

THE
SCARLET
CROWN



FREDERIC DALTON

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First printed in 2020

Book design by Najdan Mancic

ISBN 978-94-6407-350-8 (paperback)

FredericDalton.com

For my children: Emma-Marie, Alexander and Louise.

“Sapientia Sapienti Dono Data”
(Wisdom is a gift to the wise)

Florence Farr, British West End actress (1860-1917)

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was a secret society which was active in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The organization, set up by three founders—William Robert Woodman, William Wynn Westcott, and Samuel Liddell Mathers—was primarily active in Great Britain. Known as a magical order, it studied the occult and paranormal activities.

It established the basis for several magical traditions, including Wicca, and is a major inspiration to many modern-day occult organizations. Often referred to simply as the “Golden Dawn,” it was composed of three orders teaching topics such as astrology, tarot divination, magic, astral travel and alchemy, as well as the practice of spiritual communication.

The Golden Dawn attracted many celebrities in the late nineteenth century including English authors Evelyn Underhill and Aleister Crowley, actress Florence Farr, Irish revolutionary Maud Gonne, Irish poet William Butler Yeats and the Welsh author Arthur Machen.

Although the organization became less popular in the early twentieth century, several Golden Dawn temples continued to operate well into the 1970s.



This work references the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn on a regular basis, actively using the name “Golden Dawn” to identify this organization. This work solely focuses on the history of this specific organization. The author does not associate, relate, or otherwise connect to any views, political entities, commercial organizations, groups or individuals and does not have any connection whatsoever to other organizations globally who actively use the name “Golden Dawn” outside of the historical context provided above.

PROLOGUE



Britannia, 43 A.D.

Winter had come early this year. Aulus Plautius, Rome's lead general in Britain surveyed the land, standing on a small hill overlooking the snow encrusted landscape. His generals stood by his side as they evaluated their situation and discussed strategy.

Nearly half a kilometer away, hugging the frozen Medway River, a large force was gathering. They would be a formidable foe, made up of four different local tribes, and they were not planning on letting him or his army pass.

The wind suddenly picked up.

Above the area where the tribes had gathered, dark clouds appeared. Day turned to night. Bolts of blue lightning flashed across the sky. Stunned by the awesome spectacle, the tribesmen stood their ground, staring upward.

It was all over in under a minute as multiple bolts of lightning slammed into the ground from the dark clouds above them, smashing gaping holes into the landscape and taking out nearly the entire force. Those that were not dead or injured ran for their lives, and what remained of the once formidable force lay in ruins.

Plautius observed the scene and turned to his generals. "Well, another victory for our Emperor. That was easy," he said.

A little too easy.

Twenty-one years ago

Little Melton, England

It was a drab and rainy day in Little Melton, a neat little village set into the side of rolling green hills on the border between Norfolk and Suffolk counties in England. The village itself was fairly typical for the region and would not have received any attention were it not for the Tudor heritage bestowed upon it by Henry VIII many centuries ago.

Bassinth Hall, a manor house that stands less than a kilometer away from the village, reflects everything Britain is proud of: heritage, history, grandeur, and power.

On the grounds surrounding the Tudor Hall, fourteen-year-old John Bassinth, future Earl of Melton, ignored the splashing rain as he made his way to a new hiding spot in the gardens. With nearly eighteen hectares of land around the buildings, there were plenty of spaces to play hide-and-seek, but John had decided on a new favorite spot today.

He looked back at the imposing building, making sure no one could see him. The Hall had been built in 1540, near the end of Henry VIII's reign. Constructed in the classic style of the period, featuring a hand-made red brick produced in the region, it counted three floors and an impressive thirty bedrooms. Connecting the indoor spaces to the fabulous English garden outside were countless glass doors that allowed the house to flow seamlessly into the open space outside.

As with any other manor house of that period, the gardens were considered to be an extension of the house—and Bassinth Hall had it all: near perfect rose gardens, a large lake surrounded by a controlled, but wild-looking forest on one side, and an endless lawn leading up to the house from the four corners of the estate. On the far side of the property stood quite a few hectares devoted to the noblest of animals—horses.

All these luxuries had become part of daily life for John Bassinth, eldest son and future earl. But this was furthest from his mind as he ran down the lawn toward the lake. He knew his younger brother

Andrew would be after him. If he wanted to win this game of hide-and-seek, he would have to find a really good spot.

His brother, two years younger, was the only other child in the family. A sister Ann had died many years ago after falling ill at the age of six. He had never really known her, too young to remember, but it had devastated his parents, and since that time, they had often lived separate lives in the great house.

He ran faster to ensure he could reach the tree line before being seen. His brother always had a knack for finding him. Although he was younger, he had spent a large part of his free time out hunting with their dad, unlike John who preferred to spend time in the vast family library, reading or building scale models of cars. With nearly ten years of hunting experience, Andrew's tracking skills were some of the best anyone had ever seen, and John knew that even a crushed twig would be like a signpost.

Pushing past the first trees, he spurred along the two hundred-meter long pathway that led into the forest, treading as lightly as he could at that speed, careful not to leave too much of a trail. His feet splashed on the wet ground, small waves of muddy water pushing outward before the hole quickly filled back up in his absence. *Damn*, John thought, another clear marker for his brother to find.

A minute into the trail, he saw his destination—the family's mausoleum where over ten generations of his ancestors lay. One day, he too would be laid to rest there.

He knew this would be the only place where Andrew would never think to look. This would be the day—the first day ever—that his brother would not be able to find him! The fact that he was ignoring his father's rules played no part in his decision—the mausoleum was strictly off-limits—but that also meant he would not be found.

He approached the building, which sat in a clearing on the far end of the wooded patch near the lake. It was built of gray stone and was ornately decorated, his family's official coat of arms hung over the entrance gate. It was only a small building but hidden under the ground around it lay generations of his family members.

He loved his family's coat of arms; it gave him a sense of pride. He studied it intently as he took the staircase down. The shield's most visible feature was an ornate golden royal crown, surrounded by a red, almost fog-like tint. It sat directly above two roses, with a white flower set into a larger red flower behind it. The shield had been handed down the generations of his family since Henry VIII had bestowed it on his ancestors.

John passed under it and pushed open the ornate black iron gate, featuring two snakes wrapped around upside-down torches. It turned smoothly thanks to the generations of workmen who maintained it.

Today will be my day, he thought to himself.

He walked down the steps into the darkness below.

University of Vienna, Austria

At approximately the same moment, fifteen-hundred kilometers away in Vienna, thirty-four-year-old Thomas Edelmann stood in a large hall filled to the brim with men and women in black and purple togas. He walked down a neat purple carpet, flanked on each side by rows of black wooden chairs with red satin seats. Every chair in the hall was occupied for the ceremony, as parents, friends, and professors crowded the room to watch some thirty-five Ph.D. students receive their doctorate.

Edelmann followed the ten or so students in front of him as they walked up on a stage, lined with stunning marble columns that held up the ceiling of the ceremonial room at the main University of Vienna building. Located on the second floor, it was considered a jewel of Austrian nineteenth-century design, built in the 1880s by revered local architect Heinrich Ferstel who designed the hall in the Italian High Renaissance style. Natural light poured in from the windows, set into three of the four walls, reflecting off the ornate blue-and-white ceilings, and leaving a warm and bright glow in the room.

Speeches had just been completed and each student was handed their diploma by the College Chancellor, flanked by life-sized yellow marble statues of Austria's former Empress Maria Theresa to their left and Duke Rudolph IV, the university's founder, to the right.

The honor he was about to receive had taken him nearly ten years of hard work to achieve and today he was to receive recognition for that effort. He walked on stage and waved back to his proud parents sitting in the front row, his mother in tears, his father beaming with pride.

As of today, he would be addressed as “Doctor” Thomas Edlmann, a recognized expert in history and, at the same time, a full professor at the University of Vienna’s prestigious Arts and History department.

The road to this achievement had not been without its problems. His doctoral thesis had to be reworked because his original plan—to seek out and study a crown which had not been seen since King Harold II of England had owned it in 1066—had ended in failure. He simply could not track it down and every effort made had been met with a dead end. It had meant that he had to reassess nearly four years of research and refocus his thesis on the design and development of Tudor crowns instead.

Despite the fact that he had not managed to locate the crown, he had done it: today he had achieved the highest academic honor—a full doctorate. In fact, his thesis had been so good that they instantly offered him a permanent position in the history department. A position he had gratefully accepted.

Yet upon receiving his neatly rolled diploma and other items of symbolic importance, he could only think of the opportunity he had missed. He knew that he would spend the rest of his life searching for that elusive crown.

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IT BEGINS

Present Day

Sheringham, England

John Grey was not a special man and quite honestly, had little ambition to be one. He had a good desk job at Gresham's School in the village of Holt nearby—maintaining records and invoices—and had little interest in his work beyond that.

He owned a classic car—a green MG B series—which was the only love in his life, and had his own semi-detached yellow-brick Victorian house on Waterbank Road in Sheringham, a typical English village in northeast England bordering the North Sea.

Mid-thirties, with jet-black straight hair that was parted with an almost mathematically drawn line down the middle, John was 1.80 meters tall with an average body mass that reflected both his love of food, lazy days on the sofa with a good book, and his passion for sports.

Feeling a need to keep his weight under control, he was out on an early morning run across Church Street, turning onto High Street, and then down to the promenade in front of the rocky shingle beach that separated land and sea. The beach, made up of millions of rounded gray pebbles called “shingles,” was a typical feature of

the area and had often been used by smugglers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the sea was calm enough because it offered a more stable footing than sand.

Now mid-November, John had to deal with some significant headwinds blowing in from that very sea as he made his way forward. The pharmacy's clock promised a blustery three degrees Celsius, but with the wind chill, the reality was closer to a chilly minus one.

He pushed forward, crossing over a short bridge under which small fishing boats were brought to water during high tide.

He took a gulp of fresh sea air as it rushed past him, enjoying its dry and crisp flavor. He smiled, hoping the few dark clouds above his head would hang on to their water supply until they were well away from him. He hated the feeling of rain splashing on his face.

John turned onto Victoria Street, then right and made for the Esplanade. From there, he left the asphalt behind him, and a hard, sandy road took him to the top of the cliffs that stood high on each side of the village. Although the cliffs were not as famous as those in Dover, they could certainly compete as they towered an impressive seventy meters above the sea line below. The closed space of the town now opened up into a green expanse to the left of him, while the sea lapped at the coast many meters below him on his right.

He felt good; he could run for hours.

As he came closer to Sheringham Road, still on the dirt track that snaked on top of the cliff, he turned left, leaving the cliffs behind him and making his way inland to meet the main road. He could hear cars rushing by in the distance. A short sprint past Warbey House and its three-hundred-year-old mill would take him down a path between hedges and then onto the road which was his half-way point. He quickened his pace as the mill came into view, challenging his body to accept the punishment.

London, England

Alex Marfleet, a mid-level operative for British Military Intelligence, made his way out the door of his apartment on Newcourt Street, a stone's throw from London Zoo. He was of medium build, nearly

thirty years old, and was a traditionalist—which was reflected in his wardrobe choice. He wore a light brown tweed jacket, white shirt, and ribbed dark brown trousers over his well-polished brown shoes. The brown complimented his short red hair, brown eyes, and clean-shaven face.

It was cold in London this morning, with a light wind blowing, so he buttoned up his blazer against the chill.

As procedure required, he walked down a carefully pre-planned route which he changed once a week, looking into the reflection of well-placed windows to see if he was being followed. Satisfied he was not, he walked into a public parking garage several hundred meters away from his home and got into his car. It would take him over two hours to reach his destination, despite it being only a few kilometers away. But procedure was procedure, and he would follow the required steps to ensure his employer's secrets were kept safe.

Sheringham, England

John Grey, still on his morning run, took on a tougher but steady pace as he pushed on toward the main road. He began to pass the Warbey property on his right side. The sandy path crunched underfoot. Ms. Detnon, the owner of the house and mill, had always refused to allow the local council to pave the path towards her house. She wanted to retain the old charm of the place and had staunchly fought any attempt at modernizing its surroundings.

The house and mill, which both hugged the pathway in front of it, were built of red brick, with high windows flanked by a dark blue worn natural stone. The imposing mill had long lost its blades, but still proudly stood several stories higher than the house beside it. An ornate cast iron and wooden bench was neatly placed against its façade, facing out to the path in front of it. Behind the house a small but well-organized garden stretched out, protected from the blustering sea wind by several ancient hedgerows.

Though he was focused on maintaining his pace, John was momentarily distracted by something odd near the house's front door. He frowned as he ran a few steps further, then doubled back

to inspect one of two stone lion statues which flanked the house's entrance. He would not have given them a second thought were it not for the fact that one had been pushed over, its head released from its body by the force of the fall. It was somewhat blocking the passage to the front door.

Strange. It was not the owner's style to accept imperfection. He assumed she probably didn't know that vandals had destroyed what was probably a priceless artifact, given the mill's three-hundred-year history.

At sixty-five years old, the owner, Ms. Detnon, was a force to be reckoned with in Sheringham. Her family had often held leading positions in the town including delivering no less than five mayors in the past one hundred and fifty years. At one point, the family owned nearly half the businesses in town. Today, the last childless survivor of the Detnon clan, Alice, lived in Warbey House. She was conservative and British through-and-through—the broken statue would have the town buzzing and he knew she would personally track down the culprit.

The old bag will go mad, he thought. He peered through the windows to see if he could spot her. The only decent thing to do was to tell her.

And then something caught his eye: three dark figures moving inside the house. He froze. He knew Ms. Detnon was a recluse, and no visitor had ever made it beyond the front door in over twenty years.

John rushed to the window to get a better look inside, keeping his body glued to the sidewall beside it to avoid detection. A first look inside revealed nothing new—the three figures had disappeared somewhere near to what he assumed was a large fireplace.

He came out of his hiding spot and now pressed his forehead against the window, fighting against the unusually high solid blue stone windowsill that jutted out into his ribs. His heavy breathing suddenly obscured his view as he steamed up the windows. As he wiped it down and squinted to get a good look inside, he saw a figure struggle to get up from behind the seating area, holding onto the sofa for support. "Ms. Detnon!" he said out loud.

He ran toward the front door, leapt over the fallen statue, and grabbed the antique brass knob. It turned, and with a satisfying click, he felt the lock disengage. He pushed open the surprisingly heavy, solid wooden door and looked inside. He wanted to help her, but he was no fool either. If there were three criminals in the house, he would be outnumbered.

He peered into the dark windowless corridor. It led down to the back of the house, past a wooden staircase on the right. Old colorful tiles lined the floor. At the end, a door stood slightly ajar, letting in a sliver of light.

He had expected to be met with a musty smell. Ms. Detnon rarely came out the door these days, and never invited anyone in. He was surprised when he was met by the sweet smell of flowers.

Content that he heard and saw no movement, he crept into the corridor, partially feeling his way around. When he came to the first door on his left, he assumed it would lead him directly to the room next door and Ms. Detnon. He felt around for a handle and found one instantly. Gritting his teeth, he slowly pushed down, attempting to open the door without creating too much noise.

What he had failed to take into account was that the old house had seen several hundred years of history, and the antique wood-paneled doors were not as straight as new ones. As soon as he pressed down fully on the handle, he could feel the tension on the door release from the frame. It shuddered loudly in its hinges as the wood folded back into its crooked shape and, although letting out only a momentary noise, it was loud enough to cause a reaction in the room.

He tensed up.

Within seconds, he heard several feet making their way through the sitting room. Ms. Detnon cried out, "Get out! Get out of my house!" And as if on command, he heard a backdoor slam shut. They were gone.

He rushed in and headed toward where he had heard Ms. Detnon speak, seeing her leaning on a sofa, still rubbing her head. She seemed surprised to see him, but almost instantly offered a smile of gratitude to see a familiar face. Although they had never spoken extensively, Ms.

Detnon regularly sat on the bench at the front of the house on warm sunny days and had wished him a good day on regular occasions.

She was a tidy woman in her mid-sixties and wore a floral frock with a neat red apron. Her long gray hair was pulled back in a bun that was held in place by a red strap.

“Are you okay, Ms. Detnon?” John asked as he walked toward her, arms outstretched.

She continued to rub her head as he approached.

“Yes, thank you.” She smiled. “I am grateful for your response.” She paused. “You are the gentleman who regularly passes by my house on your daily jog. I recognize you.”

“I was running by the house when I saw the commotion through the window!” he said, flustered. “Should I call the police?”

“No, that won’t be needed,” she said. “I am afraid I know who was in my house—let’s just call it a family matter.”

“But you were hit on the head. Seriously, having three aggressive people—family or not—in your house is a little shocking.”

“I’ll be all right, thank you.”

“Can I get you something to drink?”

“Yes, that would be lovely—in the kitchen,” she said, pointing toward a door just a few meters down the hall from the one he had burst through.

He walked toward the kitchen.

For an old recluse, her kitchen was surprisingly modern—not older than two years, he estimated—and no cost had been spared. He found the electric kettle sitting on one of the countertops, filled it with water, and clicked the button to activate it. A small red light at the base of the kettle confirmed it was on.

As he prepared the tea, he gave the whole incident some thought. *She was surprisingly calm.*

His attention was drawn to heavy footsteps coming his way, thudding on the old wooden floorboards, and before he knew it, Ms. Detnon stood in the doorway.