

KRONOS AGENCY THE ORIGIN

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KRONOS  AGENCY



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KRONOS AGENCY ORIGINS

Jacobo Feijóo

Illustrated by
Martín Rodríguez



YOU DECIDE THE STORY

*For Marga,
from whose hand I am always discovering
new cultural horizons.*

*For Judit P.V.,
for pushing me that day to write seriously.*

*To the captains Ahab and Jas Hook,
who made me understand.*



An armed military guard accompanies an elegant gentleman wearing a frock coat and a scarf tied round his neck.

The man is wearing tiny, round-rimmed spectacles and has the look of an academic. Following them, a few steps behind, a servant carries a cedar chest.

With confident strides, they make their way between the courtiers of the royal palace, walking down the long central carpet, and finally stop in front of the queen.

They bow before Her Majesty and this is followed by several moments of tense silence.

‘Where was it?’ asks, dryly and without preamble, a man in a general’s uniform who appears to be the queen’s guard. He sports a greying, bushy, handlebar moustache, and wide epaulettes hang from his shoulders. A cut from a sabre has left a scar on his cheek.

‘In Andalusia,’ replies the man with the small, round glasses. ‘We found it on one of the excavations that I lead, in the cellars of a convent. It is an archeologically unique find.’

‘Do the Carlists know about it? Or the revolutionaries?’ cuts in one of the queen’s advisers, dressed as a cleric. His habit is completely black and a small skullcap covers his crown. Although he tries to disguise it, he is noticeably nervous.

‘Our spies say they don’t yet,’ replies another shadowy advisor, who looks like a civil servant.

The queen, in complete silence, makes a discreet but authoritative gesture and the guests step to one side, leaving the servant standing before her. The man bows his head in reverence and opens the wooden chest without further delay.



His hands are covered by thick rubber gloves. He reaches them into the chest and carefully withdraws a metal box made up of wires and pieces of various metals. It appears to be surrounded by blue rays which spark. He shows it to Her Majesty. A look of great wonder can be seen on the faces of the general, the civil servant and the priest.

‘What else do we know?’ asks the queen, firmly.

‘Not much, Your Majesty. We are only just beginning to use electricity, thanks to the discoveries of Marconi, Gauss and Weber. But this device was hidden in a fake partition in the middle of some ancient ruins!’

The queen’s counsellors look at each other, uneasy and astonished.

‘And what is it for?’ asks the queen in the curt tone of someone who is used to giving orders.

‘We don’t know that yet either,’ the archaeologist replies. ‘We have only discovered that anything we put inside it disappears as if by magic. And then reappears a week later!’

‘The devil is all around us,’ mutters the clergyman, blessing himself.

The counsellors murmur amongst themselves and then whisper something discreetly into the queen’s ear. She nods, looks firmly at the archaeologist and adds:

‘Don Pedro, we must study the power of this artefact which appears to defy time. We will create a special commission to take on this task. We will call it Kronos, who, as you know, was the god of time in Ancient Greece. For the moment, it is preferable that we keep you here, for your own safety. You never know





what might happen to you. The Kingdom has many enemies who will go to great lengths, and your life could be in serious danger.'

The soldiers gently grab the archaeologist by the arm and invite him, by pulling him, to accompany them towards the royal palace's exit.

'Your Majesty!' protests Pedro as they lead him away. 'I cannot leave my excavations! I believe there are still more things to find!'



His words are lost, obscured by the guards who, now without any pretence, are detaining him, twisting his arm on the way.

‘This artefact could be very powerful,’ says the general, trying not to raise his voice and looking out the corner of his eye at the metal box still being held by the servant. His eyes gleam with a fiery desire for power.

‘Certainly,’ adds the civil servant with a greedy glint in his eye. ‘It is of interest to all of us. There are many who would pay huge sums of money to have it.’

‘We should destroy it!’ argues the priest between clenched teeth. ‘It is the work of the devil!’

The counsellors exchange distrustful glances. Her Majesty the queen mutters to herself. There is something that she doesn’t like about this whole affair...





LONDON, 1895

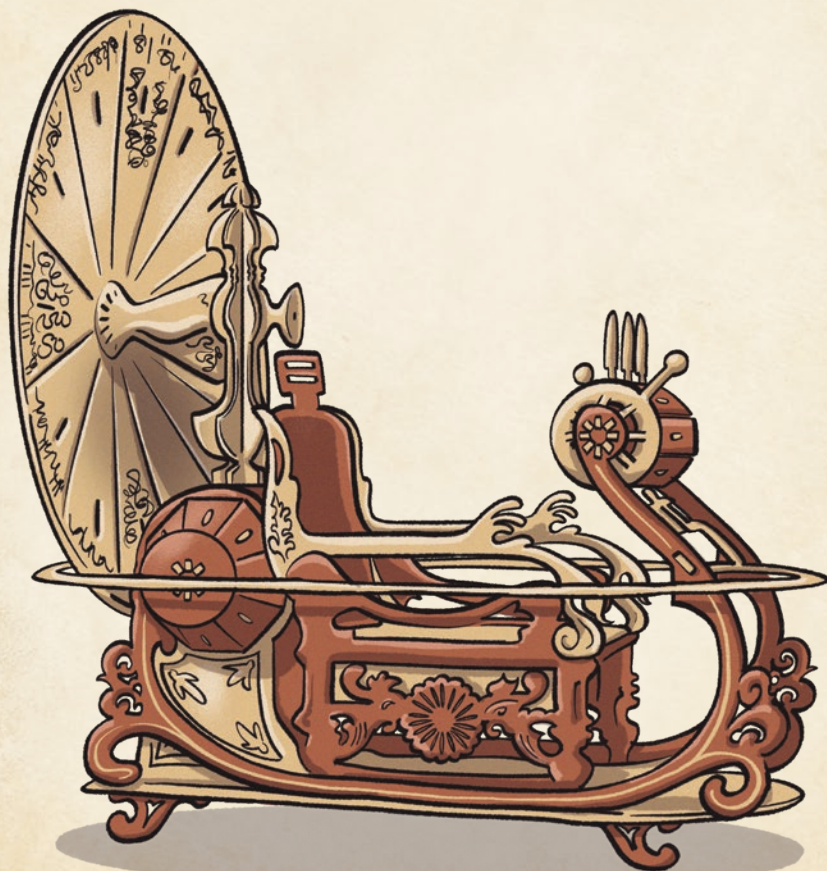




H.G. Wells publishes *The Time Machine*, a book which suggests that an artefact created by humans could allow time travel.

The whole world believes that this book is just a work of science fiction, fruit of the imagination of a writer, and that it is impossible for something like that to really exist.

However, some dark minds begin to sense that they could get something interesting out of this.





MADRID, 1941



The Spanish Civil War has finished.

It has destroyed archives, museums, buildings, streets, ports, cities. Many things have been lost in fires and bombings. The chaos is absolute and the destruction, total. At the end of the conflict, the dead number in hundreds of thousands. The air of relief at seeing the war over is combined with exhaustion, sadness and pain. Anyone who has witnessed a war first hand knows how dreadful it is.

However, although that horror is over, the rest of the world is immersed in the worst period of the Second World War, itself another horror.

Madrid and Lisbon are the capitals of two of the countries not taking part in the international war. Their geographic position has turned them into perfect spots for espionage for the warring sides.

Diplomats, artists, celebrities and supposed businessmen from around the world try to pry information from the enemy. Germans, Brits, Italians, Russians, North Americans, French, Belgians, Norwegians...they all wanted to find the way to win the war quickly and avoid more victims. By any means necessary. So, both cities are hotbeds of spies who are trying to go unnoticed. The general atmosphere is a tense one, of mistrust. Sometimes, one of these people disappears in a matter of minutes without leaving a trace. There are rumours that say their bodies turn up later, floating in the Tagus or the Manzanares, with their throat cut.

The military intelligence services work together when they are allies and compete when they are enemies. In amongst this

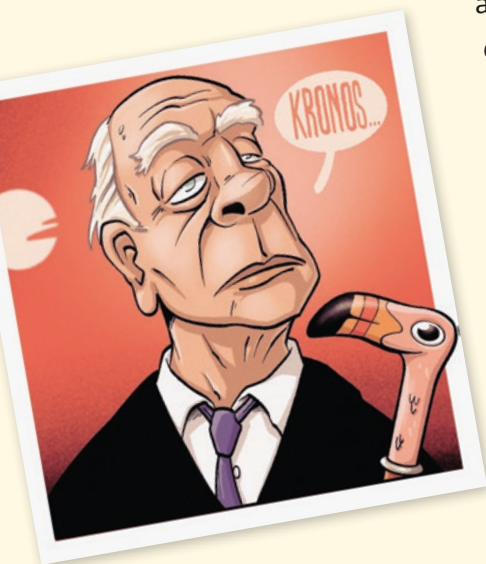


hive of espionage is José O'Malley Solla, an American with an Irish father and a Galician mother, who both emigrated to the United States forty years previously. José currently works for his birth country's government, in collaboration with the British, French and Russians. In his network there are also some spies from Latin-American countries, who help him secretly.

One day, wandering through the city on the hunt for information and alert to everything, José hears an old rumour from the mouth of an elderly blind librarian who survived the Spanish war. The librarian assures him that, when he was young and could still see, he found some reports in the National Library which mentioned a research committee created by Isabella II of Spain on the back of a certain archaeological discovery.

The reports, according to the old man, were lost for good in a fire caused by a bombing during the war and the only thing he remembers properly about them is a very strange word, Kronos, and also the existence of a mysterious object in amongst it all. The man swears that, in the deepest cellars of the National Archaeological Museum, forgotten in some box or other, that object can still be found.

'Did you know that the Archaeological Museum was founded by Isabella II herself?' he asks José. 'Don't you think that's suspicious? Perhaps she built it just to hide the strange object that Kronos looked after?'





José O'Malley Solla sees an opportunity to speed up the end of the war in his country's favour. Risking his life for two months, thanks to his network of spies, certain bribes and some contacts, he manages to get hold of the object and get it out of Spain. During the operation, his enemies intercept two of José's colleagues and a few days later, both their bodies appear floating in the river.

O'Malley hands the object, discreetly camouflaged in a wooden box, to his contact, María, although that isn't her real name. Then, he slips away into the shadows and just like that, disappears forever from the story I am telling you.

The box with the mysterious object travels to Bilbao and is hidden in the nets of a fishing boat. When the boat is just touching the horizon, two individuals in long, dark trench coats and black hats appear and seize María, shoving her into a car of the same colour. The vehicle speeds off, almost skidding. No one will ever hear from María again.

The Basque fishermen cross the Bay of Biscay and manage to reach the bleak, dangerous and choppy port of Brest, in Brittany, where they hand over the box and disappear the way they came, not before changing the name of their boat so as to remove any clue.

A few silent port workers carry the box in another boat under cover of darkness, amidst whispers in Breton, coughs and dampness.

The boat crosses the Channel en route to the Netherlands, but when they are near Cherbourg a blow to the back of the head knocks the captain down, then he is thrown into the sea



where he loses his life. The boat then changes course and heads for Ireland. On the way, a mighty storm damages the ship and two crew members drown.

The wrecked boat just about manages to reach Dublin and the box changes hands again and is taken on board a much smaller and lighter vessel, which is headed for Scotland. When it reaches the quiet port of Troon, two strong, red-haired arms hurriedly place it into a lorry, which moves off as fast as it can towards an airfield that lies just a few miles from there.

The box and the strange object it carries are loaded onto a propeller plane which takes off, without wasting a minute, for the Faroe Islands. The pilot smiles as he leaves and, raising two fingers to his cap as a goodbye, he says:



Fifteen minutes later, a couple of huge iron birds tear through the sky. They are German fighter jets looking to shoot down the Scottish plane. Against all odds, our skilful pilot heroically survives, with several bullet holes in the plane's body, the propeller splintered and the engine barely working. A piece of shrapnel has destroyed his left tibia.

Losing fuel and altitude, and with a small fire in its tail, the biplane, at the last second, manages to reach Iceland, recently invaded by the Allies. The pilot makes an emergency landing and, amidst fire and smoke, manages to take out the box and its contents while trying to cope with the excruciating pain in his leg.

Crossing this land of ice and fire, wounded and without food or water, our hero just about makes it to Reykjavik, where he delivers the box to the address indicated by his contact. The pilot has lost a lot of blood and passes out a minute after completing his mission, unable to bear the pain of his injury any longer. His contact in Reykjavik orders his men to pick up the Scottish pilot and they take him straight to hospital.

Finally, the Icelander, who is called Bergfinnur, loads the box onto his dogsled and rides to the secret base the Allies have created to investigate new weapons to beat the Nazis with. Bergfinnur takes the box from his vehicle and walks calmly into the building, greeting the guard.

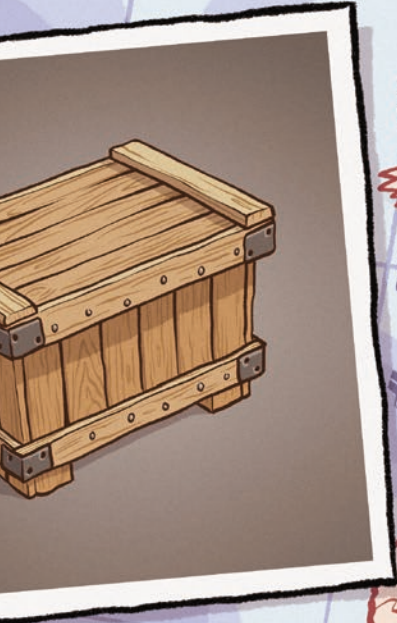
And it is here, at this precise moment, where our surprising story begins...



- Axis powers
- Other Axis' allies
- Occupied
- Allies
- Neutral



1941



DUBLIN

LONDON

Cherburgo

Brest

Bilbao

MADRID

BERLIN

PARIS

ROME

Troon

KRONOS
AGENCY
ORIGINS



HOF SJÖKULL, 1942





Major Mary Smith was sat at a table, with a pipe between her teeth, and looking closely with her only eye at the old metal box that had been sent to her from Spain. A year had passed since that risky operation where her excellent network of spies had managed to bring her this artefact, but she still hadn't been able to make much progress with it.

Although the Germans were advancing quicker in the war than the Allies, it seemed that the battle being waged at this moment in Stalingrad was slowing them down. Nevertheless, it was crucial they found new weapons to end the conflict once and for all, and it was crucial they found them quickly.

'You look concentrated, Mary,' Colonel Bernard interrupted her thoughts with his French accent as he walked into the room.

'Hmm...yeah...'

mumbled Mary, taking the pipe from her mouth. 'Your team of electronics specialists has done a good job, François, but we still don't know if the prototype is ready to use. One mistake and...'

Colonel Berard twirled his moustache, pensive. Mary was right. The war urged them to find quick solutions in order to finally halt the human butchery taking place at the front. They couldn't afford a single wrong move. Luckily, since the invention of radar, electronics were being developed much quicker and this helped the creation of new weapons and tools. Colonel Bernard knew this only too well, for it was he who was in charge of making it happen.

'One mistake and...we'd have a serious problem. Oof!' grumbled Colonel





Bernard, rummaging around in his fur coat as he sat down next to Major Mary Smith. 'I miss my warm country. The cold here in Iceland cuts right to the bones.'

'Well you could go and live in a volcano, there's plenty of them here,' a voice from the doorway replied.

Both of them turned round, instinctively. It was Commander Katie O'Sullivan, the sarcastic Irish archivist. Her bright blue eyes smiled and her plaited red hair appeared to light up the room for a moment.

'Iceland isn't so different from my native Ireland, only that we have more magical beings than there are here,' she added, nodding with her chin towards a small creature who was watching on in silence from the darkness of a corner.

Mary Smith turned her only eye to look at Ragamuffin, the good-natured troll who had joined them when they found him half dead in an Irish forest two years ago. She smiled at him and then Ragamuffin disappeared into the shadows in less than a blink of an eye.

Magic was a recently-discovered force that they knew hardly anything about, much like what happened with electricity and magnetism in their time. One of the functions of the bunker in Iceland that Major Mary Smith was in charge of was precisely that: to investigate magic.

'They're shy,' said Katie O'Sullivan, as she set down a pile of documents on the table around which Major Mary Smith and Colonel François Bernard were gathered. 'This is the latest I've found on the mysterious device. There's nothing else.'

Major Mary Smith scanned her eye quickly over the



documents and handed some out to her colleagues. She examined hers in silence for a while and finally nodded and threw it down on the table with mild disdain.

‘You’re right. There’s no more information than what we already know. We can only say for certain that the Spanish found this box in the nineteenth century and that if you put something inside it, it disappears and reappears several days later. We have no idea about what happens meanwhile, nor why this box turned up in an archaeological dig.’

Colonel Fraçois called for calm, moving his palms gently up and down, before speaking.

‘Mary...we have our prototype ready. We just need to test it one more time. We are applying the same principle as with radar, it shouldn’t fail! As you know, radar sends out waves then





collects them when they bounce back, and we send something with the machine which then bounces back. It's exactly the same. It's all about the waves. According to our table of calculations, our model should work like the Spanish artefact, although I must admit we don't know exactly what mechanism is behind the working of that old device. We are still in the design and testing phase. There are things we don't understand properly.

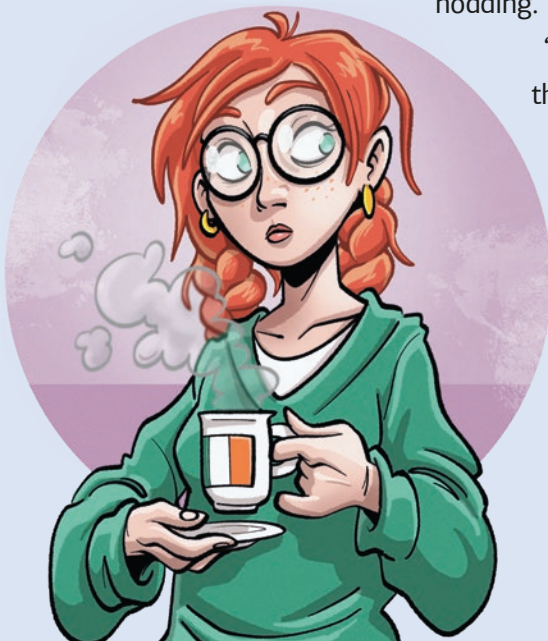
Mary Smith changed position in her seat. If they didn't find a new weapon soon, her country's Prime Minister had warned her that the government would stop financing the experiment and close the secret base. She had to think of something urgently. She trusted her team completely, but timing was running out.

Plagued by worries, the glint her eye dimmed a little.

'The other experiments didn't work, did they?' said Commander Katie O'Sullivan, putting her glasses on. 'And the government is probably growing impatient.'

Colonel Bernard rubbed his face with the palm of his hand while nodding. Then he let out a long sigh.

'Unfortunately, that's true. In the first one we tried with a plant. The machine seemed to work with objects and we grew confident. Two days later, we found the plant had returned, from wherever it had been, but it was completely dry. In fact, it was so stiff it was really a fossil.'



‘It came back fossilised? Goodness... What about the second attempt?’ insisted Katie O’Sullivan.

‘We mase some changes and the second experiment was Huski.’

‘Husky? The base’s dog? I wondered why I hadn’t seen him in a while!’ exclaimed Katie O’Sullivan as Mary Smith lowered her head. ‘What happened to him?’

The French colonel paused for a moment and then replied in a slow, deep voice.

‘Only some pieces came back.’

The room fell deathly silent. The Germans were winning the war, the research money was running out and they weren’t making any progress. The two experiments they had done with the machine had resulted in failure, and Huski had even given his life for the cause.

The outlook was not promising.

Major Mary Smith took her pipe and stood up, fiddling with it. She began to pace the room in nervous circles. It looked like she was thinking.

‘The Russians have also started to investigate. They’re moving quickly. It seems they found a similar device to the Spanish one in an ancient temple at the border with Mongolia. Our spies tell us that they have made their own machine and have already managed to put small frogs in it which come back alive and healthy. They still don’t know where the frogs go, nor how they come back, but the important part is that they return alive.’

‘Have we still not decoded the secret message we intercepted from the Russians?’ asked the Frenchman.



'The one that said *the frogs make waves when they jump in the pond?*' asked Mary.

As soon as she heard those words from her colleague, Katie O'Sullivan had a revelation and she jumped towards the table, immediately starting to rifle through the documents she had brought. After casting some aside, she snatched the ones Colonel François Bernard had right out his hands and made some quick comparisons. A few moments later, smiling widely, she thrust a couple of papers towards the Frenchman.

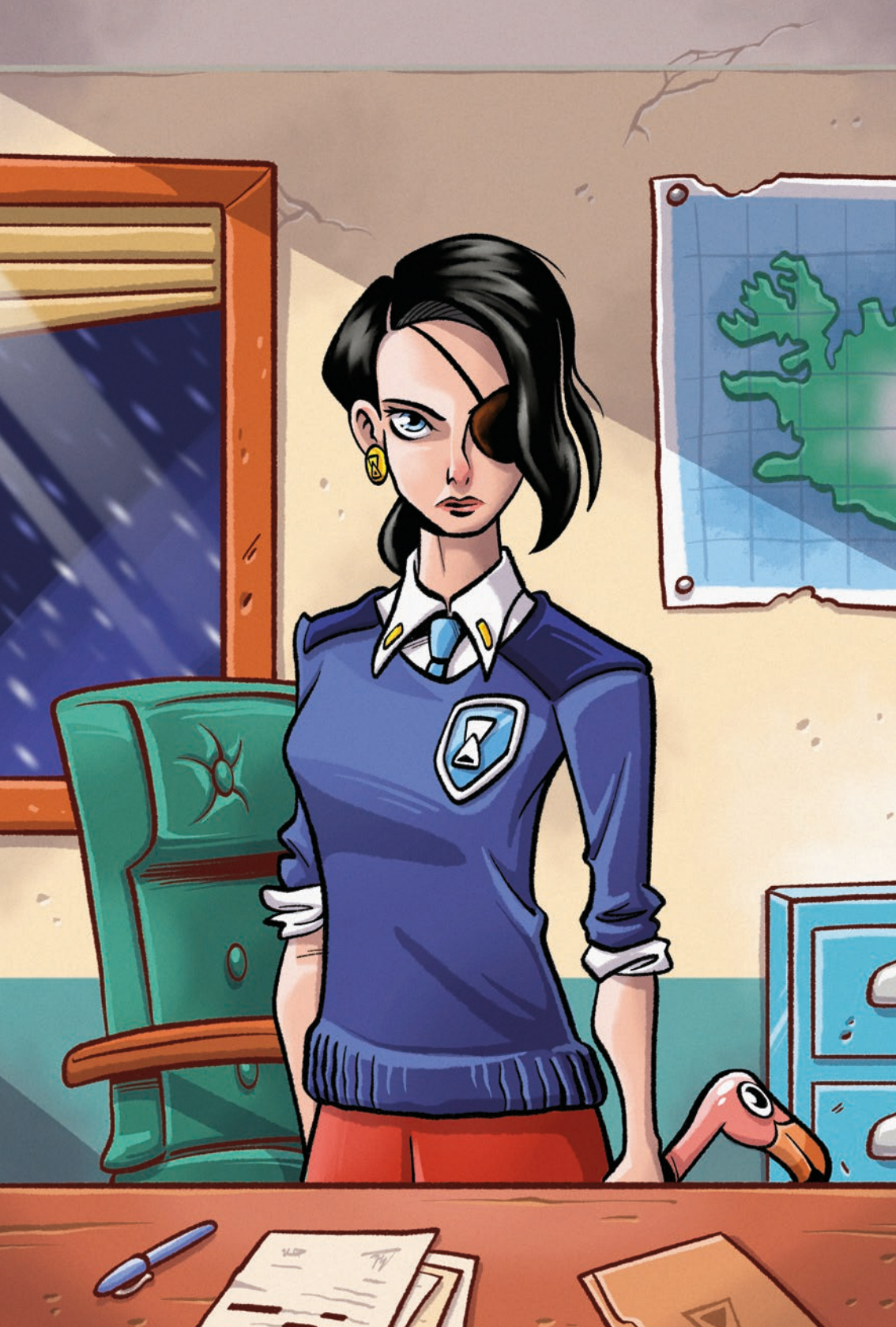
'Wavelength! They don't come back alive because of the wavelength. Look at this report which our spy network in Russia gave us and the formulas being investigated by Charles Hard Townes in the Bell Telephone labs. That man was able to improve the radar so it worked in the dampness of the Pacific Ocean. Adjusting the wavelength, my French friend! Frogs and waves!'

Colonel Bernard gave a start and quickly leaned over the papers. He was fascinated. He examined them with absolute attention for several silent moments. He ran his finger over a formula, looked at another document and then his moustache handles rose in a huge smile.

'*Mon Dieu!* How could I have missed it? Wavelength, of course!'

Getting up and shoving his chair to one side, Bernard rushed towards the door. When he reached the threshold, he stopped suddenly in his tracks and turned towards his colleagues who looked at him speechless.

'Three days, Mary. Convince the Prime Minister to give us three more days. Just three days...four at the most. It's not hard





to make the adjustment. My team is the best the Allies have right now. They won't sleep if they have to, but they'll manage it.'

Mary weighed up the French colonel's words for a few moments and then raised her thumb in a gesture of approval.

'Go for it. Leave buying time to me and you work hard in the meantime. We'll do this final test and if it doesn't work out, we'll give up and shut down this research project. It's all or nothing now.'

'Shall we try with real people this time?' asked the red-haired Irishwoman.

François Bernard twirled his moustache and raised an eyebrow, looking at the floor. He didn't dare risk so much, but the situation was extreme. Would there be any volunteers crazy or brave enough to try it? Probably not. What to do, then?

While the Frenchman hesitated, Mary Smith, displaying her leadership and intelligence, wagged her pipe at Katie and spoke decisively.

'I've got it. Yes, we'll do it with real people, but not the way you're imagining. Follow me.'

The three friends walked down the bunker's corridor until they reached a room guarded by two soldiers. Major Smith saluted them and the soldiers let them through.

Once inside, Mary headed towards a huge, strange-looking metal cupboard, rather like a giant fridge, which was full of electric cables and had a small window in the centre. It displayed some buttons, pins and circular gauges embedded in the surface which resembled a car's dashboard.

Mary Smith opened the enormous chest and reached inside to show her friends something.

‘It’s simple. We’ll use bait. Objects don’t cause any problems, do they? So we’ll put an object inside which attracts attention and we’ll send it wherever these things go. We rely on someone picking up the object and taking it with them. Then, the object will return a couple of days later and bring that person with it, too. Just like using cheese to catch mice!’

The French colonel clapped his hands and chuckled.

‘You are brilliant, *mon amie*. I’ll tune the wavelength to the coordinates of Norway. The Germans are there and we know they have research bases. With any luck, we’ll catch one of the geniuses that work for our enemies! And if it doesn’t work...one more enemy in pieces!’

Mary Smith put her pipe in her jacket pocket and smiled. The final test was underway. If this one failed, all would be lost.

From a dark corner, Ragamuffin smiled optimistically.





IN THE MIDST OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR,
A STRANGE OBJECT FALLS INTO THE HANDS OF
A MILITARY-SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH TEAM. WORKING IN A
TOP-SECRET LABORATORY, THEY WILL DISCOVER THE DEVICE'S
SURPRISING ABILITY: IT MAKES OBJECTS DISAPPEAR AND THEN
REAPPEAR A WEEK LATER. THIS MYSTERIOUS ARTEFACT
BELONGED TO QUEEN ISABELLA II OF SPAIN.
HOW HAS IT TURNED UP NOW?
WILL THE INVESTIGATORS MANAGE TO MASTER TIME TRAVEL?
WILL THEY USE IT TO PROTECT HUMANITY?

**WITNESS THE BIRTH OF THE KRONOS AGENCY:
TRAVELLING IN TIME IS JUST THE BEGINNING
OF THIS EXCITING ADVENTURE!**



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