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opening extract from

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T. Drummond MacIntyre III, son of T. Drummond MacIntyre II (Senior Vice President of MacIntyre, MacIntyre & Moscowitz Engineering, of Chicago, Atlanta and New York City), sat on a bench, trying his best to give the impression he had his nose in the most recent copy of *Black Ace* magazine – if there was anything better to read than detective fiction, he had, in his opinion, yet to find it.

As he pretended to read he kept his eyes peeled for the man he'd spotted. The man, wearing a sharply-tailored,

black double-breasted suit and a dark grey fedora, who also had a pencil mustache…and who he was *sure* he'd seen on the boat train *and* at the station in London.

Each time he'd noticed him, the man had turned and, like a shadow, slipped out of sight. He was *sure* the guy was following them, but why he'd follow him and his father he couldn't figure out. His pop helped *his* pop, Gramps, run the family company, which made machines which made machines. That kind of thing. He was *not* the kind of person who got followed by men in dark grey fedoras; unfortunately, in Trey's opinion.

Aware of exactly, word for word, what his father would say to him if he left the bench to investigate these curious circumstances, Trey gritted his teeth and stayed put. He could solve this mystery, if only he was allowed to, but his father was no fan of his ambitions to be a private eye, or of *Black Ace*, for that matter, and would no doubt confiscate the magazine, given the opportunity. So he actually did start to read, which was no hardship as there was the second part of *The Snarl of the Beast*, a Trent "Pistol" Gripp story, in this issue. And Trent Gripp was the bee's knees when it came to sleuths and gumshoes, the kind who generally always shot first and hardly ever bothered to ask questions later…

* * *

“Time to go, son!”

Trey looked up to see his father as he *marched* past him across the concourse of the Gare de Lyon, making for the platform where the Simplon *Orient-Express* was waiting to depart on its journey to Constantinople at 22.20 sharp.

T. Drummond MacIntyre II was in something of a hurry, and it showed; there was a schedule to keep to, his ramrod posture and clicking heels seemed to say, and by heaven that was what was going to happen! Some holiday *this* was turning out to be, was all T. Drummond III (generally known by one and all as Trey) could think.

This trip had been sold to him by his mother as “a golden opportunity” to spend some time with his father on an “educational holiday”, and if you wanted his opinion, Trey MacIntyre had more than somewhat been sold a pup. For a start there was no such animal as an “educational holiday” because, as anyone with half a brain knew, a holiday was time *off* from education! But Trey had been prepared to let that point go as he really was looking forward to being with his pop. Except that everywhere they went his father always seemed to have business that just *had* to be done – telegrams to pore over, wires to send, phone calls to take and make, letters to write and people who demanded to be met.

So, while his mother did whatever it was you did when you visited friends in Bel Air, California – his parents did not normally have separate holidays, but, as his mother claimed to get seasick in the bath, a trip across the Atlantic was never going to be on her agenda – Trey had travelled first by train from Chicago to New York. Here, at the window of his father's office suite in the Woolworth Building ("The tallest building in the world, son, all 792 feet of it!") he had watched, boggle-eyed, as thirty-three floors below, Broadway was turned into the Canyon of Heroes by the incredible ticker-tape parade – a sight he'd only ever seen before in smudgy newspaper photos – for the heroic flyer Charles Lindbergh. It was hard to make out much through the blizzard of thin strips of newsprint streamers being thrown out of windows, but he had *personally* seen the very first man to fly solo across the Atlantic! Now *that* was what he called an educational experience!

From then on, apart from the sea voyage, First Class, over to Liverpool, England, on the RMS *Aquitania* – five *days*, and some, which was rather more than Mr. Lindbergh's thirty-three and a half *hours* to Paris – the holiday had settled into a somewhat duller pattern. He had been taken on a car trip round various Scottish castles – Scotland being the land of his forefathers, as he'd constantly been reminded by his actual father.

From Edinburgh ("the Athens of the North, son, the Athens of the North", which didn't, thought Trey, say much for Athens itself) they'd gone on to visit London (rainy) and had taken the boat train over the Channel to Paris (also rainy, but with garlic and bad plumbing).

And everywhere they went there were always meetings, meetings, and yet more meetings (who knew engineering was so much about talking and not about making things?). But maybe, thought Trey, as he stopped while his father instructed the porters which of their trunks were to go to the compartment and which to the baggage car, the same would not be the case while they were on this part of the trip. No telephones, no colleagues, offices or business to do on the Orient Express…and hopefully the food would be better than the frankly *dull* stuff that had been served up in a lot of the swanky hotels and houses they'd stayed at. Most of the restaurants his father liked to eat in never, ever served ketchup or proper yellow mustard, let alone a hamburger and French fries, or a hot dog and onions, to put them on.

According to the man from Thomas Cook, this trip to Constantinople ("Where the East meets the West, Mr. MacIntyre – two continents in one city!") should take

them about a week, all being well. Trey had no idea why the original itinerary (a rather dull-sounding trip to the Côte d'Azur, with visits to a bunch of vineyards, then back to London via Paris) had been changed, but figured it had to do with business (what, in his father's life didn't?) and he had to say he'd no complaints as this new route did sound a lot more exciting. The map that Trey's father had given him showed they'd be going from Paris to Lausanne, in Switzerland, then across the border into Italy and on to Milan and Venice, where they would be stopping for a day or so.

"'*Though there are some disagreeable things in Venice,*'" his father had told him the night before, smiling as he read from a book, "'*there is nothing so disagreeable as the visitors*'! Henry James said that…"

Trey had no idea who Henry James was, and the information served only to make him wonder why his father was so keen they should go to Venice, and what other unpleasantness might be waiting there for them once they arrived – more than likely *more* museums, galleries and theatres, of which he'd seen enough to last a lifetime, to his way of thinking.

After Venice they still had the cities of Belgrade and Sofia to pass through before reaching their final destination, and all Trey hoped was that, if the journey ended up turning out to be a bore, his father wouldn't

stop him from reading his magazines. He'd brought a number of them with him, in fact almost enough to fill one of his cases, all of which his father regarded as worthless trash.

"Trey – stop daydreaming and get on board, son!"

Trey looked up and saw his father calling over his shoulder to him from the steps leading up into the gleaming blue carriage; as he began to follow him onto the train an odd feeling that he was being watched made him turn round, and what he saw stopped him dead in his tracks…the man was there again, some little way down the platform, staring right back at him, his dark, slitted eyes flicking from him to his father!

"*Trey!*" his father barked.

Quite sure that Trent Gripp would have been straight up the platform to find out who the man was and why he'd been putting the eye on him, Trey, on the other hand, had no option but to do as he was told…