



A Ripping Good Yarn From
WALLABY, BUSKERTON & CRUST



The Adventures of
IGOR ANILINIUM
evil handiman

12/11
679-07

Prologue

The vast marble balcony trembled and fractured as Tungsten cranked the ancient ornithopter, its dusty brass and silk wings slowly creaking open.

“I’m not leaving without Rascal!” Archie yelled over the crash and rumble of the volcano.

Tungsten, his long, gleaming frame dented and scorched from battle, didn’t look up from his work. “I cannot allow that, young Master Cleverton,” his metallic voice said calmly. “I am programmed to protect you, not your pet raven...” Just then, a spark shot flew past, missing Tungsten’s power crystal by inches.

“Wallaby’s Mole-men!” Archie took cover from their spark rifles as the ornithopter began to hum and whine. The cunning Mole-men aimed for windows of Chateau Wallaby’s grand dining hall, showering the balcony in shards of glass.

“Master Cleverton!”

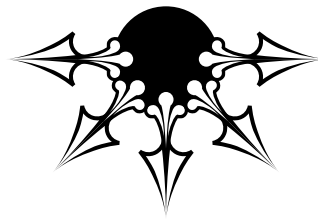
“Don’t worry, Tungsten, this gives me an idea. If I can just get the geometry right...” Archie picked up a broken pane with his bloodied hand and reflected the light of the full moon in the Mole-men’s eyes.

“Skree!” the Mole-men howled, firing blindly. Archie dashed for the hovering ornithopter and Tungsten scooped him into the cockpit with his powerful metal arm.

Suddenly Archie felt a sharp pinch on his right shoulder. A shot? He turned to see a sleek, black figure next to his face, its claws dug into his flesh. “Rascal!” Archie winced with delight.

“Caw Caw!” Rascal cried, and began gently pecking out shiny bits of glass from his freckled master’s strawberry blonde hair. The ornithopter swooped away from Wallaby’s crumbling chateau, now illuminated by the approaching lava.

“We’ve picked up a fine tailwind, Master Cleverton,” Tungsten said while coaxing the throttle forward. “We’ll have you back at the treehouse before bedtime.”



“After an adventure like this, I’ll certainly need some of Nanna’s warm milk-tea before bed...and a pint of the finest kerosene for you, loyal Tungsten, ha ha!”

Deep inside the underground laboratory, where Mole-men and freed scientists still fled the fires and collapsing walls, the broken figure of E. G. Wallaby flinched, then heaved the iron rafter off of his back. “You’ll pay for this, Archie Cleverton!” Wallaby bellowed. “Mark my words you insolent whelp, you will pay!”

“Balderdash,” said a dark, hunched figure in the corner. “Cleverton’s papa is the finest barrister in London. We won’t get a shilling from him.”

“It’s just an expression, my dear Buskerton, you should know that. Or has the boy’s mechanical manservant knocked all the sense out of you?”

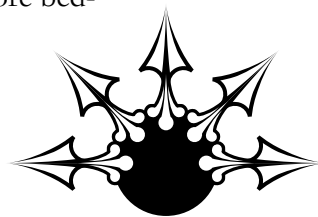
Buskerton answered his jibe with silence. It’s what one would expect from a man of his station.

Wallaby briefly examined his ruined labcoat, wondering where he would get another in his rather ample size. “At any rate, I am glad you’re still here. Fetch me the shortwave from the top shelf there. I’ve got a bit of a severed spine and can’t reach.”

“I would, but I’m the only thing holding up the ceiling at this point, old boy.” Buskerton had managed to lock the servo-joints of his battle uniform in time to steady the collapsing walls, but a few more tons of rubble and the contraption would give out. Already his gleaming cummerbund was showing signs of metal fatigue.

“Always excuses...” Wallaby muttered as he painfully climbed the shelving. He flicked a small switch and the shortwave crackled to life, its tubes glowing dimly. “Mister Crust! Are you receiving me?”

“Ransom hasn’t come yet,” replied Crust, his voice barely audible over the static.



“It won’t be coming, I’m afraid.” Wallaby twisted his singed mustache in frustration. “The Cleverton boy has made a mess of things over here. I need you to summon the handyman.”

“Tonight? But there’ll be a service charge...”

“I don’t care about his deuced expenses! Get Igor to the chateau immediately!”

The Continuing Exploits of Igor Anilinium, Evil Handyman

Chapter One:

A menacing figure climbed down into the smoldering rubble with unnatural grace. His keen eyes, full of malice, peered into the shadowy ruins. The air was heavy with smoke and the stench of death. “Did someone call for a handyman?” he asked.

“Down here, Igor,” Wallaby rasped, “Thanks for coming on such short notice.”

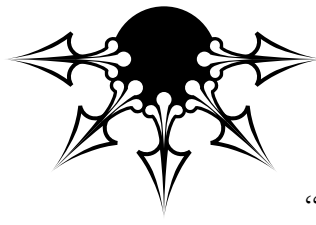
Igor followed the voice to shattered control center of the underground lab. “You understand that this visit isn’t covered in your service contract...”

“Yes, yes, I know I should have opted for the Mad Scientist Gold Plan, but what were the chances my lair would be destroyed on the weekend?”

Igor smiled, his teeth like tiny, yellow blades. “The odds were quite favorable, since Archibald Cleverton isn’t allowed to go adventuring on a school night.”

“Oh blast,” Wallaby hissed. “I suppose by now every villain in Europe knows that the boy-detective thwarted me.”

“If it helps I heard he was grounded for staying out past curfew,” Igor said, pulling a sinister, leather-bound tome from his black toolbox. “Sign here.”



Wallaby quickly signed Crust’s name into the book. “Proceed.”

Igor looked around thoughtfully. “Hmm. The first order of business is to reverse the hydrodynamic generators and flood the lab with seawater. That will put out the fires and harden the encroaching lava into stone, providing a makeshift superstructure.”

“Flood my chateau?” said Wallaby, aghast. “But all the bodies... It will smell like wet mole for weeks!”

“Let him flood the bloody lair,” Buskerton grunted. “I’m tired of holding this place up. My nose itches!”

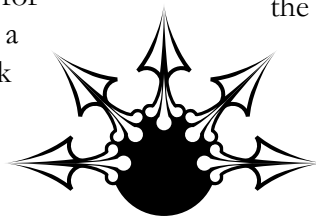
“Very well,” Wallaby sighed. “It’s the red dial on south console.”

Igor examined the sparking instruments. They were as useless as the fat man’s legs. His leathery hands peeled back the bent metal panels underneath the console, revealing a rat’s nest of bulbs and wires. Igor frowned and reached in his black toolbox, pulling out a ghastly instrument that would make an inquisitor blush. He deftly wriggled halfway into the console and made a few sharp strikes. Soon the thick air was filled a steamy hissing and the smell of brine displaced the heavy smoke. “Now then, what’s making the volcano erupt? Some sort of doomsday weapon?”

“Yes,” Wallaby said, misty-eyed. “It was supposed to be pointed at Windsor Castle but that brat aimed it at...at the center of the earth. I know it’s foolish to make a fuss, it’s only a focused heat cannon, but I had put a ton of work into it. Well, not me personally but some really brilliant scientist-hostages...”

“And you can’t shut it down?” Igor asked. He could feel the earth underneath him shudder from the volcano’s fury.

“We tried, of course,” said Buskerton while wedging an iron beam into the ceiling, “But the controls respond to Wallaby’s voice, and who knew the lad’s crow would be such a cracking good mimic? I suppose they changed the codes whilst I was fighting the mechanical fellow.”



Wallaby shifted awkwardly in his burnt-out command chair as the room began to shake. “The bird didn’t even sound like me. My voice is much deeper than that.”

Igor glanced at the rattling weapon controls and flipped open the thin book chained to the side. “Your boffins may have made a fine weapon, but their documentation is awful,” he said. “Look at this owner’s manual, it just says ‘if you can read this please rescue me I’m in cell block seven.’ Unfortunately, I suspect we’ll have to just have to destroy the cannon.” The ground lurched violently as if to illustrate his point.

“I’d hate to have it come to that,” Buskerton said. “Perhaps we can guess the crow’s new password, whatshisname, Rancid or something?”

“The bird in question is called Rascal, and I believe he was a raven,” Wallaby corrected, trying to keep his teeth from chattering.

“Bit small for a raven, though.”

“On his neck, the shaggy feathers were a giveaway,” Wallaby said. “And the fact that it’s ravens that are known for their mimicry... Not that I really sound like that, do I?”

Igor could feel the lava’s heat building underneath them. “The weapon’s controls seem to have been convincingly fooled,” he said. “I’ll just pop down to the firing silo while you two work on that password.” Igor disappeared down a crumbling hallway.

“So if I were a raven, what would my password be?” Wallaby mused for a while then shouted into the curved brass horn of the weapon control. “Raven! Rascal! Blackbird! Crow!”

Buskerton looked at the blinking lights on the weapon panel, “No change.”

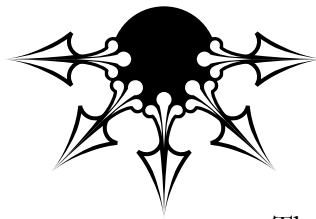
“Hmm...Detective! Interloper! Upstart! Do-gooder!”

“Nothing. What do ravens like?”

“Cracker! Rum!”

“No, I think that’s parrots.” The ground quaked violently again as the room grew hot.

“Roadkill! Squirrels! Opossums! Skunks! Infants!”



“No. Keep trying.”

“Edgar Allan Poe!”

“Ooh, good one! No change though.”

The floor split open with a hellish glow and the hiss of smoke.

Wallaby scowled, “Bloody bother... Triumph! Justice! Good! Birdie! Caw! Caw!”

The panel lights flashed then went dead. Buskerton cheered, “Huzzah! I do believe you have it, old boy!”

“No, that was Igor destroying my cannon.”

“We’re saved, then?”

“Wait until you see his bill.”

Epilogue

Wallaby’s new command chair glided down the hallways like a centipede on dozens of thin metal legs. His expression was sour as he inspected his freshly painted underground lair. “Yes, Igor, everything looks ship-shape. I can’t believe I have to steal the Star of India just to pay an expedited service charge. It’s cursed, you know.”

“I’m counting on it,” Igor grinned. “It’s still not too late to sign on for the Gold Plan.”

Wallaby shrugged. “Cleverton is, what, twelve? In a year or two he’ll get interested in girls and he’ll be out of my hair. Say, is there anything you can do about my shattered spine?”

“I know an evil chiropractor. He’s expensive but his voodoo is strong.”

“Voodoo, eh? He’s not too... preachy about it, is he?”

“He’s strictly professional, for a chiropractor anyway.”

And so, business cards were exchanged and more sinister schemes were hatched. All in a day’s work for... Igor Anilinium, evil handyman!

