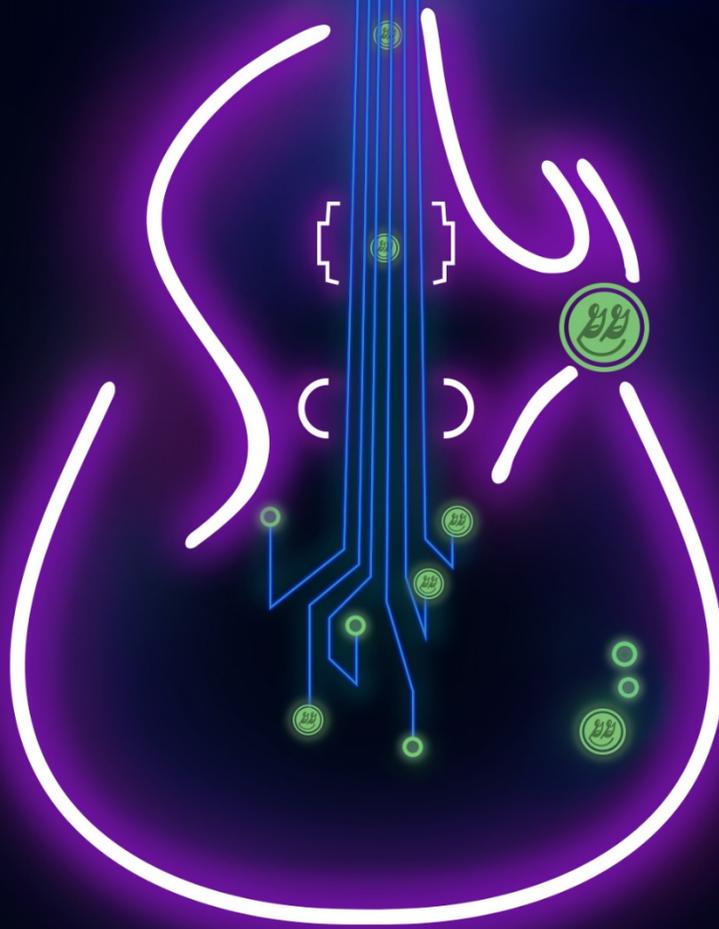


THE RISE OF
SAINT FOX
AND THE **INDEPENDENCE**



CORIN REYBURN

THE RISE OF SAINT FOX AND THE INDEPENDENCE

By Corin Reyburn

Published by Unsolicited Press
www.unsolicitedpress.com
info@unsolicitedpress.com

Copyright © 2018 Corin Reyburn
All Rights Reserved.

Prologue

THIS MEANS WAR

Janus Jeeves was ready to detonate, and had been waiting to do so for three-and-a-half lifetimes.

In this lifetime, at the tail end of the bleak and prepackaged 2030s, he built himself a network. The network was called the Arcane Society, its members the Arcana: a quotient of lost geniuses—misfit students, professors, musicians, astronomers, arsonists—those who could never quite find a proper place to hide in the transparent world in which they found themselves. Jeeves and the Society designed a set of laws on how best to conduct themselves in this thoroughly trussed-up civilization. And the Eight Laws of the Arcana were these:

1. Thou shalt never purchase anything using credit.
2. Thou shalt have no outstanding debt to any institution or to thy neighbour.
3. Thou shalt not purchase a replacement item when the original item can be repaired.
4. Thou shalt disregard any and all current trends—they are temporal, and impossible to keep up with. Build thy identity outside the moment.
5. Thou shalt boycott processed foods to the fullest extent thy pocketbook can handle.
6. Thou shalt not obtain a license for marriage. Love is not a business contract. Let your yes be yes and your no be no.
7. Thou shalt not be a member of any guild, union, club, or organization other than the Arcane Society.
8. Thou shalt evade thy income tax.

First born at the turn of the Industrial Revolution, Jeeves crawled out from beneath dusty streets into a putrid cloud of factory smoke. There he toiled night and day, working on newfangled metal contraptions for a few pence to buy bread and clothes to keep his modest family—a sweet-faced wife and two pale-faced children—warm and fed. Jeeves died suddenly at the age of twenty-nine when the sleeve of his workman's shirt got caught in a bread-slicing machine.

He resurrected a full-grown man in America in the year 1920, shortly after their Eighteenth Amendment prohibited the sale of alcohol. He immediately offed himself using a corkscrew he found in a rubbish bin.

The third incarnation of Jeeves appeared in Scotland and was coddled as a child, thereby never learning discipline and acting up at school, from which he was frequently sent home. His parents then allowed him to homeschool himself through colour television and gramophone records, making sure to ignore him most of the time, focused as they were on not going bankrupt.

The telly and tunes made young Jeeves very silly at first. A skirt chaser, a celebrity in his own right, with dreams of being both a film star and an entrepreneur.

When Jeeves turned sixteen, he realised it had all been a distraction technique, a tall tale designed to make him want something which wasn't that great anyway and that he wouldn't be able to get his hands on without selling his old soul. He didn't want to be like his parents, working all day to earn a dollar only to die prematurely from butter and cigarettes.

Jeeves grew angry through the rest of his adolescence and into young adulthood. He smashed a lot of shop windows. He went out and drank too much at pubs, wandering the streets yelling insults at posh buggers. He got arrested frequently. He developed and overcame heroin addiction five times.

The sixth time, he overdosed.

The spirit of Janus Jeeves then floated for several years before being born again in London, into a body made of spare and surplus parts—wires, feathers, and nicotine stains. He arrived at some point during the 1980s, right before everything really started going to hell but no one knew it yet.

In this life he became a professor, so he could spend all day talking about the things he loved. His favourite class to teach was a course called Neurotic Poetry: 17th–20th Century, and focused on the works of some of his former mates and heroes—Wilde, Plath, Poe, Coleridge, Shelley, Dylan Thomas.

And then, Janus Jeeves was sacked.

The university needed to cut expenses, and the first place they started was the Arts and Humanities department. He and his kind were replaced by a small army of bright-eyed, cost-effective graduates, and his courses replaced with ones more current and digestible such as Suprasocial Media and Contemporary Vlog Critique. Classes that could easily be self-taught, something Jeeves himself had done. He liked to keep up to date with the pulse of the nation, what the youth were into these days.

Now, he bided the free time he found on his hands. He lived on adrenaline, on the abstinence of his vices, on the injustices that had been done to him throughout the centuries, on books and classical music. Jeeves had read books stoned, sober, sauced, sweating, and sleeping, had absorbed them all in their entirety, and now he knew the truth.

The children were our future.

Jeeves would rally them to his side to make the future into something new.

And so, in this lifetime, the Arcane Society was born, straight in the middle of London—the pancreas of the so-called developed world. Jeeves watched as the Ministers and CEOs of Great Britain drove around in one of several luxury vehicles they owned, while the rest drove beat-up cars with no hubcaps, fenders smashed, broken LED indicators, parts slapped on at random, make and model irrelevant. The Ministers and CEOs lived in estates worth millions, owned vacation homes and islands, while for everyone else the housing market was in tatters, and homes were systematically foreclosed upon to become the property of yes, the government, who were in league with the banks, who had written the bad loans in the first place. The Ministers and CEOs drank single malt scotch equal to the price of a month's rent, and the rest drank the cheapest bitter they could find to forget that the rent was due.

Did they know, the children, of the disparity they took for granted as status quo?

They must, surely, for it was staring them straight in the face.

And if they did not, Janus Jeeves would make it known. The Arcane Society would grow.

It would grow enough to save the nation.

Chapter One

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Janus Jeeves had cultivated yet another disappointment in Julian Starr.

Cameras recorded the failure for posterity as the young man trounced around the rented studio, blue eyes blazing. He had already destroyed two set lights, irritated the film crew into dashing out for a smoke break from which they would not return, and sent an antique tea set sailing through an open window. Julian's hands shook with pent-up fury from somewhere else—resentment towards his parents, perhaps, a strict schoolmarm, a lover who'd hurt his pride.

Jeeves exhaled loudly through his nose, frustration mounting. It was not him who deserved this rage. The unfortunately positioned red-upholstered chaise that Julian had stumbled into, bruised his shin upon, and was now kicking with the heel of his suede leather boot also did not deserve it. The leading man who would lead no one gave the chaise one more lashing for good measure, then turned on his mentor.

“Go ahead and laugh, old man. I know you want to,” said Julian, running a hand through his hair and glowering at his director.

It was not amusement which Jeeves felt. Frustration, perhaps. Exhaustion, definitely. His directorial dreams dissipating into the depths along with the entire plan. He would have to sack Julian, sack the films, sack everything, just as he'd done so many times before.

Back to square one.

He needed to grow the Arcane Society by exponential amounts, that much was certain. A series of films with an irresistible hero, subversive intent—it seemed the best solution, the best way to plant the seed, to get the message out.

To grow in numbers.

Should have been, he thought, as an apple that moments ago resided in a pig's mouth went sailing through the air. Just another discarded item on a long list of things once lovely that had been destroyed. Jeeves glanced over at the glamorous spread laid out on the dining table at the far end of the room and had to laugh. Though most of the fancy tableware and mouthwatering delicacies—clove-laden curries, golden serving spoons, granny's pewter goblets, a pilfered Christmas goose—were discards collected by his fellow revolutionaries amongst the Arcana, it seemed that he, too, had now contributed to the world's massive waste cycle.

“What a messsss...you're making,” he said to Julian, who wasn't listening. Jeeves sat perched upright in a tall director's chair, his silk-draped limbs crossed

every which way. A man with impeccable flair himself, Jeeves never failed to catch an eye, though not always the ones he wanted. His own eyes were mismatched, one blue and one yellow, one row of teeth smoke-stained and the other pearlescent white, the disparate features set inside a narrow face that peered out from beneath long strands of stringy brown hair. On his arms he wore silver bangles, and his thin body was draped in loose-fitting fabrics dark and bright, black and crimson, oily and iridescent.

If only the timing were different; if only he'd figured it out sooner. Back in the seventies, perhaps, when freaks like him were lauded instead of shunned. Oh, then he would have had his chance. He would have taken the world by storm.

Now, it was too late for him. He was an Ana, as the kids would say. Short for analog. Someone from the past ought to stay there.

What he needed was someone digital.

He thought he'd found his answer in Julian, a lad so current he attached himself to a fad in practically the same moment he rejected it. They'd met by the river one night and the boy was gorgeous, so gorgeous in fact that he mistook Jeeves' intentions, a situation commonplace amongst the beautiful. But Jeeves had been interested in his face for one reason, and one reason only.

To bring more followers to the Arcana.

Julian had complied easily, aimless as he was and enthralled by Jeeves' reptilian words, promising to make him a star. He was energetic about anything new and too dumb to ask questions.

But Jeeves had miscalculated. Julian equals minus one key factor for the ultimate revolutionary star—

A kind heart.

Dreams dying now as Julian acted out his last performance for his audience of one. The words "I quit" froze on the boy's lips as the words "You're sacked" fell from Jeeves'.

At the verbal crossover, Julian howled. "How're you going to make your little propaganda films without me, huh? What are you gonna do, crawl back to your sorry flat full of reject geeks and losers? Gather more trash in the name of 'rescuing' it? Have those two-bit hackers of yours break into the CCTV feeds so you can perv on people wanking?"

"Julian," Jeeves said, with more patience than was deserved. "We use everything we find, and our hackers are the finest in the land. Why, Benson graduated top of his class."

Julian shrugged.

"And the chaise you're currently embattling is a Giatalia," he added.

"I don't care," Julian said, gathering his things in an exaggerated huff of departure.

No one does, thought Jeeves. Irony, irony in having to hang his hopes and fears on someone so young.

“I hope you find another gullible sucker to dangle from your rod. I hope you find him real soon,” Julian said. “And when you do, I hope he doesn’t just help you break the system. I hope he breaks your heart.”

“Why do you hate me so much, Julian?” Jeeves inquired in earnest.

“Because you remind me of my father.”

“Farewell, Julian.” Jeeves drew his spindly limbs closer to his body, creating the appearance of a cocoon with his long fabrics draped around him.

As the door to the rented studio slammed, the thrice-reincarnated Janus Jeeves began to mentally sort through his mind box—a box containing items from his previous lifetimes, a box containing memories. A worn grey scrap of fabric from his first wife’s dress, an empty syringe, Elvis’ first Sun record, the corkscrew Jeeves had topped himself with during Prohibition. Some items he remembered and some he didn’t. Some people he remembered, others he thought he remembered, but had maybe made up. Stories he told himself about his past lives were perhaps just that, stories.

Or perhaps not. Quite possibly the feeling in his bones that remained always was indeed his beacon of truth. He knew, oh he knew that the same sort of thing had happened too many times. That people with money told lies, and people with less believed them, and wound up with even less. That humankind too often manifested the darkest parts of themselves that overshadowed the light—but that amongst them, sometimes, there were bright and shining jewels whose sparkle and magnetism pulled the weight of the world off-kilter until just, if even for a moment, the dark world shone bright, too.

He folded inside, and waited for one to arrive.



[Pre-order The Rise of Saint Fox and The Independence from Unsolicited Press](#)