



*Comic by Hergé (Georges Prosper Remi), Jump by Aehriman  
Version 1.1*

Welcome, traveler, to a world much like your own, in the 1930s and 40s. Only, here there is no great depression, no great war. Only adventure! And when it comes to adventure, no one can match young Belgian reporter Tintin.

Perhaps you can solve mysteries with the young man. Dive into the sea for pirate treasure, uncover lost civilizations in the jungle, solve murders, race to claim a meteor of a previously unknown element, climb mountains, even take a rocket ship to the moon! Or you could stay home and read about his exploits in the paper, but then, why even come here?

Of course, it wouldn't be a proper Jump if you didn't get **1,000 cp** to spend and give yourself an edge.

## **AGE, RACE, GENDER**

*Change any or all of these at no cost. People, somewhat surprisingly, won't judge.*



## ORIGINS

*Any may be taken as a Drop-In with no history, but also no enemies.*

**Boy Reporter:** Or girl. You're young, and have a job writing stories that lets you run around as you please and just submit a story whenever you need rent or grocery money.

**Old Seadog:** You wash -hic- you was born to the sea, know everything there is to know about life on the waves and can navigate from stars and memory.

**Absent-Minded Professor:** Well, I say! You seem like an educated chap, learned in the sciences, and perhaps just a little hard of hearing in one ear. Well! Best you get to work on... say, what were we doing?

**Crack Detective:** When Scotland Yard needs the very best, you know who they call? Well, Poirot, or that Grant fellow. But your name is definitely on the list! Somewhere!

**Crook:** There's a sucker born every minute, and why shouldn't you take advantage of them? I mean, besides plucky boy reporters, those could really ruin your day.



## PERKS

**Well-Traveled** (Free to all) Except one time, as a joke with Captain Haddock, everyone in this world seems to speak the same language or have zero difficulties understanding each other. That of Tintin and all his friends and enemies are fluent in over twenty languages. So be it, you can understand and make yourself understood in all common languages of this and future settings.

**Vaccinated** (Free to all) With all this globetrotting it wouldn't do to be a vector for infectious diseases. You are immune to all of them, from the common cold to the dread ebola, and will never have problems from the local food and spices.

**Stout** (Free to all/-50 cp to keep) Tintin is usually pretty grounded and well-researched for a comic book, but pretty much nobody ever dies unless they're poisoned or riddled with bullets. Car crashes, plane crashes, head trauma, massive explosions. At most these things leave you unconscious. More often, you'll be comically dazed and disheveled for a little bit.

**Crack Shot** (-50 cp) It's a funny thing, but when your back is to the wall, when times are desperate, the last bullet in your gun will always strike true and then some. It will somehow do far more damage than could be believed, perhaps hitting a weak point or causing a chain of failures to rout a small force. It's not a miracle fix by any means, but you can't fail to walk proud after downing a plane with one shot.

**The Milanese Nightingale** (-50 cp) You have a magnificent singing voice, with awe-inspiring range. You can shatter glass with a concerted effort.

**Nose for a Story** (-100 cp, free Boy Reporter) You always stumble onto opportunities for adventure. A plane crash nearby contains a mysterious figure, a tchotchke you buy contains a clue to a treasure. Your life will never lack adventure if you make any effort to look for it. Can be turned off if you really want.

**Typist** (-100 cp, free Boy Reporter) You're a skilled storyteller and writer, able to build a coherent narrative with a distinct beginning, middle and end, and keep it understandable and entertaining whether you're penning an epic saga or a travelog. You're also an incredibly quick typist, the better to make your deadline.

**Lightning Reflexes** (-200 cp, discount Boy Reporter) Now how can a person charge thirty feet and punch out a gunman before he opens fire? Well, they could be you, to start. Not only are you amazingly swift and sure-footed, you are never hampered by surprise. Even when startled, you react exactly as you would have if you had sat down and planned out your actions.

**Real Boy Scout** (-200 cp, discount Boy Reporter) You did great in the Scouts, if there's a merit badge in something, you're an expert in it! Or at least able to talk with the experts without embarrassing yourself, call it a master's degree for the more scientific/academic fields. From carpentry to navigation, personal fitness, archaeology, aviation, skiing, welding, marksmanship, camping, radio, canoeing, first aid, metalwork, cooking, electronics, music, plumbing, skating, SCUBA diving... and more!

**Keen Observation** (-400 cp, discount Boy Reporter) It really is amazing how Tintin can memorize the license plate of a car speeding off into the night moments after trying to run him down, remember a person he passed in a stairwell once or find the one missing element in a ransacked room. You're no Sherlock Holmes, but you are remarkably observant, and need glimpse something only once to remember it and be able to review it at your leisure.

**Targeted** (-400 cp, discount Boy Reporter) Almost a third of Tintin adventures involve the reporter being targeted by a conspiracy he would have never suspected the existence of otherwise. Likewise, when you wish you can toggle an aura that makes people target you, ineptly at first, giving you a chance to learn

about their activities and foil their plots. In effect, you become bait for conspirators and criminals, who will miss their first couple shots.

**Able Seaman** (-100 cp, free Old Sea Dog) You know all about sailing of course. How to navigate by the sun and stars, tie a sailor's knots, fashion a raft, rig a mast and all of that. You make an ancient scow dance between torpedoes, if you can get a crew who'll take orders.

**Blistering Barnacles!** (-100 cp, free Old Sea Dog) You can curse up a blue streak without ever once saying a naughty word, and go for hours without repeating your insults. Sailors blush to hear your tirades. You can also shout to make yourself heard clearly even in a hurricane.

**Blood of Sir Francis** (-200 cp, discount Old Sea Dog) It's a real shame to have a famous ancestor you can never live up to. Nor a problem you've ever had, though. In each Jump you can pick a famous dead person or historic figure to be kin to, and will find that you have at least the potential to equal them in all things, given time and education/training.

**Like the Back of My Hand** (-200 cp, discount Old Sea Dog) You've traveled much of the world, and know how to get around all kinds of straits. Once you've visited a place a few times, it's impossible to get lost there, no matter what may have changed. From walking in the dark in your house without bumping the furniture to running a maze of streets and alleyways, you truly know your environment.

**My Ancestor's Blood Begins To Boil** (-400 cp, discount Old Sea Dog) You're an exceptionally tough and skilled brawler, able to casually defeat whole mobs of opponents. Relatedly, you have a very intimidating aura that can drive most people off when you get ready to throw down.

**Persistence** (-400 cp, discount Old Sea Dog) Some men quit when the odds are against them, head home to drink away their sorrows. Not you, when you run into a wall, you push through. You have the will and force of character to never give up, no matter how the odds are stacked against you, and as long as you cling on with dogged determination, no cause is truly lost.

**Scientific Method** (-100 cp, free Professor) Observe the universe, form a hypothesis, test it, repeat it, publish. You get the scientific method, the most reliable system humanity has ever found for arriving at truth, on a fundamental level. You can easily design experiments to remove bias, and make sure you're actually testing the variable you're looking for.

**Learning** (-100 cp, first free Professor) Pick a field of science, could be as broad as physics or chemistry, could be medicine, astronomy, metallurgy, social sciences like psychology and anthropology, or fields as specific as sigillography or game theory. You are now one of the world's foremost experts in this field. Which ah, may mean less in things like Computer Sciences than just living in a setting taking place ninety years in the future. Can be taken multiple times, with subsequent purchases at a discount.

**Dowsing** (-200 cp, discount Professor) When seeking something, you can find a direction, if not distance by concentrating on it while swinging a pendulum. This works for locations, and very large, valuable, or personally important items, but not people.

**Researcher** (-200 cp, discount Professor) Humanity has amassed such a body of knowledge, often you spend more time checking on old information than novel experiments. You are incredibly skilled and fortunate at research, picking just the information you need from reams of texts and encyclopediae, never forgetting a thing you read. You are consequently a very quick study and learn at thrice the rate you otherwise would.

**Inventor** (-400 cp, discount Professor) Laboratory results, while fascinating in their own right, take a backseat to practical applications. You are a master at turning the theoretical into the practical, with a fertile imagination for novel devices and the engineering skills to make them actually work. The broader your knowledge of science, the better results you'll get, but even a high school physics background would let you produce a sonic weapon.

**Omnidisciplinary Scientist** (-400 cp, discount Professor) Ah, to be an inventor in such times, designing a submarine one month, the next taking part in an

archaeological expedition. Your studies and comprehensive knowledge have made you at least basically competent in *all* fields of science. And soon, you will be far more than merely competent, because your learning in any one field advances all others. Not as quickly, and not always evenly, but a few weeks working on geology cannot help but make you a somewhat better botanist and biologist, and a far better metallurgist and vulcanologist, for example.

**Peel's Policing** (-100 cp, free Detective) You know the law forwards and back, and how to enforce it. Both ensuring visibility and the public trust, how to handle yourself in a scuffle and restrain even the slipperiest of opponents, as well as all procedures and rules for evidence.

**To Be Precise** (-100 cp, free Detective) And you are always precise, in your information, but also in your movements. You have phenomenal fine-motor skills.

**Got the Fight Out of Him** (-200 cp, discount Detective) Once you have someone cuffed or trapped, it never seems to occur to them to try and escape. They slump over, defeated.

**Master of Disguise** (-200 cp, discount Detective) You are a master of undercover work, easily able to adopt a false persona and appearance in moments, and live that legend for months at a time.

**Clear-Eyed** (-400 cp, discount Detective) You've had a thorough grounding in every kind of con and trick that exists. Mental alarm bells go off whenever someone is trying to distract you or draw your attention, you are wary of all scams, traps and red herrings.

**Drat the Luck!** (-400 cp, discount Detective) Is what your enemies will say. Anything that can break your way on the hunt, will. If you're hunting a pickpocket, they will suffer the poor judgment to try for your wallet. If a criminal hijacks a getaway car, you'll be in the backseat.

**Blackjack** (-100 cp, free Crook) Somehow, when you hit someone over the head from behind with any tool or blunt weapon, they will be instantly rendered unconscious with no lasting harmful effects.

**Cutpurse** (-100 cp, free Crook) It never does to neglect the foundational skills. You know how to spot a mark, pick a pocket, crack a safe, shimmy lock, and toss an apartment for hidden clues. You're also quite good at sleight-of-hand tricks.

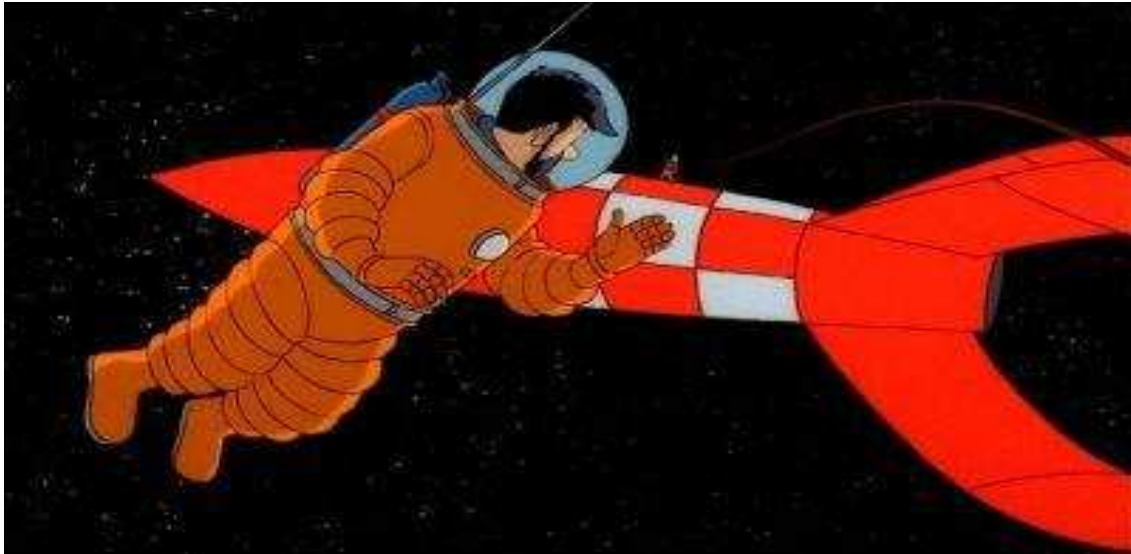
**Moon-Curser** (-200 cp, discount Crook) An ancient name for thieves, who work in the dark and bitterly rue the nights when the moon comes out. You're good at getting around unseen, hiding in shadows, stowing aboard vessels, and shimmying up to the second-floor windows that are rarely locked.

**Sign of Ki-Ohsk** (-200 cp, discount Crook) You are extremely skilled at coming up with codes, passwords and secret signs to conceal your business from outsiders, while advertising to those aware, hiding in plain sight. You're also very good at recognizing hidden messages, if not necessarily what they mean, and guessing passwords.

**Friends in Low Places** (-400 cp, discount Crook) As a villain you naturally have a vast and powerful organization at your back. From snoops and stool pigeons to burly knee-breakers to perhaps a couple of people at the highest levels of government who profit off your operations or owe you favors. In future Jumps, you are very good at building such shady networks of connections.

**Smile** (-400 cp, discount Crook) The start of Tintin is, in a very real sense, the age of the gangster. You have the skills to be a magnificent crime lord, from laundering money to concealing operations in plain sight, to intimidating crooks into working for you. You can tell when a person is amenable to being bribed, threatened or blackmailed and which to use, or if you're wasting your time. Finally, you are incredibly slippery, knowing how to present a front as an honest businessman and push off the blame for your crimes on a series of cut-outs and fall guys.





## ITEMS

**The Adventures of Tintin** (free all) The complete comics, cartoons, and film(s) of the series, along with numerous commentaries and reviews.

**Blue Orange** (-50 cp) You have a crate of cuttings and seeds for a special orange tree, adapted to thrive in desert conditions. True, the orange fruits are blue, but it's a small price to pay for orchards that run on hardly any water.

**Idol** (-50 cp) A large idol of... you. Stylized and exaggerated to show some of your traits, but clearly you. Makes a great conversation piece.

**Loch Lamond** (-50 cp) A couple crates, refilling monthly, of the allegedly best Scotch in the world, Captain Haddock's favorite, to be sure.

**Crystal Balls** (-100 cp) Seven crystal balls that easily shatter when hurled to a wall or floor, but will not accidentally break. On shattering, they release a powerful sleeping gas. Refills annually.

**Truth Serum** (-100 cp) While scopolamine just makes people more-or-less drunk, this sinister serum makes people boastful of their secrets and especially their crimes and shames. Give two people a dose and they'll eagerly compete to see who is the most evil. Incidentally, you have just two doses, though they refill annually.

**Formula 14** (-200 cp) Boom! One day your car just goes boom! Don't give in to gloom! You probably caused it. This drum of Formula 14, added to fuel, can turn any engine or generator into a time bomb. If consumed by a person, they will rapidly grow hair that cycles through many bright colors while exhaling bubbles with every breath for hours. As above, refills once a year.

**The Castafiore Emerald** (-200 cp) A beautiful, near-priceless jewel. You may keep it as a fond memory, or sell or trade it, confident it will return by the end of the Jump or decade.

**Ranko** (-200 cp) A large and powerful gorilla has taken you as a friend, and will follow and protect you as best he's able. Becomes a Follower after this Jump.

**Job** (-100 cp, free Boy Reporter) You have a steady job that provides enough for a young bachelor, at least, and doesn't mind you disappearing for months at a time. You do still need to work to get paid, but your job will always be waiting for you.

**Flat** (-200 cp, discount Boy Reporter) A spacious apartment, rent-free with all utilities taken care of. Be the envy of struggling college grads everywhere.

**King Ottokar's Sceptre** (-400 cp, discount Boy Reporter) Should the king of Slydavia ever fail to produce King Ottokar IV's sceptre on St. Vladimir's Day, he would be forced to abdicate in shame, which is precisely why agents of Borduria tried to steal it. This sceptre cannot make you a king, but it will grant you in the eyes of the populace the power to confirm or delegitimize one.

**Boat** (-100 cp, free Sea Dog) A tramp steamer, perfectly solid with plenty of room for cargo, much like the *Sirius*, *Karaboudjan*, or *Aurora*.

**Marlinspike Hall** (-200 cp, discount Sea Dog) A luxurious mansion and sprawling estate, making it clear to all that you are a person of wealth and class. Well, wealth anyways.

**Red Rackham's Treasure** (-400 cp, discount Sea Dog) A massive treasure? How big you ask? Enough. Want to rent Liechtenstein for a month? You have enough

money. Pay off the national debt? You have enough. Build a space program? You have enough.

**Experimental Submersible** (-100 cp, free Professor) Capable of diving down to 900 feet and making six knots underwater, with a two-hour air supply, this sharkproof (and shark-shaped) submersible is perfect for searching for underwater objects, or evading scrutiny.

**Shooting Star** (-200 cp, discount Professor) A head-sized chunk of Phostlite, a rare element found only in space. The strange invisible rays from this stone encourage rapid growth in organic life, with trees sprouting up overnight. Though it doesn't seem to affect humans for some reason, exposure can enlarge animals to many times their original size.

**Rocketship** (-400 cp, discount Professor) A checkered red rocket, bigger and in many ways more advanced than NASA's later model, with room for eight and many supplies, nuclear engine, artificial gravity through constant acceleration and such.

**Cane** (-100 cp, free Detective) A cane, it's good for hooking things and often overlooked as a potential weapon.

**Authentic Dress** (-200 cp, discount Detective) A closet of highly colorful ethnic and/or historical outfits, ranging from tartan kilts to silk robes. They won't help you blend in *per se*, but anyone looking at you will think you're a tourist or perhaps some kind of reenactor, not a threat.

**Double** (-400 cp, discount Detective) A Follower who is a perfect lookalike for you, and can easily match your speech and mannerisms. Your own twin, diversion and body double.

**Getaway Car** (-100 cp, free Crook) A nondescript vehicle with the ability to change color and a changing license plate. No one will connect it to a crime after you make a getaway. Can import other vehicles to gain this aspect.

**Poison of Madness** (-200 cp, discount Crook) This drug, Rajaijah from India, renders a person insane. At least, they'll flail about, act randomly and say wild things for weeks. Very handy for silencing loose ends without leaving a body. You also get the antidote and the recipe for both.

**Press** (-400 cp, discount Crook) Like the Muir Island Gang, you have a full printing press with all the necessities to churn out perfect counterfeits of any paper money in the world. It will even randomize serial numbers. You'll be rich!



## COMPANIONS

**Old Friends** (-50 cp) Import any number of companions with 600 cp apiece to spend. Companions cannot take drawbacks for additional points.

**...And New!** Feel free to recruit any number of people in this Jump to join you on future adventures! No charge, friends make the world bearable.



## DRAWBACKS

**Tintin & the Blue Orange** (+0 cp) There have been a lot of film, stage, cartoon and radio adaptations of Tintin, a couple with original stories. If you have a particular continuity you like better, by all means, use that one.

**The Fic** (+0 cp) Overall, Herge's estate and company have been very hostile to fanfiction, given the sheer number of parodies, particularly political and pornographic, that flowered after the war. Still, some gems exist and maybe you want to fight a socialist revolution. Feel free to visit the setting of any Tintin fanwork or parody instead.

**Replacement** (+0 cp) Take the place of any Tintin character matching your origin.

**Call of Adventure** (+0 cp) Tintin is, first and foremost, a pulp adventure, but embraces many genres. Detective stories, a spy thriller, jungle exploration, science fiction, gothic horror, thrillers, satire & farce. Feel free to supplement this Jump to, or use it to visit, any setting within any of these broad categories.

**Anti-Vaxxer** (+100 cp) Forgo the protection of the **Vaccinated** free perk, and all other forms of disease immunity/resistance. You can take your chances with everyone else.

**Uncanny Valley** (+100 cp) Welcome to the world of the Spielberg/Jackson film, where some events are slightly out of order, and everyone's face seems... off, somehow.

**Easily Distracted** (+100 cp) You have a little trouble focusing, especially when a lot is going on around you. Or when you have to sit still and wait for hours, then you start getting twitchy.

**A Different Time** (+100 cp) Remember when this began and I promised no one would judge you for your race or sex? Well, the comic *does* have a bit of an unfortunate history with that sort of thing, Belgium being still a colonial power when written and having been endorsed by the Nazi Party at one point. It doesn't intrude in most stories, but sheesh, the series can *never* live down *Tintin in the Congo*.

So yeah, with this drawback, people will be exactly as racist and sexist as the 1930s and 40s of your history, and you will be some form of minority. Have fun.

**Great Snakes!** (+100 cp) You have a powerful fear of one of the following: heights, darkness, crowds, confined spaces, bugs, holes & porous surfaces, drowning, snakes, or storms. You are guaranteed to encounter these things at least a few times in your stay, and your phobia can only be overcome by a great deal of work and time. This may be taken multiple times for a different phobia each time.

**Doesn't Travel Well** (+100 cp) Pick one of the following: vertigo, seasickness, car sickness, airsickness, mal de débarquement, the bends. You are particularly susceptible to this affliction, which can make the life of a globetrotting adventurer particularly difficult. This can be taken multiple times for a different affliction each time.

**Partial Amnesia** (+100 cp) You cannot recall any Jumps prior to this one, or your build or any meeting with your benefactor. As far as you know, you just woke up in the world of Tintin one day.

**The Quiff** (+100 cp) You are famous or infamous, & easily recognized by people around the globe. You must become accomplished in disguise if you ever want to move unnoticed, and even then it's a fifty-fifty chance of some accident revealing you.

**Sobered** (+100 cp) Did you take any pills from Calculus? You will be unable to stand the taste of anything with the slightest dash of alcohol, bitterest poison to your tongue.

**Superstitious** (+100 cp) A Jumper can never entirely dispel the thought that maybe magic is real in this setting. Whether you genuinely believe, or just fear it might be true, you will credit every account of hauntings, curses and witches, and avoid black cats and ladders.

**Flat Broke** (+200 cp) You just can't seem to save or hold onto money. Each month, after you pay the rent, zoom! You get taken in by salesmen, forget to haggle, get fleeced at the *souk* and not even haggle or bet on a new art craze just before it goes out.

**Changed the Key** (+200 cp) You can't access your Warehouse (or equivalent) nor any of the items within.

**Stone Deaf** (+200 cp) Really, you're just a little hard of hearing in one ear. What's that? Right now? Well of course. From time to time you might misunderstand a person, but it's really no great trouble. Eh? You want to visit? Whom do you want to visit? Why? I'm so confused.

**Long Runner** (+200 cp) The first Tintin comic was published in 1927, the last in 1979. Now you too must spend forty-nine years in this world instead of the customary ten, the events of the stories spaced over many years. You will not perish of age or related complications, but may yet die in other ways.

**Wagg the Dog** (+200 cp) Like Jolyon Wagg, you have become a model *belgicain*. That is to say, an obnoxiously overbearing, petty-minded carefree tourist without a single shred of self-awareness. You will ignore boundaries, impose on others and annoy the hell out of them, all while blithely assuming you're everybody's best friend, no matter what they say.

**Old Drunkard** (+300 cp) You just can't function when you haven't had enough hooch. Of course, you can't function when you've had too much, making the most boneheaded of choices, so expect to spend every day trying to find that happy medium. Naturally, this overrides any perks that would give you resistance to alcohol or hangovers.

If taken with **Sobered**, you will be unable to bear the taste of alcohol, *and* unable to live without it. Have fun with that.

**On the Lam** (+300 cp) Tintin winds up on the run from the law something like five times, and your luck is now just as bad! You cannot go more than a year or two without being framed for some crime and obligated to clear your name, lest your last years in the Jump be spent in a prison cell.

**Targeted** (+300 cp) It seems every crime ring, gang, and spy agency in the world has it out for you, with how often you'll be tripping over assassins and thugs sent to find out what you know or shut you up.

**Drat the Luck** (+300 cp) Everything that can go wrong, will go wrong for you. From chasing a treasure around the world only to find it isn't there to constant pratfalls, you've become the comic relief now, with the bruises to match.

**Full Amnesia** (+400 cp) You cannot remember anything of your life prior to this Jump. Your memories will return only very slowly, fully restored only for your final year in-Jump.

**Snowy? Why is it always Snowy?** (+400 cp) Alas, you cannot remember any of Herge's comics. Metaknowledge is really unfair in what is largely a mystery series, you know. If you wish, you can be at least a casual acquaintance of Tintins so you might get involved in the adventures even if you don't know you're supposed to.



**Older Than Superman** (+400 cp) Phenomenal cosmic powers aren't really what these comics are about. Check them at the door please and take a number, you'll get all your powers back when you leave. Academic knowledge and non-supernatural skills can stay though.

## THE END

**Remain:** It's quite a jolly little world, maybe a good place to settle down.

**Go Home:** After a good adventure, what could be better than returning home, flush with victory and riches.

**Move On:** One adventure ends, the next one awaits!



*Jump written by Aehriman*

### **Notes:**

**++To briefly summarize Tintin's adventures. The first several years of the Tintin comic strip (*Tintin in the Land of the Soviets*, *Tintin in the Congo*, and *Tintin in America*) are seldom collected and much derided, Herge considered them an old embarrassment, and I leave it to the Jumper how much or little they want to engage. They're... yeah, not good.**

**Tintin was originally published as a serial comic strip in *Le Petit Vingtième* (the Little Twentieth) the 'for kids' edition of the highly conservative Catholic newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle* (the Twentieth Century)++**

**In the Land of the Soviets:** In one of the most political comics, Tintin & Snowy are sent to cover an election in the Soviet Union. Along the way, a nameless OGPU (KGB predecessor) agent sabotages his train and frames Tintin, obliging him to flee the German police over the Russian border.

There he is witness to an empty factory where men bang pots and burn straw to trick foreign Marxists into believing the country is productive, open voter intimidation, a Party official handing out bread and denying it to his rivals. Snowy steals some bread for starving kids.

Tintin eavesdrops on a bolshevik meeting, learning the Soviets have exported all their grain for propaganda purposes and plan to feed the starving masses by robbing kulaks at gunpoint. Tintin warns the kulaks, gets caught and executed by firing squad, but swapped their bullets for blanks and plays dead.

Walking across the snowy wilderness towards home, he stumbles over the secret hideout where Stalin (and Lenin, and Trotsky?) warehouses the hoarded wealth of the People, is captured, escapes, steals an airplane, crashes, whittles a replacement propeller with a penknife, and is then captured and escapes from the OGPU man *three times* before coming home to share his story and be celebrated as a hero.

Hard to believe this was the start, huh? This was pretty much a direct adaptation of a popular anti-communist tract of the time, though it managed to be accidentally right in a few places. It... gets worse before it gets better.

**Tintin In the Congo:** Tintin ventures to the Belgian Congo and hires a local guide, his boy sidekick for this book, Coco. On a river voyage, he is nearly murdered by a nameless stowaway (later revealed to work for a diamond smuggling ring in service to Al Capone) who is KO'd by monkeys throwing coconuts. Those same monkeys then take Snowy, obliging Tintin to disguise himself as a monkey for a rescue.

Next day they reach the village of Barbaorum, where Tintin greatly impresses their king on a lion hunt, and teaching children, but makes an enemy of their medicine man, Muganda, who conspires with the stowaway to deface the tribe's sacred idol and frame Tintin. However, Tintin films them in the act, and then with a sip of quinine saves the life of a man beyond all Muganda's medicine. Muganda flees, swearing vengeance. Muganda leads a rival tribe, the M'havatu, to attack Barbaorum, but Tintin casually outwits and outmaneuvers the attackers, who are also awed by the white man, and after another attempt on his life saves Muganda from a boa constrictor, ending their conflict.

The stowaway isn't done though, and has two more death-traps (slowly lowered into a river of crocodiles, tied up on a boat bound for a waterfall) both of which a random Catholic missionary save him from, before their final fist-fight on the edge of a cliff (with more crocodiles) which he falls down. From his body, Tintin recovers documents establishing his identity, and lets the colonial police snap up his entire operation.

The nicest thing I can say about Tintin in the Congo, is that Herge later regretted it. Yeah, a Belgian during the height of colonialism had some problematic views of Africa, it's very representative of the times.

**Tintin in America:** Tintin is sent to Chicago, to cover the end of organized crime at the hands of a new task force, and is basically immediately kidnapped by Al Capone's men, looking for revenge for disrupting their diamond-smuggling operation. Tintin escapes, but the police are on the take and don't listen to him. Capone's rival, and actual main villain, Boss Smiles tries to hire Tintin to work for him, but Tintin only plays along long enough to get the police to roll up the whole gang, save Smiles who flees to the MidWest, a town called (sigh) Redskin City, where he convinces the Blackfoot Nation that Tintin is an enemy and heralds the end of their civilization. Tintin escapes the tribe, then finds oil on their land. By the next day, the US Army has cleared the Blackfoot out and every major oil company is drilling away, so Smiles may have had a point about Tintin.

Tintin almost dies to a lynch mob, to a wildfire, gets captured by Smiles and tied to some railroad tracks, before finally tracking Smiles to a log cabin (!) and arresting him.

Back in Chi-town, Smiles' gang kidnap Snowy, Tintin rescues him, then lure him to a cannery and throw him in the meat-grinder, but the workers pick that exact moment to go on strike. At a banquet Tintin is kidnapped again (spotting a pattern?) and thrown into Lake Michigan, but the dummies accidentally weigh him down with a prop dumbbell that floats. One more try with some fake police, but Tintin escapes, the gang is arrested and Tintin is honored with a tickertape parade for saving Chicago from organized crime, before boarding the first boat back to Europe where things make sense.

Tintin got kidnapped and stuck in death-traps more than Lois Lane. Is this how 1930s Europeans saw the US? Ah well, now we can start in on the volumes I grew up on.

**Cigars of the Pharaoh:** After all his adventures, Tintin is vacationing on a Mediterranean cruise, where he meets a famous *avant-garde* film director, Mr. Rastapopoulos, and a brilliant but eccentric archaeologist, Professor Sophocles Sarcophagus. This is also where we meet the bumbling twin detectives Thomson & Thompson (Dupont & Dumond, in the original French) who find a large quantity of opium aboard, and mistakenly attributing it to Tintin, arrest him. When the cruise liner docks in Cairo, Tintin escapes the detectives and sneaks out with Professor Sarcophagus' expedition, to find the lost tomb of the great pharaoh Kih-Ohsk. They find the tomb, and it's full of mummies, but recently made ones, previous expeditions, and boxes upon boxes of cigars, all marked with Kih-Ohsk's symbol. Tintin and Snowy get separated from the Professor, and gassed, waking up inside a sarcophagus being loaded onto a ship. Where they are promptly dumped into the sea, before the Coast Guard can come along and board the ship.

Adrift in a sarcophagus, Tintin and Snowy are rescued by gunrunners and taken to Arabia, where Sheikh Pasha is a huge fan of Tintin's stories. He finds Rastapopolous filming his next movie, but is found by Thomson and Thompson, who add arms-smuggling to his crimes, and has to flee them and into the desert. Barely surviving plan "cross the desert with no supplies and no map" Tintin is found by and drafted into the army. When he makes a fuss about his

commanding officer having those same cigars, he is charged as a spy and barely saved from execution by Thomson & Thompson who insist he faces their justice first. In the confusion, Tintin escapes and again steals and crashes a plane, this time when it runs out of fuel over India.

There he meets Professor Sarcophagus, who has apparently lost his mind, believing himself to be Ramses II, he attacks Tintin and is easily subdued. At the nearest village, Tintin finds a poet, Zloty, who explains there is a global opium ring frantic to kill Tintin since he stumbled upon them, the cigars are how they hide the opium. Before he can name the leader, the village fakir tags Zloty with a madness-inducing drug, Rajaijah, same as Sarcophagus got. Tintin flees and befriends the Maharaja, who is aware of the syndicate and has lost his father and elder brother to similar "madness." Tintin happens to spot the fakir again, and follows him to his hideout, bringing the troops in. They capture the gang, minus the fakir, and the Thomsons show up with news that the Cairo branch has been arrested and they -er, owe Tintin an apology.

The fakir and the masked leader of the syndicate kidnap the Maharaja's son, letting us get in a climatic car chase in which Tintin rescues the kid, and the leader drives off a cliff.

This is sort of a two-parter with the next book, the Blue Lotus. It's alright, nothing too great, but it did give us the detectives.

**The Blue Lotus:** A Chinese fellow visits Tintin at the Maharaja's palace, and warns him about a Japanese businessman in Shanghai, Mitsuhirato, just before getting darted with that same insanity-inducing drug. Tintin goes to Shanghai, where Mitsuhirato will tell him only that the Maharaja is in danger and Tintin must return to India immediately. Tintin is then kidnapped by a secret society, the Sons of the Dragon led by Wang Chen-Yee, who fight the opium trade. They inform Tintin that Mitsuhirato is A.) a Japanese spy and B.) leads the local branch of the international opium ring from the last book.

Tintin agrees to spy on Mitsuhirato, following him from his business, the Blue Lotus restaurant/opium den, he watches Mitsuhirato blow up a Chinese railroad to provide a pretext for the Japanese to invade. Mitsuhirato captures Tintin and

drugs him with the insanity serum, but one of the Sons of the Dragon swapped the drug for colored water, Tintin is able to fake it and escape, though the Japanese military police are set after him.

Tintin heads to the Shanghai International Settlement, hoping a poisons expert, Dr. Fang Hsi-Ying, will be able to create an antidote for the madness drug, Rajaijah. However, Dr. Fang has been abducted, and the corrupt police chief of Settlement, Dawson, arrests Tintin and turns him over to the Japanese army for execution (he gets saved by Wang and the Sons). Dawson then enlists Thomson & Thompson to apprehend Tintin yet again.

The Sons cough up a ransom payment for Dr. Fang, and Tintin volunteers to deliver it. En route, he rescues a young boy, Chang, from a flooded village. The ransom drop turns out to be a trap, which Tintin barely escapes with Chang's help.

New plan, Tintin walks brazenly into the Blue Lotus and lets himself be captured, so Mitsuhirato will monologue at him a while before the Sons and the police save him. In this way, he learns the leader of the opium ring is none other than the famed film director, Mr. Rastapopoulos, who survived driving off a cliff in the last book. When the good guys storm the Blue Lotus, Rastapopoulos is arrested, & Mitsuhirato suicides to avoid capture.

In the last pages, Tintin exposes the Japanese invasion as based on a fraud, causing the Japanese to withdraw from the League of Nations, but also from China. Dr. Fang develops that antidote, and Wang adopts Chang.

The Blue Lotus was the first time Herge seriously researched the culture he was portraying (I believe he befriended a Chinese university student to check his work) and it really shows. There's a lot of quiet jabs at Western stereotypes of China that flew straight over my head as a kid. It also got political again - the Japanese invasion of Manchuria was three years old at the time this started. Still, it's a solid adventure especially compared to what came before.

**The Broken Ear.** Tintin reports on an exhibit that vanished and reappeared at the Brussels Museum of Ethnography, an idol of the secretive Arumbaya people of South America. He quickly realizes that the idol hasn't returned, it's been swapped with a fake! One lacking a notched ear. He assumes this is connected somehow to

the mysterious death of Jacob Balthazar, a sculptor who lived nearby and certainly had the tools and expertise to make a replica of the piece.

Investigating Balthazar's flat, Tintin concludes he was murdered, finding among other clues a cigarette butt and scrap of gray flannel that definitely didn't belong to the deceased. He also discovers that the sculptor had a parrot (Polly, naturally), who the landlady just sold to a Hispanic gentleman, who promptly loses it when the bird keeps yelling "great greedy guts!" inspiring a fat man to brawl.

Tintin posts a reward for the bird, which then escapes him, just before a pair of very violent men show up to try and take it from him. Later they try to run him over in the street, which just gives Tintin a chance to trace their license plate (once he realizes they flipped it over) to Alonso Perez, engineer, in Freshfield.

Creeping up on the house, he learns the two men, Alonso & Ramon, are after the missing idol. After some antics with the parrot, Polly says "Rodrigo Tortilla, you've killed me!"

The two crooks (and Tintin) trace Tortilla to a ship bound for the South American Republic de San Theodoros, the *Ville de Lyon*. After some antics, they murder Tortilla, but fail to find their prize, and Tintin arrests them. However, their associates swap Tintin's suitcase, with the idol, for one full of explosives and report him as an anarchist.

After various shenanigans hold up Tintin's execution by firing squad, the matter is settled when the tyrannical regime of General Tapioca is overthrown by General Alcazar. Because everyone involved was very drunk, Tintin is the first to hail General Alcazar and is given a commission as colonel and made Alcazar's aide-de-camp. In this role he saves the General from several assassination attempts, is kidnapped again by Alonso & Ramon who reveal the idol in his suitcase was a fake and frees himself. However, Tintin falls rather out of favor when he alone opposes war with Nuevo Rico when an American corporation discovers a rich oil field straddling the border region, he is framed for treason and barely escapes, though in the process of running the border in an armored car, he inadvertently triggers the war he hoped to prevent (and is arrested and escapes again).

Tintin wanders the wilderness to a villa, where he learns he is quite close to where the Arumbaya live. He ventures to meet them, encountering a friendly

anthropologist Dr. Ridgewell, who explains the Arumbaya are a fine people, but seldom visited because of their hostile enemies, the Rumbaba who chop the heads off trespassers. They are captured by the Rumbaba, who let them go when Ridgewell uses ventriloquism to make it appear the village idol ordered their release.

The Arumbaya tell of an earlier expedition they exchanged gifts with, including the idol, but when they realized their magic stone for warding off snakebite, a priceless diamond, was missing, they pursued and massacred the expedition in a rage, only a couple survivors escaped. Tintin reasons the diamond must be hidden in the idol, hence why everyone wants it. On his way back to civilization, he has another run-in with Ramon & Alonso, who were conscripted into and deserted the San Theodoran army.

Back in civilization, Tintin spots the idol in a shop window for a hundred francs. He buys it, then sees two identical ones (down to the broken ear) in another! Inquiring he is directed to the maker, Jacob Balthazar's brother, who has a workshop churning them out by the dozens. He used to work from an original, which he sold recently to an American businessman, Sam Goldbarr, on his way home! Tintin hurriedly hires a seaplane to catch up to Goldbarr's ship (*SS Washington*) and catches Alonso & Ramon making off with the idol. In their struggle, the piece is dashed on the deck and the diamond falls overboard, shortly followed by the three men. Only Tintin is rescued, and tells the whole story to Goldbarr, who asks him to take the remains of the idol back to the Brussels museum.

**The Black Island:** A plane makes an emergency landing in a field as Tintin is driving through the countryside. The boy reporter rushes to render aid, but the pilot pulls a gun and shoots him.

In the hospital, the Thomsons take Tintin's statement and inform him the plane took off again and later crashed in Sussex, England. Tintin becomes determined to examine the crash site and figure out what's going on. On the rail, a criminal frames Tintin for a crime and he is (for what, the third time now?) on the run from the twin detectives. Tintin has really bad luck with rail travel.

Taking the ferry to England, Tintin is jumped by the criminals and nearly thrown off a cliff, but for Snowy biting one of his attackers in a sensitive area. He then



proceeds to the crash site, it seems the pilot walked away, but left some hastily torn up paper Tintin reassembles into a drawing of a triangle, 3FR Eastdown Sussex Müller. Proceeding to Eastdown, Tintin finds the home of a Dr. J. W. Müller, who tries to commit him, but he escapes, though in the process he burns down the man's house. Investigating the rubble, he finds a cable to a trio of red lights, and intuits the 3FR must be three flares, red. It's an aerial drop site!

Staking out the site, Tintin overcomes two goons who tried to wave the plane off and finds the drop was sacks full of money. The men escape, Tintin pursues, eventually they wind up at a pub with Müller, who is able to flee when Thomson & Thompson again try to arrest him. Tintin convinces the detectives to accompany him to the airport the crooks ran too, to prove his innocence. They're too late to stop a plane from taking off, but Tintin is able to steal another, ditching the Thompsons again. They commandeer a biplane to pursue, not giving the poor mechanic a moment to explain he doesn't know how to fly.

Tintin loses the crooks in a thick Scottish fog, and crashes, spending the night with a friendly farmer. In the morning, he hears over the radio that debris from the plane he was pursuing has washed up near Kiloach. Investigating, he gets told of the cursed, haunted Black Island from which no man returns, and takes a boat over. It seems Müller has set up an elaborate counterfeiting ring, with the press in a castle on the haunted island, protected by a guard-gorilla, Ranko. Has enough space for an airfield to regularly drop the funny money to him in Sussex. Fortunately, the gorilla is terrified of Snowy and Tintin is able to radio the police for reinforcements, before writing his headline.

**King Ottokar's Sceptre:** A chance mix-up of briefcases leads Tintin to befriend an elderly Syldavian (fictional Baltic country) sigillographer, Professor Hector Alembick, whom Tintin realizes is under surveillance by mysterious figures, whom he follows to a Syldavian restaurant. A man agrees to meet and speak with him, but is KOed and gets amnesia.

Tintin then gets a threatening letter, then is almost killed by a bomb (the Thomsons intervene, in a slapstick way).

Convinced these events are linked to Syldavia, Tintin decides to accompany Professor Alembick home, but realizes partly into their trip that the old professor

has been replaced by an imposter! For starters, he has suddenly become a non-smoker.

On the flight, Tintin reads up on Syldavian history, in particular, there's an annual tradition where the king must appear before the masses each St. Vladimir's Day, and show off the scepter of the famous King Ottokar IV, or abdicate in shame.

Tintin suspects there may be a coup involved, a play for the scepter.

The pilot physically hurls Tintin from the plane, but he survives. He goes to the head of the Syldavian police with his theory, but the man is part of the plot and has Tintin taken into the woods to be executed. Tintin escapes and hitches a ride with the world-renowned opera singer, Bianca Castafiore, shortly followed by his proceeding on foot to escape her ego and grating singing. He's arrested, escapes, walks into the capitol city of Klow and goes to the king's aide-de-camp Colonel Jorgen... who is *also* in on the coup and tries to have Tintin killed.

Finally Tintin is able to personally deliver his warning to King Muskar XII, just as the fake Alembick enters the castle to verify the scepter, and too late to prevent his fleeing with it.

Now the fix is in, Tintin and the twin detectives have only a couple days to retrieve the scepter. They pursue as far as Borduria, a country recently taken over by the fascist *fuhrer* Müssler (zero points for guessing the real-life inspiration) who orchestrated the whole thing to annex Syldavia in the chaos. Tintin steals back the scepter before it can cross, but is obliged to cross the border anyways and steal a Bordurian plane to make it back in time. Tintin is shot down by the Syldavian airforce, but parachutes down and makes it to Klow in the nick of time.

Müssler is deposed, Alembick is freed and his twin brother, the imposter, arrested. Tintin becomes the first non-Syldavian named a Knight of the Golden Pelican.

***++ In 1940, early in the run of the next Tintin adventure, the Land of Black Gold, Belgium was invaded by Nazi Germany. Herge initially fled to France, before returning home weeks later. Le Vingtième Siècle and its junior edition were shuttered. Tintin's adventures would find a new home in the pages of Le Soir, the Evening, now the sole newspaper in Belgium. But with a Nazi editor and subject to Nazi censorship laws. At this time, Tintin became studiously apolitical; they***

***even stopped referring to him as a reporter. The character of fuhrer Müssler would not appear again.++***

**The Crab With the Golden Claws:** The detectives inform Tintin of the curious case of a drowned sailor, who had on him a scrap of label from a tin of canned crab and scribbled on it 'Karaboudjan.' Investigating leads Tintin to discover the *Karaboudjan* is a tramp freighter, and sniffing around *that* gets him struck over the head and stuffed into a packing crate.

Tintin escapes when Snowy chews through his ropes, but by now they're out at sea. Climbing out the porthole leads him to the room of the ship's captain, and Tintin's new best friend and boon companion, Archibald Haddock, who can barely rouse himself from a drunken stupor enough to remember that he is technically captain of this tub, and has no clue of the shady dealings of his crew and particularly his first mate, Allan. Tintin gets to the radio room to tell the world that *Karaboudjan* is kidnapping people, then he and Captain Haddock escape in a life-boat, where they're attacked by a seaplane from the ship, but Tintin shoots it down and they steal it, and then crash it in the Sahara.

They almost die a bunch walking out of the desert, before being rescued by a French outpost, where they hear the *Karaboudjan* was lost in a storm. They reach the port of Bagghar, where Thomson & Thompson meet Tintin and explain that a local bigshot, Omar Ben Salaad, the wealthiest man in the city, is smuggling opium through his business in canned crab. Captain Haddock, separated from Tintin, recognizes the *Karaboudjan* under a different name and flag in port, but is kidnapped by his former crew before he can warn Tintin.

Rescuing Haddock, though taking some dramatic and comedic turns (at one point the crooks shoot a bunch of wine barrels in the room Tintin & Haddock are taking cover in, and they both get drunk off the fumes) turns up plenty of evidence to arrest Salaad and the whole gang. Allan flees in a speedboat for a final dramatic chase scene, but is handily captured.

**The Shooting Star:** Tintin meets a famous astronomer, Professor Decimus Phostle, who predicts the imminent end of all life on Earth via a meteor-strike. The meteor misses, but a small chunk breaks off and falls to ground somewhere in the Arctic Circle. Professor Phostle proceeds to *lose his mind* when spectrographic analysis

reveals the meteorite is made of a previously unknown element, which he humbly names Phostilite.

An expedition is made to retrieve the meteor at once, some of the greatest scientific minds, aboard the *Aurora*, captained by no less than Captain Haddock. Alas, millionaire Mr. Bohlwinkel (Blumenstein, originally), CEO of Golden Oil, smells a profit and throws together an altogether less altruistic rival expedition, aboard the SS *Peary*. The race is on!

Of course, the *Peary* people have a whole stack of dirty tricks, from planting a saboteur on the *Aurora*, denying them fuel from Mr. Bohlwinkel's company, diverting them with a fake SOS. But each time Tintin and Haddock have an answer, even siphoning fuel from a ship whose captain Haddock is friendly with.

Ultimately, Tintin takes a seaplane from the *Aurora* to parachute down on the meteorite and plant their expedition's flag first.

Turns out, though, that Phostilite is great at accelerating growth. Overnight, an apple core from Tintin's lunchbox sprouts into a massive tree, exploding mushrooms are popping all over the place, and giant insects. The meteorite starts sinking after a sea-quake and Tintin barely escapes with a hunk of meteorite to study.

**The Secret of the Unicorn:** At an open air market, Tintin buys a model ship with a unicorn figurehead, as a gift for Captain Haddock. Two very zealous men, Ivan Sakharine and Barnaby, each try to persuade him to sell it to them. He also meets Thomson & Thompson, who are on the beat looking for a compulsive pickpocket but, er, seem to have misplaced their wallets.

At home, Snowy accidentally knocks the model over, breaking the main-mast. This turns out to be massively important, as when the ship is stolen a little later, the thieves don't find what they really wanted. Tintin first goes to Sakharin's house, finding an identical model, but with an undamaged mast.

Captain Haddock reveals that the *Unicorn* was a treasure galleon, captained by his most illustrious ancestor, Sir Francis Haddock, until it was taken and the crew slaughtered by the pirate Red Rackham. Sir Francis managed to scuttle the ship, and years later made three models, one for each of his sons.

Searching his apartment, Tintin finds a tiny scroll. "Three brothers joined. Three *Unicorns* in company sailing in the noonday sunne will speak. For 'tis from the light that light will dawn, and then shines forth the Eagle's cross" plus a bunch of weird hatch marks.

Tintin believes each model had a scroll, and together they might form a clue as to the treasure of the *Unicorn*. Unfortunately, Sakharine is drugged when they arrive, his model stolen, and Tintin loses his scroll to the pickpocket. Barnaby, the other man frantic to buy the ship, appears on Tintin's door but is gunned down in a drive-by shooting. (for once, he makes a full recovery, but only after the story is effectively over)

Tintin is then kidnapped by Barnaby's employers, Max & G. Bird, a pair of unscrupulous antiques dealers/fences, and tied up in the basement of their luxurious manor house, Marlinspike Hall. Tintin gets loose, calls for help with a spot of assistance from their butler Nestor, and the Bird Brothers are swiftly arrested. Only... they only have Sakharine's scroll, lost theirs to the pickpocket. Tintin helps the Thomsons track down said thief, a kleptomaniac collector of wallets named Aristides Silk. Holding the scrolls over each other in the light the marks on the bottom line combine to spell out: 20°37'42.0" N 70°52'15.0" W. Tintin and Haddock are eager to look for the treasure but it'll take a lot of preparation and like, a whole other book.

**Red Rackham's Treasure:** Newspaper clippings fill the readers in on the previous book, and that Tintin and Haddock are taking the fishing trawler *Sirius* on a voyage to find Red Rackham's treasure. There's a lot of work to be done, first, the publicity has brought out hundreds of people claiming to be Rackham's descendants and demanding a share. Captain Haddock frightens them all off.

They are also approached by the last figure to permanently join the main cast, Professor Cuthbert Calculus, an eccentric (and stone deaf, comically mishearing everything) inventor who has made a mini-sub to help with the search and salvage. Who also believes in dowsing with a pendulum.

Thomson & Thompson also join the crew 'undercover' after Max Bird escapes captivity. And though Captain Haddock was quite insistent on not taking Calculus' mini-sub, he merely smuggled it, and himself, aboard.

Arriving at the specified coordinates, they find nothing. Tintin realizes they're using the Greenwich Meridian, but Sir Francis would have used Paris. Adjusting, they find an island with a wooden statue of Sir Francis, and parrots still cussing like a Haddock.

Searching the sea with the minisub, Tintin finds the remains of the uniform and goes down in a diving suit. They recover the figurehead and the anchor, and bottles upon bottles of alcohol, even a sealed box with a log, which reveals Sir Francis was the original owner of Marlinspike Hall, but no treasure. Eventually, they give it up.

Professor Calculus, flush with cash after his minisub proved itself, buys Haddock's ancestral home as a gift to him. In the basement, Tintin realizes that there was more to the initial riddle, Haddock saved some of the treasure and hid it, inside a globe on a statue he saw earlier, of St. John the Eagle!

We close with Haddock hosting a gallery of artifacts and treasure from the *Unicorn*.

***++Several months into the Seven Crystal Balls, the Allies liberated Belgium in September 1944. Le Soir was closed and six of the staff sentenced to death. Herge had a new label hung on him, "collaborator," and was blacklisted for two years, which he spent largely redrawing the older strips for collection. Ultimately the 'harmless' apolitical nature of Tintin made military officials reluctant to prosecute, and in 1946, fresh certificate of good citizenship in hand, Herge and some friends launched Tintin Magazine. Job one was to finish the last three quarters of Seven Crystal Balls, and the follow-up book, Prisoners of the Sun.++***

***The Seven Crystal Balls:*** Captain Haddock is trying to adjust to the life of a wealthy socialite, and it's going very poorly. He invites Tintin to a show, which includes a fortune teller who accurately predicts a scientist falling ill, who has just returned from an expedition to the Andes. And a knife-thrower Tintin recognizes as General Alcazar, dictator of San Theodoros, who has lost the premiership again to his rival, General Tapioca.

In the morning, they learn that six of the seven members of the Sanders-Hardiman expedition have fallen into mysterious comas, each time the shattered remnants of a crystal ball were found nearby.

It happens, Professor Calculus is good friends with the last man standing, Hercules Tarragon. The man is justifiably paranoid, in a locked down mansion under police guard. But he does put them up for the night and shows them the prize of the expedition, the mummified corpse of the Inca king, Rascar Capac. As the thunderstorm outside picks up, ball lightning flies down the chimney, striking and disintegrating the mummy. Professor Tarragon gets hysterical about the mummy's curse, but is calmed down.

That night, Tintin, Haddock and Calculus all dream of the mummy smashing a crystal ball. In the morning, Hercules Tarragon cannot be woken, on the floor are fragments of a crystal ball. Walking the grounds, Calculus spots one of the mummy's bracelets and puts it on, he never makes it back.

With Calculus missing, roadblocks go up but do nothing. Tintin visits the stricken academics in the ward, discovering they all wake up and flail about, screaming about being attacked for a couple minutes at the same exact time every day. The kidnapper's car is spotted at a port. Tintin and Haddock go, but the trail goes cold. They do meet General Alcazar heading home, seems his assistant Chiquito, one of the last pureblooded descendants of the Inca, has up and vanished and that's the end of his knife-throwing act.

They do find Calculus' hat, and determine the specific ship he was taken aboard, the *Pachacamac*, bound for Peru, and take a plane to beat it there.

**Prisoners of the Sun:** Following directly from the last book, Professor Calculus has been kidnapped to Peru. Tintin & Haddock beat the ship *Pachacamac* there but oh no! The ship is serving three weeks quarantine!

Tintin suspects this is, in fact, a lie, and takes a rowboat at night. He meets Chiquito, who seems to be of two minds about this kidnapping business but confirms that the quarantine is a lie and Calculus is marked for death for *lese majeste*. Gunmen drive Tintin off and when he returns with police, the Incas and Calculus are long gone.

They pursue into the mountains, losing them at the city of Jauja. Tintin gets some brownie points for helping a young indigenous boy getting bullied, prompting an elder to give him a talisman that “will save you from danger.” (Tells others “nah, *this white boy is okay*”) The kid, Zorrino, offers to guide them to the Temple of the Sun where Calculus was taken.

They pass many dangers, including a determined group of pursuers, in the wilderness before reaching the Temple of the Sun, a hidden last enclave of the traditional Inca civilization. Tintin gives his talisman to Zorrino, saving his life, but he and Haddock are sentenced to die on the same pyre as Calculus, for trespassing and to preserve the secret. They are permitted, within reason to choose the day and hour, and instead of going with the latest allowable date, Tintin picks a very precise time so their execution will coincide with a solar eclipse (this is gonna hurt).

Tintin says they are angry and will use their magic, and lo, makes the sun disappear, promising to return it only if they are released. That settled, they convince the Inca that the archaeologists meant no offense, they wanted to show off the glory of the Inca, some wax dolls are smashed and the expedition members all recover. Zorrino elects to stay, the group are sworn to secrecy and all set off for home.

A *lot* of fans consider the Seven Crystal Balls/Prisoners of the Sun duology the high water mark for the franchise. I suspect mostly because of just how creepy and atmospheric Crystal Balls was. I'd personally rank it nearer the middle, but I'm an odd duck who likes Shooting Star best of all. Even as a kid, I had to groan a bit at the white man bamboozling the primitive natives with his knowledge of basic astronomy, especially since at least a couple of the Incas do go out and participate in the modern world.

**Land of Black Gold:** Across Europe, car engines are suddenly exploding. After this happens to the Thompsons, they suspect a conspiracy by the auto garages. Numerous countries are trading accusations and arming for war. Tintin investigates Speedol, the foremost Belgian oil company, and learns that fuel is being tampered with, though not by them.



Tintin and the twin detectives sign on as crew for an oil tanker, the *Speedol Star*, to go undercover. The mate tries to kill Snowy, hits his head in the ensuing scuffle with Tintin and yep, amnesia. On arrival in Khemed (Palestine, in the original strip) the three are framed and arrested. The Thompsons use their police connections to get out in a hurry. Tintin is being transported when attacked and kidnapped by the Arab rebel, Bab El Ehr, under the mistaken belief that Tintin knows what happened to his latest, overdue, arms shipment. Tintin escapes the rebels camp into the desert, sees his old enemy Dr. Müller (the Black Island) adding something to an oil pipeline, meets the detectives and weathers a sandstorm with them, all on his way to the capital of Wadeshda.

There he relates everything to the Emir, Mohammed Ben Kalish Ezab, just as an assistant breaks in to reveal that the Emir's son Abdullah is missing.

Assuming Müller kidnapped the kid, Tintin tracks him to his house and overcomes him, freeing the boy. He learns that Müller developed a tablet, Formula 14, which greatly increases the explosive power of oil and was trying to incite a war. The two detectives eat Formula 14 tablets, mistaking them for aspirin, and begin burping bubbles while their hair grows rapidly and cycles through many colors. Professor Calculus is able to whip up an antidote, but the two will be subject to occasional attacks going forwards.

Land of Black Gold was begun in 1939, interrupted by WWII, and completed over a decade later. There's a running gag where Haddock (who didn't exist when the story was started) keeps starting to tell the fantastic story of how he came to be in Khemed and involved in this, only to be interrupted time and again until he throws up his hands in frustration.

**Destination Moon:** Professor Calculus invites Tintin & Haddock to the secretive Sprodj Atomic Research Center in Syldavia, where he reveals that he has been working for some time on the Syldavian space program and wishes them to join him on the first manned mission to the moon.

There's a lot of training and preparation to be done, for one, they're about to launch an unmanned prototype with Calculus nuclear engine, the X-FLR6, to attempt a lunar orbit. The night X-FLR6 launches, a plane flies near the center and drops three paratroopers. One is killed, Tintin confronts one but he escapes when

his accomplice arrives and the Center has a blackout. The Thomsons arrive to beef up security, as it is assumed these men work for a foreign power, and are being assisted by a mole inside Sprodj.

X-FLR6 completes its orbit and returns to Earth, but is driven off course by a stronger transmitter using their control frequency. Tintin anticipated this, though, and has Calculus trigger the self-destruct. Now they're certain there's a spy, and that the rocket works.

There's a comic interlude where Haddock accuses Calculus of "acting the goat" inspiring an impromptu tour of the full-sized rocket, and for the professor to hit his head and develop amnesia. After a variety of attempts to shock him and bring back his memory, Haddock mentions acting the goat again and that does the trick.

The rocket is finished, Calculus upgrades from his ear trumpet to a hearing aid, but just for this mission. Captain Haddock gets cold feet on launch night... until the Thompsons assure him that he's much too old for this sort of thing anyways. The rocket launches and everyone aboard passes out, leaving us on a cliffhanger.

**Explorers on the Moon:** Tintin wakes and answers. Shortly into their journey, they discover the two detectives slept aboard to deter sabotage, and have become unintentional stowaways! Luckily the extra mass makes little difference to Calculus' nuclear rocket, but the increased air consumption is going to be an issue. Also, the detectives aren't terribly bright and accidentally cut off the motor, before having another attack of bubbles and hair.

Haddock smuggled a bottle of whiskey aboard and gets sloshed, deciding to go EVA and accidentally goes drifting into space. Tintin is barely able to save him from becoming a new moon of the asteroid Adonis.

At least turnover and landing go without incident. Tintin becomes the first man to walk on the moon, his words a commentary on how bleak and lifeless it seems, where even the stars don't twinkle. While Calculus and Frank Wolff set up their various scientific apparatus, Tintin and Haddock assemble a lunar rover and go exploring. They find an ice cave and Snowy nearly dies falling down a crevasse. While the others are outside the next day, Tintin is KO'd and bound in the hold by a *third* stowaway, Colonel Jorgen (*King Ottokar's Sceptre*) who reveals that Wolff is

the spy, and he's now hijacking the rocket. They attempt to take off and strand Haddock, Calculus and the detectives but Tintin is able to get loose and cut off the engine, then taking the two men captive.

The oxygen supply is now becoming critical, with three more men than planned. They elect to abort the mission and head home as quickly as repairs to the rocket can be completed. Even so, it likely won't be enough.

After launch, Jorgen slips his bonds, frees Wolff, and regains his gun. He plans to kill them all, then resume plans to divert the rocket to his homeland. Wolff objects, they struggle over the gun and Jorgen is shot. This buys Wolff some freedom and trust, which he uses to suicide at the earliest opportunity, walking out the airlock so the others will maybe have enough oxygen to survive the return trip.

The rocket lands, for some reason they had it set so the crew (who pass out again, decelerating) have to wake up in time and manually trigger an auto-pilot for the final landing, but Tintin just makes it. Calculus immediately starts planning the next mission, to the Captain's dismay.

**The Calculus Affair.** There's a tremendous thunderstorm and strange events afoot at Marlinspike Hall, several glass and porcelain items inexplicably shatter, an overly-friendly, presumptuous and entirely lacking in self-awareness salesman, Jolyon Wagg, invites himself to take shelter from the storm, and Tintin and Haddock hear shots and find an unconscious man, who vanishes shortly after waking.

In the morning, Professor Calculus leaves for a conference on nuclear physics in Geneva. Haddock snoops around his lab, and sees that Calculus has been experimenting with ultrasonic devices. A masked man breaks in, but is driven off by Snowy. He leaves a clue, though, dropping a pack of cigarettes from the Professor's hotel in Geneva!

Tintin & Haddock rush to Calculus' rescue, finding him absent from the conference, he apparently went to consult with an expert on sonic devices, a Professor Toppolino in Nyon (also Switzerland). En route, they are driven off a road, but still make it to find Toppolino bound and gagged, the house blows up but nobody is harmed.

The twin detectives catch up, revealing the stranger in their home was Syldavian. Tintin concludes that Professor Calculus has invented a powerful sonic weapon and the Bordurians want it. They head to the nearest embassy, where Bordurian and Syldavian spies have a shootout, Tintin gets knocked out and the Syldavians bundle Calculus into a jet plane, which is later shot down by Bordurian fighters. Calculus is recaptured and taken to the Bordurian capital, Szohôd.

In Szohôd, Tintin and Haddock are escorted everywhere by the secret police. They ditch them in the opera house, where Bianca Castafiore is performing, hiding in her dressing room. While the chief of the secret police, Colonel Sponsz is occupied with the diva, Tintin steals several documents from his coat pocket, letting them forge transit papers and an order for Calculus' immediate release.

Disguised as Red Cross workers, the two get Calculus out and hijack a tank to flee to the border.

Back home, Jolyon Wagg has moved into Marlinspike Hall with his entire extended family. Calculus finds the plans for his ultrasonic device, which he accidentally left there, and burns them with Haddock's pipe to prevent their being weaponized. In the ensuing argument, Calculus mishears the Captain as saying he has chicken pox, which at least leads the Wagg to flee the estate in a panic.

**The Red Sea Sharks:** Tintin and Haddock chance to encounter General Alcazar again in the streets, then return home to learn of a terrible disaster. The Emir of Khemed (Land of Black Gold) has been overthrown, and sent his prankster and spoiled brat of a son, Abdullah, to them for safekeeping.

Having to put up with the kid's antics quickly makes fervent counter-revolutionaries of the two men. The Thomsons reveal that Alcazar is trying to buy warplanes under the table from a Mr. Debrett. Investigating, Tintin recognizes Debrett is really J.W. Dawson (the Blue Lotus) and overhears him selling arms to the new Sheikh of Khemed, Bab El Ehr (also Land of Black Gold).

Tintin and Haddock catch a plane to Khemed, and are nearly killed by a bomb planted by Dawson. Tintin renews his acquaintance with a merchant who saved his life in Cigars of the Pharaoh, who directs them to the Emir's hideout.

The Emir explains that El Ehr is backed by a powerful international slaving operation, led by the Marquis di Gorgonzola, which claims to provide transport for the *hadj*, but then claps people in irons and moves them to destinations unknown. Heading for Mecca aboard a sailing ship, they are attacked by fighter planes. Tintin shoots one down, and they on their raft rescue the pilot, Skut. They get picked up a slaver ship, the *Ramona* captained by Gorgonzola, in truth Mr. Rastapopoulos (Cigars of the Pharaoh, the Blue Lotus). In the night, a fire breaks out, and most of the crew abandon ship. Haddock organizes the prisoners to fight the fire and then crew the ship. Rastapoulos directs a U-boat to try and sink the *Ramona*, & while Haddock frantically evades torpedoes, Tintin radios for help. They are rescued by the American destroyer *Los Angeles*, which saves them and runs down Rastapoulos' yacht, but the villain escapes in a mini-sub. Docking in Khemed, Tintin & Haddock learn that without the arms and funds supplied by Rastapopoulos the Emir has retaken his throne and they can finally be rid of his son. Before they can enjoy the peace and quiet, it turns out Jolyon Wagg has arranged an impromptu auto rally.

**Tintin in Tibet:** Tintin and Haddock are vacationing in the French Alps when they hear of a plane crash in the Himalayas. That night, Tintin is tormented by dreams of his friend Chang (the Blue Lotus) alone and injured in a desolate frozen wilderness, afraid and begging Tintin for help. In the morning, he confirms that Chang was a passenger on the crashed plane. Convinced beyond all reason that Chang is alive but in danger, Tintin hares off to Tibet where the authorities have already called off the search. Tintin hires a local guide, Tharkey, and some porters for an overland expedition. The porters bail after finding strange tracks Tharkey attributes to a yeti. They find the crash site, and in a nearby cave Chang carved Tintin's name on a wall. Tharkey ditches them when they press on, but returns in time to save them when rock-climbing goes poorly. The three men pass out and are buried in an avalanche, but Buddhist monks rescue them after having a vision, and are able to direct them to a village near the yeti's cave. Staking out the cave, they haul Chang out while the yeti is away, and

when it pursues frighten it off with a camera flash. Chang says the yeti saved him, was trying to help but, ah, doesn't really know anything about medicine.

**The Castafiore Emerald:** A bit of a domestic break, Calculus has bred a new subspecies of rose, there's a broken step at Marlinspike the Captain is trying to get fixed, oh, and after finding a Romani camp at the city dump, Captain Haddock invites them to stay on his manor grounds.

Then Bianca Castafiore invites herself to stay and escape the press. Haddock breaks his leg in his haste to escape, and the paparazzi become convinced the Captain and Castafiore are engaged. Oh, and a priceless gem of Castafiore's goes missing, and a heavy finger of official blame falls on the Romani (in fact, a magpie nicked it for her nest).

**Flight 714:** As world-famous astronauts, Tintin, Haddock and Calculus are going to a spaceflight conference in Sydney, at a layover in Jakarta, they meet their pilot friend, Skut (Red Sea Sharks) who now flies the private jet of aircraft tycoon Lazlo Carreidas, who hits it off with Calculus and offers them a ride.

Unfortunately, Carreidas' assistant Spaulding is part of a plot to hijack Flight 714, & abduct Carreidas to the volcanic island lair of Mr. Rastapopoulos (Cigars of the Pharaoh/Blue Lotus, Red Sea Sharks) who will drug or torture Carreidas for his banking details and empty his hidden Swiss accounts.

Snowy is apparently killed, but lives and frees the gang. They find Carreidas and Rastapopoulos, both high on truth serum, arguing about who is the most evil and confessing all their sins. They try to flee, run into goons and... this is where things get weird.

A mysterious voice directs Tintin to take shelter in an abandoned temple. There they meet Mik Kanrokitoff, a writer of a space magazine who has been investigating the ancient aliens who used to visit this island, which is how he got the telepathic comm. The bad guys try to seal the heroes in the temple with explosives, triggering the volcano to erupt, and all involved are saved by a flying saucer, their memories of everything after Flight 714 took off wiped.

We end with the three heroes giving an interview on the mysterious disappearance of their plane, only Snowy aware of what really happened, and

he's a dog so not talking. The men then board a passenger jet for Sydney, along with Carreidas.

**Tintin and the Picaros:** While touring in San Theodoros, Bianca Castafiore, her entire troupe, and the twin detectives are arrested for conspiring to assassinate General Tapioca (the Broken Ear), a conspiracy he announces to the world was masterminded by the the sinister Tintin, Haddock and Calculus!

But the general would like to invite the wicked plotters to San Theodoros, with his assurance of safe passage, to negotiate for their friends' release. Obvious trap is obvious, but for some reason only Tintin sees it.

The Captain and Professor go, Tintin following several days behind and in disguise. They learn that Colonel Sponsz of Borduria (the Calculus Affair) has become Tapioca's chief military advisor. And yes, it's a trap. Tintin and co. flee to the wilderness and the hidden base of the Picaros, General Alcazar's guerillas. The situation is dire, a traitor reveals their camp and they are almost killed by an artillery bombardment, also the regime is airdropping loads of booze to keep Alcazar's men too inebriated to fight. Tintin agrees to win San Theodoros for the General to save his friends but has one condition: the revolution will be bloodless and *remain* so. No purges, no executions.

Calculus whips up a pill to make Alcazar's men unable to stand the taste of alcohol. They then infiltrate the capitol disguised as a traveling carnival, seizing the presidential palace and key infrastructure without a shot fired.

The detectives are saved at the last moment from a firing squad, Bianca and her people are freed, the villains banished and the heroes go home.

**Tintin and Alph-Art:** The final, unfinished Tintin story. A new modern art craze is sweeping Europe: Alph-Art, giant sculptures of letters. Tintin is skeptical, doubly so when the Captain buys an enormous 'H.' An art gallery director is run over, murdered.

Tintin investigates, and also Bianca Castafiore's new spiritual guru with a strangely familiar voice, Endadine Akass. Going to the Mediterranean island where Akass is set up, Tintin and Captain meet a who's-who of minor villains from previous volumes. Bianca invites them to spend the night, and Tintin gets up in the

night to see men loading frames into a truck. It seems Akass and Ramo, the avant-garde creator of Alph-Art have been using it as a cover for an art forgery ring.

In the final scene, Tintin is being taken away at gunpoint to be covered in polyurethane, a (briefly) living sculpture.