

DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEATRE:  
THE BLACK STONE

Written by

Sean Branney and Andrew Leman

Based on "The Black Stone" by Robert E. Howard

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Read-Along Script

SFX: static, radio tuning, snippet of '30s song, more tuning, static dissolves to:

Dark Adventure Radio THEME MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER

Tales of intrigue, adventure, and the mysterious occult that will stir your imagination and make your very blood run cold.

MUSIC CRESCENDO.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

This is Dark Adventure Radio Theatre, featuring your host, Lester Mayhew. Today's episode: "The Black Stone" -- a tale of spectral horrors by Robert E. Howard.

A HINT OF BERLIN CABARET MUSIC segues into something creepier and more menacing.

LESTER MAYHEW

In the wake of the War to End All Wars, young Charlie Tower drowns his sorrows and numbs his pain with the countless licentious pleasures of Berlin. The acquisition of a strange book leads him to a monolith in the remote mountains of Hungary - shrouded in ancient curses. Is the fabled Black Stone a creation of superstitious peasants, or is it a nexus for hideous gods of the ancient world to set foot into ours?

But first, a word from our sponsor.

SPONSOR JINGLE

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

Some women just have it. You know what I mean. That twinkle in their eye that says "I can provide you with an experience you'll never forget". Such women are the prize of dotting husbands, the goal of handsome suitors, and the envy of spinsters everywhere.

(MORE)

## LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

But how do they set themselves apart from the common and everyday? What gives them the edge over other women -- conventional women? The answer is simple, my friends: Bon Voyage Salad Dressing. Never before has the home cook had access to a salad dressing created by master French chefs. No other brand can match its panache, savoir faire and je ne sais quoi. Seize control of your home and table with a bottle of Bon Voyage - the salad sensation no man can resist!

## ANNOUNCER

Bon Voyage - set sail for your glamorous adventure in salad.

## LESTER MAYHEW

And now, Dark Adventure Radio Theatre presents "The Black Stone".

A maudlin violin solo segues into avante garde cabaret music.

## LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

It is the summer of 1919. The war has been over for months, but in Europe casualties still abound. The maimed, the mad and the otherwise broken seek solace wherever it can be found, and no city in Europe can anesthetize pain like Berlin. Its notorious nightlife offers an intoxicating balm to a world traumatized by war. And no refuge in the city is more decadent and depraved than the Heaven and Hell club.

2

## HEAVEN AND HELL

2

Heaven and Hell is Berlin's most decadent nightclub; while one part is done up in an angelic motif, we're in a dark corner of hell. A BURLESQUE COMEDY ROUTINE unfolds in the background.

## LESTER MAYHEW

In the wings behind the cabaret stage, the mysterious Hungarian Kasimir Bartok approaches one of the artistes....

KASIMIR

Felix, ja? Sprechen sie Ungarisch?  
(Do you speak Hungarian?)

\*  
\*

FELIX

Nein, mein herr.

KASIMIR

Ah. English, then, I hope?

FELIX

(reluctantly)  
Ja, I can speak English.

KASIMIR

Excellent. Your act tonight, you  
will recite poetry, yes? I would  
like to hear a very specific poem.

FELIX

I don't take requests. I recite my  
own poems.

KASIMIR

Ah yes, and a great poet you are.  
Great enough to read the work of  
another, surely?

FELIX

Why should I?

KASIMIR

You live in Helmstedter Strasse,  
ja? Number 23C?

FELIX

(concerned)  
Ja, but how do you--

KASIMIR

Knowing things is my business. You  
have a lovely flat. Such a shame if  
something unfortunate were to  
happen there.

FELIX

You threaten me?

KASIMIR

No, no! But these are... uncertain  
times, are they not? No, I wish  
only to help you, my friend. I will  
gladly pay to hear the poem of my  
choosing.

FELIX

Pay?

KASIMIR

Let us say double your usual take  
for the night?

(handing him some cash)

Half now. Go ahead, take it. And  
after, you collect the other half  
and go safely to your lovely home,  
and your lovely wife, Lena. For her  
sake, how can you say no?

FELIX

Ungarisches Schwein. (Hungarian  
swine.) I say yes.

\*  
\*

KASIMIR

Excellent. Here is poem. You can  
look at.

The RUSTLING OF PAPER.

FELIX

(reading)

"People of the monolith"?

KASIMIR

Yes, just so. You see young man,  
tall and dark, at the front table  
of Hell? With my beautiful lady  
friend?

FELIX

Ja. A professional friend.

KASIMIR

Mmm, yes. It is most important that  
he should hear this poem. Tonight  
he is your audience.

FELIX

He looks American. Who is he?

KASIMIR

Oh, he is nobody... yet. But he has  
potential. His name is Tower.  
Charlie Tower.

FELIX

And who are you?

KASIMIR

Your benefactor. Go now and  
prepare.

A whip CRACKS, followed by a SQUEAL, a SLAP on someone's ass,  
LAUGHTER, a RIMSHOT and applause.

KASIMIR (CONT'D)

What is German good luck saying?  
Hals und Beinbruch? Break your leg  
and neck!

Across the club, USCHI, a professional partier in cahoots  
with Kasimir, hangs on Charlie's arm. It's late; they're  
pretty drunk. Jörg, the MC, takes the stage.

JÖRG

(through mic)  
Meine dammen und herren, eine Runde  
Applaus für "The Imps of the  
Perverse!"

The crowd gives around of late night drunken APPLAUSE.

USCHI

(drunk)  
Droll, Charlie, no?

CHARLIE

Yeah, yeah, it's alright... I  
guess. If you've slapped one naked  
ass you've slapped 'em all. I could  
go for something fresher, Lulu,  
something more--

USCHI

Who's Lulu? I'm Uschi.

CHARLIE

She was last night.

USCHI

Not funny, Charlie. You should  
learn from the show.

CHARLIE

Right. Who's that girl on the  
violin? She was the most  
interesting thing on that stage.

USCHI

Oh, Marlene? Yes, she's wonderful.  
One day she'll be a star, I know  
it.

CHARLIE

She's quite a looker. Call her over! I'll buy her a drink.

USCHI

She's too young for you.

CHARLIE

(calling out)  
Hey you, violin girl!  
(to Uschi)  
What's her name?

USCHI

Marlene Dietrich.

CHARLIE

(calling out)  
Marlene!

There is a GRUMPY PATRON at the next table who does not like Charlie's manners.

GRUMPY PATRON

Halts Maul, du amerikanischer  
Depp! (Shut up, you American  
douchebag!)

\*  
\*

CHARLIE

Relax, pal. Have a drink on me.  
(calling out again)  
Fritz, get this man a drink!  
Marlene!

JÖRG

(at mic)  
Und jetzt, direkt aus dem chat  
Noir in Paris, Kate Kühl singt:  
„Raus mit den Männern“. (And now,  
direct from the Black Cat in Paris,  
Kate Kühl sings "Out with the Men".

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

KATE, in classic cabaret style, sings, backed by accordion and drums (or something). The crowd LAUGHS and APPLAUDS as the song goes on in the background.

The first verse fades down as Marlene walks up to Charlie's table. She's only 17, but already has the confidence and sex appeal that will make her a legend.

MARLENE

You wanted to buy me a drink?

CHARLIE

Yeah, darling. Pull up a chair,  
have some schnapps with me.

MARLENE

(with a theatrical sigh)  
I don't drink schnapps and you're  
not really my type.

CHARLIE

No? What do you drink?

MARLENE

I drink champagne. Only champagne.

CHARLIE

I'll bet you do. Hey Fritz!

Jörg steps up to the table.

JÖRG

(patiently)  
Ja, mein herr?

CHARLIE

(obnoxious)  
Hey, Fritz, bring over a bottle of  
champagne.

MARLENE

His name is Jörg, you know.

USCHI

I've been telling him that all  
night.

MARLENE

You might get a better response if  
you could ask in the right  
language.

CHARLIE

Yeah? How do I do that?

MARLENE

Jörg, Liebling, bring uns bitte  
eine Flasche exzellenten  
Champagner. (Jörg, darling, please  
bring us a bottle of your finest  
Champagne.)

\*  
\*  
\*

JÖRG

Gerne, Fräulein Dietrich. (With  
pleasure, Miss Dietrich.)

\*  
\*

He goes.

CHARLIE  
(badly imitating her  
German)  
Bringen-sie der exzellenten  
champagner.

\*

MARLENE  
You're terrible.

CHARLIE  
Let me order a few more, I'll get  
the hang of it before sunrise.

The SONG goes on in the background.

MARLENE  
(chuckling)  
Well, aren't you Mr. Good Time  
Charlie?

CHARLIE  
That's me! I gotta tell you, toots,  
you're lost up there playing the  
violin. You've got "it". A face  
like yours, I'm telling you, you  
should be in pictures.

MARLENE  
Pictures? I'm still in school!

CHARLIE  
School...meh! Forget about school.  
I've got friends out in Hollywood--

MARLENE  
Is he always like this?

USCHI  
So far.

MARLENE  
What's your name, Liebling?

USCHI  
Uschi.

Jörg approaches with the bubbly.

JÖRG  
And here you are, Herr Tower.  
Marlene.

CHARLIE

Ah, Fritz--

MARLENE AND USCHI

Jörg!

CHARLIE

Jörg, just in the nick of time.

He POPS THE CORK and POURS.

JÖRG

Zum Wohl, mein Herr und die Damen.  
(Cheers, ladies and gentleman.)

\*

\*

CHARLIE

(drinking)

Ah, that is good. Exzellenten!

\*

MARLENE

Don't hold your glass like a  
peasant. You should touch only the  
stem. Like this, you see? This way  
your hand doesn't warm the  
champagne.

CHARLIE

Got it. Mmm, I could get used to  
this stuff!

Kate continues SINGING in the background.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

So what's she on about?

USCHI

(giggling a little)

The song is... how would you say  
it...

MARLENE

"Chuck Out The Men".

CHARLIE

How's that?

USCHI

The song says men just fight and  
ruin the world.

CHARLIE

Ha. I won't argue that.

MARLENE

Any good men do, women can do it better.

CHARLIE

Well, now, but what about this?

The sound of a SMOOCH as Charlie kisses Marlene.

MARLENE

Not too bad. But Uschi, darling, let's show him, shall we? Come here to me.

Marlene lays the hottest, wettest kiss imaginable on Uschi. It goes on an uncomfortably long time.

CHARLIE

(sotto voce)

Ah... I get it.

MARLENE

(amused)

Poor Mr. Good Time Charlie!

The women LAUGH. Kate's SONG ENDS. Audience APPLAUSE.

CHARLIE

There's something wrong with this glass. It's empty!

(shouting)

Garçon! Hey, Fritz! I mean Jörg!

GRUMPY PATRON

Halts Maul! (Shut up!)

\*

CHARLIE

Yeah, yeah...

JÖRG

Ja, Herr Tower?

CHARLIE

Bring uns champagners... more!

JÖRG

A moment - first I must introduce our next act.

He goes. The grumpy patron at the next table leans over.

GRUMPY PATRON

Dein Freund ist ein Arschloch.  
(Your friend is an asshole.)

\*

\*

MARLENE

Du kannst mich mal gern haben!  
(Bite me!)

\*  
\*

JÖRG

(into microphone)

Und nun, meine lieben, verdammten  
Bewohner der Hölle, dürfen wir  
unsere eigenen Dämon der Poesie  
präsentieren, den unschlagbaren,  
Felix! (And now, my dear, damned  
denizens of hell, may we present  
our own Demon of Poetry, the  
unbeatable, Felix!)

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

USCHI

I think you will like this next  
act, Charlie. Listen! It's poetry!

CHARLIE

(skeptical)  
Poetry?

MARLENE

Felix is very good.

The crowd SNAPS ITS FINGERS appreciatively. A weird note SCREECHES out of a clarinet. A quick phrase of BONGO DRUMMING. The two instruments periodically underscore the poem in a very Bohemian manner. His reading is weird, androgynous and decidedly sinister.

FELIX

(through mic)

"People of the Monolith" by Justin  
Geoffrey.

(clears throat)

There came to me a Man one summer  
night,  
When all the world lay silent in  
the stars,  
And moonlight crossed my room with  
ghostly bars.  
He whispered hints of weird,  
unhallowed sight;  
I followed - then in waves of  
spectral light  
Mounted the shimmery ladders of my  
soul  
Where moon-pale spiders, huge as  
dragons, stole -  
Great forms like moths, with wings  
of wispy white.

(MORE)

## FELIX (CONT'D)

Around the world the sighing of the  
 loon  
 Shook misty lakes beneath the false-  
 dawn's gleams;  
 Rose-tinted shone the skyline's  
 minaret;  
 I rose in fear, and then with blood  
 and sweat  
 Beat out the iron fabrics of my  
 dreams,  
 And shaped of them a web to snare  
 the moon.  
 Against this blood red moon a tower  
 stands;  
 An everlasting silence haunts the  
 place.  
 It was not reared by any human  
 hands,  
 The silent symbol of a shadowy  
 race.  
 There, long ago, I stole through  
 ancient night,  
 My footsteps woke strange echoes  
 through the hour;  
 Strange specters walked with me  
 through mazy light.  
 I left my soul, a ghost to haunt  
 the tower.  
 They say foul things of Old Times  
 still lurk in dark forgotten  
 corners of the world. And Gates  
 still gape to loose, on certain  
 nights, shapes pent in Hell.

BONGO and CLARINET FLOURISH. NERVOUS APPLAUSE.

## FELIX (CONT'D)

Danke sehr. I hope you enjoyed.

APPLAUSE FADES as more musicians TUNE UP DISCORDANTLY in the background.

## CHARLIE

Well you were right, Marlene. That was creepy as hell. It's like he was talking right to me.

## USCHI

And here we are in the hell club. And you are a tower, just like in the poem!

## CHARLIE

Yeah yeah, I get it. Good poem.

MARLENE

And very unusual for him.

CHARLIE

(calling out)

Nice poem, Felix!

MIXED CROWD MUMBLING. Some agree, some do not.

FELIX

(dismissive)

Ja, ja. Danke.

USCHI

He went mad you know.

CHARLIE

Who, this guy?

USCHI

No, the poet. Justin Geoffrey.

CHARLIE

(loudly, directed at

Grumpy Patron)

Figures, everyone else around  
here's crazy.

USCHI

He was an American too. He died in  
a madhouse a few years--

GRUMPY PATRON

(very annoyed)

Hast du gesagt ich wäre verrückt?  
(Are you calling me crazy?)

\*

\*

CHARLIE

What's that pal?

GRUMPY PATRON

(crazy, in thickly  
accented English)

You call me crazy?

CHARLIE

Relax! Have another--

GRUMPY PATRON

You like poem?

CHARLIE

What? Yeah, as a matter of fact I  
thought it was great!

The SCRAPE OF A CHAIR as the drunken Grumpy Patron gets up.  
Crowd HUBBUB.

GRUMPY PATRON

Then you are crazy! That is crazy  
poem!

USCHI

Hey!

FELIX

I didn't write it!

CHARLIE

Here we go! You want to take a  
swing at me? Show me what you've  
got!

GRUMPY PATRON

Amerikanischer idiot!

Glasses fly as the table's thrown aside and Grumpy Patron  
goes at Charlie. Uschi SCREAMS. Yelling!

MARLENE

Raus mit den Männern!

Musicians scramble, punches fly and there's a RAUCOUS BAR  
FIGHT! MUSIC! Things break!

MARLENE (CONT'D)

Felix, Pass auf! (Look out!)

\*

A big piece of furniture SMASHES over poor Felix.

FELIX

(in agony)

Aaaah my leg! Es ist gebrochen! You  
broke it!

The wild rumpus fades into transition MUSIC that leads us  
into...

3

THE HANGOVER

3

Early morning URBAN TRAFFIC and the sound of a CAPPUCCHINO  
MAKER.

LESTER MAYHEW

Just a few hours later, Charlie found himself alone, nursing a hangover and a shiner over coffee at a café in Auguste-Viktoria-Platz.

KASIMIR

(off)

The dog has buried his bone!

CHARLIE

What?

KASIMIR

Can it be? Charlie? My old friend Charlie Tower?

CHARLIE

Sorry, but--

KASIMIR

It is I! Kasimir Bartok? You remember! From--

CHARLIE

Istanbul. Sure, sure, how could I forget my favorite Hungarian spy?  
(piecing it together)  
"The dog has buried his bone". You and your crazy codes from the war. Haven't heard those in a while. Here, have a seat.

KASIMIR

Such a surprise - you here in Berlin of all places. I thought after what happened you'd hurry home to New York.

CHARLIE

I wasn't quite ready to head back state-side just yet.

KASIMIR

It is true? ...your father...

CHARLIE

Yeah. It's true. The old man kicked the bucket.

KASIMIR

I'm sorry. Very difficult, what with his business empire and all. I trust all such matters are in hand?

CHARLIE

(unconvincing)

Yeah. It's... complicated. There's lawyers... other people can handle it. I'm tired.

KASIMIR

(with a half-hearted chuckle)

Pardon my observing, my old friend, but you are not looking so... how do you say... big eyed and bushy tailed.

CHARLIE

(wry)

Yeah. More like black-eyed and draggle-tailed. And I never realized champagne had such a kick. I wound up the night trading punches with some cranky kraut at a club. Over a poem! Would you believe that?

KASIMIR

That must have been some poem! What was it?

CHARLIE

Oh it was... didn't really catch the title, some weird thing about a monolith.

KASIMIR

Hmmm. I never heard of such poem. Do you recall any of the lines?

CHARLIE

I've got it right here. I bought it off the poet after he broke his leg last night.

(pulls it from his jacket pocket)

"They say foul things of Old Times still lurk in dark forgotten corners of the world. And Gates still gape to loose, on certain nights, shapes pent in Hell."

KASIMIR  
Ah yes, most striking.

CHARLIE  
(contemplative)  
Yeah.

A brief moment of silence as they both remember the scary stuff they've seen.

KASIMIR  
You should write, Charlie. Get it out of your system.

CHARLIE  
Me? Ha! I'm no poet.

KASIMIR  
But stories! With the life you've lived, and all this new free time, you could write tales of intrigue, adventure, occult mystery. Be the next Hanns Heinz Ewers!

CHARLIE  
I don't know, Kasimir, that sounds a lot like work. Besides, that's all mumbo jumbo kid stuff. Who in America is going to publish a bunch of weird tales?

KASIMIR  
Mumbo jumbo? You and I both know it is not.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, still--

KASIMIR  
Come. You want to see who will publish? I will show you. You remember the bookseller at the bazaar in Istanbul?

CHARLIE  
How could I forget him? With the one eye and the forbidden--

KASIMIR  
Exactly. I have found one like him here. His shop is most interesting. I take you there.

CHARLIE  
Thanks, Kasimir, but I--

KASIMIR  
(laughing)  
Come! You will like it. Is best  
cure for hangover!

OMINOUS transition MUSIC.

4

UNSPEAKABLE CULTS

4

LESTER MAYHEW  
Kasimir led Charlie through the  
streets of the Kurfürstendamm to a  
small, dark shop where cryptic  
books were packed onto shelves and  
stacked from floor to ceiling.

We hear the creak of a closing door and the tinkling of a  
shop bell in a small book shop. The elderly owner, HERR  
FRENZEL, shuffles forward.

HERR FRENZEL  
Herr Bartok, willkommen. Es ist  
eine Freude Sie wieder zu sehen.  
(It is a pleasure to see you  
again.)

\*  
\*  
\*

KASIMIR  
Herr Frenzel! Please to meet my  
American friend, Charlie.

HERR FRENZEL  
Guten morgen, mein Herr.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, hello.

KASIMIR  
I wanted to show Charlie the latest  
issue of Der Orchideengarten. You  
have it, I trust?

HERR FRENZEL  
Ja, of course.

Some SHUFFLING as Frenzel produces a magazine.

HERR FRENZEL (CONT'D)  
It is here.

CHARLIE  
What's this now?

KASIMIR  
"The Garden of Orchids". A new magazine of the fantastical and macabre. Is publishing since January.

PAGES FLIPPING.

CHARLIE  
(surprised)  
Well the artwork is certainly fantastic. These are some big names.

KASIMIR  
You see?

HERR FRENZEL  
Please do look around. I have much to offer to a man of taste. Many old and rare...

CHARLIE  
Yeah, this place is pretty great. I had a professor back at Miskatonic. He would have--

MUSIC HIT

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Say, what's that book? Back behind the counter?

KASIMIR  
What? Which one? This?

CHARLIE  
No, that one, there, the black one with the rusty hasps...

HERR FRENZEL  
(theatrically)  
Das schwarze buch?

CHARLIE  
Yeah. What is it?

HERR FRENZEL  
Of all the rarities I have, this is the most rare.

(MORE)

HERR FRENZEL (CONT'D)

*Von Unaussprechlichen Kulten* von  
von Junzt.

KASIMIR

That would be "Nameless Cults" in  
the English, yes?

HERR FRENZEL

Or perhaps "Unspeakable Cults".  
Many just call it "The Black Book".  
This is the original edition,  
published in Dusseldorf in 1839.  
There are perhaps six copies left  
in the world.

CHARLIE

Why so rare? That's only like  
eighty years old.

HERR FRENZEL

The first printing was small, and  
when Von Juntz died in... how would  
you say...

(in German)

...seltsam und gruselig?

KASIMIR

Mm, strange, grisly.

HERR FRENZEL

Yes, in this way, men who owned  
this book would burn them to avoid  
the same fate.

CHARLIE

(with a chuckle)

Strange and grisly, eh? How did he  
die?

HERR FRENZEL

(very serious)

It is said he was found in locked  
room, with the marks of... krallen  
at his throat.

KASIMIR

Talons. Maybe claws. You must be a  
brave man, Herr Frenzel, to possess  
such a thing.

HERR FRENZEL

Many are afraid to buy. For them  
there is pirate English edition--

KASIMIR

The Bridewall edition, no?

HERR FRENZEL

Ja. Of 1845. A poor translation.  
And later the Golden Goblin  
edition, New York, 1909.

KASIMIR

But it is expurgated. Useless! A  
pale imitation of this original.

CHARLIE

(beginning to catch on)  
You don't say.

KASIMIR

Only this original contains the  
true key to ancient mysteries.

HERR FRENZEL

It would be the greatest prize for  
any collector. If he was not  
afraid.

CHARLIE

I'm sure you guys are right. But  
it'd be wasted on me. I can barely  
order a drink in German. I  
certainly couldn't read a book like  
this.

HERR FRENZEL

You are young, and to learn German  
is not such--

CHARLIE

I don't know... If only I had a  
friend who could read it for me....

KASIMIR

Who, me? Oh, Charlie, this is most  
dangerous. The contents of this  
book have driven men to madness. To  
read this book would be to risk my  
very soul. But okay. For you, my  
good friend, I will do it. I will  
read this book and tell you what it  
says.

CHARLIE

I thought you might.

Charlie begins to laugh. Kasimir joins in. Then Herr Frenzel.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You haven't changed, Kasimir. I should know better than to trust a spy.

(to Herr Frenzel)

How much do you want for it?

HERR FRENZEL

(meekly)

Vierundfünfzigtausendfünfhundert mark!

CHARLIE

(after a beat)

Now that's unspeakable.

HERR FRENZEL

I'm sorry, mein Herr, but the inflation. The mark buys less every day.

CHARLIE

How much is that? In real money. Write it down.

SCRIBBLE.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Wow. That's not cheap.

HERR FRENZEL

It is impossibly rare, mein Herr - ein Kernstück der okkulten... (It's a key to the occult...)

\*

\*

KASIMIR

Six copies in the world, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I'd have to wire the lawyers....

KASIMIR

It will surely be the most remarkable item in your collection.

CHARLIE

That's true. But still...

HERR FRENZEL

And I know a woman - of French family living in Vienna - she has unique connections to von Junzt. She knows many secrets. Buy the book and I will introduce you.

CHARLIE  
Really? That is intriguing.

KASIMIR  
Yes, Charlie. You've licked your war wounds long enough. Let us go to Vienna!

CHARLIE  
All right, what the hell! Lawyers be damned, I think this will be fun!

MUSIC.

5 CLAUDINE LADEAU

5

LESTER MAYHEW  
After a week of making arrangements, Charlie and Kasimir boarded a Prussian State Railway train and traveled into Cisleithania to arrive in the capital of the newly formed Republic of German-Austria. There, they made their way to a palatial art nouveau residence.

THE WHISTLE OF A STEAM TRAIN. MUSIC, perhaps a zither. Viennese STREET SOUNDS. Rain.

CHARLIE  
Wow. Nice joint.

KASIMIR  
(a little nervous)  
Ja, the schloss of the family de Nevers.

CHARLIE  
You going to ring the bell?

KASIMIR  
Yes. I will ring it.

He doesn't.

CHARLIE  
Well?

KASIMIR  
Charlie...

CHARLIE

Here, I'll do it. What's wrong with you?

He rings a BELL. It ECHOES inside the impressive Austrian palace at the other side of the door.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

She's expecting us, right? Frenzel sent her a letter or something, didn't he?

KASIMIR

Not...

The massive door SWINGS OPEN.

GUIDO

Guten Abend. Sie wünschen?  
(Good evening. May I help you?)

\*  
\*

KASIMIR

Hallo. Wir möchte Fräulein--  
(We want Miss--)

\*  
\*

CLAUDINE is a woman of 60. Her accent sounds like a female Arnold Schwarzenegger.

CLAUDINE

(approaching)  
Guido Wer ist da? Ich erwarte  
niemanden-- (Guido, who's there?  
I'm not expecting anyone--)  
(a slight gasp)  
Nein. Kasimir Bartok?

\*  
\*

KASIMIR

(really sheepish)  
Hello, Claudine.

Pause. RAIN.

CLAUDINE

Do you remember the last time I saw you?

KASIMIR

How could I forget?

CLAUDINE

Do you remember the last words I spoke?

KASIMIR  
 Something about my head... and...

CLAUDINE  
 If ever I have the misfortune of  
 laying eyes upon your face again, I  
 want to look upon your severed head  
 rotting atop a pike.

KASIMIR  
 Yes, now you mention, I recall.

Pause. RAIN.

KASIMIR (CONT'D)  
 Claudine, may I introduce my young  
 friend Charlie Tower. From America.

CHARLIE  
 How do you do?

Pause.

CLAUDINE  
 What do you want, Kasimir?

KASIMIR  
 Charlie has it, Claudine.

CLAUDINE  
 That's Fräulein Ladeau to you.  
 (pause)  
 Has what?

KASIMIR  
 The book. The von Junzt. First  
 edition.

Pause. RAIN.

CLAUDINE  
 With you?

CHARLIE  
 Uh, yes.

CLAUDINE  
 Come in then, out of the rain.

Charlie steps into the foyer.

CLAUDINE (CONT'D)  
 Yes, you too.

The massive DOOR SHUTS behind Kasimir.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, I feel like I'm stepping  
in on some unfinished--

CLAUDINE

Oh no. It's very finished.  
(calling off)  
Guido, take the gentlemen's coats.

GUIDO

Ja, Fräulein.

CLAUDINE

Leave the valise.  
(to Charlie)  
Is it there?

CHARLIE

It is.

CLAUDINE

Bring it. Follow me, to the drawing  
room.  
(dismissively to Kasimir)  
Yes, you too.

LESTER MAYHEW

She led them through the massive  
mansion to a handsomely appointed  
drawing room.

CLAUDINE

Be seated. Guido will bring you  
coffee.  
(to Charlie)  
Well?

CHARLIE

(to Kasimir, nervous)  
Shall I?

KASIMIR

Yes. Show her.

Charlie opens his valise and removes *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*. Claudine inhales deeply.

CLAUDINE

This book is very hard to find.

CHARLIE

So I'm told. So, you are...

CLAUDINE

Ah, Kasimir has not told you.

(to Kasimir)

Tsk, tsk, you and your secrets,  
Kasimir.

(to Charlie)

My great uncle was Alexis Ladeau,  
the close personal friend and  
collaborator of Friedrich Wilhelm  
von Junzt.

CHARLIE

Really?

CLAUDINE

His father was executed during the  
Reign of Terror, and he was born  
here in Vienna, after his mother  
fled from the revolution in France.

CHARLIE

How did he come to meet von Junzt?

CLAUDINE

Paris, in 1825, they both attended  
a lecture on farfadets by du Thym.

CHARLIE

Sorry, but--

KASIMIR

Alexis-Vincent-Charles Berbiguier  
de Terre-Neuve du Thym, a French  
mystic who believed he was plagued  
by imps, goblins and the like.

CLAUDINE

Von Junzt was conducting occult  
research and my uncle became  
enthralled by it. It was he who  
made Von Junzt's work possible.

CHARLIE

How so?

CLAUDINE

Von Junzt had isolated himself at  
his family estate in Miltenberg,  
and was driving himself to  
distraction writing his book.  
Alexis visited him and persuaded  
him to let a doctor call upon him.

(MORE)

## CLAUDINE (CONT'D)

If not for my uncle, Von Junzt would certainly have gone mad before ever finishing. Alexis became his... helpmeet, his lieutenant. They lived together for years.

## KASIMIR

What secrets he must have known....

## CLAUDINE

Not, perhaps, the ones you imagine, Herr Bartok. Von Junzt never permitted my uncle to read the manuscript.

## CHARLIE

What? Why not?

## CLAUDINE

To protect him.

## CHARLIE

From what?

## CLAUDINE

From the very cults that Von Junzt was exposing. Von Junzt one night cast the whole thing into the fire in despair, and it was Alexis who saved it from destruction. Von Junzt relented, and continued the work, but became ever more cryptic and obscure.

## KASIMIR

There is a rumor, Claudine... may I call you Claudine?

## CLAUDINE

You may not.

## KASIMIR

I see. There is a rumor, Fräulein Ladeau, that when your uncle found the dead body of Von Junzt, he found also the torn fragments of a new manuscript he had been working on. They say your uncle pieced these fragments together, read them, burned them and then, forgive me, slit his own throat.

CLAUDINE  
That... is not exactly what  
happened, Herr Bartok.

CHARLIE  
(rapt)  
So what did happen?

CLAUDINE  
Some fragments were destroyed, but  
most survived, occult heirlooms of  
the Ladeau family. I have them in  
my possession.

KASIMIR  
Istenem! (My god!)

\*

CHARLIE  
Are they here in this house? Could  
we see them?

CLAUDINE  
(after a pause)  
Do you know in all my life I have  
never held a copy of the Black  
Book?

CHARLIE  
Really?

CLAUDINE  
My uncle himself possessed no copy,  
and I have been... reluctant to  
seek one out. And today it has  
walked into my home in the presence  
of Kasimir Bartok.

KASIMIR  
Please, Claudine...

She clears her throat demurely.

KASIMIR (CONT'D)  
Fräulein Ladeau, I implore you. I  
did not wish to speak of this, but  
my f--

CLAUDINE  
Enough! You have said enough.

CHARLIE

I don't really know the story with you two but I'm sorry because I'm sure Kasimir did something terrible. He's like that. But if we can let you examine the Von Junzt, perhaps you could let us examine your uncle's manuscripts. We all come out ahead.

Pause.

CLAUDINE

I should do favors for this man?

CHARLIE

Perhaps you could do the favor for me?

CLAUDINE

I am not long for this world, Mr. Tower. This I will do for myself.

MUSIC.

6

CORRELATION OF CONTENTS

6

LESTER MAYHEW

Charlie and Kasimir spent several days with Fräulein Ladeau, the three of them working together to correlate the contents of the Black Book and Von Junzt's final, unpublished manuscript.

KASIMIR

Look here! Again he writes of the Black Stone in Hungary!

CLAUDINE

But this is not the same Black Stone of the Muslims, in Mecca?

KASIMIR

Not at all. No this is a... how would you say, obelisk?

CHARLIE

Well, in this book, Dostmann calls it a monolith. He says it was just a remnant of the Hunnish invasion, erected to commemorate a victory of Attila over the Goths

KASIMIR

Poppyclocks! It is symbol of some order or being lost and forgotten centuries ago.

CLAUDINE

Yes, Von Junzt agrees, Kasimir. He says that to attribute the origin of *this* Black Stone to the Huns is like assuming that William the Conqueror reared Stonehenge. It is vastly older than that.

KASIMIR

He says it is one of the keys to outer doors. Is most important.

CHARLIE

Hold on, I have it here...

(flipping through pages)

Yeah, he says he couldn't make out the characters on the stone, but he was sure they're Mongoloid. Sounds like he saw it in person....

KASIMIR

(uneasy)

Magyar folklore says that if a man sleeps near the monolith, he will have monstrous nightmares forever. I... heard of a man who ventured to see the Stone on Midsummer Night. He paid a dear price.

FLIPPING PAGES.

CHARLIE

If Dostmann actually saw it, and if your guy saw it, it must be a real place, not just some legend. If only we knew where it...

CLAUDINE

(also flipping through pages)

In the manuscript, Herr von Junzt says here it is near a town called Stregoiavar.

KASIMIR

Stregoiavar? A strange and ominous name.

CHARLIE

How so?

KASIMIR

Is half Hungarian but half  
Romanian. It would mean castle or  
town of witches.

CLAUDINE

Perfekt.

CHARLIE

Okay, that's.... Look, Kasimir, you  
know me. I'm a pretty practical  
guy. I've never gone in for  
folklore, or the scribblings of...

CLAUDINE

Madmen, Herr Tower? My uncle's  
reputation brought shame to our--

CHARLIE

No, no! I don't think your uncle  
was.... I'm starting to think that  
he and Von Junzt were really on to  
something. Your manus-- wait a  
minute!

Charlie rushes over to his valise, POPS IT OPEN and RUMMAGES  
through it.

KASIMIR

What is it, Charlie?

CHARLIE

That poem! From Berlin!

CLAUDINE

Poem?

CHARLIE

Yes - "People of the Monolith".  
Justin Geoffrey wrote it after  
traveling in Hungary. Here, listen  
to this: "A tower not reared by any  
human hands, the silent symbol of a  
shadowy race."

KASIMIR

(feigning awe)  
Could it be the Black Stone?

CHARLIE

Of course! And if he saw it, we could go see it!

CLAUDINE

You want to go to the witch town?

CHARLIE

(to Kasimir)

Yes! And you're coming with me!

KASIMIR

Oh, Charlie, Hungary is dangerous for traveling. Is now full of revolting Communists. There is daily bloodshed in the streets.

CHARLIE

I'm not afraid. And anyway, you started this, Kasimir.

KASIMIR

(slightly overplaying it)

If this is truly your wish, Charlie, I will go with you.

CHARLIE

Thank you. Fräulein Ladeau? If you wanted to, you--

CLAUDINE

Nein, mein Herr. I have seen enough here today. My great uncle Alexis did not cut his own throat because he was afraid, or insane. He did it because he was... ihm verfallen... devoted to Von Junzt, and could not live without him. Love leads us to do strange things, Kasimir.

KASIMIR

Fräulein La--

CLAUDINE

No. Say nothing. Go. Find this Black Stone. For me, now I can rest, and close this book once and forever.

(to Charlie)

Auf wiedersehen to you, Herr Tower. And bon chance.

(to Kasimir)

And you, Herr Bartok...

KASIMIR  
 (a farewell? An apology?)  
 Claudine...

CLAUDINE  
 Guido will show you out. Adieu.

Sad MUSIC transitions us away from Vienna and onto a train plunging into the heart of vampire country.

7

TRAIN TO NOWHERE

7

LESTER MAYHEW  
 The mysterious Stregoicavar was not to be found in any travel guide or tourist map, but Kasimir's contacts from the war directed them to within striking distance of the town. He and Charlie boarded a rickety train heading east from Vienna....

An uncommonly noisy train RATTLES along the tracks.

KASIMIR  
 We are nearly at Timișoara. I'm glad we are making it before the sun has gone down.

CHARLIE  
 Why, they have a vampire problem?

KASIMIR  
 Don't be ridiculous.

CHARLIE  
 Timișoara. And that's still in Romania?

KASIMIR  
 Yes.

From across the aisle, a fellow traveler throws in her two cents. ANTANASIA is in her late 20s and bristles with Eastern European bitterness and cynicism.

ANTANASIA  
 (under her breath)  
 Hungary.

CHARLIE  
 What's that?

ANTANASIA

Hungary.

KASIMIR

It was Hungary. It is Romania now.

ANTANASIA

It was Romania until last week. Now it is again Hungary.

KASIMIR

Hmph.

CHARLIE

My map says it's in Serbia.

They LAUGH.

KASIMIR

(a silly notion)  
Serbia...

ANTANASIA

It has not been Serbia for months.

KASIMIR

Everything is changing, Charlie. After revolution last year the new Prime Minister proclaimed the First Hungarian People's Republic and deposed the king--

CHARLIE

Wait, which King?

KASIMIR

(duh)  
Charles IV. In Hungarian we call him Károly.

CHARLIE

And he was the King of Hungary?

KASIMIR

What? No. Well, he was King of Hungary, yes, but also was Emperor of Austria, King of Croatia and King of Bohemia. His uncle was Archduke Franz Ferdinand--

ANTANASIA

(scornful)  
You do know who that is, right?

CHARLIE

Yeah, the one whose assassination started the war. Who are you?

ANTANASIA

Antanasia.

CHARLIE

(turning on the charm)

Hi. This is Kasimir. My name's Charlie.

ANTANASIA

(dismissively)

Of course it is. After Austria-Hungary lose war, your President Wilson disarmed Hungarian army - then all hell breaks loose.

KASIMIR

Romania invaded Transylvania, Banat, Crişana, and Maramure.

ANTANASIA

And Bukovina.

KASIMIR

Yes. Then Slovaks invaded Felvidék, and the Serbs and the French, together they invade Vojvodina--

CHARLIE

Wait, the Serbs--

KASIMIR

No, no, you are right! No more Serbia - technically now Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia-Slavonia, Međimurje, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Sylvania, parts of Bács-Bodrog, Baranya, Torontál and Temes Counties are part of the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

ANTANASIA

Do not forget that Montenegro, Kosovo and Vardar Macedonia joined Serbia last year.

CHARLIE

So it's a new country now?

KASIMIR

Yes, like new Republic of  
Czechoslovakia.

CHARLIE

And all these places were in  
Hungary two years ago?

KASIMIR

Technically Austria-Hungary, but  
yes. But now the Communists come  
from the east and new Hungarian  
government could fall any day. By  
the time we get there everyone may  
speak Russian. Who can know?

CHARLIE

Holy hell. So, Antanasia, you know  
this place?

ANTANASIA

Do you not listen? This place is  
not a place. It is between places.  
Anything can happen here.

CHARLIE

What happened to you? I see your  
arm's in a sling.

ANTANASIA

I have lose my hand from bomb. They  
have send me home.

CHARLIE

Who--

ANTANASIA

The Liberation Front! We are fight  
the communists! Soviet bastards!

KASIMIR

Like I told you, dangerous.

CHARLIE

I... I fought in the war. In--

ANTANASIA

You want medal? Here everyone  
fought in war. Here the war is  
finally over and what do we have?  
New war!

She GRUMBLES under her breath. Pause.

CHARLIE  
Are you getting off in Timișoara?

ANTANASIA  
Temesvar.

CHARLIE  
And where's that?

ANTANASIA  
(sotto voce)  
Idiot.

CHARLIE  
What?

KASIMIR  
Is the same place. Timișoara is  
Romanian name. Now is in Hungary.  
Hungarian name is Temesvar.

Train brakes SQUEAL and the train comes to a stop. Passengers  
get up to disembark.

ANTANASIA  
Is here. I go.

MUSIC.

KASIMIR  
Charlie, here, give to me the book.  
You grab the bags.

They disembark into the CHAOS OF THE STATION.

8 BUSTED

8

They move through the bustling train station. Lots of  
Hungarian and Romanian voices.

CHARLIE  
C'mon, Kasimir. Looks like there's  
a border check.

BORDER GUARD  
(in Hungarian)  
Papírt, legyen szíves.  
(in Romanian)  
Hartii, va rog  
(in German)  
Papiere, bitte.  
(Papers, please.)

\*  
\*

Charlie gives the papers.

BORDER GUARD (CONT'D)  
 (in Hungarian)  
 Micsoda? Amerikai? Utazás célja?  
 (What? American? Purpose of  
 travel?)

\*  
 \*  
 \*

CHARLIE  
 Sorry, I don't... Hey, Kasimir, I  
 could use a little help here.  
 Kasimir!  
 (to the guard)  
 That's my friend there. He  
 speaks... everything.

BORDER GUARD  
 You wait.  
 (to Kasimir in Hungarian)  
 Uram, Ismeri ezt az embert?  
 (Sir, do you know this person?)

\*  
 \*

KASIMIR  
 Mi, ő? Soha nem láttam még. Itt  
 vannak a papírjaim. (Who, him? I've  
 never seen him before. Here are my  
 papers.)

\*  
 \*  
 \*

The RUSTLE OF PAPERS, a RUBBER STAMP.

BORDER GUARD  
 Mehet. (You can go.)

\*

KASIMIR  
 Köszönöm. Szép napot!  
 (Thanks. Have a nice day!)

\*  
 \*

CHARLIE  
 Kasimir, what are you-- stop  
 fooling around, you know me, I--

BORDER GUARD  
 Silence! Beszélnie kell a  
 Kapitánnyal. (You need to talk to  
 the captain.)

\*  
 \*

Kasimir walks away.

CHARLIE  
 Kasimir! Where are you going? You  
 can't leave me--

KASIMIR  
(from a distance)  
The cat is sleeping!

CHARLIE  
What? Kasimir!  
(to guard)  
No, I know him. He's my-- Wait, she  
knows me. Her, the girl with the  
sling. We talked with her.

BORDER GUARD  
Kisasszony, ismeri ezt az urat? \*  
(Miss, do you know this man?) \*

ANTANASIA \*  
Nem tudok semmit. (I know nothing.) \*

Another RUBBER STAMP. Antanasia walks away. Some JEERING from  
the crowd.

CHARLIE  
Anta-- wait!

BORDER GUARD  
You will come with me.

CHARLIE  
(to himself)  
Kasimir, you son of a---

Dramatic MUSIC followed by:

9 INTERROGATED

9

The CLANG of the door of a Hungarian jail cell. A distant  
YOWL of a prisoner being tortured echoes through the cells.

LESTER MAYHEW  
Charlie was taken to police  
headquarters, and after a long  
night in a cell he was interrogated  
by Captain Ornagy Zsolt.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT is very serious, but also very weary.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT  
(thumbing through  
Charlie's papers)  
Charles Harrison Tower. Quite the  
international man of action.  
Citizen of the United States of  
America.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN ZSOLT (CONT'D)

Training in the French Foreign Legion. Served with the British intelligence in the Dardanelles. Hmm, is that in Flanders?

CHARLIE

Turkey, sir. Gallipoli.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

Mm, fighting *with* the Turks?

CHARLIE

Against them, Captain.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

Ah, fighting against our allies. And you would have me believe that you traveled here with two people who claim not to know you, in order to see... what did you say, a magic rock?

CHARLIE

A monolith, sir. And I've known the man for years. I'd only just met the woman on the train.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

Why would they claim not to know you?

CHARLIE

I plan to find that out.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

(with a dark chuckle)

Ha. And this woman, she was a communist?

CHARLIE

She claimed to have lost her hand fighting against the communists.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

Hmm. Such friends... Who will vouch for you, Charlie Tower? You are married?

CHARLIE

No sir.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

Your parents? Your siblings?

CHARLIE

No. My sister, Imogen, died years ago. My father died recently.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

And your government? Your President, Woodrow Wilson, would he vouch for you, Charlie Tower? Did that great Satan send you?

CHARLIE

He did not, sir.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

So no one knows you are here. What am I to do with you, I wonder? A soldier, a spy, in the middle of a war zone? No one would raise an eyebrow if they found you in a ditch with a bullet in your head. And less paperwork for me.

CHARLIE

(cranking up the charm)  
You know, if you got to know me, you'd find I'm really not such a bad guy.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

You Americans. You never think you are the "bad guy".

CHARLIE

Look, I--

CAPTAIN ZSOLT

(done playing)  
Shut your mouth. Have you the slightest idea what your people have done to mine? And now you think you can dictate terms? The great war may be over, but the peace has not yet begun. Why should I--

The PHONE rings. Again.

CHARLIE

Are you going to get that?

He answers the phone. We hear the MUFFLED OTHER SIDE of the conversation.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT  
(in phone in Hungarian)  
Kovács Kapitány. Igen. Most  
hallgatom ki. A története nem...  
Igen, uram. Most? Értem. Igen,  
uram. (Captain Kovács. Yes. I'm  
talking to him now. His story is  
not... Yes, sir. Now? I understand.  
Yes sir.)

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

He HANGS UP the phone. TENSE MUSIC.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT (CONT'D)  
You're free to go, Mr. Tower.

CHARLIE  
Just like that?

CAPTAIN ZSOLT  
Just like that. Your papers.

He gives him back his papers and they rise and move toward  
the door.

CHARLIE  
No bullet? No ditch?

CAPTAIN ZSOLT  
Not today.

CHARLIE  
Thank you, Captain.

CAPTAIN ZSOLT  
You know, Tower, if your story is  
true, of your treacherous friends  
and your magical book and your...  
"black stone", I think you will  
find a prison cell, or even that  
ditch, might be preferable to what  
you are looking for.

Dramatic MUSIC whisks Charlie on in his investigation.

10

GETTING A RIDE

10

LESTER MAYHEW  
Heaving a sigh of relief, Charlie  
left the police barracks and  
returned to where he'd last seen  
Kasimir: the train station.  
(MORE)

## LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

He wandered through the crowd until he saw the very woman he had met on the train, struggling to carry her luggage.

We hear the bustle of the train station.

## CHARLIE

Hey, hey you!

She DROPS A HEAVY BUNDLE.

## ANTANASIA

(breathlessly annoyed)  
Ugh. Leave me alone.

## CHARLIE

Here, let me carry that.

## ANTANASIA

I can--

## CHARLIE

Come on.

## ANTANASIA

(Grunts assent)

## CHARLIE

Why the hell did you sell me out yesterday?

## ANTANASIA

Is best to stay out of others' business.

## CHARLIE

Yeah, well that business about landed me in a ditch with a bullet in my head.

(pause)

You didn't by any chance see which way my friend went, did you?

## ANTANASIA

He is gone far by now.

## CHARLIE

Yeah.

(sighs)

What are you still doing here?

ANTANASIA  
 (bitterly)  
 Change in plans.

CHARLIE  
 Well, can you tell me how I can get  
 to Stregoiavar?

ANTANASIA  
 You?

She LAUGHS.

CHARLIE  
 What's so funny?

ANTANASIA  
 This is not New York City. This is  
 Eastern Europe. We are at war. You  
 don't know this place. You don't  
 know language. You don't know  
 anything. So the police didn't kill  
 you - someone else will.

CHARLIE  
 I'll hire you. I'll pay you to help  
 me.

ANTANASIA  
 I'm not that kind of woman.

CHARLIE  
 I'm not that kind of guy.

ANTANASIA  
 Yes, you are.

CHARLIE  
 Ok, you're right. I stick out like  
 a sore thumb here. But my so-called  
 friend stole something from me. I  
 need help. And no offense, you look  
 like you could use a job. I'm  
 Charlie, remember?

ANTANASIA  
 I remember.

CHARLIE  
 Remind me of your name?

ANTANASIA  
 (hates doing this)  
 Antanasia. I help you.  
 (MORE)

ANTANASIA (CONT'D)

You pay one hundred korona each day. Ugh, this inflation.

CHARLIE

I'll pay you double that and I'll pay in Swiss francs. Deal?

ANTANASIA

The business is not funny.

CHARLIE

Agreed. No funny business.

ANTANASIA

This "friend", he goes to Stregoicavar?

CHARLIE

I'm pretty sure of it.

ANTANASIA

(groaning with annoyance)

This is no good way for go there. But I know a woman with a cart. We go tomorrow.

MUSIC.

11

THE TALE OF GYULA HUDÁK

11

LESTER MAYHEW

After a quiet night in a Hungarian (or possibly Romanian) inn, Charlie and Antanasia set out on a donkey cart with a venerable widow, Gyula Hudák, riding in stoic silence.

The cart creaks along a centuries-worn path. Gyula might be as old as the path.

CHARLIE

This is a pretty valley...

ANTANASIA

(sighing "Americans" to herself)

Is battlefield. Place of suffering. Thousands died here.

CHARLIE

Recently?

ANTANASIA

Don't be stupid. This was Battle of Schomvaal. Here the great Count Boris Vladinoff fought armies of Suleiman the Magnificent.

GYULA

(cackling)  
Tizenöt huszonhat!

CHARLIE

What's she saying?

ANTANASIA

Fifteen twenty six. Year of battle. There - you see that hill? That is where count's castle was. You can see some stones from it.

CHARLIE

Is that smoke out there?

ANTANASIA

Meh - probably some gypsy camp in the ruins. Is always gypsies...

Gyula's ancient voice rings out - as old and sinister as possible. The Hungarian fades down as Antanasia's translation of it comes over it.

GYULA

(enthused)  
A bátor Borisz gróf csontjai még mindig ott heverték valahol a mézárálás helyszínén!

ANTANASIA

She says "The bones of brave Count Boris still lay somewhere on the site of massacre".

CHARLIE

Really...

GYULA

A csetepaté után" (amelyben a gróf kis seregével visszaverte a török elővédet) "a gróf a régi vár félig leomlott falai alatt állt...

ANTANASIA

The Count, he beat back the Turk's first attack.

(MORE)

## ANTANASIA (CONT'D)

He stood by these castle walls and gave orders to the men...

## GYULA

egy szolgája hozott neki egy kis lakkozott to dobozt kot, amelyet a híres török írnok és történész, Selim Bahadur holttestéből emeltek ki, aki elesett a harcban.

## ANTANASIA

A soldier brought him a small box taken from the body of the famous historian, Selim Bahadur, who died in fight.

## GYULA

A gróf elővett belőle egy pergamen pergament, és olvasni kezdett, de nem sokat olvasott, A dróf elővett/előhúzott belőle egy pergamen tekercset és olvasni kezdett. Hirtelen elsápadt, és szó nélkül visszatette a pergament a dobozba, és köpenyébe dugta.

## ANTANASIA

The Count took out a roll of paper and began to read. The blood drained from his face and he put paper back in box and hid it in his cloak.

## GYULA

Ekkor törökök ágyúztak a várra. Bátor embereit lekaszabolták. A nemesek holttesteit nem találták meg.

## ANTANASIA

Just then Turkish cannons fired on the castle and the walls fell. His brave men were cut to pieces and the bodies of the noblemen were not recovered.

## GYULA

Ezen a helyen nyugszik még mindaz, ami az évszázadok után Borisz Vlagyinoff grófból megmaradt.

ANTANASIA

In this place still rests all that  
the centuries have left of Count  
Boris Vladinoff.

CHARLIE

Poor bastard. I've had a hell of a  
time with Turks myself.

Transition MUSIC.

12

THE VILLAGE PEOPLE - AGAIN

12

LESTER MAYHEW

Within an hour of leaving the  
battlefield, the donkey cart rolled  
into a village apparently forgotten  
by time. The quaint houses and the  
quainter dress of the people  
revealed a community overlooked by  
the war. But villagers here did  
cast a quiet glance of suspicion at  
the arriving foreigner.

CHARLIE

I guess they're not used to  
tourists here.

ANTANASIA

No. For you it is best not to go  
around ask dumb questions.

CHARLIE

But Kasimir--

ANTANASIA

Is Hungarian. He may have friends  
here. Family. With big mouth you  
put us both in danger. This way. We  
go to inn.

Transition MUSIC.

13

THE INNKEEPER

13

The gentle background walla of a RURAL HUNGARIAN PUB wafts  
about the room.

LESTER MAYHEW

It didn't take long for Charlie and his guide to secure rooms and strike up a conversation with the innkeeper, a genial man named Farkas.

FARKAS

(laughing)

Almost - say like me: hozoó pálinkát! (Bring brandy!)

\*

CHARLIE

Hozoó pálinkát!

FARKAS

Is close - we drink! Egésszégedre!

CHARLIE

Eges... cheers!

CLINK.

FARKAS

And what brings you to our village?

CHARLIE

I--

She THUMPS him with her good arm to hush him.

ANTANASIA

He is for looking at... local sights.

FARKAS

Ah. Another American came here - it must be ten years now. He stayed a few days in the village. Odd young fellow... Queer-acting--mumbled to himself--a poet, I think.

CHARLIE

I think I know who you mean. And he was a poet.

FARKAS

You know this poet man?

CHARLIE

No. His name was Justin Geoffrey. He wrote a poem about... a bit of scenery near this village.

FARKAS

Indeed? Then, since all great poets are strange in their ways, he must have achieved great fame, for was very strange.

CHARLIE

What fame he has came after his death.

FARKAS

Dead?  
(sighs)  
So young...

CHARLIE

He died screaming in a madhouse five years ago.

FARKAS

Too bad. Poor lad--he looked too long at the Black Stone.

Charlie SQUEAKS with excitement, but Antanasia dives in before he messes things up.

ANTANASIA

(casual)  
Black stone? Is near this place?

FARKAS

Nearer than decent folk might wish. Come.

FOOTSTEPS and the WHOOSH OF A PULLED CURTAIN.

FARKAS (CONT'D)

Look there, on the mountainside. Beyond where you see the cliff is the cursed Stone. Oh that our poor village has such a burden. Once men tried to destroy the thing, but all who tried came to an evil end. So now the people shun it.

CHARLIE

What is there so evil about it?

FARKAS

(under his breath)  
Ez egy ördögtől való dolog.

ANTANASIA

It is a demon-haunted thing.  
 (drawing it out of him)  
 Tell us more - Folytasd kérlek.

Farkas SPLASHES some pálinka in his glass and DRINKS it down.

FARKAS

As a boy I knew a man from Buda-  
 Pesht who laughed at our traditions  
 - called us country yokels. He went  
 to the Stone one Midsummer Night  
 and at dawn stumbled into our  
 village: dumb and mad. Something  
 had broken his brain and sealed his  
 lips. Until the day he was taken,  
 he spoke only  
 (his voice fading out into  
 Hungarian)  
 Szörnyű gyalázkodás és badar  
 beszéd.

ANTANASIA

Terrible blasphemies and insane  
 gibberish.

CHARLIE

Here, let me pour you another.

REFILLS his glass.

FARKAS

Thank you. My own nephew, Bars,  
 when very small was lost in the  
 mountains and slept in the woods  
 near the Stone. Now he is a man,  
 tortured by foul dreams. Some  
 nights he frightens the village  
 with his screams and wakes with  
 sweats upon him.

CHARLIE

Could I talk with him? Is he here  
 in the village?

FARKAS

So eager. Eh, perhaps tomorrow you  
 can meet him. It is not good to  
 dwell on such things. Let us talk  
 of something else.

ANTANASIA

Yes, Charlie, let us.

CHARLIE

Very well. Hozz pálinkát!

Farkas bursts out in laughter and pours more brandy. MUSIC.

14

THE NEPHEW

14

LESTER MAYHEW

The next day, the two met the innkeeper's nephew as he took a break from the field he was working.

We hear the pastoral sound of the HUNGARIAN COUNTRYSIDE. BARS is a soft-spoken young farmer.

BARS

Mióta megláttam ezt a Fekete követ, rémálmaim vannak.

ANTANASIA

I have had nightmares ever since I saw this Black Stone.

CHARLIE

Ask him what he sees.

ANTANASIA

Mit láatsz?

BARS

Hatalmas örvénylő tüzeket, amelyek lángokat lövellnek, és egy fekete dob hangját hallom, amely soha nem szűnik meg. És egykor a kő nem a hegyoldalban volt, hanem mint tornya egy... - hanem tornya egy hatalmas fekete várnak.

ANTANASIA

Great whirling fires shooting flames and the sound of a black drum that never stops. And one time the stone, it was not on the mountain side but was set like a spire on a great black castle.

BARS

(emotional)

Ezen a héten nagyon rosszak az álmok.

ANTANASIA

He says this week dreams are very bad.

CHARLIE

Why is that?

ANTANASIA

Miért?

BARS

Mindig Szentivánkor a legerősebbek.

ANTANASIA

They are strongest at the Midsummer.

CHARLIE

Ah, yes, that's in... what, just a day or two?

ANTANASIA

Enough. We should leave this poor man to his misery.

TRANSITION MUSIC.

15

THE SCHOOLMASTER

15

LESTER MAYHEW

They returned to the village and there met with Ugor, the village's sole schoolteacher.

The CHATTER of departing Hungarian schoolchildren.

UGOR

(in Hungarian)

Ne feledd a házi feladatot!

(Don't forget your homework!)

\*

\*

A WOODEN DOOR CLOSES.

UGOR (CONT'D)

Come. You sit in chair, America man. You, maimed woman, sit on old stool. You wish to know of the Black Stone?

CHARLIE

It would seem to be connected to this village and they say you know the history of this village better than--

UGOR

I stop you now. The people of Stregoiavar are NOT descended from the people who lived in these lands.

CHARLIE

They're not?

UGOR

When Suleiman brought the Muslims here, they left no human being alive in village. Entire region - everyone is slain.

ANTANASIA

Moorish bastards!

UGOR

Not so! The dead people, those from the before-times, they were not good people. Turks they see bad people and so kill them all. The people here now, they have come from the lower valleys in over hundreds of years after the Turks leave these lands. Settlers, you'd say.

CHARLIE

What was wrong with the original people?

UGOR

Too much with themselves. Over many, many years, these people make families... how you say, with selves?

CHARLIE

Inbreeding.

ANTANASIA

Degenerate pigs!

UGOR

Yes, filthy pig people! These are pagan people.

(MORE)

UGOR (CONT'D)

They would make attacks on  
Christian people in valleys below  
and steal girls and children to  
give to their old dark gods. They  
are witches.

CHARLIE

Ah. Hence the name Stregoicavar.

UGOR

But this was not always the name!  
This is new name from new people.  
It is said old bad people called  
the village Xuthltan.

CHARLIE

That's... weird.

ANTANASIA

(getting interested)

I have not heard this. It is not a  
Hungarian name.

UGOR

Ah, such is my point. These people,  
they lived here thousands of years  
before the Magyars and Slavs and  
good peoples came.

CHARLIE

So the bad people, they're the ones  
who raised the Black Stone?

UGOR

Ah, no! It is said the stone is so  
ancient it was there before bad  
witch people came. For them it was  
like altar where they would kill  
the children stolen from the  
valleys.

CHARLIE

Sacrifices.

UGOR

It is so. It is said Xuthltan  
people called to their strange god  
with wild rituals of killing.

ANTANASIA

Monsters.

CHARLIE

Monsters indeed.

UGOR

But these are old stories. Me, I do not believe it. Terrible things may have happened there - things one must not speak of - but time devours all. Now this stone is but a link to a past long dead.

CHARLIE

(pensive)

Sure, sure... But someone who did believe it... might find the stone irresistible.

MUSIC TRANSITION.

16

I'M NOT AFRAID, YOU ARE

16

LESTER MAYHEW

Midsummer's Day arrived, and Charlie shared his suspicions with Antanasia.

ANTANASIA

You are thinking this "friend" Kasimir, he will be there with your book?

CHARLIE

If I know him as well as I think I do, he'll be there.

ANTANASIA

And if you are wrong?

CHARLIE

I guess I'll see this black stone for myself and look for him elsewhere. You don't have to come with me.

ANTANASIA

You think I am afraid?

CHARLIE

Not at all. You're a very... brave and--

ANTANASIA

Because I have no hand I have no use? I am not afraid. I have charged enemy guns. I have go where men dare not. Fear is for the weak.

CHARLIE

I have no doubt about your courage,  
or your ability, Antanasia. I've  
never known a woman like you. But I  
can do this alone.

ANTANASIA

I am not so sure.

CHARLIE

You're my translator. I don't  
expect there will be anything to  
translate. I'll look for Kasimir  
and get my book back. I won't be  
fighting a war up there.

\*

ANTANASIA

War is one kind of evil, Charlie,  
but this evil... it is something  
else.

MUSIC transition.

17

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S BAD DREAM

17

LESTER MAYHEW

Charlie and Antanasia hiked out of  
the village. A few hours' tramp up  
the tree-covered slopes brought  
them to the face of the rugged,  
solid stone cliff which jutted  
boldly from the mountainside. A  
narrow trail wound up it, and  
mounting this, they looked out over  
the peaceful valley of  
Stregoiavar.

The summit of the cliffs proved to  
be a sort of thickly wooded  
plateau. They made their way  
through the dense growth for a  
short distance and came into a wide  
glade; and in the center of the  
glade a shining black monolith  
reached skyward from the earth.

WIND. The HUM OF SUMMER INSECTS. FOOTSTEPS IN THE GRASS as  
they walk around, examining the stone.

ANTANASIA

There - your black stone.

CHARLIE

It's tall, but narrower than I expected. What do you think? Sixteen feet high?

ANTANASIA

Oh... Five meters, at least.

CHARLIE

It's octagonal. It sure doesn't seem... natural.

ANTANASIA

Is rough here on this low part.

CHARLIE

Yeah... Maybe people hitting it with hammers like the innkeeper... Wait a minute!

CREEPY MUSIC adds to the underscore.

ANTANASIA

What?

CHARLIE

Look at this. I think it's some kind of writing. Dostmann was right.

ANTANASIA

Where?

CHARLIE

See, here. The surface is damaged but this looks... yes, look up higher! See the line of writing spiraling all around it up to the top?

ANTANASIA

This I do not like.

CHARLIE

If only I could.... Hold on, I'm going to try to climb up and get a better look.

The sound of CLIMBING EFFORTS as Charlie wraps his arms around the pillar.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(struggling)

Give me a boost?

ANTANASIA  
 (she does not know this  
 word)  
 Give you what?

CHARLIE  
 A push, a... hand.

ANTANASIA  
 (under her breath)  
 Ha ha ha...

CHARLIE  
 Just put your shoulder--

She puts her shoulder under his rear end and boosts him up.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 (surprised)  
 Okay, that's good!

ANTANASIA  
 Now you can see? What does it say?

CHARLIE  
 (with effort)  
 I don't know. They're worn down,  
 but it's definitely hieroglyphics  
 or... In my archeology class in  
 college I saw pictures of a carved  
 rock in Yucatan, but...

ANTANASIA  
 What is Yucatan?

CHARLIE  
 In Mexico. Boy I wish Professor  
 Ward could see this. It's very...  
 Look out below, I'm coming down.

Charlie SLIDES DOWN and lands with a THUMP in the grass.

ANTANASIA  
 Is okay?

CHARLIE  
 Yeah. The sun's going down. Maybe  
 it was a trick of the twilight, but  
 higher up the stone's kind of  
 translucent. Um, you can almost see  
 into it.

ANTANASIA

Is not good. Come, we should hide  
if your friend is come.

Creepy forest-at-night sounds. Weird MUSIC building. Wind  
rustles through the trees.

LESTER MAYHEW

As darkness descended on the glade,  
Charlie and Antanasia took cover  
and waited. As midnight approached,  
their patience was rewarded.

The distant SNAP of someone walking through the branches.

CHARLIE

(sotto)  
Quiet! Someone's coming.

KASIMIR

(distant, approaching)  
Ben zi bena, bluot zi bluoda,  
Lid zi geliden, sose gelimida sin!  
(Bone to bone, blood to blood,  
joints to joints, so may they be  
glued!)

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

ANTANASIA

(sotto)  
What is saying?

CHARLIE

(sotto)  
I don't know, but he's reading it  
from my book. I knew it.

LESTER MAYHEW

Kasimir emerged from the trees and  
approached the Black Stone. His  
eyes were wide and fixed upon the  
monolith. He carried the ancient  
tome open in his hands, and mumbled  
some ancient formula from its  
pages. Charlie's every muscle  
tensed as he prepared to leap out  
and confront his old friend.

CHARLIE

I'm going to beat the ever-loving--

ANTANASIA

(quiet but frightened)  
Wait! Is something else here! I  
feel it!

Out of the WHISPERING WIND rises an ancient and terrible musical PIPING.

LESTER MAYHEW

A chill came over Charlie as he looked out at the monolith and saw that the moonlit glade was no longer deserted.

ANTANASIA

(breathless)

Look - there are people.

CHARLIE

Maybe the villagers have some rite to welcome the summer--

ANTANASIA

No. Not people. They are like ghosts.

CHARLIE

What is going on here?

ANTANASIA

(freaking out)

Shh! They speak!

The crowd bellows the first words of a low chant.

CULTISTS

O se tagata!

O se tagata!

LESTER MAYHEW

These apparitions were unlike the villagers: short, squat, and primal. Both men and women were draped sensuously in the hides of wild beasts. They undulated to the piping.

CHARLIE

What is this? It's--

ANTANASIA

Witch people! Their spirits!

CULTISTS

(echoing weirdly through space and time)

Na'o lenay iä lenai se isi mea.

Se isi mea!

LESTER MAYHEW

The celebrants threw their arms upward in a gesture of horrid supplication, their eyes fixed on the top of the monolith.

CHARLIE

Kasimir. He's out there with them. What is he...

KASIMIR

(faltering)

Ben zi bena, bluot zi bluoda...  
(Bone to bone, blood to blood...)

\*  
\*

LESTER MAYHEW

In front of the monolith stood a sort of brazier from which noxious yellow smoke billowed up in a swaying spiral around the black shaft.

ANTANASIA

Look, by fire!

LESTER MAYHEW

Antanasia pointed to two figures, by the side of a ghostly fire: a young girl, stark naked and bound hand and foot, and an infant, apparently only a few months old. On the other side of the brazier squatted a hideous old hag with a queer sort of black drum on her lap.

There's a shift in the MUSIC and the cultists bellow!

CULTISTS

Masani! Masani!

LESTER MAYHEW

The rhythm of the swaying bodies grew faster, and into the space between the people and the monolith sprang a naked young woman, her eyes blazing, her long black hair flying loose. Spinning dizzily on her toes, she whirled across the open space and fell before the Stone, and lay motionless.

(MORE)

## LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

The next instant a fantastic figure followed her--a man from whose waist hung a goatskin, and whose features were entirely hidden by a sort of mask of a huge wolf's head, a monstrous, nightmare of elements both human and bestial. In his hand he held a bunch of long birch switches. The moonlight glinted on a chain of heavy gold about his neck, and Charlie thought he saw a strange pendant hanging from it.

## WOLF PRIEST

Tsa tha.

## CULTISTS

Masani!

## LESTER MAYHEW

The worshippers tossed their arms violently as this grotesque creature loped across the open space with many a fantastic leap. He came to the woman who lay before the monolith.

The CRACK of the switches striking her flesh.

## WOLF PRIEST

Tsa tha ghua!

## CULTISTS

Masani!

Crack! Atanasia WHIMPERS. Charlie gently shushes her.

## LESTER MAYHEW

She leaped up and spun into the wild mazes of an incredible dance. And her tormentor danced with her, keeping the wild rhythm, matching her every whirl and bound, while incessantly raining cruel blows on her naked body. And at every blow he shouted a single word, over and over, and all the people shouted it back, over and over with slobbering ecstasy.

## WOLF PRIEST

Tsa tha ghua!

## CULTISTS

Masani!

Antanasia SOBS.

## CHARLIE

(softly)

Don't look at it. Kasimir's gonna  
get himself killed...

The MUSIC rises in intensity, as does the drumming, the  
chanting and the lashing.

## LESTER MAYHEW

Wilder and more extravagant grew  
the whirling frenzy of that mad  
dance, bestial and obscene. Madness  
flashed across the eyes of all of  
them. Blood trickled from the  
dancer's limbs as she leaped  
through the column of smoke.

CRACK! A SQUEAL of ecstatic agony!

## LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

She shot into an indescribable,  
explosive burst of dynamic mad  
motion, and on the very crest of  
that mad wave, she dropped to the  
ground.

The music pauses and for an instant we hear nothing but her  
quivering and panting.

## WOLF PRIEST

Tsa tha ghua!

With a crack of the switch the drumming and piping resumes!

## LESTER MAYHEW

The lashing resumed and she began  
to wriggle toward the monolith on  
her belly. The priest followed,  
lashing her brutally. She reached  
the monolith, gasping and panting,  
and flung both arms about it  
covering the cold stone with fierce  
hot kisses.

The cultists really go crazy now! Crazed ULULATIONS!

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

The priest bounded high in the air, flinging away the bloodied switches, then swept up the infant with a long arm and--

ANTANASIA

No, no no!

She RUNS into the woods.

CHARLIE

Oh my god! Anta--

LESTER MAYHEW

--swung the child into the monolith!

We hear the horrid sound of brains being dashed out.

WOLF PRIEST

Tsa tha ghua!

LESTER MAYHEW

He ripped the tiny body open with his bare fingers and flung handfuls of blood on the shaft, then tossed the red and torn shape into the brazier.

CULTISTS

Tsa tha ghua!

LESTER MAYHEW

At this the priest flung his arms upward in triumph. A huge monstrous toad-like thing now squatted on the top of the monolith! Seeing it, the worshippers, howling and foaming at the mouths, turned on each other with tooth and nail, rending one another's garments and flesh in a blind frenzy. One turned, locking his gaze on the spellbound Kasimir.

CHARLIE

Damn it... Kasimir, no!

LESTER MAYHEW

Charlie dashed forward, grabbing the senseless Kasimir in one arm and clenching the Black Book in the other, and ran madly after Antanasia.

MUSIC HITS A CRESCENDO OF COSMIC FEAR and then eases us back into the world of the living.

18

MIDSUMMER'S MORN

18

LESTER MAYHEW

Charlie and Kasimir stumbled their way back to the inn in the village. At sunrise he found the shaken Antanasia was packing a valise.

The RUSTLE OF CLOTHES. Antanasia is scared and angry.

ANTANASIA

You and your "friend" are crazy men.

CHARLIE

Antanasia, look, I didn't know what we'd--

ANTANASIA

I will back to front lines.

CHARLIE

You don't have to do that.

ANTANASIA

Better to face communist bullets than your books and black stones!

CHARLIE

Antanasia...

ANTANASIA

Better to lose other hand than to lose mind! Lose soul!

CHARLIE

What can I--

ANTANASIA

Give to me the money you are owing.

CHARLIE

(with a sigh)  
Sure, sure. Of course.

The CRINKLE OF CURRENCY.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Six hundred korona in Swiss francs is, what, about seventy--

ANTANASIA

Make it a hundred.

CHARLIE

Absolutely. No, here, take it - all of it. I'm sorry.

ANTANASIA

(steeled)

No money is worth this. Goodbye, Charlie Tower. Attól tartok, a pokolban fogsz égni! (I'm afraid you'll burn in hell!)

\*  
\*

She goes - the door BANGS SHUT. MUSIC. Charlie turns to see Kasimir is standing there.

KASIMIR

Let her go, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Well, if it isn't my old "friend".

KASIMIR

Charlie, I--

CHARLIE

What was that last thing she said to me?

KASIMIR

Eh, you don't really want to know. But I think she will miss you.

CHARLIE

I should beat the hell out of you.

KASIMIR

You saved me.

CHARLIE

Yeah! And I very nearly didn't. It was all your scheme: get me to buy that damned book just so you could steal it at the very first chance you got. Left me to rot in jail!

KASIMIR

I took book so police would not take it. It would have been lost forever. I gave you clue at train station.

CHARLIE

What?!

KASIMIR

Charlie, have you forgotten all our wartime codes? "The cat is sleeping?" - it means "I will send help".

CHARLIE

Are you kidding me?

KASIMIR

I came to rescue. Who do you think was on other end of telephone call that got you released from jail?

CHARLIE

Not you.

KASIMIR

My cousin Gergo is commissar in Red Guard.

CHARLIE

You son of a... You've been pulling the strings from the beginning! Why? Why did you put me through all this?

KASIMIR

I saw what you did at Istanbul. I knew you are the only one who could help me. I needed the Black Book. I could never buy this book myself. Yes, I paid at cabaret for you to hear poem to pique your interest. Yes, I took you to Frenzel so you would see that book.

CHARLIE

You tricked me!

KASIMIR

You knew! You wanted that book. Maybe as much as I.

CHARLIE

Why that book? What do you need it for?

KASIMIR

I thought... I thought with book here I could change the vision at the monolith. To learn... ah, but it does not matter. I was wrong. For that I am sorry. I am sorry for the girl.

(more earnest)

But, Charlie, I had good reason.

CHARLIE

I don't believe you.

KASIMIR

Believe.

CHARLIE

What the hell did we see up there?

KASIMIR

I saw spectres of the past. I saw the lust, abysmal greed, cruelty and monstrous evil that has stalked the sons of men since they crawled out of caves. I saw the unholy things and vile secrets that sleep in cities under the sea, and that hide from the light of day.

(pause)

What did you see?

CHARLIE

Yeah, pretty much the same.

KASIMIR

I had another reason for needing the Black Book.

CHARLIE

Oh yeah?

KASIMIR

I needed book to confirm details of old legend of Count Boris Vladinoff.

CHARLIE

Vladinoff?

KASIMIR

You have heard this name?

CHARLIE

Yeah, some old woman was telling us on the way here. By the battlefield.

KASIMIR

Yes! I needed to know exactly his final resting place. I needed to recover something he carried to his death.

CHARLIE

(dimly remembering)

Was it some kind of... scroll?

KASIMIR

Yes! The final testament of Selim Bahadur.

CHARLIE

I've heard that name, too. He was scribe to Suleiman the Great.

KASIMIR

It is my belief the Turks witnessed the horrors of Stregoiavar. This is what Bahadur wrote, what Vladinoff intercepted. He saw what we saw! But not as visions only. In the flesh.

CHARLIE

No, I don't believe it, Kasimir.

KASIMIR

Since I left you at train station I have been consulting the book, and searching the battlefield of Schomvaal.

CHARLIE

Oh, for the love of... It was YOUR camp out in the ruins.

KASIMIR

Charlie, I found his remains.

MUSIC.

CHARLIE

Did you?

KASIMIR

Look, my friend.

LESTER MAYHEW

Kasimir pulled from his coat pocket some crushed fragments of wood, bearing the traces of ancient lacquer. Charlie could just detect the remains of elaborate oriental designs carved into the surface.

CHARLIE

No. This can't be. I mean what are the chances that--

KASIMIR

There are no chances, Charlie. This is...

CHARLIE

Kismet.

KASIMIR

Funny to hear you use a Turkish word. Open it.

MUSIC PUNCTUATION.

CHARLIE

Papers! They survived. And this, wrapped in silk - some kind of medallion.

KASIMIR

You saw the Unholy Priest last night?

CHARLIE

(remembering)

Yeah. The chain around his neck. What do the papers say?

KASIMIR

Is Old Turkish. I cannot read. But I know a man who can. Who must. Come with me, old friend. Help me to finish this.

(truly earnest)

Please, my friend.

Pause.

CHARLIE

(with a sigh)

Where are we going?

KASIMIR

Budapest.

TRANSITION MUSIC.

19

THE MADHOUSE ON THE DANUBE

19

LESTER MAYHEW

Traveling with their precious  
relics, Charlie and Kasimir made  
their way back to Temesvar and took  
a train to Budapest. Kasimir led  
his friend to the Lipótmezo  
district, where they passed through  
the gates of an enormous building  
with stained glass windows.

Their footsteps echo through cavernous halls of academia.

CHARLIE

Impressive place - what is it?

KASIMIR

Is National Institute of Psychiatry  
and Neurology. Built in 1868.  
Glorious, no?

CHARLIE

Are we going to see a doctor? I'm  
pretty sure you're crazy.

KASIMIR

Mmm. Of course we will absolutely  
see doctor.

MUSIC. Their FOOTSTEPS ECHO in cavernous halls.

LESTER MAYHEW

Inside the cavernous foyer, Kasimir  
was greeted by a white-coated  
physician, Dr. Egon Brunswik.

BRUNSWIK

(in Hungarian)

Bartók Úr! Örülök, hogy újra  
találkozunk! (Mr. Bartok! Nice to  
see you again!)

\*  
\*

KASIMIR

Dr. Brunswik, may I introduce my  
American friend, Charlie Tower.

BRUNSWIK

Ah! Welcome, Mr. Tower.

Brunswik CLICKS HIS HEELS.

CHARLIE

How do you do?

KASIMIR

How is he doing?

BRUNSWIK

He is... as well as can be expected. I regret I can report no improvement.

KASIMIR

Hmm. We have brought items to show him. I believe they will... help.

BRUNSWIK

(not optimistic)

As you wish. You know the way. I will not interfere.

MUSIC. The SOFT MECHANICAL CLANKING of an elevator. The soft sounds of SUFFERING from distant rooms and WHISPERING attendants.

LESTER MAYHEW

Kasimir silently led Charlie to a continuous paternoster lift nearby, and they stepped into the moving open compartment, which carried them up three floors. Carefully stepping out, they proceeded down a long hallway until they reached a door with a placard reading "Zoltan Bartok". Kasimir entered without bothering to knock.

KASIMIR

Papa! I am here!

ZOLTAN is subdued and quiet.

ZOLTAN

A fiam! (My son!)

\*

KASIMIR

Papa, this is my friend Charlie. Charlie, this is my venerable father, Zoltan.

ZOLTAN  
Charlie? The American? From the war?

KASIMIR  
Yes, papa. This is he.

ZOLTAN  
I feel joy to meet you.

CHARLIE  
It's an honor to meet you, sir.

ZOLTAN  
Come in. Sit down.

Some KERFUFFLE as Zoltan arranges for his guests.

CHARLIE  
(sotto to Kasimir)  
Why didn't you tell me?

KASIMIR  
I know your father is... was... how to say...

CHARLIE  
Yeah, okay. I get it.

KASIMIR  
I hope I was not wrong.

ZOLTAN  
Sit! Is nice for visitors.

MUSIC.

LESTER MAYHEW  
After drinking tea brought by hospital orderlies, Kasimir produced the relics recovered at Schomvaal, and showed them to his father without explaining where they had come from.

KASIMIR  
Is old Turkish, no?

ZOLTAN  
(perking up a bit)  
Boy, give to me looking glass.  
Hmm... yes... it is Old Turkish... early sixteenth century.

CHARLIE

So you're sure it's authentic?

ZOLTAN

You doubt me? Is very valuable find.

CHARLIE

But can you read it?

ZOLTAN

Yes. The hand is good. This was written by trained scribe.

(getting nervous)

It even looks...

KASIMIR

Papa, what does it say?

ZOLTAN

(with exceptional creepiness)

On this day of Al-Khamees, Dhul Qidah 23, in the year of the Hijrah 932, I, Selim Bahadur, royal scribe to the court of Suleiman the Law Giver, do hereby give this true and faithful account of the horrors I have seen...

Music leads us in a temporal crossfade from ancient Zoltan to the vibrant Ottoman scribe Selim.

20

THRILLING FLASHBACK

20

SELIM BAHADUR

... of the horrors I have seen. By what foul alchemy or godless sorcery the Gates of Hell are opened on that one eerie night I do not know, but mine own eyes have seen. We had, at the command of Great Suleiman, brought our armies high up a valley where our scouts had reported backward people with beliefs and practices more ancient and foul than even the most ignorant of the infidels.

We hear again the drumming and the chanting that goes with the Black Stone ritual.

SELIM BAHADUR (CONT'D)

The infidels' rite was tied to the sun and on the longest day of summer, they gathered in a clearing around a black monolith that rose from the earth.

We hear the beastly celebrants.

SELIM BAHADUR (CONT'D)

We rode with a division of cavalry, and the pagans were unarmed.

An Ottoman cavalry officer gives the word to attack:

OFFICER

(off)

Hajamahumu!

Hooves thunder as the cavalry breaks up the cultists' party. Screaming! Swords hacking!

SELIM BAHADUR

As we rode into the clearing, my eyes beheld a thing - fleeting to my sight - some kind of creature perched upon the top of the stone. The infidels broke and ran for the forest and our men cut them down like wheat.

Fleeing cultists, horses neighing, pursuit!

SELIM BAHADUR (CONT'D)

They ran to a cavern high in the hills. The survivors fought alongside the hellish creature. The demon was a monstrous, bloated, wallowing toad-like being from whose mouth a great and twisting tongue lashed out at our soldiers. We slew it with flame, steel and incantations that were old when Arabia was young. I weep to recall its death-shriek for it shook the land, and as the thing perished, the remainder of the infidels also perished in a manner so foul and unclean that I dare not write it here. Likewise, I must not write the blasphemies that torture wrung from the lips of surviving worshippers.

(MORE)

## SELIM BAHADUR (CONT'D)

From their leader, after we stopped his mouth, I tore from him a figure he wore about his neck. Carved in gold, it depicted the creature, their demon or god, the which I include with this account. Thereafter we scourged the valley with holy fury, so that none of this hellish kind should ever trod these lands again.

Gentle MUSIC TRANSITION with crossfade.

21 POST SCRIPT

21

## ZOLTAN

(very moved)

...so that none of this hellish kind should ever trod these lands again.

(collecting himself)

My son, where did you get this?

## KASIMIR

Schomvaal, papa. From the dead hand of Boris Vladinoff himself.

## ZOLTAN

You went to Stregoicavar? May god have mercy on you!

## KASIMIR

It is the proof, papa. It is proof that the legend, the myth is true. Look at this talisman of gold! You are not mad, my venerable father. You were right! All along, you were right! They will see this now!

Zoltan gently weeps.

## CHARLIE

Your father was in Stregoicavar? He saw... what we saw.

(realizing)

The innkeeper! He said a man from Budapest had laughed at the legend and then went mad when he spent Midsummer Night at the Black Stone.

KASIMIR

My father was once a most respected professor of history at the city's greatest university. He heard of the myths and went to Stregoicavar. When they brought him home he had been struck dumb. They said he had imagined it and was soft in the head. He has been here ever since. He did not have what we had, Charlie. He did not have proof.

ZOLTAN

This, my son, is more than proof. A myth is not just a story of the past. It can take us back into the ancient time itself, if we have a key. This is a key.

CHARLIE

A key?

KASIMIR

(piecing it all together)  
The key to the Outer Doors! My god! the world is full of monstrosities and those who would open those doors and give themselves and the rest of the world over to such horrors. These doors must be kept closed, Charlie.

ZOLTAN

You understand me, my son. I thank you. Friend Charlie, I thank you as well. I **was** right. Maybe they will not see it - but **you** do.

(pause)

I am tired. I must rest. Perhaps now the nightmares end.

MUSIC.

CHARLIE

Kasimir, I'll let you tend to your father. I'm gonna go back to the hotel and... send a telegram to my old archeology professor. Thanks for... letting me...

KASIMIR

No, Charlie, I must thank you. Here - the talisman - keep it safe.

(MORE)

KASIMIR (CONT'D)

The Black Book it also is a key. Be careful.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

KASIMIR

Go home, Charlie Tower. Go and write the story of our adventure. But please, leave my father out of it.

CHARLIE

Sure, sure.

KASIMIR

(with a chuckle)

Is better if you leave me out of it too.

MUSIC.

22

THE CROSSING

22

LESTER MAYHEW

Charlie sailed the next day for New York. He spent the trip in his stateroom taking a stab at writing his story...

SCRIBBLING. The low HUM of the ship's engines. MUSIC creeps up.

CHARLIE

(writing)

...that such things once crouched beast-like above the souls of men brings cold sweat to my brow. I fear to peer again into the leaves of Von Junzt's abomination. For now I understand his repeated phrase of "keys"! Keys to Outer Doors--links with an abhorrent past and perhaps of abhorrent spheres of the present.

May no man ever seek to uproot that ghastly spire men call the Black Stone! A Key! Aye, it is a Key, symbol of a forgotten horror. Since reading what Selim Bahadur wrote, I can no longer doubt anything in the Black Book.

(MORE)

## CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Man was not always master of the earth. If such a monstrous entity as the Master of the Monolith somehow survived its own unspeakably distant epoch so long -- what nameless shapes may even now lurk in the dark places of the world?

MUSICAL FINISH.

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CONCLUSION

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## LESTER MAYHEW

You've been listening to "The Black Stone", brought to you by our sponsor, Bon Voyage Salad Dressing.

I'm Lester Mayhew. Until next week, this is Dark Adventure Radio Theatre reminding you to never go anywhere alone; if it looks bad, don't look; and save the last bullet for yourself.

MUSIC.

## ANNOUNCER

"The Black Stone" was adapted for radio and produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman. Based on the story by Robert E. Howard and produced by arrangement with Robert E. Howard Properties, LLC. Original music by Troy Sterling Nies. The Dark Adventure Ensemble featured: Amir Abdullah, Yeni Alvarez, Rick Batalla, Sean Branney, Kacey Camp, Ken Clement, Dan Conroy, Mike Dalager, Larissa Gallagher, Andrew Leman, Barry Lynch, Szabolcs Parragh, Kevin Stidham, László Szegedi, Josh Thoemke, Guido Werner, Julie Wiesenberg, Eddy Will and Time Winters. Tune in next week for "The Baboon Catacombs of Hermopolis", a Nate Ward adventure!

(MORE)

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

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Radio STATIC and fade out.

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