

# The Autumn Council

## A Brief History

**H**arlan Douglas rolled the body into the tapestry and tried to figure out how to make it look less like a body in a tapestry. He just had to get it out of there before the Hotel Excelsior or any of its late night patrons might notice the murder. Sure, it was self-defense, but years of these activities had taught Harlan not to rely on his ability to convince the cops of his righteousness.

He couldn't take the elevator as it opened right opposite the front desk and there was always an attendant on-call there. He shouldered the entire load and pushed his way through the stairway door and began the arduous trek down three floors. At lobby level he paused and listened since if he set down the body he'd lose time picking it back up. Not a single noise. Harlan clumsily opened the door and nearly shut it again when he swung the tapestry and the end caught the edge of the open door, but he recovered and made it out. He glanced down the long hallway to the Exit sign that hung over the door that led to the alley and quickly scurried that direction. Backing into the door he managed to force it open, beads of sweat from the effort and the stress, not to mention the exertion before this when he had to single-handedly take down his assassin, ran down his face and soaked his shirt.

Now outside, he turned to find the car and found more than he had expected. Three men stood there. One was quite disheveled, likely inebriated, being propped up by a second fellow. The third one was smoking a cigarette. All four men froze, three eyeing the man carrying the lumpy tapestry and the fourth deciding if he should drop it and run, especially since now that he was back in the light of the moon Harlan could see that part of the tapestry was soaked with the blood of his would-be killer.

There was a long pause before the guy with the cigarette's expression changed, followed quickly by the other two, though Harlan couldn't figure out what they were thinking. The expression did not fit the situation.

"You... You're Rudolph Valentino!" the Cigarette man exclaimed.

Harlan looked puzzled for a second and then felt the hand of someone on his shoulder. He stiffened up for a moment at the surprise but then felt the man squeeze past him. The man... was indeed Rudolph Valentino! All three of the men who'd been hanging out in the alley rushed over, even the one that was drunken, as if he'd suddenly sobered up. Mr. Valentino smiled and shook their hands, glancing at Harlan for just a moment before returning his attention to the men.

Harlan hauled the tapestry down the three steps and leaned it against the wall before opening the trunk and dropping the body inside. Harlan moved to the driver side and gave a slight motion to Rudy, as he'd come to call him in the past few years, and Valentino gave an almost imperceptible nod, then the car drove off.

This is the story that Dr. Jameson Rook tells. It happened in 1925, just about a year before the young, vital, and bewitchingly handsome movie star would die mysteriously. The papers would claim it was complications from perforated ulcers. Harlan knew that something had burst from the 31-year old and doctors would never be able to explain it, so that was their story for the media. Ulcers (which he did have a history of) mimicking an appendicitis, leading to peritonitis and death.

At the funeral were not only the usual array of on and off-screen Hollywood royalty, but also retired western lawman Thrace Gilby, Professor of linguistics Angelina Leuwenhoek (Lo-van-hoke), psychic to the stars Mila Souzatska, and at least four other members of the Autumn Council, of which Rudolph Valentino had been a treasured member.

After the graveside ceremony, that night, the seven of them returned, dug up the grave, performed a proper ritual to make sure whatever had inhabited Valentino would not try and animate his corpse, and then reburied him.

This is the Autumn Council.

Said to be founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, there's no real documentation to back up a specific date. It is said that Valentino was its most famous member since one of the founders, a man named Leonardo Da Vinci. But all of this is word of mouth, tales told by senior members to younger members, sometimes during recruitment, thus making their truth suspect. Not to mention that no one tells the stories the same way.

Except Valentino. He was recent enough that everyone remembers him the same.

Named the Autumn Council because of their tendency to meet at the same time of year on a shifting date in August or September to discuss the machinations of the evils in the dark corners of the world, the council is currently comprised of ten members (Besides the playe characters).



## Current Roster (non-player characters)

- Rolf Heidelberg, 50, former spy, now retired cabaret owner in Berlin, Germany.
- Frank Hildebrandt, 70, old west gunfighter/gambler with 7 known high-noon-style showdown victories and countless other less structured gun battles. Currently he consults on Hollywood western sets. Given the nickname Pox by Jessie James who said he killed more men than small pox. (He hates the nickname.)
- Cherise Dubois, 42, former mistress to three French Prime Ministers, recently widowed by millionaire industrialist Jean Plichon (A mining engineer turned politician). She knows many politicians and businessmen. She has long had the nickname "Silk" or "Silky" because of her voice and mannerisms.
- Ares Lawson, 35, current facilitator for the annual gatherings. He's an expert in logistics, shipping, and travel. He's a former employee of Silky.

- Jameson Rook, 62, writer. He's like if Hemmingway had looked into the darkness and hadn't shot himself, instead opting to fight it. He's burly, even at 62, with a powerful handshake and a penchant for alcohol and cigars.
- Aaron Halsey, 43, former military combat instructor. He's absolutely deadly with any weapon, and may things that aren't weapons.
- Winthrop Styer, 58, antiques dealer. Winthrop has traveled the world looking for rare pieces and since joining the council has been able to look out for any items with magical properties or council-worthy history.
- Dean Mathers, 30, former Soldier. Dean has done a lot of living in 30 years and has endless tales about places he's been from the pyramids to Paris to prison. He's recently taken to shaving his head bald.
- Dr. Lois Adler, 45, surgeon. Dr. Adler was the only female medical intern at the hospital when Valentino took ill. Subsequently she was there to witness his death and was inducted shortly thereafter. No one refers to her as his "replacement" because he was considered irreplaceable.
- Dominic Deavers, 44, student of everything. Dominic reads everything he can get his hands on and becomes engrossed in high concept projects. His current one involves what he calls "The Automatic Man", an attempt to make an automaton that can respond verbally to commands. No one loves a good gadget like Dom.

## Facilities

Everyone has their own base of operations, from a lowly suburban house to Silky's massive estate. Worth noting that Aaron doesn't have a home and perpetually travels. Every year when they gather it's a new location, rented for the occasion.

## The Annual Council Meeting

When the members gather the following things generally occur...

- An exchange of technology. The latest in devices is discussed and often tales of their use in the field are shared.
- A sharing of intelligence on the activities of the council's adversaries.
- Boasting, drinking, swearing, and lots of tale telling about the past year and even the distant past of the council; a sort of oral history.
- Senior members form an agenda, marking things that need to be handled immediately out in the world.

## Initiation

You will have already been initiated when the game starts. In order to join the council you had to be sponsored by a current member, have a one-on-one discussion with the current Induction officer, and then be ratified by the council. You are already a member of the council at the start of the game. You should decide whether this is your first, second, or third time at the annual gathering (Your choice).

Induction officer the past three years has been Winthrop Styer. He employed a mirror to detect lies. (Your figure in the mirror always tells the truth; if you're lying then your actions/mouth movements didn't match up to those in the mirror). You all passed so you must not have lied too much.