

(Story submission for A Whiff of Steam, written by Aaron Michael Marsh, aka partymetroid.)

Back-story, revealed through plot:

Magic had been apart of the world since man's inception: some of the first humans to produce fire did so with the power of their will. Not all could use magic; those who couldn't, however, became much more technologically ingenious (supposedly) out of necessity. (For the real explanation, read toward the end of this document.) Both races lived in relative peace together: that is, until there came a shift in Terra's climate that led to an ice age. The Technicians (as the technologically-endowed people were called) migrated southward toward the equator, which had warmer climates. This new world for Technicians became known "Terra Technologica". Those who could use magic, however, considered the place from which humanity – and magic – originated to be sacred. Thus the Magicians decided to stay in the north and called that place, from which all magic came into being, "Terra Magica". (The names of these regions would soon be forgotten, along with each race's existence to the other.)

After many millennia of frigid temperatures, the climate grew to be temperate and fair. Many of the Technicians began to migrate back north, where they met again the magical men with whom they once shared "Originis de Mundus," Mankind's Origin. This meeting between the two peoples whose living habits were so different was greatly confusing to both, and this confusion quickly led to hostility as their feeble attempts to understand one another failed. A battle commenced between them and ended in a swift victory for the Magicians. Thus began an era know as "Regnum de Nobilitas Magica," the Reign of the Magical Nobility...

The victorious Magicians enslaved the Technicians, and inherent fear of their rulers' magical powers kept the Technicians at bay. Then an all-magical council called the Community of Faith was founded to create and enforce laws which would keep the Technicians at bay. (It was unlawful, for example, to create advanced pieces of technology that could be operated without the direction of at least one magic user.)

"A Whiff of Steam" follows a member of an underground rebel organization, named Cornelius King. The goal of this rebel group, calling themselves simply the "Infidels," was the complete destruction the Community of Faith. Cornelius King was a mole in the Community of Faith, and his job was to pass information about the council (namely the means by which the council would retain enslavement over the Technicians) to the Infidels. Cornelius joined the Infidels because of a personal vendetta he had against the Community of Faith.

Cornelius was born to parents who studied the history of the Technicians. His parents were accused of being traitors against the Community of Faith (apparently) because of their sympathy for the Technicians, and they were put to death. (Read onward toward the end of the document for the reality.) Cornelius, however, a boy of eight, was spared due to the council's fear of the scandal that would result from murdering a child.

Despite the Infidels' best efforts, Cornelius's cover was blown. He was informed this by another agent of the Infidels, Eleanor "Ellen" Montgomery; and he began his escape.

Plot:

On his way to the place where he would meet another agent of the Infidels, the engine pulling the train on which Cornelius was riding mysteriously overloaded with built-up steam and exploded over a vast ravine. He fell into the river below and was later found downstream by fishermen on the shore of a small fishing village. (He was soon afterward presumed dead by the Infidels.)

The family of the village's elder nursed Cornelius back to health, and after a few days he awoke to the realization that he had lost virtually all of his memories. He had forgotten his name, his work with the Infidels, and even the current world order.

To pass the time until Cornelius would recover his memories, he was put to gentle work around the village. After frustration with fishing, he subconsciously utilized powerful Water magic to bring fish directly out of the water, surprising the other fishermen.

A secret meeting among the village elders took place that night to determine as to what to do with Cornelius, who, they supposed, could be a Magician loyal to the Community of Faith, or even the radical Infidels. After much debate, the meeting was adjourned by the village elder, who decided that the amnesiac could become a powerful ally to the Faithful Artificers, an organization to whom the village was secretly loyal.

The next day, the village elder asked Cornelius to join the faithful Artificers, whose goal was to research technologies alternative to current magic-requiring ones and energy sources that could power them. Cornelius, because he had been taken care of by the villagers, agreed to the proposition.

Months after the train's explosion, the Infidels caught word of a powerful Magician who had joined the ranks of the Faithful Artificers. They quickly concluded that the new member of the Faithful Artificers could, in fact, be their own former member, Cornelius King. They thus set out with agents to bring him back; or, if he would refuse, kill him.

Cornelius was a childhood friend of Ellen Montgomery, and after she found out about his status, she left the Infidels in secret to find Cornelius by herself. She found him before the Infidels, and so she explained to him his past. Despite believing her, his actual memories didn't return, and he decided to remain loyal to the Faithful Artificers who, he believed, could bring peace to the world. Ellen joins Cornelius in helping the Faithful Artificers.

After returning to the village to explain the situation, Ellen recognizes the village elder as being friends of Cornelius's parents. It is then revealed that the problem that had riddled humanity since the second meeting of the Magicians and Technicians – how their different abilities that had separated each other were granted them – was discovered by Cornelius's parents and their colleagues, including the village elder.

Random story tidbits:

Cornelius's parents, along with some of their colleagues, founded the Faithful Artificers when they discovered the origin of magic and advanced technological prowess. (The Faithful Artificers was

the name of the movement they tried to start, which they intended to use to share that secret.) Most of them, however, were put to death by the Community of Faith before the movement could take off. The rest fled to live amidst the outskirt villages where they worked with the people, biding their time until the movement could pick up momentum again. Cornelius would later meet some of the founders.

(NOTE: THE LATIN IS NOT NECESSARY! I JUST ADDED IT BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT'D ADD SOME CLASS TO THE STORY. IF IT DOESN'T, I'D BE HAPPY TO REMOVE IT.)