

# KINDRED SPIRITS

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**T**HE TRICK to understanding *Kindred Spirits* lies in discerning fact from historical fiction, while at the same time deciphering a series of ciphers, each intended to point at (and help solve) the other. Layered together, the clues chronicle a hidden history, converging on an old tree stump at the historic Great Northern Railway Depot in Minot, North Dakota—Prohibition's "Little Chicago."

## Key Components

Seekers were given a letter dated February 17, 1930, ostensibly from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover at the Department of Justice to George Fabyan at Riverbank Labs in Geneva, IL—regarding materials intended for incarcerated gangster "Machine Gun" Kelly and his associates. Included were the intercepted Western Union telegram and a news clipping, each presumed to carry embedded ciphers—and assigned by Fabyan with urgency to a codebreaker named "Ruby."

## Fact & Historical Fiction

*Kindred Spirits* draws on the real-world legacy of Colonel Fabyan and his Riverbank Laboratories—America's first private cryptographic research center, where a cadre of early "code girls" pioneered modern codebreaking techniques. During Prohibition, figures like George Francis "Machine Gun Kelly" Barnes and associates such as Kathryn Thorne became embroiled in federal investigations that increasingly relied on intercepted and decrypted communications. Within *The Heartland Saga*, this history is refracted through one Ruby Barnes Norton, whose work decoding such messages places her in quiet opposition to Kelly—her estranged half-brother—and binds family legacy to the emerging science of cryptanalysis.

## "Great Divide" Cipher

The telegram's seemingly random six-letter words resolve through their third letters, spelling: **"MSG RCVD. CODE CORUPTED. RUBY KNOWS. KINDRED SPIRITS. STILL NOT SAFE. FATHER ALIVE,"** while the stamped symbols in the news clipping isolate a hidden message: **"THIRD LETTERS CIPHER BUNCO."** Finally, the clipped news brief itself conceals a structured substitution: by dividing the combined letter counts of adjacent content words against intervening functional "short" words (articles, conjunctions, prepositions), Seekers derive a sequence revealing the precise hiding spot: **"MINOT GREAT NORTHERN DEPOT TREE NOTCH POUCH X."**

an extraordinary development in automobiles manufacturing, and profits rose. Associates close to Ford suggested such zealously futuristic goals for nationwide super-highways promote commerce in unincorporated regions and provide communities a position to grow from. Strangely, Ford's most recent trends continue exceedingly downward, and unfortunately show no signals of letting up (let alone improvement or rebound any time soon).

A recent B.O.I. study noted a "great divide" between day- and nighttime drivers that corroborates well-established belief regarding dangerous and inebriated nighttime driving. In effort to find a proper resolution, a joint commission has been formed to analyze driving under hazardous conditions in monitored operations. A major experiment will test whether rain or snow distracts drivers while drinking or otherwise marginally impaired.

In Memphis, George Francis Barnes, Jr., an infamous liquor runner whose notorious bootlegging, foul language, and vile behavior are known throughout America's middle regions, was last seen with known crime associates Harvey Bailey, Kathryn Thorne, and "Silk Hat" Harry Hall. All are wanted by federal government law enforcement officers in suspicion with trafficking gin on reservation.

CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable sign above or preceding the address.

# WESTERN UNION

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT J. C. WILLEVER, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

Received at United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth, Kansas 1929 NOV

FWH 64 FT WORTH, TEXAS 1048A NOVEMBER  
U.S. PENITENTIARY  
LEAVENWORTH KANSAS  
GEO R KELLY NO. 29362

BUMPER ABSENT CAGING KERNEL DOCENT RAVINE ODDITY  
ROOMER ORDERS AGENCY DOCKET TOOLED REREAD INURE  
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TATTER ASSENT ISSUER LITTER SPIRAL PILLOW INNAT  
FETTER ONSIDE REASON EFFORT CREASE AFFAIR SCAR  
ASHORE REEFER CAREER HIATUS INLAID VEILED ENVO

JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR

Department of Justice  
Bureau of Investigation  
Washington, D.C.

Ruby Eyes only  
First priority  
Decipher with full  
report on method.  
-G.F.

Colonel George Fabyan  
Riverbank Laboratories  
Geneva, Ill.

February 17, 1930

Dear Colonel,

The Bureau intercepted this telegram in November en route to George Kelly, now at Leavenworth Pen. No one here has been able to make head or tail of it, but it seems to be right up your alley. Here's hoping one of your code girls who helped us put him away could give it a go. Our team is overextended as it is now, so we could use your expertise. I am sure someone from your team will make quick work of it.

We do not know what to make of the newspaper clipping with the red repeating ink stamps. They are not migrant symbols, as we initially believed, and do not correspond with any cipher from our archive. The scrap was on Kathryn Thorne (aliases Dolores Whitney, Cleo Brooks) when taken into custody immediately after sending the telegram in Fort Worth. It could be nothing, but we're inclined to believe it was somehow utilized by Miss Thorne in the encryption of the message to Mr. Kelly.

Though we intercepted the message before it was sent, we allowed the transmission to go through to the recipient, in the hope that Mr. Kelly would send an actionable reply. However, he did not send any such response, and in fact no return transmission of any kind was made. This leads us to believe the information has already reached its intended destination in George Kelly. We've sent it along to you in hopes of deciphering the code to "head him off at the pass," wherever that may be, amid his earliest attempts to reoffend after release.

I hope this finds you in good spirits. I trust that you and Nelle are in good health, and that the Villa and gardens remain as beautiful as upon my last visit.

Sincerely yours,

J. Edgar Hoover

