rang a bell from the coffee table. “If you allow this to leak, chaos will bleed throughout the hotel!”

“Certainly, Mr. Sir, but why me?”

Mr. Blaughvoyon and Mr. Hugenby exchanged a glance. Suddenly, a short man of Indian descent brought a tray with two cocktail drinks and mumbled as he walked in the room. Mr. Blaughvoyon did not acknowledge the servant’s incoherent audibility; he motioned for both Mr. Hugenby and Percival to take a glass, none for himself. He sat back on the edge of his chair. Percival felt rather essential.

“It’s my understanding you saw a woman today? With a cat?”

“And he never saw her eyes,” chimed in Mr. Hugenby, elongating eyes.

Mr. Blaughvoyon stared squarely at Percival and asked, “Is this true? You never saw her eyes, or you don’t remember her eyes?”

Perhaps he did see her eyes. Perhaps he just couldn’t remember. Perhaps he was delusional and there was no woman after all. He was in a most disturbed manner! He had just seen his potato cake plunge to a splat; not to mention, a smashed elevator in the basement floor.

But he did remember her, wistfully. Thoughts of the beautiful woman placed Percival back in time, in truth.

“Mr. Percival Dooley, answer me!” Mr. Blaughvoyon shouted aggressively.

“Yes! Yes! I saw her! But I was just trying to help her!” he exhaled all he had.

“Did you see her eyes!” Mr. Blaughvoyon’s shout became louder.

“Yes! I mean no! Just her cat! Not her eyes!”

“Drink up. Now, down the drink.” Without hesitation, Percival downed his drink as well, a lukewarm scotch. “No one has seen the beautiful woman’s eyes. Few have ever seen her, wearing a hat with a veil, covering her face.”

“Yes!” Percival agreed.

“I myself have seen her,” spoke up Mr. Hugenby. Percival did not say so, but he was certain the woman was no ghost; she was real, as in human with a living mortal body. She was a real breathing entity. Percival was certain.

“When she is seen, something horrible happens in the hotel. It’s as if she is angry for being seen, and she’s determined to show her dark power,” explains Mr. Blaughvoyon and turns to lock Percival’s eyes. “Something horrific is once again on its way.”

“To me, in particular?” asked Percival.

“I don’t know,” answered Mr. Blaughvoyon. “Catch her and your fear will be over.”

“How do I- excuse me,” Percival couldn’t hide a smirk. “How do I catch the ghost?”

“This is no game! You’ll find yourself dead if you think so!” snapped Mr. Hugenby.

“I’m sorry, sir and sir,” Percival felt ready to confront this charade. “I don’t see how the woman I saw was a ghost. I’m positive—positive she was a real living woman!”

Percival was silently stared at and was on the brink of becoming a ball of nerves on the uncomfortable couch.

“Then you must think I waste your time,” replied Mr. Blaughvoyon, “and mine. So then, if I’m delusional as you currently sit there and insult me, Mr. Hugenby will see to your immediate dismissal, never to step foot within the property of my hotel again. Do you understand? Stand up and get out.”

Percival stood to find that his eyes still required an upward roll to meet Mr. Blaughvoyon’s eyes, which were dominant and controlling. Percival quickly looked away. He glanced up at the horseshoe and prolonged his stare where he found more refuge. A second later, he followed Mr. Hugenby out the door.

Chapter Four: How to Trap a Ghost

Luellen had the phone to her ear as they walked through the lobby outside the door. They reversed the order of long hallways and elevators but did not exit out the door with the small blue door in the middle. They turned to the right down the hallway instead and came to a beige door. Mr. Hugenby reached into his pocket and gave Percival five dollars.

“You’ve been terminated on your first day,” Mr. Hugenby grumbled.

“But my clothes, sir,” said Percival.

“Oh, that’s right. I highly suggest you reconsider! But if you *insist* on being a stubborn, ignorant fool, get your clothes and leave immediately. You know the way out from here.”

“Yes, sir.” Percival exited the door with the tiny blue door and turned left – the wrong way. He continued walking back down the long vein of the hotel. Things didn’t look familiar; however, no part of this day resembled familiarity. Percival searched for locker room, but ventured in curiosity mostly, certain the locker room was just ahead. *Perhaps this next room . . .* No, he passed a storage room. He walked and he walked.

Perhaps the next room. . . No, a break room. The next room was several yards down. He continued to it and peered inside. The room held shelves of towels and linen that looked familiar, and he thought the locker room was through that room. He entered and walked to the other side of the room when the lights began to flicker. He looked up briefly, and as he continued, the lights turned off. With only a dimly lit hallway, the room was as black as a black wall pasted to his face. Opening his eyes wider only revealed more of the black wall. He was trapped in darkness.

“Hello?” Percival called out. “Can someone turn the—”

A metal shelf rolled in front of him as he turned towards the entrance of the room. It smacked him causing him to stumble backwards. The shelf dominated his space.

“Hello? Who’s there?” *Silly child’s play*, thought Percival; yet, it was still distressing. He could see nothing. Percival grasped the shelf and used it to guide him to its corner. A second rolling sound split his hearing and shoved against his back. He stumbled towards the other shelf. “Who’s there? Who—who . . .” Percival aspirated. “Please, stop!”

“Don’t go,” a whisper sounded and chilled Percival’s skin. He didn’t answer. He couldn’t. He was petrified. The shelf in front of him was rolled away. Percival felt revealed, vulnerable. He couldn’t see anything. What could see him? What would hit him next? He lost direction. Which way was the door?

The other shelf was then moved back. He couldn’t stand there. He felt like a target. Percival started walking forward just to be somewhere else. His forehead hit the corner of another shelf. He sprinted back and started in another direction. A hand wrapped around his arm.

“Stop,” continued the whisper with a French accent, “or you will hurt yourself.”

“Who are you?” Percival asked with a shaky voice.

Although the lights were still off, Percival could see a shape forming, and he hoped to see the painting he met in the hallway. Instead, the light shaped into a different lady, a maid in uniform. This wasn’t the painting.

“I just wanted to tell you merci. Thank you,” the whisper transformed into a soft voice at the same rate of becoming a veritable person. She stood feet in front of him with curly hair in a bun. She wore a ruffled apron and a black tea-length, collared dress. She held a folded sheet in her arms.

“I don’t know you,” Percival answered in a monotone voice.

“For your kindness,” the woman said and quickly unfolded and spread the sheet into full ripples, snapping it over and over. The billows of the sheet slapped against Percival. He tried to back up, but a shelf stood behind him. Percival couldn’t see her behind the sheet. He began to pant in frustration. As the sheet came down, he caught a glimpse of a hat. It was her. The painting! His breath relaxed. She continued to snap the sheet, and it billowed over Percival’s head and covered him. He stood completely still in awe. He saw her fully, the woman with the cat! Her head remained bowed. He saw the perfectly petite outline of her jaw and the softness of her painted lips. Her neck was bare, and he saw it move gently, breathing in the same air he breathed. If he could have made a tunnel of her breath, he would have slept there. In each breath were her thoughts and the servants of her precious words. She lowered the sheet between them. The sheet covered Percival’s head. It felt taut around him.

“Merci for your kindness,” the woman whispered. Percival quickly snatched the sheet off his head. There was no one in the room, and the lights were brightly on. Two maids walked into the room.

“Hey, what happened in here?” one of them asked.

Percival grabbed one of the ladies by the shoulders. “Is it you? Please don’t leave me! What’s your name?” Percival’s anguish released onto the maids.

“Get your hands off me, ya’ goon! . . . Drinking on the job, you bum! . . . I’ll report you to Hugenby!” The ladies shouted at Percival. He backed out of the room and jolted down the hallway. He looked frantically in each opened door but saw no other woman.

I gotta find her! He imagined feeling her arms on each side of him holding down the sheet. *She was practically hugging me! Under the sheet!* Percival’s one focus in the city of Chicago which bustled with millions of angles where any living human may place his mind and set it there for a while was on this woman in the hat with the veil and the pouty lips that spoke to him. The rolling shelves showed her playful spirit, he was certain. With big searching eyes, he smiled. The beautiful idea of placing him in complete darkness to see nothing but her- who was obviously not darkness -- showed her light, her brightness. *Why, she has no darkness in her! She lit up the room! She was as bright as the morning dawn. How could such a bright beauty be evil? Nonsense!*

A puff of laughter pushed out of his chest. He came back to the tiny blue door.

How would he find her? He knocked on the door.

“Can you please tell me where I can find Mr. Hugenby?”

“He recently walked onto your side of the world,” the eyes told him, “but I don’t know where he went.”

Percival now had two people to find, but Mr. Hugenby first. Percival remembered how he was supposed to be gone, out of the hotel, spit out. Mr. Hugenby may, upon seeing Percival, push him off a top-floor balcony. The thought also struck Percival that he never found the locker room and therefore never found his clothes. The chaos in his head kept him from reason: to walk out of the hotel and never come back. He walked in the uniform that was no longer his, and he felt like an uninvited outsider, like bad food, giving the hotel indigestion. He walked back towards the crashed elevator where a group of people still congregated. Many men were spreading out the crashed parts and giving orders. The injured occupants had already been taken away.

A woman standing to the side looked taller with her thin long face. Her thin long legs looked longer under her bubbled fur coat. Men approached her with soft steps and stances as if to look up at her even though the men weren't shorter. With a relaxed stare, the woman pierced the men's nerves to submission, transferring all worry of her smashed armoire to their own responsibility. The woman was Mrs. Dawn Mercier, Claude's mother. Her small hat was pinned to one side over blonde, sleek, bobbed hair. A man stood behind her in the shadows of the room, Mr. Hugenby. He stared at Percival with clinched eyebrows. Percival froze, forgetting to greet first. Walking into the aura of their authority was too daunting. To his relief, Mr. Hugenby started towards him.

"Walk with me. I'm escorting you out," Mr. Hugenby whispered with a pointing arm and finger.

"Sir, I . . ." Percival suddenly forgot his purpose. It was misplaced in his mind, and he was hungry. That chaotic section of the hotel did it to him!

“You are treading on very thin ice. Do you hear me? Very thin ice!” Mr. Hugenby continued to whisper. Percival thought of the billowing sheet that enveloped him.

“I wish to find her for you, to do my duty. I want to help. Please give me another chance.”

“You’re reconsidering?” he asked Percival.

“I have.” These magic words placed him up, up, up to the top penthouse floor in the company of two power men. He heard Mr. Blaughvoyon pound out an order to his Indian servant who waddled out with two drinks, mumbling more incoherent sounds, louder this time, and staring at Percival this time.

“In the elevator is where your work will take place,” began Mr. Blaughvoyon. He sat on the couch, and in unplanned unison, Mr. Hugenby and Percival sat as well.

“Yes, yes. The elevator,” Mr. Hugenby aired out the echo. Mr. Blaughvoyon’s legs looked long folded at the knees as he sat on the edge of the couch.

“When she gets on, close the door, close the gate, and don’t open it until she knows she’s trapped,” continued Mr. Blaughvoyon. “She’ll suffocate. After that, I don’t know. I think she’ll dissolve away.”

“Dissolve?” repeated Percival. The two men stared at him with raised eyebrows.

“She can’t transcend or permeate through the walls?” Percival asked.

“No, she can’t move through solid surfaces. What she can do is appear in different human

forms – as a different woman, man, or child. I don't know how she does it! You'll need to know the tenants well. Know who's not one just as well. This will take some strategy on your part."

"If I trap her, she won't try and hurt me or kill me, will she?"

"You may need to defend yourself, yes. Nonetheless, the entrapment will weaken her." At the thought of weakening the woman, Percival frowned.

"She has you smitten. Hood-winked," Mr. Blaughvoyon stated. He leaned in so close to Percival, his body was folded. "She'll kill you. She's not human. She's a monster. The pretty face is her weapon."

Percival wasn't one to listen without using his heart. Just recently, he felt bad for Mr. Hamby next door as he slept in the cold mud when his wife locked the door.

"Don't let him in here, I'm warning ya'!" Mrs. Dooley said. "He should've never gotten drunk. His poor wife!"

"He'll freeze to death," Percival answered. He woke up in the middle of the night, unlatched the door, and pulled Mr. Hamby onto their floor inside the house. The anger of Mrs. Dooley was fierce.

"Get out, ya' blasted drunk!" Get out!" she wailed, hitting him with a bucket.

With better drunken strategy, Mr. Hamby began tapping on the bedroom window of Rex and Percival in the middle of each night, singing songs and pleading for some indoor comfort.

“I’ll kick you out the door with him, Percy, if you let him in me house again! In the cold mud you’ll go!” promised Mrs. Dooley.

Percival felt that even when evil ones struggled, they turned good and should therefore be assisted.

Mr. Blaughvoyon enunciated a strained whisper, “Mr. Percival Dooley, if you are ever again, in your pathetic Irish slum life, invited into one of the finest penthouses in the world, which I highly doubt will ever again occur—I certainly won’t invite you back into mine—never again laugh at me. You’re a fool, and my mercy is underserving to you. You now walk a tightrope in my hotel, and if you fall, I will catch you by your head and squeeze your skull.”

Percival was taken to his post.

“A 1903 Otis elevator, promising charm through the years,” Mr. Hugenby taught as they approached a dark wooden sliding door. The wood was embellished with decorative borders around each of the three rectangular door panels. He used great effort to slide open the door, revealing a half-opened gold gate. He pulled open the gold gate, shortened one foot from the top. The insides of the elevator posed motionless before them. The inside’s four walls shined with golden coatings and a black marble handrail around three of the walls, interrupted a few feet by a corner velvet bench.

“It came to us with no roof,” continued Mr. Hugenby. “We could see straight up the shaft into tomorrow. So, they wired a ceiling for the chandelier and a mirrored look. Really nice.” Percival entered the elevator, taking his position beside the crank. Mr. Hugenby explained he could leave

when Mr. Hugenby came onto his elevator after dinnertime, and he walked out of sight down the hallway, leaving Percival alone at the opened elevator. He stood there as if left with a child, and he didn't know how to take care of a child.

To reduce any future risks of more embarrassment, he slid shut the heavy door, and then the gate. He was closed in with just a dull lever subdued over to the left side, being still like a good boy. He grasped the lever and pulled it with a small jerk. He heard a click and felt lighter as if the elevator was now floating. The lever must have been just in between the moving and being still and it moaned with impatience, scaring Percival to continue pulling. The elevator now proceeded down in relief as the golden door slid up out of sight. Then a second golden door appeared from the floor and disappeared up past the ceiling. A calligraphy number was painted on each door, introducing themselves to Percival as his new friends. They helped his nerves well enough.

"Floor 22, hello there. . . 21, great to see you," Percival greeted each new floor as he huffed. "There you are Floor 20. See ya' later." He took a deep breath, closing his eyelids for escape, and forced out a mighty "B-!" followed with a lowered "-onsai."

Further down, his curiosity was fulfilled: Floor 12 followed Floor 14.

Percival noticed the lever was now pointing toward the other direction. He pulled it towards him, and it stopped abruptly with a strain. He felt a gallop in his chest. He exhaled pleas and gratitude to God for life, and he handled the lever more gently as Floor 2 crept up slowly. It was adorned with glass windows, and he could see a bell boy and a couple standing and facing him, waiting to come aboard. With more pressure the elevator stopped; however, it wasn't plush with the floor. The guests would have had to step up into the elevator. So, he tried again. Percival

pushed the lever slightly down, but the elevator sank too far. He couldn't open it yet. He tried to be ever so slight with a gentle pull and at the last second, but he waited too late. The elevator stopped too far up. The debacle drew an amused crowd. The bell boy eyed him with silent insults. The couple smiled with their whole faces except their mouths. Guests behind them laughed with pleasure. Percival cleared his throat, turned to hide his face and exclaimed disapproving language for an elevator attendant. He then turned to see the audience and smiled as if laughing with them. He inhaled deeply as inconspicuously as possible and gripped the lever again. This time, Percival didn't go too far—he must have been too impatient, for he didn't make it all the way plush with the floor. He felt his face beam red, brighter than the chandelier. His temperature rose and he once again felt the uniform stick to his perspiring body. As he suspected the elevator fell too far down once again. He then continued down to Floor 1, a solid door. He stopped to roll his eyes, panted three times, and then pulled the lever to travel back up. As he rose into sight for his audience, they cheered in applause. He hardly heard them, for he concentrated his eyes and every working sense on handling the lever with precision.

He did it. He stopped plush with Floor 2, and the crowd cheered with patronizing applause.

“You're an idiot,” the bellboy told him as he rolled a cart of suitcases onto the elevator.

“Good evening, madam, . . . sir,” Percival took great lengths to try his professional face.

“Good evening,” they greeted in unison. The couple was Mr. Sam Pritchard and Mrs. Anne Pritchard. On Floor 16, they were lodging for one week, “a well-deserved getaway.” They both asked several questions regarding the accommodations, including “Will we have 24-hour room service due to Sam here being a light sleeper?” Suddenly Mrs. Pritchard began with tiny yet

thrustful sneezes.

“Strange, you’re not catching a cold, are you, dear?” asked her husband.

“No, it feels like an allergy attack.”

They came closer to Floor 16. Percival concentrated with all his strength, mind, spirit, and soul. He folded his hand gently around the lever.

“Allergy?” her husband repeated.

Percival bent his knees and gave a perfect tug to the lever, stopping flush on Floor 16. He smiled widely.

“Enjoy your stay, Mr. and Mrs. Pritchard,” he saluted to them.

“You’re an idiot,” repeated the bellboy as he exited the elevator.

Mr. Pritchard continued his conversation with Mrs. Pritchard as they followed the doorman off the elevator, “But you’re only allergic to cats.”

Percival’s smile left him. *Cats?*

He slid shut the wooden door and the gate. He looked around the elevator as if to find something hiding. He grasped the lever and rose two floors up as he learned to do in the morning’s training. He stopped on each floor, learning to stop perfectly. He slid open the wooden door on Floor 17, and there stood a man waiting.

He wore a fedora and a black suit. His skin was a bit darker; probably a Greek or Italian, thought Percival.

“Good afternoon, sir! Where to?”

“The cigah’ room.”

Percival knew the cigar room was on Floor 3, but in the South Wing. As they traveled down, the man took a flask from his jacket, opened it while staring at Percival, and took a swig. At Floor 3, the man asked Percival, “Which way?”

“Well, sir, you- you see, it’s in the South Wing. The South Wing, you see. I can take you, I think I know my way there”-

“You think I’m gonna be seen with an Irishmen holding my hand to the cigah’ room? I’ll blow ya’ head off and leave ya’ body in this fancy elevator before I let you walk me anywhere. Just point, for Christ’s sake.” Percival pointed to the right, and the man walked away. The man’s words disgraced Percival like a slap in the face. He forgot how to display a face of apathy. He held the lever and together, he and the elevator descended to Floor 2.

No one was waiting, so he stepped off the elevator into the world of Floor 2 and waited by his elevator.

“Hey!” a voice scratched beside him. It was Herbert Downey. “What happened to you? We thought you got canned. This your elevator today?”

“Yeah, and this one is yours?” Percival exchanged.

“Oh yeah. Busy day. My feet are done, you know?”

Two ladies approached Herbert’s elevator. He greeted them, and they giggled as they boarded his elevator.

“See ya’ later, my friend,” Herbert said as he slid his door shut.

Mr. Hugenby came soon after and approached Percival.

“Go home. Be here at five in the morning.”

Chapter Five: The Trouer Towers and the Drunken Stupor

Rex Dooley gaped at the butter frosted in dollops on his thickly sliced bread. His lips swelled with the aroma of the speckled honey, and he tried to keep his eyes layered upon it as he sank his teeth into a large bite of the soft warm bread. He closed his eyes and grunted with “Mmm, oh yeah,” filtered through the bread stuffed full in his mouth. He enjoyed the flavor with his eyes still closed, and he then opened them to see the crowd staring at him with no

expressions. He stared back for a moment, inconspicuously loving the taste in his mouth.

Rex held out his arms to each side, swallowed, and exclaimed, “That was some good hot bread folks!” The crowd laughed in scattered spots. “Get your own hot bread tonight in the owner’s restaurant just above our heads.”

Rex was friends with the owner’s son, Wyatt Trouer. The Trouers called their upstairs restaurant “The Trouer Tower.” Downstairs had no name; Mr. Trouer was careful to keep his fully stocked refuge a secret from the police. Only those with a passcode could enter.

“May I speak to the owner, please?” a dining guest would say.

Upon arriving at the table, the guest who wasn’t part of his inner circle would give Mr. Trouer the passcode: “Should we leave the candle on the table burning or blow it out?” Mr. Trouer would respond by placing a small invitation on the table, dated for one-night-only entry. After eating their dinner, the guests left down a hallway beside the kitchen to a dirty metal grey door. They’d give their invitation to a man nearby, who’d open the door for them revealing spiral steps in a dimly lit stairwell.

Wyatt joined Rex in opening the bird-tagging business. When they were both out of work, Mr. Trouer allowed Rex to host the speakeasy from time to time. The back of the building was for trash and employees to enter and exit. The alley was dark, and it’s where Percival found a barrel to lean against and wait for his brother to exit. He exited as he always did, busting open the door and laughing, looking around as if he’d never been outside before. His moustache was getting shabby, yet somehow, his smile was still obvious.

“Me jar! Me mucker!” Rex slurred out in seeing Percival. “What is this get-up? This blue dance suit?” They walked together down the dark road towards home. Rex dancing along the way.

“Tis no dance suit, mate,” Percival answered. He always thickened his Irish accent around his brother, no known reason why. “I’m wearing my uniform.”

Rex drew his head closer to see a “BH” embroidered on Percival’s lapel. “The Blaughvoyon Hotel?”

“I’m the elevator attendant- well, one of ‘em.”

“Yes! Your first day, and . . .” Rex studied Percival’s face as they walked, “you’re smiling strangely.”

Percival chuckled. “I met the most beautiful lady, Rex. She looked like a painting. And turns out she was probably not real, just my imagination.”

“Your mind is crazier than mine, I tell you.”

“I’m going to find her.”

“Who? The nonexistent lady?” Rex gave his hips a swing with his words.

“Yes.”

“Good. Don’t give up.” They walked in silence for a while.

“Rex, do you believe in ghosts?”

“Yes, absolutely. One lives in the speakeasy. Some old Revolutionary War soldier that wants a drink.”

“You’ve seen him?”

“Maybe. One day a man in this deplorable outfit—looked like he just came off the battlefield – approached me, and he said to me, ‘Gimme a drink, ya’ damn Irishman!’ So, I poured him a scotch, turned around, and he was gone. They say he walks the speakeasy looking for a way out, but he won’t just go through the door and leave. . . Why, Percy? You see a ghost at the hotel today? The girl? Or the painting, like you said?”

“Maybe.”

“A killer on the loose! A killer, me say!” Mrs. Dooley screamed throughout their small, three-room house plus the lavatory at four in the morning. Percival and Rex rose and stumbled to the open door where she stood. Mr. Hamby, the next-door neighbor, was picked up by other neighbors and taken into the Hamby house to lay his body on the bed.

“I wake up and see him lying right there on the ground! Didn’t look right! He was murdered!”

“Mum, why . . .” Rex began.

“I don’t know why, Rex. Why would anyone participate in such a heinous crime unless deeeeemon possessed!” Rex and Percival saw no opportunity to tell their mother that Mr. Hamby was left outside drunk, and all the elements on the inside and the outside of his body poisoned him to death. They stood and watched as Mrs. Dooley sat with Mrs. Hamby and hugged her as they both cried.

Then, Mr. Hamby sat up.

“Where’s my fags, you dreadful woman?” he slurred out. Mrs. Hamby turned into an explosive mess of frustration. Mrs. Dooley stood and walked out with her sons back to their own home next-door, just three feet away. Mrs. Dooley moaned and talked to herself as she cooked potato cakes.

“Poor, poor woman. . . If only me own Dooley would come through the door. . . He left me. He left me for good. . .”

Chapter Six: Blindly Onward

“Mum,” Percival said as he accepted her wrapped-up potato cake. “I love ya’.” He kissed her forehead and left for work.

The chill bit at his face more this morning.

“What happened in Ireland, Pops?” Percival breathed out. His mind concluded his father found a better life. He concluded the same yesterday, and the same conclusion when he was 11. The maze of homes were black pits with an occasional light soaring out a window, giving Percival relief. Life went on and its scattered sounds of mumbling and crying babies comforted him of this truth, this assurance. It was on past the neighborhood and the crossing of a black paved road that took him into a midst of bigger buildings, reminding him of his futile existence. The tops of the buildings again spat out its smoke and danced in the gray air. Percival didn’t want to go to work.

He stopped and looked behind him at the familiarity and then back ahead. *I forgot my confidence exercise this morning. I can’t go on without doing my confident exercises first. Mr. Hamby, the old drunkard, made me forget.* He took deep breaths and decided to try the exercises where he stood.

“Bonsai?” he asked the sidewalk. It sounded confident, but it wasn’t. He felt like he needed to scream. He resumed the walk. More pedestrians came and went around him, and he liked their company.

I’ll keep my focus on the woman. The woman. She takes my fear away. Funny, he thought

with a smile, *a ghost takes my fear away*. He thought about how she may approach him next time. She most likely won't be in a group or with anyone; she'll be alone.

As the hotel came into sight, the hotel's windows turned into eyes and stared at Percival. Horror washed over him. Some eyes were lit, some were dark and hiding. Some changed their inside shapes and silhouettes, like the small thoughts moving around behind the eyes, looking at him. He tried to gasp, but his breath was constricted. He stopped abruptly, turned around, and ran back toward his home. He wrapped his sprint around a building's corner and stopped to catch his breath. The gray sky was turning midnight blue. The smoke continued to dance. He knew he couldn't run home. Not again. He had done so too many times in the past. Neighbors scoffed at "the grown man" who "didn't act like an Irishman at all." He stood in humiliation and stared down at the mottled pavement as people hurried by.

He breathed in, looked both ways, and almost screamed "Bonsai," but shook his head to confirm the bad idea. Percival retracted again and walked toward the hotel. He looked back up and saw the windows placed just as windows should be placed. *The woman of my dreams is there somewhere. She needs me.* An added skip and bounce in his step directed him to the employee's entrance and to the check-in quarters.

"Dooley, go wash your face. You look like hell. Try to appear put together, for crying out loud," commanded William Smith, a hospitality lead. "Then, you got the same elevator as yesterday." Percival entered the locker room with other attendants reprimanded for dusty shoes, spots on jackets, and untamed hair.

Percival's elevator was opened at Floor 2 and waiting for him.

Chapter Seven: Elevator De-escalation

As soon as he took post, three men scurried inside. The trio included a Black man, an older White man, and a much younger man, perhaps around Percival's age, who was possibly Hispanic. All three men wore overcoats and fedoras. Percival guessed they had been out all night, not starting a new day. The younger man walked in the middle and had a bloody lip and swollen eye. He slumped on the corner bench. The scent of strong liquor permeated the air. Percival peered inside the elevator, still standing outside it.

"What the hell are you doing? Third floor!" the older man told Percival. Percival took a long step to join the men, closed the door and gate, and quickly refreshed his memory as he stared at the crank.

"Wait a minute, Mr. Elevator Man," said the young man with a chuckle. "Where are we going?" He motioned for Percival to be still with the crank. The other two men were older and shouting at the younger man. The older man insisted Percival resume the lift. Percival froze his nerves as the elevator moved.

"Every time we go out, Ren!" and "You're gonna get us shot!" and "You're apologizing and we're going home!" The younger gentlemen slicked back his hair and pressed it down with his fedora.

"You're not staying at the hotel, sirs?" Percival questioned.

“No,” answered the older man, “we’re going to the cigar room and home. Outside of Chicago.”

“Why do you need to know?” asked Ren. “You gotta a problem with it?” The other two men shouted at Ren as if it was a usual interaction. They exited onto Floor 3, and Percival didn’t see them again. He closed the door and the gate and mumbled out a “Good riddance!” before pushing the lever to Floor 2. The elevator started down at such a jerk that Percival felt his nerves reach for the chandelier. He stopped the elevator before arriving at Floor 2. He opened the gate and looked through the crack. The bottom of the shaft wasn’t as far down this time. Percival reached for his potato cake in his pocket and dropped it through the crack.

On to his next mission: find the woman.

She wasn’t Mrs. Mercier, who boarded with a scowl look. She wore a different fur coat, a brown one, and held a cigarette in a long black holder adorned with gems.

She pranced onto the elevator and said, “To the stockholder’s meeting.” However, Percival had no knowledge of its whereabouts. He closed the door and gate, and he placed his hand on the lever and pulled. The elevator rose. Mrs. Mercier puffed her cigarette. Percival turned to see her staring at him. He smiled and faced the front. The door’s floor numbers appeared and fell past the floor.

Floor 8, . . .

Floor 9, . . .

Floor 10, . . . he continued and tried to think. Did we speak of this floor in the training?

She interrupted his ignorance: “Have you met my son, Claude?”

“Oh, yes, yes. I have. Um”—

“He’s quite talented and working here to help out Nick. You know, Mr. Blaughvoyon. I thought you were getting fired, she added with a trill. “You were in trouble, I presume.”

“Yes,” answered Percival. The ride to nowhere was long. Floor 19, . . . Floor 20. . .

“Where are you taking me?” Mrs. Mercier asked.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Percival said and stopped the elevator. “I will just reverse the elevator.” He began back down, and he bade the elevator to just go and not ask any questions. “Floor 20.”

“It’s not the 20th floor,” Mrs. Mercier said.

“Then 19, madam?”

“No, further up.” With this, Percival stopped the elevator and started up again. “Floor 31. You didn’t know? Isn’t it your job? I suppose you can ask Claude if you have questions,” she gave a trill again. “You seem to have some learning to do.”

Percival hoped Mrs. Mercier wasn’t the ghost; he would fall out of admiration quickly.

He was almost completely plush with Floor 2 and made no effort to perfect it. Mainly

because Percival saw, through the glass of the door, his brother Rex standing and waiting for him.

Chapter Eight: Ups and Downs of Brotherhood

“Take me riding,” Rex smoothed out as he ambled in. “You seen the girl?” Rex soaked in the decor: the chandelier, the mirror ceiling, the bench. “My, my. . . Nice, I could handle working in here all day.” He looked out of place appearing in Percival’s other world. Percival shifted his eyes and his stance from brother to elevator attendant and back to brother. He closed the door and gate and pulled the lever.

“No, I haven’t seen her yet.”

“So, you up for a ghost-hunt?” Rex offered.

“Over me dead body, Rex!” Percival noticed his accent surfacing and felt it didn’t match his profession. “This isn’t a game!”

“Alright, Percy.”

“And she’s not a prop, Rex!”

“Alright, I said.”

“Or a toy!”

“Then, we won’t.”

“I don’t want to scare her!” Percy’s eyes were wide.

The light on Floor 14 shined. Percy stopped flush with the floor, surprising himself. A boy stood waiting, wearing knickers and a newsboy cap. They stared at one another for a moment before the boy inched a foot forward, and another. He stood in between Percival and Rex as the two brothers continued to stare at him.

“I’m meeting Mother for breakfast,” the boy said to Percival.

“The third floor, in the diner cafe?” Percival asked.

“No, a breakfast banquet. The 30th floor,” he answered. Percival closed the door and gate and began the journey up, nervous of the great height.

“This breakfast, young lad, . . . may I accompany you?” Rex asked. The boy didn’t answer. He turned back to stare at Percival.

“Sir, is your last name Dooley?”

Percival answered, “Yes, how did you know that?”

The boy shrugged his shoulders and said, "I just like to know names, you know."

"Mine, dear fellow, is Reginald Dooley. Rex for short. Mr. Dooley there is two years my junior."

"Oh, you're the brother," the boy said and nodded his head in acknowledgment.

"Well, lad, what is your name?"

The boy turned back to Percival to say, "You're at the 20th floor? I meant Floor 3."

"What?" Percival answered and stopped the elevator to sink back down.

"You're wasting his time, no-name boy! Percy, throw him off!" Rex suggested with no change in his tone.

"Percy?" the boy asked. "Percy Dooley - That's your name."

Percival started the elevator again and said, "I'm not throwing the boy off. He needs his mother."

"So kind, sir. But I see that Floor 14 is coming again. I'd like to get back off there, please."

Percival stopped the elevator at Floor 14 and opened the door for the boy. He walked into the hallway.

"I love this gate!" exclaimed Rex. "What if we close just the gate . . ." Rex closed the gate leaving the Floor 14 door open. The boy stood and watched.

“No, the guests could fall down the shaft,” explained Percival.

“Bye, Percy,” said a woman’s voice. Percival looked up to see where the boy was standing, and it was her, on the other side of the closed gate. She walked backwards for some steps before turning around and leaving.

Percival tried to open the gate too quickly, causing it to lock up. He finally relieved the locked joints of the gate and shoved it open. He leaped into the hallway.

No one.

“It was her,” Percival told Rex. “My- my painting.”

“That little boy? This is gravely concerning, Percival”-

“No, Rex”-

An older woman runs down the hallway shouting “Wait! Wait!”

“Of course, ma’am!” Percival shouted back. Back to Rex, he explained, “She disguised herself so I wouldn’t recognize her.”

The short lady, wearing a box hat and a suit dress, scooted her feet to the elevator and turned inside. She panted and held picket signs with “Anti-Saloon League” painted on them. “To the lobby, don’t delay!” Percival slid shut the door and gate and pulled the lever to descend. The elevator seemed to be slower than usual, creeping. *How will I see her again? It appears to be on her terms. I don’t actually know when I see her. Perhaps this woman . . . No, she couldn’t be.*

Percival sat on the bench with a slight smile. Rex sat in his lap and placed his arms around Percival's neck.

Rex asked the lady (which sounded more like a statement than a question), "Where ya going?" The scene shook Percival out of his wistful coma.

The lady resounded like a trumpet, "The protest, of course!"

Percival feared the next words from his brother's mouth.

"Protesting liquor? Where?" Rex asked.

"Somewhere off Broadway Street, south of here." She spurted words quickly, so quickly it juxtaposed with the inching of the elevator. "The whole block swarms at night with drunks and Irishmen, buying liquor instead of their children's food."

Percival watched the wall's border of the next floor appear behind the elevator's floor. He saw its shadow, a gray line preceding the unfinished wood trim of Floor 12. Then the door floated up slowly like a balloon that didn't really feel like floating anymore. *Please, hurry*, Percival thought.

Rex then spoke with a fake American accent and a deeper voice, "The Irishmen?"

"Children are starving!" the lady continued. "And they want to blame the poverty on the stock market. Huh!"

Floor 11 most certainly disappeared, and they'd never see it. *Never see it!* Percival stared at

the elevator's corner in front of him. He stared. *Is that angled at exactly 90 degrees?* he wondered. He looked over to see Floor 11 floating away from sight. He was happy.

"Have you ever drunk alcohol?" Rex asked in his fake American accent.

"Well,"

Floor 9, I beg ya', get here! Percival's apathetic face was full of angst.

"I drank a small swig out of curiosity from my grandfather's barn decades ago. I didn't care for it. Tasted like gasoline."

"Ah! You found the moonshine," Rex's voice of Italian rigor was back. The lady laughed for a moment and then gave a worrisome look to Rex.

Did it stop? Or is it just that slow! Percival took a deep breath. *It felt like it stopped for a moment there.*

"Are you Irish?" she asked.

"Flowing through me veins, me lady," Rex answered.

"Oh! Dear, sir! I meant no disrespect!" She placed her hand over her chest and didn't know when to close her mouth: "But you know how some of you people are. Not all of you, I'm sure."

"I don't have any children," Rex answered as he rubbed his fingers across the edge of her signs. "I've not yet fallen in love. And dear lady, it makes me want a warm morning brandy."

A fun silence followed.

“Are you in love?” Rex asked the lady. She wouldn’t answer. Percival stood at his post, facing the wall, freely smiling. He looked to see Floor 4 rise taller and taller and lift off. Then, three floors shot off behind it. Percival pulled the lever at Floor 2, a hair too high, but unnoticeable for most. What was noticeable was how bouncy Luellen was in her thin, tight lavender dress as she pranced towards the elevator holding her cigarette in a long holder.

“Hold it for me, Percy,” she called out and then smiled beautifully, “Hey ya’, Rex.” She placed her arms around his neck and Rex embraced her as well.

“My Luellen, baby!” Rex was more fluid than water now, slicker than wax and smoother than velvet. “Stay on the elevator with me all day, huh, doll?”

“Better yet, come to the 24th floor with me today. It’s a dreadful job. Not a soul to see all day.” They continued hugging and staring at one another.

“The 24th floor, Percy,” Rex said without taking his eyes off Luellen. “You heard the lady.”

Upon parting from the couple on the 24th floor, Percival was alone again. He realized the great height between the floor under his feet and the massive, empty space below. The panicking was unavoidable, but he knew his stress was foolish and irresponsible. He couldn’t bring himself to go down the elevator. He knew he and the elevator would crash. The elevator stayed put like a faithful pet, ignorant of the danger and stuck in this world of polished decor. The chandelier swayed in a small dance. He danced when his dad said he’d be back from Ireland soon. Percival was certain he’d be back the next day. He remembered the orange color of dawn that following

day behind the protruding buildings. One slight jerk of the lever and they'd plummet. He took his potato cake, opened the gate, and saw the endless abyss. He gasped more, bent down to one knee, and with a shaky hand, he dropped his potato cake in between the crack. It charged down out of sight. Percival never heard it land. *Had to have been a soft landing*, he assured himself.

Perhaps it was the elevator that finally convinced him that it knew how to do things, and Percival needed to trust it. Percival pulled the lever of the crank, and the release down caused him to let out a small cry.

As days passed, Percival acclimated to his post, to his elevator. As days passed, potato cakes floated down, piled into a soft heap. Ups and downs, and the occasional Mr. Hugenby.

"Dooley," he started, "Take me one floor up as we speak. How's your job going?"

"As elevator attendant, well, sir," answered Percival. "As for my side duty, I haven't seen her."

"I see. Well, she has attacked again. The kitchen had a blazing fire last night. It obviously flamed for no reason at all. Had to have been from the ghost. We were in great fear of the hotel collapsing."

"How terrible. I didn't hear anything," Percival answered.

"She, uh, . . . she also kills fathers, and she may have killed yours."

"I beg your pardon?"

“Mr. Blaughvoyon wants you to know how sorry he is to hear your struggles with no father and- please don’t disappoint Mr. Blaughvoyon. He likes you. . . can see you moving up in position here at the hotel. That is, of course, if you do your job.” Mr. Hugenby shook Percival’s hand before getting off at Floor 3. Percival couldn’t speak. He felt his cheeks and forehead redden and burn with a pulse.

For the last 18 years, Percival and his family heaved forward in darkness. *Where’s Papa?* No none knew. Perhaps he’d be home tomorrow, . . . or then, perhaps tomorrow, . . . or then, perhaps tomorrow. Now, the horrid truth revealed a miserable weight onto Percival, weightier than not knowing. He felt like such a fool, he smacked his forehead.

How wretched and diseased my mind is! Infested with stupid, stupid daydreams! He cursed himself. He felt like a blind man who should have seen something about her that clearly shouted how evil she was. How could he have received no inclination? He scolded himself for daydreaming of kissing her — the woman who killed his father. The knowledge also shook Percival a bit into guilt. He had no loyalty to his leaders or to his job. But now, he would change that. He would find her, and he would kill her.

Chapter Nine: A Crash with a Ghost

Percival couldn't tell his mother the next morning. He couldn't kill her hope.

"Where's my ribbon? What's going on here?" Ida asked loudly in the middle of the kitchen.

Mrs. Wright doted her, "Dear Ida, your ribbon is at home."

Ida began singing using no words, just sounds. Mrs. Dooley fried, sizzled, and simmered.

Percival stood in front of the mirror and felt too timid to shout incoherency. He cupped water in his hands, bent down and slapped his face with the water.

"Yes, Bonsai," he proclaimed with composure. The exercise required some warming up. He pooled more water in his hands. Loyalty to Mr. Blaughvoyon was his new focus. He felt strong. He splashed the water into an electric smash and wailed, "Bonsai!"

He felt a boost of life in his core. He repeated the exercise.

"Bonsai!"

She caused a fire. He'd catch her and save the hotel.

"Bonsai!"

Percival entered into the kitchen. Mrs. Wright was hugging Mrs. Dooley as she cooked.

"She's in deep despair," Mrs. Wright told Percival.

“No, I’m quite fine,” Mrs. Dooley shook out of her sobbing throat. “Me Michael! Where’d he go, huh? Where’d he go?” She sobbed in despair.

“Mum,” Percival grabbed his mother, “I miss him, too. Every day. But days don’t stop, Mum. They keep going. Ireland always has kept going, am I right?”

“Alright,” she hugged her son.

“I miss him, too,” said Ida, crying at the table. Mrs. Wright sat with her.

“You have Ida and Rex here to make you laugh, Mum,” Percival encouraged.

“I saw a horseshoe in me dream, Percy,” his mother shared.

“Ah, Mums. The horseshoe. I saw one recently and thought of Pap. . . I gotta go. Try to be happy, huh, Mum?”

The Dooley family— what was left of it— had moved on. It had been 18 years since they’d seen him. Much of life went on, but not because they thought he had passed away; no one knew what happened to him. They hoped for many years that he was still alive. He loved them so; they knew he’d come back. That hope of seeing him again never passed away, and Percival had no intentions of taking it from his mother.

Percival received a new potato cake from his mother and began the same morning routine of walking to an internal tune of a lonely whistle, hesitant every four to five steps. He took post at his elevator. A group of women boarded for a meeting on Floor 29. Luckily, the effects of his confidence exercise still sparked in his ego. He pulled the lever as if he was flying up there

himself. The ladies smelled nice of floral perfume, a wonderful scent to fill his small space. At Floor 29, he bade the women a “Good Day,” and started back down. He stopped the elevator to slip his potato cake through the crack, and he then had even more assurance, more confidence. The usual day’s routine.

The light above the elevator door on Floor 27 shined. Upon opening the door, his painting stood waiting, and she walked onto the elevator. He stared at her for a moment before closing the door and the gate, keeping this moment to himself. The air again changed around him. The elevator even looked different. He turned and stared at her.

“Floor 14, please, Percy,” she whispered. He remembered Mr. Hugenby’s words.

“Percival?”

“Yes?” he whispered back.

“Good morning. Have you missed me?”

“Every day.”

“I’ve come close to boarding your elevator but didn’t for different reasons.”

“Really?”

He turned to see her eyes looking up at him. Her eyes were so ivory, and they had another world inside them. He looked away quickly, refusing to travel inside.

He truly loved her, but he truly hated her. He had a task. *Her beauty is her tools! . . . She will*

destroy us! He heard Mr. Blaughvoyon's voice pleading for Percival to have sense. *She killed your father.* As Percival unwound this truth, he grasped the lever and stopped the elevator.

"Percy? What are you doing?" He didn't know how to answer the question. He closed his eyes in hopes this would all be over soon.

"Percy?"

No answer. He kept his eyes closed.

"Is something wrong. What is it? Oh, please tell me!"

Percival wanted to avoid the details of his task. It was a simple task, really: stop the elevator and let her die. This part was just testing his endurance. This part was the most difficult.

"Start the elevator again, please . . . Please, Percy."

Again, Percy did nothing, standing with his back to her. He held his hands piously together as if in church. He hears short gasps. Several of them, begging for air.

"Percy, . . . I can't stay . . . in here. I'll die. . . . Percy?"

She was weak and dying, begging him for help. Percival begins to cry, "I'm . . . sorry."

"Percy? . . ." She sits on the floor in the opposite corner. "Percy! . . . Percy!" Her voice was beautiful and flooded his heart. The thought dawn on him how she never retaliated. She never attacked him.

He placed his hand on the lever. He could fail by pulling it. She gasped for air. The sound of her suffering ignited him to pull the lever to the next door. However, upon pulling the lever, the elevator returned a strange reek. It then fell quickly, plummeting for a solid two seconds before stopping. The elevator was tilted, jarred in the shaft.

“What have you done?” Percival asked the ghost. “You’re trying to kill me, too!”

“What do you mean?” she was still on the floor, trying to regain strength.

“This is your doings! Why? Why did you kill my Pap?” The elevator moaned.

She said nothing else. She lowered her head to hide her eyes once again. She held on to the guard rail and steadied her feet to a stance. Percival thought of the end of his life approaching, and he huffed quick breaths. He saw that Floor 15’s door was reachable. He opened the gate and reached up to the door. The elevator grunted. Beads of sweat ran down his face. He pushed with his stretched arm at opening the sliding door. Finally, it opened. The woman climbed to the door and climbed out. He could only see her shoes, but he heard her voice.

“Percy, I didn’t kill your father. I’m sorry for your loss.” Percival then watched the shoes walk away. Percival lifted himself to the door, surprised by his strength.

He stood up on Floor 15. She was gone again.

“She tried to kill me, too!” Percival exclaimed to Mr. Hugenby. “The elevator is jarred at a tilt, bound to fall any second!”

Hugenby’s eyes grew big, and his face reddened and puffed up. He fled in titter-totter steps

down the hallway of Floor 15, his hands out to the side as if he was looking for a dance partner.

Percival waited a moment for his return but was certain he'd not see her.

Feeling lightheaded, Percival resorted to the Floor 1 employee locker room. He sat in a plastic chair and stared at the floor, too mentally drained to think of anything but the clean dull cement floor letting his eyes rest on. He slouched back in the plastic chair and found the motionless of his body inviting enough to succumb to sleep.

“Hello? Hello? Wake up, will ya’?” Herbert Downey shouted and stood over Percival. Trying to regain coherency he stared up at Herbert.

“They’re lookin’ for you everywhere, Dooley, mad as hell, too. Something about a rat infestation due to a pile of pancakes. And you and I both know who those are from, don’t we?”

Percival mumbled in confusion.

“Look, the Union is gonna have a tough time with this one, but it’s all ya’ gotta say — ‘The Union’s handling it.’ Then, they’ll shake in their rich-boy boots.” Herbert offered a hand to help Percival up. “I got chewed out myself. For accepting a guest invitation— that’s what they called it. It was just some girls. Invited me into their room. What single, good-lookin’ guy says no to that?” Herbert dusted off Percival’s back once he was finally standing. “Ya’ look awful. Listen, get cleaned up. Quick. Big-time wants to see you. Now.”

“Big-time?” asked Percival.

“Mr. Blaughvoyon himself. They said he just flew in from Paris.”

“In his penthouse? On Floor 24?”

“Is that where it is? Well, well. But no, uh, . . . just go to his office on Floor 2.”

Percival washed his face. Herbert left the room and shouted, “Don’t forget: the Union’s handling it!”

With a heavy weight of too many things to think about, Percival found the door on Floor 2: “The Office of Nicholas Blaughvoyon.” He knocked just as Mr. Hugenby approached him.

“Nevermind, Dooley. No need to bother him now. Go home for the day and rest. See you in the morning.”

“Thank you, sir.”

They both turned to walk away when the office door opened. A man in a suit at the door asked, “Percival Dooley?” Percival paused and looked back at Mr. Hugenby.

“Wait!” shouted Mr. Hugenby. He shuffled back towards Percival, stood behind him, and took him by the shoulders. “We should continue this first thing in the morning. Mr. Dooley has suffered great trauma and should go home right away.”

“I demand to see him now, Button!” a man’s voice called from a deeper room. Percival had never heard the man’s voice before. It wasn’t Mr. Blaughvoyon’s. Mr. Hugenby excused himself to “attend to hotel matters.” Percival was guided into the office where a man stood up from

behind his desk and held out his hand to shake.

“Good day, Mr. Dooley. I’m Nicholas Blaughvoyon. My hotel team knows me as either Nick or Mr. B. You may call me either that suits you.”

“You’re . . . who?” asked Percival, still standing.

“Sit down, Percival. I’m not repeating all that. I own this hotel. Let’s get down to business. Are you responsible for”-

“I beg your pardon, but you’re not Mr. Blaughvoyon,” interrupted Percival.

Mr. Blaughvoyon’s eyes grew wide. He chuckled. “I’m quite sure of most identities in my hotel this very second, and I’m certain of my own. . . . Why would you declare such a thing?”

“Well, I’ve met Mr. Blaughvoyon already. You’re not him.”

“You met me?”

“No, I met Mr. Blaughvoyon. Just a few weeks ago. On my first day of work.”

“You must have met a different Blaughvoyon. I’m the owner of this hotel.”

“Sir, . . . no, the Blaughvoyon I met was the owner of this hotel. I met him in his penthouse. In the North Wing on Floor 24. So, you can’t be him.”

“Your first day of employment, you say? On your crew’s first day of work, I was in Paris. You didn’t meet me.”

A memory of Luellen's words flashed back to Percival: ". . . *I thought he was in Paris. . . I've never seen him. . .*"

"I'm confused. You're Nicholas Blaughvoyon?" Percival stares at Mr. Blaughvoyon as if he was a ghost. Mr. Blaughvoyon pointed at photos of himself framed on the wall of him with different celebrities. The backgrounds of the photos were inside the hotel.

"Again, yes. Did someone else claim to be me?"

Percival was still confused. He asked, "You're Mr. Blaughvoyon?"

"Who claimed to be me, young man? Did someone else claim to be me? Did you take orders from this person?"

"Yes, in the penthouse."

"What floor was that you said?"

"The 24th floor, sir."

"That penthouse is not even fully furnished. You were there? That entire floor is being renovated. . . Charlie," Mr. Blaughvoyon instructed a man standing beside him, "Find out who's been on the 24th floor."

"Sir, Mr. Hugenby, my manager, introduced me to him," said Percival. He noticed that his voice didn't shake at all. He wasn't the least bit nervous of speaking to a man in power because he wasn't convinced that this man had power.

“Who? The man with my name?” asked Mr. Blaughvoyon. “Describe the man who claimed to be me.”

Mr. Blaughvoyon’s face reddened with his jaw clinched. Mr. Blaughvoyon— or, the man claiming to be Mr. Blaughvoyon, perhaps the second Mr. Blaughvoyon, looked rich. His skin was a pleasant tan, not too dark. His brown wavy hair, neither too thick nor too thin, was long enough to tell it was wavy and tactfully in place. He wore a dark blue ascot around his collar, tucked into his dark gray vest under his dark gray jacket. Nothing was too loose and nothing too tight. Nothing too dark and nothing too light. The only extreme about this man, whoever he was, was his detailed appearance of perfection.

“He’s a . . . tall man. With a twisty, twirly moustache.”

Mr. Blaughvoyon’s eyebrows deepened with concern. He said, “I’ll handle this. For now, we need to set this matter aside. Mr. Dooley, we need to discuss the reason you’re here. You need to know that a pile of pancakes”-

“Potato cakes.”

“Identity is extremely important to you, I see.” Charlie and other men in the office sang out a short laughing cadence. “A pile of potato cakes lay under your assigned elevator. Do you know why? Did the fake Mr. B tell you to do it?”

Percival remained quiet, wanting to conjure an air-tight lie of how the kitchen staff must have thrown them in there.

“Answer me or you’re fired.”

He must be the real Mr. Blaughvoyon! thought Percival. “I was scared, sir, out of my wits, after the elevator crashed. . . and I saw the crash. It was bad! Really bad! And I guess I thought a pile of fluffy potato cakes would save me if the same thing ever happened to me. It sounds crazy now, I know, . . . um, . . .”

Mr. Blaughvoyon stared with deep apathy and spoke, “A rat or two found the pan— potato cakes and invited a thousand of their rat friends. The uncivilized rodents came into my hotel and chewed on a steel rope that controlled the suspension. Keep in mind, Mr. Percival Dooley, this elevator is the golden core of the hotel, built in 1892. Why Hugenby placed *you* in charge of the gem, I don’t know. Do you know why?”

The potato cakes caused the elevator wreck, not the ghost, not his painting, not the woman who can change the air around him to golden peace. He himself caused the elevator to fall and become jarred in the shaft. He let her come close to dying. Percival realized he wrongly blamed the woman.

“Mr. Dooley, I asked you a question. Do you know why Mr. Hugenby placed you in charge of our most beloved elevator?”

He enlightened Mr. Blaughvoyon’s curiosity: “To catch a ghost.”

“My God, no,” Mr. Blaughvoyon proclaimed. Chills covered Percival’s body.

Chapter Ten: Plots of Percival

“The Union is on your side, my friend!” Herbert shouted to Percival across the lobby. Percival nods and smiles as he walks out of the lobby through the giant doors to leave. Percival was told to go home for the day but to report the next morning for further questioning. He changed out of his uniform and left.

Percival walked to Trouers Towers and peeped in the window. Rex saw him and came out.

“Did ya’ hear that? The General’s shoutin’ for justice,” Rex came out and lit a cigarette.

“The ghost?” Percival asked.

“Yeah, he wants a pint. *Gimme my bloody pint!* Do ya’ hear his British accent?” Rex gave a large open-mouth smile and laughed. Percival couldn’t hear anything over Rex’s laugh.

“Hey,” Percival looked around, “somebody’s playing a trick on me.”

“Sounds . . . fun,” Rex answered. “You wanna’ come in for a drink? Wyatt and I finished cleaning. I’m a great worker, I really am. I’m thinking of starting a new tight-rope business. Customers can walk from building to building right here in Chicago. So, you wanna’ drink?”

“No, no. And the trick, or somethin’ — it’s not fun, Rex. I think it has to do with Paps, seriously.” Percival explained how he should have noticed the emptiness of Floor 24. “But I just thought — maybe that’s how rich people live. How was I supposed to know?” The poverty of the Dooleys consisted of clutter, houses squeezed in beside others. All his neighbors and acquaintances were poor, with things all around them. Mud and puddles everywhere mixed with

trash, a stick or two, and maybe a shoe. His home was stuffed with his mother's collections and whatever they were given or found for cheap at the market: a candelabra, a jar, a book, a broken basket, a stool, a stack of papers. The only empty space in their home was on the wall where the horseshoe once hung.

"A horseshoe was all the penthouse had hanging on the wall," Percival said and paused to look around him again. He laughed to himself at the thought, and continued, "Why, Rex, out of all things, why did they hang a horseshoe in the penthouse?"

"Is it still hanging there?" Rex asked.

"As far as I know." Percival continued, "It was Paps!"

"They say when something feels like home, it's yours," Rex said.

"Yeah, it did, too. My thoughts went directly to Paps when I saw it."

Rex offered to speak with Luellen for access past Floor 24 security. He wanted to see it, and if it felt like home to him, he was taking it."

"I'll take off and go to the hotel first. Gimme a few minutes to kiss Luellen and hug her, and I'll get her to let you through."

Just as Rex prepared to part, an automobile stopped beside them, and Ida blasted open the door and jumped out shouting greetings to the Dooley brothers. Mrs. Wright shouted for Ida to get back into the car. Percival and Rex tried as well, but their persistence built Ida's stubbornness.

“Oh, Ida! How dreadful! I’m going to be late for the doctor! . . . Perhaps you gentlemen can watch her for me for just a little while. The doctor is surely waiting at my house right now, so I must get home. I’m terribly sorry.” With that, she closed the car door, and the car spun away. Ida smiled and waved bye. Percival and Rex stared at her.

“Let’s go, Ida,” Rex strummed out and began walking. “Go in and have a drink with Wyatt and the General. Take your time. Then, come my way.”

“Are you coming, Bonsai?” Ida asked Percival.

“Maybe later,” Percival answered. Rex and Percival exchanged a smile.

A half-hour later, Percival slid into a Blaughvoyon Hotel employee doorway. He reached an elevator, and the door slid open. Guests spilled out soaking in the views of the lavish Floor 2 Lobby. His own elevator door was closed with a sign that stated, “Out of Order.”

“Herbert,” Percival said and glanced behind him, “take me to the 24th floor, will ya’?”

“Hop aboard, my friend,” Herbert pressed a button, and his elevator smoothly closed on its own. The elevator interior was covered with wood paneling and a decorative ceiling light. It was no glittering chandelier like Percival had in his elevator, but it was still snazzy.

“Floor 24. Isn’t that where you told me the big boss man lived?” Herbert asked. “By the way, how’d it go? You didn’t get canned?”

“Not yet. He’s out of sorts about the potato cakes,” Percival answered. The ride was so smooth, Percival could hardly tell he was moving.

“Of course he was! That was phonus balonus, I tell ya’.” Herbert stared at and studied Percival. “Why you wanna go to Floor 24? Mr. Dapper with his pretty hair waitin’ on ya’ there?”

“No, there’s somethin’ up there of mine. . . You met Mr. Blaughvoyon, right? Wavy dark-haired guy.”

“Yeah, he grilled me about the invitation I got from the pretty girls. But ya’ know what? You just say ‘Union’ and they’re all balled up. . . The girls are here, Floor 17.” Herbert turned and smiled at Percival. “I think I’d like to say hello.” The door slid open and the ladies from Floor 17 stood waiting and smiling. They strutted and giggled aboard, and Percival saw his painting standing inside a hotel door. She motioned with her hand for him to come inside.

“Herbert, pick me up in a few minutes.” Percival went into the room where she was. It was larger than most hotel rooms, and it was empty other than a small bed and nightstand in the corner.

Emptiness was becoming a theme for Percival since his employment at the Blaughvoyon Hotel — the palatial hotel, the elevator shaft, the penthouse, and here. The grandeur of all this; yet only here he feels no angst, and no fear.

Chapter Eleven: A Ghost Story

She faced him squarely from the other side of the room, holding her fingers in front of her as if timid, and said, "I never killed you father. I know Hugenby plotted to lie to you. Please believe me," she begged.

"I believe you," Percival answered. Then, the moment was quiet.

When two lovers are in a large spacious room alone, staring at one another with admiration while burdened with a fear of blinking and missing something, they are there by fate, not on their own choosing. In these situations, they don't forget the world around them; they remember that the world around them is nothing but space without the one they love standing in the midst of it. The world they dwell in quietens. It stands as still as they do.

"Percival Dooley," she stated as if wanting to confirm his name.

"Yes? Please, miss, tell me everything." Percival led her to have a seat at the foot of the bed. The calico cat jumped and sat in the middle.

She paused and stared as if frightened of something Percival was ignorant of. She even panted and tried to steal a smile or two despite her face enraptured in dread.

"My name is Marie-Louise Chadoir. I am from France, as you can tell by my accent."

It was a lovely accent to Percival. He basked in the sounds of her words which filled the air

around him.

“I lived with my parents and worked as an infirmière in our home. We lived just by the Deûle River in the city of Lille.

“Maisons were so terribly stuffy and so hot, swarming with germs and sickness, all that I learned in my studies, and I was apt to faint. So, no one wanted my assistance anymore. In my own home, I knew I could still help. Patients came to me. We were poor, like everyone else. My patients were good to me as I helped them. They paid when they could, maybe a franc a month. Then my own Maman and Papa grew terribly ill, probably from the germs I brought into our home. A friend, a médecin said they were too sick to survive. He gave them médicament for a peaceful sleep, and neither of my parents ever woke up.

“I missed them terribly. They were my best friends, so I know how precious the ties of family are. . . I wanted to go far away, tired of France. I missed my parents. The country felt dark. I heard of the wonders of the New World of America, and everyone in Lille was excited about the news of the Titanic, of the giant ship heading for America. The Titanic was coming to Cherbourg! I was able to go quickly and secure a ticket. I was boarded as a nurse, assigned to work with the other médecins, with doctors from England, too.

“The first evening on board, we met a most repulsive drunk, slouched in his own vomit on a bench — Mr. Lymon Braham. Even when he was sober, he was loud and overbearing and rude.

“The hôpital crew slept and ate when we could, many times when guests had already enjoyed a feast. On my first night, I ate at a table alone. Most of the dining room was empty, and a man

cleaned up tables. He started to sway, and I could tell he was feeling seasick. I rushed to him and had him sit down. I had him tell me all about himself so as to forget his nervous stomach. He told me he was going home . . . to Chicago. His name was Michael Dooley.”

Percival’s heart felt full and healthy and terrified. He gasped and let go of a tear. He begged Marie-Louise, “Go on.”

“He had a thick, deep Irish accent, and he said he wished he had his horseshoe with him. He said then, he’d stop feeling sick. He told me he had two sons. He called you ‘A mighty Irish pair’ with his thick accent. He said his wife could make liquor in their very own kitchen, so he’d come home. He said he didn’t particularly like to drink and always wanted to see her. The next day, I saw him with half of a horseshoe sticking out of his pocket.”

They shared a soft laugh.

Marie-Louise abruptly stopped smiling, killing both laughters. “The next time I saw him was at the sinking. So many people were screaming and crying on the ship, wandering where their husbands were, where their children were.” Her ivory eyes were set into a distance, filled with tears. She stayed quiet for a moment. “And I saw your papa again. I saw him walking around hopelessly, and oh, how I hurt for his family, waiting for him in America!” Her cry escalated.

Percival took her hand, and noticed there was no surface to her skin. But he held something; he could feel something he beheld that was more real of substance than any hand he ever beheld. She found her composure dutifully to continue.

“He saw me . . . staring at him in despair, and he walked up to me with a smile. I will never

forget his words. They are etched in my memory forever. He said, ‘Drowning is the most wonderful way to die, don’t you think? Immersed in something so beautiful. Breathing in the forbidden. It becomes part of me. So, when you see my wife — her name is Lena — tell her I died in a most romantic way.’

“His words . . . he was so broken. I think he was trying to help me deal with dying in the water. . .

“A lifeboat called for me to jump aboard. A man was injured. A nurse was needed. People were swimming in the water everywhere. I was horrified! Then I heard the voice of Mr. Braham say, ‘Get over it! We can’t feel bad for not dying!’ He was in the same boat as I. Suddenly, a man panting for breath swims to the boat and begs for Mr. Braham to pull him in. Mr. Braham shouts, ‘There’s no room! Die with some dignity, not like a beggar!’ The man holds on to the edge of the boat, and I can see his face better — it’s Michael Dooley!”

“No,” Percival responded softly and hung his head.

“I shout for the men to let him in, but no one will listen to me. Mr. Dooley was holding his horseshoe. Mr. Braham told him, ‘There’s only room for your horseshoe, you vagrant!’ With that, Mr. Braham jerked to pull the horseshoe out of Mr. Dooley’s hand, but his grip was tight. He clung to it, letting his own body swim with one arm. When Mr. Braham finally snatched it, your father was gone.”

Percival lowered his head and clinched his jaw.

“I’m so sorry,” Marie-Louise added.

“Once I was finally brought to the mainland of the States, the words of your father bore a heavy weight upon me. My mission was to find Chicago and find your mother. I needed money and food, so I settled in Boston for a few months. A doctor gave me the money to board a bus and stay at a ritzy hotel. I was on my way to find Lena Dooley.

“As I checked into this hotel, December of 1912, I found that Mr. Braham worked here. He worked with Mr. Hugenby. Mr. Braham saw me and must have remembered me. He reacted as if seeing me was a joy. He disgusted me and I couldn’t hide it. He followed me on an elevator, your assigned elevator, so I quickly got off. He followed me off and down the hallway. So, I entered the stairwell. I swiftly climbed several flights of stairs before slowing down. He continued to follow me, shouting vulgarities and threats that he’d catch me, and then, he did. He came behind me and grabbed me, holding me close to him. I tried to scream, but I couldn’t. He smelled strongly of liquor and like rotting flesh. A surge of strength ran through me, and I pushed him off of me. He fell backwards, and he must have become disoriented with his surroundings. He leaned up and rolled off the stairwell. I could hear the bangs and cracks of the rails of each floor as he fell from a floor to a deeper floor. Falling, and then the most horrifying thud. The whole stairwell felt evil and dark. He was dead.

“But I was free, or so I thought. I continued to climb to my room on Floor 12. I opened the door into the hallway, and Mr. Hugenby was standing in the hallway. He approached me. I didn’t know him. I didn’t know what he was going to do, so I stood still. He hit me over the head, and I must have passed out. The next thing I remembered was gasping for air as something pressed down against my face. I couldn’t breathe! A pillow lifted off my head, and I saw Mr. Hugenby over me. He pressed the pillow back onto my face, and I stopped breathing. When I opened my

eyes, no one was in the room. I stood to walk. I felt completely different. I felt no pain, but somehow, that feeling hurt the most. My reflection in the mirror was only a cloud; I couldn't see myself. I heard a scratch on my door and realized I could still feel frightening chills. I heard a cat's meow. I tried to open the door, but the makeup of my hands had changed in such a way that gripping a doorknob was difficult. Finally, I let the calico cat into my room.

"As strange as it sounds, the cat became my mentor. He showed me how he could morph into a mouse, then a small duck. I learned that if I filled my thoughts with the understanding of how another person lived and breathed, I could morph into that person. The only ones I have so far accomplished include the young boy and the maid. You remember?"

"Yes" was all Percival could say.

"I realized I couldn't walk through walls, but gripping doorknobs was difficult, practically impossible. Entire doors would shake as I tried to open them. I suppose the guests found it to be quite eerie."

"I have tried to get out of the hotel, but walking out is suffocating. I can't breathe on the outside of the hotel. It feels as if I'm — sorry to say — drowning. My only resort is to walk back in. And once I'm back in, I inhale deeply for air. I'm thinking there has to be a way out. Every day, I look for a new way out. I'm stuck here, seeking justice, I suppose. Mr. Braham is stuck here too, seeking revenge."

"Mr. Braham, he's a ghost?" as Percival.

"You don't know? He's here. In this hotel. I'm sure you've seen him floating around"-

“What! He’s here?”

“He’s a tall man with an evil twirl of a moustache.”

Chapter Twelve: The Truth About Ghosts

And so, the truth of Lyman Braham was revealed, but not all of it.

Marie-Louise was a good woman. Truly, she was a kind and compassionate human just as she was as a ghost; nonetheless, with Percival, she didn’t share everything.

She didn’t share how she was married, and how her husband, Julien de Plenron, lived with her in her parents’ home de Chadoir. He wasted his late parents’ inheritance, a small fortune of less than a year’s worth of wages. Nevertheless, Julien had a gift of creating poetic dreams and conveying them to Marie-Louise in the most romantic way. She stirred her dreams to go up and far away.

However, reality kept her low and showed itself as beads of sweat onto Marie-Louise's face and neck as she worked continuously throughout each day on the community's sick. Eventually, customers dwindled; they refused to "ever go into that house again" based on Julien's grumpy mood and snappy attitude at the arrival of patients in the home. He typically said nothing, and he always wore a scowl on his face. He made the atmosphere unwelcoming, even for Marie-Louise.

When they learned of a mighty ship escaping to the States, Julien promised them a new life. He came home announcing he had booked two 3rd-class tickets, discounted based on Marie-Louise boarding as part of the medical team, and they packed.

Marie-Louise admitted to Julien, "Perhaps the open-space of a new country might place us on two different journeys." He stared without a word. She continued to pack the chest.

Once aboard the ship, Marie-Louise worked endlessly. Many reported seasickness. She rarely saw Julien. He ventured to social groupings, creating new connections, new relationships. One of these new acquaintances was Michael Dooley. Julien found him to be entertaining and his Irish accent to be a jewel. Later and elsewhere, Julien met Lyman Braham, whose moustache kept a nest of beer foam. Lyman claimed to be on the ship to flee from "a messy British investigation."

The friendship with Michael gave Julien a fun drinking partner. The friendship with Lyman gave Julien a dangerous drinking partner.

Julien confessed to Michael his loss of hope for his marriage.

Michael, in hopes of giving his new friend hopes, pulled a horseshoe out of his pocket and placed it on the bar. "Right here, ye' see, is me luck. 'Tis Irish luck, and me friend, ye must

believe me. ‘Tis full of magic!” Michael looked around him and placed the horseshoe back in his pocket. “It hung on me wall in Chicago. It did good for me ‘n me wife. Ah, me dear Percy, me boy, gave me the charm for me trip. Me good boy Percy! He knew, with the goodness of Holy Mary, he knew it promises good.”

Julien believed him, and later in the night, he expressed his belief in the Irish spirit, how it bore powerful Irish magic. He shared with Lyman how it would be nice to have his own magic charm to swoon his wife back in love with him. Julien was a romantic in that way. Lyman, in response, suggested they steal it.

The rest of Marie-Louise’s account is filled in accurately, other than that Julien de Plenron, at the age of 35, disappeared the night the Titanic sank. It was the same night Lyman and Julien had plotted to steal the horseshoe. Mari-Louise never saw Julien again, and she never looked for him.

Years later, in 1930, Percival Dooley placed his name on a list for hiring at a table in downtown Chicago. The real Nicholas Blaughvoyon gave Button Hugenby the job of looking through the names and finding an elevator crew. Button came to the name on the list: Percival Dooley. His friend (actually, at this point, Lyman was his ghost-friend) had mentioned the name Dooley several times with a wide smile of victory. He hung the horseshoe as his trophy on the wall of the abandoned penthouse. Lyman loved the horseshoe and needed its power to feel refreshed and alive, despite the obvious opposite.

Dooley, . . . Button thought. He wobbled his way— for he had wobbled for modality for many years — to Lyman Braham.

“Is it the same Dooley? Perhaps his son?” Button asked.

“It is. It has to be,” answered Lyman. “There can’t possibly be more than one Irishman named Percival Dooley in Chicago.”

The two men sat quietly and stared out the penthouse window at the view. They had a difficult thought to reason, for having Percival in the hotel could be a reward or a curse.

“Hire him right away, and give him the vintage elevator,” demanded Lyman. Button agreed and concluded that this hire was a great idea. The two evil men conjured a plan to pose as owners of the Blaughvoyon Hotel. Lyman was concerned about his moustache but agreed to play the part of Mr. Blaughvoyon.

Lyman, aware of the slow renovation being done on the 24th floor, repositioned everything to convince the new employee. Meanwhile, Button secured the secret by hiring guards and doorkeepers. He even hired a secretary.

Then, they were ready. Their ultimate objective was to have the new employee kill the ghost, Marie-Louise Chadoir. They confirmed to see that this Dooley never came near their horseshoe, perhaps by some unfortunate accident, similar to his father. Perhaps in an elevator. They practiced foul-play and disassembled brackets and cords within the shaft of an elevator. It crashed perfectly on Percival Dooley’s first day of work.

But they claimed, even to themselves, that they forgot they left the horseshoe hanging on the wall.

Chapter Thirteen: Hotel Indigestion

Anyone who knew Mr. Button Hugenby knew that when he wobbled, he was on a mission, making a straight point to an important destination. He was aiming for Mr. Blaughvoyon's office.

"Permission to fire Percival Dooley, sir!"

Mr. Blaughvoyon questioned Button regarding Percival's accusations.

"All false and lies, sir. Preposterous!" shouted Button.

"If that is true, then, yes, permission granted to fire him. However, direct him to come see me before you fire him. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir," Button asked.

"You'll need to wait until the morning. I sent him home for the day."

Percival was not at home; he was back on the elevator with Herbert, floating to Floor 24. Luellen informed security of Mr. Blaughvoyon's immediate appointment with Percival Dooley and his guest, Herbert.

"I'm goin' with you?" Herbert asked.

"You're stronger than me," Percival admitted. "I'm a bit frightened."

Inside the large empty waiting room outside the penthouse, Luellen and Rex laughed with Ida. Ida danced with her feather duster and guided it to fly.

“So, this is the big man’s penthouse floor. Pretty snazzy,” Herbert exclaimed. “He’s even got a waiting room to enter the penthouse. Wow.”

Percival began to pant and said, “What do we do? Just go in? Just go in there?” He looked at Rex.

“If it’s being renovated, Percy, there shouldn’t be anyone home.” Rex stared back at Percival and added, “I’ll go in first.” He approached the door, and everyone huddled around him. He shook the doorknob. “It’s locked.”

“Get back,” Herbert commanded. He bolted his shoulder into the door. With a boom it popped open. Ida screamed. They all entered in awe of the windows and view of Chicago. A security guard entered the lobby and shouted, “Everything okay? What’s goin’ on in there?”

Marie-Louise appeared and painted a thick French accent: “Oui, Oui, monsieur. I took a fall, and boom.” Meanwhile, Percival took Rex by the arm, around the corner to the horseshoe hanging on the wall. They both stared at it for a long moment. Percival reached for the horseshoe and fit inside his jacket. They notice Ida fluttering her voice and preparing to take off out a windowpane to fly. Rex caught her as she ran, and they both fell to the floor.

“I’m taking her home, and then I’m coming back for Luellen,” Rex said.

“No need to come back, Rex,” Luellen answered. “I’ll go with you and help.”

Percival tried to give Rex the horseshoe to take home, but Rex refused to take it. In seeing the horseshoe, Marie-Louise gasped and whispered, "That's it."

"I don't need its luck right now, but, brother, you do," Rex said. Herbert walked with them to go back to his elevator, leaving Percival and Marie-Louise.

"Where's Braham and Hugenby?" Marie-Louise asked. "If not here, where are they?"

Both Percival and Marie-Louise rushed out of the penthouse and down the hallway. Button Hugenby appeared from a doorway in front of them. Marie-Louise fled as quickly as a blur. Button held out his hand.

"The horseshoe, Dooley."

Dooley stood still. What else could he do? Button lunged towards Percival and was able to pull the horseshoe out of his jacket easily. Percival fought for it, pulling at Button's sleeves and popping Button's head, but he felt he was losing the family charm, losing his father, almost as if he was drowning. Button raised the horseshoe and bashed it onto Percival's head. Into darkness Percival sank and sank. The icy water stung. He frantically pushed himself up to the surface. When he opened his eyes, he was sitting in an elevator. His clothes were twisted. He stared at the floor, trying to remember where he had seen the carpet before, and the long shoes. His eyes traveled up the tall figure of Lyman Braham.

The elevator door was open. Button entered and closed the door. He turned around, and the door began to open from the other side. Herbert climbed on, pausing to see Percival weak with a bloody head.

“He has my horseshoe,” Percival exclaimed in a whisper, the loudest he could give.

“This guy? Hugenby?” Herbert asked. “Our boss?”

Percival felt nothing between him but a floor. A rumble with punches and pushes shook the moving elevator. Percival stood to his feet and his legs wobbled. He swung his arms everywhere, trying to hit his foes, not knowing who he hit.

Percival didn’t remember the elevator stopping, but he noticed, with a pulsing face and swollen lip, he was alone with Lyman. “I understand you made an interesting discovery today.”

“I met”-

“I know, but it doesn’t change anything,” the man said. “She still needs to be destroyed. You still have a job to save the hotel. You understand?” The conversation and the person speaking didn’t harmonize. He panted and felt imprisoned. *Where’s Herbert?*

“You’re a ghost?” Percival managed.

“Yes, I am.”

“Mr. Braham?”

“No.”

“Who are you?” Percival asked.

“Well, yes. My name is Braham. Lyman Braham. Do your job, or Hugenby will have you

killed.”

“Like you killed my father? Where’s his horseshoe?”

“Is that what she told you? *She* killed your father. I begged her to let him in the boat.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Fine. But I didn’t kill him, I just didn’t let him live, now TRAP THE GHOST!” Mr. Braham roared and unfolded his core of hate.

Chills covered Percival, and he looked back at the man. Percival still felt equipped to battle a new unexpected danger. He and the hotel had built closeness. With upheavals and uninvited excitement within its deepest secrets, Percival could soothe it. As the elevator continued to fall, he grasped the lever and stopped the elevator in the middle of Floors 9 and 10.

“Yes, sir,” Percival obeyed, turning his back to him. Percival felt a soft touch come around his neck. Behind him, Lyman strained and moaned. The elevator remained still in the air, with deep air under it. This terrified Percival to the point of wishing he had a potato cake. His neck felt the grip of no more than a scarf. Yet, Lyman was apparently gripping with all his ghostly might. He finally let go and fell to the floor. He gasped for air in long inhales.

“Damn you, . . . Dooley!” In between gasps, he managed, “I . . . can’t . . . breathe!”

Percival didn’t watch him die; he stared at the wall, abhorring being in the elevator with a dying ghost. The gasps grew weaker, but Percival continued to stare at the wall, and could hear the breath clearly. He waited a few minutes after the complete silence before turning and seeing

the physical body of Lyman lying on the elevator floor. Percival finished the elevator one floor up and opened the door to get out, but Herbert came aboard before Percival could get off. He quickly closed the door. He looked down at the lifeless, long body and the twirled moustache, and he looked up at Percival with more shock. Percival's left half of his head was plastered in dried blood, along with his collar. His lip was swollen, and his cheek was bright red, beginning to bloom purple.

"You killed'm?" Herbert asked. His face was red, body stiff, and his lips tight. He glared at Percival as he lit a cigarette. He took a quick, meaningful puff before speaking. "What the hell! Hugenby says I'm fired. I don't even know what the hell happened! And my elevata' is frozen on this floor. I had to walk up seven flights o' stairs in this elevata' attendant get-up. A wise guy on the stairs asked me if I lost my elevata', and I almost slugged'm, Percy. I almost slugged'm. You wanna' walk off the edge of a cliff, don't carry me with ya', pal. Okay? I can't lose another job. I see why you forgot about me," Herbert motioned towards the body, "but ya' gotta think about these things."

"Do you know where the horseshoe is?"

"Hugenby sent Claude to find it. I don't think he ever did. Percy, whata' we gonna' do w' this body?"

Herbert helped Percival pull the body out onto Floor 6. They left it lying on the floor just outside the elevator. Then, they hopped back on the elevator, closed the doors, and headed down to Floor 2.

Chapter Fourteen: Cat Scratches

The horseshoe was gone. Percival looked around the bottom of the shaft and in the pit and found nothing. Hugenby had to have had it. Percival was tired. He was empty-handed and felt poor, impoverished, with no hope. His father was dead, drowned alone, died alone to the bottom of the unforgiving ocean. “My Paps,” he whispered. He still had the task of looking at his mother to say her husband was never coming home. He hated being poor. His poor father worked in the metal factory and told them they were rich, even if they had no money. His affirmations were ignorant; if the Dooleys had money, Michael Dooley would be alive. Percival fell to his knees in defeat beside the shaft pit. His clothes were stained with blood. His left sleeve was torn somehow, and he had a scratch on his arm, which he couldn’t recall its initial appearance. His face throbbed in pain. He was glad of it. The throb understood how he felt, how he saw his life.

He heard footsteps behind him.

“You’re fired,” Button Hugenby said behind him, “and I must confiscate the stolen item of the horseshoe you stole at once. Hand it here.”

Percival stammered to his feet with eyebrows and lips more wrinkled in disgust than Button ever portrayed.

“You have it!” Percival shouted. “You hand it to me! It’s mine!”

Hugenby chuckled a low trillo as if he found the moment pleasant. “So, you lost it again.” His laugh grew louder and pierced Percival’s ears. Percival shouted, mouth fully opened, conveying the oppression his jaws had felt over many years. No confidence exercise was needed

here.

“You murdered Marie-Louise Chadoir. Your friend murdered me Paps.” Percival placed his hand on his chest and added, “They were two loves of me life.”

“Ah, I had forgotten the dame’s name,” Mr. Hugenby claimed. “She’s still floating around here somewhere because you never fulfilled your duty to catch her.”

Mr. Nicholas Blaughvoyon was not a blind man. He knew ghosts lived in his hotel; he knew Percival had found one, the one he had heard about from other guests. He wanted to meet her but never did. He knew to sit in the dark corner of the elevator pit, beside the scratches on the wall and wait. He was there before even Percival. The scratches led him there. They always had since 1912. He noticed the first cat scratch on a hotel door, Floor 12, Room 1271. The next scratch was actually a shred in a pillowcase reported to him by housekeeping, after the body of Marie-Louise was found. Her own arm carried a slight scratch. And the fourth scratch kept his full attention to this day. The back of Button Hugenby’s hand, when he was promoted to be manager, had two deep scratches that formed an “X” in a dark red scab.

“Just a mean cat,” Button answered about it. But the scratches continued, giving Mr. Blaughvoyon clues. Each door of each floor of the crashed elevator carried an “X,” etched in by the claws of a cat.

Mr. Blaughvoyon stood from the dark corner of the pit, startling Percival and Button.

“You both failed to fulfill your duties, and the ghosts of Blaughvoyon Hotel led you astray.” He spoke like a doctor over the sickly hotel, finding the germ, and he was preparing to give the cure, flushing out the illness. “Button Hugenby, you’re not only fired, but you will also find authority waiting for you just out the back employee doors to arrest you for the murder of Marie-Louise Chadoir. Other mysteries of the hotel are also being investigated, and I imagine you will be found the culprit. Off you go.”

“Sir,” Button began with the strangest condescending look to Mr. Blaughvoyon, “with the Union, I have defense attorneys at my disposal”-

Button’s insults were interrupted by a long, low meow. A cat was obviously nearby, but no one could see it. Button cleared his throat and continued, “And if the Union doesn’t destroy you, the stock market crash will.” He laughed and waltzed to the back door where police officers stood. “Hello, officers.” The back door slammed shut.

“Percival Dooley,” Mr. Blaughvoyon said, “you have a room reserved on Floor 7, Room 720, with a suit hanging for you after you get cleaned up. Go up immediately. Then, I don’t know. We will speak again.”

“Sir, I’m missing”-

“A horseshoe. I know. I know nothing of its whereabouts.” He turned to walked down the hallway, paused, and turned to Percival to share, “Can you believe it? A cat, for crying out loud.” Mr. Blaughvoyon resumed walking away.

Chapter Fifteen: Freedom and Dying

Percival wore a dark blue suit with a Windsor tie tucked behind a blue vest. The fedora revealed his smaller than average head, so he wore his own. Percival stared at himself for several minutes in the mirror. He was impressed, but he couldn't smile. Considering the depths of his angst and sadness throughout the day, his own elation tried to poke light through the gloom he carried. He knew it tried. He also knew his brother was anticipating his arrival with a piece of his father's life in his hand. How he had wanted to carry it into their home triumphantly. He imagined his mother's face upon beholding the horseshoe. He imagined her tears, but a feeling of completion in her unclosed wonders. She'd be given understanding. But he had nothing, and today, he would go home like any other day, with nothing more. He would continue to see his mother's puffy eyes glare out the window as if maybe this time, she'd see Michael. But no, nothing, and she'd look back down and try to continue her life, wondering if maybe he'd be home in a minute.

"He'll be by me side when I awake," she used to say. The next morning, after morning, after morning, she opened her eyes to his empty fluffy pillow.

"He'll be home to lie by me before the day ends," she used to say. Percival and Rex bade her goodnight and goodnight and goodnight as she walked into the dark bedroom alone.

Thoughts of love brought wonder to Percival about what happened to Marie-Louise. Did she now have closure which helped her exit the hotel and be free in her death? She was gone. A small

window in the room showed Lake Michigan reflecting the sky trying to close the day. The sun wasn't bright anymore. *Perhaps Mum will beam at my debonair look*, he thought.

As he opened the hotel door to leave, he noticed a housekeeping cart abandoned beside an open door to a hotel room across the hallway. No lights shone from the doorway, except two bright dots towards the floor. Percival closed the door behind him, and his eyes rested curiously on the two dots. The calico cat strutted out of the dark and into the lighted hallway. A staring moment was shared. Just as Percival was on the brink of deducing the stare into important communication, the cat stood up and turned to flee.

"Wait, cat!" Percival followed the cat. It stopped and looked behind at Percival as if to say, "Come along." The cat squeezed through a cracked-open door into a mechanical room, continuing to strut, knowing its location. Percival followed the cat through the room. The cat stopped at a closed door, looked at Percival, and gave a "mew." Percival looked through the small window and saw a large empty ballroom, brightened by the city's dusk. He entered the room to find the ghost—the lady, or "the painting," as Percival saw her.

"I'm so glad my cat found you," her voice danced softly.

Percival didn't take a step forward yet, but he had plans to as soon as he remembered how to.

"This ballroom is really nice," Percival offered. Surprisingly to Percival, tears fell down his cheeks.

"Yes," she answered. "It's been this way since— well, for a long time." Curiosity arose within Percival and he moved towards her.

The notion reoccurred that she wasn't really a ghost until she said, "It's time for me to leave."

Percival shook his head and pleaded, "Please, please don't leave me."

Ignoring him, she added, "I'd like for you to take me outside. Outside the front door."

"You'll suffocate."

"Yes."

Finally, while staring, she spoke: "Percy, you look like your father."

She reached into her portmanteau and pulled out the horseshoe. As they both held it for a moment, Percival swam in a stare at Marie-Louise. Hurt and dread, anger and despair filled Percival's chest. He stared at Marie-Louise because in her ivory eyes he was safe. He wished he could set her free. Staring at her was staring at peace. Percival couldn't see how the freedom of outside could be suffocating, or how this air that had wrapped around the both of them with a silent dance could not fill her lungs with life.

"Hey, me boy! Me brave Irish boy!" the deep voice of Michael Dooley resounded and startled Percival. He gripped the horseshoe and placed it in his pocket.

With his low Dooley voice, he said, "Marie-Louise, I love you."

Music played. A harp and an accordion harmonized and filled the air with no sight of either. Percival stood and pulled Marie-Louise up to dance with him. She placed her dainty arm upon

his chest, and Percival saw a pool of sadness in her staring ivory eyes. She must have hurt for him, and he was certain she loved him, too. They embraced for a dance. As Percival placed his arms around her, he noticed Marie-Louise's body was cloud-like, and his hand and arm sunk slightly deeper before connecting to an embrace. There still wasn't a solid of a body, but there was something real. Something definite.

A thousand thoughts of his father swirled in a thousand different directions, and he cried with the sides of their faces touching. They swayed, and the air was lighter. And full, too. Full of the blooms of air particles seeded and rooted thousands of years ago for the whole purpose of enveloping this couple the moment they would stand together, dance together, inhaling the breath of love and being caressed by the touch of serenity. They moved to the motion of the hotel's heartbeat, standing in the core of its heart.

"You are the loveliest woman I've ever met in my life. I've never been in a ballroom like this before either. We don't have these in Southside Chicago. Well, maybe, but none that I've ever seen." The small talk helped Percival to keep his senses. He had an overload of information. The music that played within the heart faded.

They spoke of being trapped and dying and being given freedom and dying. Traps are temporary. Vast expanses give freedom to die in, like the vast expanse of the ocean. In freedom, she'd die. Percival held her hand as they approached the large giant front doors of the hotel. A doorman opened one for them, but they stood still and stared out. Marie-Louise led Percival beyond the threshold, into the courtyard. Marie-Louise took Percival's arm as they continued to walk out the gate, onto North Michigan Avenue. Streetlights were already declaring the end of the

day and brightened the street. Automobiles and people passed, going along with their day. Passersby gazed admiringly at the hotel's surface, its adorned outer skin. Percival saw Marie-Louise gasping for breath, so he picked her up and held her. She reached for his face and kissed him. She then stretched her head back and was still. Her hat fell off and raced away with the wind. Her hair blew, and within seconds, she morphed into dust and blew away. Percival looked down the busy Chicago street. How would he manage to ever go into Blaughvoyon Hotel again? It was a world which existed without the one he loved. Maybe he'd find a new world. He placed his hands in his pockets and felt the horseshoe. Steps required more strength with a heart weighing distractingly heavier.

Percival thought of his mother.

Chapter Sixteen: The Importance of a Strong Arm

Percival walked home in his fancy suit. He stopped by Trouers Towers and learned Rex didn't go into work that night. He continued walking under the beams of streetlights, closer to home. He felt strange in his get-up as he came closer to the clutter of mazes of homes, the puddles of mud, the stares. His new shoes began to collect dust and dirt, and he was happy for it.

He open the door into the kitchen where Mums was standing, beaming.

"Oh, me boy! What a dappa' dandy you are!" she spoke in her low voice and hugged him. "Were you already promoted? If your Papa could see you now." Rex came into the kitchen with a curious look, staring at Percival. Percival knew what he wondered, so he nodded his head at Rex and smiled.

"Mums," Percival began, and Mrs. Dooley interrupted him a million times before he brought out the horseshoe for her to see. She was then quiet and stared at it. She embraced the horesshoe in her hands, crying and kissing it. Percival shared with his mother that her husband perished in the wreck of the Titanic. Percival, Rex, and Mums shared the time, passing the horseshoe around and discussing the horrors of Michael Dooley's death. They wept and laughed and shared how Paps would have really handled things at the hotel, "with a crack o' the hid, I tell ya' that!" Mrs. Dooley exclaimed.

Mrs. Dooley tried to brighten the moment.

“Rex here tells me ye’ met a lady?” She smiled big at Percival with her puffy face, beady tear-soaked eyes, and crooked teeth.

“I loved her, but she’s gone,” he answered and smiled. “But it’s fine, Mums.”

“That’s nice,” Mrs. Dooley stared at her son.

He slid the horseshoe to her. She hugged and kissed it more.

“We have to give it back to him.”

Herbert helped Percival plan a bus trip to the eastern coast.

“You won’t be close enough to my hometown, but that’s okay. If’ ya’ see a Downey, tell’m I said hello.” The Dooleys decided to travel in a straight line going east until they hit the ocean. They planned for their stop to be Westport, Massachusetts. This distance was all they had money for, and it practically make a straight line from Chicago to Westport, straight across the states. Mr. Blaughvoyon agreed to give Percival an advance in payment plus a bonus for assurance that Percival wouldn’t file a lawsuit against the hotel.

“You got family willing to let us stay with ‘em?” Percival asked Herbert.

“My family’s in Jersey, yeah. But no offense, Percy, but they ain’t lettin’ no Irish family in their house. I’m sorry, my friend. They don’t know you like I do, okay?”

From bus station to bus station, Percy, Rex, and Mrs. Dooley traveled east. If Mrs. Dooley saw the sun to the right of left of the bus, she’d shout to the driver, “Excuse me, are we still

east?" She also asked several times, "Whose got the horseshoe? You remembered the horseshoe, didn't ya', boys?" They also had a couple of delays that gave them time to eat and wait in the bus stations.

The massive expanse of the ocean was difficult to grasp. A wind from the ocean caused them to all take off their hats. Rex and Percival helped their mother through the rocky shore to meet their feet at the end of the water.

"The last time me saw this ocean, I was wed to your father. We came over in 1899." She stared out and laughed a bit. "We had the best time, the two of us!" She stood on a nearby boulder. "Michael!" she shouted. "Michael Dooley, it's your beloved and trothed!" She cried for a small moment and regained her composure. "It's Lena, me love. We found your horseshoe, and we here to give it back to ya', because Michael, I am sorry, so sorry you don't have it. And me loves you! So, now you rest." She stared out at the ocean for a moment.

Percival had the horseshoe and climbed the boulder with his mother to throw the horseshoe out into the deep.

"Love ya' Paps," Percival and Rex shouted. Percival reared back, and it's possible that Percival hadn't practiced throwing for some time, for the horseshoe landed on another rock just a few yards away. Mrs. Dooley and Rex glare at Percival.

"You're an idiot," Mrs. Dooley proclaimed.

"You have a weak arm. Did you never carry a suitcase at work?" Rex argued.

“I haven’t been practicing. It’s not like I’m a Chicago Cub,” Percival stated.

“’Twas downright embarrassing,” Mrs. Dooley said.

“Have you ever in your life thrown anything?” Rex continued.

“I’ll try again. Let me”-

Both Rex and Mrs. Dooley interrupted him with objections. Rex recovered the horseshoe and walked out further. He stood for a moment, ankle-deep in the water. He stared down at the horseshoe and just as he reared back to throw it, Percival shouted, “Love you, Paps!” Rex turned around at Percival.

“You’re trying to throw me off, ain’t ya’!”

“I’m sorry,” Percival answered.

“Shuttup, Percy!” Mrs. Dooley exclaimed. Rex threw the horseshoe with a much stronger arm than Percival conveyed. The horseshoe dove into the deep waters and was gone. Staring at the ocean anymore gave them a cold, dull feeling. They embraced one another.

“There,” Mrs. Dooley replied. “I want to go home.” Her sons felt the same need. They headed west to new knowledge and understanding, to memories of those they loved finding completion in the wide open, even on the busy streets of Chicago.

Particularly Percy. He was a brave warrior who experienced love. Consequently, he had an extraordinary craving for some potato cakes. He hadn’t enjoyed one in ages.

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