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Editor-In-Chief- Dr. Vishwanath Bite

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The Hanson Affair

James Goodridge

Riverside Drive looked splendid this Autumn morning. A gentlemen dressed in an expensive tweed suit made his way up to an ornate building on the corner. The square faced young man kept brushing thick locks of dark hair from across his face. Finding the right building he entered the vestibule and buzzed the apartment of Madison Cavendish private investigator of situations normal and paranormal.

“Orson how are you ? Please have a seat. “ Madison offered as he ushered Mr. Welles into to his abode that double as an office. Furnished in the styling of the nineteen thirties, both clients and investigator found it quaint.

“Marvelous place you have here Madison. “Really swell.”

“We let’s hope this will be your final visit for awhile Orson.” Madison said grinning.

“ Well trust me , old friend I have a career in radio and motion pictures ahead of me and I do not intend to get mixed up into anything that will lead to black mail in the future again. “ The young would be motion picture maverick giggled.

Reaching across Madison’s oak desk Orson Welles handed him a check with a large sum written on it for services rendered. Madison , legs propped up on the desk took the check and dropped it into one of the desk draws.

Madison Cavendish sharply dressed in a three piece pin stripe blue suit, black wing tip shoes, white shirt, blue tie ,blue fedora with white band. Jet black hair slicked back, sharp nosed and swarthy complexioned, he had matinee idol looks , but in truth Madison was passing for white. Only Seneca his secretary, love interest and Shaman and a few trusted people in the Harlem community knew because he was identified as a secret asset, working inside of the system. Another secret only Madison and Seneca shared between them was the horrific event that hurdled them in to investigations of the strange. The lower Manhattan affair. Kidnappings, ritual murder, a strange creature in an office building basement, betrayal by a friend and finally Madison and Seneca coming to grips with their newly imbued powers.

“ Well Madison I cannot stay , I’ve got to meet with some fellow actors for a script reading later and it’s a bit too early in the morning for me anyway .”

Orson stood up trying to suppress a yawn.

“ Just remember Orson stay out of lower Manhattan bars and stay out of women from Madrid if you catch my drift.” Madison cracked as he led his promising client to the door and out into the vestibule. Just as Madison turned to go back into his apartment/office he caught a glimpse of Seneca going in before him, her apartment was on the second floor.

“ Hey ! Sweet stuff! A grand good morning to you!” Madison now running behind her to hug her. Since they met that fateful summer of nineteen fourteen Seneca did not look a day over twenty seven, as a matter of fact neither did Madison. Not aging seemed to be a part of the gift they received back then as the both of them called it although at times it was a curse to be sure. It’s not a good feeling to have people born around eighteen eighty five like yourself wonder and ask you why haven’t you aged.

“ What’s so grand about it sweetie ?” Seneca offered dryly as Madison tried to slow waltz her from behind.

“ Check the draw sweet stuff.” Madison said as he let go of her waist.

Seneca went around the desk and sat down to check the draws. Seneca part native American and mulatto ,like Cavendish she had faced racism too. Never being fully accepted by a few in

the Seneca Nation in upstate New York and sometimes called a “red nigger” by others , Seneca felt alone in the world and with drew in the mystic world of a shaman. Seneca cut a striking lanky figure in a pleated black skirt with matching sleeveless sweater covering a white blouse, white pearls and black shoes and stockings. Raven black waves shimmered in her hair.

“ Oh Maddy. This is a lot of cash for one case.” Seneca had found the check.

“ Orson was in a real bind. The black mailers were going to cook his goose.”

Just then the ring of the phone broke Madison and Seneca’s conversation. Madison tapped the ear piece of the phone lightly into the air and caught it.

“Hello Cavendish here.” Madison answered while looking at Seneca’s legs as she sat on the desk. She never failed to distract him. Their love was supreme, he belonged to her and she belonged to him, marriage was around the corner. After a few minutes of yes Paul and a price quote of services. Finally Madison hung up the phone.

“ Who was it ?” Seneca asked. She had worked her way on the desk to in a way where Madison was sitting at the desk between her legs.

“Paul Robeson and he says , Dr. Jacob Hanson and his wife Inez have vanished! and he wants us to help find him. He’s sending Bumpy Johnson cross town to us with details and a retainer fee.” Madison tipped his hat back on his head while he began to go into deep thought.

“ What do you need me to do Maddy ?”

“ First I need you to use your shaman powers to see if you can feel anything.”

“What about Dr. Hanson’s personal radio that he gave you ?” Seneca asked.

“ I’ll work on that before Bumpy gets here. Now as much as we seem like two peas in a pod sitting here we have got work to do.” Madison cracked wise before struggling to get up.

The fragrance of sandal wood incense made its way from under the door to Madison’s room, inside Seneca in a crossed legged sitting position levitated a few feet off the floor, deep in a dream quest . Madison behind his desk mean while tried to contact Dr. Hanson on the short wave radio the good doctor was nice enough to give him along with other gadgets , like a auto mobile tracking device, tear gas gun just to name a few helped Madison and Seneca on many an “affair” as they liked to call and file their work.

A buzz of the intercom , broke Madison’s concentration . Turning off the short wave and placing it back in the wood cabinet behind his desk he buzzed the person in , not even bothering to ask, for he knew it was Bumpy Johnson. Bumpy was prompt, which was good if he had your back in a situation , but bad ; if you had crossed him in some way.

Stepping into Maddy’s office Bumpy was dapper in a grey suit with matching fedora, hand made white shirt, pearl colored tie, grey shoes and enough diamonds on him to almost blind you.

“Hey ex John Law. How’s business? Still helping those crazy white folks find, lost ugly ass paintings they pay way too much for? They paying you good ?” Bumpy teased as he entered.

“ Yeah and then some. But not as much as the digits you write down while standing on the corner brother.” Madison replied. While both men were on opposite sides of the perennial street, there was mutual respect for each other.

He flopped down in the chair Orson Welles sat in earlier , Bumpy also flopped a manila envelope , the New York Sun news paper neatly folded to an item on page eighteen and an regular sized white envelope thick with cash on Cavendish’s desk.

“You know that, Miss Green still praising you and the Lord for finding her twin daughters Josie and Donna. You did good brother.” Bumpy offered.

Madison barely acknowledge Bumpy’s salutations for he had opened the manila envelope and was going over the news paper clips and note addressed to him from Paul Robeson. It seems, Hanson was on the edge of an important breakthrough of some kind research, that could revolutionize travel . His ideals and theories on electromagnetic power while stuff of science fiction did arouse interest from foreign powers but an indolent query from the United States Navy , who could not believe a negro scientist come up with anything of any magnitude . Mister Robeson’s note pleaded to Madison to find Hanson at all cost; for while the New York Sun article stated that “Doc Hanson” negro scientist and his wife Inez most likely perished in the explosion at his Harlem lab, Robeson thought otherwise.

“ Hey ! Madison !” Bumpy interrupted Madison’s reading.

“ So you going to take the case?” Bumpy had more important things to do than watch some gumshoe read.

“ Yeah tell Paul I’m his man.” Madison rose to show Bumpy out, but was waved off by the gangster.

“ By the way. Where that high yeller gal , that’s all ways under you boss?” Bumpy said over his shoulder.

“ Doing research .” Madison answered hoping , that this was a cordial question anything else could prove to be fatal for Bumpy. That’s how much Madison loved Seneca.

A few moments after Bumpy exited the building, the door to Madison’s bedroom opened on its own and Seneca staggered out. The elegant outfit she had on was now drenched in perspiration and incense. Slipping into his arms he helped her to a couch across the room placed near the door and then went into the icebox and got some ice water. Every time Seneca did a dream quest, she would end up her energy being sapped, a person had to be ready to travel through time and space to communicate with the ancestors. Floating head over heels in the twilight void they the ancestors gave her an answer , kind of good news bad news.

“So what did those forefathers and foremothers of yours say?” Madison had waited until Seneca had pushed herself up on her elbows , a sign that she was all right.

“ Hanson and Inez are alive not too far, in danger but not too far, don’t where though. Maddy I have to rest a little please and whatever you do, do not leave me. Did you check the short wave ?” Seneca asking before sipping some ice water.

“No luck with the short wave; sweet stuff. You did the best you could. Get some rest and we will start this affair tonight.” Madison while talking had got up and retrieved his bath robe out the bedroom. Helping Seneca out of her damp clothes and into the robe, Seneca laid back down for a few hours rest which gave him time to read the New York Sun article again in depth.

Wagner Westhoff put the New York Sun newspaper down and shook his head in frustration . Frustration in the fact that just when he had arrived at Dr. Hanson’s Harlem laboratory the previous night a explosion so fierce as to knock Wagner across one hundred and sixteenth street opposite the building engulfing the structure surely the good doctor and his wife could not have survived , but what could have happened?

Was it an error on the doctor’s part? Or was sabotage by some cartel intent on ending the negro’s contribution to science ? It was also frustrating in that deep down he knew the doctor wasn’t dead (although a negro he’s too smart to blow himself up) and now he had to find Hanson. Wagner Westhoff , settled down to what people from the middle West United

States call a plowman's lunch , a wedge of cheese, a tomato, an onion and a loaf of bread washed down with a pot of black coffee. As an agent of the United States section of the Vrill society he was charged with obtaining anything of scientific value and making it available to the third reich back in Germany ,Wagner took his fifth column work seriously. Pale, shako headed, blue eyes, with brown hair , Wagner's physical build was enhanced by a exoskeleton of electro magnetic energy circuits he , and the doctor had build; this he wore under a three piece brown suit. Ordered from Wisconsin to New York , and now holed up in a nasty little Hell's Kitchen rooming house, Wagner ate his lunch which was really dinner and logically thought out his next move.

Midnight on the roof top of a burned out shell of a building on west one hundred and sixteenth street. Two shadows make their way through an opening into what was once Dr. Hanson's laboratory . Bulky flash lights turned on, the two investigators search for clues.

“ You take this end of the room and I'll take the other Maddy.’ Seneca ordered.

“Ok. sweet stuff.” Madison whispered. When it came down to business they were equals. For situations like this Madison like to dress in a one piece mechanic's dark jump suit, boots and skull cap. Seneca favor a sleek black leather jump suit, boots and scarf. Soot covered the walls , broken wood and glass crunched under their feet.

On Madison's end of the room a pang of guilt hit him as his flash light revealed a burned out metal and wood cabinet where Hanson's short wave radio had been, its broken vacuum tube corpse giving no hint as to what transpired the other night.

“ Why didn't he contact me ?” Madison mused , just then a figure caught his vision. He never saw the punch coming, as it crashed down on his jaw. Flash light dropping to the grimy floor.

Seneca was in the process of concealing a half burned damp paper inside her jump suit when she saw the wildly intense light, caused by the blows Madison and the unknown assailant were throwing at each others body. The scientific energy from Wagner's exoskeleton gave off a neon blue spark every time it connected a punch to Madison while his occult energy gave off a neon magenta spark every time he landed a jab or hook on Wagner.

“ Who are you ?” Madison demanded in the midst of the battle.

“I am of no concern to you! Now die!” Westhoff thundered.

Just then Seneca spun into Westhoff with a long legged kick to his head. the blow knocking him off balance. Steadying himself Westhoff now faced the two adversaries ,closing in on him. Powering up his exoskeleton suit, he then let loose two neon blue energy bolts ,one hitting Madison with such force it knocked him out of one of the already broken windows to the street three floors below. The other energy bolt lifted Seneca off her feet and across the ash and muck covered floor. Feeling weak from powering up his suit Westhoff made a quick exit from the darken lab down the stairs. Out on the street Westhoff passed the crumpled body of Madison his neck twisted in a awkward position as if broke.

Seneca made her way down to the street after the strange man but stopped when she saw Madison. Running over to her partner she sat him up, Madison's neck and head lolling around as if he was a rag doll. Seneca snapped Madison's neck back in place. Being almost indestructible was a good dividend for them. Their only fear, high voltages of electricity.

“ Where the hell did he go! I going to settle that jackanapes hash whoever he is!”

Madison said as he stood up, just in time to see the faint image of the mystery man bounding farther west along hundred and sixteenth street to the Hudson river.

“ Come on we can still catch him Seneca.”

“ No wait Maddy I think ; I’ve found something.” Seneca said patting the chest area of her leather jump suit.

Jumping into their forest green Pierce-Arrow 840A , Madison and Seneca drove back to Riverside drive to change and plan their next step.

After changing clothes , the two immortals, examined the water logged paper resting on the desk before them. A nonsensical paragraph , but with a simple code embedded in it : Once in a life time Everyone senses Frowns on Owns Unmasked Response Tentatively emerges and Energizes Everyone in Nature excerpt of a poem from the book Avenues of My Soul by Ogden Nash “ We have to head to the Bronx.” Madison said still intent on the faded piece of stationary.

“ Why Maddy?”

“ Its an address, one fourteen Ogden Avenue. Nash never wrote jumble like this and never published a book named Avenues of My Soul.” Madison the lover of poetry explained.

“ How do you know its not a street named Nash?” Seneca retorted.

“ Ogden is one of the counties larger thoroughways ,not as long as the Grand Concourse though.” Madison countered.

“ I ‘ll tell you something else.” Seneca now had her hand on the paper . Her eyes closed reconnecting , to the emphatic feeling she felt , when she picked the paper up in Hanson’s electromagnetic lab.

“ They have something of importance with them.” Seneca opened her eyes. Finding herself leaning on the desk she straightened herself up. Madison came from around the desk and embraced her. The two investigators decided to get a few hours rest before venturing up to the sparsely populated Northside of the city to make good on their hunch. More than not another round with that unknown superman awaited them.

“ We are being followed sweet stuff .” Madison said calmly. Looking into the rear view mirror at the gray Ford tailing them. Passing Yankee Stadium and turning on to the Grand Concourse, Seneca marveled at the new apartment buildings that lined the elegant roadway.

“ What’s the plan Maddy? Whoever he is he’s a hard case grade A mug!”

“ We have to find a away to counter his powers. Going toe to toe just does not cut the mustard. Even when its two against one.” Madison clenched his teeth after saying it.

“ He may know our weakness you know.” Seneca lamented. Electricity equal to a power plant substation could end her and Madison’s immortality. Madison became silent and focused on side streets. Maybe a real quick turn could lose the Ford.

One fourteen Ogden Avenue was the address of a warehouse. A former horse stable it had a dusty unused look on the outside. This chilly Autumn Sunday morning saw very few people on the street when the two investigators pulled up , with the Ford a few blocks back. Madison reached under his trench coat and felt the weight of the Colt 45 in his shoulder hoister , normally he had an aversion to using his fire arm but this affair was different , even Seneca who hated guns more than her Maddy, had a 38 revolver in the pocket of her full length black leather coat. Getting out of their 840A, Madison checked the door while Seneca looked out for the gray Ford which had now disappeared . A small bolt of magenta energy from from the immortals hand blew the lock off the wooden door. Waving to Seneca Madison entered the warehouse.

Stealthy moving past shipping crates of all sizes, he now could make out the faint sound of music and a shaft of morning light coming from a ajar door. Closer the aroma of freshly brewed coffee and sweet rolls, greeted Madison.

Josephine Baker's "You're Driving Me Crazy" played on a phonograph. If it wasn't for the fact that this was such a odd and dangerous situation, a hot cup of java and music would not be a bad idea, this morning.

Pulling open the door, the private investigators earned their retainer and fees.

"Jacob, Inez! What the hell is going on!" Madison demanded.

"Coffee my friend, coffee. Pull up a crate." Doctor Jacob Hanson dead panned.

Doctor Hanson and his wife Inez were seated on either side of a packing crate covered with a table cloth, their minimal breakfast spread in front of them.

In the corner, the seventy eight record continued Miss Baker's crooning on the phonograph. Short in stature, bespectacled, pencil thin mustache and caramel in complexion, Dr. Hanson was dressed in a black suit more for function than style. His wife Inez statuesque, elegant with striking dark brown features wearing a red dress outfit covered by a dark fur collared coat was his better half.

"Madison my dear. How did you find Jacob and me?" Inez was now crossing the warehouse office to turn the phonograph off.

"We have our ways Inez. Paul sent me to find you, now you want to tell me why the two of you have everyone thinking your dead. Come on Jacob what gives? If you had any problems you could have contacted me. And who was the mug me and Seneca ran into at your lab last night? Does the owner of this place know you're here?"

Doctor Hanson reached over to a crate and handled a shoebox sized wooden device, metal handled, ruby red lighted bulb on top and with some type on grated metal opening on side of the box.

"This my dear friend, is the working model DIRECT #001 electromagnetic control box. With this transportation is changed, we can control cars, planes etc.. with the use of pickup transmitters placed in the vehicle. Driverless highways devoted to moving products and people at a fraction of the cost. News of my invention brought interest from certain nations intent on using it to position themselves as world leaders. Paul sent you to find me because he and his soft headed friends have lofty ideas to help humanity, I on the other hand am only in it for financial gain." Doctor Hanson said with disdain. Inez eyed her husband, her face a mask of unease.

"No doubt you have met Westhoff and his exosuit?"

"Yeah! And I owe him one!" Madison wanted to go another round with Westhoff.

"Madison your out classed, I build that suit and was short changed by Westhoff and his associates, that's why I blew up the laboratory and all working models save this #001 and when I reach out to them again they prey tell will have to offer a higher bid." Hanson's gambit.

"I am here you do not have to reach out to me Doctor." Westhoff said tapping the ajar door wider, so he and Seneca could enter the warehouse office recently converted into a breakfast nook. Blue electrical snake like energy wiggled around Seneca who was pinioned to Westhoff, his arm around her neck. A blue bolt of energy had blindsided her as she stood sentry outside the warehouse, giving Westhoff a chance to subdue her.

"If you harm her!" Madison yelled as he pulled his Colt 45, just then Doctor Hanson aimed the #001 at him pulling the gun out his hands.

“ Thanks Doc I owe you a good one.” Madison said. His anger showing in little magenta sparks around his finger tips.

“ Westhoff let her go and we can leave and discuss a price for my invention.” Hanson offered.

“Negro we are not discussing a price at all, I’m to take you to long Island to be picked up by U-boat and taken to Europe. You may be sub human but you do have immense scientific potential , but I will leave your friends alone. Let’s go!” Westhoff ordered. Hustling the doctor and his wife out the warehouse Westhoff followed by Madison let Seneca drop from his grasp but reneged on the deal by throwing a web of electrical energy at Madison. Jumping and hitting his shoulder on a crate, Madison got out of the way of the blast.

“Come on sweet stuff!” Madison yelled scooping up his soul mate in his arms and out of the warehouse , which was now beginning to catch fire, two city blocks length down Madison could see the gray Ford turning in a westerly direction. Placing Seneca in the front passenger seat, Madison jumped in the 840 A and sped off after Westhoff and his prisoners.

The two cars did not observe stop lights barely missing other cars and pedestrians, at one moment a police car joined the chase but was shaken off. Just as both auto mobiles closed in on the Washington bridge that connects the Bronx and Upper Manhattan, the Ford started to slow down and swerve left to right.

“What the hell is going on ?” Madison demanded. Seneca sat up in her seat, eyes wide.

The Ford now cut across the dividing line into the east bound lane, slowing down the rear door flew open and Inez bounced out on to the side walk in a sitting position. Madison started to pull over, but Inez gave him the thumbs up sign and waved him on.

The Ford finally jumped up on the curve , Doctor Hanson fell out the car holding on to the device for dear life while Westhoff pummeled him. Madison pulled up and win, lose, draw or maybe death, he owed Westhoff but good. In the blink of an eye Seneca ran pass him, both her and Westhoff went head over heels over the bridges stone wall flipping , twisting and finally hitting the Harlem river below. Westhoff ‘s exoskeleton suit short circuited but was lithe enough to swim in ,and be recharged. Adjusting to the murky light of the river Westhoff began to swim to the surface.A shadowy figure swam towards the Vrill society member. The last image Westhoff saw before he died, was Seneca’s out stretched hand grabbing his neck and breaking his wind pipe with zest.

Inez Hanson nervously kept folding the two day old New York Sun newspaper over and over in her hands. The faded paper , dated Monday September seventeenth, nineteen thirty six contained stories of mayhem in Bronx county the preceding Sunday. Unkown person’s starting fires in Mills warehouse on Ogden avenue, car chases on the Grand Concourse and a abandoned car on the Washington bridge with double suicide implications according to the few witnesses.

“ It was totally unacceptable for me to let Westhoff abduct me for slave labor in Germany. No compensation , no invention! So turning the device on him was a moot point.” Dr. Hanson said to Madison and Seneca , leaning on a wooden cane Madison had gave him during the course of tending to Hanson and Inez’s bruises courtesy of the now deceased Westhoff. The quartet were in the lower levels of Grand Central Station waiting for the New York Central , Empire Skyliner. The diesel powered locomotive was preparing to whisk the inventor and his elegant wife to a more low key life in Canada with new identities .

“ Well its good that you’re out of the game now . Paul has agreed to give you a financial stake to start anew , only me and Seneca know where you and Inez are going.”

“ And we will hold on to your device.” Seneca interjected .

“ Along with the contents in my Ogden Avenue warehouse.” Hanson retorted.

“ Wish you could have told us you were the owner.” Madison said.

“ I still find it amazing that your alive after such a fall.” The doctor stared at Sue slowly up and down , as if he could find an answer, in fact so intently Inez found it necessary to elbow him in his already sore ribs, although the question crossed Inez’s mind too.

“ Again doctor I’m a trained swimmer.” Seneca maintained the lie with a stoic look.

“ All aboard. Empire Skyliner to Montreal. All aboard.” The plump train conductor yelled at the top of his lungs. The four of them offered goodbyes thus ending the affair.