

STORYLINE PROVIDENCE:

Whispers in the Darkness

Prologue

*Before the Red Star... before the Week of Nightmares...
some witnessed another sign that the end would soon be upon us...*

November 8th - 11:32 pm

Marco moved quickly through the streets of Providence, bracing himself against the torrent of ice. Two hundred years a vampire and he still hated the biting teeth of frozen rain. You would think the walking dead would not care about such trivialities, but to a supreme predators heightened senses it was highly irritating. Even still, the weather was no match for the chill Marco felt in the pit of his being. Or the pain that still lingered there. He had made a terrible mistake tonight. One that might cost him everything. He had thought that the painting was simply a clue to the Clocks whereabouts. But when he had gazed upon the painting and saw the Clock within, he knew... he just knew. Marco had reached out without thinking and touched the device within the painting. And then, an explosion of darkness and pain shattered all his senses and he lost consciousness.

He had no idea how long he was catatonic, but when he awoke, the painting was gone. That was two hours ago, and Marco had to hurry if he was going to find who had stolen his find. That was what Marco did. He found things. Objects of great value. Objects of great power. For himself and his Clan. And the Clock was just such an object. Or, should he think of it as just 'The Painting' now? No matter. Only two people knew where he was going to look for the painting, and one of them must have betrayed him to the thief. But which one? Someone was going to tell him where the painting went. Of that he was certain. He will find out and heads will roll. No one double crosses Marco Giovanni.

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November 9th - 12:58 am

Sitting alone at his table at the back of the room, Dr. Pickman pretended to sip his wine as he watched the floor, in search of a lovely bit of flesh. Club Ember was not his usual hunting ground, he did not favor discotheques, or whatever the Kine called them these days, but sometimes you must make due when the need arrises. He spotted two others of his kind working the room, but they gave him a wide berth. They were Toreador neonates, and he was sure they did not want to trifle with a Tremere of his notoriety. Besides, there was plenty of blood to go around. It was a packed house. Fun for all.

Dr. Pickman finally spotted a promising lamb when, without warning, an intense pain sundered his

body. It felt like fire crawled underneath his skin. He closed his eyes from the pain, only to be blasted with hideous visions. A slithering amorphous shape, hungry for this world, screaming to be set free. It lasted but a moment and then the vision was gone.

He cleared his eyes and glanced around, but no one else seemed to have noticed his pain. Or felt pain themselves. The Kine were oblivious. Then he spotted the other two vampires he had seen earlier. They were just getting to their feet, having fallen to the floor. Shock and terror filled their eyes. So, he was not the only one to experience this event. What did it mean? What had caused this?

Horrific screams from across the room broke his train of thought. People fled from a dance floor, fleeing a nightmare come to life. Its outline was vaguely human but stood twice again as tall as a man. It possessed a face that was a mass of bullwhip appendages, with a scaly, rubbery-looking body, mighty razor talons, and long, shadowy wings behind.

It struck out with claw and tentacles, ripping flesh and rending bone. The beast cried out in delicious joy. Blood sprayed hot into the air as the bodies of would-be dancers were ripped apart like paper mache. The monster seemed all but unstoppable. Then, as suddenly as it appeared, it vanished again into nothingness, leaving only a shriek of denial to linger in the air.

Dr. Pickman stood frozen, his mind racing. It can't be! He knew what this was. Someone had found the *peractio fabrica*. Or, as some preferred the more vulgar translation, the Armageddon Clock. There was no time to waste! He had to find out who has empowered the device and stop them before it was too late. He might be the only one with the knowledge who can.

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November 11th - 9:33 pm

Stepping out of the Gulfstream G650, she made her way down the steps and onto the tarmac. Adjusting her glasses in a rare human gesture, Aiko Hira surveyed the surrounding night. Providence. Of all places for an event such as this to happen. If rumors were true, something powerful was rising and this city could be its birthplace. Kindred had been fleeing the city for the last few nights, telling tales of strange attacks by demons, or possibly wraiths. The reports have been sketchy at best.

Aiko had a talent of getting to the bottom of mysteries. And that talent had helped her rise through the ranks of The Imperial Order of the Master Edenic Groundskeepers. (What a mouthful!) They sent her here to uncover the truth. And she would not fail. But the question is... what truth? Is it a demon? Or an Antediluvian? She had spent her un-lives work searching for the resting places of those dark gods. Perhaps she would find one. That thought both chilled her and excited her. Oh... the possibility!

Whatever it was that brought her here, she would not stop until she had her answer. She climbed into the waiting towncar and drove off towards the city. But, if it was an Antedeluvian, she would be rewarded well for her success. Oh, yes!

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November 12th - 12:59 am

The Cultist stared down at the painting propped against the motel wall. He had taken it when the Giovanni lay helpless on the floor. That necromancer had made a tempting target. If only he had had more time, he would have drained him dry. But the painting had called to him, and it was the vital that he escape with it unseen. So, he fled and never looked back.

He watching the painting, waiting for it to begin again. Every night, at exactly 1:00 am, it would waken and draw power into itself. The Cultist knew that its cycle was nearly finished. Perhaps tonight or tomorrow at the latest, and then the portal would have enough strength to open completely. He smiled to himself, enjoying the sweet anticipation of that exquisite pain. Soon, it would wash over him, as something marvelous struggled to birth.

The colors in the painting began to twist and blend, darkening into a swirling mass of the deepest black. He felt the elemental pull of the depths of that maelstrom and saw images take shape and then dissipate within. Teeth and flesh, tentacle and claw, and terrible eyes that promised sweet oblivion. The Cultist wasn't sure what would be unleashed, but he knew it would be glorious!

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