THE AUSLANDER FILES

BY
MICHAEL PATRICK SULLIVAN

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

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INTRODUCTION

According to the online German-English dictionary the literal translation of "auslander" means "outlander," but when taken in the context of this pulp series by Michael Patrick Sullivan, *The Auslander* is an alien.

I like aliens.

No, I don't mean little green men with antennae in flying saucers, though I am a big fan of those too. I mean the "man apart" or "the hero with no name" which has been an archetype of genre fiction media for awhile now (think *Clint Eastwood*, but also *Toshiro Mifune, Chow Yun-fat, Bruce Willis* and most recently *Matt Damon* in the *Bourne* trilogy). *The Auslander* is a hero with no identity, save his shadowy presence, who somehow arrives at the right time and the right place, not always to save the day, but to wreak holy hell on the guilty. A hero driven by passions and nightmares that are meant to be his alone, keeping him apart

from the rest of us.

Set in a WWII America filled with paranoia and treachery at every turn, *The Auslander* is a pulp character cut from the same cloth as these other no-named archetypes. However, in the best "New Pulp" tradition, Kid Sullivan (I can call him that because, damnit, he's younger than me) has taken the archetype and subverted our expectation as to who this "man apart" is…or was…or will be. This volume collects the Auslander's first adventures (nightmares?) written for the New Pulp publication *Astonishing Adventures Magazine.* From that dark chrysalis of quarterly mystery-adventures emerges an enigma whose secrets are waiting to be unraveled in a single sitting - because trust me, you won't want to put it down.

Enjoy!

Bill Cunningham
Mad Pulp Bastard

THE YELLOW STAR OF ANTWERP

With each smattering of blood on his fist, The Auslander forced himself to take solace in the fact that each of these men, for whatever broken bones or bruises they might have, will still be alive after he leaves the thirty-story building on 47th Street. Had these men met him six months ago, the same would not likely be true.

They were protecting that which was behind the last door that the foreigner with the shock-white hair and deep black trench coat needed to open. He had passed through many doors already, most them over the prone bodies of security guards that weren't much better than a 4F, though each door was more difficult than the last. Now he had finally reached the door behind which was The Yellow Star of Antwerp.

It was an image that came to him in a dream. It was one of

those dreams that had periodically been haunting him since the day he woke up in a hotel room with an array of false ID cards, each with a different name. None of those names, he knew, were his own, though he had no proof of it as he had no memory of it…or anything else.

All he knew for certain is that his German was better than his English, and with the Second World War raging, that tended to be problematic as roamed the States, following cryptic clues that came to him in dreams. Each journey leads to some kind of Nazi plot. The pieces aren't hard to put together. Each plot, he fears, he likely had a hand in. Each plot also brings back some piece of his fractured mind as well as the dread that when the final piece falls into place, he will once again be more monster than man.

His most recent dream led him to New York City's Diamond District and, instinctively, several stories into the tallest building on the block. One the locals simply called "The Tower." Within its secure walls were enough diamonds to get engaged to every woman, single or not, in the tri-state area. The Auslander was only interested in one such gem.

The man of black and white dreamt of a super-weapon, a beam weapon uniquely focused by a specially cut gem. A cut so special, so specific that it would lead Nazi agents deep within The Tower, populated almost exclusively by those they would exterminate with glee. The same Nazi agents for whom he was, now, clearing a path. Nazi agents just two floors behind him. Each guard, each jeweler, each innocent who met with the cracking force of The Auslander's knuckles was another person the Germans behind him would not have to kill to get to their goal. "The Yellow Star of Antwerp." The Auslander surmised that to be the name of the deadly stone in question.

His blood-soaked hands work feverishly to pick the locks of the final door as the unconscious men in the traditional black suits of Orthodox Jews lie heaped around him, spark-

ing a faint memory he was reasonably certain he did not want to recall. He could hear the sounds of doorknobs breaking plaster as his pursuers violently kicked open doors. It's that sound that nearly masked the clicking of the last tumbler in the lock.

The shock-haired man slipped through the opened door, using the doorknob to anchor a rapid turn, throwing his weight back into the door, shutting it. He secured the lock, pulled a nearby chair to brace the door and started scanning for heavy furniture. It wasn't until he finally got a look at the room he entered. Cabinets surrounded the room, each with dozens of small, flat drawers, and each likely filled with precious jewels enough to buy the building they were in a hundred times over.

"Which one contains the Yellow Star?" he thought to himself.

Fortunately, The Auslander had an opportunity to get the answer from the only other human being he found in that room. Directly in the center of the room sat a bearded Hasidic man at a workbench. His eyes, huge in the lenses of his magnifying glasses, stare at him, more offended than fearful or even surprised.

'You are not allowed in here," said the hirsute cutter. "Didn't Herschel tell you that? Where is he?" He called out, "Herschel?"

"You didn't hear what was happening?" The Auslander's Austrian accent put the fear in the cutter's eyes that had not been there before.

"I hear nothing when I'm working," uttered the bearded man.

The Auslander busied himself once again with securing the door, buying enough time to locate the Star and then, somehow, devise a plan for keeping it out of German hands.

"I need to find the Yellow Star."

"My name is Menahem," said the stone worker.

The Auslander turned to him. "Pardon?"

"My name is Menahem, I said." He took off his work glasses. "You can't kill a man if you know his name." It was something he very much believed until that moment. He knew that proof would soon overtake faith.

"I'm not here to kill you."

"You say that now."

"I'm not here to kill you, but right behind me are men that will do so without remorse."

"Who? Who are these men?"

"German agents."

"I came here to get away from those goons, and now they follow me here?" he uttered to himself. He looked to the stranger that had just burst into his workroom. "If they are German agents, then who are you?"

It was the question he hated. The question he always got. The question was one for which he had only one answer, an answer that said all and nothing. The answer that marked him as an outsider, not just in the foreign lands he now travels, but even among his own people, especially the well-armed ones that were closing the gap. He had only one answer.

"Ich bin ein Auslander."

Menahem wasn't entirely sure what he meant by that. He knew the words. He spoke German, but it was such an odd thing to say. It was the way the black-clad stranger said it that spoke volumes to him. He would trust the stranger.

The foreigner moved a large cabinet in front of the door to block the path of the Nazis he could now hear entering the room outside. It was heavy and the moving of it would have sapped his energy entirely were he not running on pure adrenaline. The fact that he could move it was of comfort at first, that he was able to get the piece into position. Then there was the less comfortable truth that if he could move it, the five intruders behind him would not be stalled by it for

too long.

Menahem asked, "What do they want?"

The Auslander answered as he scanned the room for escape routes, of which another door was not going to be one. "They seek to build a weapon of terrible force. A beam weapon."

"A death ray? Like the one that Tesla fellow used to talk about. You know he died this year. Near here."

The stranger was not one for conversation and certainly not for small talk. "Yes, a death ray," The Auslander said. "And a vital component for the focusing of this death ray is a specially cut stone. It's in this room. We need to find it. The Yellow Star?"

Menahem searched his memory but came up blank. "I know of no stone called the Yellow Star." The only Yellow Stars he knew of were not highly prized at all.

The black and white stranger didn't need to hear that. "It must be. My drea—my intelligence puts it in this room. The most secure room in the entire building."

"Not secure enough, apparently."

The Auslander didn't bother to tell him that he found the security uncommonly good and that said security was up against someone uncommonly better. "We need to identify that stone," he said. "And do whatever we must to make sure—"

"*Erschließen Sie*!" The Auslander was interrupted by the yelling of the Nazi agents as they pounded on the door. "Open up! We will not kill you!"

Both the foreigner and the cutter were disinclined to believe them.

"We can't let them get the stone." The Auslander was resolute. He noted several air vents. None would be large enough to escape through, but perhaps one of them would facilitate the "losing" of the gem once it was found.

"I told you, I know of no Yellow Star."

"That doesn't mean it's not here," said The Auslander. "What stones have an unusual or one-of-a-kind cut? Of the stones in here, which ones?"

Menahem knew the foreigner would not like the answer. "There are many. I'm known for my ability to manipulate the stones. My cuts are highly sought after."

The sound of gunfire then rang out through the room. Submachine guns began to obliterate the door's frame, rendering the lock bar nothing more than a useless bit of steel. The Auslander never bothered to lay so much as a finger on his Mauser, a prize he'd taken from another German agent whose plans he'd fouled and whose life he'd taken. A simple Mauser would do him no good. He counted the actions of five machine guns. Five men. In the confined space, he had no tactical advantage and luck was no friend to him.

A low, ringing thud came from the door. The Germans had found something to ram their way in with. The blocking cabinet moved. Slightly, but it did.

"We need to leave here, my friend." The cutter got to his feet and took hold of his cane. A plain brown-lacquered wooden cane he brought with him from Europe. "Or rather, you do. Save yourself, boy."

"I'm not about to leave you here. Beside that, the only way out is through and I—"

Crash. The blocking cabinet moved again.

"You are mistaken." Menahem pointed to a cabinet with his cane. "Behind there. A window."

"We're ten stories up."

"Somehow, I think it's not a problem for you."

"For you, though," responded the Avenging Austrian.

"I am at peace with my Maker. If it is my time, then it is my time. Whether it's at his hands, or theirs."

The Auslander admired Menahem's tenacity not in hanging on to life, but in his unwavering willingness to let his go. He thought it was an easy solution. Too easy. It was a road

he would not take so readily, but in the back of his mind, he felt some consolation that there was a road map available, should the destination not be smartly found.

"It doesn't matter." The Auslander disregarded the cabinet. The gem is what they're after and even if you don't know which one it is, I can't let them find it."

There was another ramming of the door. "We don't know who you are, but give us the old man and we will let you live."

The Auslander was momentarily puzzled. He looked to Menahem and was met with equal confusion. Then it occurred to him. "The Yellow Star?" Where did you come from?"

"Now is no time for chit chat, boy."

"Just tell me. You came here to escape the Nazis. Where from?"

"Belgium." Said the cutter. "Antwerp."

The shock-haired foreigner muttered to himself. "The Yellow Star of Antwerp." The realization unlocked a piece of memory. Yellow Star was not the name of a gem, it was a code name used to designate the only man in the world who would be able to cut the death ray diamond successfully. The same bum-legged man trapped in a room 100 feet over the streets of New York. "It's you. You're the Yellow Star. They have the diamond they need, but they don't have the man to cut it. They've come for you."

The Auslander immediately rushed to move the cabinet that Menahem indicated, revealing the harsh blue light of an overcast day. "I will get you out of here, somehow."

Another push from the intruders and the cabinet moved again, enough to reach a hand through. One of the Germans did just that, feeling for obstacles. Instantly, and without thought, The Auslander drew his Mauser and fired into the gap. A tell-tale thud indicated the odds had changed, in the favor of the black and white stranger.

"Astounding," exclaimed the cutter.

"That still leaves us outnumbered, and the remaining four will be very angry indeed." He fully cleared the way to the window, and pulled up on the pane with all his might, cracking the paint that had sealed it shut for untold years.

"Boy, look at me. I'm old, I have no balance to speak of and I'm fat. Even if I could get through that window, I wouldn't fit on the ledge and I wouldn't be able to move." He hobbled toward the foreigner. "It's clear you have a mission here, and it's a mitzvah. You know what you need to do."

Another arm appeared though the gap in the door. This one bearing an MP38 submachine gun.

"They won't shoot," The Auslander assured Menahem. "They might hit you." The cutter did not appear even remotely relieved as the window finally broke loose of its seal and slid up.

The foreigner climbed into the window and held his hand out to the misshapen gem-handler. "Come on, now."

The cutter sat down on his work stool. "I will get us both killed. The world does not need me."

One of the Germans shouldered into the door, moving it nearly wide enough to put a man through, but not wide enough that they wouldn't be at an extreme disadvantage trying to cross through.

"In fact," Menahem continued, "it seems my existence is a hazard to the world. A world that still needs you."

Another hit at the door. One more is all they would need.

"Save yourself. Save the world. If not for me then for my people."

The last hit came and the intruders stormed the room, all dressed in black, like The Auslander, but with dark or dirty blonde hair instead of his distinctive colorless shock. They instinctively ducked when a single shot rang out from The Auslander's Mauser. They looked up to find Menahem falling to the floor, bleeding from the tiniest little dot in

the center of his forehead. They also found an empty open window.

A jump, a swing and a calculated drop got The Auslander most of the way down. It was the last two stories down that gave him the limp as he walked down 47th Street. The gun in his coat pocket felt like an anchor.

There was no dream that night. No clue as to his next destination and the next Nazi plot that he probably planned and would certainly disrupt. There was no sleep at all. As he laid in a makeshift bed in the back of a boxcar bound for who-knows-where. He stared at the rotted wood ceiling and replayed that last squeeze of the trigger. It dislodged something in his memory. It was familiar to him. It was something he had done before and he knew that he would, eventually, have to pay for that.

MY HOSTAGE, MY HERO

It was not the first time the white-haired foreigner had heard the crack of bone. It wasn't even the first time in the last two minutes. It was, however, the first time that the cracking sound had emanated from his own body.

He fought in a figurative fog of pain and in a visual red-tinged fog, as blood from a gash on his brow dripped into his eyes. He was outmatched, and his thoughts should have been plainly focused on defeating his opponent, a classic example of the Aryan superman Hitler was so fond of, despite being the polar opposite of it. Instead, he wondered to himself why it was that the German spy he uncovered working in the machine department of an aircraft manufacturer's research and development arm was so perfectly able to anticipate his every blow. "Is it possible I trained him?"

The rest of the fight was a blur to the black-clad and bloodied stranger. And at some point, he lost consciousness. When he awoke to find his foe dead and partially dismembered by a large piece of machinery that he knew neither the name nor function of, he attributed it to luck. Anything else would be both hubris and likely inaccurate.

Medical care had always been a concern of the black and white man since shortly after he first awoke with no memory of who he was and an accent that would immediately peg him as a German or Austrian at best and a Nazi at worst. Being that he was stateside, it was no small problem.

He knew full well that going to a hospital would be out of the question. His viability would be compromised the moment they asked him who he was. He only had one answer for such a question.

"Ich bin ein Auslander."

Any further questions would surely come at the end of a fist under a bright light in a military prison somewhere.

Instead, the man known as The Auslander dragged his bloody and broken body to a hotel room he had taken earlier that night, and with whatever supplies he could find or shoplift, he set his own broken arm. And with the help of a medicine commonly known as Rum, he slept, praying that he would not dream that which he did.

Since his nameless awakening, his dreams have led him to criss-cross the United States. Each vision led him to a German plot of stateside sabotage. He knew better than to attribute these dreams as messages from beyond. They were memories. They had to be. And he knew the only way he could have such memories was if he had devised the plans himself. And now it was his job to untie his own knot, living with the fear that, once unbound, his memories would return him to the monster he once was.

The Auslander rose before the sun did. He dreamt of concrete and water. The dream must have been triggered by

something he saw or heard recently, as his journey would be a short one. His destination was a dam some twenty miles to the south that overlooked a town whose chief industry was the manufacture of the very aircraft designed in the facility where his ulna was fractured.

It was the second stage of the plan the Avenging Austrian believes he devised himself. Once the plans for any advanced aircraft had been copied, the plant would be allowed to go into production, utilizing man-hours, money and materials, and just as the first new aircraft is to roll off the line, an agent working in the dam would unleash a torrent of water that would not only destroy the aircraft plant and kill its workers, but would wipe an entire town from the face of the Earth.

That day had come. The Auslander had arrived just in time to intercept the stolen plans before they could be spirited away and the first plane was to roll out in a ceremony that day. The fighting foreigner had no time, or, given his current state, ability to worm his way into an undercover position of his own at the dam or to spend the time trying to uncover the saboteur. He had a plan, though. Not a good one, but a plan nonetheless.

A quiet bus ride that felt hours longer than it was ended with the Strange Sentinel outside the dam facilities. It was still early. The sun was coming up and the shift had not yet changed from the skeleton night crew to the more populous day shift. He had to act now. The Auslander had one problem though. He was in no shape to fight, going in or going out. Given the excruciating pain he experienced pulling himself over the fence, any such scrap he might find himself in would, at least, be mercifully short.

Slipping through an unlocked and apparently unused side door, The Auslander engaged in the main thrust of his plan. He grabbed the first person that walked by and held his German Army issue Mauser to the back of a balding and

slightly overweight man who wore overalls and a tool belt that surely doubled his weight. And in an accent that was both unmistakable and fear-inducing and that he made no attempt to disguise, he said, "You will do as I say or will kill you."

The w's cut like v's in the bald man's ears. The s's buzzed as z's.

"You know what I am?"

In his mind, only one word. "Kraut." He nodded silently.

"You are an engineer, *ja*?"

The bald man was too stunned to reply.

"You will answer."

"No. I'm just maintenance." He said it twice. The first time was inaudible. "I just work on the pumps." The Auslander recognized the nearly paralyzing fear in the man. He was glad to see it. He needed it, but it brought him no joy to induce it.

"You will take me to the control room. If you attempt to escape me, I will shoot you. If you or your co-workers attempt to stop me, I will shoot as many people as I can." Then, as an afterthought, "Each death will be another small victory for the fatherland."

No American would respond to the request of a man with a German accent. The hairless maintenance man's fear was the only thing that would get The Auslander to the control room and might be the only thing that would allow the Erstwhile Enemy to complete his self-appointed mission. Any red-blooded, patriotic American would surely die before he'd aid a Nazi agent. Any clear-headed American would certainly not do anything he believed would endanger the population of his hometown. It was only the bald man's fear that would override that instinct. And as long as the man quivered uncontrollably, there would be hope.

The maintenance man led his foreign captor slowly to a nearby stair. They drew no attention from the skeleton staff

that were weary after a long night and focused on the looming end of their shift. The steps were grate steel and ascended from a seemingly random point on the machine floor, which was riddled with pumps, pipes and personnel. At the top of 25-foot climb, the stairs ended on a catwalk that was made of the same grated metal and hugged a concrete wall that was still several stories taller than the stairs, and dwarfed the mechanisms below, which in turn dwarfed the men that maintained them. At the end of the catwalk were a set of steel double doors that The Auslander could only assume would be the final destination of his glabrous guide.

The Auslander's mind was taxed as they ascended the steps. Pain clouded his thoughts as he tried to be vigilant about his captive and maintain a watch over his shoulder for discovery by the maintenance man's colleagues. What the black-clad man hadn't accounted for was that with the handyman's trembling came clumsiness, and an unsure step led to a stumble. And a stumble led to a heavy steel wrench sliding from its cradle in the hairless man's voluminous tool belt. The Auslander felt time crawl as he saw the implement plummet to the cement below.

The klang with which the heavy tool hit was more than enough to gain the attention of even the most tired plant worker. The foreigner was sure it would even be enough to arouse the dead. He would have to think fast to make sure that the population of the dead would not be added to in the next few seconds. Not by him. Not by anyone.

It was mere heartbeats before the assembled shift realized what was going on and spotted the Mauser held to their bald friend's sweaty back. They swarmed together and approached the base of the stairway. Maintaining his pretense of being the enemy agent that he probably once was, The Auslander shouted, "You will stay back or I will kill this man." The accent was unmistakable, even in the din of machinery.

The Auslander looked down and quickly assessed the look of each of these men as they realized the threat he presented. These men were junior workers. Surely the older, senior men worked the day shift. They were also likely classified 4F. There was not a one of them, The Auslander surmised, that hadn't tried to enlist to fight the good fight and now was their chance to serve their country and maybe snag a little glory. A group of them did not relent at the foreigner's warning and mounted the stairs.

"Stay back." The Auslander made it sound authoritative and commanding, but deep inside him, it was a plea. He had no desire to hurt innocent men, but they weren't listening. Instead they hurled epithets and quickly boiled their rage.

"Kraut!"

"Nazi scum!"

"Kill the bosch," yelled an odd older man in the back of the madding crowd.

They would not halt their advance. The Auslander considered holding the gun directly to the maintenance man's head, but sought something more definitive. He needed an action that would surely hold them off, if not permanently, at least something to give them pause enough to get he and his hostage behind the steel doors that was their destination.

The maintenance man thought he heard his captor utter something that sounded like "Ich entschuldige mich." He thought it was some kind of invective. He didn't know it was an apology.

It was at that moment that The Auslander let lead fly from the barrel of his German-made weapon. Even with the pain of a broken bone, the foreigner's aim was impeccable. The leader of the gang was a large and grease-covered man who the Auslander could not fathom was classified 4F. He should have been on a battlefield someplace, tearing apart tanks

with his bare hands. Instead, he was thunderous with the pain of a shattered kneecap caused by a 9mm round.

The greasy man fell back on the crew behind him; his body was obstacle enough even if their minds weren't riddled with a new level of doubt and fear for their own mortality.

With the time gained, the shock-haired man hurried his captive up the remaining steps and clambered him across the grated plates of the walkway to the double doors. Now at the surmised destination, he was able to confirm that his prisoner was not leading him astray. A small, embossed plate mounted on the door read "Main Control Room." He pulled at the door handle. It would not budge.

"Open it!" The words shook the tool-bearer's eardrums. And his hands shook the same as he fumbled to get a key into the door's lock. The mob below was still occupied with their fallen leader, trying to stop the bleeding. The wails from below made the foreigner think they might be doing more harm than good.

Click.

As soon as The Auslander heard the door unlatch, he forced his fearful captive through the door and followed in behind him. He was briefly struck by the panorama before him, as the control room was mounted above the dam wall with a large plate window that looked down on the valley. Inside it, the town that was in danger of being scrubbed from the land below. He was not so struck though that he forgot to order his hostage to close, lock and bar the doors with one of his remaining tools.

With the doors secured, the bald man did not turn back to face his alien captor, but The Auslander demanded it. "You will face me," he commanded. The maintenance man slowly complied.

His panic was beginning to subside. Maybe he was just getting used to his situation, but he was absolutely regaining

his faculties. He was able to think again. He knew why the apparent Nazi forced him to the control room, and silently cursed himself for complying even as much as he had. He knew that he would be the last hope of the townspeople below, including his own wife and children. He knew he would comply no more. He knew his life was going to have to be expendable and he was glad that his coworkers were locked out of the room, because he was unsure of his resolve should he have to watch them be harmed further.

"Now, listen closely to me and do exactly as I say and no one will be hurt."

The Auslander had perhaps slipped too far into the role because, while he meant every word of what he'd said and in a most benevolent way, all the bald man heard were the lies of a "Nazi swine."

"No." The bald man stood his ground with a courage The Auslander had not seen in him thus far and that the maintenance man had not felt in ages. "I'm not going to help you." The fat fixer of things also mentioned a simple little truth that might buy him some mercy. "Not that I could if I wanted to. I'm no engineer."

That didn't matter. In The Auslander's dream of warning, he saw the means of sabotage quite clearly. If he was, in fact, the grand designer of this play of sabotage, he did his research well. He knew exactly what needed to be done." It was simple. A bomb had been planted that would cause the deadly torrent that would fulfill the dastardly plan and that bomb was mounted in a crevice high in the dam wall. It was unreachable in the Strange Sentinel's current state, but the water could be diverted by means of a valve, opened by turning a wheel in this control room. One he simply could not turn in his present condition.

"You will open the valve." He ordered the bald man.

"I won't do it."

"Do you know what this valve does?" They were the first

non-threatening words The Auslander had spoken since walking in that unlocked door below.

"It doesn't matter what it does. I'm not doing what you say."

The foreigner realized he was still pointing his Mauser at his hostage and corrected that. "It will divert the flow of the damn into the old secondary reservoir."

"Why would I believe you?" asked the maintenance man.

"What is your name?"

The overweight man in overalls was taken aback. Why would it matter? Why would he care? He was too confused to not answer. "Jerry."

"Jerry." The Auslander smirked a little. "Jerry, if this valve is not turned, flooding the secondary reservoir, a bomb is going to go off, very soon indeed, that will destroy the town below. Everyone will be crushed by the flood or drown in its rushes."

"Like I said, why should I believe you?"

The Auslander shifted back to his previous persona. "You don't have to believe me. You just have to do it." He resumed threatening Jerry with the pistol, but the man held firm.

"I won't do it."

"You will!"

"No." Jerry shut his eyes waiting for the inevitable. Five seconds passed, then ten. He opened his eyes to see the Auslander standing before him, holding his weapon out for Jerry to take.

"If you don't, everyone will die."

Jerry considered the weapon for several seconds before snatching it as fast as he could, which The Auslander noted was not fast at all. He fumbled with the weapon, hurriedly trying to point it at the man of black and white.

"Why do you think I won't just shoot you?"

The Auslander spoke calmly. "I don't care if you do. You

just have to turn the wheel. It requires more torque than I'm able to exert upon it."

Jerry noticed the sling for the first time. With his adrenaline pumping, it didn't surprise him that he hadn't seen it before. He wouldn't have noticed if The Auslander had been five raccoons stacked upon one another inside a black trench coat.

"There is a bomb planted in the dam face. There's no time to stop it, only to prevent total disaster. You have to divert the flow and then this facility must be evacuated."

Jerry considered the options.

"You have the gun," The Auslander said. "You have the power." Jerry walked up to the Auslander and put the barrel of the weapon against the foreigner's forehead. The Auslander met his eyes and showed no fear. "Pull the trigger now, if that's what you want. Just turn that valve all the way to the right."

Jerry lowered the gun and handed it back to the stranger, who took it back slowly. Jerry then waited a moment, as if a test. He'd given the supposed Nazi one more chance to threaten him or to kill him. A chance not seized upon. "I'm gonna need both hands for this, right?"

The Amnesiac Avenger smiled and holstered his weapon as Jerry went to the valve wheel and gripped it at nine and twelve o'clock and put all his strength into turning it. It moved slowly and with great resistance. It hadn't been used in years. Jerry was scarcely fit and broke a sweat almost immediately.

"Hurry," said the foreigner. "Hurry."

The wheel was moving even more slowly. "I don't know if I can do it."

The Auslander knew that time was running out. He pulled a nearby fire alarm. Red lights illuminated around the facility and buzzers blared. At least the plant workers would be safe when the bomb exploded. He then began to aid Jerry.

With his good arm, he gripped the wheel at one o'clock and pulled. The wheel creaked. It was moving again, but still slowly. Both men struggled.

"Just…a...little…more… torsion?." Jerry struggled to get the words out. He nearly regretted speaking them as they drew too much energy from the task at hand.

The stranger knew what had to be done. He steeled himself, and with his broken arm gripped the wheel at eleven o'clock, crossing Jerry's right hand. With enormous pain and a howl that would not only wake the dead but also frighten them back to death, he pulled on the valve control and it finally broke free of its entropic stall and turned freely. Jerry finished the job, spinning the wheel until it would turn no more.

The white-haired foreigner convulsed against the wall in pain. "We have to get out of here. The bomb could blow at any time."

He was proven right as a loud explosion shook the facility as Jerry aided his new ally back down the stairs they'd ascended just moments before. Jerry looked over his shoulder to see the concrete wall behind him crack and as they made their exit from the building, he looked again to see it fall away, taking the control room with it.

Once outside, in the chaos of two shifts of dam workers running for their lives, Jerry saw that the water of the valley's river was indeed rushing into the secondary reservoir. The stranger told the truth. Clear of the collapsing facility, Jerry watched the destruction unfold, relieved that this man beside him had arrived to prevent a massive loss of life. It was then that he realized he didn't know his companion's name or where he came from.

"Who the hell are you, anyway?"

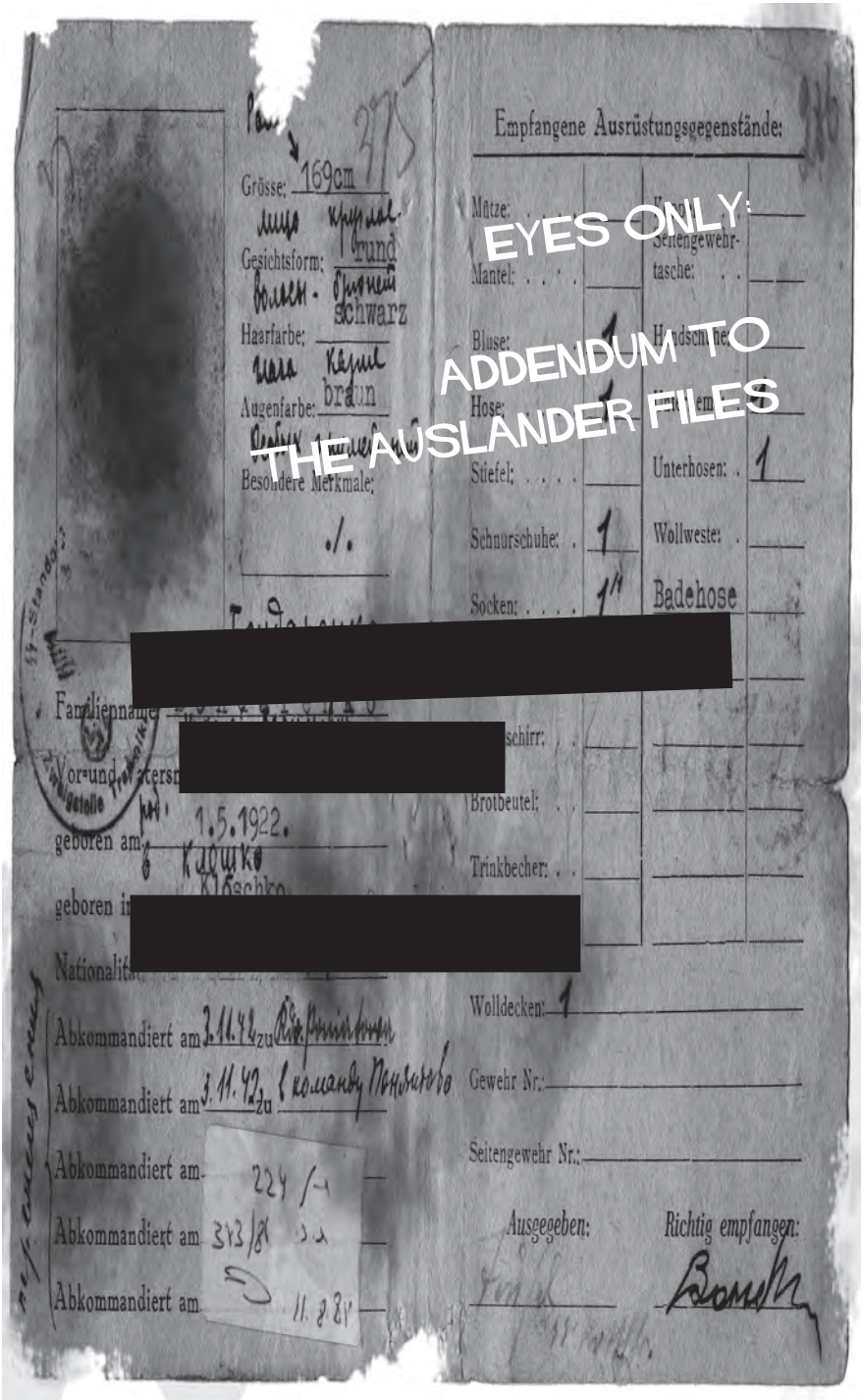
The mysterious foreigner had heard the question before. Many times. His answer was always the same.

"Ich bin ein Auslander."

Jerry didn't really understand the reply and was distracted by the further collapse of the dam facilities. When he looked back, the Auslander was gone.

That night, in a car he'd stolen in the confusion at the water plant, the nameless man laid down in the backseat, parked behind a billboard on Route 66. As he drifted off to sleep, he hoped, he prayed that there would be no dream that night. He needed time to heal.

"Though if this is penance for crimes of a past life, then who am I to complain?"



EYES ONLY:
ADDENDUM TO
THE AUSLANDER FILES

Grösse: 169cm
Gesichtsform: rund
Haarfarbe: schwarz
Augenfarbe: braun
Besondere Merkmale: ./.

Familienname: [redacted]
Vor- und Vatersname: [redacted]
geboren am: 1.5.1922.
geboren in: [redacted]
Nationalität:

Abkommandiert am 3.11.42 zu Die Feuerwehr
Abkommandiert am 3.11.42 zu Kommando Neuhaldensleben
Abkommandiert am
Abkommandiert am
Abkommandiert am

Empfangene Ausrüstungsgegenstände:

Mütze:		Seitengewehrtasche:	
Mantel:			
Bluse:	1	Handschuhe:	
Hose:	1		
Stiefel:		Unterhosen:	1
Schnürschuhe:	1	Wollweste:	
Socken:	1 Paar	Badehose	
schirr:			
Brotbeutel:			
Trinkbecher:			
Wolldecken:	1		

Gewehr Nr.:
Seitengewehr Nr.:

Ausgegeben:
Richtig empfangen:

AFTERWORD

"What inspired *The Auslander*?" I was asked by The Dragon Lady.

There are so many things that inspired *The Auslander*.

I've always been fascinated by the pulp fiction of the thirties and forties, though in a backward way. I like *The Spider*, *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow*, but I look at those old adventures through the eyes of a modern writer and, more, as a modern consumer of fiction. Fitting then, the way I found into the pulps.

My favorite pulp character was and is The Shadow. I'd always had a slight awareness of him in my childhood, largely just from hearing the memorable phrase "*Crime does not pay.*" My first direct exposure to the character was not in his original form. It was in a 1986 comic book mini-series by Howard Chaykin. In it, he picked up Lamont

Cranston decades after he was last seen and extrapolated where he would be now and what might bring him back to the crime–ridden streets. And it was done with garish eighties sensibilities. There was blood, sex, and questionable fashion choices, though not on the part of the Shadow himself. His black trench and fedora were still there, though his twin .45s were replaced by twin Mac-10s. It was pulp noir meets *Miami Vice*.

That led me to the radio shows. My first was "Murder in The Death House." I was riveted and listened to it a dozen times before I even got around to finding another one. I eventually made my way through the majority of those radio adventures. I even have a namesake in the awesome "League of Terror."

Yeah, I even kinda liked the movie with Alec Baldwin.

And I sort of name-checked the writer of The Shadow pulps, Walter Gibson, in "Captured!"

So, The Shadow was one thing that inspired The Auslander.

When I first heard about *Astonishing Adventures Magazine* starting up and looking for tales of pulpy goodness, I decided I wanted to have a go at it. *Could I get pulpy?* There was only one way to find out. I knew I wanted to be pulpy. I wanted to write quick and dirty stories. I wanted to write stories with a boot to the face. I wanted to write stories with blood and guns. I wanted to write stories that didn't look back…but did…to the forties.

I wasn't sure what stories I would write, though. Maybe something with a mad scientist. Maybe something with a rogue cop of some kind. I thought about a fortune spewing teddy bear for a few seconds. I didn't know. I just knew I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity.

So, yes, *Astonishing Adventures* itself inspired The Auslander.

Then there was the song title that caught my eye while I was scrolling though iTunes at two in the morning. The band was *Pop Will Eat Itself*. The song was "*Ich Bin Ein Auslander.*"

The title stuck with me. I though it would make for a cool catchphrase and maybe an ominous one. I worked backward from there. I started with the catchphrase, which led me to the man speaking it, clearly a German one and in a place where he is, in fact, an "auslander". Germans and pulp led me to World War II and led me to the juxtaposition of "the enemy" fighting for "us."

So yeah, The Auslander was inspired by a late 80s/early 90s alt-techno band.

And in this post 9/11 time, I have had the misfortune of seeing enough people act out of stupidity and fear and attributing evil to an entire group of people for no good reason. Just as Muslims are not the bad guys now, terrorists are, Germans were not the bad guys then, Nazis were. Maybe I could touch on those things, ever so slightly. I mean, it's pulp, right?

So yeah, The Auslander was inspired by a paranoid America.

And there's also all the things that I'm not going to tell you about.

Michael Patrick Sullivan
Los Angeles, CA

P.S.

And Rutger Hauer.
The Auslander was inspired by Rutger Hauer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A few words of thanks for those who helped bring The Auslander to the page:

John Donald Carlucci and ***Katherine Thomlinson*** (a.k.a *The Dragon Lady*) for toiling on *Astonishing Adventures Magazine* and giving The Auslander a home in its pages, and occasionally bending a deadline to make sure he got in there.

Bill Cunningham, for he is the Mad Pulp Bastard. It was he that brought the then-nascent *Astonishing Adventures* to my attention, allowing me to get in on the ground floor of coolness for once. Also for the pulpy wisdom he dispenses.

And ***Saadia Mather***, for too many and varied reasons to be enumerated here.

Oh, and to ***The Auslander*** himself, for not killing me that one time.

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Best New Pulp Character

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Best Author

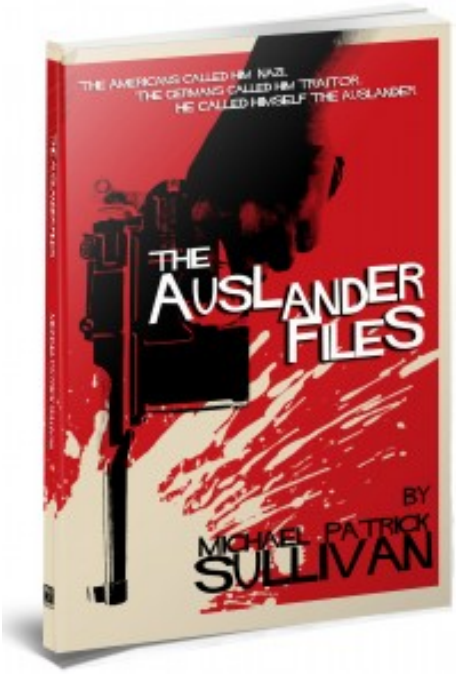
Michael Patrick Sullivan

Best New Writer

Michael Patrick Sullivan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

THE AUSLANDER FILES is now available from PULP 2.0 PRESS on AMAZON.COM, TOWER BOOKS and more…



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— Andrew Salmon, ALL-PULP

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