

The background of the cover is a photograph of a room, likely a jazz club or a rehearsal space. The room is dimly lit with a deep blue or purple hue. In the center, there is a dark upright piano. In front of the piano, an axe lies on the wooden floor, its head glowing with a bright orange light. To the right of the piano, a double bass stands on a stand. In the foreground, there are several round tables with dark cloths and wooden chairs. Two pendant lights hang from the ceiling, casting a warm glow. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and somber.

THE AXEMAN'S ENCORE

Based on true events

A novel by
BRADLEY PAGE

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While this story draws inspiration from real-life events, it is a work of fiction. The characters, their relationships, and the narrative arc are products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

First edition

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Chapter 4

Sunday, January 5th, 2025 – 3:18 PM

Hub kicked open the garage door with his foot and stumbled in, arms wrapped around a massive, beat-up box that looked like it hadn't seen daylight since the Nixon era.

"Sorry I'm late!" he called, voice muffled behind cardboard and dust. "This thing weighs more than my regrets."

From behind her kit, Kayla didn't miss a beat, literally or verbally.

"You're always late," she said, bringing a cymbal crash down like a period at the end of a sentence. "But sure, let's blame the mystery box today."

Hub grinned as he lowered it to the concrete floor with a grunt. "This one's got an excuse."

The rest of Obsidian Casket was already deep into warm-up mode. Rage, hunched over his guitar, was teasing out a sludgy new riff that vibrated the drywall. Joey leaned against his keyboard rig, sipping something out of a dented thermos and adjusting the settings with one hand.

Kayla, surrounded by her massive burgundy Pearl drum kit, twirled a drumstick between her fingers and raised a brow. Her two kick drums gleamed with the band's name; OBSIDIAN on the left, CASKET on the right, white paint against blood-red shells. The whole thing looked like it should come with a warning label.

Joey spoke first. "So... what's in the box? You finally cleaning out your closet?"

Hub pulled up a metal folding chair and sat, brushing dust from the lid of

the box.

"Nah. I found this stuff yesterday in Aunt Lydia's house. Turns out my great-papa was a jazz pianist."

That got their attention.

"Wait, seriously?" Joey asked, stepping out from behind his keyboards. "You've never mentioned him before."

"Didn't know," Hub said. "Lydia just told me. He played clubs all over the city back in the day. Small-time stuff, but he had chops. Get this, his nickname was *The Hammer*." He grinned. "Thought I'd bring some of his old photo albums and see what he was all about."

"The Hammer is a bad-ass nickname. Think he'd mind if I stole it?" Joey chuckled.

Kayla leaned forward on her snare. "So... you brought photo albums to band practice?"

"I also brought a mystery," Hub said, flipping open the top of the box. "So... shut up and look intrigued."

He started pulling out cracked leather-bound albums, yellowed envelopes tied with string, even a few brittle newspaper clippings. The band gathered loosely around, a mix of curiosity and low-key reverence.

Then Hub pulled out the flier.

A faded card stock rectangle, worn soft at the corners but still legible.

Grand Opening – THRESHOLD

A New Venue for the Brightest Sounds of New Orleans

August 11th, 1917 – 415 Burgundy Street

Where music holds the line.

He laid it flat on a nearby amp.

"Whoa," Kayla said, almost a whisper. "That thing is old. And *Threshold*, that's a hell of a name."

"Looks like he opened his own club," Hub said, wide-eyed. "No one in my family ever talked about it. Lydia couldn't even remember the name."

Rage leaned closer, reading it again. "You think it's still around?"

"I'm gonna find out," Hub said, already unlocking his phone. "If it is, I want to see it for myself. Maybe it's nothing. Or maybe..."

"Ah, I see where you're going with this. You want to have a bigger place to play," Rage said, remembering Hub's earlier complaints about The Rock.

"Exactly! If it's a big place, it would be perfect. And it could double as a jam room when we don't have any shows going on."

Rage was sold. Joey was still intrigued, knowing now that Hub's great-grandfather was a fellow key-smasher, but Kayla wasn't quite convinced.

She crossed her arms and raised an eyebrow. "Hold on. You found one flier in a box and now you're ready to renovate some hundred-year-old jazz club into our rehearsal space? Maybe slow the roll."

"It couldn't hurt to check it out. I mean, I don't even have any money to do anything really. I just want to know, that's all." Hub found the street view of the the venue online, "Look, here it is." He said turning his phone towards the band.

"Jeez, that place is run down. I bet it's cheap though." Rage said.

"Right?! It's got to cost next to nothing." Hub agreed.

"You just said you don't have any money and now you've convinced yourself that it's within your grasp? Earth to Hub, please locate the common sense switch and turn it on please." Kayla suggested sarcastically.

"I could get a loan. It's not like I don't have a job to pay it back. And it would be hard work to get the place back up and running. But we need a bigger place to grow. Look at us," Hub gestured around, "we're still in a garage, but we have a huge following and we just put out our first album. Wouldn't it be nice to upgrade?"

"I mean, I'll help clean if you can get it. And I suppose if we threw shows there we could probably make some money." Kayla was still hesitant.

"I'm in, but you knew that". Rage offered

"Joey? What do you think?" Hub asked.

"I think I want to know more about your papa. But yeah, I'm in. What if we put up pictures of The Hammer?" Joey suggested.

"Yeah, Like a tribute. That would be dope." Hub's enthusiasm was hardly contained.

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Kayla was starting to get antsy “Okay, okay. That’s settled, let’s rock. I wanna play.”



About the Author

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Bradley Page is a writer, musician, and metalhead with a taste for the mysterious, the macabre, and the beautifully strange. When he's not spinning dark tales that blend horror, history, and a little bit of humor, he's diving deep into underground music scenes and reviewing albums on his blog, *TheOriginalRage.com*

Bradley lives in Iowa with his son, his bass guitar, and far too many story ideas haunting his notebooks.

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