

The Long Tin Can: how the Canister the Robot pulp fiction mystery novel franchise was born

(by Gerald Saul and Smodin A.I.)

In the mid-20th century, teens and young adults devoured the adventures of fictional detectives like Sherlock Holmes and Tarleton Pope. One of the most popular and longest-running series was the Canister the Robot mystery novel series written by O.B Beserock. The series was originally published in pulp magazines like True Detective and Mystery Magazine. The mystery novel series became so popular that they were later adapted into movies, radio dramas and TV shows.

The first story in the series introduced readers to Nick (Canister) Bradstreet, a secret agent whose primary mission was to thwart evil masterminds. The villains in these stories were usually Nazi scientists or other high-ranking members of the German government. In each story, Canister encounters a different enemy, steals an item from them and returns to his base with it. He would then hand the item to his boss for examination, after which he would report on the item's origins and current location.

Next, the author would present a series of cliff-hangers that kept the reader anxious for the next chapter. Ultimately, readers learned that Canister had been given a lead lined bag filled with elusive blue gold to carry with him at all times. This was a deadly radioactive substance that Nick could use to his advantage against his enemies. With this device, he could make enemies slip on a slick substance that would incapacitate them but leave them alive so they could be interrogated by military personnel or probed with alien technologies.

In addition to writing short stories, Beserock also wrote longer works under the pen name A.E Conrad. In those works, Conrad used some original characters such as Inspector Lorrimer and Dr Saw-Boy Watson to help tell his stories. She also created settings such as Canister's secret base in London and the nefarious Zyuganov Castle in Russia where many of Robot's enemies came from next. Many spin-offs focused on these original characters and settings, creating a long-running franchise that still fuels entertainment today.

The popularity of Beserock's works led Canister screen actor Minton LaFare to become a successful author in his own right. He made his money by licensing his image along with various sub-standard knock-off stories to movie producers and creating new, albeit derivative characters for the movie sequels. Some of these movie sequels featured narration by an imaginary dog or kangaroo named Spike who served as tale-teller for many of the robot's adventures before LaFare/Canister took over narration duties himself in later stories. For this reason, fans sometimes refer to Spike as 'the true star' of this entire series rather than Conrad's original character Canister, although both are well beloved by long-time fans today.

Today many consider Beserock's classic pulp character Nick (Canister) Bradstreet to be one of the greatest fictional detectives ever created! The first story introduced readers to Canister's lethal blue gold device and spawned many sequels where he used it against his enemies. Long after his death, Beserock remains a popular author thanks to film spinoffs and cross-over publishing rights deals she had with other authors.