

FIFTEEN SOUL-CHILLING TALES BY

# H. P. LOVECRAFT

AND AUGUST DERLETH




## THE WATCHERS OUT OF TIME

"Lovecraft is the twentieth century's dark and baroque prince." —STEPHEN KING



THE  
WATCHERS  
OUT OF TIME

H. P. LOVECRAFT  
*and August Derleth*

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## THE SURVIVOR

*Certain houses, like certain persons, manage somehow to proclaim at once their character for evil. Perhaps it is the aroma of evil deeds committed under a particular roof, long after the actual doers have passed away, that makes the gooseflesh come and the hair rise. Something of the original passion of the evil-doer, and of the horror felt by his victim, enters the heart of the innocent watcher, and he becomes suddenly conscious of tingling nerves, creeping skin, and a chilling of the blood...*

—ALGERNON BLACKWOOD



I had never intended to speak or write again of the Charriere house, once I had fled Providence on that shocking night of discovery—there are memories which every man would seek to suppress, to disbelieve, to wipe out of existence—but I am forced to set down now the narrative of my brief acquaintance with the house on Benefit Street, and my precipitate flight there from, lest some innocent person be subjected to indignity by the

police in an effort to explain the horrible discovery the police have made at last—that same ghastly horror it was my lot to look upon before any other human eye—and what I saw was surely far more terrible than what remained to be seen after all these years, the house having reverted to the city, as I had known it would.

While it is true that an antiquarian might be expected to know considerably less about some ancient avenues of human research than about old houses, it is surely conceivable that one who is steeped in the processes of research among the habitations of the human race might occasionally encounter a more abstruse mystery than the date of an ell or the source of a gambrel roof and find it possible to come to certain conclusions about it, no matter how incredible, how horrible or frightening or even—yes, damnable! In those quarters where antiquarians gather, the name of Alijah Atwood is not entirely unknown; modesty forbids me to say more, but it is surely permissible to point out that anyone sufficiently interested to look up references will find more than a few paragraphs about me in those directories devoted to information for the antiquary.

I came to Providence, Rhode Island, in 1930, intending to make only a brief visit and then go on to New Orleans. But I saw the Charriere house on Benefit Street, and was drawn to it as only an antiquarian would be drawn to any unusual

house isolated in a New England street of a period not its own, a house clearly of some age, and with an indefinable aura that both attracted and repelled.

What was said about the Charriere house—that it was haunted—was no more than what was said about many an old, abandoned dwelling in the old world as well as in the new, and even, if I can depend on the solemn articles in the *Journal of American Folklore*, about the primitive dwellings of American Indians, Australian bush-people, the Polynesians, and many others. Of ghosts I do not wish to write; suffice it to say that there have been within the circle of my experience certain manifestations which have lent themselves to no scientific explanation, though I am rational enough to believe that there is such explanation to be found, once man chances upon the proper interpretation through the correct scientific approach.

In that sense, surely the Charriere house was not haunted. No spectre passed among its rooms rattling its chain, no voice moaned at midnight, no sepulchral figure appeared at the witching hour to warn of approaching doom. But that there was an aura about the house—one of evil? of terror? of hideous, eldritch things?—none could deny; and had I been born a less insensitive clod, I have no doubt that the house would have driven me forth raving out of mind. Its aura was less tangible than others I have known, but it suggested that the house concealed unspeakable secrets, long hidden from human perception. Above all

else, it conveyed an overpowering sense of age—of centuries not alone of its own being, but far, far in the past, when the world was young, which was curious indeed, for the house, however old, was less than three centuries of age.

I saw it first as an antiquarian, delighted to discover set in a row of staid New England houses a house which was manifestly of a seventeenth century Quebec style, and thus so different from its neighbors as to attract immediately the eye of any passerby. I had made many visits to Quebec, as well as to other old cities of the North American continent, but on this first visit to Providence, I had not come primarily in search of ancient dwellings, but to call upon a fellow antiquarian of note, and it was on my way to his home on Barnes Street that I passed the Charriere house, observed that it was not tenanted, and resolved to lease it for my own. Even so, I might not have done so, had it not been for the curious reluctance of my friend to speak of the house, and, indeed, his seeming unwillingness that I go near the place. Perhaps I do him an injustice in retrospect, for he, poor fellow, was even then on his deathbed, though neither of us knew it; so it was at his bedside I sat, and not in his study, and it was there that I asked about the house, describing it unmistakably, for, of course, I did not then know its name or anything about it.

A man named Charriere had owned it—a French surgeon, who had come down from Quebec. But who had

built it, Gamwell did not know; it was Charriere he had known. "A tall, rough-skinned man—I saw little of him, but no one saw more. He had retired from practice," said Gamwell. He had lived there—and presumably older members of his family, though Gamwell could not say as to this—for as long as Gamwell had known the house. Dr. Charriere had lived a reclusive life, and had died, according to notice duly published in the *Providence Journal*, in 1927, three years ago. Indeed, the date of Dr. Charriere's death was the only date that Gamwell could give me; all else was shrouded in vagueness. The house had not been rented more than once; there had been a brief occupation by a professional man and his family, but they had left it after a month, complaining of its dampness and the smells of the old house; since then it had stood empty, but it could not be torn down, for Dr. Charriere had left in his will a considerable sum of money to keep the property off the tax-delinquent list for a long enough time—some said twenty years—to guarantee that the house would be standing there if and when heirs of the surgeon appeared to lay claim to it, the doctor having written vaguely of a nephew in French Indo-China, on military service. All attempts to find the nephew had proved futile, and now the house was being permitted to stand until the period specified in the will of Dr. Charriere had expired.

"I think of leasing it," I told Gamwell.

Ill though he was, my fellow antiquarian raised himself up



on one elbow in protest. "A passing whim, Atwood—let it pass. I have heard disquieting things of the house."

"What things?" I asked him bluntly.

But of these things he would not speak; he only shook his head feebly and closed his eyes.

"I hope to examine it tomorrow," I went on.

"It offers nothing you could not find in Quebec, believe me," said Gamwell.

But, as I have set forth, his curious opposition served only to augment my desire to examine the house at close range. I did not mean to spend a lifetime there, but only to lease it for a half year or so, and make it a base of operations, while I went about the countryside around the city as well as the lanes and byways of Providence in search of the antiquities of that region. Gamwell did surrender at last the name of the firm of lawyers in whose hands the Charriere will had been placed, and when I made application to them, and overcame their own lack of enthusiasm, I became master of the old Charriere house for a period of not more than six months, and less, if I so chose.

I took possession of the house at once, though I was somewhat nonplussed to discover that, while running water had been put in, electricity had not. I found among the furnishings of the house—these had been left in each room,

exactly as at the death of Dr. Charriere—a half dozen lamps of various shapes and ages, some of them apparently dating back a century or more, with which to light my way. I had expected to find the house cobwebbed and dusty, but I was surprised to learn that this was not the case, though I had not understood that the lawyers—the firm of Baker & Greenbaugh—had undertaken to care for the house during the half century it was to stand, short of someone's appearing to lay claim to it as the sole survivor of Dr. Charriere and his line.

The house was all I had hoped for. It was heavily timbered, and in some of the rooms paper had begun to peel from the plaster, while in others the plaster itself had never been covered with paper, and shone yellow with age on the wall. Its rooms were irregular—appearing to be either quite large or very small. It was of two storeys, but the upper floor had not been much used. The lower or ground floor, however, abounded in evidence of its one-time occupant, the surgeon, for one room of it had manifestly served him as a laboratory of some kind, and an adjoining room as a study, for both had the look of having been but recently abandoned in the midst of some inquiry or research, quite as if the occupation of the house by its brief tenant—*post-mortem* Charriere—had not touched upon these rooms. And perhaps it had not, for the house was large enough to permit of habitation without disturbing them, both laboratory and study being at the back of the house, opening out upon a garden, now much overgrown

with shrubs and trees, a garden of some size, since the house occupied a frontage of over three lots in width, and in depth reached to a high stone wall which was but a lot removed from the street in its rear.

Dr. Charriere had evidently been in the midst of some work when his hour had struck, and I confess its nature intrigued me at once, for it was plainly no ordinary one. The inquiry was not alone a study of man, for there were strange, almost cabalistic drawings, resembling physiological charts, of various kinds of saurians, though the most prominent among them were of the order *Loricata* and the genera *Crocodylus* and *Osteolaemus*, though there were also recognizable drawings of *Gavialis*, *Tomistoma*, *Gaiman* and *Alligator*, with a lesser number being speculative sketches of earlier members of this reptilian order reaching back to the Jurassic period. Yet even this fascinating glimpse of the surgeon's odd vein of inquiry would not have stimulated any really genuine delving into his affairs had it not been for the antiquarian mystery of the house.

The Charriere house impressed me at once as having been the product of its age, save for the later introduction of waterworks. I had all along assumed that Dr. Charriere himself had built it; Gamwell had nowhere in our somewhat elliptical conversation given me to understand otherwise; nor had he, for that matter, mentioned the surgeon's age at his death. Presuming it to be a well-rounded eighty years,

then it was certainly not he who had built the house, for internal evidence spoke clearly of its origin in the vicinity of the year 1700!—or over two centuries before Dr. Charriere's death. It seemed to me, therefore, that the house only bore the name of its most recent long-time tenant, and not that of its builder; it was the pursuit of this problem which brought me to several disturbing facts which bore no relationship, seemingly, to credible facts.

For one thing, the year of Dr. Charriere's birth was nowhere in evidence. I sought out his grave—it was, strangely, on his own property; he had obtained permission to be buried in his garden, not far from a gracious old well which stood, roofed over, with bucket and all still as it had stood, doubtless, for almost as long as the house had been standing—with a view to examining his headstone for the date of his birth, but, to my disappointment and chagrin, his stone bore only his name—Jean-Francois Charriere—his calling: Surgeon—his places of residence or professional occupation—Bayonne: Paris: Pondicherry: Quebec: Providence—and the year of his death: 1927. No more. This was enough only to further me on my quest, and forthwith I started to make inquiry by letter of acquaintances in various places where research might be done.

Within a fortnight, the results of my inquiries were at hand. But, far from being in any way satisfied, I was more perplexed than ever. I had made my first inquiry of a correspondent in Bayonne, presuming that, since this was

first mentioned on the stone, Charriere might have been born in that vicinity. I had next inquired in Paris, then of a friend in London, who might have access to information in British archives pertaining to India, and then in Quebec. What did I glean from all this correspondence but a riddling sequence of dates? A Jean-Francois Charriere had indeed been born in Bayonne—but in the year 1636! The name was not unknown in Paris, either, for a seventeen-year-old lad of that name had studied under the Royalist exile, Richard Wiseman, in 1653 and for three years thereafter. At Pondicherry—and later, too, on the Caronmandall Coast of India—one Dr. Jean-Francois Charriere, surgeon in the French army, had been on duty from 1674 onward. And in Quebec, the earliest record of Dr. Charriere was in 1691; he had practiced in that city for six years, and had then left the city for an unknown destination.

I was left, patently, with but one conclusion: that the said Dr. Jean-Francois Charriere, born in Bayonne, 1636, last known to have been in Quebec the very year of the erection of the Charriere house on Benefit Street, was a forebear of the same name as the late surgeon who had last occupied the house. But if so, there was an absolute lacuna between that time in 1697 and the lifetime of the last occupant of the house, for there was nowhere any account of the family of that earlier Jean-Francois Charriere; if there had been a Madame Charriere, if there had been children—as assuredly there must have been for the line to continue to the present century—there was no record of them. It was

not impossible that the elderly gentleman who had come down from Quebec might have been of single status upon his arrival in Providence, and might have married thereafter. He would then have been sixty-one years of age. Yet a search of the appropriate registry failed to reveal any record of such a marriage, and I was left more bewildered than ever, though, as an antiquarian, I was fully aware of the difficulties of discovering facts and I was not at that time too discouraged to continue my inquiries.

I took a new line, and approached the firm of Baker & Greenbaugh for information about the late Dr. Charriere. Here an even more curious rebuff awaited me, for when I inquired about the appearance of the French surgeon, both the lawyers were forced to admit that they had never laid eyes on him. All their instructions had come by letter, together with cheques of generous figures; they had acted for Dr. Charriere approximately six years before his death, and thereafter; before that time, they had not been retained by Dr. Charriere.

I inquired then about his "nephew," since the existence of a nephew implied, at least, that there had at one time been a sister or brother to Charriere. But here, too, I was rebuffed; Gamwell had misinformed me, for Charriere had not specifically identified him as a nephew, but only as "the sole male survivor of my line" this survivor had only been presumed to have been a nephew, and all search for him had come to naught, though there was that in Dr.

Charriere's will which implied that the said "sole male survivor" would not need to be sought, but would make application to the firm of Baker & Greenbaugh either in person or by letter in such terms as to be unmistakable. Mystery there was, certainly; the lawyers did not deny it, but it was understood, also, that they had been well rewarded for their trust, too well to permit of any betrayal of it save in such casual terms as they had related to me. After all, as one of the lawyers sensibly pointed out, only three years had elapsed since the death of Dr. Charriere, and there was still ample time for the survivor to present himself.

Failing in this line of inquiry, I again called on my old friend, Gamwell, who was still abed, and now noticeably weaker. His attending physician, whom I encountered on the way out, now for the first time intimated that old Gamwell might not rise again, and cautioned me not to excite him, or to tire him with too many questions. Nevertheless, I was determined to ferret out what I could about Charriere, though I was not entirely prepared for the keen scrutiny to which I was subjected by Gamwell, quite as if he had expected that less than three weeks' residence in the Charriere house should have altered my very appearance.

After the amenities had been exchanged, I turned to the subject about which I had come; explaining that I had found the house so interesting, I desired to know more of its late tenant. Gamwell had mentioned seeing him.

“But that was years ago,” said Gamwell. “He’s been dead three years. Let me see—1907, I think.”

I was astounded. “But that was twenty years before he died!” I protested.

Nevertheless, Gamwell insisted, that was the year.

And how had he looked? I pressed the question upon him.

Disappointingly, senility and illness had encroached upon the old man’s once fine mind.

“Take a newt, grow him a little, teach him to walk on his hind legs, and dress him in elegant clothes,” Gamwell said. “I give you Dr. Jean-Francois Charriere. Except that his skin was rough, almost horny. A cold man. He lived in another world.”

“How old was he?” I asked then. “Eighty?”

“Eighty?” He was contemplative. “When first I saw him—I was but twenty, then—he looked no older. And twenty years ago—my good Atwood—he had not changed a jot. He seemed eighty the first time. Was it the perspective of my youth? Perhaps. He seemed eighty in 1907. And died twenty years later.”



“A hundred, then.”

“It might well have been.”

But Gamwell, too, was dissatisfying. Once again there was nothing definite, nothing concrete, no single fact—only an impression, a memory, of someone, I felt, Gamwell had disliked for no reason he could name. Perhaps some professional jealousy he did not care to name biased his judgment.

I next sought the neighbors, but I found them for the most part younger people who had little memory of Dr. Charriere, except as someone whom they wished elsewhere, for he had an abominable traffic in lizards and the like, and none knew what diabolic experiments he performed in his laboratory. Only one among them was of advanced age; this was an old woman, a Mrs. Hepzibah Cobbett, who lived in a little two-storey house directly behind the Charriere garden wall, and I found her much enfeebled, in a wheel chair, guarded over by her daughter, a hawk-nosed woman whose cold blue eyes looked at me askance from behind her pincenez. Yet the old woman spoke, starting to life at mention of Dr. Charriere's name, realizing that I lived in the house.

“Ye'll not live there long, mark my words. It's a devil's house,” she said with some spirit that degenerated rapidly into a senile cackling. “Many's the time I've laid eyes on

him. A tall man, bent like a sickle, with a wee tuft of beard like a goat's whisker on his chin. And what was it that crawled about at his feet I could not see? A long, black thing, too big for a snake—though 'twas snakes I thought of every time I set eyes on Dr. Charriere. And what was it screamed that night? And what barked at the well?—a fox, indeed, I know a fox and a dog, too. Like the yawping of a seal. I've seen things, I tell ye, but nobody'll believe a poor old woman with one foot in her grave. And ye—ye won't either, for none does."

What was I to make of this? Perhaps the daughter was right when she said, as she showed me out, "You must overlook mother's ramblings. She has an arteriosclerotic condition which occasionally makes her sound quite weak-minded." But I did not think old Mrs. Cobbett weak-minded, for her eyes snapped and sparkled when she talked, quite as if she were enjoying a secret joke of proportions so vast that its very outlines escaped her keeper, the grim daughter who hovered ever near.

Disappointment seemed to await me at every turn. All avenues of information yielded little more together than any one had yielded. Newspaper files, library, records—all that was to be found was the date of the erection of the house: 1697, and the date of the death of Dr. Jean-Francois Charriere. If any other Charriere had died in the city's history, there was no mention of him. It was inconceivable that death had stricken all the other members of the

Charriere family, predeceasing the late tenant of the house on Benefit Street, away from Providence, and yet it must have been so, for there was no other feasible explanation.

Yet there was one additional fact—a likeness of Dr. Charriere which I discovered in the house; though no name was appended to it where it hung in a remote and almost inaccessible corner of an upstairs room, the initials J. F. C. identified it beyond reasonable doubt. It was the likeness of a thin-faced ascetic, wearing a straggly goatee; his face was distinguished by high cheekbones, sunken cheeks, and dark, blazing eyes. His aspect was gaunt and sepulchral.

Thus, in the absence of other avenues of information, I was driven once again to the papers and books left in Dr. Charriere's study and laboratory. Hitherto, I had been much away from the house, in the pursuit of my inquiry into Dr. Charriere's background; but now I was as much confined to the house as I had previously been away from it. Perhaps it was because of this confinement that I began to grow more keenly aware of the aura of the house—both in a psychic and a physical sense. That unhappy professional man and his family who had remained here but a month and then left because of the smells abounding had perhaps conditioned me to smell the house, and now, for the first time, I did indeed become sharply cognizant of various aromas and musks, some of them typical of old houses, but others completely alien to me. The dominant one, however, was

identifiable; it was a musk I had encountered several times before—in zoos, swamps, along stagnant pools—almost a miasma which suggested most strongly the presence of reptiles. It was not impossible that reptiles had found their way through the city to the haven of the garden behind the Charriere house, but it was incredible that they should have persisted in such numbers as to taint the very air of the place. Yet, seek as I might, I could find no source of this reptilian musk, inside or out, though I fancied once that it emanated from the well, which was doubtless a result of an illusory conviction.

This musk persisted, and it was especially strong whenever rain fell, or a fog formed, or dew lay on the grass, as might have been expected, moisture heightening all odors. The house was moist, too; its short-lived tenantry had been explained in part by this, and in this, certainly, the renter had not been in error. I found it often unpleasant, but not disturbing—not half so disturbing as other aspects of the house.

Indeed, it was as if my invasion of the study and laboratory had stirred the old house to protest, for certain hallucinations began to occur with annoying regularity. There was, for one, the curious barking sound which seemed to emanate from the garden late at night. And, for another, the illusion that an oddly bent, reptilian figure haunted the darkness of the garden outside the study windows. These and other illusions persisted—and I, in

turn, persisted in looking upon them as hallucinatory—until that fateful night when, after hearing a distinct sound as of someone bathing in the garden, I woke from my sleep convinced that I was not alone in the house, and, putting on my dressing-robe and slippers, I lit a lamp and hurried to the study.

What I saw there must certainly have been inspired by the nature of my inquiry into the late Dr. Charriere's papers; that it was a figment of a nightmare, I could not doubt at the moment, though I caught but a faint glimpse of the invader; for there was an invader in the study, and he made off with certain papers belonging to the Charriere estate, but as I saw him in the brief glimpse I had of him in the wan yellow light of the lamp held overhead and partially blinding me he seemed to glisten, he shone blackly, and he seemed to be wearing a skin-tight suit of some rough, black material. I saw him for only an instant, before he leapt through the open window into the darkness of the garden; I would have followed then, had it not been for the disquieting things I saw in the light of the lamp.

Where the invader had stood there were the irregular marks of feet—of wet feet—and more, of feet which were oddly broad, the toes of which were so long-nailed as to leave the marks of those nails before each toe; and where he had bent above the papers there was the same wetness; and over all there hung the powerful reptilian musk I had begun to accept as an integral part of the house, so

powerful, indeed, that I almost reeled and fainted.

But my interest in the papers transcended fear or curiosity. At that time, the only rational explanation which occurred to me was that one of the neighbors, who had some animus against the Charriere house and were constantly agitating to have it torn down, must have come from swimming to invade the study. Farfetched, yes, certainly. But could any other explanation readily account for what I saw? I am inclined to think not.

As for the papers, certain of them were undeniably gone. Fortunately, these were the very ones I had finished with; I had put them into a neat pile, though many were not consecutive. I could not imagine why anyone would have wanted to take them, unless someone other than myself were interested in Dr. Charriere, perhaps with a view to laying claim to the house and property; for these papers were painstaking notes about the longevity of crocodiles and alligators, as well as of related reptiles. It had already begun to be plainly evident to me that the late doctor had been studying reptilian longevity with almost obsessive devotion, and with a view, clearly, to learning how man might lengthen his own life. If the secrets of reptilian longevity had been revealed to Dr. Charriere, there was nothing in his papers thus far to show that it had, though I had come upon two or three disquieting suggestions of "operations" performed—on whom was not set down—with a view to increasing the life span of the subject.

True, there was one variant vein of notes in what I assumed to be Dr. Charriere's handwriting, treated as a related subject, but, to me, one at variance from the more or less scientific inquiry into the long life of reptiles. This was a sequence of cryptic references to certain mythological creatures, particularly one named "Cthulhu," and another named "Dagon," who were evidently deities of the sea in some ancient mythology completely unknown to me; and suggestions of long-lived creatures (or people?) who served these ancient Gods, named the "Deep Ones," evidently amphibious creatures living in the depths of the seas. Among these notes were photographs of a singularly hideous monolithic statue, of a distinctly saurian cast of feature, labeled "E. coast Hivaoa Is., Marquesas. Object of worship?", and of a totem pole of the Northwest Coast Indians of a disturbingly similar workmanship, also reptilian in aspect, this one being marked, "Kwakiutl Indian totem. Quatsino Sound. Sim. t. erected by Tlingit Inds." These curious notes existed as if to show that Dr. Charriere was not averse to examining rites of ancient sorceries and primitive religious beliefs in an effort to bring about some earnestly desired goal.

What that goal might be was soon evident enough. Dr. Charriere had not been interested in the study of longevity for its sake alone; no, he had also wished to prolong his own life. And there were certain upsetting hints in the writings he had left behind him to suggest that in part, at

least, he had succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. This was a disturbing discovery to make because it recalled again the curious history of that first Jean-Francois Charriere, also a surgeon, about whose later years and death there was fully as much mystery as there was about the birth and early years of the late Dr. Jean-Francois Charriere, who died in Providence in 1927.

The events of that night, though not frightening me too badly, did result in my purchasing a powerful Luger pistol in a second-hand shop, as well as a new flashlight; the lamp had impeded me in the night, which a flashlight would not do in similar circumstances. If indeed I had a visitor from among the neighbors, I could be sure that the papers he had taken would no more than whet his appetite, and sooner or later he would return. Against that contingency I meant to be fully prepared, and if again I caught a marauder in the study of the house I had leased, I would not hesitate to shoot if my demand to stop where he was were not heeded. I hoped, however, that I would not have occasion to use the weapon in such a manner.

On the next night I resumed my study of Dr. Charriere's books and papers. The books had surely at one time belonged to his forebears, for many of them dated back through the centuries; among them was a book translated into the French from the English of R. Wiseman, testifying to some connection between the Dr. Jean-Francois Charriere who had studied in Paris under Wiseman, and



that other surgeon of similar name who had, until recently, lived in Providence, Rhode Island.

They were en masse a singular hodge-podge of books. They seemed to be in every known language, from French to Arabic. Indeed, I could not hope to translate a majority of the titles, though I could read French and had some smattering of the other Romance languages. I had at that time no understanding of the meaning of such a title as *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, by Von Junzt, though I suspected that it was akin to the Count d'Erlette's *Cultes des Goules*, since it stood next to that book on the shelf. But then, books on zoological subjects stood beside weighty tomes about ancient cultures; they bore such titles as *An Inquiry Into the Relationship of the Peoples of Polynesia and the Indian Cultures of the South American Continent, with Special Reference to Peru; The Pnakotic Manuscripts, De Furtivis Literarum Notis*, by Giambattista Porta; Thicknesses's *Kryptographik*; the *Daemonolatreia* of Remigius; Banfort's *The Saurian Age*; a file of the Aylesbury, Massachusetts, *Transcript*; another of the Arkham, Massachusetts, *Gazette*—and the like. Some of these books were certainly of immense value, for many of them dated as far back as from 1670 to 1820, and, though all showed much wear from use, all were still in relatively good condition.

These books, however, meant comparatively little to me.

In retrospect, I am constrained to believe that, had I examined them more attentively, I might have learned even more than I did; but there is a saying that too much knowledge of matters men are better off without knowing is even more damning than too little. I soon gave over my examination of the books because I discovered, pressed in among them on the shelves, what seemed at first glance to be a diary or journal, but was, on closer examination, manifestly a notebook, for the entries dated too far back to have encompassed Dr. Charriere's span of years. All were written in a crabbed, tiny script, which was most certainly the late surgeon's, and, despite the age of the first pages, all had been written by the same hand, suggesting that Dr. Charriere had set down these notes in a kind of rough chronology, very probably from some earlier draft. Nor were they jottings alone; some were illustrated with crude drawings which were nevertheless effective, as are on many occasions the primitive paintings of untutored artists.

Thus, upon the very first page of the hand-bound manuscript I came upon this entry: "1851. Arkham. Aseph Goade, D.O." and with it a drawing, presumably of the said Aseph Goade, emphasizing certain aspects of his features, which were batrachian in essence, for they were distinguished by an abnormally wide mouth, with peculiar leathery lips, a very low brow, strangely webbed eyes, and a generally squat physiognomy, giving them a distinctly and unmistakably frog-like appearance. This drawing took up the majority of the page, and the jotting accompanying it I

assumed to be a notation of an encounter—evidently in research, for it could hardly have been in the flesh—with a sub-human type—(could the “D.O.” have been a reference to the “Deep Ones,” mention of which I had previously encountered?), which, doubtless, Dr. Charriere looked upon as a verification of the trend of his research, a trend to support a belief he probably held that some kinship with batrachia, and hence very probably also saurians, could be traced.

To that end, too, there were other jottings. Most of them were so vague—perhaps purposely so—as to seem to me at that first examination of them virtually meaningless. What was I to make of a page like this, for instance?

“1857. St. Augustine. Henry Bishop. Skin very scaly, but not ichthyic. Said to be 107 years old. No deteriorative process. All senses still keen. Ancestry uncertain, but Polynesian trade in background.

“1861. Charleston. Balacz family. Crusted hands. Double jaw construction. Entire family manifesting similar stigmata. Anton 117 years old. Anna 109. Unhappy away from water.

“1863. Innsmouth. Marsh, Waite, Eliot, Gilman families.

Captain Obed Marsh a trader in Polynesia, married to a Polynesian woman. All bearing facial characteristics similar to Aseph Goade's. Much secretive living. Women seldom seen in streets, but at night much swimming—entire families, all the rest of the town keeping to their houses, swimming out to Devil Reef. Relationship to D.O. very marked. Considerable traffic between Innsmouth and Ponape. Some dark religious worship.

“1871. Jed Price, carnival entertainer. Billed as ‘Alligator Man.’ Appears in pool of alligators. Saurian look. Long lantern jaw. Said to have pointed teeth, but whether real or filed unable to determine.”

This was the general tenor of the jottings in the book. Their range was continental—there were notes referring to Canada and Mexico as well as the eastern seaboard of North America. From them, Dr. Jean-Francois Charriere began to emerge as a man obsessed with a strange compulsion—to establish proof of the longevity of certain human beings seemingly bearing some kinship to saurian or batrachian ancestors.

Admittedly, the weight of the evidence gathered, could one have accepted it all as fact, rather than as wishfully colored accounts of people with some marked physical

defect, seemed to lend to Dr. Charriere and his belief a strange and provocative corroboration. Yet the surgeon had not often gone beyond the realm of pure conjecture. What he sought seemed to be the connecting link among the various instances which had come to his notice. He had sought this link in three bodies of lore. The most familiar of these was the *vodu* legendry of Negro culture. Next to it, in familiarity, stood the animal worship of ancient Egypt. Finally, and most important, according to the surgeon's notes, was a completely alien culture which was as old as earth, nay, older, involving ancient Elder Gods and their terrible, unceasing conflict with equally primeval Old Ones who bore such names as Cthulhu, Hastur, Yog-Sothoth, Shub-Niggurath, and Nyarlathotep, and who were served in turn by such curious beings as the Tcho-Tcho People, the Deep Ones, the Shantaks, the Abominable Snow Men, and others, some of whom appeared to have been a sub-order of human being, but others of which were either definite mutations or not human at all. All this fruit of Dr. Charriere's research was fascinating, but in no case had he adduced a definite, provable link. There were certain saurian references in the *Vodu* cult; there were similar connections to the religious culture of ancient Egypt; and there were many obscure and tantalizing suggestions connecting the saurians to the Cthulhu myth-pattern, ranging far deeper into the past than *Crocodylus* and *Gavialis*, embracing *Tyrannosaurus* and *Brontosaurus*, *Megalosaurus*, and other Mesozoic reptilia.

In addition to these interesting notes, there were diagrams of what seemed to be very odd operations, the nature of which I did not fully comprehend at that time. These were apparently copied out of ancient texts, particularly one given frequently as source entitled, *De Vermis Mysteriis*, by Ludvig Prinn, another of those obscure references completely foreign to me. The operations themselves suggested a *raison d'être* too astounding to accept on face; one of them, for instance, was designed to stretch the skin, consisting of many incisions made to "permit growth." Yet another was a simple cross-incision made at the base of the spine for the purpose of "extension of the tailbone." What these fantastic diagrams suggested was too horrible to contemplate, yet it was part and parcel, surely, of the strange research conducted for so many years by Dr. Charriere, whose seclusion was thus readily explicable, since his was a project which could only be conducted in secret lest it bring down upon him the scorn and laughter of his fellow scientists.

Among these papers there were also certain references set down in such a manner that I could not doubt they were the experiences of the narrator. Yet, for all that these antedated 1850, in some cases by decades, they were unmistakably in Dr. Charriere's handwriting, so that—excepting always the possibility that he had transcribed the experiences of someone else—it was evident that he was more than an octogenarian at the time of his death, indeed,

far more, so much more that the very anticipation of it made me uneasy, and cast my thoughts back to that other Dr. Charriere who had gone before him.

The sum total of Dr. Charriere's credo amounted to a strongly hypothetical conviction that a human being could, by means of certain operations, together with other unusual practices of a macabre nature, take upon himself something of the longevity that characterized the sauria; that as much as a century and a half, perhaps even two centuries, could be added to a man's life span; and, beyond that, given a period of semiconscious torpor in some moist place, which would amount to a kind of gestation, the individual could emerge again, somewhat altered in aspect, true, to begin another lengthy span of life, which would, by virtue of the physiological changes which had taken place in him, be of necessity somewhat altered from his previous mode of existence. To support this conviction, Dr. Charriere had amassed only a number of legendary tales, certain data of a kindred nature, and highly speculative accounts of curious human mutations known to have existed in the past two hundred and ninety-one years—a figure which later assumed far more meaning, when I realized that this was the exact span of time from the year of the birth of that earlier Dr. Charriere to the date of the later surgeon's death. Nowhere in all this material was there anything resembling a concrete line of scientific research, with adducible proof—only hints, vague intimations, hideous suggestions—sufficient, in truth, to fill a

casual reader with horrible doubts and terrible, half-formed convictions, but not nearly enough to warrant the sober interest of any genuine scholar.

How much farther I would have gone into Dr. Charriere's research, I do not know.

Had it not been for the occurrence of that which sent me screaming in horror from that house on Benefit Street, it was possible that I would have gone much farther instead of leaving house and contents to be claimed by a survivor who, I know now, will never come, thus leaving the house to fall to its ultimate destruction by the city.

It was while I was contemplating these "findings" of Dr. Charriere that I became aware of being under scrutiny, that manifestation people are fond of calling the "sixth sense." Unwilling to turn, I did the next best thing; I opened my pocket-watch, set it up before me, and used the inside of the highly polished case as a kind of mirror to reflect the windows behind me. And there I saw, dimly reflected, a horrible travesty of a human face, which so startled me that I turned to view for myself that which I had seen mirrored. But there was nothing at the pane, save the shadow of movement. I rose, put out the light, and hastened to the window. Did I then see a tall, curiously bent figure, crouched and shuffling in an awkward gait into the darkness of the garden? I believed that I did, but I was not given to folly enough to venture out in pursuit. Whoever it was would



come again, even as he had come the previous night.

Accordingly, I settled back to watch, a score of possible explanations crowding upon my mind. As the source of my nocturnal visitor, I confess I put at the head of the list the neighbors who had long opposed the continued standing of the house of Dr. Charriere. It was possible that they meant to frighten me away, unaware of the shortness of my lease; it was also possible that there was something in the study they wanted, though this was far-fetched, in view of the time they had had to search the house during its long period of un-occupancy. Certainly the truth of the matter never once occurred to me; I am not by nature any more skeptical than an antiquarian might be expected to be; but the true identity of my visitor did not, I confess, suggest itself to me despite all the curious interlocking circumstances which might have conveyed a greater meaning to a less scientific mind than my own.

As I sat there in the dark, I was more than ever impressed with the aura of the old house. The very darkness seemed alive, but incredibly remote from the life of Providence which swirled all around it. The interior darkness was filled instead with the psychic residue of years—the persistent smell of moisture, accompanied by that musk so commonly associated with reptilian quarters at the zoo; the smell of old wood, old limestone, of which the cellar walls were composed, the odor of decay, for the centuries had begun to deteriorate both wood and stone.

And there was something more—the vaporous hint of an animal presence, which seemed indeed to grow stronger with every passing moment.

I sat there well over an hour, before I heard any untoward sound.

Then it was indistinguishable. At first I thought it a bark, akin to that sound made by alligators; but then I thought it rather less a figment of my perfervid imagination than the actual sound of a door closing. Yet it was some time before another sound smote upon my ears—a rustling of papers. Astonishing as it was, an intruder had actually found his way into the study before my very eyes without being seen! I turned on the flashlight, which was directed at the desk I had left.

What I saw was incredible, horrible. It was not a man who stood there, but a travesty of a man. I know that for one cataclysmic moment I thought consciousness would leave me; but a sense of urgency coupled with an awareness of acute danger swept over me, and without a moment's hesitation, I fired four times, at such range that I knew each shot had found harbor in the body of the bestial thing that leaned over Dr. Charriere's desk in that darkened study.

Of what followed I have, mercifully, only the vaguest memory. A wild thrashing about—the escape of the invader—my own uncertain pursuit. I had struck him, certainly, for a

trail of blood led from the study to the windows through which he had gone, tearing away glass and frame in one. Outside, the light of my flash gleamed on the drops of blood, so that I had no difficulty following them. Even without this to follow, the strong musk pervading the night air would have enabled me to trace whoever had gone ahead.

I was led—not away from the house—but deeper into the garden, straight to the curb of the well behind the house. And over the curb *into the well*, where I saw for the first time in the glow of the flashlight the cunningly fashioned steps which led down into that dark maw. So great was the discharge of blood at the well-curb, that I was confident I had mortally wounded the intruder. It was that confidence which impelled me to follow, despite the manifest danger.

Would that I had turned at the well-curb and gone away from that accursed place! For I followed down the rungs of the ladder set into the well-wall—not to the water below, as I had first thought I might be led—but to an aperture opening into a tunnel in the well-wall, leading even deeper into the garden. Compelled now by a burning desire to know the nature of my victim, I pushed into this tunnel, unmindful of the damp earth which stained my clothes, with my light thrust before me, and my weapon in instant readiness. Up ahead I could see a kind of hollowed out cavern—not any larger than enough to permit a man to kneel upright—and in the center of my flashlight's glow stood a casket, at sight of which I hesitated momentarily, for I recognized the direction

of the tunnel away from the well led toward the grave of Dr. Charriere.

But I had come too far to retreat.

The smell in this narrow opening was almost indescribable. Pervading every part of the tunnel was the nauseatingly strong musk of reptiles; indeed, it lay so thickly in the air that I had to force myself to press on toward the casket. I came up to it and saw that it lay uncovered. The trail of blood led to the edge of the casket and into it. Impelled by burning curiosity and a half-formed fear of what I might find, I rose to my knees and forced the light tremblingly into the casket.

It may well be charged that after so many years my memory is no longer to be relied upon. But what I saw there was imprinted indelibly on my memory. For there, in the glow of my light, lay a newly-dead being, the implications of whose existence overwhelmed me with horror. This was the thing I had killed. Half-man, half-saurian, it was a ghastly travesty upon what had once been a human being. Its clothes were split and torn by the horrible mutations of the flesh, by the crusted skin which had burst its bonds, its hands and unshod feet were flat, powerful in appearance, claw-like. I gazed in speechless terror at the shuddersome tail-like appendage which pushed bluntly out from the base of the spine, at the terribly elongated, crocodilian jaw, to which still grew a tuft of hair, like a goat's beard....

All this I saw before a merciful unconsciousness overcame me,—for I had seen enough to recognize what lay in that coffin—him who had lain there in a cataleptic torpor since 1927, waiting his turn to come back in frightfully altered form to live again—Dr. Jean-Francois Charriere, surgeon, born in Bayonne in 1636, “died” in Providence in 1927—and I knew that the survivor of whom he had written in his will was none other than himself, born again, renewed by a hellish knowledge of long-forgotten, eldritch rites more ancient than mankind, as old as that early vernal earth on which great beasts fought and tore!

## WENTWORTH'S DAY



North of Dunwich lies an all but abandoned country, one which has returned in large part—after its successive occupation by the old New Englanders, the French-Canadians who moved in after them, the Italians, and the Poles who came last—to a state perilously close to the wild. The first dwellers wrested a living from the stony earth and the forests that once covered all that land, but they were not versed in conservation of either the soil or its natural resources, and successive generations still further depleted that country. Those who came after them soon gave up the struggle and went elsewhere.

It is not an area of Massachusetts in which many people like to live. The houses which once stood proudly there have fallen into such disuse that most of them would not now support comfortable living. There are still farms on the gentler slopes, with gambrel-roofed houses on them, ancient buildings, often brooding in the lee of rocky ledges over the secrets of many New England generations; but the marks of decay are everywhere apparent—in the crumbling

chimneys, the bulging side walls, the broken windows of the abandoned barns and houses. Roads crisscross it, but, once you are off the state highway which traverses the long valley north of Dunwich, you find yourself in byways which are little more than rutted lanes, as little used as most of the houses on the land.

Moreover, there broods eternally about this country an undeniable atmosphere not alone of age and desertion, but also of evil. There are areas of woodland in which no axe has ever fallen, as well as dark, vine-grown glens, where brooks trickle in a darkness unbroken by sunlight even on the brightest day. Over the entire valley there is little sign of life, though there are reclusive dwellers on some of the broken-down farms; even the hawks which soar high overhead never seem to linger long, and the black hordes of crows only cross the valley and never descend to scavenge or forage. Once, long ago, it had the reputation of being a country in which *Hexerei*—the witch-beliefs of superstitious people—was practiced, and something of this unenviable reputation lingers about it still.

It is not a country in which to linger overlong, and certainly not a place in which to be found by night. Yet it was night in that summer of 1927 when I made my last trip into the valley, on my way from delivering a stove not far from Dunwich. I should never have chosen to drive through the region north of that decayed town, but I had one more delivery to make, and, rather than follow my impulse to go

around the valley and come in from the far end, I drove into it at late dusk. In the valley itself the dusk which still prevailed at Dunwich had given way to a darkness which was soon to be profound, for the sky was heavily overcast, and the clouds were so low as almost to touch upon the enclosing hills, so that I rode, as it were, in a kind of tunnel. The highway was little traveled; there were other roads to take to reach points on both sides of the valley, and the side-roads were so overgrown and virtually abandoned in this place that few drivers wanted to take the risk of having to use them.

All would have been well, for my course led straight through the valley to the farther end, and there was no need for me to leave the state highway, had it not been for two unforeseen factors. Rain began to fall soon after I left Dunwich; it had been hanging heavy over the earth throughout that afternoon, and now at last the heavens opened and the torrent came down. The highway was soon a gleam in the glow of my headlamps. And that glow, too, soon shone upon some thing other. I had gone perhaps fifteen miles into the valley when I was brought up short by a barrier on the highway, and a well-marked directive to detour. Beyond the barrier I could see that the highway had been torn up to such an extent that it was truly impassable.

I turned off the highway with misgivings. If I had only followed my impulse to return to Dunwich and take another road, I might be free of the accursed nightmares which



have troubled my sleep since that night of horror! But I did not. Having gone so far, I had no wish to waste the time it would take to return to Dunwich. The rain was still coming down as a wall of water, and driving was extremely difficult. So I turned off the highway, and immediately found myself on a road which was only partially surfaced with gravel. The highway crew had been along this way, and had widened the detour a little by cutting away overhanging limbs which had all but shut off the road before, but they had done little for the road itself, and I had not gone very far before I realized that I was in trouble.

The road on which I traveled was rapidly worsening because of the rain; my car, though one of the sturdiest of Fords, with relatively high, narrow wheels, cut deep ruts where it passed along, and from time to time, splashed into rapidly deepening puddles of water, which caused my motor to sputter and cough. I knew that it was only a question of time before the downpour would seep through the hood of the car and stop my engine altogether, and I began to look around for any sign of habitation, or, at least, some cover which would afford shelter for the car and myself. Indeed, knowing the loneliness of this isolated valley, I would have preferred an abandoned barn, but, in truth, it was impossible to make out any structure without some guidance, and thus I came at last to a pale window square of light shining not far off the road, and by a lucky chance found the driveway in the fading glow of my headlamps.

I turned in, passing a mailbox on which the owner's name had been crudely painted; it stood out, fading now: *Amos Stark*. The headlamps' glow swept the face of the dwelling there, and I saw that it was ancient, indeed, one of those houses which are all of a piece—house, ell, summer kitchen, barn, all in one long structure, under roofs of various heights. Fortunately, the barn stood wide open to the weather and, seeing no other shelter, I drove my car under that cover, expecting to see cattle and horses. But the barn wore an air of long-time desertion, for there were neither cattle nor horses, and the hay which filled it with its aroma of past summers must have been several years old.

I did not linger in the barn, but made my way to the house through the driving rain. From the outside, the house, as much as I could see of it, had the same appearance of desolation as the barn. It was of but one storey, with a low verandah out in front, and the floor of that verandah was, as I discovered just in time, broken here and there, with dark gaps to show where there had once been boards.

I found the door and pounded on it.

For a long time there was no sound but the voice of the rain falling upon the roof of the porch and into the water gathered in the yard just beyond. I knocked again and raised my voice to shout, "Is anybody home?"

Then a quavering voice rose from inside. "Who be ye?"

I explained that I was a salesman seeking shelter.

The light began to move inside, as a lamp was picked up from where it stood. The window grew dim, and from under the door a line of yellow grew stronger. There was the sound of bolts and chains being withdrawn, and then the door was opened, and my host stood there, holding a lamp high; he was a wizened old man with a scraggly beard half covering his scrawny neck. He wore spectacles, but peered out at me over them. His hair was white, and his eyes black; seeing me, his lips drew back in a kind of feral grin, exposing the stumps of teeth.

“Mr. Stark?” I asked.

“Storm ketched ye, eh?” he greeted me. “Come right in the haouse an’ dry off. Don’t reckon the rain’ll last long naow.”

I followed him into the inner room from which he had started away, though not before he had carefully bolted and locked the door behind us, a procedure which touched me with a faint unease. He must have seen my look of inquiry, for, once he had set the lamp down on a thick book which lay on a round table in the center of the room to which he led me, he turned and said with a dry chuckle, “This be Wentworth’s day. I thought yew might be Nahum.”

His chuckle deepened into the ghost of a laugh.

“No, sir. My name is Fred Hadley. I’m from Boston.”

“Ain’t never been ta Boston,” said Stark. “Never been as fur as Arkham, even. Got my farm work ta keep me ta home.”

“I hope you don’t mind. I took the liberty of driving my car into your barn.”

“The caows won’t mind.” He cackled with laughter at his little joke, for he knew full well that no cow was in the barn. “Wouldn’t drive one a them new-fangled contraptions myself, but yew taown people are all alike. Got ta hev yer automobiles.”

“I didn’t imagine I looked like a city slicker,” I said, in an attempt to meet his mood.

“I kin tell a taown man right off—onct in a while we get one movin’ into the deestrick but they move out suddent; guess they daon’t like it here. Ain’t never been ta no big taown; ain’t sure I want ta go.”

He rambled on in this fashion for such an interminable time that I was able to look around me and make a kind of inventory of the room. In those years the time I did not spend on the road I put in at the warehouse in Boston, and there were few of us who could be counted better at

inventory than myself; so it took me no time at all to see that Amos Stark's living room was filled with all kinds of things that the antique collectors would pay well to get their hands on. There were pieces of furniture that went back close to two hundred years, if I were any judge, and fine bric-a-brac, whatnots, and some wonderful blown glass and Haviland china on the shelves and on the whatnots. And there were many of the old handiwork pieces of the New England farm of decades before—candle-snuffers, wooden-pegged cork inkwells, candle-molds, a book rest, a turkey-call of leather, pitchpine and tree gum, calabashes, samplers—so that it was plain to see that the house had stood there for many years.

“Do you live alone, Mr. Stark?” I asked, when I could get a word in.

“Naow I do, yes. Onct thar was Molly an' Dewey. Abel went off when he war a boy, an' Ella died with lung fever. I bin alone naow for nigh on ta seven years.”

Even as he spoke, I observed about him a waiting, watchful air. He seemed constantly to be listening for some sound above the drumming of the rain. But there was none, save one small crepitant sound, where a mouse gnawed away somewhere in the old house—none but this and the ceaseless rune of the rain. Still he listened, his head cocked a little, his eyes narrowed as if against the glow of the lamp, and his head a gleam at the bald crown which was

ringed round by a thin, straggly tonsure of white hair. He might have been eighty years old, he might have been only sixty with his narrow, reclusive way of life having prematurely aged him.

“Ye war alaone on the road?” he asked suddenly.

“Never met a soul this side of Dunwich. Seventeen miles, I figure.”

“Give or take a half,” he agreed. Then he began to cackle and chuckle, as with an outburst of mirth that could no longer be held within. “This be Wentworth’s day. Nahum Wentworth.” His eyes narrowed again for a moment. “Yew been a salesman in these parts long naow? Yew must a knowed Nahum Wentworth?”

“No, sir. I never knew him. I sell mostly in the towns. Just once in a while in the country.”

“Might’ near everybody knowed Nahum,” he went on. “But thar weren’t none knowed him as well as I did. See that thar book?” He pointed to a well thumbed paper-covered book I could just make out in the ill-lit room. “That thar’s the *Seventh Book a Moses*—it’s got a sight more larnin’ in it than any other book I ever seen. That thar was Nahum’s book.”

He chuckled at some memory. “Oh, that Nahum was a queer one, all right. But mean—an’ stingy, too. Don’t see as

haow ye could miss knowin' him.”

I assured him I had never heard of Nahum Wentworth before, though I admitted privately to some curiosity about the object of my host's preoccupation, insofar as he had been given to reading the *Seventh Book of Moses*, which was a kind of Bible for the supposed hexes, since it purported to offer all manner of spells, incantations, and charms to those readers who were gullible enough to believe in them. I saw, too, within the circle of lamplight, certain other books I recognized—a Bible, worn as much as the textbook of magic, a compendious edition of Cotton Mather's works, and a bound volume of the *Arkham Advertiser*. Perhaps these, too, had once belonged to Nahum Wentworth.

“I see ye lookin' at his books,” said my host, as if he had indeed divined my thoughts. “He said as haow I could have 'em; so I took 'em. Good books, too. Only that I need glasses, I'd a read 'em. Yew're welcome ta look at 'em, though.”

I thanked him gravely and reminded him that he had been talking of Nahum Wentworth.

“Oh, that Nahum!” he replied at once, renewing his chuckle. “I don't reckon he'd a lent me all that money if he a knowed what was ta happen ta him. No, sir, I don't reckon he would. An' never ta take a note fer it, neither. Five

thousand it was. An' him tellin' me he didn't have no need fer a note or any kind of paper, so thar warn't no proof I ever had the money off'n him, not a-tall, jest the two of us knowin' it, and he settin' a day five years after fer him ta come fer his money an' his due. Five years, an' this is the day, this is Wentworth's day."

He paused and favored me with a sly glance out of eyes that were one and the same time dancing with suppressed mirth and dark with withheld fear. "Only he can't come, because it warn't no less'n two months after that day that he got shot out huntin'. Shotgun in the back o' the head. Pure accident. O' course, thar was them that said as haow I done it a-purpose, but I showed 'em haow ta shet up, 'cause I druv in ta Dunwich an' went straight ta the bank an' I made out my will so's his daughter—that's Miss Genie—was ta git all I die ownin'. Didn' make no secret of it, either. Let 'em all know, so's they could talk their fool heads off."

"And the loan?" I could not forebear asking.

"The time ain't up till midnight tonight." He chuckled and cackled with laughter. "An' it don't seem like Nahum can keep his 'pointment, naow, does it? I figure, if he don't come, it's mine. An' he can't come. An' a good thing he can't, 'cause I ain't got it."

I did not ask about Wentworth's daughter, and how she fared. To tell the truth, I was beginning to feel the strain of



the day and evening's drive through the downpour. And this must have been evident to my host, for he ceased talking and sat watching me, speaking again only after what seemed a long time.

"Yew're peaked lookin'. Yew tired?"

"I guess I am. But I'll be going as soon as the storm abates a little."

"Tell yew what. Thar's no need a yew a-settin' here listenin' ta me jaw yew. I'll get ye another lamp, an' yew kin lie down on the couch inside the next room. If it stops rainin', I'll call ye."

"I'm not taking your bed, Mr. Stark?"

"I set up late nights," he said.

But any protest I might have made would have been futile. He was already up and about, lighting another kerosene lamp, and in a few moments he was conducting me into the adjoining room and showing me the couch. On the way in, I picked up the *Seventh Book of Moses*, impelled by curiosity inspired by decades of hearing talk of the potent wonders between its covers; though he eyed me strangely, my host made no objection, and returned to his wicker rocking chair in the next room again, leaving me to my own devices.

Outside, the rain still came down in torrential gusts. I made myself comfortable on the couch, which was an old-fashioned leather-overed affair, with a high headrest, moved the lamp over close—for its light was very feeble—and commenced to read in the *Seventh Book of Moses*, which, I soon found, was a curious rigmarole of chants and incantations to such “princes” of the nether world as Aziel, Mephistopheles, Marbuel, Barbuel, Aniquel, and others. The incantations were of many kinds; some were designed to cure illness, others to grant wishes; some were meant for success in undertakings, others for vengeance upon one’s enemies. The reader was repeatedly warned in the text of how terrible some of the words were, so much so, that perhaps because of these adjurations, I was compelled to copy the worst of the incantations which caught my eye—*Aila himel adonaj amara Zebaoth cadas yeseraije haralius*—which was nothing less than an incantation for the assemblage of devils or spirits, or the raising of the dead.

And, having copied it, I was not loath to say it aloud several times, not for a moment expecting anything untoward to take place. Nor did it. So I put the book aside and looked at my watch. Eleven o’clock. It seemed to me that the force of the rain had begun to diminish; it was no longer such a downpour; that lessening which always foretells the end of a rain storm within a reasonably short time had begun. Marking the appointments of the room well, so that I would not stumble over any object of furniture

on my way back to the room where my host waited, I put out the light to rest a little while before taking to the road once more.

But, tired as I was, I found it hard to compose myself.

It was not alone that the couch on which I lay was hard and cold, but that the very atmosphere of the house seemed oppressive. Like its owner, it had about it a kind of resignation, an air of waiting for the inevitable, as if it, too, knew that sooner rather than later its weatherbeaten siding would buckle outward and its roof fall inward to bring an end to its increasingly precarious existence. But there was something more than this atmosphere of so many old houses which it possessed; it was a resignation tinged with apprehension—that same apprehension which had caused old Amos Stark to hesitate about answering my knock; and soon I caught myself listening, too, as Stark did, for more than the patter of the rain, steadily diminishing now, and the incessant gnawing of mice.

My host did not sit still. Every little while he rose, and I could hear him shuffle from place to place; now it was the window, now the door; he went to try them, to make sure they were locked; then he came back and sat down again. Sometimes he muttered to himself; perhaps he had lived too long alone and had fallen into that common habit of isolated, reclusive people, of talking to himself. For the most part what he said was indistinguishable, almost

inaudible, but on occasion some words came through, and it occurred to me that one of the things which occupied his thoughts was the amount of interest that would be due on the money he owed Nahum Wentworth, were it now collectible. "A hunderd an' fifty dollars a year," he kept saying. "Comes to seven-fifty"—said with something akin to awe. There was more of this, and there was something more which troubled me more than I cared to admit.

Something the old man said was upsetting when pieced together; but he said none of it consecutively. "I fell," he muttered, and there followed a sentence or two of inanities. "All they was to it." And again many indistinguishable words. "Went off—quick-like." Once more a round of meaningless or inaudible words. "Didn't know 'twas aimed at Nahum." Followed once again by indistinct mutterings. Perhaps the old man's conscience troubled him. Certainly, the brooding resignation of the house was enough to stir him to his darkest thoughts. Why had he not followed the other inhabitants of the stony valley to one of the settlements? What was there to prevent his going? He had said he was alone, and presumably he was alone in the world as well as in the house, for had he not willed his earthly possessions to Nahum Wentworth's daughter?

His slippers whispered along the floor, his fingers rustled papers.

Outside the whippoorwills began to call, which was a

sign that in some quarters the sky was beginning to clear; and soon there was a chorus of them fit to deafen a man. "Heer them whipperwills," I heard my host mutter. "Callin' fer a soul. Clem Whateley's dyin'." As the voice of the rain fell slowly away, the voices of the whippoorwills rose in volume, and soon I grew drowsy and dozed off.

I come now to that part of my story which makes me doubt the evidence of my own senses, which, when I look back upon it now, seems impossible of occurrence. Indeed, many times now, with added years, I wonder whether I did not dream it all—yet I know it was not a dream, and I still have certain corroborating newspaper clippings to adduce in proof that mine was not a dream—clippings about Amos Stark, about his bequest to Genie Wentworth,—and, strangest of all—about a hellish molestation of a grave half forgotten on a hillside in that accursed valley.

I had not been dozing long when I awoke. The rain had ceased, but the voices of the whippoorwills had moved closer to the house and were now in thunderous chorus. Some of the birds sat immediately under the window of the room in which I lay, and the roof of the shaky verandah must have been covered with the nocturnal creatures. I have no doubt that it was their clamor which had brought me out of the light sleep into which I had fallen. I lay for a few moments to collect myself, and then moved to rise, for, the rain having now come to an end, driving would be less hazardous, and my motor was in far less danger of going

out on me.

But just as I swung my feet to the floor, a knock fell upon the outer door.

I sat motionless, making no sound—and no sound came from the adjoining room.

The knock came again, more peremptorily this time.

“Who be ye?” Stark called out.

There was no reply.

I saw the light move, and I heard Stark’s exclamation of triumph. “Past midnight!” He had looked at his clock, and at the same time I looked at my watch. His clock was ten minutes fast.

He went to answer the door.

I could tell that he set down the lamp in order to unlock the door. Whether he meant to take it up again, as he had done to peer at me, I could not say. I heard the door open—whether by his hand or by another’s.

And then a terrible cry rang out, a cry of mingled rage and terror in Amos Stark’s voice. “No! No! Go back. I ain’t got it—ain’t got it, I tell yew. Go back!” He stumbled back and fell, and almost immediately after there came a

horrible, choking cry, a sound of labored breathing, a gurgling gasp....

I came to my feet and lurched through the doorway into that room—and then for one cataclysmic moment I was rooted to that spot, unable to move, to cry out, at the hideousness of what I saw. Amos Stark was spread on the floor on his back, and sitting astride him was a mouldering skeleton, its bony arms bowed above his throat, its fingers at his neck. And in the back of the skull, the shattered bones where a charge of shot had once gone through. This I saw in that one terrible moment—then, mercifully, I fainted.

When I came to a few moments later, all was quiet in the room. The house was filled with the fresh musk of the rain, which came in through the open front door; outside, the whippoorwills still cried, and a wan moonlight lay on the ground like pale white wine. The lamp still burned in the hall, but my host was not in his chair.

He lay where I had seen him, spread on the floor. My whole impulse was to escape that horrible scene as quickly as possible, but decency impelled me to pause at Amos Stark's side, to make sure that he was beyond my help. It was that fateful pause which brought the crowning horror of all, that horror which sent me shrieking into the night to escape that hellish place as were all the demons of the nether regions at my heels. For, as I bent above Amos Stark, ascertaining that he was indeed dead, I saw sticking

into the discolored flesh of his neck the whitened finger bones of a human skeleton, and, *even as I looked upon them, the individual bones detached themselves, and went bounding away from the corpse, down the hall, and out into the night to rejoin that ghastly visitor who had come from the grave to keep his appointment with Amos Stark!*



# THE PEABODY HERITAGE

## I



I never knew my great-grandfather Asaph Peabody, though I was five years old when he died on his great old estate northeast of the town of Wilbraham, Massachusetts. There is a childhood memory of once visiting there, at a time when the old man was lying ill; my father and mother mounted to his bedroom, but I remained below with my nurse, and never saw him. He was reputed to be wealthy, but time whittles away at wealth as at all things, for even stone is mortal, and surely mere money could not be expected to withstand the ravages of the ever-increasing taxation, dwindling a little with each death. And there were many deaths in our family, following my great-grandfather's in 1907. Two of my uncles died after—one was killed on the Western front, and another went down on the *Lusitania*. Since a third uncle had died before them, and none of them had ever married, the estate fell to my father on my grandfather's death in 1919.

My father was not a provincial, though most of his forebears had been. He was little inclined to life in the

country, and made no effort to take an interest in the estate he had inherited, beyond spending my great-grandfather's money on various investments in Boston and New York. Nor did my mother share any of my own interest in rural Massachusetts. Yet neither of them would consent to sell it, though on one occasion, when I was home from college, my mother did propose that the property be sold, and my father coldly dismissed the subject; I remember his sudden freezing—there is no more fitting word to describe his reaction—and his curious reference to “the Peabody heritage,” as well as his carefully phrased words: “Grandfather predicted that one of his blood would recover the heritage.” My mother had asked scornfully: “What heritage? Didn't your father just about spend it all?” to which my father made no reply, resting his case in his icy inference that there were certain good reasons why the property could not be sold, as if it were entailed beyond any process of law. Yet he never went near the property; the taxes were paid regularly by one Ahab Hopkins, a lawyer in Wilbraham, who made reports on the property to my parents, though they always ignored them, dismissing any suggestion of “keeping up” the property by saying it would be like “Throwing good money after bad.”

The property was abandoned, to all intent and purpose; and abandoned it remained. The lawyer had once or twice made a halfhearted attempt to rent it, but even a brief boom in Wilbraham had not brought more than transient renters to the old homestead, and the Peabody place yielded

inexorably to time and the weather. It was thus in a sad state of disrepair when I came into the property on the sudden death by automobile accident of both my parents in the autumn of 1929. Nevertheless, what with the decline in property values which took place subsequent to the inauguration of the depression that year, I determined to sell my Boston property and refurbish the house outside of Wilbraham for my own use. I had enough of a competence on my parents' death so that I could afford to retire from the practice of law, which had always demanded of me greater preciseness and attention than I wished to give to it.

Such a plan, however, could not be implemented until at least part of the old house had been got ready for occupation once more. The dwelling itself was the product of many generations. It had been built originally in 1787, at first as a simple colonial house, with severe lines, an unfinished second storey, and four impressive pillars at the front. But, in time, this had become the basic part of the house, the heart, as it were. Subsequent generations had altered and added to it—at first by the addition of a floating stairway and a second storey; then by various ells and wings, so that at the time I was preparing to make it my residence, it was a large, rambling structure, which occupied over an acre of land, adding to the house itself the lawn and gardens, which were in as great a state of disuse as the house.

The severe colonial lines had been softened by age and

less regardful builders, and the architecture was no longer pure, for gambrel roof vied with mansard roof, small-paned windows with large, figured and elaborately sculptured cornices with plain, dormers with unbroken roof. Altogether the impression the old house conveyed was not displeasing, but to anyone of architectural sensibilities, it must have appeared a woeful and unhappy conglomeration of architectural styles and kinds of ornament. Any such impression, however, must surely have been softened by the tremendously spreading ancient elms and oaks which crowded upon the house from all sides save the garden, which had been taken over among the roses, so long grown untended, by young poplar and birch trees. The whole effect of the house, therefore, despite the accretions of time and differing tastes, was of faded magnificence, and even its unpainted walls were in harmony with the great-girthed trees all around.

The house had no less than twenty-seven rooms. Of these, I selected a trio in the southeast corner to be rehabilitated, and all that autumn and early winter, I drove up from Boston to keep an eye on the progress of the venture. Cleaning and waxing the old wood brought out its beautiful color, installing electricity removed the dark gloom of the rooms, and only the waterworks delayed me until late winter; but by February twenty-fourth, I was able to take up my residence in the ancestral Peabody home. Then for a month I was occupied with plans for the rest of the house, and, though I had initially thought of having some of the

additions torn down and the oldest parts of the structure retained, I soon abandoned this project in favor of the decision to keep the house as it was, for it had a pervasive charm born, no doubt, of the many generations which had lived there, as well as of the essence of the events which had taken place within its walls.

Within that month, I was quite taken with the place, and what had been primarily a temporary move was gladly embraced as a lifelong ideal. But alas, this ideal grew to such proportions that it soon brought about a grandiose departure which subtly altered my direction and threw me off the track on a course I had never wished to take. This scheme was the determination to move to the family vault, which had been cut into a hillside within sight of the house, though away a little from the highway which passed in front of the estate, the remains of my parents, who had been decently interred in a Boston plot. This was in addition to my resolve to make an attempt also to bring back to the United States the bones of my dead uncle, which reposed somewhere in France, and thus re-unite the family, as far as possible, on the ancestral acres near Wilbraham. It was just such a plan as might occur to a bachelor who was also a reclusive solitary, which I had become in the short space of that month, surrounded by the architect's drawings and the lore of the old house which was about to begin a new lease on life in a new era far, far removed from that of its simple beginnings.

It was in pursuit of this plan that I made my way one day in March to the family vault, with the keys the lawyer for the estate had delivered into my hands. The vault was not obtrusive; indeed, no part of it was ordinarily visible except the massive door, for it had been built into a natural slope, and was almost concealed by the trees which had grown without pruning for decades. The door and the vault, as well, had been built to last for centuries; it dated back almost as far as the house, and for many generations every member of the Peabody family from old Jedediah, the first to occupy the house, onward, had been interred here. The door offered me some resistance, since it had not been opened for years, but at length it yielded to my efforts and the vault lay open to me.

The Peabody dead lay in their coffins—thirty-seven of them, some in cubicles, some outside. Some of the cubicles where the earliest Peabodys had lain held only the remains of coffins, while that reserved for Jedediah was completely empty, with not even the dust to show that coffin and body had once reposed in that place. They were in order, however, save for the casket which bore the body of my great-grandfather Asaph Peabody; this seemed curiously disturbed, standing out of line with the others, among those more recent ones—my grandfather's and my one uncle's—which had no cubicles of their own but were simply on a ledge extended outward from the cubicled wall. Moreover, it seemed as if someone had lifted or attempted to lift the cover, for one of the hinges was broken, and the

other loosened.

My attempt to straighten my great-grandfather's coffin was instinctive, but in so doing, the cover was still further jostled and slipped partially off, revealing to my startled gaze all that remained of Asaph Peabody. I saw that through some hideous error, he had been buried face downward—I did not want to think, even at so long a time after his death, that the old man might have been buried in a cataleptic state and so suffered a painful death in that cramped, airless space. Nothing but bones survived, bones and portions of his garments. Nevertheless, I was constrained to alter mistake or accident, whichever it might be; so I removed the cover of the coffin, and reverently turned skull and bones over so that the skeleton of my great-grandfather lay in its rightful position. This act, which might have seemed grisly in other circumstances, seemed only wholly natural, for the vault was aglow with the sunlight and shadows that speckled the floor through the open door, and it was not at that hour a cheerless place. But I had come, after all, to ascertain how much room remained in the vault, and I was gratified to note that there was ample room for both my parents, my uncle—if his remains could be found and brought thither from France—and, finally, myself.

I prepared, therefore, to carry on with my plans, left the vault well locked behind me, and returned to the house pondering ways and means of bringing my uncle's remains

back to the country of his birth. Without delay, I wrote to the authorities in Boston on behalf of the disinterment of my parents, and to those of the county in which I now resided for permission to reinter my parents in the family vault.

## II

The singular chain of events which seemed to center about the old Peabody homestead began, as nearly as I can recall, on that very night. True, I had had an oblique kind of warning that something might be amiss with the old house, for old Hopkins, on surrendering his keys, had asked me insistently when I came to take possession whether I was sure I wanted to take this step, and had seemed equally intent upon pointing out that the house was "a lonely sort of place," that the farming neighbors "never looked kindly on the Peabodys," and that there had always been a "kind of difficulty keeping renters there." It was one of those places, he said, almost with relish at making a distinct point, "to which nobody ever goes for a picnic. You'll never find paper plates or napkins there!"—a plethora of ambiguities which nothing could persuade the old man to reduce to facts, since, evidently, there were no facts, but that the neighbors frowned upon an estate of such magnitude in the midst of what was otherwise good farming land. This, in truth, stretched out on all sides of my property of but forty acres, most of it woods—a land of neat fields, stone walls, rail fences, along which trees grew and shrubbery made adequate cover for birds. An old man's talk, I thought it,



given rise by his kinship with the farmers who surrounded me: solid, sturdy Yankee stock, no whit different from the Peabodys, save that they toiled harder and perhaps longer.

But on that night, one on which the winds of March howled and sang among the trees about the house, I became obsessed with the idea that I was not alone in the house. There was a sound not so much of footsteps as of *movement* from somewhere upstairs, one that defies description, save that it was as of someone moving about in a narrow space, forward and back, forward and back. I remember that I went out in the great dark space into which the floating stairway descended, and listened to the darkness above; for the sound seemed to drift down the stairs, sometimes unmistakable, sometimes a mere whisper; and I stood there listening, listening, listening, trying to identify its source, trying to conjure up from my rationalization some explanation for it, since I had not heard it before, and concluded at last that in some fashion a limb of a tree must be driven by the wind to brush against the house, forward and back. Settled on this, I returned to my quarters, and was no more disturbed by it—not that it ceased, for it did not, but that I had given it a rational excuse for existence.

I was less able to rationalize my dreams that night. Though ordinarily not at all given to dreams, I was literally beset by the most grotesque phantasms of sleep, in which I played a passive role and was subjected to all manner of

distortions of time and space, sensory illusions, and several frightening glimpses of a shadowy figure in a conical black hat with an equally shadowy creature at his side. These I saw as through a glass, darkly, and the twilight landscape as through a prism. Indeed, I suffered not so much dreams as fragments of dreams, none of them having either beginning or ending, but inviting me into an utterly bizarre and alien world, as through another dimension of which I was not aware in the mundane world beyond sleep. But I survived that restless night, if somewhat haggardly.

On the very next day I learned a most interesting fact from the architect who came out to discuss my plans for further renovation, a young man not given to the quaint beliefs about old houses common to isolated, rural areas. "One who came to look at the house would never think," he said, "that it had a secret room—well, hidden—would you?" he said, spreading his drawings before me.

"And has it?" I asked.

"Perhaps a 'priest's hole,'" he guessed. "For runaway slaves."

"I've never seen it."

"Nor I. But look here..." And he showed me on the plans he had reconstructed from the foundations and the rooms as we knew them, that there was a space unaccounted for

along the north wall upstairs, in the oldest part of the house. No priest's hole, certainly; there were no Papists among the Peabodys. But runaway slaves—perhaps. If so, however, how came it there so early, before there were enough slaves to make the run for Canada to justify the room's coming into being? No, not that, either.

“Can you find it, do you think?” I asked.

“It has to be there.”

And so indeed it was. Cleverly concealed, though the absence of a window in the north wall of the bedroom ought to have warranted an earlier examination. The door to it was hidden in the finely-wrought carvings which decorated that entire wall, which was of red cedar; had one not known the room must have been there, one would hardly have seen the door which had no knob and worked only by pressure upon one of the carvings, which the architect found, not I, for I have never had an adeptness at things of that kind. However it lay rather within the province of an architect than my own and I paused only long enough to study the rusty mechanism of the door before stepping into the room.

It was a small confining space. Yet it was not as small as a priest's hole; a man could walk upright in it for a distance of ten feet or so, though the slant of the roof would cut off any walking in the direction opposed to it. The long way,

yes; across to the wall, no. What was more, the room bore every sign of having been occupied in past time, for it was left undisturbed, there were still books and papers about, as well as chairs which had been used at a small desk against one wall.

The room presented the most singular appearance. Though it was small, its angles seemed to be awry, as if the builder were subtly determined to confound its owner. Moreover, there were curious designs drawn upon the floor, some of them actually cut into the planking in a crudely barbarous fashion, roughly circular in plan, with all manner of oddly repellent drawings around the outer and inner edges. There was a similar repulsiveness about the desk, for it was black, rather than brown, and it had the surprising appearance of having been burned; it looked, indeed, as if it served in more than the capacity of a desk. On it, moreover, was a stack of what looked at first glance to be very ancient books, bound in some sort of leather, as well as a manuscript of some kind, likewise bound.

There was little time for any examination, however, for the architect was with me and, having seen all he wished, which was just sufficient to verify his suspicion of the room's existence, he was eager to be off.

“Shall we plan to eliminate it, cut in a window?” he asked, and added, “Of course, you won't want to keep it.”

"I don't know," I answered. "I'm not sure. It depends on how old it is."

If the room was as ancient as I thought it to be, then I would be quite naturally hesitant to destroy it. I wanted a chance to poke around it a little, to examine the old books. Besides, there was no haste; this decision did not need to be made at once; there were other things the architect could do before either of us need think about the hidden room upstairs. It was there that the matter rested.

I had fully intended to return to the room next day, but certain events intervened. In the first place, I spent another very troubled night, the victim of recurrent dreams of a most disturbing nature, for which I could not account, since I had never been given to dreams except as a concomitant of illness. These dreams were, perhaps not unnaturally, of my ancestors, particularly of one long-bearded old fellow, wearing a conical black hat of strange design, whose face, unfamiliar to me in dream, was in actuality that of my great-grandfather Asaph, as a row of family portraits verified next morning. This ancestor seemed to be involved in an extraordinary progression through the air, quite as if he were flying. I saw him walking through walls, walking on the air, silhouetted among treetops. And wherever he went, he was accompanied by a large black cat which had the same ability to transcend the laws of time and space. Nor did my dreams have any progression or even, each within itself, any unity; they were a mixed-up sequence of scenes in

which my great-grandfather, his cat, his house, and his property took part as in unrelated tableaux. They were distinctly related to my dreams of the previous night, and accompanied again by all the extra-dimensional trappings of those first nocturnal experiences, differing only in that they possessed greater clarity. These dreams insistently disturbed me throughout the night.

I was thus in no mood to learn from the architect that there would be some further delay in the resumption of work at the Peabody place. He seemed reticent or reluctant to explain, but I pressed him to do so, until at last he admitted that the workmen he had hired had all notified him early this morning that none of them wished to work on this "job." Nevertheless, he assured me, he would have no difficulty hiring some inexpensive Polish or Italian laborers from Boston, if I would be a little patient with him. I had no alternative, but, in fact, I was not as much annoyed as I pretended to be, for I began to have certain doubts about the wisdom of making all the alterations I had intended. After all, a part of the old house must necessarily stand with no more than reenforcement, for much of the charm of the old place lay in its age; I adjured him, therefore, to take his time, and went out to make such purchases as I had intended to make when I came into Wilbraham.

I had hardly begun to do so before I was aware of a most sullen attitude on the part of the natives. Whereas, heretofore, they had either paid me no attention at all, since

many of them did not know me, or they had greeted me perfunctorily, if they had made my acquaintance, I found them on that morning of one mind—no one wished to speak to me or to be seen speaking to me. Even the storekeepers were unnecessarily short, if not downright unpleasant, their manner suggesting plainly that they would appreciate my taking my trade elsewhere. It was possible, I reflected, that they had learned of my plans to renovate the old Peabody house, and might be opposed to it on twin grounds—either that renovation would contribute to the destruction of its charm, or that it would on the other hand, give another and longer lease of life to a piece of property that surrounding farmers would much have preferred to cultivate, once the house and the woods were gone.

My first thoughts, however, soon gave way to indignation. I was not a pariah, and I did not deserve to be shunned like one, and when, finally, I stopped in at the office of Ahab Hopkins, I unburdened myself to him rather more volubly than was my custom, even though, as I could see, I made him uneasy.

“Ah, well, Mr. Peabody,” he said, seeking to soothe my ruffled composure, “I would not take that too seriously. After all, these people have had a grievous shock, and they are in an ugly, suspicious mood. Besides, they are basically a superstitious lot. I am an old man, and I have never known them to be otherwise.”

Hopkins' gravity gave me pause. "A shock, you say. You must forgive me—I've heard nothing."

He favored me with a most curious look, at which I was quite taken aback. "Mr. Peabody, two miles up the road from your place lives a family by the name of Taylor. I know George well. They have ten children. Or perhaps I had better say 'had.' Last night, their second youngest, a child of slightly over two years of age, was taken from his bed and carried off without a trace."

"I am sorry to hear it. But what has that got to do with me?"

"Nothing, I'm sure, Mr. Peabody. But you're a comparative stranger here, and, well—you must know it sooner or later—the name of Peabody is not looked on with pleasure—in fact, I may say it is hated—by many people of the community."

I was astounded and did not attempt to hide it. "But why?"

"Because there are many people who believe every kind of gossip and muttered talk, no matter how ridiculous it is," Hopkins answered. "You are an old enough man to realize that it is so, even if you're unfamiliar with our rural countryside, Mr. Peabody. There were all manner of stories common about your great-grandfather, when I was a child, and, since during the years of his incumbency of the



homestead, there were certain ugly disappearances of little children, of whom no trace was ever found, there is possibly a natural inclination to connect these two events—a new Peabody on the homestead, and a recurrence of a kind of event associated with another Peabody's residence there."

"Monstrous!" I cried.

"Undoubtedly," Hopkins agreed with an almost perverse amiability, "but so it is. Besides, it is now April. Walpurgis Night is scarce a month away."

I fear my face must have been so blank as to disconcert him.

"Oh, come, Mr. Peabody," said Hopkins with false joviality, "you are surely aware that your great-grandfather was considered to be a warlock!"

I took my leave of him, gravely disturbed. Despite my shock and outrage, despite my indignation at the manner in which the natives showed their scorn and—yes, fear—of me, I was even more upset by the nagging suspicion that there was a disquieting logic to the events of the previous night and this day. I had dreamed of my great-grandfather in strange terms indeed, and now I heard him spoken of in far more significant terms. I knew only enough to know that the natives had looked upon my great-grandfather superstitiously as the male counterpart of a witch—a

warlock or wizard; by whatever name they called him, so they had seen him. I made no further attempt to be even decently courteous to the natives who turned their heads when I came walking toward them, but got into my car and drove out to the homestead. There my patience was still further tried, for I found nailed to my front door a crude warning—a sheet of tablet paper upon which some illiterate, ill-intentioned neighbor had scrawled in pencil: "*Git out—or els.*"

### III

Possibly because of these distressing events, my sleep that night was far more troubled by dreams than it had been on previous nights. Save for one major difference—there was more continuity in the scenes I saw while I tossed in restless slumber. Again it was my great-grandfather, Asaph Peabody, who occupied them, but he seemed now to have grown so sinister in appearance as to be threatening, and his cat moved with him with the hair of its neck ruffled, its pointed ears forward, and tail erect—a monstrous creature, which glided or floated along beside or behind him. He carried something—something white, or flesh-colored, but the murkiness of my dream would not permit me to recognize it. He went through woods, over countryside, among trees; he traveled in narrow passageways, and once, I was certain, he was in a tomb or vault. I recognized, too, certain parts of the house. But he was not alone in his dreams—lingering always in the background was a

shadowy, but monstrous Black Man—not a Negro, but a man of such vivid blackness as to be literally darker than night, but with flaming eyes which seemed to be of living fire. There were all manner of lesser creatures about the old man—bats, rats, hideous little beings which were half human, half rat. Moreover, I was given to auditory hallucinations simultaneously, for from time to time, I seemed to hear muffled crying, as if a child were in pain, and, at the same time, a hideous, cackling laughter, and a chanting voice saying: “Asaph will *be* again. Asaph will *grow* again.”

Indeed, when at last I woke from this continuing nightmare, just as the dawn light was making itself manifest in the room, I could have sworn that the crying of a child still sounded in my ears, as if it came from within the very walls itself. I did not sleep again, but lay wide-eyed, wondering what the coming night would bring, and the next, and the next after that.

The coming of the Polish workmen from Boston put my dreams temporarily from mind. They were a stolid, quiet lot. Their foreman, a thick-set man named Jon Cieciorca, was matter-of-fact and dictatorial with the men under him; he was a well-muscled fellow of fifty or thereabouts, and the three men whom he directed moved in haste at his command, as if they feared his wrath. They had told the architect that they could not come for a week, the foreman explained, but another job had been postponed, and here

they were; they had driven up from Boston after sending the architect a telegram. But they had his plans, and they knew what must be done.

Their very first act was to remove the plaster from the north wall of the room immediately beneath the hidden room. They had to work carefully, for the studding which supported the second storey could not be disturbed, nor need it be. Plaster and lathing, which, I saw as they began, was of that old-fashioned kind made by hand, had to be taken off and replaced; the plaster had begun to discolor and to break loose years before, so that the room was scarcely habitable. It had been so, too, with that corner of the house which I now occupied, but, since I had made greater changes there, the alterations had taken longer.

I watched the men work for a little while, and had just become accustomed to the sounds of their pounding, when suddenly, they ceased. I waited a moment, and then started up and went out into the hall. I was just in time to see all four of them, clustered near the wall, cross themselves superstitiously, back away a little, and then break and run from the house. Passing me, Cieciorka flung an epithet at me in horror and anger. Then they were out of the house, and while I stood as if rooted to the spot, I heard their car start and leap away from my property.

Utterly bewildered, I turned toward where they had been working. They had removed a considerable section of the

plaster and lathing; indeed, several of their tools were still scattered about. In their work, they had exposed that section of the wall which lay behind the baseboard, and all the accumulated detritus of the years which had come to rest in that place. It was not until I drew close to the wall that I saw what they must have seen and understood what had sent these superstitious louts running in fear and loathing from the house.

For at the base of the wall, behind the baseboard, there lay, among long yellowed papers half gnawed away by mice, yet still bearing on their surfaces the unmistakably cabalistic designs of some bygone day, among wicked implements of death and destruction—short, dagger-like knives rusted by what must surely have been blood—*the small skulls and bones of at least three children!*

I stared unbelievably, for the superstitious nonsense I had heard only a day before from Ahab Hopkins now took on a more sinister cast. So much I realized on the instant. Children had disappeared during my great-grandfather's aegis; he had been suspected of wizardry, of witchcraft, of playing roles in which the sacrifice of little children was an integral part; now here, within the walls of his house, were such remains as lent weight to the native suspicions of his nefarious activities!

Once my initial shock had passed, I knew I must act with dispatch. If this discovery were made known, then indeed

my tenure here would be bitterly unhappy, made so by the God-fearing natives of the neighborhood. Without hesitating further, I ran for a cardboard box and, returning to the wall with it, gathered up every vestige of bone I could find, and carried this gruesome burden to the family vault, where I emptied the bones into the cubicle which had once held the remains of Jedediah Peabody, now long since gone to dust. Fortunately, the small skulls disintegrated, so that anyone searching there would find only the remains of someone long dead, and only an expert would have been able to determine the origin of the bones which remained sufficiently unimpaired to offer any key. By the time any report from the Polish workmen came back to the architect, I would be able to deny the truth of them, though for this report I was destined to wait in vain, for the fear-ridden Poles never revealed to the architect a word of their real reason for deserting their job.

I did not wait to learn this from the architect, who was bound eventually to find someone who would undertake such alterations as I wished made, but, guided by an instinct I did not know I possessed, I made my way to the hidden room, carrying a powerful flashlight, determined to subject it to the most painstaking examination. Almost at once upon entering it, however, I made a spine-chilling discovery; though the marks the architect and I had made in our brief foray into the room were still identifiably evident, there were other, more recent marks which suggested that someone—or something—had been in this room since I

had last entered it. The marks were plain to be seen—of a man, bare of foot, and, equally unmistakably, the prints of a cat. But these were not the most terrifying evidences of some sinister occupation—they began out of the northeast corner of the curiously-angled room, at a point where it was impossible for a man to stand, and scarcely high enough for a cat; yet it was here that they materialized in the room, and from this point that they came forward, proceeding in the direction of the black desk—where there was something far worse, though I did not notice it until I was almost upon the desk in following the footsteps.

The desk had been freshly stained. A small pool of some viscous fluid lay there, as if it had boiled up out of the wood—scarcely more than three inches in diameter, next to a mark in the dust as if the cat or a doll or a bundle of some kind had lain there. I stared at it, trying to determine what it might be in the glow of my flashlight, sending my light ceilingward to detect; if possible, any opening through which rain might have come, until I remembered that there had been no rainfall since my first and only visit to this strange secret room. Then I touched my index finger to the pool and held it in the light. The color was red—the color of blood—and simultaneously I knew without being told that this was what it was. Of how it came there I dared not think.

By this time the most terrifying conclusions were crowding to mind, but without any logic. I backed away from the desk, pausing only long enough to snatch up some of

the leather-bound books, and the manuscript which reposed there; and with these in my possession, I retreated from the room into the more prosaic surroundings outside—where the rooms were not constructed of seemingly impossible angles, suggesting dimensions beyond the knowledge of mankind. I hastened almost guiltily to my quarters below, hugging the books carefully to my bosom.

Curiously, as soon as I opened the books, I had an uncanny conviction that I knew their contents. Yet I had never seen them before, nor, to the best of my knowledge, had I ever encountered such titles as *Malleus Maleficarum* and the *Daemonialitas* of Sinistrari. They dealt with witchlore and wizardry, with all manner of spells and legends, with the destruction of witches and warlocks by fire, with their methods of travel—"Among their chief operations are being bodily transported from place to place...seduced by the illusions and phantasms of devils, do actually, as they believe and profess, ride in the night-time on certain beasts...or simply walk upon the air out of the openings built for them and for none other. Satan himself deludes in dreams the mind which he holds captive, leading it through devious ways...They take the unguent, which they make at the devil's instruction from the limbs of children, particularly of those whom they have killed, and anoint with it a chair or a broomstick; whereupon they are immediately carried up into the air, either by day or by night, and either visibly or, if they wish, invisibly..." But I read no more of this, and turned to Sinistrari.



Almost at once my eye fell upon this disturbing passage—“*Promittunt Diabolo statis temporibus sacrificia, et oblationes; singulis quindecim diebus, vel singulo mense saltem, necem alicujus infantis, aut mortale veneficium, et singulis hebdomadis alia mala in damnum humani generis, ut grandines, tempestates, incendia, mortem animalium...*” setting forth how warlocks and witches must bring about, at stated intervals, the murder of a child, or some other homicidal act of sorcery, the mere reading of which filled me with an indescribable sense of alarm, as a result of which I did no more than glance at the other books I had brought down, the *Vitae sophistarum* of Eunapius, Anania’s *De Natura Daemonum*, Stampa’s *Fuga Satanae*, Bouget’s *Discours des Sorciers*, and that untitled work by Olaus Magnus, bound in a smooth black leather, which only later I realized was human skin.

The mere possession of these books betokened a more than ordinary interest in the lore of witchcraft and wizardry; indeed, it was such manifest explanation for the superstitious beliefs about my great-grandfather which abounded in and about Wilbraham, that I understood at once why they should have persisted for so long. Yet there must have been something more, for few people could have known about these books. What more? The bones in the wall beneath the hidden chamber spoke damningly for some hideous connection between the Peabody house and the unsolved crimes of other years. Even so, this was surely

not a public one. There must have been some overt feature of my great-grandfather's life which established the connection in their minds, other than his reclusiveness and his reputation for parsimony, of which I knew. There was not likely to be any key to the riddle among these things from the hidden room, but there might well be some clue in the files of the Wilbraham *Gazette*, which were available in the public library.

Accordingly, half an hour later found me in the stacks of that institution, searching through the back issues of the *Gazette*. This was a time-consuming effort, since it involved a blind search of issue after issue during the later years of my great-grandfather's life, and not at all certain to be rewarding, though the newspapers of this day were less hampered and bound by legal restrictions than those of my own time. I searched for over an hour without coming upon a single reference to Asaph Peabody, though I did pause to read accounts of the "outrages" perpetrated upon people—primarily children—of the countryside in the vicinity of the Peabody place, invariably accompanied by editorial queries about the "animal" which was "said to be a large black creature of some kind, and it has been reported to be of different sizes—sometimes as large as a cat, and sometimes as big as a lion"—which was a circumstance no doubt due solely to the imagination of the reporting witnesses, who were principally children under ten, victims of mauling or biting, from which they had made their escape, happily more fortunate in this than younger children

who had vanished without trace at intervals during the year in which I read: 1905. But throughout all this, there was no mention of my great-grandfather; and, indeed, there was nothing until the year of his death.

Then, and only then, did the editor of the *Gazette* put into print what must have represented the current belief about Asaph Peabody. "Asaph Peabody is gone. He will be long remembered. There are those among us who have attributed to him powers which belonged rather more to an era in the past than to our own time. There was a Peabody among those charged at Salem; indeed, it was from Salem that Jedediah Peabody removed when he came to build his home near Wilbraham. The pattern of superstition knows no reason. It is perhaps mere coincidence that Asaph Peabody's old black cat has not been seen since his death, and it is undoubtedly mere ugly rumor that the Peabody coffin was not opened before interment because there was some alteration in the body tissues or in the conventions of burial to make such opening unwise. This is again lending credence to old wives' tales—that a warlock must be buried face downward and never thereafter disturbed, save by fire...."

This was a strange, oblique method of writing. Yet it told me much, perhaps uncomfortably more than I had anticipated. My great-grandfather's cat had been looked upon as his familiar—for every witch or warlock has his personal devil in any shape it might care to assume. What

more natural than that my great-grandfather's cat should be mistaken for his familiar, for it had evidently in life been as constant a companion to him as it was in my dreams of the old man? The one disturbing note struck by the editorial comment lay in the reference to his interment, for I knew what the editor could not have known—that Asaph Peabody had indeed been buried face downward. I knew more—that he had been disturbed, and should not have been. And I suspected yet more—that something other than myself walked at the old Peabody homestead, walked in my dreams and over the countryside and in the air!

#### IV

That night, once more, the dreams came, accompanied by that same exaggerated sense of hearing, which made it seem as if I were attuned to cacophonous sound from other dimensions. Once again my great-grandfather went about his hideous business, but this time it seemed that his familiar, the cat, stopped several times and turned to face squarely at me, with a wickedly triumphant grin on its evil face. I saw the old man in a conical black hat and a long black robe walking from woodland seemingly through the wall of a house, coming forth into a darkened room, spare of furnishings, appearing then before a black altar, where the Black Man stood waiting for the sacrifice which was too horrible to watch, yet I had no alternative, for the power of my dreams was such that I must look upon this hellish deed. And I saw him and his cat and the Black Man again, this

time in the midst of a deep forest, far from Wilbraham, together with many others, before a large outdoors altar, to celebrate the Black Mass and the orgies that followed upon it. But they were not always so clear; sometimes the dreams were only arrow-swift descents through unlimited chasms of strangely colored twilight and bafflingly cacophonous sound, where gravity had no meaning, chasms utterly alien to nature, but in which I was always singularly perceptive on an extrasensory plane, able to hear and see things I would never have been aware of while waking. Thus I heard the eldritch chants of the Black Mass, the screams of a dying child, the discordant music of pipes, the inverted prayers of homage, the orgiastic cries of celebrants, though I could not always see them. And on occasion, too, my dreams conveyed portions of conversations, snatches of words, meaningless of themselves, but capable of dark and disquieting explication.

“Shall he be chosen?”

“By Belial, by Beelzebub, by Sathanus....”

“Of the blood of Jedediah, of the blood of Asaph, companioned by Balor.”

“Bring him to the Book!”

Then there were those curious figments of dreams in

which I myself appeared to be taking part, particularly one in which I was being led, alternately by my great-grandfather and by the cat, to a great black-bound book in which were written names in glowing fire, countersigned in blood, and which I was instructed to sign, my great-grandfather guiding my hand, while the cat, whom I heard Asaph Peabody call Balor, having clawed at my wrist to produce blood into which to dip the pen, capered and danced about. There was about this dream one aspect which had a more disturbing bond to reality. In the course of the way through the woods to the meeting place of the coven, the path led beside a marsh where we walked in the black mud of the sedge, near to foetid sloughs in a place where there was a charnel odor of decay; I sank into the mud repeatedly in that place, though neither the cat nor great-grandfather seemed to more than float upon its surface.

And in the morning, when at last I awoke after sleeping over long, I found upon my shoes, which had been clean when I went to bed, a drying black mud which was the substance of my dream! I started from bed at sight of them, and followed the tracks they had made easily enough, tracing them backwards, out of the room, up the stairs, into the hidden room on the second storey and, once there, back, inexorably, to that same bewitched corner of peculiar angle from which the footprints in the dust had led into the room! I stared in disbelief, yet my eyes did not deceive me. This was madness, but it could not be denied. Nor could the scratch on my wrist be wished out of existence.

I literally reeled from the hidden room, beginning at last vaguely to understand why my parents had been loath to sell the Peabody homestead; something had come down to them of its lore from my grandfather, for it must have been he who had had great-grandfather buried with his face downward in the family crypt. And, however much they may have scorned the superstitious lore they had inherited, they were unwilling to chance its defiance. I understood, too, why periods of rental had failed, for the house itself was a sort of focal point for forces beyond the comprehension or control of any one person, if indeed any human being; and I knew that I was already infected with the aura of the habitation, that, indeed, in a sense I was a prisoner of the house and its evil history.

I now sought the only avenue of further information open to me. The manuscript of the journal kept by my great-grandfather. I hastened to it directly, without pausing for breakfast, and found it to be a sequence of notes, set down in his flowing script, together with clippings from letters, newspapers, magazines, and even books, which had seemed to him pertinent, though these were peculiarly unconnected, yet all dealing with inexplicable events—doubtless, in great-grandfather's eyes, sharing a common origin in witchcraft. His own notes were spare, yet revealing.

“Did what had to be done today. J. taking on flesh,

incredibly. But this is part of the lore. Once turned over, all begins again. The familiar returns, and the clay takes shape again a little more with each sacrifice. To turn him back would be futile now. There is only the fire.”

And again:

“Something in the house. A cat? I see him, but cannot catch him.”

“Definitely a black cat. Where he came from, I do not know. Disturbing dreams. Twice at a Black Mass.”

“In dream, the cat led me to the Black Book. Signed.”

“In dream an imp called Balor. A handsome fellow. Explained the bondage.”

And, soon after:

“Balor came to me today. I would not have guessed him the same. He is as handsome a cat as he was a young imp. I asked him whether this was the same form in which he had served J. He indicated that it was. Led the way to the corner with a strange and extra-dimensional angle which is the door to outside. J. had so constructed it. Showed me how to walk through it...”

I could bear to read no further. Already I had read far too much.



I knew now what had happened to the remains of Jedediah Peabody. And I knew what I must do. However fearful I was of what I must find, I went without delay to the Peabody crypt, entered it, and forced myself to go to the coffin of my great-grandfather. There, for the first time, I noticed the bronze plate attached beneath the name of Asaph Peabody, and the engraving upon it: "Woe betide him who disturbs his rest!"

Then I raised the lid.

Though I had every reason to expect what I saw, I was horrified no less. For the bones I had last seen were terribly altered. What had been but bone and fragments, dust and tatters of clothing, had begun a shocking alteration. Flesh was beginning to grow once again on the remains of my great-grandfather, Asaph Peabody—flesh that took its origin from the evil upon which he had begun to live anew when I had so witlessly turned over his mortal remains—and from that other thing within his coffin—the poor, shriveling body of that child which, though it had vanished from the home of George Taylor less than ten days ago, already had a leathern, parchment appearance, as were it drained of all substance, and partially mummified!

I fled the vault, numb with horror, but only to build the pyre I knew I must gather together. I worked feverishly, in haste lest someone surprise me at my labors, though I knew that people had shunned the Peabody homestead for decades.

And then, this done, I labored alone to drag Asaph Peabody's coffin and its hellish contents to the pyre, just as, decades before, Asaph himself had done to Jedediah's coffin and what it had contained! Then I stood by, while the holocaust consumed coffin and contents, so that I alone heard the high shrill wail of rage which rose from the flames like the ghost of a scream.

All that night the diminishing ashes of that pyre still glowed. I saw it from the windows of the house.

And inside, I saw something else.

A black cat which came to the door of my quarters and leered wickedly in at me.

And I remembered the path through the marsh I had taken, the muddied footprints, the mud on my shoes. I remembered the scratch on my wrist, and the Black Book I had signed. Even as Asaph Peabody had signed it.

I turned to where the cat lurked in the shadows and called it gently. "Balor!"

It came and sat on its haunches just inside the door.

I took my revolver from the drawer of my desk and deliberately shot it.

It kept right on regarding me. Not so much as a whisker

twitched.

Balor. One of the lesser devils.

This, then, was the Peabody heritage. The house, the grounds, the woods—these were only the superficial, material aspects of the extra-dimensional angles in the hidden room, the path through the marsh to the coven, the signatures in the Black Book....

*Who, I wonder, after I am dead, if I am buried as the others were, will turn me over?*

# THE GABLE WINDOW

## I



I moved into my cousin Wilbur's home less than a month after his untimely death, not without misgivings, for its isolation in a pocket of the hills off the Aylesbury Pike was not to my liking. Yet I moved with a sense of fitness that this haven of my favorite cousin should have descended to me. As the old Wharton place, the house had been untenanted for many years. It had fallen into disuse after the grandson of the farmer who had built it had left the soil for the seaside city of Kingston, and my cousin had bought it from the estate of that heir disgruntled with the meager living to be made on that sadly depleted land. It was not a calculated move, for the Akeley's did nothing but by sudden impulse.

Wilbur had been for many years a student of archeology and anthropology. He had been graduated from Miskatonic University in Arkham, and immediately following his graduation, had spent three years in Mongolia, Tibet, and Sinkiang Province, followed by an equal number of years divided among South and Central America, and the

southwestern part of the United States. He had come home to reply in person to an offer to join the staff of Miskatonic University, but instead, he had bought the old Wharton farm, and set about to remodel it, tearing down all but one of the outbuildings, and imposing upon the central structure an even more curious shape than it had gathered to itself in the course of the twenty decades it had been standing. Indeed, the extent of these alterations was not fully apparent to me until I myself took possession of the house.

It was then that I learned that Wilbur had retained unaltered only one face of the old house, that he had completely rebuilt the front and one side, and had erected a gable room over the south wing of the ground floor. The house had originally been a low building, of but one storey, with a large attic, which had in its time been hung with all the impedimenta of the rural life in New England. In part, it had been constructed of logs; and some of this construction had been carefully retained by Wilbur, which was testimony to my cousin's respect for the handiwork of our forebears in this country, for the Akeley family had been in America fully two hundred years when Wilbur had decided to foreswear his wanderings and settle in his native mileu. The year, as I recall it, was 1921; he had lived but three years thereafter, so that it was 1924—on April 16—that I took possession of the house in accordance with the terms of his will.

The house was still very much as he left it, an anomaly in the New England landscape, for, though it still bore the

marks of its ancestry in its stone foundations and the logs of its substructure, as well as in the square stone chimney which rose from its fireplaces, it had been so much altered as to seem a product of several generations. Though the majority of these alterations had apparently been made to contribute to Wilbur's comfort, there was one change which had baffled me at the time that Wilbur had made it, and for which he never offered any explanation; this was the installation in the south wall of his gable room of a great round window of a most curious clouded glass, of which he said only that it was a work of great antiquity, which he had discovered and acquired in the course of his travels in Asia. He referred to it at one time as "the glass from Leng" and at another as "possibly Hyadean in origin," neither of which enlightened me in the slightest, though, to tell the truth, I was not sufficiently interested in my cousin's vagaries to press inquiries.

I soon wished, however, that I had done so, for I discovered rapidly, once I had taken up my existence in the building, that my cousin's entire living seemed to revolve not about the central rooms of the house on the ground floor, which one might have expected, since these were appointed for maximum effect and comfort, but about the south gable room, for it was here that he kept his rack of pipes, his favorite books, records, and most comfortable pieces of furniture, and it was here that he worked on such manuscripts pertinent to his studies as he had in progress at the time that he was struck down with a coronary ailment

while he was at work in the stacks of Miskatonic University Library.

That some adjustment between what had been his regimen and what was mine would have to be made, I knew; and it must be made in my favor. It seemed, therefore, that the first order of business was a restoration of the rightful way of existence in the house, a resumption of life on the ground floor, for, to tell the truth, I found myself from the beginning curiously repelled by the gable room, in part certainly because it reminded me so strongly of the living presence of my dead cousin who could never again occupy his favorite corner of the house, in part also because the room was to me unnaturally alien and seemed cold to me, holding me off as by some physical force I could not understand, though this was surely consistent with my attitude about the room, for I could understand it no more than I ever really understood my cousin Wilbur.

The alteration I wished to bring about, however, was not as easily accomplished as I had hoped it might be, for I was soon aware that my cousin's old "den" cast an aura over the entire house. There are those who hold that houses inevitably assume something of the character of their owners; if the old house had worn any of the characteristics of the Whartons, who had lived in it for so long, it was certain that my cousin had effectively obliterated them when he remodeled the house, for now it seemed often literally to speak of Wilbur Akeley's

presence. It was not often an obtrusive feeling—only rather an uneasy conviction I experienced of being no longer alone, or of being watched, under some scrutiny, the source of which was not known to me.

Perhaps it was the very isolation of the house which was responsible for this fancy, but it came to seem to me that my cousin's favorite room was like something alive, waiting on his return, like an animal unaware that death had intervened and the master for whom it waited would not again come back. Perhaps because of this obsession, I gave the room more attention than in fact it deserved. I had removed from it certain articles, such as a very comfortable lounging chair; but I was curiously impelled to bring them back, out of compulsions which arose from different and often conflicting convictions—the fancy that this chair, for instance, which at first proved to be so comfortable, was made for someone of a different shape from my own, and thus was uncomfortable to my person, or the belief that the light was not as good downstairs as above, which was responsible for my returning to the gable room the books I had removed from it.

The fact was, undeniably, that the character of the gable room was subtly at variance with that of the remainder of the house. My cousin's home was in every way prosaic enough, except for that one room in the south gable. The ground floor of the house was filled with creature comforts, but gave little evidence of having been extensively used,



save for that room given over to the preparation of food. In contrast, the gable room, while also comfortable, was comfortable in a different way, difficult to explicate; it was as if the room, manifestly a “den” built by one man for his use, had been used by many different kinds of people, each of whom left something of himself within these walls, without, however, any identifying mark. Yet I knew that my cousin had lived the life of a recluse, save for his journeys to the Miskatonic at Arkham and the Widener Library in Boston. He had gone nowhere else, he had received no callers, and even, on the rare occasions when I stopped at his home—as an accountant I did sometimes find myself in his vicinity—he seemed always willing that I be gone, though he was unfailingly courteous, and though I never remained longer than fifteen minutes at most.

Truth to tell, the aura of the gable room diminished my resolve. The lower floor was ample for my purposes; it afforded me a commodious home, and it was easy to put the gable room and the alterations I hoped to make in it out of my mind, to defer and postpone it until it came to seem too minor a matter to trouble about. Moreover, I was still frequently away for days and nights at a time, and there was nothing pressing I needed to do about the house. My cousin’s will had been probated, the estate had been settled, and no one challenged my possession.

All might have been well, for, with my resolve put by, I was much less aware of my unfinished plans for the gable room,

had it not been for the succession of little incidents which occurred to disturb me. These were of no consequence at first; they began as tiny, almost unnoticed things. I believe that the first of them took place when I had been in possession scarcely a month, and it was such an infinitesimal thing that it did not occur to me to connect it to the later events I experienced until many weeks had gone by. It happened one night when I sat reading before my fireplace in the ground-floor living-room, and it was surely nothing more, I was certain, than a cat or some similar animal scratching at the door to be let in. Yet it was so distinct that I got up and made the rounds, from the front door to the back, and even to a little side door which was a relic of the oldest part of the house, but I could find neither cat nor trace of one. The animal had vanished into the darkness. I called to it several times, but it neither replied nor made any other sound. Yet I had no sooner seated myself again before the scratching began anew. No matter how I tried, I failed utterly to catch any sight of the cat, though I was disturbed in this fashion fully half a dozen times, until I was so upset that, had I caught sight of the cat, I would probably have shot it.

Of itself, this was an incident so trivial that no one would think twice about it. Could it not have been a cat familiar with my late cousin, and unfamiliar enough with me to be frightened away by my appearance? Indeed, it could. I thought no more of it. However, in less than a week, a similar incident took place, differing in one marked

exception to the first. This time, instead of there being the clawing or scratching of a cat, there was a slithering, groping sound that sent a chill of apprehension through me, just as if a giant snake or an elephant's trunk were moving along the glass of the windows and doors. The pattern of its sounding and my reactions was exactly similar. I heard, but saw nothing; I listened, but could find nothing—only the intangible sounds. A cat, a snake? What more?

But there was yet more, quite apart from the occasions on which the cat or the snake seemed to have returned for another try. There was the time when I heard what sounded like hoof beats, or the tramping of some gigantic animal, or the twittering of birds pecking at the windows, or the slithering of some vast body, or the sucking sounds of lips or suckers. What was I to make of all this? I considered hallucination, and dismissed it as an explanation, for the sounds occurred in all kinds of weather and at all hours of the night and day, so that, had there actually been an animal of any size at door or window, I should certainly have caught sight of it before it vanished into the wooded hills which rose on all sides of the house, for the fields had long since been reclaimed by new growths of poplar, birch, and ash trees.

This mysterious cycle might never have been interrupted if I had not chanced one evening to open the stair door leading up to the gable room, on account of the heat of the ground floor; for it was then, when the clawing of a cat came

once more, that I realized the sound came not from one of the doors, but from the window in the gable room. I bounded up the stairs in unthinking haste, never stopping to realize that it would have been a remarkable cat indeed which could or would climb to the second floor of the house and demand entrance through the round window, which was the only opening into the room from outside. And, since the window did not open, either in whole or in part, and, since it was clouded glass, I saw nothing, even though I stood there and continued to hear, just as close by as the other side of the glass, the sounds made by the cat clawing the glass.

I raced downstairs, snatched up a powerful flashlight, and went out into the hot summer night to throw a beam of light to the side wall in which the window stood. But now all sound had ceased, and now there was nothing whatsoever to be seen but the bland house wall and the equally bland window, which looked as black from the outside as it looked like clouded white from within. I might have remained forever baffled—and often I think it would surely have been for the best had it been so—but it was not meant to be.

It was at about this time that I received from an elderly aunt a prized cat named Little Sam, which had been a pet of mine as a kitten two years before. My aunt had fretted about my insistence on living alone, and had finally sent along one of her cats to keep me company. Little Sam now

belied his name; he ought to have been called "Big Sam," for he had added pounds since I last saw him, and he was in every way a fierce, tawny feline, a credit to his species. But, while Little Sam rubbed me with affection, he was of two minds about the house. There were times when he slept in comfort and ease on the hearth; there were others when he was like a cat possessed, demanding to be out. And, at such times as the curious sounds as of some other animal seeking entry were to be heard, Little Sam was virtually mad with fear and fury, and I had to let him out of the house at once, whereat he would streak to the one out-building left after my cousin's remodeling was done, and there he would spend the night—there or in the woods, and not come out again until dawn, when hunger drove him back to the house. And into the gable room he absolutely refused to set foot!

## II

It was the cat, in fact, which was responsible for my decision to probe a little deeper into my cousin's work, since Little Sam's antics were so manifestly genuine that I had no recourse but to seek, among the scattered papers my cousin had left, some explanation for the phenomena so common to the house. Almost at once I came upon an unfinished letter in the drawer of a desk in one of the downstairs rooms; it was addressed to me, and it was apparent that Wilbur must have been aware of his coronary condition, for I saw at a glance that the letter was meant to

be one of those instructions in case of death, though Wilbur was clearly not cognizant of how short his time was to be, for the letter had been begun only about a month before his death, and, once pushed into the drawer, had not been taken up again, though ample time had been afforded him in which to finish it.

“Dear Fred,” he wrote, “The best medical authorities tell me I have not long to live, and, since I have already set down in my will that you are to be my heir, I want to supplement that document now with a few final instructions, which I adjure you not to dismiss and want you to carry out faithfully. There are specifically three things you must do without fail, as follows:

“1) All my papers in drawers A, B, and C of my filing cabinet are to be destroyed.

“2) All books on shelves H, I, J, and K are to be turned over to the library of Miskatonic University at Arkham.

“3) The round glass window in the gable room upstairs is to be broken. It is not to be simply removed and disposed of elsewhere, but it must be shattered.

“You must accept my decision that these things must be

done, or you may ultimately be responsible for loosing a terrible scourge upon the world. I shall say no more of this, for there are other matters of which I wish to write here while I am still able to do so. One of these is the question..."

But here my cousin had been interrupted and left his letter.

What was I to make of these strange instructions? I could understand that his books ought to go to the Miskatonic Library, since I had no especial interest in them. But why destroy his papers? Should they not also go there? And as for the glass—its destruction was surely a piece of wanton folly, since it would entail a new window and thus additional expense. This fragment of a letter had the unfortunate effect of whetting my curiosity even farther, and I determined to look into his things with more attention.

That very evening I began with the books on the designated shelves, which were all in the south gable room upstairs. My cousin's interest in archaeological and anthropological subjects was clearly reflected in his choice of books, for he possessed many texts related to the civilizations of the Polynesians, the Easter Islanders, the Mongolians, and various primitive peoples, as well as books about the migrations of peoples and the cult-and-myth-patterns of primitive religions. These, however, were but a prelude to his shelves of books designated for

disposal to the university library, for some of these appeared to be fabulously old, so old, in fact, that they bore no dates, and must have descended, to judge from their appearance and their written characters, from medieval times. The more recent ones among them—and none of these dated beyond 1850—had been assembled from various places; some had belonged to our fathers' cousin, Henry Akeley, of Vermont, who had sent them down to Wilbur; some bore the ownership stamps of the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris, suggesting that Wilbur had not been above abstracting them from the shelves.

These books were in various languages; they bore titles such as *Pnakotic Manuscripts*, the *R'lyeh Text*, the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of von Junzt, the *Book of Eibon*, the *Dhol Chants*, the *Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan*, Ludvig Prinn's *De Vermis Mysteriis*, the *Celaeno Fragments*, the *Cultes des Goules* of the Comte d'Erlette, the *Book of Dzyan*, a photostat copy of the *Necronomicon*, by an Arabian, Abdul Alhazred, and many others, some of them apparently in manuscript form. I confess that these books baffled me, for they were filled—such of them as I could read—with an incredible lore of myths and legends, related beyond question to the ancient, primitive religious beliefs of the race—and, if I could read it correctly, of other and alien races as well. Of course, I could not hope to do justice to the Latin, French, and German texts; it was difficult enough to read the old English of some of the manuscripts and books. In any case, I soon lost patience



with this task, for the books postulated a belief so bizarre that only an anthropologist would be likely to give enough credence to it to amass so much literature on the subject.

Yet it was not uninteresting, though it represented a familiar pattern. It was the old credo of the force of light against the force of darkness, or at least, so I took it to be. Did it matter whether you called it God and the Devil, or the Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones, Good and Evil or such names as the Nodens, Lord of the Great Abyss, the only named Elder God, or these of the Great Old Ones—the idiot god, Azathoth, that amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity; Yog-Sothoth, the all-in-one and one-in-all, subject to neither the laws of time nor of space, co-existent with all time and coterminous with space; Nyarlathotep, the messenger of the Ancient Ones; Great Cthulhu, waiting to rise again from hidden R'lyeh in the depths of the sea; the unspeakable Hastur, Lord of the Interstellar Spaces; Shub-Niggurath, the black goat of the woods with a thousand young? And, just as the races of men who worshipped various known gods bore sectarian names, so did the followers of the Ancient Ones, and they included the Abominable Snow Men of the Himalayas and other Asian mountain regions; the Deep Ones, who lurked in the ocean depths to serve Great Cthulhu, though ruled by Dagon; the Shantaks; the Tcho-Tcho people; and many others, some of whom were said to stem from the places to which the Ancient Ones had been banished—as was Lucifer from

Eden—when once they revolted against the Elder Gods—such places as the distant stars of the Hyades, Unknown Kadath, the Plateau of Leng, the sunken city of R'lyeh.

Throughout all this, there were two disturbing notes which suggested that my cousin took this myth-pattern more seriously than I had thought. The repeated reference to the Hyades, for instance, reminded me that Wilbur had spoken of the glass in the gable window as “possibly Hyadean in origin.” Even more specifically, he had referred to it as “the glass from Leng.” It is true that these references might have been coincidental, and for a while I took comfort in telling myself that “Leng” might well be some Chinese dealer in antiques, and the word “Hyadean” might readily have been misunderstood. Yet this was a mere pretense on my part, for there was indeed everything to show that Wilbur had had more than a passing interest in this utterly alien mythos. If his possession of the books and manuscripts themselves were not enough, his notes left me in no doubt whatsoever.

For there were in his notes far more than strange references, which I found oddly disturbing; there were crude, yet effective drawings of shockingly outré settings and alien creatures, such beings as I could never, in my wildest dreams, have conceived. Indeed, for the most part, the creatures begged description; they were winged, bat-like beings of the size of a man; they were vast, amorphous bodies, hung with tentacles, looking at first glance octopoid, but very definitely far more intelligent than an

octopus; they were clawed half-man, half-bird creatures; they were horrible, batrachian-faced things walking erect, with scaled arms and a hue of pale green, like sea-water. There were also more recognizable human beings, however distorted—stunted and dwarfed Orientals living in a cold place, to judge by their attire, and a race born of miscegenation, with certain characteristics of the batrachian beings, yet unmistakably human. I had never dreamed that my cousin was possessed of such imagination; I had long known that Uncle Henry was convinced of the most patently imagined delusions, but no taint had ever shown in Wilbur, to my knowledge; I saw now, however, that he had skillfully concealed from all of us the essentials of his true nature, and I was more than a little astonished at this revelation.

For certainly no living creature could ever have served as models for his drawings, and there were no such illustrations in the manuscripts and books which he had left behind. Moved by my curiosity, I delved deeper and deeper into his notes, and finally put aside certain cryptic references which seemed, however remotely, to bear upon my immediate quest, arranging them into a sequence, which was easy, for all were dated.

“Oct. 15, '21. Landscape coming clearer. Leng? Suggestive of southwestern America. Caves filled with hordes of bats which begin to come out—like a dense cloud—just before sundown, blot out the sun. Low shrub

growth, twisted trees. A place of much wind. Snowcapped mountains in distance, right, along the rim of the desert region.

“Oct. 21, '21. Four Shantaks mid-scene. Average height exceeding that of a man. Furred, bat-like bodies, bat wings, extending three feet above head. Face beaked, vulture-like, but otherwise resembling bat. Crossed landscape in flight, pausing to rest on crag in middle distance. Not *aware*. Did one have a rider? Cannot be sure.

“Nov. 7, '21. Night. Ocean. A reef-like island in the foreground. Deep Ones together with humans of partly similar origin; hybrid white. Deep Ones scaled, walk with frog-like gait, a cross between a hop and a step, somewhat hunched, too, as most batrachia. Others seem to have swum to reef. Possibly Innsmouth? No coast line evident, no town lights. Also no ship. Rise from below, beside reef. *Devil Reef?* Even hybrids ought not to be able to swim too far without some resting-place. Possibly coast foreground, out of sight.

“Nov. 17, '21. Utterly alien landscape. Not of earth so far as I know. Black heavens, some stars. Craggs of porphyry or some similar substance. Foreground a deep lake. Hali? In five minutes the water began to ripple where something rose. Facing inward. A titanic aquatic being, tentacled. Octopoid, but far, far larger—ten—twenty times larger than the giant *Octopus apollyon* of the west coast. What was its

neck was alone easily fifteen rods in diameter. Could not risk chance of seeing its face and destroyed the star.

“Jan. 4, '22. An interval of nothingness. *Outer space?* Planetary approach, as were I seeing through the eyes of some being coming in to an object in space. Sky dark, far stars, but the surface of the planet soon looming close. Coming closer, saw barren landscape. No vegetation, as on the dark star. A circle of worshippers facing a stone tower. Their cries: *lä! Shub-Niggurath!*

“Jan. 16, '22. Undersea region. *Atlantis?* Doubtful. A vast, cavernous temple-like structure, broken by depth-charges. Massive stones, similar to pyramid stones. Steps leading down to black maw below. Deep Ones in background. Movement in darkness of stair-well. A huge tentacle moving up. Far back two liquid eyes, many rods apart. *R'lyeh?* Fearful at approach of thing from below, and destroyed star.

“Feb. 24, '22. Familiar landscape. *Wilbraham country?* Rundown farm houses, ingrown family. Foreground, old man listening. Time: evening. Whippoorwills calling in great volume. Woman approaches holding stone replica of star in hand. Old man flees. Curious. Must look up.

“Mar. 21, '22. Unnerving experience today. Must be more careful. Constructed star and spoke the words: *Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.* Opened

immediately on huge shantak in foreground. Shantak *aware*, and at once moved forward. I could actually hear its claws. Managed to break the star in time.

“Apr. 7, '22. I know now they will actually come through if I am not careful. Today the Tibetan landscape, and the Abominable Snowmen. Another attempt made. But what of their masters? If the servants make the attempt to transcend time and space, what of Great Cthulhu—Hastur—Shub-Niggurath? I intend to abstain for a while. Shock profound.”

Nor did he again turn to whatever had been his odd pursuit until early the next year. Or, at least, so his notes indicate. An abstention from his obsessive preoccupation, followed once more with a period of brief indulgence. His first entry was just short of a year later.

“Feb. 7, '23. There seems now no doubt but that there is a general awareness of the door. Very risky to look in at all. Safe only when landscape is clear. And, since one never knows upon what scene the eye will turn, the risk is all the more grave. Yet I hesitate to seal the opening. I constructed the star, as usual, spoke the words, and waited. For a while I saw only the familiar southwestern American landscape, at the hour of evening—bats, owls, night-prowling kangaroo rats and wildcats. Then out of one of the caves, came a Sand-Dweller—rough-skinned, large-eyed, large-eared, with a horrible, distorted resemblance to the Koala bear

facially, though his body had an appearance of emaciation. He shambled toward the foreground, manifestly eager. Is it possible that the door makes this side as visible to them as they are to me? When I saw that he was heading straight for me, I destroyed the star. All vanished, as usual. But later—the house *filled with bats!* Twenty-seven of them! I am no believer in mere coincidence!”

There occurred now another hiatus, during which my cousin wrote cryptic notes without reference to his visions or to the mysterious “star” of which he had written so often. I could not doubt that he was the victim of hallucinations inspired, no doubt, by his intensive study of the material in the books he had assembled from all corners of the world. These paragraphs were in the nature of substantiation, though they were in essence an attempt to rationalize what he had “seen.”

They were interspersed with newspaper clippings, which my cousin obviously sought to relate to the myth-pattern to which he was so devoted—accounts of strange happenings, unknown objects in the heavens, mysterious disappearances into space, curious revelations regarding hidden cults, and the like. It was painfully patent that Wilbur had come to believe intensely in certain facets of the ancient primitive credos, particularly that there were contemporary survivals of the hellish Ancient Ones and their worshippers and followers; and it was this, more than anything else, that he was trying to prove. It was as if he had

taken the writings printed or written in the old books he possessed and, accepting them for literal truth, was trying to adduce the weight of evidence from his own time to add to that from the past. It was true, there was a disturbing element of similarity between the ancient accounts and many of those my cousin had managed to find, but these were doubtless capable of being explained as coincidence. Cogent as they were, I reproduced none of them before sending them to Miskatonic Library for the Akeley Collection, but I remember them vividly—and all the more so in the light of that unforgettable climax to my somewhat aimless inquiry into my cousin Wilbur's preoccupation.

### III

I would never have known about the "star" if it had not been accidentally brought to my attention. My cousin had written repeatedly about "making," "breaking," "constructing" and "destroying" the star as a necessary adjunct to his illusions, but this reference was utterly meaningless to me and would perhaps have remained so had I not chanced to see in the slanting light across the floor of the gable room the faint marks which seemed to outline a five-pointed star. This had been invisible before, because it had been covered by a large rug; but the rug had got moved in the course of my packing the books and papers to be taken to Miskatonic University Library, and thus my sight of the markings was an accident.



Even then it did not dawn upon me that these markings represented a star. Not until I finished my work with the books and papers and could push back the rug from the entire center of the floor did the whole design present itself. I saw then that it was a star of five points, decorated with various ornamental designs, the whole of sufficient size to permit its being drawn from within it. This then, I knew at once, was the explanation for a box of chalk for which I had previously found no reason for being in my cousin's favorite room. Pushing books, papers, and all else out of the way, I went for the chalk, and set about faithfully copying the star design and all the decorations within the star. It was clearly meant for some kind of cabalistic drawing, and it was equally evident that the performer was required to sit within its outlines.

So, having completed the drawing in accordance with the impress left by frequent reconstructions, I sat within the design. Quite possibly I expected something to happen, though I was still puzzled by my cousin's references in his notes as to the breaking of the design each time he thought himself menaced, for, as I recalled rituals, it was the breaking of such designs which brought about the danger of psychic invasion. However, nothing whatsoever took place, and it was not until several minutes had passed that I remembered "the words." I had copied them, and now I rose to find my copy, and, finding it, returned with it to the star and gravely spoke the words—

*"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn."*

Instantly a most extraordinary phenomenon took place. I was seated, facing the round window of clouded glass in the south wall, so that I saw everything that happened. The cloudiness vanished from the glass, and I found myself, to my astonishment, looking upon a sunbaked landscape—though the hour was night, a few minutes past nine o'clock of a late summer evening in the state of Massachusetts. Yet the landscape which appeared through the glass was one which could not have been found anywhere in New England—an arid country, a land of sandy rocks, of desert vegetation—which was spare—of caverns, and, in the background, of snowcapped mountains—just such a landscape as had been described more than once in my cousin's cryptic notes.

Upon this landscape I gazed in the utmost fascination, my mind in turmoil. Life seemed to be going on in the landscape to which I looked, and I picked out one aspect after another—the rattlesnake crawling sinuously along, the sharp-eyed hawk soaring overhead—which enabled me to see that the hour was not long before sundown, for the reflection of the sunlight on the hawk's breast was indicative—the Gila monster, the roadrunner—all those prosaic aspects of the American southwest I saw. Where was the scene, then? Arizona? New Mexico?

But the events of that alien landscape kept on without

reference to me. The snake and Gila monster crawled away, the hawk plummeted downward and came up with a snake in his talons, the roadrunner was joined by another. And the sunlight drew away, making of that land a face of great beauty. Then, from the mouth of one of the largest caverns came the bats. They came flowing from that black maw by the thousands in an endless stream, and it seemed to me that I could hear their chittering. How long it took for them to fly out into the gathering twilight, I do not know. They had hardly gone before something more made its appearance—a kind of human being, rough of skin, as if the desert's sand had been encrusted upon the surface of his body, with abnormally large eyes and ears. He seemed to be emaciated, with ribs showing through his skin, but what was particularly repellent was the look of his face—for he resembled an Australian toy bear called the Koala. And at this, I remembered what my cousin had called these people—for there were others following that first, some of them female. Sand-Dwellers!

They came from the cavern, blinking their great eyes, but soon they came in greater haste, and scattered to both sides, crouching behind the bushes—then, little by little, an incredible monster made its appearance—at first a probing tentacle, then another, and presently half a dozen cautiously exploring the cave's mouth. And then, from out of the darkness of the cavern's well, an eldritch head showed dimly. Then, as it thrust forth, I almost screamed aloud in horror—for the face was a ghastly travesty on everything

civilized; it rose from a neckless body which was a mass of jelly-like flesh, rubbery to the eye, and the tentacles which adorned it took rise from that area of the creature's body which was either its lower jaw or what passed for a neck.

Moreover, the thing had intelligent perception, for from the first it seemed to be aware of me. It came sprawling out of the cavern, its eyes fixed upon me, and then began to move with unbelievable rapidity toward the window over that rapidly darkening landscape. I suppose I had no real concept of the danger in which I sat, for I watched with rapt attention, and only when the thing was blotting out all the landscape, when its tentacles were reaching toward the gable window—and through it!—that I recognized the paralysis of fright.

*Through it!* Was this then, the ultimate illusion?

I remember breaking through the icy fear which held me long enough to pull off a shoe and hurl it with all my might at the glass; and at the same time, recalled my cousin's frequent references to breaking the star; so I slouched forward and wiped part of the design into oblivion. Even as I heard the sound of shattering glass, I slipped into merciful darkness.

I know now what my cousin knew.

If only I had not waited quite so long, I might have been

spared that knowledge, I might have continued able to believe in illusion, in hallucination. But I know that the clouded glass of the gable window was a potent door into other dimensions—to alien space and time, an opening to landscapes Wilbur Akeley sought at will, a key to those hidden places of the earth and the star spaces where the followers of the Ancient Ones—and the Old Ones themselves!—lurk forever, awaiting their time to rise again. The glass from Leng—which might have come out of the Hyades, for I never learned where my cousin had got it—was capable of being rotated within its frame, it was not subject to mundane laws save only that its direction was altered by the earth's movement on its axis. And if I had not shattered it, I would have loosed upon the earth indeed a scourge from other dimensions, unwittingly called forth by my ignorance and curiosity.

For I know now that the models from which my cousin drew the illustrations, however crude, among his notes, were *alive*, and not the product of his imagination. The final, crowning proof is indisputable. The bats I found in the house when I regained consciousness might have come in through the broken window. That the clouded glass had cleared might have been an optical illusion—if it were not that I know better. For I know beyond doubt that what I saw was not the product of my feverish fancy, because nothing could demolish that final damning proof which I found near the shattered glass on the floor of the gable room—*the cut tentacle, ten feet in length, which had been caught*

*between dimensions when the door had been shut against that monstrous body to which it belonged, the tentacle no living savant could identify as belonging to any known creature, living or dead, on the face or in the subterrenean depths of the earth!*

# THE ANCESTOR

## I



When my cousin, Ambrose Perry, retired from the active practice of medicine, he was still a comparatively young man, ruddy and vigorous and in his fifties. He had had a very lucrative practice in Boston, and, though he was fond of his work, he was somewhat more given to the development of certain of his theories, which—and he was an individualist in this—he did not inflict upon his colleagues, whom, truth to tell, he was inclined to look down upon as too bound by the most orthodox methods, and too timid to venture forth upon experiments of their own without the sanction of the American Medical Association. He was a cosmopolitan in every sense of the word, for he had studied extensively in Europe—in Vienna, at the Sorbonne, at Heidelberg—and he had traveled widely, but for all that he was content to lose himself in wild country in Vermont, when at last he chose retirement to climax his brilliant career.

He went into virtual seclusion at his home, which he had built in the middle of a dense wood, and outfitted with as

complete a laboratory as money could buy. No one heard from him, and for three years not a word of his activities reached the public prints or the private correspondence of his relatives and friends. It was thus with considerable surprise that I received a letter from him—I found it waiting on my return from a sojourn in Europe—asking me to come and spend some time with him, if possible. I replied regretfully that I had now to set about finding a position for myself, and expressed my pleasure at hearing from him and the hope that some day I might be able to avail myself of his invitation, which was as kind as it was unexpected. His answer came by return mail, offering me a handsome emolument if I would accept the position of secretary—by which, I was certain, he meant me to do everything about the house as well as take notes.

Perhaps my motivation was as much curiosity as the attractiveness of the remuneration, which was generous; I accepted as quickly, almost fearful lest he withdraw his offer, and within a week I presented myself at my cousin's rambling house, built in the Pennsylvania Dutch farm manner, though of but one storey with sharply pointed gables and deeply pitched roofs. I had had some difficulty finding it, even after receiving my cousin's explicit instructions, for he was at least ten miles from the nearest village, which was a hamlet called Tyburn, and his house was set so far back from the little-traveled road, and had so slight a lane leading up to it, that I was constrained to believe for some time that I had traveled past it in my



eagerness to arrive at the hour I had promised.

An alert German shepherd dog guarded the premises, but, though he was chained, he was not at all vicious, for apart from watching me intently, he neither growled nor made any move in my direction when I went up to the door and rang the bell. My cousin's appearance, however, shocked me, for he was thin and gaunt; the hale, ruddy man I had last seen almost four years ago had vanished, and in his place stood a mere travesty of his former self. His hearty vigor, too, seemed sadly diminished, though his handshake was firm and strong, and his eyes no less keen.

"Welcome, Henry," he cried at sight of me. "Even Ginger seems to have accepted you without so much as a bark."

At the mention of his name, the dog came bounding forward as far as his long chain would reach, tail wagging.

"But come in. You can always put your car up later on."

I did as I was bidden and found the interior of his house very masculine, almost severe in its appointments. A meal was on the table, and I learned that, far from expecting me to do other than serve as his "secretary," my cousin had a cook and a handyman, who lived above his garage, and had no intention whatsoever that I should do more than take down such notes as he intended to give me, and to file the results of his experiments. For he was experimenting; he

made so much clear at once, though he said nothing of the nature of his experiments, and all during our meal, in the course of which I met both Edward and Meta Reed, the couple who took care of the house and grounds, he asked only about myself, what I had been doing, what I hoped to do—at thirty, he reminded me, there was considerably less time to dawdle about deciding on one's future—and occasionally, though only as my own answers to his questions brought up their names, about other members of the family, who were, as always, widely scattered. Yet I felt that he asked about me only to satisfy the amenities of the situation, and without any real interest, though he did once hint that if only I could turn to medicine for a career, he might be persuaded to see me through college in pursuit of my degree. But all this, I felt sure, was only the superficiality, the politeness of the moment, representing those aspects of our first meeting in some years which were to be got over with at the earliest opportunity; there was, moreover, that in his manner which suggested a suppressed impatience at this subject he himself had initiated, an impatience with me for my preoccupation with his questions, and at himself for having so far yielded to the conventionalities of the situation as to have asked questions about matters in which he was plainly not interested at all.

The Reeds, man and wife, who were both in their sixties, were subdued. They made little conversation, not only because Mrs. Reed both cooked and served her dinner,

but because they were plainly accustomed to carrying on an existence apart from their employer's, for all that they ate at his table. They were both greying, yet they managed to look far more youthful than Ambrose, and they showed none of the signs of the physical deterioration which had come upon my cousin. The meal went on with only the dialogue between Ambrose and myself to break the silence; the Reeds partook of the meal not in subservience, but with a mask of indifference, though I did notice, two or three times, that quick, sharp glances passed from one to the other of them at something my cousin said, but that was all.

It was not until we had retired to Ambrose's study that he touched upon that subject closest to his thoughts. My cousin's study adjoined his laboratory, which was at the rear of the house; the kitchen and large dining and living room combination came next, and the bedrooms, curiously, were at the front of the house; once in the cozy study, Ambrose relaxed, his voice filled with the tremor of excitement.

"You will never guess the direction my experiments have taken since I left practice, Henry," he began, "and I dare to wonder at my temerity in telling you. Were it not, indeed, that I need someone to set down these amazing facts, I would not do so. But now that I am on the road to success, I must think of posterity. I have, in short, made successful efforts to recapture all my past, down to the most minute

nooks and crannies of human memory, and I am now further convinced that, by the same methods, I can extend this perceptive process to *hereditary* memory and recreate the events of man's heredity. I see your expression—you doubt me."

"On the contrary, I am astounded at the possibilities in it," I answered, quite truthfully—though I failed to admit that a sharp stab of alarm possessed me simultaneously.

"Ah, good, good! I sometimes think that, because of the means I must use to induce the state of mind necessary to this ceaseless probing of past time, I have gravely disappointed the Reeds, for they look upon all experimentation on human beings as fundamentally un-Christian and treading upon forbidden ground."

I wanted to ask what means he had reference to, but I knew that in good time he would tell me if he had a mind to; if he had not, no question of mine would bring the answer. And presently he came to it.

"I have found that a combination of drugs and music, taken at a time when the body is half-starved, induces the mood and makes it possible to cast back in time and sharpen all the faculties to such a degree that memory is regained. I can tell you, Henry, I have achieved the most singular and remarkable results; I have actually gone back to memory of the womb, incredible as it may seem."

He spoke with great intensity; his eyes shone, his voice trembled. Plainly, he was exhilarated beyond ordinary stimulation by his dreams of success. This had been one of his goals when he was still in practice; now he had used his considerable means to further his ambition to achieve success in this, and he seemed to have accomplished something. So much I was ready to admit, however cautiously, for his experiments explained his appearance—drugs and starvation could easily account for his gauntness, which was in fact a kind of emaciation—he had starved himself so frequently and so steadily that he had not only lost his excess weight but had reduced beyond the point of wisdom and health. Furthermore, as I sat listening to him, I could not help observing that he had all the aspects of fanaticism, and I knew that no demurrer I could offer would affect him in the slightest or bring about any deviation whatsoever in his direction. He had his eyes fixed on this strange goal, and he would permit nothing and no one to deflect him from it.

“But you will have the task of transcribing my shorthand notes, Henry,” he went on, less intensely. “For, of course, I have kept them—some of them written in a trance-like state, quite as if I were possessed by some spirit guide, which is an absurdity, naturally. They range backward in time to just before my birth, and I am now engaged in probing ancestral memory. You shall see how far I have got when you have had time to examine and transcribe such data as I have set down.”

With that, my cousin turned to other matters, and soon excused himself, vanishing into his laboratory.

## II

It took me fully a fortnight to assimilate and copy Ambrose's notes, which were more extensive than he had led me to believe, and also disturbingly revelatory. I had already come to look upon Ambrose as extremely quixotic, but now I was convinced that a strong vein of aberration was manifest in his make-up as well, for the relentless driving of himself to achieve an end which was incapable of proof, for the most part, and promised no boon to mankind even if his goal were reached, seemed to me to border on irrational fanaticism. He was not interested so much for the information he might obtain in this incessant probing of memory as he was in the experiment for its sake alone, and what was most disturbing about it was the patent evidence that his experiment, which might at first have had only the proportions of a hobby, was becoming obsessive, to such an extent that all other matters were relegated to second place—not excluding his health.

At the same time, I was forced to admit that the material the notes contained was often deeply surprising. There was no question but that my cousin had found some way to tap the stream of memory; he had established beyond doubt that everything that happened to a human being was

registered in some compartment of the brain, and that it needed but the proper bridge to its place of storage in memory to bring it to consciousness once more. By recourse to drugs and music, he had gone back into the past to such a degree that his notes, as finally put together, constituted an exact biography which was in no way complicated by the glossing over of wish-fulfillment dreams, the enchantment of distance, or the ego-gratifications which always play a part in adjustment of the individual personality to life's disappointments which have dealt blows to the ego.

My cousin's course so far was undeniably fascinating. For the immediately past years, his notes mentioned many people we knew in common; but soon the two decades between us began to become obvious and his memory concerned strangers to me and events in which I had no part, even indirectly. The notes were especially revealing in what they conveyed of my cousin's dominant thoughts during his youth and early manhood—in their cryptic references to the themes which were constantly uppermost in his thoughts.

“Argued vehemently with de Lesseps about the primal source. The chimpanzee linkage too recent. Primal fish?” So he wrote of his days at the Sorbonne. And, at Vienna —“Man did not always live in trees’—so says Von Wiedersen. Agreed. Presumably he swam. What role, if any, did man's ancestors have in the age of the brontosaur?” Such notes as these, including many far more

detailed, were interspersed with the daily record of his years, mingling with accounts of parties, romances, an adolescent duel, differences with his parents, and the like—all the assorted trivia of one man's life. This subject appeared to hold my cousin's interest with an astonishing consistency; his more recent years, of course, were filled with it, but it recurred all the way through his life from the age of nine onward, when on one occasion he had asked our grandfather to explain the family tree and demanded to know what was beyond the registered beginnings of the line.

There was, too, in these notes, certain evidence of how much he was taxing himself in this obsessive experiment, for his handwriting had undergone a marked decrease in legibility from the time he had first begun to chronicle his memories to the present; that is, as he went backward through time to his earliest years—and indeed, into the place of darkness which was the womb, for he had accomplished this return, if his notes were not a skillful fabrication—his script grew steadily more illegible, quite as if there were a change in degrees with the change in the age of his memories, which was as fantastic a concept as, I felt then, my cousin's belief that he could reach back into ancestral and hereditary memory, both involving the memory of his forebears for many generations, and presumably transmitted in the genes and chromosomes from which he had sprung.



To a very large extent, however, I suspended judgment while I was putting his notes in order, and there was no mention of the notes, except for the help I asked once or twice when I could not decipher a word in Ambrose's script. Read over, when at last it was completed, the transcript was impressive and cogent, and I handed it to my cousin at last with mixed feelings and not without some suspension of belief.

"Are you convinced?" he asked me.

"As far as you've gone, yes," I admitted.

"You shall see," he replied imperturbably.

I undertook to remonstrate with him about the diligence with which he pursued this dream of his. In the two weeks it had taken me to assimilate and copy his notes, he had plainly driven himself beyond the bounds of reason. He had taken so little food and had slept so little that he had grown noticeably thinner and more haggard than he had been on the day of my arrival. He had been secluded in his laboratory day and night, for long hours at a time; indeed, on many occasions in that fortnight there were but three of us at the table for meals—Ambrose had not come out of the laboratory. His hands had a tendency to tremble, and there was a hint of palsy too about his mouth, while his eyes burned with the fire of the fanatic, to whom all else but the goal of his fanaticism had ceased to exist.

The laboratory was out of bounds for me. Though my cousin had no objection to showing me about the extensive laboratory, he required the utmost solitude when he was conducting his experiments. Nor had he any intention of setting down exactly what drugs he had recourse to—though I had reason to believe that *Cannabis indica*, or Indian hemp, commonly known as hashish, was one of them—in the punishment he inflicted on his body in pursuit of his wild dream to recapture his ancestral and hereditary memory, a goal he sought daily and often nightly, as well, without surcease, so much so that I saw him with increasing rarity, though he sat for a long time with me on the night I finally gave him the transcript of his notes tracing the course of his life through his recaptured memory, going over each page with me, making certain small corrections and additions, striking out a few passages here and there, and, in general, improving the narrative as I had transcribed it. A retyping was obviously necessary, but what then, if I were not to attend him in the actual course of his experiments?

But my cousin had yet another sheaf of notes ready for me when the retyping was finished. And this time the notes were not of his own memories, but ranged back through time; they were the memories of his parents, his grandparents, of his forebears even before them—not specific, as were his own, but only general, yet enough to convey an amazing picture of the family before his own generation. They were memories of great cataclysms, of major events of history, of the earth in its youth; they were

such recreations of time past as I would have thought impossible for one man to set down. Yet here they were, undeniably, impressive and unforgettable: an accomplishment by any standard. I was convinced that they were a skillful fabrication, yet I dared not pass judgment on Ambrose, whose fanatical belief brooked no doubt. I copied them as carefully as I had copied his earlier notes, and in but a few days I finished and handed the new transcript to him.

“You need not doubt me, Henry,” he said, smiling grimly. “I see it in your eyes. What would I have to gain by making a false record? I am not prone to self-deception.”

“I am not qualified to judge, Ambrose. Perhaps not even to believe or disbelieve.”

“That is well enough put,” agreed my cousin.

I pressed him to tell me what I must do next, but he suggested that I wait on his pleasure. I might take the time to explore the woods or roam the fields on the far side of the road, until he had more work ready for me. I planned to take his suggestion and explore the adjoining woods, but this was never to be done, for other events intervened. That very night I was set in a different direction, providing a decided change from the routine of my cousin's increasingly difficult notes, for in the middle of the night Reed came to awaken me and tell me that Ambrose

wanted me in his laboratory.

I dressed and went down at once.

I found Ambrose stretched out on an operating table, clad in the worn mouse-colored dressing-gown he usually wore. He was in a semi-stuporous state, yet not so far gone that he failed to recognize me.

“Something’s happened to my hands,” he said with effort. “I’m going under. Will you take down anything I may say?”

“What is it?” I asked.

“A temporary nerve block, perhaps. A muscular cramp. I don’t know. They’ll be all right tomorrow.”

“All right,” I said. “I’ll take down anything you may say.”

I took his pad and pencil and sat waiting.

The atmosphere of the laboratory, ill-lit with but one low red light near to the operating table, was eerie. My cousin looked far more like a corpse than a man under the influence of drugs. Moreover, there was playing in one corner an electric phonograph, so that the low, discordant strains of Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps* flowed through the room and took possession of it. My cousin lay perfectly still, and for a long time not a sound escaped him; he had sunk into the deep drugged sleep in which he

carried on his experiment, and I could not have awakened him had I tried.

Perhaps an hour elapsed before he began to speak, and then he spoke so disjointedly that I was hard put to it to catch his words.

“Forest sunk into earth,” he said. “Great ones fighting, tearing. Run, run....” And again, “New trees for old. Footprint ten feet across. We live in cave, cold, damp, fire....”

I put down everything he said insofar as I could catch his muttered words. Incredibly, he seemed to be dreaming of the saurian age, for his hints were of great beasts that roamed the face of his land and fought and tore, walking through forests as were they of grass, seeking out and devouring mankind, the dwellers in caves and holes under the surface of the earth.

But the effort of driving himself back so far into the past was a singular strain on my cousin Ambrose, and, when at last he came back to consciousness that night, he shuddered, directing me to turn off the phonograph, and muttered something about “degenerative tissues” curiously allied to “my dreams—my memories,” and announced that we would all rest for a while before he resumed his experiments.

It is possible that if my cousin could have been persuaded to rest his experiment on the admitted probability of ultimate success, and taken care of himself, he might have avoided the consequences of pushing himself beyond the boundaries mortal man was meant to go. But he did not do so; indeed, he scorned my every suggestion, and reminded me that he was the doctor, not I. My retort that like all doctors he was more careless of himself as patient than he would have been of anyone fell on deaf ears. Yet even I could not have foreseen what was to take place, though Ambrose's vague hint about "degenerative tissues" ought to have lent direction to my contemplation of the harm he was doing to himself by the addiction to drugs which had made him their victim.

For a week he rested.

Then he resumed his experiments, and soon I was once more putting his notes into typescript. But this time his notes were increasingly difficult to decipher; his script was indeed deteriorating, even as he had hinted, and, moreover, their subject was often very difficult to follow, though it was evident that Ambrose had gone far back in time. The possibility remained, of course, and was strong, that my cousin had fallen victim to a kind of self-hypnosis, and that, far from experiencing any such memory as he chronicled, he was reproducing from the memory of books

he had read the salient aspects of the lives of ancient cave- and tree-dwellers; yet there were disturbingly clear indications from time to time that the observations he made were not made from any printed text or the memory of such a text, though I had no way of seeking out such possible sources for my cousin's bizarre chroniclings.

I saw Ambrose increasingly seldom, but on the rare occasions when I did see him, I could not avoid noticing the alarming degree to which he had yielded to drugs and starvation; his emaciation was complicated by certain repellent signs of degeneration. He tended to slaver at his food and his eating habits became so deplorable that Mrs. Reed was pointedly absent from the table at more than one occasion; though, because of Ambrose's growing dislike of leaving his laboratory, we were not often more than three at table.

I do not remember just when the drastic alteration in Ambrose's habits came about, but I believe I had been at the house just over two months. Now that I think back to it, it seems to me that events were signalled by Ginger, my cousin's dog, which began to act up most restlessly. Whereas hitherto he had been a singularly well-behaved dog, now he began to bark often at night, and by day he whined and moved about house and yard with an air of alarm. Mrs. Reed said of him, "That dog smells or hears something he don't like." Perhaps she spoke truly, for all that I paid little attention.

It was at about this time that my cousin elected to remain in his laboratory all together, instructing me to leave his food on a tray outside the laboratory door. I took issue with him, but he would neither open the door nor come out, and very often he left his food stand for some time before he took it in, so that Mrs. Reed made ever less attempts to serve him hot food, for most of the time it had grown cold by the time he took it in. Curiously, none of us ever saw Ambrose take his food; the tray might stand there for an hour, two hours, even three—then suddenly it would be gone, only to be replaced later by an empty tray.

His eating habits also underwent a change; though he had formerly been a heavy coffee drinker, he now spurned it, returning his cup untouched so many times that Mrs. Reed no longer troubled to serve it. He seemed to grow ever more partial to simpler foods—meat, potatoes, lettuce, bread—and was not attracted to salads or most casserole dishes. Sometimes his empty tray contained notes, but these were growing fewer and farther between, and such as there were I found almost impossible to transcribe, for in his handwriting now, as well as in the content of his notes, there was the same distressing deterioration. He seemed to have difficulty properly holding a pencil, and his lines were scrawled in large letters over all the sheets of paper without any sense of order, though this was not entirely unexpected in one heavily dosed with drugs.



The music which welled forth from the laboratory was even more primitive. Ambrose had obtained certain records of ethnic music—Polynesian, ancient Indian, and the like—and it was these he now played to the exclusion of all else. These were weird sounds, indeed, and peculiarly trying in endless repetition, however interesting they were at first hearing, and they prevailed with monotonous insistence, night and day, for over a week, when one night the phonograph began to manifest every indication of having run down or worn out, and then abruptly stopped; it was not thereafter heard again.

It was at about this time that the notes ceased to appear, and, concomitant with this development, there were two others. The dog, Ginger, erupted into frantic barking during the night, at fairly regular intervals, as if someone were invading the property; I got up once or twice, and once I did think I saw some unpleasantly large animal scuttling into the woods, but nothing came of this; it was gone by the time I had got outside, and, however wild this portion of Vermont was, it was not bear country, nor, for that matter, was there any likelihood of encountering in the woods anything larger or more dangerous than a deer. The other development was more disturbing; Mrs. Reed noticed it first, and called my attention to it—a pervasive and highly repellent musk, clearly an animal odor, which seemed to emanate from the laboratory.

Could my cousin somehow have brought an animal in

from the woods through the back door of the laboratory, which opened out upon the woods? This was always a possibility, but, in truth, I knew of no animal which might give out so powerful a musk. Efforts to question Ambrose from this side of the door were of no avail; he resolutely refused to make any answer, and even the threat of the Reeds that they would leave, unable any longer to work in such a stench, did not move him. After three days of it, the Reeds departed with their belongings, and I was left alone to take care of Ambrose and his dog.

In the shock of discovery, the exact sequence of events thereafter is no longer very clear. I know that I determined to reach my cousin by one way or other, though all my pleadings remained unanswered. I lightened my burdens as much as possible by unchaining the dog that morning, and letting him roam. I made no attempt to undertake the various tasks Reed had performed, but spent my time going to and from the laboratory door. I had long ago given up trying to look into the laboratory from the outside, for its windows were high rectangles parallel to the roof, and, like the single window in the door, they were covered over so as to make it impossible to look in upon any experiment under way inside.

Though my cajolery and pleadings had no effect on Ambrose, I knew that ultimately he must eat, and that, if I withheld food from him, he would finally be forced to come out of the laboratory. So for all of one day I set no food

before his door; I sat grimly watching for him to appear, despite the almost nauseating animal musk which invaded the house from behind the laboratory door. But he did not appear. Determinedly, I continued to keep my vigil at the door, fighting sleep, which was not difficult, for in the quiet of the night I was aware of peculiarly disturbing movements within the laboratory—awkward, shuffling sounds, as if some large creature were crawling about—combined with a guttural mewling sound, as if some mute animal were trying to speak. Several times I called out, and as often I tried the laboratory door anew, but it still resisted my efforts, being not only locked, but also barred by some heavy object.

I decided that, if this refusal to serve my cousin the food to which he had become accustomed, did not bring him out, I would tackle the outer door of the laboratory in the morning, and force it by whatever means I could devise. I was now in a state of high alarm, since Ambrose's persistent silence seemed wholly unlike him.

But this decision had hardly been made, when I was aware of the frantic excitement of the dog. This time, unhampered by the chain which had hitherto bound him, he streaked along one side of the house and made for the woods, and in a moment I heard the furious snarling and growling which always accompanied an attack.

Momentarily forgetting my cousin, I made for the nearest

door, snatching up my flashlight as I ran, and, running outside, I was on my way to the woods when I stopped short. I had come around the corner of the house, in view of the back of the laboratory—and I saw that the door to the laboratory stood open.

Instantly I turned and ran into the laboratory.

All was dark inside. I called my cousin's name. There was no response. With the flashlight I found the switch and turned up the light.

The sight that met my eyes startled me profoundly. When last I had been in the laboratory, it had been a conspicuously neat and trim room—yet now it was in a shocking state. Not only were the impedimenta of my cousin's experiments tipped over and broken, but there were scattered over instruments and floor fragments of partly decayed food—some that was clearly recognizable as having come prepared, but also a disturbing amount of wild food—remains of partially-consumed rabbits, squirrels, skunks, woodchucks, and birds. Above all, the laboratory bore the nauseatingly repellent odor of a primal animal's abode—the scattered instruments bespoke civilization, but the smell and sight of the place were of sub-human life.

Of my cousin Ambrose there was no sign.

I recalled the large animal I had seen faintly in the woods,

and the first thought that came to mind was that somehow the creature had broken into the laboratory and made off with Ambrose, the dog in pursuit. I acted on the thought, and ran from the laboratory to the place in the woods from which still came the throaty, animal sounds of a lethal battle which ended only as I came running up. Ginger stepped back, panting, and my light fell upon the kill.

I do not know how I managed to return to the house, to call the authorities, even to think coherently for five minutes at a time, so great was the shock of discovery. For in that one cataclysmic moment, I understood everything that had taken place—I knew why the dog had barked so frantically in the night when the “thing” had gone to feed, I understood the source of that horrible animal musk, I realized that what had happened to my cousin was inevitable.

*For the thing that lay below Ginger's bloody jaws was a sub-human caricature of a man, a hellish parody of primal growth, with horrible malformations of face and body, giving off an all-pervasive and wholly charnel musk—but it was clad in the rags of my cousin's mouse-colored dressing-gown, and it wore on its wrist my cousin's watch.*

*By some unknown primal law of nature, in sending his memory back to that pre-human era, into man's hereditary past, Ambrose had been trapped in that period of evolution, and his body had retrograded to the level of man's pre-human existence on the earth. He had gone*

*nightly to forage for food in the woods, maddening the already alarmed dog; and it was by my hand that he had come to this horrible end—for I had unchained Ginger and made it possible for Ambrose to come to his death at the jaws of his own dog!*

# THE SHADOW OUT OF SPACE

## I

*The most merciful thing in the world...is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on an island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far....*



If it is true that man lives forever on the edge of an abyss, then certainly most men must experience moments of awareness—of a kind of precognition, as it were—when the vast, unplumbed depths which exist forever on the rim of man's little world become for one cataclysmic moment tangible, when the terrible, boundless well of knowledge of which even the most brilliant man has only tasted, assumes a shadowy being capable of striking the most primal terror into even the stoutest heart. Does any living man know the true beginnings of mankind? Or man's place in the cosmos? Or whether man is doomed to the worm's ignominious end?

There are terrors that walk the corridors of sleep each night, that haunt the world of dream, terrors which may indeed be tenuously bound to the more mundane aspects of daily life. Increasingly, I have known such an awareness of a world outside this world—coterminous, perhaps, yet not impossibly completely hallucinatory. Yet it was not always so. It was not so until I met Amos Piper.

My name is Nathaniel Corey. I have been in the practice of psychoanalysis for more than fifty years. I am the author of one textbook and uncounted monographs published in the journals devoted to such learned papers. I practiced for many years in Boston, after studying in Vienna, and only within the last decade, in semiretirement, removed to the university town of Arkham, in the same state. I have a hard-earned reputation for integrity, which I fear this paper may seem to challenge. I pray that it may do more than that.

It is a steadily disturbing sense of premonition that drives me at last to setting down some record of what is perhaps the most interesting and provocative problem I have faced in all my years of practice. I am not in the habit of making public statements regarding my patients, but I am forced by the peculiar circumstances attending the case of Amos Piper to set forth certain facts, which, in the light of other, seemingly unrelated data, may quite possibly assume a greater importance than they appeared to have when first I made their acquaintance. There are powers of the mind which are shrouded in darkness, and perhaps also there



are powers in darkness beyond the mind—not witches and warlocks, not ghosts and goblins, or any such desiderata of primitive civilizations, but powers infinitely more vast and terrible, beyond the concept of most men.

The name of Amos Piper will not be unfamiliar to many people, particularly to those who recall the publication of anthropological papers bearing his byline a decade or more ago. I met him for the first time when his sister, Abigail, brought him to my office one day in 1933. He was a tall man who had the look of once having been fleshy, but upon whose large-boned frame the clothes now hung as if he had lost much weight in a comparatively short time. Indeed, this proved to be the case, for, while Piper seemed to need medical attention far more than the services of a psychoanalyst, his sister explained that he had sought out the best medical care, and one and all the doctors he had seen had concluded that his trouble was primarily mental and beyond their curative powers. Several of my colleagues had recommended me to Miss Piper, and at the same time some of Piper's fellow savants on the faculty of Miskatonic University had added their commendations to those of the medical counsel Piper had sought out, hence the coming of the Pipers to fulfill an appointment.

Miss Piper prepared me a little with her statement of her brother's problem, while he was composing himself in my consultation room. She set forth with admirable succinctness. Piper appeared to be the victim of certain

terrifying hallucinations, which took the shape of visions whenever he closed his eyes or lowered his eyelids while in a waking state, and of dreams when he slept. He had not slept, however, for three weeks, during which time he had lost so much weight that both of them had become profoundly alarmed at his condition. As prelude, Miss Piper recalled to my mind that her brother had suffered a nervous collapse while at the theatre three years before; this collapse had been of such duration that it was actually only for the past month that Piper had seemed once more to have become his normal self. His new obsession—if such it was—had begun scarcely a week after his return to normal; it seemed to Miss Piper that there might be some logical connection between his former state and this occurrence following a brief normalcy. Drugs had proved successful in inducing sleep, but even they had not eliminated the dreams, which seemed to Dr. Piper to be of a peculiarly horrible nature, so much so that he hesitated to speak of them.

Miss Piper answered frankly such questions as I asked her, but betrayed the lack of any real knowledge of her brother's condition. She assured me that he had never been violent at any time, but he was frequently distraught and apparently separated from the world in which he lived, with a manifest line of demarcation, as if he existed in a shell enclosing him from the world.

After Miss Piper took her leave, I looked in on my patient.

I found him sitting wide-eyed beside my desk. His eyes had an hypnotic quality, and appeared to be held open by force of will, for the eyeballs were extremely bloodshot, and the irises seemed to be clouded. He was in an agitated condition, and began at once to apologize for being there, explaining that his sister's determined insistence had left him no recourse but to yield to her. He was all the more unwilling to heed her demands because he knew that nothing could be done for him.

I told him that Miss Abigail had briefly outlined his trouble, and sought to calm his fears. I spoke soothingly in generalized terms. Piper listened with patient respect, apparently yielding to the casual yet reassuring manner with which I have always sought to inspire confidence, and when at last I asked why he could not close his eyes, he answered without hesitation, and quite simply, that he was afraid to do so.

“Why?” I wanted to know. “Can you say—if you will?”

I remember his reply. “The moment I close my eyes, there appear on the retina strange geometrical figures and designs, together with vague lights and even more sinister shapes beyond, as of great creatures past the conception of mankind—and the most frightening thing about them is that they are creatures of intelligence—immeasurably alien.”

I urged him then to make an attempt to describe these beings. He found it difficult to do so. His descriptions were vague, but startling in what they suggested. None of his beings seemed clearly formed, except for certain rugose cones which might as readily have been vegetable in origin as animal. Yet he spoke with such conviction, striving to limn for me the astonishing creatures of which he dreamed so insistently, that I was struck by the vividness of Piper's imagination. Perhaps there was a connection between these visions and the long illness which had beset him? Of this he was reluctant to speak, but after a while he began to go back to it, somewhat uncertainly, speaking of it disconnectedly, so that it was left for me to piece together the sequence of events.

His story began properly in his forty-ninth year. This was when his illness came upon him. He had been attending a performance of Maugham's *The Letter* when, in the middle of the second act, he had fainted. He had been carried to the manager's office, and efforts were there made to revive him. These were futile, and finally he was removed to his home by police ambulance; there medical men spent some further hours in an attempt to bring him to. As a result of their failure, Piper was hospitalized. He lay in a comatose state for three days, at the end of which he returned to consciousness.

It was immediately observed, however, that he was "not himself." His personality seemed to have suffered a

profound disorientation. It was at first believed by his medical attendants that he had been the victim of a stroke of some kind, but this theory was reluctantly abandoned for lack of corroborative symptoms. So profound was his ailment that some of the most ordinary acts of man were performed by him with the utmost difficulty. For instance, it was noticed at once that he seemed to have difficulty grasping objects; yet nothing seemed wrong with his physical structure and his articulation appeared to be normal. His approach in grasping things was not that of a creature with fingers, but a motion of opening fingers and thumb as if to pick up and handle objects without finger mobility, in a motion that was claw-like rather than manual. Nor was this the only aspect of his disturbing "recovery." He had to learn to walk all over again, for he seemed to attempt to inch along as if he had no locomotive power. He had, too, a most extraordinary difficulty in learning to speak; his first attempts to do so were made with his hands, in the same claw-like motion with which he sought to grasp objects; at the same time, he made curious whistling sounds, the meaninglessness of which visibly troubled him. Yet it was perceived that his intelligence did not appear to have suffered any impairment, for he learned rapidly, and in a week's time he had mastered all those prosaic acts which are part of any man's daily life.

But, if his intelligence had not been impaired, his memory for the events of his life had been all but wiped out. He had not recognized his sister, nor had he known any of

his fellow faculty members on the staff at Miskatonic University. He professed to know nothing of Arkham, of Massachusetts, and but little of the United States. It was necessary to make all this knowledge available to him anew, though it was only a short time—less than a month—before he had assimilated all that had been put before him, rediscovering human knowledge in an amazingly brief time, and manifesting a phenomenally accurate memory of everything he had been told and had read. Indeed, if anything, his memory during his illness—once indoctrination had been completed—was infinitely superior to the functioning of that part of his mind before.

It was only after Piper had made these necessary adjustments to his situation that he began to follow what he himself described as “an inexplicable” course of action. He was on indefinite leave from Miskatonic University, and he began to travel extensively. Yet he had no direct and personal knowledge of these travels at the time of his visit to my office, or at any time since his “recovery” from the illness which had afflicted him for three years. There was nothing remotely resembling memory in his account of these travels, and what he did on these journeys he did not know; this was extraordinary, in view of the astounding memory he had displayed during that illness. He had been told since his “recovery” that he had gone to strange, out-of-the-way places on the globe—the Arabian desert, the fastnesses of Inner Mongolia, the Arctic Circle, the Polynesian Islands, the Marquesas, the ancient Inca country

of Peru, and the like. Of what he did there he had no recollection whatever, nor was there anything in his luggage to show, save for one or two curious scraps of what might have been antique hieroglyphic writings, most of them on stone, such as any tourist might be interested in adding to a small collection.

When not engaged on these mysterious journeys, he had spent his time reading very widely, and with almost inconceivable rapidity at the great libraries of the world. Beginning with that of Miskatonic University in Arkham—one well known for certain forbidden manuscripts and books gradually accumulated over a period of centuries begun in colonial times—he had ranged as far as Cairo, Egypt, in such studies, though he had spent most of his time at the British Museum in London and the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. He had consulted innumerable private libraries, wherever he could gain admittance.

In every case, the records which he had subsequently troubled to check in that single brief week of his “normalcy”—using every available means: cablegram, wireless, radio, in the sense of urgency which, he said, impelled him—showed that he had read avidly of certain very old books, of but a few of which he had had only the remotest knowledge prior to the onset of his illness. They were such books related to ancient lore as the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*, the *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred, the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of Von Junzt, the

Comte d'Erlette's *Cultes des Goules*, Ludvig Prinn's *De Vermis Mysteriis*, the *R'lyeh Text*, the *Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan*, the *Dhol Chants*, the *Liber Ivoris*, the *Celaeno Fragments*, and many other, similar texts, some of which existed only in fragmentary form, all of which were scattered over the globe. Of course, there was also a leavening of history, but it was to be noted, according to the records of withdrawals in such libraries as Piper had been able to check, that reading in any given library had always begun with books that accounted legendry and supernatural lore, and from them progressed into studies of history and anthropology, in a direct progression, as if Piper assumed that the history of mankind began not with ancient times but with the incredibly old world which existed before man's measured time as known to historians, and which was written about in certain dreaded and terrible lore to be found only in eldritch books held of an occult nature.

He was also known to have made contacts with other persons with whom he had had no prior acquaintance, but whom he now met as by prearrangement at various places, persons of similar pursuits, also engaged in somewhat macabre research, or affiliated with the faculty of some college or university. Yet there had been always one affinity among them, as Piper had learned by dint of telephoning across oceans and continents to people whose communications he found among his papers when he had returned to "normalcy"—each of them had suffered a seizure either identical with or very similar in nature to that



which had come upon Piper at the theatre.

Though this course of action was not related to Piper's way of life before the illness came upon him, it remained fairly consistent for the duration of that illness, once it had been set. The strange and unaccountable trips he had undertaken soon after he had once again accustomed himself to living among his fellowmen after his initial "recovery" had continued throughout the three years he had been "not himself." Two months at Ponape, a month at Angkor-Vat, three months in Antarctica, a conference with a fellow-savant in Paris, and only brief periods in Arkham between journeys; such was the pattern of his life, this was the way in which he had spent the three years prior to full and complete recovery, which in turn had been followed by another period of profound displacement, which permitted Amos Piper no memory of what he had done during those three years, and subjected him to a dread of closing his eyes lest he see that which suggested to his subconscious mind something awe-inspiring and terrible, coupled with his dreams.

## II

It was only after three visits that I managed to persuade Amos Piper to set down for me a sequence of his strangely vivid dreams, those nocturnal adventures of his subconscious mind which troubled him and disturbed him so deeply. They were very similar to one another in nature,

and each of them was unconnected and fragmentary, since none had any transitional phase from waking to dream. Yet, in the light of Piper's illness, they were challengingly significant. The most common of them was a repetitive dream of place; this, in one variation or another, occurred repeatedly in the sequence which Piper set down. I reproduce here his own account of the repetitive dream.

"I was a scholar at work in a library in a colossal building. The room in which I sat transcribing something in a book in a language which was not English was so large that the tables in it were as high as an ordinary room. The walls were not of wood, but of basalt, though the shelves which lined the walls were of a kind of dark wood I did not know. The books were not printed, but entirely in holograph, many of them written in the same strange language which I wrote. But there were some which were in recognizable languages—this recognition, however, seemed to spring from an ancestral memory—in Sanscrit, Greek, Latin, French—even English, but English of much variation, from the time of Piers Plowman to our own time. The tables were lit with large globes of luminous crystal together with strange machines made of vitreous tubes and metal rods, without connecting wires of any kind.

"Apart from the books on the shelves, there was an austere barrenness about the place. The exposed stonework showed some odd carvings, invariably in curvilinear mathematical designs, together with inscriptions

in the same hieroglyphs which were written in the books. The masonry was megalithic; convex-topped blocks fitted the concave-bottomed courses which rested upon them; and all rose from a floor composed of great octagonal flagstones of a similar basalt. Nothing was hung upon the walls, and nothing decorated the floors. The shelves rose from floor to ceiling, and between the walls were only the tables at which we worked at a standing position, since nothing resembling chairs was in evidence, nor was the inclination to sit down felt.

“By day I could see outside a vast forest of fernlike trees. By night I could look upon the stars, but none was recognizable; no single constellation of those skies even remotely resembled the familiar stars which were the nocturnal companions of Earth. This filled me with terror, for I knew that I was in an utterly alien place, far removed from the terrestrial surroundings I had once known, and which now seemed a memory of an incredibly far existence. Yet I knew that I was an integral part of all this, and at one and the same time wholly distinct from it; or, as if part of me belonged to this milieu, and part did not. I was very much confused, and all the more so to recognize that the material I was writing was nothing more or less than a history of Earth of a time I believed was one I had lived—that is, the twentieth century; I was setting this down in the minutest detail, as if for study, but I knew not for what purpose, save to add to the tremendous accumulation of knowledge already in those countless books in the room in which I sat

as well as in adjoining rooms, for the entire building of which this room was but one was a vast storehouse of knowledge. Nor was it the only one, for I knew from such conversation as went on around me that there were others far removed, and that in them all there were other writers such as us, similarly engaged, and that the work we were doing was vital to the return of the Great Race—which was the race to which we belonged—to the places in the universes which had once, aeons gone by, served us as home until the war with the Ancient Ones had forced us into flight.

“I worked always under great fear and an inspired terror. I was afraid to look at myself. There was omnipresent a lurking fear that some hideous discovery was implicit in even the most fleeting glance at my body, which sprang from the conviction that I had stolen such a glance at some past time and had been profoundly frightened at sight of myself. Perhaps I feared that I was like the others, for my fellow-workers were all around me, and all were alike. They were great rugose cones, resembling a vegetable in structure, more than ten feet in height, with heads and claw-like hands attached to thick limbs which were ringed around the apex of their bodies. They walked by expanding and contracting the viscous layer attached to their bases, and, though they did not speak a language I recognized, yet I was able to understand the sounds they made because, as I knew in my dream, I had been instructed in that language from the moment of my arrival at that place. They

did not speak with anything that resembled a human voice at all, nor did I, rather by a combination of strange whistlings and the clicking or scraping of huge claws attached to the end of two of their four limbs, which radiated from what supposedly would have been their necks, save that no such part of their bodies was visible.

“Part of my fear arose from the dim understanding that I was a prisoner within a prisoner, that even as I was imprisoned within a body similar to those around me, so this body was imprisoned within the great library. I sought in vain for any familiar thing. Nothing was there to suggest the Earth I had known since childhood, and everything hinted at a point far out in space as that which we now occupied. I understood that all my fellow-workers were captives of some kind, too, though there were occasional appearances by warders who, though they were similar in form to the others, nevertheless, wore an air of authority, and came walking among us, often to assist us. These warders were not menacing, but courteous, if firm.

“Though our warders were not supposed to engage us in conversation, there was one among them who was under no restrictions. He was evidently an instructor, and moved among us with more importance than the others, and I noticed that even the other warders deferred to him. This was not alone because he was an instructor, but also because he was held to be doomed, for the Great Race was not yet ready to move, and the body he inhabited was

destined to die before the migration would take place. He had known other men, and he was in the habit of stopping at my table—at first with only a few words of encouragement, but finally to talk for longer periods of time.

“From him I learned that the Great Race had existed on Earth and on other planets of our own universe as well as those of others, billions of years before recorded history. The rugose cones which made their present form had been occupied for only a few centuries, and were far from their true form, which was more kin to a shaft of light, for they were a race of free minds, capable of invading any body and displacing the mind which inhabited it. They had occupied Earth until they had become involved in the titanic struggle between the Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones for the domination of the cosmos, a struggle which, he told me, accounted for the Christian Mythos among mankind, for the simple minds of early men had conceived of their ancestral memories of this struggle as one between elemental Good and elemental Evil. From Earth, the Great Race had fled outward into space, at first to the planet Jupiter, and then farther, to that star on which they now were, a dark star in Taurus, where they remained ever watchful for invasion from the region of the Lake of Hali, which was the place of banishment for Hastur of the Ancient Ones, after the defeat of the Ancient Ones by the Elder Gods. But now their star was dying, and they were preparing for a mass migration to another star, either backward or forward in time, and for the occupation of the bodies of creatures more long-lived than

the rugose cones which now afforded them housing.

“Their preparation consisted of the displacing of minds of creatures who existed at various times and in many places among the universes. There were among my companions, he asserted, not only tree-men from Venus, but also members of the half-vegetable race of paleogean Antarctica; not only representatives of the great Inca civilization of Peru, but also members of the race of men who were to live on post-atomic earth, horribly altered by mutations caused by the fall-out of radioactive materials from the hydrogen and cobalt bombs of the atomic wars; not only ant-like beings from Mars, but also men from ancient Rome and men from a world fifty thousand years in the future. There were countless others from all races, from all walks of life, from worlds I knew and from worlds separated from my time by thousands upon thousands of years. For the Great Race could travel at will in time or space, and the rugose cones which now constituted their bodies were but a temporary dwelling, briefer than most, and the place where they now carried on their vast researches, filling their archives with the history of life in all time and all places, was for them but a short residence before they went on to a newer and continuing existence elsewhere, in some other form, on some other world.

“All of us who worked in the great library were assisting in the gathering of the archives, for each of us wrote the history of his own time. By sending their members forth into

the void, the Great Race could both see for itself what life was like in other times and places, and achieve an account of it in terms of the beings who lived then and there, for these were the minds which had been sent back to take the place of the missing members of the Great Race until such time as they were ready to return. The Great Race had built a machine which aided them in their flight through time and space, but it was not such a machine as had been crudely imagined by mankind, but rather one that operated on the body to separate and project the mind; and whenever a journey forward or backward in time was contemplated, the voyager submitted to the machine and the project was accomplished. Then, wherever they went in mass migration, they went unfettered; all the appurtenances, the artifacts, the inventions, even the great library would be left behind; the Great Race would begin again to build its civilization, always hoping to escape the holocaust which would come about when the Ancient Ones—great Hastur, the Unspeakable; and Cthulhu, who lies in the watery depths; and Nyarlathotep, the Messenger; and Azathoth and Yog-Sothoth and all their terrible progeny—escaped their bondage and joined again in titanic battle with the Elder Gods in their remote fastnesses among distant stars.”

This was Piper’s most recurrent dream. Actually, it was very probably not a continuing dream in the sense that it took place at one time, but rather one which was repeated, adding details, until the final version which he had set down



seemed to him one repetitive dream, when in truth it had been cumulative, adding details with each recurrence. The pattern of his actions in his brief period of “normalcy” in relation to the dream was significant, for it represented a signal reversal of the proper order—in life he imitated the actions of what he later described as rugose cones inhabiting dreams which came subsequently into peripheral existence. The order should have been, normally, reversed to this; had his actions—his attempts to grasp objects as with claws, and to speak with his hands, and so—taken place after the occurrence of these vivid dreams, the normal progression would have been observed. It was significant that it did not happen in this manner.

A second recurring dream appeared to be merely an appendage to his first. Once more Piper was at work at the high table in the great library, unable to sit because there were no chairs and because the rugose cone was not meant to sit. Once again the doomed instructor had stopped to talk with him, and Piper had questioned him about the life of the Great Race.

“I asked him how the Great Race could hope to keep secret its plans, if it replaced the displaced minds. He said this would be done in two ways. First, all trace of memory of this place would be carefully expunged before any displaced mind was returned, whether it were sent back or forward in time and space. Second, if traces remained,

they were likely to be so diffuse and unconnected as to be meaningless, and, if something could be pieced together from them, it would seem so incredible to others as to be considered the workings of an overwrought imagination, if not, indeed, illness.

“He went on to tell me that the minds of the Great Race were permitted to select their habitats. They were not sent forth haphazardly to occupy the first ‘dwellings’ to which they came, but had the power of choosing among the creatures they saw which they would occupy. The mind so displaced would be sent back to the present home of the Great Race, while the member of that race who had gone forth would adjust himself to the life of the civilization to which he had gone until he had sought out the traces of the aeon-old culture which had culminated in the great upheaval between the Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones. Even after the return had been effected, and the Great Race had learned all it wished to learn of the ways of life and of the points of contact with the Ancient Ones, particularly of their minions who might oppose the Great Race, whose members had always striven for solitude and peace, but who were more closely akin to the Elder Gods than to the Ancient Ones, there were times when minds were sent out to make sure that the displaced minds had been washed clear of memory, and to reclaim them by effecting another displacement if they had not.

“He took me into the subterranean rooms of the great

library. There were books everywhere, all in holograph. Cases of them were stored in tiers of rectangular vaults wrought of some unknown lustrous metal. The archives were arranged in the order of life forms, and I took note of the fact that the rugose creatures of the dark star were held to be of a higher order than man, for the race of man was not very far from the reptilian orders which immediately preceded it on Earth. When asked about this, the instructor confirmed that it was so. He explained that contact with Earth was maintained only because it had once been the center of the great battleground between the Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones, and the minions of the latter existed there unknown to most men—the Deep Ones in the ocean depths, the batrachian people of Polynesia and the Innsmouth country of Massachusetts, the dreaded Tcho-Tcho people of Tibet, the shantaks of Kadath in the Cold Waste, and many others, and because it might now be necessary for the Great Race to retreat once more to that green planet which had first been their home. Only yesterday, he said—a time which seemed infinitely long ago, for the length of the days and nights was equivalent to a week on Earth—one of the minds had returned from Mars and reported that that planet was farther along the way toward death even than their own star, and thus one more prospective haven had been lost.

“From these subterranean reaches, he took me to the top of the building. This was a great tower domed in a substance like glass, from which I could look out over the

landscape below. I saw then that the forest of fernlike trees which I had seen was of dried green leaves, not fresh, and that far from the edge of the forest stretched an interminable desert which descended into a dark gulf, which, my guide explained, was the dried bed of a great ocean. The dark star had come within the outermost orbit of a nova and was now slowly and surely dying. How strange indeed that landscape looked! The trees were stunted, in comparison to the great building of megalithic stone out of which we peered; no bird flew across that grey heaven; no cloud was there; no mist hung above the abyss; and the light of the distant sun which illuminated the dark star came indirectly out of space, so that the landscape was bathed forever in a grey unreality.

“I shuddered to look upon it.”

Piper's dreams grew steadily more fraught with fright. This fear seemed to exist on two planes—one which bound him to Earth, another which bound him to the dark star. There was seldom much variation. A secondary theme which occurred two or three times in his dream sequence was that of being permitted to accompany the instructor-warder to a curious circular room which must have been at the very bottom of the colossal tower. In each such case one of their number was stretched out upon a table between glittering domes of a machine which shone a blinking and wavering light as if it were of some kind of electricity, though, as with the lamps on the work-tables,

there were no wires leading to or from it.

As the light pulsations increased and brightened, the rugose cone on the table became comatose and remained so for some time, until the light wavered and the hum of the machine failed. Then the cone came to life once more, and immediately began an excited jabbering of whistling and clicking sounds. This scene was invariable. Piper understood what was being said, and he believed that what he had witnessed in each case was the return of a mind belonging to the Great Race, and the sending back of the displaced mind which had occupied the rugose cone in its absence. The substance of the rapid talk of the revived cone was always quite similar; it amounted to a report in summary of the great mind's sojourn away from the dark star. In one instance the great mind had just come back from Earth after five years as a British anthropologist, and he pretended to have himself seen the places where the minions of the Ancient Ones lay in wait. Some had been partially destroyed—as, for instance, were a certain island not far from Ponape, in the Pacific, and Devil Reef off Innsmouth, and a mountain cavern and pool near Machu Pichu—but other minions were widespread, with no organization, and the Ancient Ones who remained on Earth were imprisoned under the five-pointed star which was the seal of the Elder Gods. Of the places which were reported potentially future homes for the Great Race, Earth was always a leading contender, despite the danger of atomic war.

It was clear, in the progression of Piper's dreams, despite their confusion, that the Great Race contemplated flight to some planet or star far distant from the dying star which they occupied, and that vast regions of the green planet where few men lived—places covered with ice, great sandy regions in the hot countries—offered a haven to the Great Race. Basically, Piper's dreams were all very similar. Always there was the vast structure of megalithic basalt blocks, always the interminable working by those peculiar beings who had no need of sleep, invariably the feeling of imprisonment, and, in real life concomitantly the omnipresent fear of which Piper could not shake himself free.

I concluded that Piper was the victim of a very deep confusion, unable to relate dream to reality, one of those unhappy men who could no longer know which was the real world—that of his dreams or that in which he walked and talked by day. But even in this conclusion I was not wholly satisfied, and how right I was to question my judgment I was soon to learn.

### III

Amos Piper was my patient for a period just short of three weeks. I observed in him throughout that time, however much to my dismay and to the discredit of such treatment, as I attempted, a steady deterioration in his condition.

Hallucinatory data—or what I took to be such—began to make their appearance, particularly in the development of the typical paranoid delusions of being followed and watched. This development reached its climax in a letter Piper wrote to me and sent by the hand of a messenger. It was a letter obviously written in great haste....

“Dear Dr. Corey, Because I may not see you again, I want to tell you that I am no longer in any doubt about my position. I am satisfied that I have been under observation for some time—not by any terrestrial being, but by one of the minds of the Great Race—for I am now convinced that all my visions and all my dreams derive from that three-year period when I was displaced—or ‘not myself,’ as my sister would put it. The Great Race exists apart from my dreams. It has existed for longer than mankind’s measure of time. I do not know where they are—whether in the dark star in Taurus or farther away. But they are preparing to move again, and one of them is nearby.

“I have not been idle between visits to your office. I have had time to make some further private inquiries of my own. Many connecting links to my dreams have alarmed and baffled me. What, for instance, actually happened at Innsmouth in 1928 that caused the federal government to drop depth charges off Devil Reef in the Atlantic coast just out of that city? What was it in that seacoast town that brought about the arrest and subsequent banishing of half the citizenry? And what was the connecting link between

the Polynesians and the people of Innsmouth? Too, what was it that the Miskatonic Antarctic Expedition of 1930–31 discovered at the Mountains of Madness, of such a nature that it had to be kept quiet and secret from all the world except the savants at the university? What other explanation is there for the Johannsen narrative but a corroborative account of the legendry of the Great Race? And does this not also exist in the ancient lore of the Inca and Aztec nations?

“I could go for many pages, but there is no time. I discovered scores of such subtly disturbing related incidents, most of them hushed up, kept secret, suppressed, lest they disturb an already sorely troubled world. Man, after all, is only a brief manifestation on the face of but a single planet in only one of the vast universes which fill all space. Only the Great Race knows the secret of eternal life, moving through space and time, occupying one habitation after another, becoming animal or vegetable or insect, as the circumstances demand.

“I must hurry—I have so little time. Believe me, my dear doctor, I know whereof I write...”

I was not, in view of this letter, particularly surprised to learn from Miss Abigail Piper that her brother had suffered a “relapse” within a few hours, apparently, of the writing of this letter. I hastened to the Piper home only to be met at the door by my one-time patient. But he was now



completely changed.

He presented to me a self-assurance he had not shown in my consultation room or at any time since first I had met him. He assured me that he had won control of himself at last, that the visions to which he had been subjected had vanished, and that he could now sleep free of the disturbing dreams which had so troubled him. Indeed, I could not doubt that he had made a recovery, and I was at a loss to understand why Miss Piper should have written me that frantic note, unless she had become so accustomed to her brother in his disoriented state that she had mistaken his improvement for a "relapse." This recovery was all the more remarkable since every evidence—his increasing fears, his hallucinations, his mounting nervousness, and, finally, his hasty letter—combined to indicate, as surely as any physical symptom ever did a disease, a collapse of what remained of his sanity.

I was pleased with his recovery, and congratulated him. He accepted my congratulations with a faint smile, and then excused himself, saying that there was much for him to do. I promised to call once again in a week or so, to watch against any return of the earlier symptoms of his distressed state.

Ten days later I called on him for the last time. I found him affable and courteous. Miss Abigail Piper was present, somewhat distraught, but uncomplaining. Piper had had no

further dreams or visions, and was able to talk quite frankly of his "illness," deprecating any mention of "disorientation" or "displacement" with an insistence that I could interpret only as great anxiety that I should not retain such impressions. I spent a very pleasant hour with him; but I could not escape the conviction that whereas the troubled man I had known in my office was a man of matching intelligence, the "recovered" Amos Piper was a man of far vaster intelligence than my own.

At the time of my visit, he impressed me with the fact that he was making ready to join an expedition to the Arabian desert country. I did not then think of relating his plans to the curious journeys he had made during the three years of his illness. But subsequent happenings brought this forcibly to mind.

Two nights later, my office was entered and rifled. All the original documents pertaining to the problem of Amos Piper were removed from my files. Fortunately, impelled by an intuition for which I could not account, I had had presence of mind enough to make copies of the most important of his dream accounts, as well as of the letter he had written me at the end, for this, too, was removed. Since these documents could have had no meaning or value to anyone but Amos Piper, and since Piper was now presumably cured of his obsession, the only conclusion that presented itself in explanation of this strange robbery was in itself so bizarre that I was reluctant to entertain it.

Moreover, I ascertained that Piper departed on his journey on the following day, establishing the possibility in addition to the probability of his having been the instrument—I write “instrument” advisedly—of the theft.

But a recovered Piper would have no valid desire for the return of the data. On the other hand, a “relapsed” Piper would have every reason to want these papers destroyed. Had Piper, then, suffered a second disorientation, one which was this time not obvious, since the mind displacing his would have no need to accustom itself again to the habits and thought-patterns of man?

However incredible this hypothesis, I acted on it by initiating some inquiries of my own. I intended originally to spend a week—possibly a fortnight—in pursuit of the answers to some of the questions Amos Piper had put to me in his last letter. But weeks were not enough; the time stretched into months, and by the end of a year, I was more perplexed than ever. More, I trembled on the edge of that same abyss which had haunted Piper.

For something had indeed taken place at Innsmouth in 1928, something which had involved the federal government at last, and about which nothing but the most vaguely terrifying hints of a connection to certain batrachian people of Ponape—none of this official—ever seeped out. And there were oddly disquieting discoveries made at some of the ancient temples at Angkor-Vat, discoveries

which were linked to the culture of the Polynesians as well as to that of certain Indian tribes of Northwestern America, and to certain other discoveries made at the Mountains of Madness by an expedition from Miskatonic University.

There were scores of similar related incidents, all shrouded in mystery and silence. And the books—the forbidden books Amos Piper had consulted—these were at the library of Miskatonic University, and what was in such pages as I read was hideously suggestive in the light of all Amos Piper had said, and all I had subsequently confirmed. What was there set forth, however indirectly, was that somewhere there did exist a race of infinitely superior beings—call them gods or the Great Race or any other name—who could indeed send their free minds across time and space. And if this were accepted as a premise, then it could also be true that Amos Piper's mind had once again been displaced by that mind of the Great Race sent to find out whether all memory of his stay among the Great Race had been expunged.

But perhaps the most damningly disturbing facts of all have only gradually come to light. I took the trouble to look up everything I could discover about the members of the expedition to the Arabian desert which Amos Piper had joined. They came from all corners of the earth, and were all men who might be expected to show an interest in an expedition of that nature—a British anthropologist, a French Palentologist, a Chinese scholar, an Egyptologist—

there were many more. And I learned that each of them, like Amos Piper, had some time within the past decade suffered some kind of seizure, variously described, but which was undeniably a personality displacement precisely the same as Piper's.

Somewhere in the remote wastes of the Arabian desert, the entire expedition vanished from the face of the earth.

Perhaps it was inevitable that my persistent inquiries should stir interest in quarters beyond my reach. Yesterday, a patient came to my office. There was that in his eyes which made me think of Amos Piper, when last I saw him—a patronizing, aloof superiority, which made me cringe mentally, together with a certain awkwardness of the hands. And last night I saw him again, passing under the streetlight across from the house. Once more this morning, like a man studying another's every habit for some reason too devious for his intended victim to know...

And now, coming across the street....

*The scattered pages of the above manuscript were found on the floor of Dr. Nathaniel Corey's office, when his resident nurse summoned police as a result of an*

*alarming disturbance behind the locked door of the office. When the police broke in, Dr. Corey and an unidentified patient were found on their knees on the floor, both trying vainly to push the sheets of paper toward the flames of the fireplace in the north wall of the room.*

*The two men seemed unable to grasp the pages, but were nudging them forward with strange, crab-like motions. They were oblivious of the police, and were bent only on the destruction of the manuscript, continuing their unnatural efforts toward that end with a frenzied haste. Neither man was able to give an intelligent account of himself to the police or to medical attendants, nor was either even coherent in what he did say.*

*Since, after competent examination, both appeared to have suffered a profound personality displacement, they have been removed for indefinite confinement in the Larkin Institute, the well-known private asylum for the insane....*

## THE LAMP OF ALHAZRED



It was seven years after his Grandfather Whipple's disappearance that Ward Phillips received the lamp. This, like the house on Angell Street where Phillips lived, had belonged to his grandfather. Phillips had had the living of the house ever since his grandfather's disappearance, but the lamp had been in the keeping of the old man's lawyer until the elapsing of the required seven years for the presumption of death. It had been his grandfather's wish that the lamp be safely kept by the lawyer in the event of any untoward circumstance, whether death or any other, so that Phillips should have sufficient time to browse as he pleased in the sizable Whipple library, in which a great store of learning waited for Phillips' attention. Once he had read through the many volumes on the shelves, Phillips would be mature enough to inherit his grandfather's "most priceless treasure"—as old Whipple himself had put it.

Phillips was then thirty, and in indifferent health, though this was but a continuation of the sickliness which had so

often made his childhood miserable. He had been born into a moderately wealthy family, but the savings which had once been his grandfather's had been lost through injudicious investments, and all that remained to Phillips was the house on Angell Street and its contents. Phillips had become a writer for the pulp magazines, and had eked out a spare living by undertaking in addition the revision of countless almost hopeless manuscripts of prose and verse by writers far more amateur than he, who sent them to him, hopeful that through the miracle of his pen they in turn might see their work in print. His sedentary life had weakened his resistance to disease; he was tall, thin, wore glasses and was prey to colds and once, much to his embarrassment, he came down with the measles.

He was much given on warm days to wandering out into the country where he had played as a child, taking his work outdoors, where often he sat on the same lovely wooded riverbank which had been his favorite haunt since infancy. This Seekonk River shore had changed not at all in the years since then, and Phillips, who lived much in the past, believed that the way to defeat the sense of time was to cling close to unaltered early haunts. He explained his way of life to a correspondent by writing, "Amongst those forest paths I know so well, the gap between the present and the days of 1899 or 1900 vanishes utterly—so that sometimes I almost tend to be astonished upon emergence to find the city grown out of its *fin de siècle* semblance!" And, in addition to the Seekonk's banks, he went often to a hill,



Nentaconhaunt, from the slope of which he could look down upon his native city and wait there for the sunset and the enchanting panoramas of the city springing to its life by night, with the steeples and gambrel roofs darkening upon the orange and crimson, or mother-of-pearl and emerald afterglow, and the lights winking on, one by one, making of the vast, sprawling city a magical land to which, more than to the city by day, Phillips fancied himself bound.

As a result of these diurnal excursions, Phillips worked far into the night, and the lamp, because he had long ago given up the use of electricity to conserve his meager income, would be of use to him, for all that it was of an odd shape and manifestly very old. The letter which came with this final gift from the old man, whose attachment to his grandson had been unbounded and was cemented by the early death of the boy's parents, explained that the lamp came from a tomb in Arabia of the dawn of history. It had once been the property of a certain half-mad Arab, known as Abdul Alhazred, and was a product of the fabulous tribe of Ad—one of the four mysterious, little-known tribes of Arabia, which where Ad—of the south, Thamood—of the north, Tasm and Jadis—of the center of the peninsula. It had been found long ago in the hidden city called Irem, the City of Pillars, which had been erected by Shedad, last of the despots of Ad, and was known by some as the Nameless City, and said to be in the area of Hadramant, and, by others, to be buried under the ageless, ever-shifting sands of the Arabian deserts, invisible to the ordinary eye,

but sometimes encountered by chance by the favorites of the Prophet. In concluding his long letter, old Whipple had written: "It may bring pleasure equally by being lit or by being left dark. It may bring pain on the same terms. It is the source of ecstasy or terror."

The lamp of Alhazred was unusual in its appearance. It was meant for burning oil, and seemed to be of gold. It had the shape of a small oblong pot, with a handle curved up from one side, and a spout for wick and flame on the other. Many curious drawings decorated it, together with letters and pictures arranged into words in a language unfamiliar to Phillips, who could draw upon his knowledge for more than one Arabian dialect, and yet knew not the language of the inscription on the lamp. Nor was it Sanscrit which was inscribed upon the metal, but a language older than that—one of letters and hieroglyphs, some of which were pictographs. Phillips worked all one afternoon to polish it, inside and out, after which he filled it with oil.

That night, putting aside the candles and the kerosene lamp by the light of which he had worked for many years, he lit the lamp of Alhazred. He was mildly astonished at the warmth of its glow, the steadiness of its flame, and the quality of its light, but, since he was behind in his work, he did not stop to ponder these things, but bent at once to the task in hand, which was the revision of a lengthy creation in verse, which began in this manner:

“Oh, 'twas on a bright and early morn

Of a year long 'fore I was born,

While earth was yet being torn,

Long before by strife 'twas worn....”

and went on even more archaically in a style long ago out of fashion. Ordinarily, however, the archaic appealed to Phillips. He lived so definitely in the past that he had pronounced views, and a philosophy all his own about the influence of the past. He had an idea of impersonal pageantry and time-and-space-defying fantasy which had always from his earliest consciousness been so inextricably bound up with his inmost thought and feeling, that any searching transcript of his moods would sound highly artificial, exotic, and flavored with conventional images, no matter how utterly faithful it might be to truth. What had haunted Phillips' dreams for decades was a strange sense of adventurous expectancy connected with landscapes and architecture and sky-effects. Always in his mind was a picture of himself at three, looking across and downward from a railway bridge at the densest part of the city, feeling the imminence of some wonder which he could neither describe nor fully conceive—a sense of marvel and liberation hiding in obscure dimensions and problematically reachable at rare instances still through vistas of ancient

streets, across leagues of hill country, or up endless flights of marble steps culminating in tiers of balustraded terraces. But, however much Phillips was inclined to retreat to a time when the world was younger and less hurried, to the eighteenth century or even farther back, when there was still time for the art of conversation, and when a man might dress with a certain elegance and not be looked at askance by his neighbors, the lack of invention in the lines over which he struggled, and the paucity of ideas, together with his own weariness, soon combined to tire him to such an extent that he found it impossible to continue, and, recognizing that he could not do justice to these uninspired lines, he pushed away at last and leaned back to rest.

Then it was that he saw that a subtle change had come upon his surroundings.

The familiar walls of books, broken here and there by windows, over which Phillips was in the habit of drawing the curtains tight so that no light from outside—of sun or moon or even of the stars—invaded his sanctuary, were strangely overlaid not only with the light of the lamp from Arabia, but also by certain objects and vistas in that light. Wherever the light fell, there, superimposed upon the books on their serried shelves, were such scenes as Phillips could not have conjured up in the wildest recesses of his imagination. But where there were shadows—as, for instance, where the shadow of the back of a chair was thrown by the light upon the shelves—there was nothing but the darkness of the

shadow and the dimness of the books on the shelves in that darkness.

Phillips sat in wonder and looked at the scenes unfolded before him. He thought fleetingly that he was the victim of a curious optical illusion, but he did not long entertain this explanation of what he saw. Nor, curiously, was he in want of an explanation; he felt no need of it. A marvel had come to pass, and he looked upon it with but a passing question, only the wonder at what he saw. For the world upon which he looked in the light of the lamp was one of great and surpassing strangeness. It was like nothing he had ever seen before, nor like anything he had read or dreamed about.

It seemed to be a scene of the earth when young, one in which the land was still in the process of being formed, a land where great gouts of steam came from fissures and rocks, and the trails of serpentine animals showed plainly in the mud. High overhead flew great beasts that fought and tore, and from an opening in a rock on the edge of a sea, a tremendous animal appendage, resembling a tentacle, uncoiled sinuously and menacingly into the red, wan sunlight of that day, like a creature from some fantastic fiction.

Then, slowly, the scene changed. The rocks gave way to windswept desert, and, like a mirage, rose the deserted and hidden city, the lost City of the Pillars, fabled Irem, and

Phillips knew that, while no human foot any longer walked the streets of that city, certain terrible beings still lurked among the ancient stone piles of the dwellings, which stood not in ruins, but as they had been built, before the people of that ancient city had been destroyed or driven forth by the things which came out of the heavens to lay siege to and possess Irem. Yet nothing was to be seen of them; there was only the lurking fear of a movement, like a shadow out of time. And far beyond the city and the desert rose the snowcapped mountains; even as he looked upon them, names for them sprang into his thoughts. The city on the desert was the Nameless City and the snowy peaks were the Mountains of Madness or perhaps Kadath in the Cold Waste. And he enjoyed keenly bestowing names upon these landscapes, for they came to him with ease, they sprang to his mind as if they had always been lingering on the perimeter of his thoughts, waiting for this moment to come to being.

He sat for a long time, his fascination unbounded, but presently a vague feeling of alarm began to stir in him. The landscapes passing before his eyes were no less of the quality of dreams, but there was a disquieting persistence of the malign, together with unmistakable hints of horrible entities which inhabited those landscapes; so that finally he put out the light and somewhat shakily lit a candle, and was comforted by its wan, familiar glow.

He pondered long on what he had seen. His grandfather

had called the lamp his "most priceless possession" its properties must then have been known to him. And what were its properties but an ancestral memory and a magic gift of revelation so that he who sat in its glow was enabled to see in turn the places of beauty and terror its owners had known? What Phillips had seen, he was convinced, were landscapes known to Alhazred. But how inadequate this explanation was! And how perplexed Phillips grew, the more he thought of what he had seen! He turned at last to the work he had put aside and lost himself in it, pushing back from his awareness all the fancies and alarms which clamored for recognition.

Late next day, Phillips went out into the October sunlight, away from the city. He took the car-line to the edge of the residential district and then struck out into the country. He penetrated a terrain which took him almost a mile from any spot he had ever before trod in the course of his life, following a road, which branched north and west from the Plainfield Pike and ascending a low rise which skirted Nentaconhaunt's western foot, and which commanded an utterly idyllic vista of rolling meadows, ancient stone walls, hoary groves, and distant cottage roofs to the west and south. He was less than three miles from the heart of the city, and yet basked in the primal rural New England of the first colonists.

Just before sunset, he climbed the hill by a precipitous cart-path bordering an old wood, and from the dizzy crest

obtained an almost stupefying prospect of outspread countryside, gleaming rivulets, faroff forests, and mystical orange sky, with the great solar disc sinking redly amidst bars of stratus clouds. Entering the woods, he saw the actual sunset through the trees, and then turned east to cross the hill to a more familiar cityward slope which he had always sought. Never before had he realized the great extent of Nentaconhaunt's surface. It was in reality a miniature plateau or table-land, with valleys, ridges, and summits of its own, rather than a simple hill. From some of the hidden interior meadows—remote from every sign of nearby human life—he secured truly marvellous glimpses of the remote urban skyline—a dream of enchanted pinnacles and domes half-floating in air, and with an obscure aura of mystery around them. The upper windows of some of the taller towers held the fire of the sun after he had lost it, affording a spectacle of cryptic and curious glamour. Then he saw the great round disc of the Hunter's moon floating about the belfries and minarets, while in the orange-glowing west Venus and Jupiter commenced to twinkle. His route across the plateau was varied—sometimes through the interior—sometimes getting toward the wooded edge where dark valleys sloped down to the plain below, and huge balanced boulders on rocky heights imparted a spectral, druidic effect where they stood out against the twilight.

He came finally to better-known ground, where the grassy ridge of an old buried aqueduct gave the illusion of a



vestigial Roman road, and stood once more on the familiar eastward crest which he had known ever since his earliest childhood. Before him, the outspread city was rapidly lighting up, and lay like a constellation in the deepening dusk. The moon poured down increasing floods of pale gold, and the glow of Venus and Jupiter in the fading west had grown intense. The way home lay before him down a steep hillside to the car-line which would take him back to the prosaic haunts of man.

But throughout all these halcyon hours, Phillips had not once forgotten his experience of the night before, and he could not deny that he looked upon the coming of darkness with an increased anticipation. The vague alarm which had stirred him had subsided in the promise of further nocturnal adventure of a nature hitherto unknown to him.

He ate his solitary supper that night in haste so that he could go early to his study where the rows of books that reached to the ceiling greeted him with their bland assurance of permanence. This night he did not even glance at the work which awaited him, but lit the lamp of Alhazred at once. Then he sat to wait for whatever might happen.

The soft glow of the lamp spread yellowly outward to the shelf-girt walls. It did not flicker; the flame burned steadily, and, as before, the first impression Phillips received was one of comforting, lulling warmth. Then, slowly, the books

and the shelves seemed to grow dim, to fade, and gave way to the scenes of another world and time.

For hour upon hour that night Phillips watched. And he named the scenes and places he saw, drawing upon a hitherto unopened vein of his imagination, stimulated by the glow from the lamp of Alhazred. He saw a dwelling of great beauty, wreathed in vapors, on a headland like that near Gloucester, and he called it the strange high house in the mist. He saw an ancient, gambrel-roofed town, with a dark river flowing through it, a town like to Salem, but more eldritch and uncanny, and he called the town Arkham, and the river Miskatonic. He saw the dark brooding sea-coast town of Innsmouth, and Devil Reef beyond it. He saw the watery depths of R'lyeh where dead Cthulhu lay sleeping. He looked upon the windswept Plateau of Leng, and the dark islands of the South Seas—the places of dream, the landscapes of other places, of outer space, the levels of being that existed in other time continua, and were older than earth itself, tracing back through the Ancient Ones to Hali in the start and even beyond.

But he witnessed these scenes as through a window or a door which seemed to beckon him invitingly to leave his own mundane world and journey into these realms of magic and wonder; and the temptation rose ever stronger within him, he trembled with a longing to obey, to discard that which he had become and chance that which he might be; and, as before, he darkened the lamp and welcomed the

book-lined walls of his Grandfather Whipple's study.

And for the rest of that night, by candle-light, abandoning the monotonous revisions he had planned to do, he turned instead to the writing of short tales, in which he called up the scenes and beings he had seen by the light of the lamp of Alhazred.

All that night he wrote, and all the next day he slept, exhausted.

And the following night, once again he wrote, though he took time to answer letters from his correspondents, to whom he wrote of his "dreams," unknowing whether he had seen the visions that had passed before his eyes or whether he had dreamed them, and aware that the worlds of his fiction had been woven inextricably with those which belonged to the lamp, having blended in his mind's eye the desires and yearnings of his youth with the visions of his creative drive, absorbing alike the places of the lamp and the secret recesses of his heart, which, like the lamp of Alhazred, had coursed the far reaches of the universes.

For many nights Phillips did not light the lamp.

The nights lengthened into months, the months into years.

He grew older, and his fictions found their way into print, and the myths of Cthulhu; of Hastur the Unspeakable! of Yog-Sothoth; and Shub-Niggurath, the Black Goat of the

Woods with a Thousand Young; of Hypnos, the god of sleep; of the Great Old Ones and their messenger, who was Nyarlathotep—all became part of the lore of Phillips' innermost being, and of the shadow-world beyond. He brought Arkham into reality, and delineated the strange high house in the mist; he wrote of the shadow over Innsmouth and the whisperer in darkness and the fungi from Yuggoth and the horror at Dunwich; and in his prose and verse the light from the lamp of Alhazred shone brightly, even though Phillips no longer used the lamp.

Sixteen years passed in this fashion, and then one night Ward Phillips came upon the lamp where he had put it, behind a row of books on one of the lower-most shelves of his Grandfather Whipple's library. He took it out, and at once all the old enchantment and wonder were upon him, and he polished it anew and set it once more on his table. In the long years which had passed, Phillips had grown progressively weaker. He was now mortally ill, and knew that his years were numbered; and he wanted to see again the worlds of beauty and terror that lay within the glow of the lamp of Alhazred.

He lit the lamp once more and looked to the walls.

But a strange thing came to pass. Where before there had been on the walls the places and beings of Alhazred's adventures, there now came to be a magical presentation of a country intimately known to Ward Phillips—but not to

his time, rather of a time gone by, a dear lost time, when he had romped through his childhood playing his imaginative games of Greek mythology along the banks of the Seekonk. For there, once again, were the glades of childhood; there were the familiar coves and inlets where he had spent his tender years; there was once more the bower he had built in homage to great Pan; and all the irresponsibility, the happy freedoms of that childhood lay upon those walls; for the lamp now gave back his own memory. And he thought eagerly that perhaps it had always given him an ancestral memory, for who could deny that perhaps in the days of his Grandfather Whipple's youth, or the youth of those who had gone before him, someone in the Ward Phillips' line had seen the places illuminated by the lamp?

And once again it was as if he saw as through a door. The scene invited him, and he stumbled weakly to his feet and walked toward the walls.

He hesitated only for a moment; then he strode toward the books.

The sunlight burst suddenly all about him. He felt shorn of his shackles, and he began to run lithely along the shore of the Seekonk to where, ahead of him, the scenes of his childhood waited and he could renew himself, beginning again, living once more the halcyon time when all the world was young...

It was not until a curious admirer of his tales came to the city to visit him that Ward Phillips' disappearance was discovered. It was assumed that he had wandered away into the woods, and been taken ill and died there, for his solitary habits were well known in the Angell Street neighborhood, and his steady decline in health was no secret.

Though desultory searching parties were organized and sent out to scour the vicinity of Nentaconhaunt and the shores of the Seekonk, there was no trace of Ward Phillips. The police were confident that his remains would some day be found, but nothing was discovered, and in time the unsolved mystery was lost in the police and newspaper files.

The years passed. The old house on Angell Street was torn down, the library was bought up by book shops, and the contents of the house were sold for junk—including an old-fashioned antique Arabian lamp, for which no one in the technological world past Phillips' time could devise any use.

# THE SHUTTERED ROOM

## I



At dusk, the wild, lonely country guarding the approaches to the village of Dunwich in north central Massachusetts seems more desolate and forbidding than it ever does by day. Twilight lends the barren fields and domed hills a strangeness that sets them apart from the country around that area; it brings to everything a kind of sentient, watchful animosity—to the ancient trees, to the brier-bordered stone walls pressing close upon the dusty road, to the low marshes with their myriads of fireflies and their incessantly calling whippoorwills vying with the muttering of frogs and the shrill songs of toads, to the sinuous windings of the upper reaches of the Miskatonic flowing among the dark hills seaward, all of which seem to close in upon the traveller as if intent upon holding him fast, beyond all escape.

On his way to Dunwich, Abner Whateley felt all this again, as once in childhood he had felt it and run screaming in terror to beg his mother to take him away from Dunwich and Grandfather Luther Whateley. So many years ago! He

had lost count of them. It was curious that the country should affect him so, pushing through all the years he had lived since then—the years at the Sorbonne, in Cairo, in London—pushing through all the learning he had assimilated since those early visits to grim old Grandfather Whateley in his ancient house attached to the mill along the Miskatonic, the country of his childhood, coming back now out of the mists of time as were it but yesterday that he had visited his kinfolk.

They were all gone now—Mother, Grandfather Whateley, Aunt Sarey, whom he had never seen but only knew to be living somewhere in that old house—the loathsome cousin Wilbur and his terrible twin brother few had ever known before his frightful death on top of Sentinel Hill. But Dunwich, he saw as he drove through the cavernous covered bridge, had not changed; its main street lay under the looming mound of Round Mountain, its gambrel roofs as rotting as ever, its houses deserted, the only store still in the broken-steeped church, over everything the unmistakable aura of decay.

He turned off the main street and followed a rutted road up along the river, until he came within sight of the great old house with the mill wheel on the riverside. It was his property now, by the will of Grandfather Whateley, who had stipulated that he must settle the estate and “take such steps as may be necessary to bring about that dissolution I myself was not able to take.” A curious proviso, Abner



thought. But then, everything about Grandfather Whateley had been strange, as if the decadence of Dunwich had infected him irrevocably.

And nothing was stranger than that Abner Whateley should come back from his cosmopolitan way of life to heed his grandfather's adjurations for property which was scarcely worth the time and trouble it would take to dispose of it. He reflected ruefully that such relatives as still lived in or near Dunwich might well resent his return in their curious inward growing and isolated rustication which had kept most of the Whateleys in this immediate region, particularly since the shocking events which had overtaken the country branch of the family on Sentinel Hill.

The house appeared to be unchanged. The river-side of the house was given over to the mill, which had long ago ceased to function, as more and more of the fields around Dunwich had grown barren; except for one room above the mill-wheel—Aunt Sarey's room—the entire side of the structure bordering the Miskatonic had been abandoned even in the time of his boyhood, when Abner Whateley had last visited his grandfather, then living alone in the house except for the never seen Aunt Sarey who abode in her shuttered room with her door locked, never to move about the house under prohibition of such movement by her father, from whose domination only death at last had freed her.

A verandah, fallen in at the corner of the house, circled that part of the structure used as a dwelling; from the lattice-work under the eaves great cobwebs hung, undisturbed by anything save the wind for years. And dust lay over everything, inside as well as out, as Abner discovered when he had found the right key among the lot the lawyer had sent him. He found a lamp and lit it, for Grandfather Whateley had scorned electricity. In the yellow glow of light, the familiarity of the old kitchen with its nineteenth century appointments smote him like a blow. Its spareness, the hand-hewn table and chairs, the century-old clock on the mantel, the worn broom—all were tangible reminders of his fear-haunted childhood visits to the formidable house and its even more formidable occupant, his mother's aged father.

The lamplight disclosed something more. On the kitchen table lay an envelope addressed to him in handwriting so crabbed that it could only be that of a very old or infirm man—his grandfather. Without troubling to bring the rest of his things from the car, Abner sat down to the table, blowing the dust off the chair and sufficiently from the table to allow him a resting place for his elbows, and opened the envelope.

The spidery script leapt out at him. The words were as severe as he remembered his grandfather to have been. And abrupt, with no term of endearment, not even the prosaic form of greeting.

Grandson:

When you read this, I will be some months dead. Perhaps more, unless they find you sooner than I believe they will. I have left you a sum of money—all I have and die possessed of—which is in the bank at Arkham under your name now. I do this not alone because you are my own and only grandson but because among all the Whateleys—we are an accursed clan, my boy—you have gone forth into the world and gathered to yourself learning sufficient to permit you to look upon all things with an inquiring mind ridden neither by the superstition of ignorance nor the superstition of science. You will understand my meaning.

It is my wish that at least the mill section of this house be destroyed. Let it be taken apart, board by board. *If anything in it lives, I adjure you solemnly to kill it. No matter how small it may be. No matter what form it may have, for if it seem to you human it will beguile you and endanger your life and God knows how many others.*

Heed me in this.

If I seem to have the sound of madness, pray recall

that worse than madness has spawned among the Whateleys. I have stood free of it. It has not been so of all that is mine. There is more stubborn madness in those who are unwilling to believe in what they know not of and deny that such exists, than in those of our blood who have been guilty of terrible practises, and blasphemy against God, and worse.

Your Grandfather, Luther S. Whateley.

How like Grandfather! thought Abner. He remembered, spurred into memory by this enigmatic, self-righteous communication, how on one occasion when his mother had mentioned her sister Sarah, and clapped her fingers across her mouth in dismay, he had run to his grandfather to ask, "Grandpa, where's Aunt Sarey?"

The old man had looked at him out of eyes that were basilisk and answered, "Boy, we do not speak of Sarah here."

Aunt Sarey had offended the old man in some dreadful way—dreadful, at least, to that firm disciplinarian—for from that time beyond even Abner Whateley's memory, his aunt had been only the name of a woman, who was his mother's older sister, and who was locked in the big room over the mill and kept forever invisible within those walls, behind the shutters nailed to her windows. It had been forbidden both

Abner and his mother even to linger before the door of that shuttered room, though on one occasion Abner had crept up to the door and put his ear against it to listen to the snuffling and whimpering sounds that went on inside, as from some large person, and Aunt Sarey, he had decided, must be as large as a circus fat lady, for she devoured so much, judging by the great platters of food—chiefly meat, which she must have prepared herself, since so much of it was raw—carried to the room twice daily by old Luther Whateley himself, for there were no servants in that house, and had not been since the time Abner's mother had married, after Aunt Sarey had come back, strange and mazed, from a visit to distant kin in Innsmouth.

He refolded the letter and put it back into the envelope. He would think of its contents another day. His first need now was to make sure of a place to sleep. He went out and got his two remaining bags from the car and brought them to the kitchen. Then he picked up the lamp and went into the interior of the house. The old-fashioned parlor, which was always kept closed against that day when visitors came—and none save Whateleys called upon Whateleys in Dunwich—he ignored. He made his way instead to his grandfather's bedroom; it was fitting that he should occupy the old man's bed now that he, and not Luther Whateley, was master here.

The large, double bed was covered with faded copies of the *Arkham Advertiser*, carefully arranged to protect the

fine cloth of the spread, which had been embossed with an armigerous design, doubtless a legitimate Whateley heritage. He set down the lamp and cleared away the newspapers. When he turned down the bed, he saw that it was clean and fresh, ready for occupation; some cousin of his grandfather's had doubtless seen to this, against his arrival, after the obsequies.

Then he got his bags and transferred them to the bedroom, which was in that corner of the house away from the village; its windows looked along the river, though they were more than the width of the mill from the bank of the stream. He opened the only one of them which had a screen across its lower half, then sat down on the edge of the bed, bemused, pondering the circumstances which had brought him back to Dunwich after all these years.

He was tired now. The heavy traffic around Boston had tired him. The contrast between the Boston region and this desolate Dunwich country depressed and troubled him. Moreover, he was conscious of an intangible uneasiness. If he had not had need of his legacy to continue his research abroad into the ancient civilizations of the South Pacific, he would never have come here. Yet family ties existed, for all that he would deny them. Grim and forbidding as old Luther Whateley had always been, he was his mother's father, and to him his grandson owed the allegiance of common blood.

Round Mountain loomed close outside the bedroom; he

felt its presence as he had when a boy, sleeping in the room above. Trees, for long untended, pressed upon the house, and from one of them at this hour of deep dusk, a screech owl's bell-like notes dropped into the still summer air. He lay back for a moment, strangely lulled by the owl's pleasant song. A thousand thoughts crowded upon him, a myriad of memories. He saw himself again as the little boy he was, always half-fearful of enjoying himself in these foreboding surroundings, always happy to come and happier to leave.

But he could not lie here, however relaxing it was. There was so much to be done before he could hope to take his departure that he could ill afford to indulge himself in rest and make a poor beginning of his nebulous obligation. He swung himself off the bed, picked up the lamp again, and began a tour of the house.

He went from the bedroom to the dining room, which was situated between it and the kitchen—a room of stiff, uncomfortable furniture, also handmade,—and from there across to the parlor, the door of which opened upon a world far closer in its furniture and decorations to the eighteenth century than to the nineteenth, and far removed from the twentieth. The absence of dust testified to the tightness of the doors closing the room off from the rest of the house. He went up the open stairs to the floor above, from bedroom to bedroom—all dusty, with faded curtains, and showing every sign of having remained unoccupied for

many years even before old Luther Whateley died.

Then he came to the passage which led to the shuttered room—Aunt Sarey's hideaway—or prison—he could now never learn what it might have been, and, on impulse, he went down and stood before that forbidden door. No snuffling, no whimpering greeted him now—nothing at all, as he stood before it, remembering, still caught in the spell of the prohibition laid upon him by his grandfather.

But there was no longer any reason to remain under that adjuration. He pulled out the ring of keys, and patiently tried one after another in the lock, until he found the right one. He unlocked the door and pushed; it swung protestingly open. He held the lamp high.

He had expected to find a lady's boudoir, but the shuttered room was startling in its condition—bedding scattered about, pillows on the floor, the remains of food dried on a huge platter hidden behind a bureau. An odd, ichthyic smell pervaded the room, rushing at him with such musty strength that he could hardly repress a gasp of disgust. The room was in shambles; moreover, it wore the aspect of having been in such wild disorder for a long, long time.

Abner put the lamp on a bureau drawn away from the wall, crossed to the window above the mill wheel, unlocked it, and raised it. He strove to open the shutters before he



remembered that they had been nailed shut. Then he stood back, raised his foot, and kicked the shutters out to let a welcome blast of fresh, damp air into the room.

He went around to the adjoining outer wall and broke away the shutters from the single window in that wall, as well. It was not until he stood back to survey his work that he noticed he had broken a small corner out of the pane of the window above the mill wheel. His quick regret was as quickly repressed in the memory of his grandfather's insistence that the mill and this room above it be torn down or otherwise destroyed. What mattered a broken pane!

He returned to take up the lamp again. As he did so, he gave the bureau a shove to push it back against the wall once more. At the same moment he heard a small, rustling sound along the baseboard, and, looking down, caught sight of a long-legged frog or toad—he could not make out which—vanishing under the bureau. He was tempted to rout the creature out, but he reflected that its presence could not matter—if it had existed in these locked quarters for so long on such cockroaches and other insects as it had managed to uncover, it merited being left alone.

He went out of the room, locked the door again, and returned to the master bedroom downstairs. He felt, obscurely, that he had made a beginning, however trivial; he had scouted the ground, so to speak. And he was twice as tired for his brief look around as he had been before.

Though the hour was not late, he decided to go to bed and get an early start in the morning. There was the old mill yet to be gone through—perhaps some of the machinery could be sold, if any remained—and the mill wheel was now a curiosity, having continued to exist beyond its time.

He stood for a few minutes on the verandah, marking with surprise the welling stridulation of the crickets and katydids, and the almost overwhelming choir of the whippoorwills and frogs, which rose on all sides to assault him with a deafening insistence of such proportion as to drown out all other sounds, even such as might have risen from Dunwich. He stood there until he could tolerate the voices of the night no longer; then he retreated, locking the door, and made his way to the bedroom.

He undressed and got into bed, but he did not sleep for almost an hour, bedevilled by the chorus of natural sounds outside the house and from within himself by a rising confusion about what his grandfather had meant by the “dissolution” he himself had not been able to make. But at last he drifted into a troubled sleep.

## II

He woke with the dawn, little rested. All night he had dreamed of strange places and beings that filled him with beauty and wonder and dread—of swimming in the ocean’s depths and up the Miskatonic among fish and

amphibia and strange men, half batrachian in aspect—of monstrous entities that lay sleeping in an eerie stone city at the bottom of the sea—of utterly outré music as of flutes accompanied by weird ululations from throats far, far from human—of Grandfather Luther Whateley standing accusingly before him and thundering forth his wrath at him for having dared to enter Aunt Sarey's shuttered room.

He was troubled, but he shrugged his unease away before the necessity of walking into Dunwich for the provisions he had neglected to bring with him in his haste. The morning was bright and sunny; pewees and thrushes sang, and dew pearly on leaf and blade reflected the sunlight in a thousand jewels along the winding path that led to the main street of the village. As he went along, his spirits rose; he whistled happily, and contemplated the early fulfillment of his obligation, upon which his escape from this desolate, forgotten pocket of ingrown humanity was predicated.

But the main street of Dunwich was no more reassuring under the light of the sun than it had been in the dusk of the past evening. The village huddled between the Miskatonic and the almost vertical slope of Round Mountain, a dark and brooding settlement which seemed somehow never to have passed 1900, as if time had ground to a stop before the turn of the last century. His gay whistle faded and died away; he averted his eyes from the buildings falling into ruin; he avoided the curiously expressionless faces of

passersby, and went directly to the old church with its general store, which he knew he would find slovenly and ill-kept, in keeping with the village itself.

A gaunt-faced storekeeper watched his advance down the aisle, searching his features for any familiar lineament.

Abner strode up to him and asked for bacon, coffee, eggs, and milk.

The storekeeper peered at him. He made no move. "Ye'll be a Whateley," he said at last. "I dun't expeck ye know me. I'm yer cousin Tobias. Which one uv 'em are ye?"

"I'm Abner—Luther's grandson." He spoke reluctantly.

Tobias Whateley's face froze. "Libby's boy—Libby, that married cousin Jeremiah. Yew folks ain't back—back at Luther's? Yew folks ain't a-goin' to start things again?"

"There's no one but me," said Abner shortly. "What things are you talking about?"

"If ye dun't know, tain't fer me to say."

Nor would Tobias Whateley speak again. He put together what Abner wanted, took his money sullenly, and watched him out of the store with ill-concealed animosity.

Abner was disagreeably affected. The brightness of the

morning had dimmed for him, though the sun shone from the same unclouded heaven. He hastened away from the store and main street, and hurried along the lane toward the house he had but recently quitted.

He was even more disturbed to discover, standing before the house, an ancient rig drawn by an old workhorse. Beside it stood a boy, and inside it sat an old, white-bearded man, who, at sight of Abner's approach, signalled to the boy for assistance, and by the lad's aid, laboriously descended to the ground and stood to await Abner.

As Abner came up, the boy spoke, unsmiling. "Great-grampa'll talk to yew."

"Abner," said the old man quaveringly, and Abner saw for the first time how very old he was.

"This here's Great-grampa Zebulon Whateley," said the boy.

Grandfather Luther Whateley's brother—the only living Whateley of his generation. "Come in, sir," said Abner, offering the old man his arm.

Zebulon Whateley took it.

The three of them made slow progress toward the verandah, where the old man halted at the foot of the steps,

turning his dark eyes upon Abner from under their bushy white brows, and shaking his head gently.

“Naow, if ye’ll fetch me a cheer, I’ll set.”

“Bring a chair from the kitchen, boy,” said Abner.

The boy sped up the steps and into the house. He was out as fast with a chair for the old man, and helped to lower him to it, and stood beside him while Zebulon Whateley caught his breath.

Presently he turned his eyes full upon Abner and contemplated him, taking in every detail of his clothes, which, unlike his own, were not made by hand.

“Why have ye come, Abner?” he asked, his voice firmer now.

Abner told him, as simply and directly as he could.

Zebulon Whateley shook his head. “Ye know no more’n the rest, and less’n some,” he said. “What Luther was abaout, only God knowed. Naow Luther’s gone, and ye’ll have it to dew. I kin tell ye, Abner, I vaow afur God, I dun’t know why Luther took on so and locked hisself up and Sarey that time she come back from Innsmouth—but I kin say it was suthin’ turrible, turrible—and the things what happened was turrible. Ain’t nobody left to say Luther was to blame, nor poor Sarey—but take care, take care,

Abner.”

“I expect to follow my grandfather’s wishes,” said Abner.

The old man nodded. But his eyes were troubled, and it was plain that he had little faith in Abner.

“How’d you find out I was here, Uncle Zebulon?” Abner asked.

“I had the word ye’d come. It was my bounden duty to talk to ye. The Whateleys has a curse on ’em. Thar’s been them naow gone to graoun’ has had to dew with the devil, and thar’s some what whistled turrible things aout o’ the air, and thar’s some what had to dew with things that wasn’t all human nor all fish but lived in the water and swum aout—way aout—to sea, and thar’s some what growed in on themselves and got all mazed and queer—and thar’s what happened on Sentinel Hill that time—Lavinny’s Wilbur—and that other one by the Sentinel Stone—Gawd, I shake when I think on it...

“Now, Grandpa—don’t ye git yer dander up,” chided the boy.

“I wun’t, I wun’t,” said the old man tremulously. “It’s all died away naow. It’s forgot—by all but me and them what took the signs daown—the signs that pointed to Dunwich, sayin’ it was too turrible a place to know about...” He shook his head and was silent.

“Uncle Zebulon,” said Abner. “I never saw my Aunt Sarah.”

“No, no, boy—she was locked up that time. Afore you was borned, I think it was.”

“Why?”

“Only Luther knowed—and Gawd. Now Luther’s gone, and Gawd dun’t seem like He knowed Dunwich was still here.”

“What was Aunt Sarah doing in Innsmouth?”

“Visitin’ kin.”

“Are there Whateleys there, too?”

“Not Whateleys. Marshes. Old Obed Marsh that was Pa’s cousin. Him and his wife that he faound in the trade—at Ponape, if ye know whar that is.”

“I do.”

“Ye dew? I never knowed. They say Sarey was visitin’ Marsh kin—Obed’s son or grandson—I never knowed which. Never heered. Dun’t care. She was thar quite a spell. They say when she come back she was different. Rightly. Unsettled. Sassed her pa. And then, not long after,



he locked her up in that room till she died.”

“How long after?”

“Three, four months. And Luther never said what fer. Nobody saw her again after that till the day she wuz laid out in her coffin. Two year, might be three years ago. Thar was that time nigh onto a year after she come back from Innsmouth thar was sech goins-on here at this house—a-fightin’ and a-screamin’ and a-screechin’—most everyone in Dunwich heerd it, but no one went to see whut it was, and next day Luther he said it was only Sarey took with a spell. Might be it was. Might be it was suthin’ else....”

“What else, Uncle Zebulon?”

“Devil’s work,” said the old man instantly. “But I fergit—ye’re the eddicated one. Ain’t many Whateleys ever bin eddicated. Thar was Lavinny—she read them turrible books what was no good for her. And Sarey—she read some. Them as has only a little learnin’ might’s well have none—they ain’t fit to handle life with only a little learnin’, they’re fitter with none a-tall.”

Abner smiled.

“Dun’t ye laugh, boy!”

“I’m not laughing, Uncle Zebulon. I agree with you.”

“Then ef ye come face to face with it, ye’ll know what to dew. Ye wun’t stop and think—ye’ll jest dew.”

“With what?”

“I wisht I knowed, Abner. I dun’t. Gawd knows. Luther knowed. Luther’s dead. It comes on me Sarey knowed, too. Sarey’s dead. Now nobody knows whut turrible thing it was. Ef I was a prayin’ man, I’d pray you dun’t find aout—but ef ye dew, dun’t stop to figger it aout by eddication, jest dew whut ye have to dew. Yer grandpa kep’ a record—look fer it. Ye might learn whut kind a people the Marshes was—they wasn’t like us—suthin’ turrible happened to ’em—and might be it reached aout and tetched Sarey....”

Something stood between the old man and Abner Whateley—something unvoiced, perhaps unknown; but it was something that cast a chill about Abner for all his conscious attempt to belittle what he felt.

“I’ll learn what I can, Uncle Zebulon,” he promised.

The old man nodded and beckoned to the boy. He signified that he wished to rise, to return to the buggy. The boy came running.

“Ef ye need me, Abner, send word to Tobias,” said Zebulon Whateley. “I’ll come—ef I can.”

“Thank you.”

Abner and the boy helped the old man back into the buggy. Zebulon Whateley raised his forearm in a gesture of farewell, the boy whipped up the horse, and the buggy drew away.

Abner stood for a moment looking after the departing vehicle. He was both troubled and irritated—troubled at the suggestion of something dreadful which lurked beneath Zebulon Whateley's words of warning, irritated because his grandfather, despite all his adjurations, had left him so little to act upon. Yet this must have been because his grandfather evidently believed there might be nothing untoward to greet his grandson when at last Abner Whateley arrived at the old house. It could be nothing other by way of explanation.

Yet Abner was not entirely convinced. Was the matter one of such horror that Abner should not know of it unless he had to? Or had Luther Whateley laid down a key to the riddle elsewhere in the house? He doubted it. It would not be Grandfather's way to seek the devious when he had always been so blunt and direct.

He went into the house with his groceries, put them away, and sat down to map out a plan of action. The very first thing to be accomplished was a survey of the mill part of the structure, to determine whether any machinery could be salvaged. Next he must find someone who would undertake

to tear down the mill and the room above it. Thereafter he must dispose of the house and adjoining property, though he had a sinking feeling of futility at the conviction that he would never find anyone who would want to settle in so forlorn a corner of Massachusetts as Dunwich.

He began at once to carry out his obligations.

His search of the mill, however, disclosed that the machinery which had been in it—save for such pieces as were fixed to the running of the wheel had been removed, and presumably sold. Perhaps the increment from the sale was part of that very legacy Luther Whateley had deposited in the bank at Arkham for his grandson. Abner was thus spared the necessity of removing the machinery before beginning the planned demolition. The dust in the old mill almost suffocated him; it lay an inch thick over everything, and it rose in great gusts to cloud about him when he walked through the empty, cobwebbed rooms. Dust muffled his footsteps and he was glad to leave the mill to go around and look at the wheel.

He worked his way around the wooden ledge to the frame of the wheel, somewhat uncertain, lest the wood give way and plunge him into the water beneath; but the construction was firm, the wood did not give, and he was soon at the wheel. It appeared to be a splendid example of middle nineteenth century work. It would be a shame to tear it apart, thought Abner. Perhaps the wheel could be

removed, and a place could be found for it either in some museum or in some one of those buildings which were forever being reconstructed by wealthy persons interested in the preservation of the American heritage.

He was about to turn away from the wheel, when his eye was caught by a series of small wet prints on the paddles. He bent closer to examine them, but, apart from ascertaining that they were already in part dried, he could not see in them more than marks left by some small animal, probably batrachian—a frog or a toad—which had apparently mounted the wheel in the early hours before the rising of the sun. His eyes, raising, followed the line of the wheel to the broken out shutters of the room above.

He stood for a moment, thinking. He recalled the batrachian creature he had glimpsed along the baseboard of the shuttered room. Perhaps it had escaped through the broken pane? Or, more likely, perhaps another of its kind had discovered its presence and gone up to it. A faint apprehension stirred in him, but he brushed it away in irritation that a man of his intelligence should have been sufficiently stirred by the aura of ignorant, superstitious mystery clinging to his grandfather's memory to respond to it.

Nevertheless, he went around and mounted the stairs to the shuttered room. He half expected, when he unlocked the door, to find some significant change in the aspect of

the room as he remembered it from last night, but, apart from the unaccustomed daylight streaming into the room, there was no alteration.

He crossed to the window.

There were prints on the sill. There were two sets of them. One appeared to be leading out, the other entering. They were not the same size. The prints leading outward were tiny, only half an inch across. Those leading in were double that size. Abner bent close and stared at them in fixed fascination.

He was not a zoologist, but he was by no means ignorant of zoology. The prints on the sill were like nothing he had ever seen before, not even in dream. Save for being or seeming to be webbed, they were the perfect prints in miniature of human hands and feet.

Though he made a cursory search for the creature, he saw no sign of it, and finally, somewhat shaken, he retreated from the room and locked the door behind him, already regretting the impulse which had led him to it in the first place and which had caused him to burst open the shutters which for so long had walled the room away from the outer world.

### III

He was not entirely surprised to learn that no one in

Dunwich could be found to undertake the demolition of the mill. Even such carpenters as those who had not worked for a long time were reluctant to undertake the task, pleading a variety of excuses, which Abner easily recognized as a disguise for the superstitious fear of the place under which one and all labored. He found it necessary to drive into Aylesbury, but, though he encountered no difficulty in engaging a trio of husky young men who had formed a partnership to tear down the mill, he was forced to wait upon their previous commitments and had to return to Dunwich with the promise that they would come "in a week or ten days."

Thereupon he set about at once to examine into all the effects of Luther Whateley which still remained in the house. There were stacks of newspapers—chiefly the *Arkham Advertiser* and the *Aylesbury Transcript*—now yellowing with age and mouldering with dust, which he set aside for burning. There were books which he determined to go over individually in order that he might not destroy anything of value. And there were letters which he would have burned at once had he not happened to glance into one of them and caught sight of the name "Marsh," at which he read on.

"Luther, what happened to cousin Obed is a singular thing. I do not know how to tell it to you. I do not know how to make it credible. I am not sure I have all the facts in this matter. I cannot believe but that it is a rigmarole deliberately invented to conceal something of a scandalous nature, for

you know the Marshes have always been given to exaggeration and had a pronounced flair for deception. Their ways are devious. They have always been.

“But the story, as I have it from cousin Alizah, is that when he was a young man Obed and some others from Innsmouth, sailing their trading ships into the Polynesian Islands, encountered there a strange people who called themselves the ‘Deep Ones’ and who had the ability to live in the water or on the earth. Amphibians, they would then be. Does this sound credible to you? It does not to me. What is most astonishing is that Obed and some others married women of these people and brought them home to live with them.

“Now that is the *legend*. Here are the *facts*. Ever since that time, the Marshes have prospered mightily in the trade. Mrs. Marsh is never seen abroad, save on such occasions as she goes to certain closed affairs of the Order of Dagon Hall. ‘Dagon’ is said to be a sea god. I know nothing of these pagan religions, and wish to know nothing. The Marsh children have a *very strange* look. I do not exaggerate, Luther, when I tell you that they have such wide mouths and such chinless faces and such large staring eyes that I swear they sometimes look more like frogs than human beings! They are not, at least, so far as I can see, *gilled*. The ‘Deep Ones’ are said to be possessed of gills, and to belong to Dagon or to some other deity of the sea whose name I cannot even pronounce, far less set down.



No matter. It is such a rigmarole as the Marshes might well invent to serve their purposes, but by God, Luther, judging by the way the ships Captain Marsh has in the East India trade keep afloat without a smitchin of damage done to them by storm or wear—the brigantine *Columbia*, the barque *Sumatra Queen*, the brig *Hetty* and some others—it might almost seem that he has made some sort of bargain with Neptune himself!

“Then there are all the doings off the coast where the Marshes live. Night swimming. They swim way out off Devil Reef, which, as you know, is a mile and a half out from the harbor here at Innsmouth. People keep away from the Marshes—except the Martins and some such others among them who were also in the East India trade. Now that Obed is gone—and I suppose Mrs. Marsh may be also, since she is no longer seen anywhere—the children and the grandchildren of old Captain Obed follow in his strange ways.”

The letter dwindled down to commonplaces about prices—ridiculously low figures seen from this vantage of over half a century later, for Luther Whateley must have been a young man, unmarried, at the time this letter had been written to him by Aariah, a cousin of whom Abner had never heard. What it had to say of the Marshes was nothing—or all, perhaps, if Abner had had the key to the puzzle of which, he began to believe with mounting irritation, he held only certain disassociated parts.

But if Luther Whateley had believed this rigmarole, would he, years later, have permitted his daughter to visit the Marsh cousins? Abner doubted it.

He went through other letters—bills, receipts, trivial accounts of journeys made to Boston, Newburyport, Kingsport—postcards, and came at last to another letter from Cousin Aariah, written, if a comparison of dates was sufficient evidence, immediately after the one Abner had just read. They were ten days apart, and Luther would have had time to reply to that first.

Abner opened it eagerly.

The first page was an account of certain small family matters pertinent to the marriage of another cousin, evidently a sister of Aariah's; the second a speculation about the future of the East India trade, with a paragraph about a new book by Whitman—evidently Walt; but the third was manifestly in answer to something Grandfather Whateley had evidently written concerning the Marsh branch of the family.

“Well, Luther, you may be right in this matter of race prejudice as responsible for the feeling against the Marshes. I know how people here feel about other races. It is unfortunate, perhaps, but such is their lack of education that they find much room for such prejudices. But I am not convinced that it is *all* due to race prejudice. I don't know

what kind of race it is that would give the Marshes after Obed that strange *look*. The East India people—such as I have seen and recall from my early days in the trade—have features much like our own, and only a different color to the skin—copper, I would call it. Once I did see a native who had a similar appearance, but he was evidently not typical, for he was shunned by all the workers around the ships in the harbor where I saw him. I've forgotten now where it was, but I think Ponape.

“To give them their due, the Marshes keep pretty much to themselves—or to those families living here under the same cloud. And they more or less run the town. It may be significant—it may have been accident—that one selectman who spoke out against them was found drowned soon after. I am the first to admit that coincidences more startling than this frequently occur, but you may be sure that people who disliked the Marshes made the most of this.

“But I know how your analytical mind is cold to such talk; I will spare you more of it.”

Thereafter not a word. Abner went through bundles of letters in vain. What Aariah wrote in subsequent letters dealt scrupulously with family matters of the utmost triviality. Luther Whateley had evidently made his displeasure with mere gossip clear; even as a young man, Luther must have been strictly self-disciplined. Abner found but one further reference to any mystery at Innsmouth—that was a

newspaper clipping dealing in very vague terms, suggesting that the reporter who sent in the story did not really know what had taken place, with certain federal activity in and near Innsmouth in 1928—the attempted destruction of Devil Reef, and the blowing up of large sections of the waterfront, together with wholesale arrests of Marshes and Martins and some others. But this event was decades removed from Ariah's early letters.

Abner put the letters dealing with the Marshes into his pocket, and summarily burned the rest, taking the mass of material he had gone through out along the riverbank and setting fire to it. He stood guarding it, lest a chance wind carry a spark to surrounding grass, which was unseasonably dry. He welcomed the smell of the smoke, however, for a certain dead odor lingered along the riverbank, rising from the remains of fish upon which some animal had feasted—an otter, he thought.

As he stood beside the fire, his eyes roved over the old Whateley building, and he saw, with a rueful reflection that it was high time the mill were coming down, that several panes of the window he had broken in the room that had been Aunt Sarey's, together with a portion of the frame, had fallen out. Fragments of the window were scattered on the paddles of the mill wheel.

By the time the fire was sufficiently low to permit his leaving it, the day was drawing to a close. He ate a meager

supper, and, having had his fill of reading for the day, decided against attempting to turn up his grandfather's "record" of which Uncle Zebulon Whateley had spoken, and went out to watch the dusk and the night in from the verandah, hearing again the rising chorus of the frogs and whippoorwills.

He retired early, unwontedly weary.

Sleep, however, would not come. For one thing, the summer night was warm; hardly a breath of air stirred. For another, even above the ululation of the frogs and the demoniac insistence of the whippoorwills, sounds from within the house invaded his consciousness—the creaks and groans of a many-timbered house settling in for the night; a peculiar scuffling or shuffling sound, half-drag, half-hop, which Abner laid to rats, which must abound in the mill section of the structure—and indeed, the noises were muffled, and seemed to reach him as from some distance; and, at one time, the cracking of wood and the tinkle of glass, which, Abner guessed, very probably came from the window above the mill wheel. The house was virtually falling to pieces about him; it was as if he served as a catalytic agent to bring about the final dissolution of the old structure.

This concept amused him because it struck him that, willy-nilly, he was carrying out his grandfather's adjuration. And, so bemused, he fell asleep.

He was awakened early in the morning by the ringing of the telephone, which he had had the foresight to have connected for the duration of his visit in Dunwich. He had already taken down the receiver from the ancient instrument attached to the wall before he realized that the call was on a party line and not intended for him. Nevertheless, the woman's voice that leapt out at him, burst open his ear with such screaming insistence that he remained frozen to the telephone.

"I tell ye, Mis' Corey, I heard things las' night—the graoun' was a-talkin' agen, and along about midnight I heerd that scream—I never figgered a caow's scream that way—jest like a rabbit, only deeper. That was Lutey Sawyer's caow—they faoun' her this morning—more'n haff et by animals..."

"Mis' Bishop, you dun't s'pose...it's come back?"

"I dun't know. I hope t'Gawd it ain't. But it's the same as the las' time."

"Was it jest that one caow took?"

"Jest the one. I ain't heerd about no more. But that's how it begun the las' time, Mis' Corey."

Quietly, Abner replaced the receiver. He smiled grimly at this evidence of the rampant superstitions of the Dunwich natives. He had never really known the depths of ignorance and superstition in which dwellers in such out-of-the-way

places as Dunwich lived, and this manifestation of it was, he was convinced, but a mild sample.

He had little time, however, to dwell upon the subject, for he had to go into town for fresh milk, and he strode forth into the morning of sun and clouds with a certain feeling of relief at such brief escape from the house.

Tobias Whateley was uncommonly sullen and silent at Abner's entrance. Abner sensed not only resentment, but a certain tangible fear. He was astonished. To all Abner's comments Tobias replied in muttered monosyllables. Thinking to make conversation, he began to tell Tobias what he had overheard on the party line.

"I know it," said Tobias, curtly, for the first time gazing at Abner's face with naked terror.

Abner was stunned into silence. Terror vied with animosity in Tobias's eyes. His feelings were plain to Abner before he dropped his gaze and took the money Abner offered in payment.

"Yew seen Zebulon?" he asked in a low voice.

"He was at the house," said Abner.

"Yew talk to him?"

"We talked."

It seemed as if Tobias expected that certain matters had passed between them, but there was that in his attitude that suggested he was puzzled by subsequent events, which seemed to indicate that Zebulon had not told him what Tobias had expected the old man to tell him, or else that Abner had disregarded some of his uncle's advice. Abner began to feel completely mystified; added to the superstitious talk of the natives on the telephone, to the strange hints Uncle Zebulon had dropped, this attitude of his cousin Tobias filled him with utter perplexity. Tobias, no more than Zebulon, seemed inclined to come out frankly and put into words what lay behind his sullen features—each acted as if Abner, as a matter of course, should know.

In his bafflement, he left the store, and walked back to the Whateley house determined to hasten his tasks as much as he could so that he might get away from this forgotten hamlet with its queer, superstition-ridden people, for all that many of them were his relatives.

To that end, he returned to the task of sorting his grandfather's things as soon as he had had his breakfast, of which he ate very little, for his disagreeable visit to the store had dulled the appetite which he had felt when he had set out for the store earlier.

It was not until late afternoon that he found the record he sought—an old ledger, in which Luther Whateley had made certain entries in his crabbed hand.



## IV

By the light of the lamp, Abner sat down to the kitchen table after he had a small repast, and opened Luther Whateley's ledger. The opening pages had been torn out, but, from an examination of the fragments of sheets still attached to the threads of the sewing, Abner concluded that these pages were purely of accounts, as if his grandfather had taken up an old, not completely used account book for a purpose other than keeping accounts, and had removed such sheets as had been more prosaically utilized.

From the beginning, the entries were cryptic. They were un-dated, except for the day of the week.

"This Saturday Aariah answered my inquiry. S. was seen sev times with Ralsa Marsh. Obed's great-grandson. *Swam* together by night."

Such was the first entry, clearly pertaining to Aunt Sarey's visit to Innsmouth, about which Grandfather had plainly inquired of Aariah. Something had impelled Luther to make such inquiry. From what he knew of his grandfather's character, Abner concluded that the inquiry had been made after Sarey had returned to Dunwich.

*Why?*

The next entry was pasted in, and was clearly part of a typewritten letter received by Luther Whateley.

“Ralsa Marsh is probably the most repellent of all the family. He is almost *degenerate* in his looks. I know you have said that it was Libby of your daughters who was the fairest; even so, we cannot imagine how Sarah came to take up with someone who is so repulsive as Ralsa, in whom all those recessive characteristics which have been seen in the Marsh family after Obed’s strange marriage to that Polynesian woman—(the Marshes have denied that Obed’s wife was Polynesian, but of course, he was trading there at that time, and I don’t credit those stories about that uncharted island where he was supposed to have dallied)—seem to have come to fullest fruit.

“As far as I can now ascertain—after all, it is over two months—close to four, I think—since her return to Dunwich—they were constantly together. I am surprised that Aariah did not inform you of this. None of us here had any mandate to halt Sarah’s seeing Ralsa, and, after all, they are cousins and she was visiting at Marshes—not here.”

Abner judged that this letter had been written by a woman, also a cousin, who bore Luther some resentment for Sarah’s not having been sent to stay with her branch of the family. Luther had evidently made inquiry of her regarding Ralsa.

The third entry was once again in Luther's hand, summarizing a letter from Ariaah.

"Saturday. Ariaah maintains Deep Ones a sect or quasi-religious group. Sub-human. Said to live in the sea and worship Dagon. Another God named Cthulhu. Gilled people. Resembling frogs or toads more than fish, but eyes ichthyic. Claims Obed's late wife was one. Holds that Obed's children all bore the marks. Marshes gilled? How else could they swim a mile and a half to Devil Reef, and back? Marshes eat sparingly, can go without food and drink a long time, diminish or expand in size rapidly." (To this Luther had appended four scornful exclamation marks.)

"Zadok Allen swears he saw Sarah swimming out to Devil Reef. Marshes carrying her along. All *naked*. Swears he saw Marshes with tough, warty skin. Some with *scales*, like fish! Swears he saw them chase and eat fish! Tear them apart like animals."

The next entry was again a portion of a letter, patently a reply to one from Grandfather Whateley.

"You ask who is responsible for those *ridiculous* tales about the Marshes. Well, Luther, it would be impossible to single out any one or a dozen people over several generations. I agree that old Zadok Allen talks too much, drinks, and may be romancing. But he is only one. The fact is this legendry—or *rigmarole*, as you call it,—has grown

up from one generation to the next. Through three generations. You have only to look at some of the descendants of Captain Obed to understand why this could have come about. There are some Marsh offspring said to have been too horrible to look upon. Old wives' tales? Well, Dr. Rowley Marsh was too ill to attend one of the Marsh women one time; so they had to call Dr. Gilman, and Gilman always said that what he delivered was less than human. And nobody ever saw that particular Marsh, though there were people later who claimed to have seen *things moving on two legs that weren't human.*"

Following this there was but a brief but revealing entry in two words: "Punished Sarah."

This must then mark the date of Sarah Whateley's confinement to the room above the mill. For some time after this entry, there was no mention of his daughter in Luther's script. Instead, his jottings were not dated in any way, and, judging by the difference in the color of the ink, were made at different times, though run together.

"Many frogs. Seem to bear in on the mill. Seem to be more than in the marshes across the Miskatonic. Sleeping difficult. Are whippoorwills on the increase, too, or is this imagination?...Counted thirty-seven frogs at the porch steps tonight."

There were more entries of this nature. Abner read them

all, but there was no clue in them to what the old man had been getting at. Luther Whateley had thereafter kept book on frogs, fog, fish and their movements in the Miskatonic—when they rose and leaped from the water, and so on. This seemed to be unrelated data, and was not in any way connected to the problem of Sarah.

There was another hiatus after this series of notes, and then came a single, underscored entry.

*“Ariah was right!”*

But about what had Ariah been right? Abner wondered. And how had Luther Whateley learned that Ariah had been right? There was no evidence that Ariah and Luther had continued their correspondence, or even that Ariah desired to write to the crochety Luther without a letter of direct inquiry from Luther.

There followed a section of the record to which newspaper clippings had been pasted. These were clearly unrelated, but they did establish for Abner the fact that somewhat better than a year had passed before Luther’s next entry, one of the most puzzling Abner found. Indeed, the time hiatus seemed to be closer to two years.

“R. out again.”

If Luther and Sarah were the only people in the house, who was “R.”? Could it have been Ralsa Marsh come to

visit? Abner doubted it, for there was nothing to show that Ralsa Marsh harbored any affection for his distant cousin, or certainly he would have pursued her before this.

The next notation seemed to be unrelated.

“Two turtles, one dog, remains of woodchuck. Bishop’s—two cows, found on the Miskatonic end of the pasture.”

A little further along, Luther had set down further such data.

“After one month a total of 17 cattle, 6 sheep. Hideous alterations; size commensurate with amt. of food. Z. over. Anxious about talk going around.”

Could Z. stand for Zebulon? Abner thought it did. Evidently then Zebulon had come in vain, for he had left him, Abner, with only vague and uncertain hints about the situation at the house when Aunt Sarey was confined to the shuttered room. Zebulon, on the evidence of such conversation as he had shared with Abner, knew less than Abner himself did after reading his grandfather’s record. But he did know of Luther’s record; so Luther must have told him he had set down certain facts.

These notations, however, were more in the nature of notes for something to be completed later; they were unaccountably cryptic, unless one had the key of basic knowledge which belonged to Luther Whateley. But a

growing sense of urgency was clearly manifest in the old man's further entries.

"Ada Wilkerson gone. Trace of scuffle. Strong feeling in Dunwich. John Sawyer shook his fist at me—safely across the street, where I couldn't reach him."

"Monday. Howard Willie this time. They found one shoe, with the foot still in it!"

The record was now near its end. Many pages, unfortunately, had been detached from it—some with violence—but no clue remained as to why this violence had been done to Grandfather Whateley's account. It could not have been done by anyone but Luther himself; perhaps, thought Abner, Luther felt he had told too much, and intended to destroy anything which might put a later reader on the track of the true facts regarding Aunt Sarey's confinement for the rest of her life. He had certainly succeeded.

The next entry once again referred to the elusive "R."

"R. back at last."

Then, "Nailed the shutters to the windows of Sarah's room."

And at last: "Once he has lost weight, he must be kept on a careful diet and to a controllable size."

In a way, this was the most enigmatic entry of them all. Was “he” also “R.”? If so, why must he be kept on a careful diet, and what did Luther Whateley mean by controlling his size? There was no ready answer to these questions in such material as Abner had read thus far, either in this record—or the fragmentary account still left in the record—or in letters previously perused.

He pushed away the record-book, resisting an impulse to burn it. He was exasperated, all the more so because he was uneasily aware of an urgent need to learn the secret embalmed within this old building.

The hour was now late; darkness had fallen some time ago, and the ever-present clamor of the frogs and the whippoorwills had begun once more, rising all around the house. Pushing from his thoughts briefly the apparently unconnected jottings he had been reading, he called from his memory the superstitions of the family, representing those prevalent in the countryside—associating frogs and the calling of whippoorwills and owls with death, and from this meditation progressed readily to the amphibian link which presented itself—the presence of the frogs brought before his mind’s eye a grotesque caricature of one of the Marsh clan of Innsmouth, as described in the letters Luther Whateley had saved for so many years.

Oddly, this very thought, for all that it was so casual,



startled him. The insistence of frogs and toads on singing and calling in the vicinity was truly remarkable. Yet, batrachia had always been plentiful in the Dunwich vicinity, and he had no way of knowing for how long a period before his arrival they had been calling about the old Whateley house. He discounted the suggestion that his arrival had anything at all to do with it; more than likely, the proximity of the Miskatonic and a low, swampy area immediately across the river on the edge of Dunwich, accounted for the presence of so many frogs.

His exasperation faded away; his concern about the frogs did likewise. He was weary. He got up and put the record left by Luther Whateley carefully into one of his bags, intending to carry it away with him, and to puzzle over it until some sort of meaning came out of it. Somewhere there must exist a clue. If certain horrible events had taken place in the vicinity, something more in the way of a record must exist than Luther Whateley's spare notes. It would do no good to inquire of Dunwich people; Abner knew they would maintain a close-mouthed silence before an "outsider" like himself, for all that he was related to many of them.

It was then that he thought of the stacks of newspapers, still set aside to be burned. Despite his weariness, he began to go through packs of the *Aylesbury Transcript*, which carried, from time to time, a Dunwich department.

After an hour's hasty search, he found three vague

articles, none of them in the regular Dunwich columns, which corroborated entries in Luther Whateley's ledger. The first appeared under the heading: *Wild Animal Slays Stock Near Dunwich*—

“Several cows and sheep have been slain on farms just outside Dunwich by what appears to be a wild animal of some kind. Traces left at the scenes of the slaughter suggest some large beast, but Professor Bethnall of Miskatonic University's anthropology department points out that it is not inconceivable that packs of wolves could lurk in the wild hilly country around Dunwich. No beast of the size suggested by the traces reported was ever known to inhabit the eastern seaboard within the memory of man. County officials are investigating.”

Search as he might, Abner could find no follow-up story. He did, however, come upon the story of Ada Wilkerson.

“A widow-lady, Ada Wilkerson, 57, living along the Miskatonic out of Dunwich, may have been the victim of foul play three nights ago. When she failed to visit a friend by appointment in Dunwich, her home was visited. No trace of her was found. However, the door of her house had been broken in, and the furniture had been wildly thrown about, as if a violent struggle had taken place. A very strong musk is said to have pervaded the entire area. Up to press time today, Mrs. Wilkerson has not been heard from.”

Two subsequent paragraphs reported briefly that authorities had not found any clue to Mrs. Wilkerson's disappearance. The account of a "large animal" was resurrected, lamely, and Professor Bethnall's beliefs on the possible existence of a wolf-pack, but nothing further, for investigation had disclosed that the missing lady had neither money nor enemies, and no one would have had any motive for killing her.

Finally, there was the account of Howard Willie's death, headed, *Shocking Crime at Dunwich*.

"Some time during the night of the twenty-first Howard Willie, 37, a native of Dunwich, was brutally slain as he was on his way home from a fishing trip along the upper reaches of the Miskatonic. Mr. Willie was attacked about half a mile past the Luther Whateley property, as he walked through an arbored lane. He evidently put up a fierce fight, for the ground is badly torn up in all directions. The poor fellow was overcome, and must have been literally torn limb from limb, for the only physical remains of the victim consisted of his right foot, still encased in its shoe. It had evidently been cruelly torn from his leg by great force.

"Our correspondent in Dunwich advises us that people there are very sullen and in a great rage of anger and fear. They suspect many of their number of being at least partly to blame, though they stoutly deny that anyone in Dunwich murdered either Willie or Mrs. Wilkerson, who disappeared

a fortnight ago, and of whom no word has since been heard.”

The account concluded with some data about Willie's family connections. Thereafter, subsequent editions of the *Transcript* were distinguished only for the lack of information about the events which had taken place in Dunwich, where authorities and reporters alike apparently ran up against blank walls in the stolid refusal of the natives to talk or even speculate about what had happened. There was, however, one insistent note which recurred in the comments of investigators, relayed to the press, and that was that such trail or track as could be seen appeared to have disappeared into the waters of the Miskatonic, suggesting that if an animal were responsible for the orgy of slaughter which had occurred at Dunwich, it may have come from and returned to the river.

Though it was now close to midnight, Abner massed the discarded newspapers together and took them out to the riverbank, where he set them on fire, having saved only torn pages relative to the occurrences at Dunwich. The air being still, he did not feel obliged to watch the fire since he had already burned a considerable area, and the grass was not likely to catch on fire. As he started away, he heard suddenly above the ululation of the whippoorwills and frogs, now at a frenzied crescendo, the tearing and breaking sound of wood. He thought at once of the window of the shuttered room, and retraced his steps.

In the very dim light flickering toward the house from the burning newspapers, it seemed to Abner that the window gaped wider than before. Could it be that the entire mill part of the house was about to collapse?

Then, out of the corner of his eye, he caught sight of a singularly formless moving shadow just beyond the mill wheel, and a moment later heard a churning sound in the water. The voices of the frogs had now risen to such a volume that he could hear nothing more.

He was inclined to dismiss the shadow as the creation of the wild flames leaping upward from the fire. The sound in the water might well have been that of the movement made by a school of fish, darting forward in concert. Nevertheless, he thought, it would do no harm to have another look at Aunt Sarey's room.

He returned to the kitchen, took the lamp, and mounted the stairs. He unlocked the door of the shuttered room, threw open the door, and was almost felled by the powerful musk which pushed hallward. The smell of the Miskatonic, of the marshes, the odor of that slimey deposit left on the stones and sunken debris when the Miskatonic receded to its low water stage, the cloying pungence of some animal lairs—all these were combined in the shuttered room.

Abner stood for a moment, wavering on the threshold. True, the odor in the room could have come in through the

open window. He raised the lamp so that more of its light fell upon the wall above the mill wheel. Even from where he stood, it was possible to see that not only was all the window itself now gone, but so was the frame. Even at this distance it was manifest that the frame had been broken out *from inside!*

He fell back, slammed the door shut, locked it, and fled down stairs with the shell of his rationalizations tumbling about him.

## V

Downstairs, he fought for self-control. What he had seen was but one more detail added to the proliferating accumulation of seemingly unrelated data upon which he had stumbled ever since his coming to his grandfather's home. He was convinced now that however unlikely it had at first seemed to him, all these data must be related. What he needed to learn was the one basic fact or element which bound them together.

He was badly shaken, particularly because he had the uneasy conviction that he did indeed have all the facts he needed to know, that it was his scientific training which made it impossible for him to make the primary assumption, to state the premise which the facts before him would inevitably prove. The evidence of his senses told him that something laired in that room—some bestial creature;

it was folly to assume that odors from outside could so permeate Aunt Sarey's old room and not be noticeable outside the kitchen and at the windows of his own bedroom.

The habit of rational thinking was strong in him. He took out Luther Whateley's final letter to him once more and read it again. That was what his grandfather had meant when he had written "you have gone forth into the world and gathered to yourself learning sufficient to permit you to look upon all things with an inquiring mind ridden neither by the superstition of ignorance nor the superstition of science." Was this puzzle, with all its horrible connotations, beyond rationalization?

The wild ringing of the telephone broke in upon his confused thoughts. Slipping the letter back into his pocket, he strode rapidly to the wall and took the receiver off the hook.

A man's voice screamed over the wire, amid a chaos of inquiring voices as everyone on the line picked up his receiver as if they waited, like Abner Whateley himself, for word of another tragedy. One of the voices—all were disembodied and unidentifiable for Abner—identified the caller.

"It's Luke Lang!"

“Git a posse up an’ come quick,” Luke shouted hoarsely over the wire. “It’s jest aoutside my door. Snufflin’ araoun’. Tryin’ the door. Feelin’ at the winders.”

“Luke, what is it?” asked a woman’s voice.

“Oh, Gawd! It’s some unairthly thing. It’s a-hoppin’ raoun’ like it was too big to move right—like jelly. Oh, hurry, hurry, afore it’s too late. It got my dog....”

“Git off the wire so’s we can call fer help,” interrupted another subscriber.

But Luke never heard in his extremity. “It’s a-pushin’ at the door—it’s a-bowin’ the door in....”

“Luke! Luke! Git off’n the wire!”

“It’s a-tryin’ the winder naow.” Luke Lang’s voice rose in a scream of terror. “There goes the glass. Gawd! Gawd! Hain’t yew comin’? Oh, that hand! That turri’ble arm! Gawd! That face...!”

Luke’s voice died away in a frightful screech. There was the sound of breaking glass and rending wood—then all was still at Luke Lang’s, and for a moment all was still along the wire. Then the voices burst forth again in a fury of excitement and fear.

“Git help!”



“We’ll meet at Bishops’ place.”

And someone put in, “It’s Abner Whateley done it!”

Sick with shock and half-paralyzed with a growing awareness, Abner struggled to tear the receiver from his ear, to shut off the half-crazed bedlam on the party line. He managed it with an effort. Confused, upset, frightened himself, he stood for a moment with his head leaning against the wall. His thoughts seethed around but one central point—the fact that the Dunwich rustics considered him somehow responsible for what was happening. And their conviction, he knew intuitively, was based on more than the countryman’s conventional distrust of the stranger.

He did not want to think of what happened to Luke Lang—and to those others. Luke’s frightened, agonized voice still rang in his ears. He pulled himself away from the wall, almost stumbling over one of the kitchen chairs. He stood for a moment beside the table, not knowing what to do, but as his mind cleared a little, he thought only of escape. Yet he was caught between the desire to get away, and the obligation to Luther Whateley he had not yet fulfilled.

But he had come, he had gone through the old man’s things—all save the books—he had made arrangements to tear down the mill part of the house—he could manage its sale through some agency; there was no need for him to be present. Impulsively, he hastened to the bedroom, threw

such things as he had unpacked, together with Luther Whateley's note-filled ledger, into his bags, and carried them out to his car.

Having done this, however, he had second thoughts. Why should he take flight? He had done nothing. No guilt of any kind rested upon him. He returned to the house. All was still, save for the unending chorus of frogs and whippoorwills. He stood briefly undecided; then he sat down at the table and took out Grandfather Whateley's final letter to read it once more.

He read it over carefully, thoughtfully. What had the old man meant when, in referring to the madness that had spawned among the Whateleys, he had said, "It has not been so of all that is mine" though he himself had kept free of that madness? Grandmother Whateley had died long before Abner's birth; his Aunt Julia had died as a young girl; his mother had led a blameless life. There remained Aunt Sarey. What had been her madness then? Luther Whateley could have meant none other. Only Sarey remained. What had she done to bring about her imprisonment unto death?

And what had he intended to hint at when he adjured Abner to kill anything in the mill section of the house, anything that lived? *No matter how small it may be. No matter what form it may have....* Even something so small as an inoffensive toad? A spider? A fly? Luther Whateley

wrote in riddles, which in itself was an affront to an intelligent man. Or did his grandfather think Abner a victim to the superstition of science? Ants, spiders, flies, various kinds of bugs, millers, centipedes, daddy long-legs—all occupied the old mill; and doubtless in its walls were mice as well. Did Luther Whateley expect his grandson to go about exterminating all these?

Behind him suddenly something struck the window. Glass fragmented to the floor, together with something heavy. Abner sprang to his feet and whirled around. From outside came the sound of running footsteps.

A rock lay on the floor amid the shattered glass. There was a piece of “store paper” tied to it by common store string. Abner picked it up, broke the string, and unfolded the paper.

Crude lettering stared up at him. “Git out before ye get kilt!” Store paper and string. It was not meant so much as a threat as a well-intentioned warning. And it was clearly the work of Tobias Whateley, thought Abner. He tossed it contemptuously to the table.

His thoughts were still in turmoil, but he had decided that precipitate flight was not necessary. He would stay, not only to learn if his suspicions about Luke Lang were true—as if the evidence of the telephone left room for doubt—but also to make a final attempt to fathom the riddle Luther Whateley

had left behind.

He put out the light and went in darkness to the bedroom where he stretched out, fully clothed, upon the bed.

Sleep, however, would not come. He lay probing the maze of his thoughts, trying to make sense out of the mass of data he had accumulated, seeking always that basic fact which was the key to all the others. He felt sure it existed; worse, he was positive that it lay before his eyes—he had but failed to interpret it or to recognize it.

He had been lying there scarcely half an hour, when he heard, rising above the pulsating choir of the frogs and whippoorwills, a splashing from the direction of the Miskatonic—an approaching sound, as if a large wave were washing up the banks on its seaward way. He sat up, listening. But even as he did so, the sound stopped and another took its place—one he was loath to identify, and yet could define as no other than that of someone trying to climb the mill-wheel.

He slid off the bed and went out of the room.

From the direction of the shuttered room came a muffled, heavy falling sound—then a curious, choking whimpering that sounded, horribly, like a child at a great distance trying to call out—then all was still, and it seemed that even the noise and clamor of the frogs diminished and fell away.

He returned to the kitchen and lit the lamp.

Pooled in the yellow glow of light, Abner made his way slowly up the stairs toward the shuttered room. He walked softly, careful to make no sound.

Arriving at the door, he listened. At first he heard nothing—then a susurrations smote his ears.

Something in that room—*breathed!*

Fighting back his fear, Abner put the key in the lock and turned it. He flung open the door and held the lamp high.

Shock and horror paralyzed him.

There, squatting in the midst of the tumbled bedding from that long-abandoned bed, sat a monstrous, leathery-skinned creature that was neither frog nor man, one gorged with food, with blood still slavering from its batrachian jaws and upon its webbed fingers—a monstrous entity that had strong, powerfully long arms, grown from its bestial body like those of a frog, and tapering off into a man's hands, save for the webbing between the fingers....

The tableau held for only a moment.

Then, with a frenzied growling sound—“*Eh-ya-ya-ya-yaahaah—ngh'aaa—h'yuh, h'yuh—*” it rose up, towering, and launched itself at Abner.

His reaction was instantaneous, born of terrible, shattering knowledge. He flung the kerosene-filled lamp with all his might straight at the thing reaching toward him.

Fire enveloped the thing. It halted and began to tear frantically at its burning body, unmindful of the flames rising from the bedding behind it and the floor of the room, and at the same instant the calibre of its voice changed from a deep growling to a shrill, high wailing—“*Mama-mama—ma-aa-ma-aa-ma-aa!*”

Abner pulled the door shut and fled.

Down the stairs, half falling, through the rooms below, with his heart pounding madly, and out of the house. He tumbled into the car, almost bereft of his senses, half-blinded by the perspiration of his fear, turned the key in the ignition, and roared away from that accursed place from which the smoke already poured, while spreading flames in that tinder-dry building began to cast a red glow into the sky.

He drove like one possessed—through Dunwich—through the covered bridge—his eyes half-closed, as if to shut out forever the sight of that which he had seen, while the dark, brooding hills seemed to reach for him and the chanting whippoorwills and frogs mocked him.

But nothing could erase that final, cataclysmic knowledge

seared into his mind—the key to which he had had all along and not known it—the knowledge implicit in his own memories as well as in the notes Luther Whateley had left—the chunks of raw meat he had childishly supposed were going to be prepared in Aunt Sarey's room instead of to be *eaten raw*, the reference to "R." who had come "back at last" after having escaped, back to the only home "R." knew—the seemingly unrelated references also in his grandfather's hand to missing cows, sheep, and the remains of other animals—the hideous suggestion clearly defined now in those entries of Luther Whateley's about R.'s "size commensurate with amt. of food," and "he must be kept on a careful diet and to a controllable size"—like the Innsmouth people!—controlled to nothingness after Sarah's death, with Luther hoping that foodless confinement might shrivel the thing in the shuttered room and kill it beyond revival, despite the doubt that had led him to adjure Abner to kill "anything in it that lives,"—*the thing Abner had unwittingly liberated when he broke the pane and kicked out the shutters, liberated to seek its own food and its hellish growth again, at first with fish from the Miskatonic, then with small animals, then cattle, and at last human beings—the thing that was half-batrachian, half-human, but human enough to come back to the only home it had ever known and to cry out in terror for its mother in the face of the fatal holocaust—the thing that had been born to the unblest union of Sarah Whateley and Ralsa Marsh, spawn of tainted and degenerate blood,*

*the monster that would loom forever on the perimeter of Abner Whateley's awareness—his cousin Ralsa, doomed by his grandfather's iron will, instead of being released long ago into the sea to join the Deep Ones among the minions of Dagon and great Cthulhu!*



# THE FISHERMAN OF FALCON POINT



Along the Massachusetts coast where he lived many things are whispered about Enoch Conger—and certain others are hinted at in lowered voices and with great caution—things of surpassing strangeness which flow up and down the coast in the words of sea-farers from the port of Innsmouth, for he lived only a few miles down the coast from that town, at Falcon Point, which was so named because it was possible to see the peregrines and merlins and even sometimes the great gyrfalcons at migration time passing by this lonely finger of land jutting into the sea. There he lived until he was seen no more, for none can say he died.

He was a powerful man, broad in the shoulders, barrel-chested, with long, muscular arms. Even in middle age he wore a beard, and long hair crowned his head. His eyes were a cold blue in color, and set deep in his square face, and when he was clad in rainproof garments with a hat to match, he looked like someone who had stepped from an old schooner a century ago. He was a taciturn man, given

to living alone in a house of stone and driftwood which he himself had constructed on the windswept point of land where he heard the voices of the gulls and terns, of wind and sea, and, in season, of migrants from far places passing by, sometimes invisibly high. It was said of him that he answered them, that he talked with the gulls and terns, with the wind and the pounding sea, and with others that could not be seen and were heard only in strange tones like the muted sounds made by great batrachian beasts unknown in the bogs and marshes of the mainland.

Conger made his living by fishing, and a spare living it was, yet it contented him. He cast his net into the sea by day and by night, and what it brought up he took into Innsmouth or Kingsport or even farther to sell. But there was one moonlight night when he brought no fish into Innsmouth, but only himself, his eyes wide and staring, as if he had looked too long into the sunset and been blinded. He went into the tavern on the edges of town, where he was wont to go, and sat by himself at a table drinking ale, until some of the curious who were accustomed to seeing him came over to his table to join him, and, with the aid of more liquor, set his tongue to babbling, even though he talked as though he spoke but to himself, and his eyes did not seem to see them.

And he said he had seen a great wonder that night. He had brought his boat up to Devil Reef more than a mile outside Innsmouth, and cast his net, and brought up many

fishes—and something more—something that was a woman, yet not a woman, something that spoke to him like a human being but with the gutturals of a frog speaking to the accompaniment of fluting music such as that piped from the swamps in the spring months, something that had a wide slash of a mouth but soft eyes and that wore, beneath the long hair that trailed from her head, slits that were like gills, something that begged and pleaded for its life and promised him his own life if ever the need came upon him.

“A mermaid,” said one, with laughter.

“She was not a mermaid,” said Enoch Conger, “for she had legs, though her toes were webbed, and she had hands, though her fingers were webbed, and the skin of her face was like that of mine, though her body wore the color of the sea.”

They laughed at him and made many a jest, but he heard them not. Only one of their number did not laugh, for he had heard strange tales of certain things known to old men and women of Innsmouth from the days of the clipper ships and the East India Trade, of marriages between men of Innsmouth and sea-women of the South Pacific islands, of strange happenings in the sea near Innsmouth; he did not laugh, but only listened, and later slunk away and held his tongue, taking no part in the jesting of his companions. But Enoch Conger did not notice him any more than he heard the crude baiting of his tavern companions, going on with

his tale, telling of how he had held the creature caught in the net in his arms, describing the feeling of her cold skin and the texture of her body, telling of how he had set her free and watched her swim away and dive out of sight off the dark mound of Devil Reef, only to reappear and raise her arms aloft to him and vanish forever.

After that night Enoch Conger came seldom to the tavern, and if he came, sat by himself, avoiding those who would ask him about his "mermaid" and demand to know whether he had made any proposal to her before he had set her free. He was taciturn once more, he spoke little, but drank his ale and departed. But it was known that he did not again fish at Devil Reef; he cast his net elsewhere, closer to Falcon Point, and though it was whispered that he feared to see again the thing he had caught in his net that moonlit night, he was seen often standing on the point of land looking out into the sea, as if watching for some craft to make its appearance over the horizon, or longing for that tomorrow which looms forever but never arrives for most searchers for the future, or indeed, for most men, whatever it is they ask and expect of life.

Enoch Conger retired into himself more and more, and from coming seldom to the tavern at the edge of Innsmouth, he came not at all, preferring to bring his fish to market, and hasten home with such supplies as he might need, while the tale of his mermaid spread up and down the coast and was carried inland to Arkham and Dunwich along the

Miskatonic, and even beyond, into the dark, wooded hills where lived people who were less inclined to make sport of the tale.

A year went by, and another, and yet another, and then one night the word was brought to Innsmouth that Enoch Conger had been grievously hurt at his lonely occupation, and only rescued by two other fishermen who had come by and seen him lying helpless in his boat. They had brought him to his house on Falcon Point, for that was the only place he wished to go, and had come back hastily to Innsmouth for Dr. Gilman. But when they returned to the house of Enoch Conger with Dr. Gilman, the old fisherman was nowhere to be seen.

Dr. Gilman kept his own counsel, but the two who had brought him whispered into one ear after another a singular tale, telling how they had found in the house a great moisture, a wetness clinging to the walls, to the doorknob, even to the bed to which they had lowered Enoch Conger only a short while before hastening for the doctor—and on the floor a line of wet footprints made by feet with webbed toes—a trail that led out of the house and down to the edge of the sea, and all along the way the imprints were deep, as if something heavy had been carried from the house, something as heavy as Enoch.

But though the tale was carried about, the fishermen were laughed at and scorned, for there had been only one

line of footprints, and Enoch Conger was too large a man for but one other to bear him for such a distance; and besides, Dr. Gilman had said nothing save that he had known of webbed feet on the inhabitants of Innsmouth, and knew, since he had examined him, that Enoch Conger's toes were as they should have been. And those curious ones who had gone to the house on Falcon Point to see for themselves what was to be seen came back disappointed at having seen nothing, and added their ridicule to the scorn of others for the hapless fishermen, silencing them, for there were those who suspected them of having made away with Enoch Conger, and whispered this, too, abroad.

Wherever he went, Enoch Conger did not come back to the house on Falcon Point, and the wind and the weather had their way with it, tearing away a shingle here and a board there, wearing away the bricks of the chimney, shattering a pane; and the gulls and terns and falcons flew by without hearing an answering voice; and along the coasts the whispers died away and certain dark hints took their place, displacing the suspicions of murder and some deed of darkness with something fraught with even greater wonder and terror.

For the venerable old Jedediah Harper, patriarch of the coastal fishermen, came ashore one night with his men and swore that he had seen swimming off Devil Reef a strange company of creatures, neither entirely human nor entirely batrachian, amphibian creatures that passed through the

water half in the manner of men and half in the manner of frogs, a company of more than two score, male and female. They had passed close to his boat, he said, and shone in the moonlight, like spectral beings risen from the depths of the Atlantic, and, going by, they had seemed to be singing a chant to Dagon, a chant of praise, and among them, he swore, he had seen Enoch Conger, swimming with the rest, naked, like them, and his voice too raised in dark praise. He had shouted to him in his amazement, and Enoch had turned to look at him, and he had seen his face. Then the entire school of them—Enoch Conger as well—dove under the waves and did not come up again.

But, having said this, and got it around, the old man was silenced, it was told, by certain of the Marsh and Martin clan, who were believed to be allied to strange seaw dwellers; and the Harper boat did not go out again, for afterward he had no need of money; and the men who were with him were silent, too.

Long after, on another moonlit night, a young man who remembered Enoch Conger from his boyhood years in Innsmouth returned to that port city and told how he had been out with his young son, rowing past Falcon Point in the moonlight, when suddenly out of the sea beyond him rose upward to his waist a naked man—so close to him he might almost have touched him with an oar—a man who stood in that water as if held aloft by others, who saw him not, but only looked toward the ruins of the house on Falcon

Point with great longing in his eyes, a man who wore the face of Enoch Conger. The water ran down his long hair and beard, and glistened on his body, and was dark where beneath his ears he appeared to wear long slits in his skin. And then, as suddenly and strangely as he had come, he sank away again.

And that is why, along the Massachusetts coast near Innsmouth, many things are whispered about Enoch Conger—and certain others are hinted at in lowered voices....



## WITCHES' HOLLOW



District School Number Seven stood on the very edge of that wild country which lies west of Arkham. It stood in a little grove of trees, chiefly oaks and elms with one or two maples; in one direction the road led to Arkham, in the other it dwindled away into the wild, wooded country which always looms darkly on that western horizon. It presented a warmly attractive appearance to me when first I saw it on my arrival as the new teacher early in September, 1920, though it had no distinguishing architectural feature and was in every respect the replica of thousands of country schools scattered throughout New England, a compact, conservative building painted white, so that it shone forth from among the trees in the midst of which it stood.

It was an old building at that time, and no doubt has since been abandoned or torn down. The school district has now been consolidated, but at that time it supported this school in somewhat niggardly a manner, skimping and saving on every necessity. Its standard readers, when I came there to

teach, were still *McGuffey's Eclectic Readers*, in editions published before the turn of the century. My charges added up to twenty-seven. There were Allens and Whateleys and Perkinses, Dunlocks and Abbots and Talbots—and there was Andrew Potter.

I cannot now recall the precise circumstances of my especial notice of Andrew Potter. He was a large boy for his age, very dark of mien, with haunting eyes and a shock of touseled black hair. His eyes brooded upon me with a kind of different quality which at first challenged me but ultimately left me strangely uneasy. He was in the fifth grade, and it did not take me long to discover that he could very easily advance into the seventh or eighth, but made no effort to do so. He seemed to have only a casual tolerance for his schoolmates, and for their part, they respected him, but not out of affection so much as what struck me soon as fear. Very soon thereafter, I began to understand that this strange lad held for me the same kind of amused tolerance that he held for his schoolmates.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the challenge of this pupil should lead me to watch him as surreptitiously as I could, and as the circumstances of teaching a one-room school permitted. As a result, I became aware of a vaguely disquieting fact; from time to time, Andrew Potter responded to some stimulus beyond the apprehension of my senses, reacting precisely as if someone had called to him, sitting up, growing alert, and wearing the air of

someone listening to sounds beyond my own hearing, in the same attitude assumed by animals hearing sounds beyond the pitch-levels of the human ear.

My curiosity quickened by this time, I took the first opportunity to ask about him. One of the eighth-grade boys, Wilbur Dunlock, was in the habit on occasion of staying after school and helping with the cursory cleaning that the room needed.

“Wilbur,” I said to him late one afternoon, “I notice you don’t seem to pay much attention to Andrew Potter, none of you. Why?”

He looked at me, a little distrustfully, and pondered his answer before he shrugged and replied, “He’s not like us.”

“In what way?”

He shook his head. “He don’t care if we let him play with us or not. He don’t want to.”

He seemed reluctant to talk, but by dint of repeated questions I drew from him certain spare information. The Potters lived deep in the hills to the west along an all but abandoned branch of the main road that led through the hills. Their farm stood in a little valley locally known as Witches’ Hollow which Wilbur described as “a bad place.” There were only four of them—Andrew, an older sister, and their parents. They did not “mix” with other people of the

district, not even with the Dunlocks, who were their nearest neighbors, living but half a mile from the school itself, and thus, perhaps, four miles from Witches' Hollow, with woods separating the two farms.

More than this he could not—or would not—say.

About a week later, I asked Andrew Potter to remain after school. He offered no objection, appearing to take my request as a matter of course. As soon as the other children had gone, he came up to my desk and stood there waiting, his dark eyes fixed expectantly on me, and just the shadow of a smile on his full lips.

"I've been studying your grades, Andrew," I said, "and it seems to me that with only a little effort you could skip into the sixth—perhaps even the seventh—grade. Wouldn't you like to make that effort?"

He shrugged.

"What do you intend to do when you get out of school?"

He shrugged again.

"Are you going to high school in Arkham?"

He considered me with eyes that seemed suddenly piercing in their keenness, all lethargy gone. "Mr. Williams, I'm here because there's a law says I have to be," he

answered. "There's no law says I have to go to high school."

"But aren't you interested?" I pressed him.

"What I'm interested in doesn't matter. It's what my folks want that counts."

"Well, I'm going to talk to them," I decided on the moment. "Come along. I'll take you home."

For a moment something like alarm sprang into his expression, but in seconds it diminished and gave way to that air of watchful lethargy so typical of him. He shrugged and stood waiting while I slipped my books and papers into the schoolbag I habitually carried. Then he walked docilely to the car with me and got in, looking at me with a smile that could only be described as superior.

We rode through the woods in silence, which suited the mood that came upon me as soon as we had entered the hills, for the trees pressed close upon the road, and the deeper we went, the darker grew the wood, perhaps as much because of the lateness of that October day as because of the thickening of the trees. From relatively open glades, we plunged into an ancient wood, and when at last we turned down the sideroad—little more than a lane—to which Andrew silently pointed, I found that I was driving through a growth of very old and strangely deformed trees. I had to proceed with caution; the road was so little used that

underbrush crowded upon it from both sides, and, oddly, I recognized little of it, for all my studies in botany, though once I thought I saw saxifrage, curiously mutated. I drove abruptly, without warning, into the yard before the Potter house.

The sun was now lost beyond the wall of trees, and the house stood in a kind of twilight. Beyond it stretched a few fields, strung out up the valley; in one, there were cornshocks, in another stubble, in yet another pumpkins. The house itself was forbidding, low to the ground, with half a second storey, gambrel-roofed, with shuttered windows, and the outbuildings stood gaunt and stark, looking as if they had never been used. The entire farm looked deserted; the only sign of life was in a few chickens that scratched at the earth behind the house.

Had it not been that the lane along which we had travelled ended here, I would have doubted that we had reached the Potter house. Andrew flashed a glance at me, as if he sought some expression on my face to convey to him what I thought. Then he jumped lightly from the car, leaving me to follow.

He went into the house ahead of me. I heard him announce me.

“Brought the teacher. Mr. Williams.”

There was no answer.

Then abruptly I was in the room, lit only by an old-fashioned kerosene lamp, and there were the other three Potters—the father, a tall, stoop-shouldered man, grizzled and greying, who could not have been more than forty but looked much older, not so much physically as psychically—the mother, an almost obscenely fat woman—and the girl, slender, tall, and with that same air of watchful waiting that I had noticed in Andrew.

Andrew made the brief introductions, and the four of them stood or sat, waiting upon what I had to say, and somewhat uncomfortably suggesting in their attitudes that I say it and get out.

“I wanted to talk to you about Andrew,” I said. “He shows great promise, and he could be moved up a grade or two if he’d study a little more.”

My words were not welcomed.

“I believe he’s smart enough for eighth grade,” I went on, and stopped.

“If he ’uz in eighth grade,” said his father, “he’d be havin’ to go to high school ’fore he ’uz old enough to git outa goin’ to school. That’s the law. They told me.”

I could not help thinking of what Wilbur Dunlock had told

me of the reclusiveness of the Potters, and as I listened to the elder Potter, and thought of what I had heard, I was suddenly aware of a kind of tension among them, and a subtle alteration in their attitude. The moment the father stopped talking, there was a singular harmony of attitude—all four of them seemed to be listening to some inner voice, and I doubt that they heard my protest at all.

“You can’t expect a boy as smart as Andrew just to come back here,” I said.

“Here’s good enough,” said old Potter. “Besides, he’s ours. And don’t ye go talkin’ ’bout us now, Mr. Williams.”

He spoke with so latently menacing an undercurrent in his voice that I was taken aback. At the same time I was increasingly aware of a miasma of hostility, not proceeding so much from any one or all four of them, as from the house and its setting themselves.

“Thank you,” I said. “I’ll be going.”

I turned and went out, Andrew at my heels.

Outside, Andrew said softly, “You shouldn’t be talking about us, Mr. Williams. Pa gets mad when he finds out. You talked to Wilbur Dunlock.”

I was arrested at getting into the car. With one foot on the running board, I turned. “Did he say so?” I asked.



He shook his head. "You did, Mr. Williams," he said, and backed away. "It's not what he thinks, but what he might do."

Before I could speak again, he had darted into the house.

For a moment I stood undecided. But my decision was made for me. Suddenly, in the twilight, the house seemed to burgeon with menace, and all the surrounding woods seemed to stand waiting but to bend upon me. Indeed, I was aware of a rustling, like the whispering of wind, in all the wood, though no wind stirred, and from the house itself came a malevolence like the blow of a fist. I got into the car and drove away, with that impression of malignance at my back like the hot breath of a ravaging pursuer.

I reached my room in Arkham at last, badly shaken. Seen in retrospect, I had undergone an unsettling psychic experience; there was no other explanation for it. I had the unavoidable conviction that, however blindly, I had thrust myself into far deeper waters than I knew, and the very unexpectedness of the experience made it the more chilling. I could not eat for the wonder of what went on in that house in Witches' Hollow, of what it was that bound the family together, chaining them to that place, preventing a promising lad like Andrew Potter even from the most fleeting wish to leave that dark valley and go out into a

brighter world.

I lay for most of that night, sleepless, filled with a nameless dread for which all explanation eluded me, and when I slept at last my sleep was filled with hideously disturbing dreams, in which beings far beyond my mundane imagination held the stage, and cataclysmic events of the utmost terror and horror took place. And when I rose next morning, I felt that somehow I had touched upon a world totally alien to my kind.

I reached the school early that morning, but Wilbur Dunlock was there before me. His eyes met mine with sad reproach. I could not imagine what had happened to disturb this usually friendly pupil.

“You shouldn’t a told Andrew Potter we talked about him,” he said with a kind of unhappy resignation.

“I didn’t, Wilbur.”

“I know I didn’t. So you must have,” he said. And then, “Six of our cows got killed last night, and the shed where they were was crushed down on ’em.”

I was momentarily too startled to reply. “A sudden windstorm,” I began, but he cut me off.

“Weren’t no wind last night, Mr. Williams. And the cows were *smashed*.”

“You surely cannot think that the Potters had anything to do with this, Wilbur,” I cried.

He gave me a weary look—the look of one who *knows*, meeting the glance of one who should know but cannot understand, and said nothing more.

This was even more upsetting than my experience of the previous evening. He at least was convinced that there was a connection between our conversation about the Potter family and the Dunlock’s loss of half a dozen cows. And he was convinced with so deep a conviction that I knew without trying that nothing I could say would shake it.

When Andrew Potter came in, I looked in vain for any sign that anything out of the ordinary had taken place since last I had seen him.

Somehow I got through that day. Immediately after the close of the school session, I hastened into Arkham and went to the office of the *Arkham Gazette*, the editor of which had been kind enough, as a member of the local District Board of Education, to find my room for me. He was an elderly man, almost seventy, and might presumably know what I wanted to find out.

My appearance must have conveyed something of my agitation, for when I walked into his office, his eyebrows lifted, and he said, “What’s got your dander up, Mr.

Williams?”

I made some attempt to dissemble, since I could put my hand upon nothing tangible, and, viewed in the cold light of day, what I might have said would have sounded almost hysterical to an impartial listener. I said only, “I’d like to know something about a Potter family that lives in Witches’ Hollow, west of the school.”

He gave me an enigmatic glance. “Never heard of old Wizard Potter?” he asked. And, before I could answer, he went on, “No, of course, you’re from Brattleboro. We could hardly expect Vermonters to know about what goes on in the Massachusetts back country. He lived there first. An old man when I first knew him. And these Potters were distant relatives, lived in Upper Michigan, inherited the property and came to live there when Wizard Potter died.”

“But what do you know about them?” I persisted.

“Nothing but what everybody else knows,” he said. “When they came, they were nice friendly people. Now they talk to nobody, seldom come out—and there’s all that talk about missing animals from the farms in the district. The people tie that all up.”

Thus begun, I questioned him at length.

I listened to a bewildering enigma of half-told tales, hints, legends, and lore utterly beyond my comprehension. What

seemed to be incontrovertible was a distant cousinship between Wizard Potter and one Wizard Whateley of nearby Dunwich—"a bad lot," the editor called him; the solitary way of life of old Wizard Potter, and the incredible length of time he had lived; the fact that people generally shunned Witches' Hollow. What seemed to be sheer fantasy was the superstitious lore—that Wizard Potter had "called something down from the sky, and it lived with him or in him until he died"—that a late traveller, found in a dying state along the main road, had gasped out something about "that thing with the feelers—slimy, rubbery thing with the suckers on its feelers" that came out of the woods and attacked him—and a good deal more of the same kind of lore.

When he finished, the editor scribbled a note to the librarian at Miskatonic University in Arkham, and handed it to me. "Tell him to let you look at that book. You may learn something." He shrugged. "And you may not. Young people now-days take the world with a lot of salt."

I went supperless to pursue my search for the special knowledge I felt I needed, if I were to save Andrew Potter for a better life. For it was this rather than the satisfaction of my curiosity that impelled me. I made my way to the library of Miskatonic University, looked up the librarian, and handed him the editor's note.

The old man gave me a sharp look, said, "Wait here, Mr. Williams," and went off with a ring of keys. So the book,

whatever it was, was kept under lock and key.

I waited for what seemed an interminable time. I was now beginning to feel some hunger, and to question my unseemly haste—and yet I felt that there was little time to be lost, though I could not define the catastrophe I hoped to avert. Finally the librarian came, bearing an ancient tome, and brought it around and to a table within his range of vision. The book's title was in Latin—*Necronomicon*—though its author was evidently an Arabian, *Abdul Alhazred*, and its text was in somewhat archaic English.

I began to read with interest which soon turned to complete bewilderment. The book evidently concerned ancient, alien races, invaders of earth, great mythical beings called Ancient Ones and Elder Gods, with outlandish names like Cthulhu and Hastur, Shub-Niggurath and Azathoth, Dagon and Ithaqua and Wendigo and Cthugha, all involved in some kind of plan to dominate earth and served by some of its peoples—the TchoTcho, and the Deep Ones, and the like. It was a book filled with cabalistic lore, incantations, and what purported to be an account of a great interplanetary battle between the Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones and of the survival of cults and servitors in isolated and remote places on our planet as well as on sister planets. What this rigmarole had to do with my immediate problem, with the ingrown and strange Potter family and their longing for solitude and their anti-social way of life, was completely beyond me.

How long I would have gone on reading, I do not know. I was interrupted presently by the awareness of being studied by a stranger, who stood not far from me with his eyes moving from the book I was busy reading to me. Having caught my eye, he made so bold as to come over to my side.

“Forgive me,” he said, “but what in this book interests a country school teacher?”

“I wonder now myself,” I said.

He introduced himself as Professor Martin Keane. “I may say, sir,” he added, “that I know this book practically by heart.”

“A farrago of superstition.”

“Do you think so?”

“Emphatically.”

“You have lost the quality of wonder, Mr. Williams. Tell me, if you will, what brought you to this book?”

I hesitated, but Professor Keane’s personality was persuasive and inspired confidence.

“Let us walk, if you don’t mind,” I said.

He nodded.

I returned the book to the librarian, and joined my new-found friend. Haltingly, as clearly as I could, I told him about Andrew Potter, the house in Witches' Hollow, my strange psychic experience,—even the curious coincidence of Dunlock's cows. To all this he listened without interruption, indeed, with a singular absorption. I explained at last that my motive in looking into the background of Witches' Hollow was solely to do something for my pupil.

"A little research," he said, "would have informed you that many strange events have taken place in such remote places as Dunwich and Innsmouth—even Arkham and Witches' Hollow," he said when I had finished. "Look around you at these ancient houses with their shuttered rooms and ill-lit fanlights. How many strange events have taken place under those gambrel roofs! We shall never know. But let us put aside the question of belief! One may not need to see the embodiment of evil to believe in it, Mr. Williams. I should like to be of some small service to the boy in this matter. May I?"

"By all means!"

"It may be perilous—to you as well as to him."

"I am not concerned about myself."

"But I assure you, it cannot be any more perilous to the



boy than his present position. Even death for him is less perilous.”

“You speak in riddles, Professor.”

“Let it be better so, Mr. Williams. But come—we are at my residence. Pray come in.”

We went into one of those ancient houses of which Professor Keane had spoken. I walked into the musty past, for the rooms were filled with books and all manner of antiquities. My host took me into what was evidently his sitting room, swept a chair clear of books, and invited me to wait while he busied himself on the second floor.

He was not, however, gone very long—not even long enough for me to assimilate the curious atmosphere of the room in which I waited. When he came back he carried what I saw at once were objects of stone, roughly in the shape of five-pointed stars. He put five of them into my hands.

“Tomorrow after school—if the Potter boy is there—you must contrive to touch him with one of these, and keep it fixed upon him,” said my host. “There are two other conditions. You must keep one of these at least on your person at all times, and you must keep all thought of the stone and what you are about to do out of your mind. These beings have a telepathic sense—an ability to read your

thoughts.”

Startled, I recalled Andrew’s charging me with having talked about them with Wilbur Dunlock.

“Should I not know what these are?” I asked.

“If you can abate your doubts for the time being,” my host answered with a grim smile. “These stones are among the thousands bearing the Sea of R’lyeh which closed the prisons of the Ancient Ones. They are the seals of the Elder Gods.”

“Professor Keane, the age of superstition is past,” I protested.

“Mr. Williams—the wonder of life and its mysteries is never past,” he retorted. “If the stone has no meaning, it has no power. If it has no power, it cannot affect young Potter. And it cannot protect you.”

“From what?”

“From the power behind the malignance you felt at the house in Witches’ Hollow,” he answered. “Or was this too superstition?” He smiled. “You need not answer. I know your answer. If something happens when you put the stone upon the boy, he cannot be allowed to go back home. You must bring him here to me. Are you agreed?”

“Agreed,” I answered.

That next day was interminable, not only because of the imminence of crisis, but because it was extremely difficult to keep my mind blank before the inquiring gaze of Andrew Potter. Moreover, I was conscious as never before of the wall of pulsing malignance at my back, emanating from the wild country there, a tangible menace hidden in a pocket of the dark hills. But the hours passed, however slowly, and just before dismissal I asked Andrew Potter to wait after the others had gone.

And again he assented, with that casual air tantamount almost to insolence, so that I was compelled to ask myself whether he were worth “saving” as I thought of saving him in the depths of my mind.

But I persevered. I had hidden the stone in my car, and, once the others were gone, I asked Andrew to step outside with me.

At this point I felt both helpless and absurd. I, a college graduate, about to attempt what for me seemed inevitably the kind of mumbo-jumbo that belonged to the African wilderness. And for a few moments, as I walked stiffly from the school house toward the car I almost flagged, almost simply invited Andrew to get into the car to be driven home.

But I did not. I reached the car with Andrew at my heels,

reached in, seized a stone to slip into my own pocket, seized another, and turned with lightning rapidity to press the stone to Andrew's forehead.

Whatever I expected to happen, it was not what took place.

For, at the touch of the stone, an expression of the utmost horror shone in Andrew Potter's eyes; in a trice, this gave way to poignant anguish; a great cry of terror burst from his lips. He flung his arms wide, scattering his books, wheeled as far as he could with my hold upon him, shuddered, and would have fallen had I not caught him and lowered him, foaming at the mouth, to the ground. And then I was conscious of a great, cold wind which whirled about us and was gone, bending the grasses and the flowers, rippling the edge of the wood, and tearing away the leaves at the outer band of trees.

Driven by my own terror, I lifted Andrew Potter into the car, laid the stone on his chest, and drove as fast as I could into Arkham, seven miles away. Professor Keane was waiting, no whit surprised at my coming. And he had expected that I would bring Andrew Potter, for he had made a bed ready for him, and together we put him into it, after which Keane administered a sedative.

Then he turned to me. "Now then, there's no time to be lost. They'll come to look for him—the girl probably first. We

must get back to the school house at once.”

But now the full meaning and horror of what had happened to Andrew Potter had dawned upon me, and I was so shaken that it was necessary for Keane to push me from the room and half drag me out of the house. And again, as I set down these words so long after the terrible events of that night, I find myself trembling with that apprehension and fear which seize hold of a man who comes for the first time face to face with the vast unknown and knows how puny and meaningless he is against that cosmic immensity. I knew in that moment that what I had read in that forbidden book at the Miskatonic Library was not a farrago of superstition, but the key to a hitherto unsuspected revelation perhaps far, far older than mankind in the universe. I did not dare to think of what Wizard Potter had called down from the sky.

I hardly heard Professor Keane's words as he urged me to discard my emotional reaction and think of what had happened in scientific, more clinical fashion. After all, I had now accomplished my objective—Andrew Potter was saved. But to insure it, he must be made free of the others, who would surely follow him and find him. I thought only of what waiting horror that quartet of country people from Michigan had walked into when they came to take up possession of the solitary farm in Witches' Hollow.

I drove blindly back to school. There, at Professor

Keane's behest, I put on the lights and sat with the door open to the warm night, while he concealed himself behind the building to wait upon their coming. I had to steel myself in order to blank out my mind and take up that vigil.

On the edge of night, the girl came...

And after she had undergone the same experience as her brother, and lay beside the desk, the star-shaped stone on her breast, their father showed up in the doorway. All was darkness now, and he carried a gun. He had no need to ask what had happened; he *knew*. He stood wordless, pointed to his daughter and the stone on her breast, and raised his gun. His inference was plain—if I did not remove the stone, he meant to shoot. Evidently this was the contingency the professor expected, for he came upon Potter from the rear and touched him with the stone.

Afterward we waited for two hours—in vain, for Mrs. Potter.

"She isn't coming," said Professor Keane at last. "She harbors the seat of its intelligence—I had thought it would be the man. Very well—we have no choice—we must go to Witches' Hollow. These two can be left here."

We drove through the darkness, making no attempt at secrecy, for the professor said the "thing" in the house in the Hollow "knew" we were coming but could not reach us

past the talisman of the stone. We went through that close pressing forest, down the narrow lane where the queer undergrowth seemed to reach out toward us in the glow of the headlights, into the Potter yard.

The house stood dark save for a wan glow of lamplight in one room.

Professor Keane leaped from the car with his little bag of star-shaped stones, and went around sealing the house—with a stone at each of the two doors, and one at each of the windows, through one of which we could see the woman sitting at the kitchen table—stolid, watchful, *aware*, no longer dissembling, looking unlike that tittering woman I had seen in this house not long ago, but rather like some great sentient beast at bay.

When he had finished, my companion went around to the front, and, by means of brush collected from the yard and piled against the door, set fire to the house, heedless of my protests.

Then he went back to the window to watch the woman, explaining that only fire could destroy the elemental force, but that he hoped, still, to save Mrs. Potter. “Perhaps you’d better not watch, Williams.”

I did not heed him. Would that I had—and so spared myself the dreams that invade my sleep even yet! I stood at

the window behind him and watched what went on in that room—for the smell of smoke was now permeating the house. Mrs. Potter—or what animated her gross body—started up, went awkwardly to the back door, retreated, to the window, retreated from it, and came back to the center of the room, between the table and the wood stove, not yet fired against the coming cold. There she fell to the floor, heaving and writhing.

The room filled slowly with smoke, hazing about the yellow lamp, making the room indistinct—but not indistinct enough to conceal completely what went on in the course of that terrible struggle on the floor, where Mrs. Potter threshed about as if in mortal convulsion and slowly, half visibly, something other took shape—an incredible amorphous mass, only half glimpsed in the smoke, tentacled, shimmering, with a cold intelligence and a physical coldness that I could feel through the window. The thing rose like a cloud above the now motionless body of Mrs. Potter, and then fell upon the stove and drained into it like vapor!

“The stove!” cried Professor Keane, and fell back.

Above us, out of the chimney, came a spreading blackness, like smoke, gathering itself briefly there. Then it hurtled like a lightning bolt aloft, into the stars, in the direction of the Hyades, back to that place from which old Wizard Potter had called it into himself, away from where it



had lain in wait for the Potters to come from Upper Michigan and afford it a new host on the face of earth.

We managed to get Mrs. Potter out of the house, much shrunken now, but alive.

On the remainder of that night's events there is no need to dwell—how the professor waited until fire had consumed the house to collect his store of star-shaped stones, of the reuniting of the Potter family—freed from the curse of Witches' Hollow and determined never to return to that haunted valley—of Andrew, who, when we came to waken him, was talking in his sleep of “great winds that fought and tore” and a “place by the Lake of Hali where they live in glory forever.”

What it was that old Wizard Potter had called down from the stars, I lacked the courage to ask, but I knew that it touched upon secrets better left unknown to the races of men, secrets I would never have become aware of had I not chanced to take District School Number Seven, and had among my pupils the strange boy who was Andrew Potter.

# THE SHADOW IN THE ATTIC

## I



My Great-uncle Uriah Garrison was not a man to cross—a dark-faced, shaggy-browed man with wild black hair and a face that haunted my childhood dreams. I knew him only in those early years. My father crossed him, and he died—strangely, smothered in his bed a hundred miles from Arkham, where my great-uncle lived. My Aunt Sophia condemned him, and she died—tripped on a stair by nothing visible. How many others might there have been? Who knows? Who could do more than whisper fearfully of what dark powers were at Uriah Garrison's command?

And of how much of what was said of him was superstitious gossip, baseless, and malicious, none could say. We never saw him again after my father's death, my mother hating her uncle then and until the day she died, though she never forgot him. Nor did I, either him or his gambrel-roofed house on Aylesbury Street, in that part of Arkham south of the Miskatonic River, not far from Hangman's Hill and its wooded graveyard. Indeed,

Hangman's Brook flowed through his grounds, wooded, too, like the cemetery on the hill; I never forgot the shadowed house where he lived alone and had someone in—by night—to keep his house for him—the high-ceilinged rooms, the shunned attic which no one entered by day and into which no one was permitted, ever, to go with a lamp or light of any kind, the small-paned windows that looked out upon the bushes and trees, the fan-lit doors; it was the kind of house that could not fail to lay its dark magic upon an impressionable young mind, and it did upon mine, filling me with brooding fancies and, sometimes, terrifying dreams, from which I started awake and fled to my mother's side, and one memorable night lost my way and came upon my great-uncle's housekeeper, with her strange emotionless, expressionless face—she stared at me and I at her, as across unfathomable gulfs of space, before I turned and sped away, spurred by new fear imposed upon those engendered in dreams.

I did not miss going there. There was no love lost between us, and there was little communication, though there were occasions on which I was moved to send Uriah Garrison a short greeting—the old man's birthday, or Christmas—to which he never responded, which was as well.

It was, therefore, all the more surprising to me that I should have inherited his property and a small competence at his death, with no more annoying a provision but that I

inhabit the house for the summer months of the first year after his death; he had known, clearly, that my teaching obligations would not permit occupancy throughout the year.

It was not much to ask. I had no intention of keeping the property. Arkham had even in those years begun to grow outward along the Aylesbury Pike, and the city which had once been so detached from my great-uncle's home, was now pressing close upon it, and the property would be a desirable acquisition for someone. Arkham held no particular attraction for me, though I was fascinated by the legends that haunted it, by its clustering gambrel roofs, and the architectural ornamentation of two centuries ago. This fascination did not run deep, and Arkham as a permanent home did not appeal to me. But before I could sell Uriah Garrison's house, it was necessary to occupy it in accordance with the terms of his will.

In June of 1928, over my mother's protests and in spite of her dark hints that Uriah Garrison had been peculiarly cursed and abhorred, I took up my residence in the house on Aylesbury Street. It required little effort to do so, for the house had been left furnished since my great-uncle's death in March of that year, and someone, clearly, had kept it clean, as I saw on my arrival from Brattleboro. My great-uncle's housekeeper had evidently been instructed to continue her duties at least until my occupancy.

But my great-uncle's lawyer—an ancient fellow who still affected high collars and solemn black attire—knew nothing of any arrangements Uriah Garrison had made, when I called upon him to investigate the provisions of the will. "I've never been in the house, Mr. Duncan," he said. "If he made arrangements to have it kept clean, there must have been another key. I sent you the one I had, as you know. There is no other, to my knowledge."

As for the provisions of my great-uncle's will—these were barrenly simple. I was merely to occupy the house through the months of June, July, and August, or for ninety days following my coming, if my teaching obligations made it impossible to take up occupancy on the first of June. There were no other conditions whatsoever, not even the ban on the attic room I had expected to see set down.

"You may find the neighbors a trifle unfriendly at first," Mr. Saltonstall went on. "Your great-uncle was a man of odd habits, and he rebuffed the neighbors. I suppose he resented their moving into the neighborhood, and they for their part took umbrage at his independence and made much of the fact that, because he took walks into the cemetery on Hangman's Hill, he seemed to prefer the company of the dead to that of the living."

As to what the old man had been like in his last years, about which I asked,—“He was a lusty, vigorous old fellow, very tough, actually,” answered Mr. Saltonstall, “but, as so

often happens, when his decline came, it came fast—he was dead in just one week. Senility, the doctor said.”

“His mind?” I asked.

Mr. Saltonstall smiled frostily. “Well, now, Mr. Duncan, you must know there was always some question about your uncle’s mind. He had some very strange ideas which were, in a real sense, archaic. This witchcraft exploration, for one thing—he spent a good deal of money investigating the Salem trials. But you’ll find his library intact—and filled with books on the subject. Other than this obsessive interest in one subject, he was a coldly rational man—that describes him best. Unfriendly, and holding himself aloof.”

So Great-uncle Uriah Garrison had not changed in the years that had intervened between my childhood and my late twenties. And the house had not changed, either. It still had that air of watchful waiting—like someone huddled together against the weather, waiting for a stagecoach—nothing more recent, certainly, for the house was two hundred years old, and, though well kept up, it had never been invaded by electricity and its plumbing was archaic. Apart from its appointments, and some aspects of its finishing lumber, the house had no value—only the property on which it stood had considerable monetary worth in view of the expansion of Arkham along the Aylesbury Pike.

The furniture was in cherry and mahogany and black

walnut, and I more than half suspected that if Rhoda—my fiancée, saw it, she would want to keep it for our own house when we built one—and, what with the money the sale of the property and the furniture might realize, we should be able to build that house, leaving my salary as an English Department assistant and hers as an instructor in philology and archaeology to keep it up.

Three months' time was not long to do without electricity, and I could endure the ancient plumbing for those weeks, but I decided forthwith that I could not do without a telephone; so I drove into Arkham and ordered a telephone installed without delay. While I was in the business section, I stopped in at the telegraph office on Church Street and sent wires to both my mother and Rhoda, assuring them of my arrival and inviting Rhoda, at her leisure, to drive around and inspect my newly acquired property. I stopped long enough, too, for a good meal at one of the restaurants, bought a few necessary provisions for breakfast—however little inclined I might be toward building a fire in the old iron range in the kitchen—and went back fortified against hunger for the remainder of that day.

I had brought with me various books and papers necessary to the doctoral dissertation on which I was at work, and I knew that the shelves of the library of Miskatonic University, scarcely a mile from the house, would offer me all the additional assistance I might need; Thomas Hardy and the Wessex country hardly constituted a subject so

obscure as to make necessary application to the Widener or some more expanded college library. So to that work I set myself until mid-evening of my first day in Uriah Garrison's old house, when, being tired, I went to bed in what had been my great-uncle's room on the second floor rather than in the guest room on the ground floor.

## II

Rhoda surprised me by coming to visit late the following day. She arrived without any prior notice, driving her own roadster. Rhoda Prentiss. It was, actually, a ridiculously prim name for such a lovely young lady, one so filled with excitement and so vigorously alive. I failed to hear her drive in, and was not aware of her until she opened the front door of the house and called out, "Adam! Are you home?"

I bounded out of the study where I was at work—by lamplight, for the day was dark and louring with squalls—and there she stood, with her shoulder-length ash-blonde hair damp with raindrops, and her thin-lips parted, and her candid blue eyes taking in what she could see of the house with lively curiosity.

But when I took her in my arms, a faint tremor ran through her body.

"How can you bear three months in this house?" she cried.



“It was made for doctoral dissertations,” I said. “There’s nothing here to disturb me.”

“The whole house disturbs me, Adam,” she said with unaccustomed gravity. “Don’t you feel anything wrong?”

“What was wrong about it is dead. That was my great-uncle. When he was here, I admit, the house reeked of evil.”

“And it still does.”

“If you believe in psychic residue.”

She might have said more, but I changed the subject.

“You’re just in time to drive into Arkham for dinner. There’s a quaint old-fashioned restaurant at the foot of French Hill.”

She said no more, however much, as I saw by the small frown that held for a while, she was of a mind to say. And at dinner her mood changed, she spoke of her work, of our plans, of herself and of me, and we spent over two hours in the French House before we returned to the house. It was only natural that she should stay the night, taking the guest room, which, being below my own, enabled her simply to rap on the ceiling if she wanted for anything, or if, as I put it, “the psychic residue crowds you.”

Nevertheless, despite my jesting, I was aware from the

moment of my fiancée's arrival of a kind of heightened awareness in the house; it was as if the house had shaken off its indolence, as if, suddenly, it had come upon need to be more alert, as if it apprehended some danger to itself in somehow learning of my intention to dispose of it to someone who would unfeelingly tear it down. This feeling grew throughout the evening, and with it a curious response that was basically sympathetic, unaccountably. Yet, I suppose this should not have been so strange to me, since any house slowly assumes an atmosphere, and one of two centuries in age has undeniably more than a house less old. Indeed, it was the great number of such houses that lent to Arkham its chief distinction—not alone the architectural treasures, but the atmosphere of the houses, the lore and legendry of human lives come into being and spent in the relatively small confines of the city.

And from that moment, too, I was aware of something on another plane about the house—not that Rhoda's intuitive reaction to it had been communicated to me, but simply that her arrival spurred events, the first of which took place that very night. I have thought afterward that Rhoda's appearance on the scene hastened the happenings that were bound to take place in any event, but which would, in the normal course of circumstances, have taken place more insidiously.

We went to bed late that night. For my part, I fell asleep instantly, for the house was set well away from most of the

city traffic, and there was nothing in the house of those settling and creaking noises so common to old houses. Below me, Rhoda still moved restlessly about, and she was still up and around when I drifted off.

It was sometime after midnight when I was awakened.

I lay for a few seconds growing to full wakefulness. What was it that had awakened me? A sound of breathing not my own? A nearby presence? Something on my bed? Or all these things together?

I thrust forth a hand and encountered, unmistakably, a woman's naked breast! And at the same moment I was aware of her hot, fervid breath—and then, instantaneously, she was gone, the bed lightened, I felt, rather than heard, her movement toward the door of the bedroom.

Fully awake now, I thrust back the light sheet covering me—for the night was sultry and humid, and got out of bed. With hands that trembled a little, I lit the lamp and stood there, undecided as to what to do. I was clad only in my shorts, and the experience had unsettled me more than I cared to say.

I am ashamed to admit that I thought at first it had been Rhoda—which was only evidence of the mental confusion the incident had brought me to, for Rhoda was incapable of such an act; had she wished to spend the night in my bed,

she would have said as much—she had done so before this. Further, the breast I had touched was not Rhoda's; her breasts were firm, beautifully rounded—and the breast of the woman who lay next to me on my bed was flaccid, large nipples, and old. And the effect of it, unlike Rhoda's, was one of shuddering horror.

I took up the lamp and stepped outside my room, determined to search the house. But at the moment of my entry into the hall I heard, drifting down as if from somewhere outside, high up over the house, the wailing and screaming of a woman's voice, the voice of a woman being punished—only a drift of sound that grew more and more tenuous and was finally lost. It could not have lasted thirty seconds in all, but it was, in its way, as unmistakable as what I had felt beside me on my bed.

I stood, shaken—and in the end retreated to my bed and lay sleepless for over an hour, waiting for what might happen.

Nothing did, and when at last I slept again, I had begun to wonder whether I had not confused dream with reality.

But in the morning, the cloud on Rhoda's face told me that something was wrong. She had got up to prepare breakfast for the two of us, and I came upon her in the kitchen.

Without a greeting, she turned and said, "There was a woman in the house last night!"

"Then it wasn't a dream!" I cried.

"Who was she?" she demanded.

I shook my head. "I wish I could tell you."

"It seems to me an extraordinary thing to have a cleaning woman in the middle of the night," she went on.

"You saw her?"

"I saw her, yes. Why?"

"What did she look like?"

"She seemed to be a young woman—but I had a strange feeling that she wasn't young at all. Her face was expressionless—fixed. Only her eyes seemed to be alive."

"She saw you?"

"I don't think so."

"My great-uncle's cleaning woman!" I cried. "That's who it must have been. I found the house clean when I came. You see how clean it is. He must never have left orders for her not to come again. I remember seeing her once when I was

a child. He always had her in at night....”

“How utterly ridiculous! Uriah Garrison died in March—over three months ago. Only a cretin couldn’t tell by this time that he was no longer alive. Who pays her?”

Who, indeed? I could not answer.

Furthermore, in the circumstances, I could not tell Rhoda of my experience in the night. I could only assure her that I had not seen a woman in the house since that night in my early years when I had inadvertently caught a glimpse of the cleaning woman at her work.

“I remember having the same impression, too—the expression-lessness of her face,” I said.

“Adam, that was twenty years ago—perhaps more,” Rhoda pointed out. “It couldn’t be the same woman.”

“I shouldn’t think so. Still, I suppose it isn’t impossible. And in spite of what Mr. Saltonstall said, she must have a key.”

“It simply doesn’t make sense. And you’ve hardly been here long enough to hire anyone yourself.”

“I didn’t.”

“I believe it. You wouldn’t lift a finger to dust even if you

were drowning in it.” She shrugged. “You’ll have to find out who she is and put a stop to it. It won’t do to have people gossiping, you know.”

On this note we sat down to breakfast, after which, I knew, Rhoda intended to be on her way.

But the troubled frown remained on Rhoda’s forehead, and she said very little during the meal, responding to my comments with only the briefest of monosyllables, until at last she burst forth with, “Oh, Adam—can’t you *feel* it?”

“Feel what?”

“Something in this house wants you, Adam—I sense it. It’s you the house wants.”

After my initial astonishment, I pointed out soberly that the house was an inanimate object, I was to the best of my knowledge the only living creature in it, exclusive of mice I may not have seen or heard, and that the house could not want or not want anything.

She was not convinced, and when, an hour later, she was ready to leave, she said impulsively, “Adam come away with me—now.”

“It would be folly to surrender a valuable property we can both turn to good use simply to satisfy your whim, Rhoda,” I answered.

“It’s more than a whim. Take care, Adam.”

On this note we parted, Rhoda promising to come again later in the summer, and exacting my promise to write her faithfully.

### III

The experience of that second night in the house stirred my memory to thoughts of the sinister gloom that had pervaded the house for me as a boy—gloom which radiated from my great-uncle Uriah’s forbidding countenance, and from the locked attic room which no one dared enter, however often my great-uncle went in and out of it. I suppose it was only natural that eventually I would think again of the challenge represented by the attic room and would respond to it.

The rain of yesterday had given way to bright sunlight which streamed into the house through the windows on the sunny side and gave to it an air of genteel and mellow age, one far removed from the sinister. It was such a day as to make all that was dark and ominous seem very far away, and I did not hesitate to light a lamp to dispel the darkness in the windowless attic and set out forthwith for the top of the old house, carrying along all the keys Mr. Saltonstall had surrendered to me.

None was necessary, however. The attic room was unlocked.



And empty, too, I thought, when I stepped into it. But not quite. A single chair stood in the middle of that gabled room, and on it lay a few prosaic objects and one which could not be so described—some woman's clothing—and a rubber mask—one of that kind which moulds to the features of the wearer. I crossed to it, astonished, and put the lamp down on the floor the better to examine the things on the chair.

They were nothing more than what I had seen at a glance—a common cotton house dress in a very old-fashioned square print design, in various shades of grey—an apron—a pair of skin-tight rubber gloves—elastic stockings—house slippers—and then the mask, which, on examination, proved to be ordinary enough, save for having hair attached to it—however unusual it was to find it here. The clothing could very likely have belonged to Great-uncle Uriah's cleaning woman—it would have been like him to let her use only the attic room in which to change. And yet, of course, this did not ring true, considering the care he had always taken to allow no one to enter that room but himself.

The mask could not be so readily explained. It was not at all hardening, betokening long disuse; it had the softness and flexibility of rubber that is being used, which was all the more mystifying. Moreover, in common with all the rest of the house, the attic was spotless.

Leaving the clothing undisturbed, I picked up the lamp again and held it high. It was then that I saw the shadow, which lay beyond my own, against the wall and sloping ceiling—a monstrous, misshapen, blackened area, as if some vast flame had flared forth and burnt its image into the wood there. I stared at it for some time before I realized that, however grotesque it was, it bore a resemblance to a distorted human figure, though its head—for it had a surmounting blob of shapelessness that served it as head—was horribly out of shape.

I walked over to examine it, but its outlines faded as I drew close. Yet, undeniably, it had the appearance of having been burned into the wood by some searing blast. I moved back again, toward the chair, and a trifle beyond it. The shadow bore the appearance of having come from a blast of flame virtually at floor level; its angle was odd and inexplicable. I turned, accordingly, and tried to find the possible point from which whatever had made this strange blemish on the wall and ceiling could have come.

As I turned, the light fell upon the opposite side of the attic room and disclosed, at the point I sought, an opening at the juncture of the roof and the floor—for there was along this side of the house no wall between floor and roof—an opening no larger than that for a mouse, and I assumed instantly that it was, indeed, a mouse-hole, and it did not attract my attention for more than a second, but what was painted in garish red chalk or oil around it did—a sequence

of curious angular lines, which seemed to me completely unlike any geometrical designs with which I was familiar and which were arranged in such a fashion as to make the mouse-hole seem their precise center. I thought instantly of my great-uncle's absorption in witchcraft, but no, these were not the familiar pentagrams and tetrahedrons and circles associated with sorcery—rather their opposite.

I carried the lamp toward the painted lines and examined them; up close, they were simply lines, no more—but from the middle of the attic they had a strange kind of design, essentially other-dimensional, I thought. There was no telling how long they had been there, but they did not seem to be of recent origin—that is, within the last three decades or so, and they might very well have been a century old.

It was while I was pondering the meaning of the strange shadow and the painted lines opposite it that I began to grow aware of a kind of tension in the attic; it was actually indescribable; it felt—how curious it is to put it into words—as if the attic *were holding its breath!* I began to grow uneasy, as if not the attic but I were under observation, and the flame on the wick wavered and began to smoke, and the room seemed to grow dark. There was a moment that was as if the earth had taken a half turn backward or something of that kind, and I had not gone along with it but were suspended somewhere far out in space at the instant before plunging into orbit of my own—and then the moment passed, the earth resumed its regularity of turning, the room

lightened, the flame in the lamp steadied.

I left the attic in unseemly haste, with all the whispered lore of my childhood pressing after me out of the store of memories. I wiped away from my temples the fine beading of perspiration which had gathered there, blew out the lamp, and started down the narrow stairs, considerably shaken, though, by time I reached the ground floor I had regained my composure. Nevertheless, I was now a little less ready than I had been to brush aside my fiancée's perturbation about the house in which I had consented to spend the summer.

I pride myself on being a methodical man. In her lighter moments, Rhoda has referred to me as her "little pendant,"—referring strictly, of course, to my concern with books and writers and the circumstances of literature. Not that I mind. The truth, no matter how it is put, is no less truth. Once recovered from my momentarily frightening experience in the attic, following so hard upon the events of the night, I resolved to get to the bottom of the matter and uncover some tenable explanation for what had happened in both instances. Had I, in fact, been in an hallucinatory state on both occasions? Or had I not?

The cleaning woman obviously was the nearest point of departure.

An immediate telephone call to Mr. Saltonstall, however,

only confirmed what he had said before—he knew of no cleaning woman, he had no knowledge that my great-uncle had ever employed a housekeeper of any kind, and to the best of his knowledge there was no other key to the house.

“But you do understand, Mr. Duncan,” finished Mr. Saltonstall, “that your great-uncle was a reclusive sort of man, secretive almost to the point of fanaticism. What he did not wish others to know, others did not know. But, if I may make a suggestion—why not make inquiry among the neighbors? I’ve set foot in the house only once or twice, and they’ve had it under daily observation for years. There isn’t much, you know, that neighbors don’t find out.”

I thanked him and rang off.

Approaching the neighbors, however, apart from a frontal attack, represented a problem, for most of the houses in the area were at more than lot-line distances from my great-uncle’s house. The nearest house was two lots away, off to the left of my great-uncle’s ancient house; I had noticed very little sign of life about it, but now that I peered from the windows, I saw someone in a rocking-chair taking the sun on the porch of that house.

I pondered for a few minutes about my best approach, but I could think of nothing but a direct question. So I walked out of the house and down the lane to the house next door. As I turned into the yard, I saw that the occupant of the chair

was an old man.

“Good morning, sir,” I greeted him. “I wonder if you could help me.”

The old man stirred. “Who’re you?”

I identified myself, which aroused an immediate responsive interest. “Duncan, eh? Never heard the old man mention you. But then, I never spoke with him more’n a dozen times. What can I do for you?”

“I’m trying to find out how to reach my great-uncle’s cleaning woman.”

He gave me a sharp glance out of suddenly narrowed eyes. “Young fellow, I’d like to have known that myself—just out of curiosity,” he said. “I never knew her to have any other place.”

“You’ve seen her come?”

“Never. Saw her through the windows at night.”

“You’ve seen her leave, then?”

“Never saw her come, never saw her leave. Neither did anybody else. Never saw her by day, either. Maybe the old man kept her there—but I wouldn’t know where.”

I was baffled. I thought briefly that the old man was being deliberately obstructive, but no, his sincerity was self-evident. I hardly knew what to say.

“That’s not the only thing, Duncan. You seen the blue light yet?”

“No.”

“You heard anything you couldn’t explain?”

I hesitated.

The old man grinned. “I thought so. Old Garrison was up to something. I wouldn’t be surprised if he’s still at it.”

“My great-uncle died last March,” I reminded him.

“You can’t prove it by me,” he said. “Oh, I saw a coffin carried out of that house up to the cemetery on Hangman’s Hill—but that’s as much as I know about it. I don’t know who or what was in the coffin.”

The old fellow went on in this vein until it was clear to me that he knew nothing, no matter how much he suspected. He gave me hints and innuendos, but nothing tangible, and the sum of what he hinted was little more than what I had known myself—that my great-uncle kept to himself, that he was engaged in some “hellish business,” and that he was better dead than alive—if in fact he were dead. He had

concluded also that there was something “wrong” with my great-uncle’s house. He did concede that, left alone, he did not trouble the neighbors. And he had been left strictly alone ever since old Mrs. Barton had gone to his house and upbraided him for keeping a woman there—and was found dead of a heart attack next morning at her home, “scared to death, they said.”

There was plainly no short-cut to information about my great-uncle to be had; unlike the subject of my doctoral dissertation, there were no references in libraries—other than my great-uncle’s own, to which I repaired at once, only to find there an almost solid array of books, both ancient and modern, on the subject of sorcery and witchcraft and allied superstitions—the *Malleus Maleficarum*, for example, and very old books by Olaus Magnus, Eunapius, de Rochas, and others. Few titles meant anything to me; I had never heard of Anania’s *De Natura Daemonum* or De Vignate’s *Quaestio de Lamiis* or Stampa’s *Fuga Satanae*.

It was evident that my great-uncle had read his books, for they were marked up with annotations—principally cross-references jotted down for his easy use. I had no difficulty reading the often ancient printing, but it was all on related themes—my great-uncle’s interest ran not only to the ordinary practices of witchcraft and demonology, but to a persistent fascination with succubi, the retention of the “essence” from one existence to another—not, apparently, a reference to reincarnation, familiars, the wreaking of



vengeance by means of sorcery, incantations, and the like.

I had no intention of studying the books, but I took time to follow through some of his references on the “essence,” and found myself led from book to book from a discussion of the “essence” or “soul” or “life-force,” as it was variously called, through chapters on transmigration and possession, to a dissertation on taking over a new body by driving out the life-force within and substituting one’s own essence—the sort of rigmarole which might conceivably have appealed to an aging man on the threshold of death.

I was still at work among the books when Rhoda called from Boston.

“Boston!” I was astonished. “You didn’t get very far.”

“No,” she said. “I just began to think about your great-uncle and stopped off here at the Widener to look at some of their rare books.”

“Not on sorcery?” I hazarded a guess.

“Yes. Adam, I think you ought to get out of that house.”

“And just throw a tidy little inheritance over my shoulder? Not a chance.”

“Please don’t be stubborn. I’ve been doing some research. I know what a closed mind you have, but believe

me,” she said earnestly, “your uncle was up to no good when he made that stipulation. He wants you there for a definite reason. Are you all right, Adam?”

“Perfectly.”

“Has anything happened?”

I told her in detail what had taken place.

She listened in silence. When I had finished, she said again, “I think you ought to leave, Adam.”

As she spoke, I was conscious of a growing irritation with her. Her possessiveness, her assumption of the right to tell me what I ought to do—which did, certainly, postulate her conviction of knowing better than I what served my welfare, angered me.

“I’m staying, Rhoda,” I said.

“Don’t you see, Adam—that shadow in the attic—some monstrous thing came in by way of that hole and blasted that shadow there,” she said.

I’m afraid I laughed. “I’ve always said women simply aren’t rational creatures.”

“Adam—this isn’t a man-woman thing. I’m scared.”

“Come back,” I said. “I’ll protect you.”

Resigned, she rang off.

#### IV

That night was memorable for what I chose then to believe pure hallucination. It began, literally, with a step on the stair some time after I had gone to bed. I listened for a moment, to hear it again; then I slipped out of bed, made my way in the dark to the door, and opened it just enough to enable me to look out.

The cleaning woman had just passed my door, bound for the ground floor. I backed into my room at once, fumbled my way to my dressing-gown in my bag—I had not had occasion to use it before—and let myself out of the room, bent upon facing the woman at her work.

I moved quietly in the darkness down the stairs, though the dark was alleviated somewhat by the iridescence of moonlight flowing into the house from outside. Not quite midway down, I experienced that curious sensation I had known previously—of being watched.

I turned.

There in the well of glowing darkness behind and a little above me hung the spectral likeness of Great-uncle Uriah Garrison—something as ephemeral as air—the heavy

bearded face distorted a little by the moonlight's iridescence, the burning eyes, the shock of touseled hair, the high bones of his cheeks with the parchment skin tight over them—seen for an instant so unmistakably—then it collapsed like a pricked balloon and vanished, save for a thin, serpentine coil or rope of some dark substance which seemed to flow writhing and turning, down the stairs to where I stood, until it, too, disappeared like smoke.

I stood frozen with terror until reason reasserted control. I told myself I had had an hallucination of a kind not to be entirely unexpected, in view of my concern during the day about my great-uncle and his curious preoccupations, though I should have thought this far more likely to have occurred in a dream than in a vision while awake. But at this moment, too, I questioned the degree of my wakefulness. I had to think what I was doing on the stairs, and remembered the cleaning woman. I had an impulse to return to my room and go to sleep, but I would not. I pulled myself together and went on.

There was a light in the kitchen—a lamp burning dimly and low, by the glow of it. I crept silently toward the kitchen and stood where I could look in.

The woman was there, cleaning, as always. Now was the time to front her directly and demand an accounting of her presence.

But something held me where I was. Something about the woman repelled me. Something other stirred my memories, and I remembered that other woman I had seen there in the years of my childhood. Slowly, certainly, I became aware that they were one and the same; the woman's impassive, expressionless face was unchanged over twenty years or more, her actions were mechanical, and she seemed even to be wearing the same clothing!

And intuitively I knew that this was the woman whose body I had felt beside me on the bed in the night!

My reluctance to face her grew. But I forced myself to step into the room just over the threshold, on the tip of my tongue the demand for an accounting of her presence.

But no word left my lips. She turned and for but a brief few moments our eyes met—and I looked into pools of glowing fire, eyes that were hardly eyes at all but so much more—the epitome of passion and hunger, the apex of evil, the embodiment of the unknown. In every other respect the confrontation was no different from what it had been in the earlier years—she did not move, her face save for her eyes remained expressionless. Then I lowered my eyes, unable to gaze into hers any longer, and stepped back across the threshold into the darkness behind me.

And fled up the stairs to my room, where I stood trembling, my back to the door, my thoughts confused, for I

knew that what I had seen was something more than a woman, but I did not know what, something in bondage to my dead uncle, something bound to return night after night and perform these rites. Where she came from remained unknown.

It was while I still stood there that I heard her once again on the stairs starting up from below. For a few moments I thought her bound for my room—as once before—and I felt myself grow cold with fear—but her steps carried her past, on to the stairs that led to the attic.

As the sound of her steps receded, my courage returned, and, emboldened, I opened the door and looked out.

All was in darkness. But no—up at the top of the stairs, out from under the attic door, shone a blue glow.

Even as I mounted to the attic, the blue glow began to fade.

I stood with my ear pressed to the door, listening. There was no sound.

Pressed by mounting courage, I threw open the door. There was no sign of the woman. But over against the floor, where the angle of the roof joined it, the blue light I had noticed under the door was flowing out like water through the mouse-hole there! And the painted lines all around the hole glowed as with a light all their own, which faded even

as I watched.

I lit a match and held it high.

The clothing the woman had worn lay as before, on the chair. And the mask.

I crossed to the chair and touched the mask.

It was warm.

The match burned my fingers and went out.

All was now black as pitch. But from the direction of the mouse-hole I felt such a drawing power as must I fling myself on my knees and try to follow the blue light, if I did not at once escape—a pulsing, sensate evil—and once again the earth seemed to stop in its turning, there was a lurch in time, and a great cloud of paralyzing fear enveloped me.

I stood as if transfixed.

Then, from the mouse-hole, a drift of blue light like smoke came seeping into the attic. The sight of it burgeoning there broke the spell that held me—I ran, crouching, to the door, and flung myself out of the attic. I raced down the stairs to my room, looking back as if I expected some eldritch thing to be hot on my heels.

There was nothing but blackness, nothing but the dark.

I went into my room and threw myself upon the bed, fully clothed, and there I lay, waiting apprehensively, for whatever might come—knowing I should do as Rhoda had asked, yet curiously reluctant to leave the house on Aylesbury Street—not because it was my inheritance, but for a frightening kind of bondage, almost kinship, that kept me there.

I waited in vain for even the ghost of a sound to disturb the quiet. Nothing whatsoever came to ear but the natural sounds the house made on a windy night, for a wind had come up—and the occasional keening of a screech owl from the direction of Hangman's Hill.

And presently I slept, fully clothed as I was, and in my sleep I dreamed—dreamed that the blue light burgeoned and mushroomed into the attic, came flowing down the stairs and into the room where I lay, and out of the mouse-hole at the apex of the angle of roof and floor came to swell and grow the figures of the cleaning woman, now clad and rubber-masked, now hideous with age, now naked and beautiful as a young woman, and beside her my great-uncle Uriah Garrison, invading the house and the room and at last me—a dream from which I woke bathed in perspiration on the edge of dawn which lay pale blue in the room before it gave way to the roseate hue of the morning sky.



What kept me awake, exhausted as I was, was the pounding at the outside door. I struggled to my feet and made my way to the door.

Rhoda stood there.

“Adam!” she cried. “You look terrible.”

“Go away,” I said, “We don’t need you.”

I was momentarily shocked to hear my own words, but in a few moments I was resigned to them, I began to understand that I meant them, I resented Rhoda’s interference—as if she thought I could not take care of myself.

“So—I’m too late then,” she said.

“Go away,” I said again. “Just leave us alone.”

She pushed past me and strode into the house. I went after her. She was bound for the study, and when she got there she put together my notes and manuscript for my Hardy dissertation and confronted me with them.

“You won’t need these any more, will you?” she asked.

“Take them,” I said. “Take them all.”

She took them. “Goodbye, Adam,” she said.

“Goodbye, Rhoda,” I said.

I could hardly believe the evidence of my eyes, but Rhoda went, as meek as any lamb. And though I was still vaguely troubled by it, I was aware of a secret satisfaction at the way things were turning out.

## V

I spent most of the rest of that day just relaxing and, in a sense, waiting upon the events of that night. It is impossible now to describe my frame of mind. All fear had left me, and I was consumed with a vivid curiosity, even with a kind of eagerness.

The day dragged. I slept through part of it. I ate very little. My appetite now was for something no food could satisfy, and it did not trouble me that this was so.

But the night and darkness came at last, and I set myself to waiting with keen anticipation for whatever might come from that room in the attic. I waited at first down stairs, but at last I understood that it was the room above—my great-uncle Uriah’s old room—where I must wait upon the events of night in the house; so I went there and sat in the darkness.

I waited while the night grew older, hearing the old clock downstairs strike the hours of nine and ten and eleven. I

expected to hear, soon, the step of the woman on the stair, the woman called Lilith, but it was the blue light that came first, seeping in under the door—as in my dream.

But I was not sleeping, I was not dreaming.

The blue light came, filling the room until I could just faintly see the naked form of the woman and the shaping form of Great-uncle Uriah looming up, with a writhing, twisting, serpentine coil reaching out from where he was taking shape to where I sat on the bed....

And then something more, something that filled me with sudden terror. I smelled smoke—and I heard the crackling of flames.

And from outside came Rhoda's voice calling, "Adam! Adam!"

The vision collapsed. The last thing I saw was the expression of terrible rage on my great-uncle's spectral face, the fury on the face of the woman changing in that light from that of a lissome girl to that of an ancient hag. Then I flung myself to the window and opened it.

"Rhoda!" I cried.

She had taken no chances. There was a ladder up against the windowsill.

The house burned to the ground with everything in it.

Its burning did not affect my great-uncle's will. As Mr. Saltonstall put it, I had been fulfilling his condition when circumstances beyond my control made it impossible to continue. So I did inherit the property, and I sold it, and Rhoda and I were married.

In spite of her insistently feminine delusions.

"I set fire to it myself," she said. She had spent the day after she had left with my papers and books at the library of Miskatonic University, famed for its collection of arcane books, studying witchcraft lore. She had concluded that the spirit animating the house and responsible for the events in it was that of Great-uncle Uriah Garrison, and that his sole reason for the condition that I must live there was to place me within his reach so that he could usurp my own life-force and take possession of my body. The woman was a succubus, perhaps his mistress. The mouse-hole obviously an opening into another dimension.

Trust a woman to construe some kind of romantic angle out of even the most curious events. Succubus, indeed!

There are times even now when her notions affect me. From time to time I find myself unsure of my own identity.

Am I Adam Duncan or Uriah Garrison? It does no good to mention it to Rhoda. I did so once and she said only, "It seems to have improved you, Adam."

Women are fundamentally not rational creatures. Nothing will shake her free of her notions about the house on Aylesbury Street. It annoys me that I find myself unable to come up with a more rational explanation myself, one that will satisfy all the questions that occur to me when I sit down and think about the events in which I played such a small, if motivating, part.

## THE DARK BROTHERHOOD

*It is probable that the facts in regard to the mysterious destruction by fire of an abandoned house on a knoll along the shore of the Seekonk in a little habited district between the Washington and Red Bridges will never be entirely known. The police have been beset by the usual number of cranks, purporting to offer information about the matter, none more insistent than Arthur Phillips, the descendant of an old East Side family, long resident of Angell Street, a somewhat confused but earnest young man who prepared an account of certain events he alleges led to the fire. Though the police have interviewed all persons concerned and mentioned in Mr. Phillips' account, no corroboration—save for a statement from a librarian at the Athenaeum, attesting only to the fact that Mr. Phillips did once meet Miss Rose Dexter there—could be found to support Mr. Phillips' allegations. The manuscript follows.*



The nocturnal streets of any city along the Eastern Seaboard afford the nightwalker many a glimpse of the strange and terrible, the macabre and *outré*, for darkness draws from the crevices and crannies, the attic rooms and cellar hideaways of the city those human beings who, for obscure reasons lost in the past, choose to keep the day secure in their grey niches—the misshapen, the lonely, the sick, the very old, the haunted, and those lost souls who are forever seeking their identities under cover of night, which is beneficent for them as the cold light of day can never be. These are the hurt by life, the maimed, men and women who have never recovered from the traumas of childhood or who have willingly sought after experiences not meant for man to know, and every place where the human society has been concentrated for any considerable length of time abounds with them, though they are seen only in the dark hours, emerging like nocturnal moths to move about in their narrow environs for a few brief hours before they must escape daylight once more.

Having been a solitary child, and much left to my own devices because of the persistent ill-health which was my lot, I developed early a propensity for roaming abroad by night, at first only in the Angell Street neighborhood where I lived during much of my childhood, and then, little by little, in a widened circle in my native Providence. By day, my health permitting, I haunted the Seekonk River from the city

into the open country, or, when my energy was at its height, played with a few carefully chosen companions at a “clubhouse” we had painstakingly constructed in wooded areas not far out of the city. I was also much given to reading, and spent long hours in my grandfather’s extensive library, reading without discrimination and thus assimilating a vast amount of knowledge, from the Greek philosophies to the history of the English monarchy, from the secrets of ancient alchemists to the experiments of Niels Bohr, from the lore of Egyptian papyri to the regional studies of Thomas Hardy, since my grandfather was possessed of very catholic tastes in books and, spurning specialization, bought and kept only what in his mind was good, by which he meant that which involved him.

But the nocturnal city invariably drew me from all else; walking abroad was my preference above all other pursuits, and I went out and about at night all through the later years of my childhood and throughout my adolescent years, in the course of which I tended—because sporadic illness kept me from regular attendance at school—to grow ever more self-sufficient and solitary. I could not now say what it was I sought with such determination in the nighted city, what it was in the ill-lit streets that drew me, why I sought old Benefit Street and the shadowed environs of Poe Street, almost unknown in the vastness of Providence, what it was I hoped to see in the furtively glimpsed faces of other night-wanderers slipping and slinking along the dark lanes and byways of the city, unless perhaps it was to escape from



the harsher realities of daylight coupled with an insatiable curiosity about the secrets of city life which only the night could disclose.

When at last my graduation from high school was an accomplished fact, it might have been assumed that I would turn to other pursuits; but it was not so, for my health was too precarious to warrant matriculation at Brown University, where I would like to have gone to continue my studies, and this deprivation served only to enhance my solitary occupations—I doubled my reading hours and increased the time I spent abroad by night, by the simple expedient of sleeping during the daylight hours. And yet I contrived to lead an otherwise normal existence; I did not abandon my widowed mother or my aunts, with whom we lived, though the companions of my youth had grown away from me, and I managed to discover Rose Dexter, a dark-eyed descendant of the first English families to come into old Providence, one singularly favored in the proportions of her figure and in the beauty of her features, whom I persuaded to share my nocturnal pursuits.

With her I continued to explore nocturnal Providence, and with new zest, eager to show Rose all I had already discovered in my wanderings about the city. We met originally at the old Athenaeum, and we continued to meet there of evenings, and from its portals ventured forth into the night. What began light-heartedly for her soon grew into dedicated habit; she proved as eager as I to inquire into

hidden byways and long disused lanes, and she was soon as much at home in the night-held city as I. She was little inclined to irrelevant chatter, and thus proved admirably complementary to my person.

We had been exploring Providence in this fashion for several months when, one night on Benefit Street, a gentleman wearing a knee-length cape over wrinkled and ill-kept clothing accosted us. He had been standing on the walk not far ahead of us when first we turned into the street, and I had observed him when we went past him; he had struck me as oddly disquieting, for I thought his moustached, dark-eyed face with the unruly hair of his hatless head strangely familiar; and, at our passing, he had set out in pursuit until, at last, catching up to us, he touched me on the shoulder and spoke.

“Sir,” he said, “could you tell me how to reach the cemetery where once Poe walked?”

I gave him directions, and then, spurred by a sudden impulse, suggested that we accompany him to the goal he sought; almost before I understood fully what had happened, we three were walking along together. I saw almost at once with what a calculating air the fellow scrutinized my companion, and yet any resentment I might have felt was dispelled by the ready recognition that the stranger’s interest was inoffensive, for it was rather more coolly critical than passionately involved. I took the

opportunity, also, to examine him as carefully as I could in the occasional patches of streetlight through which we passed, and was increasingly disturbed at the gnawing certainty that I knew him or had known him.

He was dressed almost uniformly in sombre black, save for his white shirt and the flowing Windsor tie he affected. His clothing was unpressed, as if it had been worn for a long time without having been attended to, but it was not unclean, as far as I could see. His brow was high, almost dome-like; under it his dark eyes looked out hauntingly, and his face narrowed to his small, blunt chin. His hair, too, was longer than most men of my generation wore it, and yet he seemed to be of that same generation, not more than five years past my own age. His clothing, however, was definitely not of my generation; indeed, it seemed, for all that it had the appearance of being new, to have been cut to a pattern of several generations before my own.

“Are you a stranger of Providence?” I asked him presently.

“I am visiting,” he said shortly.

“You are interested in Poe?”

He nodded.

“How much do you know of him?” I asked then.

“Little,” he replied. “Perhaps you could tell me more?”

I needed no second invitation, but immediately gave him a biographical sketch of the father of the detective story and a master of the macabre tale whose work I had long admired, elaborating only on his romance with Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, since it involved Providence and the visit with Mrs. Whitman to the cemetery whither we were bound. I saw that he listened with almost rapt attention, and seemed to be setting down in memory everything I said, but I could not decide from his expressionless face whether what I told him gave him pleasure or displeasure, and I could not determine what the source of his interest was.

For her part, Rose was conscious of his interest in her, but she was not embarrassed by it, perhaps sensing that his interest was other than amorous. It was not until he asked her name that I realized we had not had his. He gave it now as “Mr. Allan,” at which Rose smiled almost imperceptibly; I caught it fleetingly as we passed under a street-lamp.

Having learned our names, our companion seemed interested in nothing more, and it was in silence that we reached the cemetery at last. I had thought Mr. Allan would enter it, but such was not his intention; he had evidently meant only to discover its location, so that he could return to it by day, which was manifestly a sensible conclusion, for—though I knew it well and had walked there on occasion by

night—it offered little for a stranger to view in the dark hours.

We bade him good night at the gate and went on.

“I’ve seen that fellow somewhere before,” I said to Rose once we had passed beyond his hearing. “But I can’t think where it was. Perhaps in the library.”

“It must have been in the library,” answered Rose with a throaty chuckle that was typical of her. “In a portrait on the wall.”

“Oh, come!” I cried.

“Surely you recognized the resemblance, Arthur!” she cried. “Even to his name. He looks like Edgar Allan Poe.”

And, of course, he did. As soon as Rose had mentioned it, I recognized the strong resemblance, even to his clothing, and at once set Mr. Allan down as a harmless idolater of Poe’s, so obsessed with the man that he must fashion himself in his likeness, even to his outdated clothing—another of the curious specimens of humanity thronging the night streets of the city.

“Well, that one is the oddest fellow we’ve met in all the while we’ve walked out,” I said.

Her hand tightened on my arm. “Arthur, didn’t you *feel*

something—something *wrong* about him?”

“Oh, I suppose there is something ‘wrong’ in that sense about all of us who are haunters of the dark,” I said. “Perhaps, in a way, we prefer to make our own reality.”

But even as I answered her, I was aware of her meaning, and there was no need of the explanation she tried so earnestly to make in the spate of words that followed—there was something wrong in the sense that there was about Mr. Allan a profound note of error. It lay, now that I faced and accepted it, in a number of trivial things, but particularly in the lack of expressiveness in his features; his speech, limited though it had been, was without modulation, almost mechanical; he had not smiled, nor had he been given to any variation in facial expression whatsoever; he had spoken with a precision that suggested an icy detachment and aloofness foreign to most men. Even the manifest interest he showed in Rose was far more clinical than anything else. At the same time that my curiosity was quickened, a note of apprehension began to make itself manifest, as a result of which I turned our conversation into other channels and presently walked Rose to her home.

## II

I suppose it was inevitable that I should meet Mr. Allan again, and but two nights later, this time not far from my own door. Perhaps it was absurd to think so, but I could not

escape the impression that he was waiting for me, that he was as anxious to encounter me again as I was to meet him.

I greeted him jovially, as a fellow haunter of the night, and took quick notice of the fact that, though his voice simulated my own joviality, there was not a flicker of emotion on his face; it remained completely placid—"wooden," in the words of the romantic writers, not the hint of a smile touched his lips, not a glint shone in his dark eyes. And now that I had had it called to my attention, I saw that the resemblance to Poe was remarkable, so much so, that had Mr. Allan put forth any reasonable claim to being a descendant of Poe's, I could have been persuaded to belief.

It was, I thought, a curious coincidence, but hardly more, and Mr. Allan on this occasion made no mention of Poe or anything relating to him in Providence. He seemed, it was soon evident, more intent on listening to me; he was as singularly uncommunicative as he had been at our first meeting, and in an odd way his manner was precisely the same—as if we had not actually met before. But perhaps it was that he simply sought some common ground, for, once I mentioned that I contributed a weekly column on astronomy to the *Providence Journal*, he began to take part in our conversation; what had been for several blocks virtually a monologue on my part became a dialogue.

It was immediately apparent to me that Mr. Allan was not a novice in astronomical matters. Anxious as he seemed to be for my views, he entertained some distinctly different views of his own, some of them highly debatable. He lost no time in setting forth his opinion that not only was interplanetary travel possible, but that countless stars—not alone some of the planets in our own solar system—were inhabited.

“By human beings?” I asked incredulously.

“Need it be?” he replied. “Life is unique—not man. Even here on this planet life takes many forms.”

I asked him then whether he had read the works of Charles Fort.

He had not. He knew nothing of him, and, at his request, I outlined some of Fort’s theories, together with the facts Fort had adduced in support of those theories. I saw that from time to time, as we walked along, my companion’s head moved in a curt nod, though his unemotional face betrayed no expression; it was as if he agreed. And on one occasion, he broke into words.

“Yes, it is so. What he says is so.”

I had at the moment been speaking of the sighting of unidentified flying objects near Japan during the latter half of the nineteenth century.



“How can you say so?” I cried.

He launched at once into a lengthy statement, the gist of which was that every advanced scientist in the domain of astronomy was convinced that earth was not unique in having life, and that it followed therefore that, just as it could be concluded that some heavenly bodies had lower life forms than our own, so others might well support higher forms, and, accepting that premise, it was perfectly logical that such higher forms had mastered interplanetary travel and might, after decades of observation, be thoroughly familiar with earth and its inhabitants as well as with its sister planets.

“To what purpose?” I asked. “To make war on us? To invade us?”

“A more highly developed form of life would hardly need to use such primitive methods,” he pointed out. “They watch us precisely as we watch the moon and listen for radio signals from the planets—we here are still in the earliest stages of interplanetary communication and, beyond that, space travel, whereas other races on remote stars have long since achieved both.”

“How can you speak with such authority?” I asked then.

“Because I am convinced of it. Surely you must have come face to face with similar conclusions.”

I admitted that I had.

“And you remain open-minded?”

I admitted this as well.

“Open-minded enough to examine certain proof if it were offered to you?”

“Certainly,” I replied, though my skepticism could hardly have gone unnoticed.

“That is good,” he said. “Because if you will permit my brothers and me to call on you at your home on Angell Street, we may be able to convince you that there is life in space—not in the shape of men, but life, and life possessing a far greater intelligence than that of your most intelligent men.”

I was amused at the breadth of his claim and belief, but I did not betray it by any sign. His confidence made me to reflect again upon the infinite variety of characters to be found among the night-walkers of Providence; clearly Mr. Allan was a man who was obsessed by his extraordinary beliefs, and, like most of such men, eager to proselytize, to make converts.

“Whenever you like,” I said by way of invitation. “Except that I would prefer it to be later rather than early, to give my

mother time to get to bed. Anything in the way of an experiment might disturb her.”

“Shall we say next Monday night?”

“Agreed.”

My companion thereafter said no more on this subject. Indeed, he said scarcely anything on any subject, and it was left for me to do the talking. I was evidently not very entertaining, for in less than three blocks we came to an alley and there Mr. Allan abruptly bade me good night, after which he turned into the alley and was soon swallowed in its darkness.

Could his house abut upon it? I wondered. If not, he must inevitably come out the other end. Impulsively I hurried around one end of that block and stationed myself deep in the shadows of the parallel street, where I could remain well hidden from the alley entrance and yet keep it in view.

Mr. Allan came leisurely out of the alley before I had quite recovered my breath. I expected him to pursue his way through the alley, but he did not; he turned down the street, and, accelerating his pace a little, he proceeded on his way. Impelled by curiosity now, I followed, keeping myself as well hidden as possible. But Mr. Allan never once looked around; he set his face straight ahead of him and never, as far as I could determine, even glanced to left or right; he

was clearly bound for a destination that could only be his home, for the hour was past midnight.

I had little difficulty following my erstwhile companion, for I knew these streets well, I had known them since my childhood. Mr. Allan was bound in the direction of the Seekonk, and he held to his course without deviation until he reached a somewhat rundown section of Providence, where he made his way up a little knoll to a long-deserted house at its crest. He let himself into it and I saw him no more. I waited a while longer, expecting a light to go up in the house, but none did, and I could only conclude that he had gone directly to bed.

Fortunately, I had kept myself in the shadows, for Mr. Allan had evidently not gone to bed. Apparently he had gone through the house and around the block, for suddenly I saw him approach the house from the direction we had come, and once more he walked on, past my place of concealment, and made his way into the house, again without turning on a light.

This time, certainly, he had remained there. I waited for five minutes or a trifle more; then turned and made my way back toward my own home on Angell Street, satisfied that I had done no more in following Mr. Allan than he had evidently done on the night of our initial meeting in following me, for I had long since concluded that our meeting tonight had not been by chance, but by design.

Many blocks from the Allan house, however, I was startled to see approaching me from the direction of Benefit Street, my erstwhile companion! Even as I wondered how he had managed to leave the house again and make his way well around me in order to enable him to come toward me, trying in vain to map the route he could have taken to accomplish this, he came up and passed me by without so much as a flicker of recognition.

Yet it was he, undeniably—the same Poesque appearance distinguished him from any other night-walker. Stilling his name on my tongue, I turned and looked after him. He never turned his head, but walked steadily on, clearly bound for the scene I had not long since quitted. I watched him out of sight, still trying—in vain—to map the route he might have taken among the lanes and byways and streets so familiar to me in order to meet me so once more, face to face.

We had met on Angell Street, walked to Benefit and north, then turned riverward once more. Only by dint of hard running could he have cut around me and come back. And what purpose would he have had to follow such a course? It left me utterly baffled, particularly since he had given me not the slightest sign of recognition, his entire mien suggesting that we were perfect strangers!

But if I was mystified at the occurrences of the night, I was even more puzzled at my meeting with Rose at the

Athenaeum the following night. She had clearly been waiting for me, and hastened to my side as soon as she caught sight of me.

“Have you seen Mr. Allan?” she asked.

“Only last night,” I answered, and would have gone to recount the circumstances had she not spoken again.

“So did I! He walked me out from the library and home.”

I stifled my response and heard her out. Mr. Allan had been waiting for her to come out of the library. He had greeted her and asked whether he might walk with her, after having ascertained that I was not with her. They had walked for an hour with but little conversation, and this only of the most superficial—relative to the antiquities of the city, the architecture of certain houses, and similar matters, just such as one interested in the older aspects of Providence would find of interest—and then he had walked her home. She had, in short, been with Mr. Allan in one part of the city at the same time that I had been with him in another; and clearly neither of us had the slightest doubt of the identity of our companions.

“I saw him after midnight,” I said, which was part of the truth but not all the truth.

This extraordinary coincidence must have some logical explanation, though I was not disposed to discuss it with

Rose, lest I unduly alarm her. Mr. Allan had spoken of his “brothers” it was therefore entirely likely that Mr. Allan was one of a pair of identical twins. But what explanation could there be for what was an obvious and designed deception? One of our companions was *not*, could not have been the same Mr. Allan with whom we had previously walked. But which? I was satisfied that my companion was identical with Mr. Allan met but two nights before.

In as casual a manner as I could assume in the circumstances, I asked such questions of Rose as were designed to satisfy me in regard to the identity of her companion, in the anticipation that somewhere in our dialogue she would reveal some doubt of the identity of hers. She betrayed no such doubt; she was innocently convinced that her companion was the same man who had walked with us two nights ago, for he had obviously made references to the earlier nocturnal walk, and Rose was completely convinced that he was the same man. She had no reason for doubt, however, for I held my tongue; there was some perplexing mystery here, for the brothers had some obscure reason for interesting themselves in us—certainly other than that they shared our interest in the night-walkers of the city and the hidden aspects of urban life that appeared only with the dusk and vanished once more into their seclusion with the dawn.

My companion, however, had made an assignation with me, whereas Rose said nothing to indicate that her

companion had planned a further meeting with her. And why had he waited to meet her in the first place? But this line of inquiry was lost before the insistent cognizance that neither of the meetings I had had after leaving my companion at his residence last night could have been Rose's companion, for Rose lived rather too far from the place of my final meeting last night to have permitted her companion to meet me at the point we met. A disquieting sense of uneasiness began to rise in me. Perhaps there were three Allans—all identical—triplets? Or four? But no, surely the second Mr. Allan encountered on the previous night had been identical with the first, even if the third encounter could not have been the same man.

No matter how much thought I applied to it, the riddle remained insoluble. I was, therefore, in a challenging frame of mind for my Monday night appointment with Mr. Allan, not but two days away.

### III

Even so, I was ill-prepared for the visit of Mr. Allan and his brothers on the following Monday night. They came at a quarter past ten o'clock; my mother had just gone upstairs to bed. I had expected, at most, three of them; there were seven—and they were as alike as peas in a pod, so much so that I could not pick from among them the Mr. Allan with whom I had twice walked the nocturnal streets of Providence, though I assumed it was he who was the



spokesman for the group.

They filed into the living room, and Mr. Allan immediately set about arranging chairs in a semi-circle with the help of his brothers, murmuring something about the "nature of the experiment," though, to tell the truth, I was still much too amazed and disquieted at the appearance of seven identical men, all of whom bore so strong a resemblance to Edgar Allan Poe as to startle the beholder, to assimilate what was being said. Moreover, I saw now by the light of my Welsbach gas-lamp that all seven of them were of a pallid, waxen complexion, not of such a nature as to give me any doubt of their being flesh and bone like myself, but rather such as to suggest that one and all were afflicted with some kind of disease—anemia, perhaps, or some kindred illness which would leave their faces colourless; and their eyes, which were very dark, seemed to stare fixedly and yet without seeing, though they suffered no lack of perception and seemed to perceive by means of some extra sense not visible to me. The sensation that rose in me was not predominantly one of fear, but one of overwhelming curiosity tinged with a spreading sense of something utterly alien not only to my experience but to my existence.

Thus far, little had passed between us, but now that the semi-circle had been completed, and my visitors had seated themselves, their spokesman beckoned me forward and indicated a chair placed within the arc of the semi-circle facing the seated men.

“Will you sit here, Mr. Phillips?” he asked.

I did as he asked, and found myself the object of all eyes, but not essentially so much their object as their focal point, for the seven men seemed to be looking not so much at me as through me.

“Our intention, Mr. Phillips,” explained their spokesman—whom I took to be the gentleman I had encountered on Benefit Street—“is to produce for you certain impressions of extra-terrestrial life. All that is necessary for you to do is to relax and to be receptive.”

“I am ready,” I said.

I had expected that they would ask for the light to be lowered, which seems to be integral to all such seance-like sessions, but they did not do so. They waited upon silence, save for the ticking of the hall clock and the distant hum of the city, and then they began what I can only describe as singing—a low, not unpleasant, almost lulling humming, increasing in volume, and broken with sounds I assumed were words though I could not make out any of them. The song they sang and the way they sang it was indescribably foreign; the key was minor, and the tonal intervals did not resemble any terrestrial musical system with which I was familiar, though it seemed to me more Oriental than Occidental.

I had little time to consider the music, however, for I was rapidly overcome with a feeling of profound malaise, the faces of the seven men grew dim and coalesced to merge into one swimming face, and an intolerable consciousness of unrolled aeons of time swept over me. I concluded that some form of hypnosis was responsible for my condition, but I did not have any qualms about it; it did not matter, for the experience I was undergoing was utterly novel and not unpleasant, though there was inherent in it a discordant note, as of some lurking evil looming far behind the relaxing sensations that crowded upon me and swept me before them. Gradually, the lamp, the walls, and the men before me faded and vanished and, though I was still aware of being in my quarters on Angell Street, I was also cognizant that somehow I had been transported to new surroundings, and an element of alarm at the strangeness of these surroundings, together with one of repulsion and alienation, began to make themselves manifest. It was as if I feared losing consciousness in an alien place without the means of returning to earth—for it was an extra-terrestrial scene that I witnessed, one of great and magnificent grandeur in its proportions, and yet one completely incomprehensible to me.

Vast vistas of space whirled before me in an alien dimension, and central in them was an aggregation of gigantic cubes, scattered along a gulf of violet and agitated radiation—and other figures moving among them—enormous, iridescent, rugose cones, rising from a base

almost ten feet wide to a height of over ten feet, and composed of ridgy, scaly, semi-elastic matter, and sporting from their apexes four flexible, cylindrical members, each at least a foot thick, and of a similar substance, though more fleshlike, as that of the cones, which were presumably bodies for the crowning members, which, as I watched, had an ability to contract or expand, sometimes to lengthen to a distance equal to the height of the cone to which they adhered. Two of these members were terminated with enormous claws, while a third wore a crest of four red, trumpetlike appendages, and the fourth ended in a great yellow globe two feet in diameter, in the center of which were three enormous eyes, darkly opalescent, which, because of their position in the elastic member, could be turned in any direction whatsoever. It was such a scene as exercised the greatest fascination upon me and yet at the same time spread in me a repellant inspired by its total alienation and the aura of fearful disclosures which alone could give it meaning and a lurking terror. Moreover, as I saw the moving figures, which seemed to be *tending* the great cubes, with greater clarity and more distinctness, I saw that their strange heads were crowned by four slender grey stalks carrying flowerlike appendages, as well as, from its nether side, eight sinuous, elastic tentacles, moss green in colour, which seemed to be constantly agitated by serpentine motion, expanding and contracting, lengthening and shortening and whipping around as if with life independent of that which animated, more sluggishly, the cones themselves. The whole scene was bathed in a wan,

red glow, as from some dying sun which, failing its planet, now took second place to the violet radiation from the gulf.

The scene had an indescribable effect on me; it was as if I had been permitted a look into another world, one incredibly vaster than our own, distinguished from our own by antipodally different values and life-forms, and remote from ours in time and space, and as I gazed at this far world, I became aware—as were this intelligence being funnelled into me by some psychic means—that I looked upon a dying race which must escape its planet or perish. Spontaneously then, I seemed to recognize the burgeoning of a menacing evil, and with an urgent, violent effort, I threw off the bondage of the chant that held me in its spell, gave vent to the uprushing of fear I felt in a cry of protest, and rose to my feet, while the chair on which I sat fell backward with a crash.

Instantly the scene before my mind's eye vanished and the room returned to focus. Across from me sat my visitors, the seven gentlemen in the likeness of Poe, impassive and silent, for the sounds they had made, the humming and the odd word-like tonal noises, had ceased.

I calmed down, my pulse began to slow.

“What you saw, Mr. Phillips, was a scene on another star, remote from here,” said Mr. Allan. “Far out in space—indeed, in another universe. Did it convince you?”

“I’ve seen enough,” I cried.

I could not tell whether my visitors were amused or scornful; they remained without expression, including their spokesman, who only inclined his head slightly and said, “We will take our leave then, with your permission.”

And silently, one by one, they all filed out into Angell Street.

I was most disagreeably shaken. I had no proof of having seen anything on another world, but I could testify that I had experienced an extraordinary hallucination, undoubtedly through hypnotic influence.

But what had been its reason for being? I pondered that as I set about to put the living room to rights, but I could not adduce any profound reason for the demonstration I had witnessed. I was unable to deny that my visitors had shown themselves to be possessed of extraordinary faculties—but to what end? And I had to admit to myself that I was as much shaken by the appearance of no less than seven identical men as I was by the hallucinatory experience I had just passed through. Quintuplets were possible, yet—but had anyone ever heard of septuplets? Nor were multiple births of identical children usual. Yet here were seven men, all of very much the same age, identical in appearance, for whose existence there was not a scintilla of explanation.

Nor was there any graspable meaning in the scene that I had witnessed during the demonstration. Somehow I had understood that the great cubes were sentient beings for whom the violet radiation was life-giving; I had realized that the cone-creatures served them in some fashion or other, but nothing had been disclosed to show how. The whole vision was meaningless; it was just such a scene as might have been created by a highly-organized imagination and telepathically conveyed to a willing subject, such as myself. That it proved the existence of extra-terrestrial life was ridiculous; it proved no more than that I had been the victim of an induced hallucination.

But, once more, I came full circle. As hallucination, it was completely without reason for being.

Yet I could not escape an insistent disquiet that troubled me long that night before I was able to sleep.

#### IV

Strangely enough, my uneasiness mounted during the course of the following morning. Accustomed as I was to the human curiosities, to the often incredible characters and unusual sights to be encountered on the nocturnal walks I took about Providence, the circumstances surrounding the Poesque Mr. Allan and his brothers were so *outré* that I could not get them out of mind.

Acting on impulse, I took time off from my work that afternoon and made my way to the house on the knoll along the Seekonk, determined to confront my nocturnal companion. But the house, when I came to it, wore an air of singular desertion; badly worn curtains were drawn down to the sills of the windows, in some places blinds were up; and the whole milieu was the epitome of abandonment.

Nevertheless, I knocked at the door and waited.

There was no answer. I knocked again.

No sound fell to ear from inside the house.

Powerfully impelled by curiosity now, I tried the door. It opened to my touch. I hesitated still, and looked all around me. No one was in sight, at least two of the houses in the neighborhood were unoccupied, and if I was under surveillance it was not apparent to me.

I opened the door and stepped into the house, standing for a few moments with my back to the door to accustom my eyes to the twilight that filled the rooms. Then I moved cautiously through the small vestibule into the adjacent room, a parlor sparsely occupied by horsehair furniture at least two decades old. There was no sign here of occupation by any human being, though there was evidence that someone had not long since walked here, making a path through dust visible on the uncarpeted



flooring. I crossed the room and entered a small dining-room, and crossed this, too, to find myself in a kitchen, which, like the other rooms, bore little sign of having been used, for there was no food of any kind in evidence, and the table appeared not to have been used for years. Yet here, too, were footprints in substantial numbers, testifying to the habitation of the house. And the staircase revealed steady use, as well.

But it was the far side of the house that afforded the most disturbing disclosures. This side of the building consisted of but one large room, though it was instantly evident that it had been three rooms at one time, but the connecting walls had been removed without the finished repair of the junctions at the outer wall. I saw this in a fleeting glance, for what was in the center of the room caught and held my fascinated attention. The room was bathed in violet light, a soft glowing that emanated from what appeared to be a long, glass-encased slab, which, with a second, unlit similar slab, stood surrounded by machinery the like of which I had never seen before save in dreams.

I moved cautiously into the room, alert for anyone who might prevent my intrusion. No one and nothing moved. I drew closer to the violet-lit glass case and saw that something lay within, though I did not at first encompass this because I saw what it laid upon—nothing less than a life-sized reproduction of a likeness of Edgar Allan Poe, which, like everything else, was illuminated by the same

pulsing violet light, the source of which I could not determine, save that it was enclosed by the glass-like substance which made up the case. But when at last I looked upon that which lay upon the likeness of Poe, I almost cried out in fearful surprise, for it was, in miniature, a precise reproduction of one of the rugose cones I had seen only last night in the hallucination induced in my home on Angell Street! And the sinuous movement of the tentacles on its head—or what I took to be its head—was indisputable evidence that it was alive!

I backed hastily away with only enough of a glance at the other case to assure myself that it was bare and unoccupied, though connected by many metal tubes to the illumined case parallel to it; then I fled, as noiselessly as possible, for I was convinced that the nocturnal brotherhood slept upstairs and in my confusion at this inexplicable revelation that placed my hallucination of the previous night into another perspective, I wished to meet no one. I escaped from the house undetected, though I thought I caught a brief glimpse of a Poesque face at one of the upper windows. I ran down the road and back along the streets that bridged the distance from the Seekonk to the Providence River, and ran so for many blocks before I slowed to a walk, for I was beginning to attract attention in my wild flight.

As I walked along, I strove to bring order to my chaotic thoughts. I could not adduce an explanation for what I had

seen, but I knew intuitively that I had stumbled upon some menacing evil too dark and forbidding and perhaps too vast as well for my comprehension. I hunted for meaning and found none; mine had never been a scientifically-oriented mind, apart from chemistry and astronomy, so that I was not equipped to understand the use of the great machines I had seen in that house ringing that violet-lit slab where that rugose body lay in warm, life-giving radiation—indeed, I was not even able to assimilate the machinery itself, for there was only a remote resemblance to anything I had ever before seen, and that the dynamos in a power-house. They had all been connected in some way to the two slabs, and the glass cases—if the substance were glass—the one occupied, the other dark and empty, for all the tubing that tied them each to each.

But I had seen enough to be convinced that the dark-clad brotherhood who walked the streets of Providence by night in the guise of Edgar Allan Poe had a purpose other than mine in doing so; theirs was no simple curiosity about the nocturnal characters, about fellow walkers of the night. Perhaps darkness was their natural element, even as daylight was that of the majority of their fellowmen; but that their motivation was sinister, I could not now doubt. Yet at the same time I was at a loss as to what course next to follow.

I turned my steps at last toward the library, in the vague hope of grasping at something that might lead me to some

clue by means of which I could approach an understanding of what I had seen.

But there was nothing. Search as I might, I found no key, no hint, though I read widely through every conceivable reference—even to those on Poe in Providence on the shelves, and I left the library late in the day as baffled as I had entered.

Perhaps it was inevitable that I would see Mr. Allan again that night. I had no way of knowing whether my visit to his home had been observed, despite the observer I thought I had glimpsed in an upper window in my flight, and I encountered him therefore in some trepidation. But this was evidently ill-founded, for when I greeted him on Benefit Street there was nothing in his manner or in his words to suggest any change in his attitude, such as I might have expected had he been aware of my intrusion. Yet I knew full well his capacity for being without expression—humor, disgust, even anger or irritation were alien to his features, which never changed from that introspective mask which was essentially that of Poe.

“I trust you have recovered from our experiment, Mr. Phillips,” he said after exchanging the customary amenities.

“Fully,” I answered, though it was not the truth. I added something about a sudden spell of dizziness to explain my bringing the experiment to its precipitate end.

“It is but one of the worlds outside you saw, Mr. Phillips,” Mr. Allan went on. “There are many. As many as a hundred thousand. Life is not the unique property of Earth. Nor is life in the shape of human beings. Life takes many forms on other planets and far stars, forms that would seem bizarre to humans, as human life is bizarre to other life-forms.”

For once, Mr. Allan was singularly communicative, and I had little to say. Clearly, whether or not I laid what I had seen to hallucination—even in the face of my discovery in my companion’s house—he himself believed implicitly in what he said. He spoke of many worlds, as if he were familiar with them. On occasion he spoke almost with reverence of certain forms of life, particularly those with the astonishing adaptability of assuming the life-forms of other planets in their ceaseless quest for the conditions necessary to their existence.

“The star I looked upon,” I broke in, “was dying.”

“Yes,” he said simply.

“You have seen it?”

“I have seen it, Mr. Phillips.”

I listened to him with relief. Since it was manifestly impossible to permit any man sight of the intimate life of outer space, what I had experienced was nothing more than

the communicated hallucination of Mr. Allan and his brothers. Telepathic communication certainly, aided by a form of hypnosis I had not previously experienced. Yet I could not rid myself of the disquieting sense of evil that surrounded my nocturnal companion, nor of the uneasy feeling that the explanation which I had so eagerly accepted was unhappily glib.

As soon as I decently could, thereafter, I made excuses to Mr. Allan and took my leave of him. I hastened directly to the Athenaeum in the hope of finding Rose Dexter there, but if she had been there, she had already gone. I went then to a public telephone in the building and telephoned her home.

Rose answered, and I confess to an instantaneous feeling of gratification.

“Have you seen Mr. Allan tonight?” I asked.

“Yes,” she replied. “But only for a few moments. I was on my way to the library.”

“So did I.”

“He asked me to his home some evening to watch an experiment,” she went on.

“Don’t go,” I said at once.

There was a long moment of silence at the other end of the wire. Then, "Why not?" Unfortunately, I failed to acknowledge the edge of truculence in her voice.

"It would be better not to go," I said, with all the firmness I could muster.

"Don't you think, Mr. Phillips, I am the best judge of that?"

I hastened to assure her that I had no wish to dictate her actions, but meant only to suggest that it might be dangerous to go.

"Why?"

"I can't tell you over the telephone," I answered, fully aware of how lame it sounded, and knowing even as I said it that perhaps I could not put into words at all the horrible suspicions which had begun to take shape in my mind, for they were so fantastic, so *outré*, that no one could be expected to believe in them.

"I'll think it over," she said crisply.

"I'll try to explain when I see you," I promised.

She bade me good night and rang off with an intransigence that boded ill, and left me profoundly disturbed.

I come now to the final, apocalyptic events concerning Mr. Allan and the mystery surrounding the house on the forgotten knoll. I hesitate to set them down even now, for I recognize that the charge against me will only be broadened to include grave questions about my sanity. Yet I have no other course. Indeed, the entire future of humanity, the whole course of what we call civilization may be affected by what I do or do not write of this matter. For the culminating events followed rapidly and naturally upon my conversation with Rose Dexter, that unsatisfactory exchange over the telephone.

After a restless, uneasy day at work, I concluded that I must make a tenable explanation to Rose. On the following evening, therefore, I went early to the library, where I was accustomed to meeting her, and took a place where I could watch the main entrance. There I waited for well over an hour before it occurred to me that she might not come to the library that night.

Once more I sought the telephone, intending to ask whether I might come over and explain my request of the previous night.

But it was her sister-in-law, not Rose, who answered my ring.



Rose had gone out. "A gentleman called for her."

"Did you know him?" I asked.

"No, Mr. Phillips."

"Did you hear his name?"

She had not heard it. She had, in fact, caught only a glimpse of him as Rose hurried out to meet him, but, in answer to my insistent probing, she admitted that Rose's caller had had a moustache.

Mr. Allan! I had no further need to inquire.

For a few moments after I had hung up, I did not know what to do. Perhaps Rose and Mr. Allan were only walking the length of Benefit Street. But perhaps they had gone to that mysterious house. The very thought of it filled me with such apprehension that I lost my head.

I rushed from the library and hurried home. It was ten o'clock when I reached the house on Angell Street. Fortunately, my mother had retired; so I was able to procure my father's pistol without disturbing her. So armed, I hastened once more into night-held Providence and ran, block upon block, toward the shore of the Seekonk and the knoll upon which stood Mr. Allan's strange house, unaware in my incautious haste of the spectacle I made for other night-walkers and uncaring, for perhaps Rose's life was at

stake—and beyond that, vaguely defined, loomed a far greater and hideous evil.

When I reached the house into which Mr. Allan had disappeared I was taken aback by its solitude and unlit windows. Since I was winded, I hesitated to advance upon it, and waited for a minute or so to catch my breath and quiet my pulse. Then, keeping to the shadows, I moved silently up to the house, looking for any sliver of light.

I crept from the front of the house around to the back. Not the slightest ray of light could be seen. But a low humming sound vibrated just inside the range of my hearing, like the hum of a power line responding to the weather. I crossed to the far side of the house—and there I saw the hint of light—not yellow light, as from a lamp inside, but a pale lavender radiance that seemed to glow faintly, ever so faintly, from the wall itself.

I drew back, recalling only too sharply what I had seen in that house.

But my role now could not be a passive one. I had to know whether Rose was in that darkened house—perhaps in that very room with the unknown machinery and the glass case with the monster in the violet radiance.

I slipped back to the front of the house and mounted the steps to the front door.

Once again, the door was not locked. It yielded to the pressure of my hands. Pausing only long enough to take my loaded weapon in hand, I pushed open the door and entered the vestibule. I stood for a moment to accustom my eyes to that darkness; standing there, I was even more aware of the humming sound I had heard—and of more—the same kind of chant which had put me into that hypnotic state in the course of which I had witnessed that disturbing vision purporting to be that of life in another world.

I apprehended its meaning instantly, I thought. Rose must be with Mr. Allan and his brothers, undergoing a similar experience.

Would that it had been no more!

For when I pushed my way into that large room on the far side of the house, I saw that which will be forever indelibly imprinted on my mind. Lit by the radiance from the glass case, the room disclosed Mr. Allan and his identical brothers all prone upon the floor around the twin cases, making their chanting song. Beyond them, against the far wall, lay the discarded life-size likeness of Poe I had seen beneath that weird creature in the glass case bathed in violet radiance. But it was not Mr. Allan and his brothers that so profoundly shocked and repelled me—it was what I saw in the glass cases!

For in the one that lit the room with its violently pulsating

and agitated violet radiation lay Rose Dexter, fully clothed, and certainly under hypnosis—and on top of her lay, greatly elongated and with its tentacles flailing madly, the rugose cone-like figure I had last seen shrunk on the likeness of Poe. And in the connected case adjacent to it—I can hardly bear to set it down even now—lay, identical in every detail, *a perfect duplicate of Rose!*

What happened next is confused in my memory. I know that I lost control, that I fired blindly at the glass cases, intending to shatter them. Certainly I struck one or both of them, for with the impact the radiance vanished, the room was plunged into utter darkness, cries of fear and alarm rose from Mr. Allan and his brothers, and, amid a succession of explosive sounds from the machinery, I rushed forward and picked up Rose Dexter.

Somehow I gained the street with Rose.

Looking back, I saw that flames were appearing at the windows of that accursed house, and then, without warning, the north wall of the house collapsed, and something—an object I could not identify—burst from the now burning house and vanished aloft. I fled, still carrying Rose.

Regaining her senses, Rose was hysterical, but I succeeded in calming her, and at last she fell silent and would say nothing. And in silence I took her safely home, knowing how frightening her experience must have been,

and resolved to say nothing until she had fully recovered.

In the week that followed, I came to see clearly what was taking place in that house on the knoll. But the charge of arson—lodged against me in lieu of a far more serious one because of the pistol I abandoned in the burning house—has blinded the police to anything but the most mundane matters. I have tried to tell them, insisting that they see Rose Dexter when she is well enough to talk—and willing to do so. I cannot make them understand what I now understand only too well. Yet the facts are there, inescapably.

They say the charred flesh found in that house is not human, most of it. But could they have expected anything else? Seven men in the likeness of Edgar Allan Poe! Surely they must understand that whatever it was in that house came from another world, a dying world, and sought to invade and ultimately take over Earth by reproducing themselves in the shape of men! Surely they must know that it must have been only by coincidence that the model they first chose was a likeness of Poe, chosen because they had no knowledge that Poe did not represent the average among men? Surely they must know, as I came to know, that the rugose, tentacled cone in the violet radiance was the source of their material selves, that the machinery and the tubing—which they say was too much damaged by the

fire to identify, as if they could have identified its functions even undamaged!—manufactured from the material simulating flesh supplied by the cone in the violet light, creatures in the shape of men from the likeness of Poe!

“Mr. Allan” himself afforded me the key, though I did not know it at the time, when I asked him why mankind was the object of interplanetary scrutiny—“To make war on us? To invade us?”—and he replied: “*A more highly developed form of life would hardly need to use such primitive methods.*” Could anything more plainly set forth the explanation for the strange occupation of the house along the Seekonk? Of course, it is evident now that what “Mr. Allan” and his identical brothers afforded me in my own house was a glimpse of life on the planet of the cubes and rugose cones, which was their own.

And surely, finally, most damning of all—it must be evident to any unbiased observer why they wanted Rose. They meant to reproduce their kind in the guise of men and women, so that they could mingle with us, undetected, unsuspected, and slowly, over decades—perhaps centuries, while their world died, take over, and prepare our Earth for those who would come after.

God alone knows how many of them may be here, among us, even now!

Later, I have been unable to see Rose until now, tonight,

and I am hesitant to call for her. For something unutterably terrible has happened to me. I have fallen prey to horrible doubts. While it did not occur to me during that frightful experience in the shambles following my shots in that violet-lit room, I have now begun to wonder, and my concern has grown hour by hour until I find it now almost unbearable. How can I be sure that, in those frenzied minutes, I rescued the *real* Rose Dexter? If I did, surely she will reassure me tonight. If I did not—God knows what I may unwittingly have loosed upon Providence and the world!

From *The Providence Journal*—July 17

## LOCAL GIRL SLAYS ATTACKER

Rose Dexter, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Elisha Dexter of 127 Benevolent Street, last night fought off and killed a young man she charged with attacking her. Miss Dexter was apprehended in an hysterical condition as she fled down Benefit Street in the vicinity of the Cathedral of St. John, near the cemetery attached to which the attack took place.

Her attacker was identified as an acquaintance, Arthur Phillips....

# THE HORROR FROM THE MIDDLE SPAN

## I

*The Bishop Manuscript was found by authorities investigating the disappearance of Ambrose Bishop. It was enclosed in a bottle evidently thrown wide into the woods at the rear of the burning house. It is still being held in the office of the sheriff in Arkham, Massachusetts.*



It was on my seventh day out of London that I reached the place in America to which my ancestors had come from England over two centuries before. It lay in the heart of wild, lonely country above Dunwich, Massachusetts, along the upper reaches of the Miskatonic River, and well away here even from the brier-bordered stone walls that line so much of the road away from the Aylesbury Pike—a country of great old trees, pressed darkly together, many brambles, and here and there—though rarely seen for the underbrush grown up about them—the ruins of a dwelling abandoned long ago. I might easily have missed the place, for the lane leading to the house—



now totally concealed by trees and bushes—was long overgrown, but the remains of a stone pillar next to the road still bore the last four letters of *Bishop*, and thus I knew I had reached my goal, from which my great-uncle Septimus Bishop had vanished in his middle years almost two decades before. I fought my way up the lane, through brier and bramble, over fallen limbs of the trees that lined it, up the slope for half a mile.

The house stood on the side of a hill—squat, though it was of two storeys, and hybrid in construction, being partly of stone, and partly of wood that had once, long ago, been painted white, but had now lost all but traces of its original color and had long since reverted to its natural state. I observed its most unusual aspect at once—unlike the other houses I had espied along the road wholly or partly in ruins, it stood intact, stone upon stone, and not a window-pane broken, though the weather had had its way with the wood of its superstructure, particularly the circular cupola that crowned it, in which I could detect several apertures surrounded by what was clearly rotten wood.

The door stood ajar, but the pillared verandah opening outward from it had protected the interior from the worst of the weather. Moreover, though dust lay thickly inside, it was quickly apparent that nothing had disturbed the interior—no vandal had laid hands upon so much as a stick of furniture, nor disturbed the still open book on the desk in the study, though mildew was everywhere, and the house smelled of

damp and mustiness, which perhaps no amount of airing out would dissipate, and no intensiveness in cleaning would entirely eradicate.

Nevertheless, I undertook to try, a decision that made necessary a return journey to Dunwich; so I made my way back to the main road—though that road was little more than a rutted lane—where I had left the car I had rented in New York, and drove back to Dunwich, a squalid hamlet crouched between the dark waters of the Miskatonic and the brooding mass of Round Mountain, which seemed eternally to shadow the village. There I went to the only general store the settlement offered, one that occupied an abandoned church and boasted the proprietorship of one Tobias Whateley.

Though I had had some experience with the rustics of remote corners of the earth, I was hardly prepared for my reception by the bearded, gaunt-faced old man who advanced to wait upon me, and who produced almost all the articles I wanted without a word, until I had finished and paid him.

Then he looked me full in the face for the first time. “Ye’ll be a stranger here?”

“I—yes,” I said. “Come from England. But I once had relatives here. Name of Bishop.”

“Bishop,” he said in a voice that had fallen to a whisper. “Yew said ‘Bishop’?” Then, as if to reassure himself of something beyond my knowledge, he added in a stronger voice, “There be Bishops still hereabouts. Yew’ll likely belong to them?”

“Not likely,” I said. “My uncle was Septimus Bishop.”

At mention of the name, Whateley went a shade paler than his normal pallor. Then he made a move to sweep the articles I had bought back from the counter.

“No, you don’t,” I said. “I paid you for these things.”

“Ye kin have ye’re money back,” he said. “I don’t want truck with any kin o’ Septimus Bishop’s.”

I had little trouble taking from him the articles I had bought for he had no strength in his lean arms. He backed away from the counter and stood over against the shelves behind.

“Ye’ll not be goin’ to that house?” he asked, again in a whisper, and with some alarm manifest on his old face.

“There’s nobody to stop me,” I said.

“Ain’t nobody from Dunwich ’d set foot on that ground—let alone the house,” he said fervently.

“Why?” I demanded.

“Don’t yew know?” he asked.

“If I did, I wouldn’t ask. All I know is that my great-uncle disappeared from his home nineteen years ago, and I’m here to lay claim to his property. Wherever he is, he must be dead by now.”

“He was dead then,” said the proprietor, again in little more than a whisper. “Kilt.”

“Who killed him?”

“The people. Them as lived all around. Him and his.”

“My great-uncle lived alone.”

I had begun to tire of this yokel’s fears and superstitions, and at his manifest lack of knowledge about Great-uncle Septimus, I felt justified in concluding that his attitude represented the typical response of the illiterate and ignorant to knowledge and education, such as my great-uncle Septimus had possessed.

Whateley had begun to mumble “...In the night...buried him and that other alive...cursed ’em...an’ their houses fell an’ they died one after t’ other....”

On this disagreeable note I left the store, determined to

do any further shopping I needed to do in Arkham. Yet the aged proprietor's words had stirred sufficient doubt to impel me forthwith to drive to Arkham, there to consult the files of the *Arkham Advertiser*—an impulse that was but ill-rewarded, for the entire month of June carried but two stories date-lined Dunwich—the one concerning Septimus

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“Nothing has been heard of Septimus Bishop, who apparently vanished from his home in the country above Dunwich ten days ago. Mr. Bishop was a recluse and a bachelor, to whom the folk of Dunwich were in the habit of ascribing many superstitious abilities, calling him at various times, a ‘healer’ and a ‘warlock.’ Mr. Bishop was a tall, spare man, aged about 57 at the time of his disappearance.”

—and the other an amusing account of the strengthening of one of the piers, that supported the middle span of a disused bridge over the Miskatonic above Dunwich, evidently by private initiative, since the county in charge stoutly denied—refuting the voluble criticism directed at it for repairing a bridge no longer in use—having had anything to do with it.

Nevertheless, I reflected on my return drive toward and beyond Dunwich that the superstitions of the natives doubtless accounted for the attitude of Tobias Whateley, who only reflected the general beliefs, however laughable

they might be to someone decently educated in this scientific age, when all such ridiculous concepts as healing by the laying on of hands or any other method and of witchcraft were known to be but the product of ignorance. My great-uncle Septimus had been educated at Harvard, and was known to the English branch of the Bishop family as a bookish man, profoundly inimical to any form of superstition, surely.

It was dusk when I returned to the old Bishop place. My great-uncle had evidently never laid in electricity or gas, but there were both candles and kerosene lamps—some of the latter still containing kerosene. I lit one of the lamps and made myself a frugal meal, after which I cleared a place in the study where I could lie down without too much discomfort, and readily fell asleep.

## II

In the morning I set about tidying up the place, though there was little that could be done about the mildewed books in my great-uncle's library, other than to get a roaring fire going in the fireplace—for all that it was midsummer and there was no lack of warmth—and so drying out this area of the house.

In time I had dusted and swept the lower floor—which consisted of the study, a bedroom adjacent, a small kitchen, a pantry, and a room that was obviously intended

as a dining-room but clearly used for more, for mounds of books and papers indicated some kind of storage. I mounted to the second storey, but before beginning work there, I continued to the cupola, by way of a narrow stairs which permitted only one person at a time to move along it.

The cupola proved to be somewhat larger than I had thought it, with ample room for a man to stand and move about without impediment. It had patently been used for astronomical observation, for there was a telescope there, and the floor, for some reason I could not fathom, was covered with all manner of designs, in which circles, pentacles, and stars predominated, and there were, quaintly, in addition to texts on astronomy, some on astrology and divination, all quite old, one dating to 1623, some of them in German, but the majority in Latin, which certainly were the property of my great-uncle, though I could not conceive of any use to which he could put them. There was, in addition to a sky-light on the north, an opening through which the telescope could be thrust, once its covering was removed.

This cupola was surprisingly free of dust and lint, for all that there were openings in its wall, where some of the wood had rotted away, as I had observed on my approach to the house; at these openings there was some manifest water damage from rain and snow, but none of this was beyond repair, and it seemed to me—if I did ultimately conclude to make my home here for even a short time—

that such repair could be accomplished with but comparatively little cost.

I had yet, however, to ascertain the condition of the foundation of the house; and, leaving the second storey—which consisted, I saw in a brief examination, of but two bedrooms, two closets, and a store-room, only one bedroom being furnished and looking as if it had never been put to the use for which it was intended—I descended again to the ground floor and made my way to the cellar below through the door that opened to it off the kitchen.

Somewhat to my surprise I saw by the light of the lamp I carried that the floor of the cellar, which extended to only about half of the area covered by the house, was of laid brick, while the walls were of limestone all of a foot and a half thick, as the window embrasures showed. I had expected a floor of earth, as was commonly to be found in the cellars of old houses; but on closer examination, I concluded that the brick had been laid considerably after the building of the house, quite probably by my great-uncle Septimus.

In this floor, at opposite corners, there were two square trapdoors with large iron rings in them, the one, I judged by the evidence of a drainage pipe leading from the side of the wall to it, and the presence of a pump rising out of it, to cover a cistern. The other, however, gave no indication of its purpose, though I assumed that it might cover a fruit or



root cellar, and went over confidently to lift it and prove my assumption correct.

Much to my astonishment, however, there was disclosed a succession of brick steps leading downward—certainly not, as the rays of the lamp revealed when I thrust it into the stair-well—any kind of cellar, but rather a passageway of some sort, into which I promptly climbed to find myself in a tunnel leading away from the house and, as nearly as I could determine, into the hill and away from the house along the slope to the northwest. I walked, crouching, a little way along this tunnel, following a turn, and then hesitated, unsure of the tunnel's purpose.

I was, however, reasonably certain that the tunnel had been constructed by my great-uncle, and was prepared to turn back when I caught sight of something gleaming only a little way ahead, and went forward, only to find myself gazing down at yet another trapdoor. This too I opened, and looked down into a large circular room, reached by seven brick steps.

I could not forbear descending into it, and, holding the lamp high, looked around. A brick floor had been laid here, as well, and some curious structures had been erected in it—something very much like an altar, of stone, for one, and benches, also of stone. And on the floor there were crude drawings very similar to those in the cupola of the house; though I could readily explain those astronomical designs in

the cupola, which was open to the skies, I found it impossible to adduce any reason for their presence here.

There was, too, yet another opening into the floor before the altar. The great iron ring tempted me, but for some reason caution held me back from lifting the trapdoor. I went only close enough to detect a draft that indicated the circulation of air and suggested another opening to the outside below this subterranean chamber. Then I retreated to the passageway above, and, instead of returning to the house, pressed on.

In perhaps three quarters of a mile I came to a great wooden door, barred on the inside. I put down the lamp and lifted the bar. Opening the door, I found myself looking into a tangle of growth that effectively concealed the opening into the tunnel from anyone outside. I pushed through this tangle sufficiently to find myself looking down the hill toward the countryside below, where I could see the Miskatonic some distance away, and a stone bridge across it—but nowhere a dwelling of any kind, only the ruins of what had once been isolated farms. For a long minute I stood looking out upon that prospect; then I returned the way I had come, pondering the reason for being of the elaborate tunnel and the room below it—and whatever lay below that; for there was no key to their use, save only, remotely, as a secret way out of the house, if any were needed.

Once back in the house, I abandoned the cleaning of the

second storey to another day, and set myself to bring about some order in the study, which, with papers on the desk and the floor around it, and the chair hurriedly pushed back, bore the aspects of having been precisely so left at my great-uncle's departure, as if he had been suddenly summoned and had gone straightaway, and had then never returned to right the room.

I had always understood that Great-uncle Septimus Bishop was a man of independent means, and that he had been engaged in some kind of scholarly research. Astronomy perhaps—perhaps even in its relation to astrology, however unlikely that seemed. If only he had corresponded freely with those of his brothers who remained in England or if he had kept up some kind of diary or journal or daybook; but there was nothing of that kind in his desk or among the papers there, and the papers themselves were concerned with abstruse matters, filled with many diagrams and drawings, which I took to be related to geometry since they were all angles and curves and represented nothing familiar to me; and such lettering as was set down on them was little more than gibberish, since it was not in English but in some language too ancient to be known to me, though I could have read anything in Latin and in half a dozen other languages still spoken on the Continent.

But there were some letters, carefully tied together, and, after a light lunch of cheese and bread and coffee, I

undertook to look into them. The very first of these letters amazed me. It was headed “Starry Wisdom” and bore no address. Written in a broad-pointed pen and in a flourishing hand, it read:

“Dear Brother Bishop,

“In the Name of Azathoth, by the sign of the Shining Trapezohedron, all things will be known to you when the Haunter of Dark is summoned. There must be no light, but He who comes by darkness goes unseen and flees the light. All the secrets of Heaven and Hell will be made known. All the mysteries of worlds unknown to Earth will be yours.

“Be patient. Despite many setbacks, we flourish still, however secretly, here in Providence.”

The signature was not decipherable, but I thought it read “Asenath Bowen” or “Brown.” This first astonishing letter set the tone for almost all the rest. They were almost to a letter the most esoteric communications, dealing with mystical matters beyond my ken—and also beyond that of any modern man, belonging as these matters did to an age of superstition all but lost since the Dark Ages, and what my great-uncle had to do with such matters—unless, indeed, he were studying the survival of superstitious rites and practices in his time—I could not estimate.

I read them one after another. My great-uncle was hailed in the name of Great Cthulhu, of Hastur the Unspeakable, of Shub-Niggurath, of Belial and Beelzebub, and many another. My great-uncle seemed to have been in correspondence with every kind of quack and mountebank, with self-professed wizards and renegade priests alike. There was one quasi-scholarly letter, however, that was unlike the others. It was written in a difficult script, though the signature—Wilbur Whateley—was easily read, and the date, January 17, 1928, as well as the place of origin—nearby Dunwich—offered me no difficulty. The letter itself, once deciphered, was arresting.

“Dear Mr. Bishop.

“Yes, by the Dho formula it is possible to see the inner city at the magnetic poles. I have seen it, and hope soon to go there. When the earth is cleared off. When you come to Dunwich, come to the farm, and I will say the Dho formula for you. And the Dho-Hna. And tell you the angles of the planes and the formulas between the Yr and the Nhhngr.

“They from the air cannot help without human blood. They take body from it, as you know. As you, too, will be able to do if you are destroyed other than by the Sign. There are those hereabouts who know the Sign and its power. Do not speak idly. Guard your tongue, even at the Sabbat.

“I saw you there—and what walks with you in the guise of

a woman. But by the sight given me by those I had summoned I saw it in its true form, which you must have seen; so I guess some day you may look upon what I can call forth in my own image, and it may not affright you.

“I am yours in the Name of Him Who Is Not To Be Named.”

Certainly the writer must have belonged to the same family as Tobias, who so shunned this house. Small wonder, then, at the fellow's fear and superstition; he must have had some first hand acquaintance with it in more tangible form than my great-uncle could have offered him. And if Great-uncle Septimus had been friendly with Wilbur Whateley, it was not surprising that another Whateley might suspect him, too, of being what Wilbur was. Whatever that was. But how to explain that friendship? Clearly, there were many things about my great-uncle I did not know.

I tied the letters up again and put them back where I had found them. I turned next to an envelope of newspaper clippings—all, I took it, recognizing the typeface, from the *Arkham Advertiser*, and found them no less puzzling than the letters, for they were accounts of mysterious disappearances in the Dunwich and Arkham region, principally of children and young adults—evidently just such as my great-uncle Septimus had ultimately fallen victim to. There was one clipping that concerned the fury of the local inhabitants and their suspicion of one of their neighbors,

who was unnamed, as the author of the disappearances; and their threatening to take matters into their own hands, the local constabulary having failed them. Perhaps my great-uncle had interested himself in solving the disappearances.

I put these, too, away, and sat for some time pondering what I had read, disquieted by something recalled from Wilbur Whateley's letter. "*I saw you there—and what walks with you in the guise of a woman.*" And I remembered how Tobias Whateley had referred to my great-uncle—"*Him and his.*" Slain. Perhaps the superstitious natives had blamed Great-uncle Septimus for the disappearances and had indeed taken vengeance on him.

Abruptly I felt the need to escape the house for a little while. It was now mid-afternoon, and the need of fresh air after so long in the musty house was strong. So I walked outside, and again to the road, and turned away from Dunwich, almost as if impelled to do so, curious to know what the country beyond the Bishop house was like, and certain that the view I had seen from the mouth of the tunnel on the side of the hill lay in this general direction.

I expected that country to be wild, and indeed it was. The road carried through it, obviously little used, perhaps chiefly by the rural mailman. Trees and shrubbery pressed upon the road from both verges, and from time to time the hills loomed over on the one side, for on the other was the valley

of the Miskatonic, drawing in now parallel to the road, then again swinging wide away from it. The land was utterly deserted, though there were fields that were clearly being worked, for grain flourished there for those non-resident farmers who came in to work it. There were no houses, only ruins or abandoned buildings; there were no cattle; there was nothing but the road to point to human habitation of recent date, for the road led somewhere, and presumably to another place where people lived.

It was at a point some distance from the river that I came upon a side road that wound away to the right. A leaning sign-post identified it as Cray Road, and an ancient barrier across it—itself all overgrown—marked it as “Closed,” with another sign tacked below it that read: “Bridge out.” It was this latter that inclined me to take the road; so I walked in along it, struggling through shrubbery and brambles for a distance of a little over half a mile, and thus came upon the Miskatonic where a stone bridge had once carried traffic across.

The bridge was very old, and only the middle span stood, supported by two stone piers, one of them thickened with a large out-cropping of concrete, upon which whoever had constructed it had etched a large five-pointed star in the center of which was embedded a stone of the same general shape, though very small by comparison with the outline. The river had worn away both bridge-heads and carried down into it a span from either end, leaving the



middle span to stand as a symbol of the civilization that had once flourished in this valley and had since passed away. It occurred to me that perhaps this was the very bridge that had been strengthened, though no longer used, as recorded in the *Arkham Advertiser*.

Strangely, the bridge—or what was left of it—exercised a curious attraction for me, though its architecture was crude; it was a purely utilitarian structure, and had never been built as an aesthetic object; yet, like so many old things, it had now the attraction of its great age, though the concrete reinforcement detracted from it in every way, making a great blister or bulge up from the foundation almost to the top. Indeed, studying it, I could not understand how it could in fact serve as a reinforcement of the pier, though both piers were clearly very old and crumbling, and would not stand for long, what with the action of the water at their base. The Miskatonic here was seemingly not very deep, but it had a respectable width that surrounded both piers supporting the middle span.

I stood gazing at the structure, trying to estimate its age, until the sun darkened suddenly, and, turning, I saw that great mounds of cumulo-nimbus clouds were pushing up the west and southwest, presaging rain; then I left the ruin of the bridge and went back to the house that had been the home of my great-uncle Septimus Bishop.

It was well that I did so, for the storm broke within the

hour, and was succeeded by another and another; and all night the thunder raged and the lightning flared and the rain came down in torrents hour after hour, cascading off the roof, running down the slope in scores of rills and freshets for all the hours of darkness.

### III

Perhaps it was only natural that in the fresh, rain-washed morning, I should think again of the bridge. Perhaps it was, instead, a compulsion arising from some source unknown to me. The rain had now been done for three hours; the rills and freshets had dwindled to little trickles; the roof was drying under the morning sun, and in another hour the shrubbery and the grasses too would once again be dry.

At noon, filled with a sense of adventurous expectancy, I went to look at the old bridge. Without knowing quite why, I expected change, and I found it—for the span was gone, the very piers had crumbled, and even the great concrete reinforcement was sundered and seared—obviously struck by lightning, a force which, coupled with the raging torrent the Miskatonic must have been in the night (for even now it was high, swollen, brown with silt; and its banks showed that in the night it had been higher by over two feet), had succeeded in bringing to final ruin the ancient bridge that had once carried men and women and children across the river into the now deserted valley on the far side.

Indeed, the stones that had made up the piers had been carried well down river and flung up along the shores; only the concrete reinforcement, riven and broken, lay at the site of the middle span. It was while I followed with my eyes the path of the stream and the disposition of the stones that I caught sight of something white lying on the near bank, not far up out of the water. I made my way down to it, and came upon something I had not expected to see.

Bones. Whitened bones, long immersed in the water perhaps, and now cast up by the torrent. Perhaps some farmer's cow, drowned long ago. But the thought had hardly entered my mind before I discarded it, for the bones upon which I now looked were at least in part human, and now I saw, looking out from among them, a human skull.

But not all were human, for there were some among them that bore no resemblance to any bones I ever saw—long whips of bones, flexible by the look of them, as of some creature but half formed, all intertwined with the human bones, so that there was hardly any definition of them. They were bones that demanded burial; but, of course, they could not be buried without notification to the proper authorities.

I looked around for something in which to carry them, and my eye fell upon some coarse sacking, also cast up by the Miskatonic. So I walked down and took it up, wet though it still was, and brought it back and spread it out beside the

bones. Then I picked them up—at first all intertwined as they were, by the handful; and then one by one to the last finger-bone—and having finished, gathered them up in the sacking by tying the four corners of it together, and in that fashion carried them back to the house, and took them down into the cellar until I could take them into Dunwich later in the day, and perhaps to Arkham and the county seat, thinking then that I had ought to have resisted the impulse to gather them up, and left them where I had found them, which no doubt the authorities would have preferred.

I come now to that portion of my account which, by any standard, is incredible. I have said that I took the bones directly to the cellar; now, there was no reason why I could not have deposited them on the verandah or even in the study; yet without question I took them to the cellar, and there I left them while I went back to the ground floor to prepare and eat the lunch I had not troubled to eat before I walked to the old bridge. When I had finished my repast, I determined to take the bones from the river to the proper authorities, and went back down into the cellar to fetch them.

Judge my baffled astonishment to find, when I lifted the sacking, which lay just as I had left it, to find it empty. The bones were gone. I could not believe the evidence of my own senses. I returned to the ground floor, lit a lamp, and carried it into the cellar, which I proceeded to search from wall to wall. It was futile. Nothing was changed in the cellar

since first I had looked into it—the windows had not been touched, for the same cobwebs still covered them—and, as far as I could see, the trapdoor leading to the tunnel had not been lifted. Yet the bones were irrevocably gone.

I returned to the study, bewildered, beginning to doubt that I had in fact found and carried home any bones. But indeed I had! As I sat trying to resolve my perplexity, one possible—if far-fetched—solution to the mystery occurred to me. Perhaps the bones had not been as firm as I had thought them; perhaps exposure to the air had reduced them to dust. But in that case surely that dust would have been in evidence. And the sacking was clean, free of the white detritus to which the bones would have been reduced.

Manifestly, I could not go to the authorities with such a tale, for certainly they would have looked upon me as a madman. But there was nothing to prevent my making inquiries, and, accordingly, I drove into Dunwich. Perversely, I went first into Whateley's store.

At sight of me, Tobias glowered, "Wun't sell yew nothin'," he said before I had had a chance to speak, and, to another customer—a slovenly old fellow—he said pointedly, "This here's thet Bishop!" which intelligence caused the old man to sidle quickly out the door.

"I came to ask a question," I said.

“Ask it.”

“Is there a cemetery along the Miskatonic up a piece from that old bridge above my place?”

“Dun’t know uv any. Why?” he asked suspiciously.

“I can’t tell you,” I said. “Except to say I found something that made me think so.”

The proprietor’s eyes narrowed. He bit at his lower lip. Then his sallow face lost the little color it had. “Bones,” he whispered. “Yew found some bones!”

“I didn’t say so,” I answered.

“Where’d yew find ’em?” he demanded in an urgent voice.

I spread my hands. “I have no bones,” I said, and walked out of the store.

Looking back as I walked up toward the rectory of a little church I had seen on a side street, I saw that Whateley had closed his store and was hurrying along the main street of Dunwich, evidently to spread the suspicion he had voiced.

The name of the Baptist minister, according to his mailbox, was Abraham Dunning, and he was at home—a short, rotund man, rosy-cheeked and with spectacles on his

nose. He appeared to be in his middle sixties, and, gratifyingly, my name obviously meant nothing to him. He invited me into his spare parlor, which evidently served as his office.

I explained that I had come to make inquiries of him.

“Pray do so, Mr. Bishop,” he invited.

“Tell me, Reverend Dunning, have you ever heard of warlocks hereabouts?”

He tented his fingers and leaned back. An indulgent smile crossed his face. “Ah, Mr. Bishop, these people are a superstitious lot. Many of them do indeed believe in witches and warlocks and all manner of things from outside, particularly since the events of 1928, when Wilbur Whateley and the thing that was his twin brother died. Whateley fancied himself a wizard and kept talking about what he ‘called down’ from the air—but of course, it was only his brother—horribly misshapen through some accident of birth, I suppose, though the accounts given me are too garbled for me to be sure.”

“Did you know my late great-uncle, Septimus Bishop?”

He shook his head. “He was before my time. I do have a Bishop family in my charge, but I rather think they are a different branch. Ill-educated. And there is no facial resemblance.”

I assured him that we were not related. It was clear, however, that he knew nothing that would be of any assistance to me; so I took my departure as soon as I decently could, for all that the Reverend Dunning was patently anxious for the company of an educated man, not commonly found in Dunwich and its environs, I gathered.

I despaired of learning anything in Dunwich; so I made my way back to the house, where I could not prevent myself from descending once more to the cellar to make certain anew that the bones I had brought home were gone. And, of course, they were. And not even rats could have carried them, one by one, past the door of the study and out of the house without my having seen them.

But the suggestion of rats set in mind a new train of thought. Acting on it, I went again into the cellar with the lamp and searched carefully for any opening such as rats might use, still seeking some natural explanation for the disappearance of the bones.

There was none.

I resigned myself to their vanishing, and spent the remainder of that day trying to keep my mind upon something else.

But that night I was troubled by dreams—dreams in which I saw the bones I had brought reassemble



themselves into a skeleton—and the skeleton clothe itself in flesh—and the whiplike bones grow into something not of this world that constantly changed shape, and was once a thing of utter horror and then a large black cat, once a tentacled monster and then a lissome naked woman, once a giant sow and then a lean bitch running at its master's side; and, waking, I lay hearing distant sounds I could not identify—a strange snuffling and a slobbering that seemed to rise from far below, from deep in the earth, a rending and grinding that suggested something dreadful and malign.

I rose to shake myself free of dream and hallucination, and walked the house in the dark, pausing now and then to gaze out into the moonlight night, until hallucination troubled me even there, for I thought I saw at the edge of the close-pressing wood the long lean figure of a man together with a thing of abominable shape that loped at his side—seen so for but a few minutes before both vanished into the dark wood which the moonlight did not penetrate. If ever I wished for the guiding wisdom of my great-uncle Septimus, it was then; for the hallucination was even more vivid than the dream, with which I had done now, as I had with the sounds I had fancied I heard from below.

Nevertheless, in the clear light of day that dawned soon enough, I was persuaded to descend into the cellar, and enter the tunnel with the lamp, and go on to the subterranean room—compelled to do so by some force I did not understand and could not withstand. At the entrance

to the underground room I thought that the earth was disturbed by more than my footprints at my earlier visit, disturbed not only by alien prints, but by the marks as of something dragged there from the direction of the door in the hillside, and I was apprehensive when I went down into that room. But I need not have been, for there was no one there.

I stood with lamp held high and looked about. All was unchanged—stone benches, brick floor, altar—and yet... There was a stain upon the altar, a great dark stain I could not remember having seen before. Slowly, reluctantly, I moved forward, though I had no will or inclination to do so, until the lamplight disclosed it—freshly wet and gleaming—undeniably *a pool of blood*.

And I saw now, for the first time seeing the altar close, that there were other and far older stains, dark, too, and still faintly red, that must have been blood spilled there a long time ago.

Badly shaken, I fled the cellar, ran along the tunnel, and blundered up into the cellar immediately below the house. And there I stood to catch my breath until I heard a sound of footsteps above, and made my cautious way up to the ground floor.

The steps had seemed to come from the study. I blew out the lamp, for the light from outside the house, despite the

massed trees, was ample, and I made my way to the study.

There sat a man, lean of face, saturnine of countenance, his tall body concealed by a cloak, his eyes like fire fixed upon me.

“You are clearly a Bishop,” he said. “But which one?”

“Ambrose,” I said, when I found my voice. “Son of William, grandson of Peter. Come to see about the property of my great-uncle Septimus. And you?”

“I have been hidden away a long time. Nephew, I am your great-uncle Septimus.”

Something stirred behind him, and looked out from behind his chair, though he pulled out his cloak as if to hide what was there—a squamous thing with the face of a lovely woman.

I fainted dead away.

As I was coming around to consciousness again, I fancied he stood near me and said to someone, “We shall have to give him a little more time.”

Opening my eyes fearfully, I looked to where he had been.

There was no one there.

## IV

Four days later the first issue of the *Arkham Advertiser* was delivered to me, left under a stone on top of what remained of the pillar at the roadside. I had entered a six-month subscription when I had taken the opportunity of studying its files for mention of my great-uncle. I resisted my initial impulse to discard it, for I had subscribed merely as a courtesy in return for the privilege accorded me, and carried it into the house.

Though I had no intention of reading it, a two-column heading caught my eye. *Dunwich Disappearances Resume*. Somewhat apprehensively, I read the story below.

“Seth Frye, 18, employed at the Howard Cole farm immediately north of Dunwich, has been reported missing. He was last seen three nights ago walking out of Dunwich on his way home. This is the second disappearance in the Dunwich area in as many days. Harold Sawyer, 20, vanished from the outskirts of Dunwich without trace two days ago. Sheriff John Houghton and his deputies are searching the area, but as yet report no clue. Neither young man had any known reason to disappear voluntarily, and foul play is suspected.

“It will be remembered by older readers that a rash of similar disappearances took place over twenty years ago,

culminating in the vanishing of Septimus Bishop in the summer of 1929.

“The Dunwich area is a backwater which has a curious reputation and has figured from time to time in the news, usually in a strange way, ever since the mysterious Whateley affair of 1928....”

I lowered the paper, overcome with the knowledge that events were shaping toward only one explanation, one I was loath even now to accept. It was then that I determined to set down everything that had occurred, in the hope of seeing everything that had happened in its proper relation, one event to another, for those events were hopelessly garbled in my mind, and I kept thinking of the bones that had disappeared from the cellar and of Wilbur Whateley's words in his letter to my great-uncle—*“They from the air cannot help without human blood. They take body from it...as you, too, will be able to do....”* and of Great-uncle Septimus's mysterious return and his equally mysterious vanishing again, for there had been no sign of him since the sight I had had of him in the study.

I threw the paper to the floor, my mind a whirl with the lore of warlocks and familiars, the power of running water to contain ghosts and witches and all such superstitious manifestations, my reason embattled, besieged. Impelled by a wild curiosity to learn more, I ran from the house; unmindful of the brambles in my path, I pushed through the

lane to the car, and drove down the road to Dunwich.

I had hardly set foot into Tobias Whateley's shop before he confronted me, eyes ablaze.

"Git aout! I wun't wait on yew," he cried fiercely. "Yew done it!"

I found it impossible to break into his anger.

"Git aout of taown, afore it happens again. We done it once—we kin do it again. I known that boy, Seth, like I known my own. Yew done it—yew cursed Bishops!"

I backed away from his naked hatred, and saw, as I retreated to my car, the way in which other inhabitants of Dunwich grouped along the street staring at me with unconcealed loathing.

I got into the car and drove back out of Dunwich, knowing for the first time a spreading fear of the unknown against which all rationalization was powerless.

And once back at the Bishop house, I lit the lamp and descended to the cellar. I entered the tunnel and walked along it to the trapdoor into the subterranean room. I lifted it, and such a charnel odor rose up from it—perhaps from that other opening I had never looked into below, for the room, as much as could be seen in the glow from my lamp, was unchanged from the last time I had looked into it—that I

could not bring myself to descend.

I dropped the trapdoor and fled back the way I had come.

Against all reason, I knew now what horror I had unwittingly loosed upon the countryside—I and the blind forces of nature—the horror from the middle span....

Later, Great-uncle Septimus has just awakened me from my dream-haunted sleep, a firm hand on my shoulder. I opened my eyes to see him dimly in the dark, and behind him the white, unclothed body of a long-haired woman, whose eyes shone as if with fire.

“Nephew, we are in danger,” said my great-uncle.

“Come.”

He and his companion turned and left the study.

I swung off the couch where I had fallen asleep fully dressed to set these last words to the account I have written.

Outside, I can see the flickering of many torches. I know who is there at the woods' edge—the hateful inhabitants of Dunwich and the country around—I know what they mean to do.

Great-uncle Septimus and his companion are waiting for me in the tunnel. There is no other course for me.

If only *they* do not know of the door in the hillside....



The Bishop manuscript ends at this point.

By way of coincidence, seekers after *curiosa* will find in the inside pages of the *Arkham Advertiser* dated eleven days after the destruction by fire of the old Bishop house, this paragraph:

“The Dunwichers have been at it again.

“Hard upon the disappearance of Ambrose Bishop, the Dunwichers have been building again. The old Crary Road bridge, which was recently completely destroyed during a flash flood on the Miskatonic, apparently holds some charm for the Dunwichers, who have quietly rebuilt one of the central piers in concrete, and crowned it with what old-timers in the area call ‘the Elder Sign.’ No one in Dunwich, approached by our reporter, would admit any knowledge of the old bridge...”



## INNSMOUTH CLAY



The facts relating to the fate of my friend, the late sculptor, Jeffrey Corey—if indeed “late” is the correct reference—must begin with his return from Paris and his decision to rent a cottage on the coast south of Innsmouth in the autumn of 1927. Corey came from an armigerous family with some distant relationship to the Marsh clan of Innsmouth—not, however, such a one as would impose upon him any obligation to consort with his distant relatives. There were, in any case, old rumors abroad about the reclusive Marshes who still lived in that Massachusetts seaport town, and these were hardly calculated to inspire Corey with any desire to announce his presence in the vicinity.

I visited him a month after his arrival in December of that year. Corey was a comparatively young man, not yet forty, six feet in height, with a fine, fresh skin, which was free of any hirsute adornment, though his hair was worn rather long, as was then the custom among artists in the Latin quarter of Paris. He had very strong blue eyes, and his

lantern-jawed face would have stood out in any assemblage of people, not alone for the piercing quality of his gaze, but as much for the rather strange, wattled appearance of the skin back from his jaws, under his ears and down his neck a little way below his ears. He was not ill-favored in looks, and a queer quality, almost hypnotic, that informed his fine-featured face had a kind of fascination for most people who met him. He was well settled in when I visited him, and had begun work on a statue of Rima, the Bird-Girl, which promised to become one of his finest works.

He had laid in supplies to keep him for a month, having gone into Innsmouth for them, and he seemed to me more than usually loquacious, principally about his distant relatives, about whom there was a considerable amount of talk, however guarded, in the shops of Innsmouth. Being reclusive, the Marshes were quite naturally the object of some curiosity; and since that curiosity was not satisfied, an impressive lore and legendry had grown up about them, reaching all the way back to an earlier generation which had been in the South Pacific trade. There was little definite enough to hold meaning for Corey, but what there was suggested all manner of arcane horror, of which he expected at some nebulous future time to learn more, though he had no compulsion to do so. It was just, he explained, that the subject was so prevalent in the village that it was almost impossible to escape it.

He spoke also of a prospective show, made references to friends in Paris and his years of study there, to the strength of Epstein's sculpture, and to the political turmoil boiling in the country. I cite these matters to indicate how perfectly normal Corey was on the occasion of this first visit to him after his return from Europe. I had, of course, seen him fleetingly in New York when he had come home, but hardly long enough to explore any subject as we were able to do that December of 1927.

Before I saw him again, in the following March, I received a curious letter from him, the gist of which was contained in the final paragraph, to which everything else in his letter seemed to mount as to a climax—

“You may have read of some strange goings-on at Innsmouth in February. I have no very clear information about it, but it must surely have been in the papers somewhere, however silent our Massachusetts papers seem to have been. All I can gather about the affair is that a large band of federal officers of some kind descended upon the town and spirited away some of the citizens—among them some of my own relatives, though which I am at a loss to say since I've never troubled to ascertain how many of them there are—or were, as the case may be. What I can pick up in Innsmouth has reference to some kind of South Pacific trade in which certain shipping interests in the town were still evidently engaged, though this seems to be pretty far-fetched, insofar as the docks are all but

abandoned, and actually largely useless for the ships now plying the Atlantic, most of which go to the larger and more modern ports. Quite apart from the reasons for the federal action—and considerably of more importance to me, as you will see—is the indisputable fact that, coincident with the raid on Insmouth, some naval vessels appeared off the coast in the vicinity of what is known as Devils' Reef, and there dropped a power of depth charges! These set off such turmoil in the depths that a subsequent storm washed ashore all manner of debris, of which a peculiar blue clay came in along the water's edge here. It seemed to me very much like that moulding clay of similar color found in various parts of interior America and often used for the manufacture of bricks, particularly years ago when more modern methods of brick-making were not available to builders. Well, what is important about all this is that I gathered up the clay I could find before the sea took it back again, and I have been working on an entirely new piece I've tentatively titled 'Sea Goddess'—and I am wildly enthusiastic about its possibilities. You will see it when you come down next week, and I am certain you will like it even more than my 'Rima'."

Contrary to his expectations, however, I found myself oddly repelled at my first sight of Corey's new statue. The figure was lissome, save for rather heavier pelvic structure than I thought fitting, and Corey had chosen to alter the feet with webbing between the toes.

“Why?” I asked him.

“I really don’t know,” he said. “The fact is I hadn’t planned to do it. It just happened.”

“And those disfiguring marks on the neck?” He was apparently still at work in that area.

He gave an embarrassed laugh, and a strange expression came into his eyes. “I wish I could explain those marks to my own satisfaction, Ken,” he said. “I woke up yesterday morning to find that I must have been working in my sleep, for there were slits in the neck below her ears—on both sides—slits like—well, like gills. I’m repairing the damage now.”

“Perhaps a ‘sea goddess’ ought to have gills,” I said.

“I’d guess it came about as a result of what I picked up in Innsmouth day before yesterday when I went in for some things I needed. More talk of the Marsh clan. It boiled down to the suggestion that members of the family were reclusive by choice because they had some kind of physical deformity that related to a legend tying them to certain South Sea islanders. This is the kind of fairy tale that ignorant people take up and embellish—though I grant that this one is more unusual than the kind one commonly picks up, related to the Judaeo-Christian morality pattern. I dreamed about it that night—and evidently walked in my

sleep and worked out some part of the dream on my 'Sea goddess'."

However strange I thought it, I made no further comment on the incident. What he said was logical, and I confess that I was appreciably more interested in the Innsmouth lore than in the disfigurement of the "Sea Goddess."

Moreover, I was somewhat taken aback at Corey's evident preoccupation. He was animated enough when we were in conversation, no matter what the subject, but I could not help noticing an air of abstraction whenever we were not—as if he had something on his mind of which he was reluctant to speak, something that vaguely troubled him, but of which he had no certain knowledge himself, or knowledge insufficient to permit him to speak. This showed itself in various ways—a distant look in his eyes, an occasional expression of bafflement, a far gazing out to sea, and now and then a bit of wandering in his talk, an edging off the subject, as were some more demanding thought intruding upon the subject under discussion.

I have thought since that I ought to have taken the initiative and explored the preoccupation so manifest to me; I deferred doing so because I thought it did not concern me and to have done so seemed to me an invasion of Corey's privacy. Though we were friends of long standing, it did not seem that it should be incumbent upon me to intrude upon matters that were patently his alone, and he

did not offer to introduce the subject himself, which, I felt, precluded my doing so.

Nevertheless, if I may digress here and leap forward to that period after Corey's disappearance, when I had come into possession of his estate—as directed by him in a formally drawn-up document—it was at about this time that Corey began to jot down disturbing notes in a journal or diary he kept, one that had begun as a commonplace book relating solely to his creative life. Chronologically, these jottings fit at this point into any account of the facts about Jeffrey Corey's last months.

“March 7. A very strange dream last night. Something impelled me to baptize Sea Goddess. This morning found the piece *wet* about the head and shoulders, as if I had done it. I repaired the damage, as if no alternative were offered me, though I had planned to crate Rima. The *compulsion* troubles me.”

“March 8. A dream of swimming accompanied by shadowy men and women. Faces, when seen, hauntingly familiar—like something out of an old album. This undoubtedly took rise in the grotesque hints and sly innuendos heard at Hammond's Drug Store today—about the Marshes, as usual. A tale of Great-grandfather Jethro *living* in the sea. Gilled! The same thing said of some members of the Waite,

Gilman, and Eliot families. Heard the identical stuff when I stopped to make an inquiry at the railroad station. The natives here have fed upon this for decades.”

“March 10. Evidently sleep-walked in the night, for some slight alterations had been made in Sea Goddess. Also curious indentations as if someone’s arms had been around the statue, which was yesterday far too hard to take any sort of impression not made by a chisel or some such tool. The marks bore the appearance of having been *pressed into soft clay*. The entire piece *damp* this morning.”

“March 11. A really extraordinary experience in the night. Perhaps the most vivid dream I’ve ever had, certainly the most erotic. I can hardly even now think of it without being aroused. I dreamed that a woman, *naked*, slipped into my bed after I had gone to sleep, and remained there all night. I dreamed that the night was spent at love—or perhaps I ought to call it lust. Nothing like it since Paris! And as real as those many nights in the Quarter! Too real, perhaps, for I woke exhausted. And I had undoubtedly spent a restless night, for the bed was much torn up.”

“March 12. Same dream. Exhausted.”

“March 13. The dream of swimming again. In the



sea-depths. A sort of city far below. Ryeh or R'lyeh? Something named 'Great Thooloo'?"

Of these matters, these strange dreams, Corey said very little on the occasion of my March visit. His appearance at that time seemed to me somewhat drawn. He did speak of some difficulty sleeping; he was not, he said, getting his "rest"—no matter when he went to bed. He did ask me then if I had ever heard the names "Ryeh" or "Thooloo" of course, I never had, though on the second day of my visit, we had occasion to hear them.

We went into Innsmouth that day—a short run of less than five miles—and it was evident to me soon that the supplies Corey said he needed did not form the principal reason for going to Innsmouth. Corey was plainly on a fishing expedition; he had come deliberately to find out what he could learn about his family, and to that end led the way from one place to another, from Ferrand's Drug Store to the public library, where the ancient librarian showed an extraordinary reserve on the subject of the old families of Innsmouth and the surrounding country side, though she did at last mention two names of very old men who might remember some of the Marshes and Gilmans and Waites, and who might be found in their usual haunt, a saloon on Washington Street.

Innsmouth, for all that it had much deteriorated, was the

kind of village that must inevitably fascinate anyone with archeological or architectural interests, for it was well over a century old, and the majority of its buildings—other than those in the business-section, dated back many decades before the turn of the century. Even though many were now deserted, and in some cases fallen into ruin, the architectural features of the houses reflected a culture long since gone from the American scene.

As we neared the waterfront, on Washington Street, the evidence of catastrophe was everywhere apparent. Buildings lay in ruins—"Blown up," said Corey, "by the federal men, I'm told"—and little effort had been made to clean up anything, for some side streets were still blocked by brick rubble. In one place, an entire street appeared to have been destroyed, and all the old buildings once used as warehouses along the docks—long since abandoned—had been destroyed. As we neared the sea shore, a nauseating, cloying musk, ichtyic in origin, pervaded everything; it was more than the fishy odor often encountered in stagnant areas along the coast or, too, in inland waters.

Most of the warehouses, Corey said, had once been Marsh property; so much he had learned at Ferrand's Drug Store. Indeed, the remaining members of the Waite and Gilman and Eliot families had suffered very little loss; almost the entire force of the federal raid had fallen upon the Marshes and their holdings in Innsmouth, though the

Marsh Refining Company, engaged in manufacturing gold ingots, had not been touched, and still afforded employment to some of the villagers who were not engaged in fishing, though the Refining Company was no longer directly controlled by members of the Marsh clan.

The saloon, which we finally reached, was plainly of nineteenth century origin; and it was equally clear that nothing in the way of improvement had been done to the building or its interior since it had gone up, for the place was unbelievably rundown and shabby. A slovenly middle-aged man sat behind the bar reading a copy of the *Arkham Advertiser*, and two old men, one of them asleep, sat at it, far apart.

Corey ordered a glass of brandy, and I did likewise.

The bartender did not disguise a cautious interest in us.

“Seth Akins?” asked Corey presently.

The bartender nodded toward the customer who slept at the bar.

“What’ll he drink?” asked Corey.

“Anything.”

“Let’s have a brandy for him.”

The bartender poured a shot of brandy into an ill-washed glass and put it down on the bar. Corey took it down to where the old man slept, sat down beside, and nudged him awake.

“Have one on me,” he invited.

The old fellow looked up, revealing a grizzled face and bleary eyes under touseled grey hair. He saw the brandy, grabbed it, grinning uncertainly, and drank it down.

Corey began to question him, at first only establishing his identity as an old resident of Innsmouth, and talking in a general fashion about the village and the surrounding country to Arkham and Newburyport. Akins talked freely enough; Corey bought him another drink, and then another.

But Akins’s ease of speech faded as soon as Corey mentioned the old families, particularly the Marshes. The old man grew markedly more cautious, his eyes darting longingly toward the door, as if he would have liked to escape. Corey, however, pressed him hard, and Akins yielded.

“Guess thar ain’t no harm sayin’ things naow,” he said finally. “Most o’ them Marshes is gone since the guv’ment come in last month. And no one knows whar to, but they ain’t come back.” He rambled quite a bit, but, after circling the subject for some time, he came at last to the “East Injy

trade” and “Cap’n Obed Marsh—who begun it all. He had some kind a truck with them East Injuns—brung back some o’ thar women an’ kep’ ’em in that big house he’d built—an’ after that, the young Marshes got that queer look an’ took to swimmin’ aout to Devil Reef an’ they’d be gone fer a long time—haours—an’ it wasn’t natural bein’ under water so long. Cap’n Obed married one o’ them women—an’ some o’ the younger Marshes went aout to the East Injys an’ brung back more. The Marsh trade never fell off like the others’. All three o’ Cap’n Obed’s ships—the brig *Columby*, an’ the barque *Sumatry Queen*, an’ another brig, *Hetty*—sailed the oceans for the East Injy an’ the Pacific trade without ever a accident. An’ them people—them East Injuns an’ the Marshes—they begun a new kind a religion—they called it the Order o’ Dagon—an’ there was a lot o’ talk, whisperin’ whar nobuddy heerd it, abaout what went on at their meetin’s, an’ young folk—well, maybe they got lost, but nobuddy ever saw ’em again, an’ thar was all that talk about sacreefices—*human* sacreefices—abaout the same time the young folks dropped aout o’ sight—none o’ them Marshes or Gilmans or Waites or Eliots, though, none o’ thar young folk ever got lost. An’ thar was all them whispers abaout some place called ‘Ryeh’ an’ somethin’ named ‘Thooloo’—some kin’t Dagon, seems like....”

At this Corey broke in with a question, seeking to clarify Akins’s reference; but the old man knew nothing, and I did not understand until later the reason for Corey’s sudden interest.

Akins went on. "People kep' away from them Marshes— an' the others, too. But it was the Marshes that had that queer look mostly. It got so bad some o' them never went aout o' the house, unless it was at night, an' then it was most o' the time to go swimmin' in the ocean. They cud swim like fish, people said—I never saw 'em myself, and nobuddy talked much cuz we noticed whenever anybuddy talked a lot he sort o' dropped aout o' sight—like the young people—and were never heerd from again.

"Cap'n Obed larnt a lot o' things in Ponape an' from the Kanakys—all about people they called the 'Deep Ones' that lives under the water—an' he brought back all kinds o' carved things, queer fish things and things from under the water that wasn't fish-things—Gawd knows what them things wuz!"

"What did he do with those carvings?" put in Corey.

"Some as didn't go to the Dagon Hall he sold—an' fer a good price, a real good price they fetched. But they're all gone naow, all gone—an' the Order of Dagon's all done an' the Marshes ain't been seen hereabaouts ever since they dynamited the warehouses. An' they wan't all arrested, neither—no, sir, they do say what was left o' them Marshes jist walked daown't the shore an' aout into the water an' kilt themselves." At this point he cackled mirthlessly. "But nobuddy ain't seen a one o' them Marsh bodies, thar ain't

been no corp' seen all up an' daown the shore."

He had reached this point in his narrative when something extremely odd took place. He suddenly fixed widening eyes on my companion, his jaw dropped, his hands began to shake; for a moment or two he was frozen in that position; then he shrugged himself up and off the barstool, turned, and in a stumbling run burst out of the building into the street, a long, despairing cry shuddering back through the wintry air.

To say that we were astonished is to put it mildly. Seth Akins's sudden turning from Corey was so totally unexpected that we gazed at each other in astonishment. It was not until later that it occurred to me that Akins's superstition-ridden mind must have been shaken by the sight of the curious corrugations on Corey's neck below his ears—for in the course of our conversation with the old man, Corey's thick scarf, which had protected his neck from the still cold March air, had loosened and fallen to drape over his chest in a short loop, disclosing the indentations and rough skin which had always been a part of Jeffrey Corey's neck, that wattled area so suggestive of age and wear.

No other explanation offered itself, and I made no mention of it to Corey, lest I disturb him further, for he was visibly upset, and there was nothing to be gained by upsetting him further.

“What a rigmarole!” I cried, once we were again on Washington Street.

He nodded abstractedly, but I could see plainly that some aspects of the old fellow’s account had made an impression of sorts—and a not entirely pleasant one—on my companion. He could smile, but ruefully, and at my further comments he only shrugged, as if he did not wish to speak of the things we had heard from Akins.

He was remarkably silent throughout that evening, and rather noticeably preoccupied, even more so than he had been previously. I recall resenting somewhat his unwillingness to share whatever burdened his thoughts, but of course this was his decision to make, not mine, and I suspect that what churned through his mind that evening must have seemed to him far-fetched and outlandish enough to make him want to spare himself the ridicule he evidently expected from me. Therefore, after several probing questions which he turned off, I did not again return to the subject of Seth Akins and the Innsmouth legends.

I returned to New York in the morning.

Further excerpts from Jeffrey Corey’s *Journal*.



“March 18. Woke this morning convinced that I had not slept alone last night. Impressions on pillow, in bed. Room and bed very *damp*, as if someone wet had got into bed beside me. I know intuitively it was a woman. But *how?* Some alarm at the thought that the Marsh madness may be beginning to show in me. *Footprints* on the floor.”

“March 19. ‘Sea Goddess’ gone! The door open. Someone must have got in during the night and taken it. Its sale value could hardly be accounted as worth the risk! Nothing else taken.”

“March 20. Dreamed all night about everything Seth Akins said. Saw Captain Obed Marsh under the sea! Very ancient. *Gilled!* Swam to far below the surface of the Atlantic off Devil Reef. Many others, both men and women. The queer Marsh look! Oh, the power and the glory!”

“March 21. Night of the equinox. My neck throbbed with pain all night. Could not sleep. Got up and walked down to the shore. How the sea draws me! I was never so aware of it before, but I remember now how as a child I used to fancy I *heard*—way off in mid-continent!—the sound of the sea, of the sea’s drift and the windy waves!—A fearful sense of anticipation filled me all night long.”

Under this same date—March 21—Corey's last letter to me was written. He said nothing in it of his dreams, but he did write about the soreness of his neck.

"It isn't my throat—that's clear. No difficulty swallowing. The pain seems to be in that disfigured area of skin—wattled or wart-like or fissured, whatever you prefer to call it—beneath my ears. I cannot describe it; it isn't the pain one associates with stiffness or friction or a bruise. It's as if the skin were about to break outward, and it goes deep. And at the same time I cannot rid myself of the conviction that something is about to happen—something I both dread and look forward to, and all manner of *ancestral awareness*—however badly I put it—obsess me!"

I replied, advising him to see a doctor, and promising to visit him early in April.

By that time Corey had vanished.

There was some evidence to show that he had gone down to the Atlantic and walked in—whether with the intention of swimming or of taking his life could not be ascertained. The prints of his bare feet were discovered in what remained of that odd clay thrown up by the sea in February, but there were no returning prints. There was no farewell message of any kind, but there were instructions left for me directing the disposal of his effects, and I was named administrator of his estate—which suggested that

some apprehension did exist in his mind.

Some search—desultory at best—was made for Corey's body along the shore both above and below Innsmouth, but this was fruitless, and a coroner's inquest had no trouble in coming to the conclusion that Corey had met his death by misadventure.

No record of the facts that seemed pertinent to the mystery of his disappearance could possibly be left without a brief account of what I saw off Devil Reef in the twilight of the night of April 17th.

It was a tranquil evening; the sea was as of glass, and no wind stirred the evening air. I had been in the last stages of disposing of Corey's effects and had chosen to go out for a row off Innsmouth. What I had heard of Devil Reef drew me inevitably toward its remains—a few jagged and broken stones that jutted above the surface at low tide well over a mile off the village. The sun had gone down, a fine afterglow lay in the western sky, and the sea was a deep cobalt as far as the eye could reach.

I had only just reached the reef when there was a great disturbance of the water. The surface broke in many places; I paused and sat quite still, guessing that a school of dolphins might be surfacing and anticipating with some pleasure what I might see.

But it was not dolphins at all. It was some kind of sea-dweller of which I had no knowledge. Indeed, in the fading light, the swimmers looked both fish-like and squamously human. All but one pair of them remained well away from the boat in which I sat.

That pair—one clearly a female creature of an oddly claylike color, the other male—came quite close to the boat in which I sat, watching with mixed feelings not untinged with the kind of terror that takes its rise in a profound fear of the unknown. They swam past, surfacing and diving, and, having passed, the lighter-skinned of the two creatures turned and distinctly flashed me a glance, making a strange guttural sound that was not unlike a half-strangled crying-out of my name: “Ken!” and left me with the clear and unmistakable conviction *that the gilled sea-thing wore the face of Jeffrey Corey!*

It haunts my dreams even now.

# THE WATCHERS OUT OF TIME

## I



On a spring day in 1935, there arrived at the home of Nicholas Walters in Surrey a communication from Stephen Boyle, of Boyle, Monahan, Prescott & Bigelow, 37 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts, addressed to his father, Charles Walters, seven years dead. The letter, couched in rather old-fashioned legal terminology, puzzled Nicholas, a solitary young man, almost as old as the century; it made reference to “ancestral property” situated in Massachusetts, to which the addressee had fallen heir seven years before, though, because of the uncertain health of one Ambrose Boyle of Springfield—“my late cousin”—there had been a failure to notify the heir, accounting for a delay of seven years, during which the property—“a house and various outbuildings, set in north central Massachusetts, the entire land area of the property comprising fifty acres more or less,” had been untenanted.

Nicholas Walters had no memory of his father’s ever making mention of any such property. Indeed, the elder Walters had been a close-mouthed man, and, after the

death of his wife a decade before his own passing, had grown increasingly reclusive and morose, much given to solitary introspection, and very little communication with anyone. What Nicholas chiefly remembered about him was his father's habit on occasion of studying Nicholas's features, always with some faint apprehension and a disturbing habit of shaking his head forbiddingly as if he did not like something of what he saw—certainly not the finely-chiseled nose, but perhaps the wide mouth, or the curious lobeless ears, or the large pale blue slightly bulging eyes behind the spectacles Nicholas had worn since he was a child, to facilitate his favorite pastime of reading. Nicholas could not recall that his father had even so much as made a passing reference to the United States, though his mother had told Nicholas that he had been born in that same state of Massachusetts to which the solicitor's letter referred.

He pondered the matter for two days. His initial perplexity gave place to curiosity; his reluctance to stir thinned, and an odd kind of anticipation rose in him, investing the American property in a mysterious haze that made it seem attractive; so that, by the third day after his receipt of the letter addressed to his father, he cabled Stephen Boyle and announced his coming. Within the day he booked a flight to New York, and within the week he presented himself at the offices of Boyle, Monahan, Prescott & Bigelow.

Stephen Boyle, the senior partner, proved to be a tall, thin gentleman of some seventy years; he was quite grey,

but nevertheless carried a full head of hair and long sideboards. He wore a pince-nez on a long black silk ribbon, his face was somewhat pinched with wrinkles, his thin lips were pursed, and his blue eyes very sharp. There was about him that general air of preoccupation, so common to men of affairs, suggesting that his mind was so busy with various matters that the problem in hand was almost too trivial to command his attention. His manner, however, was extremely courteous.

After the exchange of the customary pleasantries, he plunged directly into the matter of the estate. "You will forgive me, Mr. Walters, if I come straight to the point. We know very little of this matter. It was inherited from my cousin Ambrose—as I believe I wrote your father. He maintained an office in Springfield, and when we took it over on his death we discovered among folders pertaining to unsettled estates one devoted to the property in question, with a clear notation that it belonged, following the death of your father's—we could not make that out, but it appeared to be 'stepbrother'—to your father, whose name was appended to the documents, together with a notation in my cousin's execrable Latin which we could not satisfactorily read, but which seemed to be a paragraph referring to an alteration in name—but whose name is not clear. In any case, the estate is known locally in the Dunwich area, not far from Springfield, where it lies, as the old Cyrus Whateley estate, and your father's stepbrother—if that is what he was—was the late Aberath Whateley."

“I’m afraid those names mean nothing to me,” Walters said. “I was scarcely two years old when we reached England—so my mother told me. I don’t recall my father ever mentioning any of his relatives on this side, and there was very little if any correspondence with them except in the last year of his life. I have some reason to believe that he intended to tell me something of the family background, but he was stricken with what the medical profession now calls a cerebral accident, which deprived him not only of virtually all mobility, but also of speech, and though the expression in his eyes indicated that he wanted desperately to speak, he died without ever regaining the power to do so. And of course he could not set down anything in writing.”

“I see.” Boyle looked thoughtful, as if coming to a decision in regard to the problem, before he continued. “Well, Mr. Walters, we’ve made some inquiries, but they haven’t come to much. That country around Dunwich—which is north central Massachusetts, as I wrote,—is a sort of backwater. In Aylesbury they call in ‘Whateley country’—and many of the old farms there do still carry mailboxes that show the onetime presence of many members of that family, though these farms are now largely deserted—following some sort of trouble there in 1928 or thereabouts—and the area itself seems to be quite decadent. But you will see that for yourself. The estate in question still stands, and is apparently in remarkably good shape, for Aberath Whateley’s been dead only about seven years and a



companion who lived there with him only three. Ambrose should have written at once on Whateley's death, but he was in precarious health for years before he died, and I suppose it was for that reason the matter slipped from mind. I take it you have your own means of transportation?"

"I bought a car in New York," said Walters. "As long as I'm over here, I mean to see something of the States, beginning with Walden Pond, which appears to be on the way to Springfield."

"At least in that general direction," observed Boyle dryly. "Now, if there is anything we can do for you, please do not hesitate to call on us."

"I'm sure I'll be able to manage," Walters said.

Boyle looked dubious. "What will you do with the property, Mr. Walters?"

"I'll have to make up my mind about that when I've seen it," he answered. "But I have my home in England, and it strikes my fancy. Candidly, what I've seen of the States so far hasn't seemed to me encouraging."

"I advise you not to get up any hope of selling it at even a fraction of its value," said Boyle then. "That country is pretty decayed. Furthermore, it has an unsavory reputation."

Walters's interest was unaccountably quickened.

“Precisely what does that mean, Mr. Boyle?”

“They tell strange tales about Dunwich.” He shrugged. “But I suppose they’re no stranger than those to be found in other remote corners of the country. And they are very probably much exaggerated.”

It was obvious to Walters that Boyle was not inclined to repeat specific tales, if he had heard them. “How do I get there?” he asked.

“It’s off the beaten path. You take a loop from the Aylesbury Pike through Dunwich and back to the Pike again at a considerable distance from there. Quite a bit of wooded terrain there, too. It’s picturesque country. What farming is done is, I believe, largely dairying. It’s very backward country—I don’t exaggerate. You can pick up the Aylesbury Pike near Concord, if you’re bound for Walden—or due west of Boston if you bear toward Worcester. Once on the Pike, continue west. Watch for a hamlet named Dean’s Corners. Just past it you’ll find a junction. You turn left there.” He chuckled. “It’ll be like turning into the American past, Mr. Walters—the far past.”

## II

He had not traveled far from the Aylesbury Pike on the Dunwich road before Nicholas Walters understood readily what Boyle had meant in his reference to the area. As the

terrain rose, many brier-bordered stone walls made their appearance, pressing upon the road; most of these were broken down in places, with field stones scattered along the foot of the walls. The road wound into hills past great old trees, bramble-covered fences, and barren fields and pastures in country that was only sparsely settled. Occasional farms could be seen; these wore an aspect of age he had not previously encountered west of Boston; many wore an air of depressing desertion, though they were architecturally of singular interest to Walters, for he had long ago made the photographing of buildings a hobby, and such farms as he could see closer to the road, though squalid, revealed curious decorative motifs hitherto unknown to him. Some of the old barns bore on their gables designs which could only have been cabalistic, though many of these seemed not to have been otherwise painted. Here and there lesser outbuildings—sheds, cribs, and storage buildings—had fallen together. Among these abandoned farms there occurred from time to time well-kept and clearly still inhabited farms, with cattle in pasture and corn in the fields and rocky meadows that gave evidence of being cropped.

He drove slowly. The mood and atmosphere of the country filled him with an odd fascination; it was as if he had been there before, as if some ancestral memory had risen up to set his own mood. Surely it was not possible that some bridge to memory had reached back to his first two years!—and yet there were vistas and turns of the road that

rose before him with a disturbing familiarity. The rounded hills brooded over the valleys; the woods were dark and crowded with trees, as if no axe or saw had ever been wielded in them; and now and then he caught sight of strange circles of tall stone pillars on the summits of the hills, reminding him of Stonehenge and the cromlechs of Devon and Cornwall. From time to time the hills were broken by deep gorges, crossed by crude wooden bridges; and openings along the base of the hills afforded glimpses of the Miskatonic River, and upper reaches of which he had seen on road maps took rise not far west of the Dunwich country and wound serpentinely through the valley beyond and on to the seat at Arkham. Occasionally, too, he saw lesser streams emptying into the Miskatonic, hardly more than rills which very probably came from springs in the hills; and once there flashed upon his vision the blue-white column of a waterfall cascading out of the dark hills.

Though the hills pressed almost precipitously upon the dusty road for much of the way, there were some infrequent openings that revealed high marshland or meadows, and now and then more farms—or what remained of them. The landscape was forbidding; the enclosing hills, the looming, pillared summits of the higher ridge leaning over, the dreary, deserted farms—all combined to convey the impression of a cleavage not only in time but in place between this area and the country along the Aylesbury Pike; and, insofar as the area around Boston was concerned, the Dunwich settlement was centuries removed.

The mood of the region pervaded him oddly; he could not explain it; he was both drawn to the country through which he drove, and repelled by it, and the deeper he penetrated into it, the greater the confirmation of that mood. The conviction that he had been here before grew upon him, even as he smiled at the thought; he was not troubled at the thought, and only remotely curious. Such impressions, he knew, are common to all mankind, and only the unlettered and superstitious tend to read meaningful mystery into them.

He came out of the hills suddenly into a broader valley, and there lay the village of Dunwich, on the far side of the Miskatonic, huddling between the river and Round Mountain on the far side. A quaint covered bridge crossed the river, a relic of that distant past to which the settlement itself obviously belonged. Rotting gambrel roofs, ruined, deserted houses, dominated by a church with a broken steeple, met his eye as he emerged from the bridge. It was a place of desolation, where even the few men and women on the streets seemed gnarled and aged by more than the passage of time.

He drew his car up at the broken-steepled church, for it had patently been given over to use as a general store, and went in to inquire of the gaunt-faced storekeeper behind the counter for directions to the property he had come to inspect.

“Aberath Whateley’s place,” he repeated, staring at him. His wide-lipped mouth worked, his lips making chewing motions, as if he were masticating Walters’s inquiry. “Ye—kin? Kin to Whateley’s?”

“My name is Walters. I’ve come from England.”

The storekeeper did not seem to have heard. He studied Walters with open-faced interest and curiosity. “Ye hey the Whateley look. Walters. Never heerd none o’ my kin speak thet name.”

“The Whateley place,” Walters reminded him.

“Might be twenty sech places. Aberath’s place, ye said. It’s shet up.”

“I have the key,” Walters said, with ill-concealed impatience and some irritation at what seemed to him the storekeeper’s crooked and mocking smile.

“Go back crost the bridge, an’ turn right. Go mebbe half a mile. Can’t miss it. Stone fence in front—medder down from thet toards the river. Wood the other three sides. ’Twant Aberath’s—’twas Cyrus Whateley’s—Old Cyrus, the smart one, the eddicated one.” He said this with an arresting sneer and added, “Ye’ll be eddicated, too. Ye dress like it.”

“Oxford,” said Walters.

“Ain’t never heard uv it.”

With that, he turned, dismissing Walters. But he could not wholly cut Walters off, for when he reached the threshold, the storekeeper spoke again. “I’m Tobias Whateley. Ye’re likely kin. Tek keer out there. Ain’t nobody *livin’* in thet house, but tek keer jest the same.”

The peculiar accent he put on “livin’” touched Walters with foreboding, though superstition was not part of his education. He left the store with an annoying edge of apprehension gnawing at him.

The house was not difficult to find, given Tobias Whateley’s directions. It was evident at but a glance, as Walters drove toward the stone fence that bounded the property along the rutted road, that the house was far older than the generation of Cyrus Whateley. Its dating could not have been later than early eighteenth century, and its lines were classic and utterly unlike the worn houses of the village or the farms along the road leading in from the Aylesbury Pike. It was a wooden structure, rising from a high base of brown sandstone rocks, and quite plainly thick-walled. It was of a storey and a half in height, though the central section rose somewhat taller than the wings. A broad verandah crossed the front of the central section, framing a Queen Anne door with a brass knocker. Around the door and the fanlight on top were elaborate carvings,

narrow along the sides, broader above the fanlight, an ornamentation in rather odd contrast to the severity of the door itself.

The house had at one time been painted white, but many years had passed since last a coat of paint had been applied to it; now its general appearance suggested brown rather than white, for the house had weathered without paint for many decades. Walters saw outbuildings to the rear of the house, among them what must certainly be a spring house of fieldstone, for a rill ran from under it toward the Miskatonic beyond the meadow on the other side of the road. Along the left side of the house, but some two yards removed from it, ran a lane that had once been a driveway, leading toward the outbuildings; but this had been for so long unused that trees grew in it. Walters could drive no farther than just in from the road.

The key Boyle had given him fitted the front door. The door stuck a little, which was not surprising, for presumably it had not been opened since the death of the last resident, Aberath's companion. It opened into a hallway that ran the length of the front of the house, as far as Walters could determine at a glance; and it faced upon a pair of handsome double-doors, made of mahogany. These, too, were locked, but in the circlet of lesser keys Boyle had given him, Walters found the key to it.

Walters had been surprised at the lack of vandalism at



sight of the house, so remote from a well-traveled highway; now, opening the double doors, he was even more astounded to find the room fully furnished and in excellent condition, save for minimal dust and lint; patently, nothing had been disturbed here, and it struck him as odd indeed, considering the remoteness of the house in an almost deserted countryside, it should have escaped the vandalism commonly done to abandoned buildings. Moreover, the furniture was almost all period, antique and of far greater value than pieces ordinarily on offer in shops specializing in such furniture.

This central room was that around which all the rest of the house had been built. It accounted for the tallness of the central section of the house, for its ceiling was at least ten feet from the floor. The far wall, that facing the double doors, was occupied by a fireplace framed by woodwork, exquisitely panelled, which masked on the right a hidden pullout desk and cabinet above it. The chimney wall was crowned by an extensive carved ornament in the center of which had been placed a convex glass circle a trifle more than half a foot in diameter. The ornament itself was triangular in shape, its apex reaching almost to the ceiling.

From the fireplace area bookshelves encircled the room, broken only by doors; these shelves were laden with what, Walters saw at a glance, were very old books. He crossed to the opposite wall, and examined some of them. Nothing more recent than Dickens stood among the leather-bound

tomes, and many of them were in Latin and other languages. High atop a bookcase lay a telescope; here and there small ornaments broke the even rows of books—carvings, small statuary, and what appeared to be ancient artifacts. On the massive table that occupied the middle of the room lay papers, pen and ink, and several ledgers, lying as if but recently left there, and but waiting to be put to use again.

Walters could not imagine what manner of accounts might have been kept by the previous occupant of the house. He crossed to the table and opened one of the ledgers. There was no accounting in it, he saw at a glance; the pages were filled with a fine script, very small—so much so that two lines of script occupied each rule on the page. He read a line on one page—“taken the boy and gone, leaving no word; but it will not matter; They will know where he has gone....” He opened an older ledger and read: “no question but she is gone, and Wilbur could tell if he will; the fires on Sentinel Hill, and the whippoorwills screeching all night long as on the night the Old Man died.” The presence of dates suggested that the ledgers held some kind of journal or diary. He closed the book and turned away, and at that moment was aware of a small sound that had been present in the house, he recognized, from the beginning. It was the ticking of a clock.

A clock! And no one had lived here for at least three years. He was astonished. Someone must have had

entrance to the house and set it. He looked around and saw in an alcove close to the door by which he had entered a curious, obviously hand-carved clock standing almost three feet tall, its face covered with strange designs—of serpentine coils and primitive creatures belonging clearly to some pre-human era, he thought, utterly alien—and yet the sight of them filled him with a disturbing, almost shocking, mushrooming of familiar terror, as if in some remote corner of his memory, lost in the murky years of his childhood, he had known their like—not in the face of a clock, but in a vague, misty reality. Nevertheless, the clock fascinated him, drew him, and he stared at it long enough to conclude that it was intended to tell more than time, for the numerals and lettering on its face clearly pertained to more than minutes and hours. Or days, for that matter.

He drew away from the clock and withdrew from the room. There was more of the house to be seen, and he set about to examine it. If he had hoped to discover anything other in the building that held the odd fascination of its central room, he was disappointed; for the remainder of the house was ordinary, its rooms were sparsely furnished, if completely. There were two bedrooms, a kitchen, a pantry, a dining-room, a storeroom, and, under the gables upstairs, three cramped rooms used for additional storage and a fourth as a bedroom, the second storey of the house being interrupted here and there by the slope of the roof. These gable rooms were intimately cozy, with one window in each—commodious too, for they were dormer windows of a

sort, shaped to repeat the design of the gable in a fashion he had not previously encountered.

He must, he reflected, add photographs of the house to his extensive collection; the architectural details of the gables with their dormer windows were unique. But there were other aspects of the house, too, that aroused his professional interest, and there was no time like the present to take a sequence of pictures, before the sun slipped down the western heavens and the shadows of the woods pressed upon the building.

He went back down the narrow stairway and out to his car, got out his paraphernalia, and made it ready for use. He began with exteriors, taking pictures of the house from every elevation, and particularly of the dormered gables; then he went inside, and took photographs of the great central room—of the clock, with a close-up of its strange face, and at last of the glass ornament in its carved setting above the fireplace, to complete a record for his future reference.

By this time the day was drawing to its close, and he had to decide whether he would drive to a nearby town for the night or whether he would stay here. In view of the evident cleanliness of the house, it seemed foolish to go elsewhere to spend the night. He would sleep, he decided, in the cozy gable bedroom. Accordingly, he brought in his luggage, and having done this, he decided that he would need some

minimal supplies—a modicum of groceries, preferably nothing that necessitated extensive preparation: cookies and crackers, perhaps, cereal, milk, bread and butter, together with some fruit, if that were available, and cheese, for he had not seen even a lunch counter on his brief visit to the village, to say nothing of a restaurant, of which the reclusive rural inhabitants of this remote area clearly had no need. And he would need, above all else, some kind of fuel for the kerosene lamps that stood empty in the pantry, unless he were to use some of the candles that were to be seen in all the rooms and showed every sign of having been used.

He needed to return to Dunwich for his supplies, and he felt a curious compulsion to get there and back before darkness closed down on the countryside. He locked the house and set out at once.

Tobias Whateley had a look of anticipation on his gaunt face when Walters mounted the steps to his store. It disconcerted Walters a little; Tobias had evidently been expecting him, but for what reason mystified and troubled Walters.

“I need some groceries and kerosene,” said Walters, and without giving Whateley an opportunity to reply, rattled off the things he wanted.

Whateley stood unmoving, staring at Walters in a

speculative manner. "Yew aim to stay?" he asked finally.

"Overnight at least," Walters said. "Maybe a little longer. Until I can make up my mind what to do with the property."

"What to do?" repeated Whateley in manifest astonishment.

"I may put it up for sale."

Whateley gave him a baffled look. "Ain't even a Whateley'd buy it. None a the eddicated Whateleys'd want a thing to do with it—an' the others—wal, the others 're tied down to places all their own. Ye'll have to git in an outsider."

He said this as if the possibility were too unlikely to contemplate, nettling Walters, who said curtly, "I'm an outsider."

Whateley gave a short bark that was like a derisive laugh. "Ye kin tell it! Ye'll not be stayin' long, I reckon. Ye kin sell it from Springfield or Arkham or Boston—but ye wun't find a buyer in these parts."

"That house is in perfect condition, Mr. Whateley."

He gave Walters a fierce, blazing stare. "Ain't ye been aksin' yer-self who kep' it thet way? Nobody's lived in thet house since Increase died. Nobody's bin near it. Three years naow. Cousin, I couldn't git a body around here to so

much as bring yer groceries up thar.”

Walters was disconcerted. “Locked up as tight as it was, it’s not likely the house would be much run down. Three years isn’t a long time. Aberath Whateley’s been dead seven. Who was Increase?”

“Increase Brown, they said his name was,” answered Whateley. “I dun’t know who he was—or what he was.” He gave Walters a hard, challenging stare as he spoke. “Nor where he come from. He belonged to Aberath.”

What a strange way to put it! thought Walters.

“One day he was jist thar. An’ then he was allus thar! Follered Aberath around like a dog. An’ then he wasn’t thar. So they said he died.”

“Who claimed his body, then?”

“No body to claim,” said Whateley brusquely.

It seemed plain to Walters, however much to his astonishment, that Tobias Whateley regarded him with something akin to contempt; he looked upon Walters as at someone unaware of some basic knowledge he ought to have. This was galling, for Whateley was unmistakably a bumpkin, with an education that was halted somewhere in the grades; that he should look upon him with such ill-concealed scorn was irritating, particularly since it was

patent that his attitude was not that of the ignorant yokel by temperament antipathetic to the educated man, and Walters was as much perplexed as he was irritated; indeed, his irritation washed away as his perplexity grew; for Whateley continued to talk, and his talk was filled with odd allusions and puzzling references, and he kept glancing at Walters from time to time almost hopefully as if to catch some sign of comprehension that Walters might not otherwise be willing to betray.

As he listened to Whateley, his mystification increased. It was obvious from what Whateley said as he went about putting Walters's order together that Aberath Whateley, though one of "the eddicated ones," was nevertheless as shunned by the educated Whateleys as by the decayed branch of the family. As for Increase Brown, who remained a somewhat shadowy figure whose description in the course of Whateley's monologue painted him as "gaunt" and "brown" of skin with black eyes and bony hands—"never seen him eat—never come after Aberath died for food"—but "thar was allus chickens and onct a hog and twict a cow gone" and people said "dark things"—the sum total of what he had to say of Increase Brown was that he was loathed and feared, and fearsomely avoided—not that he was ever about much to be avoided. Walters could not escape the conclusion that the Dunwichers were manifesting considerably more than the ignorant countryman's resentment of the outsider in their attitude toward Brown; but what was it that Whateley sought in his



sometimes guarded, sometimes frank glances at Walters's eyes, what reaction was he looking for? Whateley succeeded in giving Walters a profoundly uneasy conviction that he not only was expected to react in a certain way, but ought to so react.

His uneasiness did not drain away when he left the store and drove out of Dunwich; and when he came to a stop at the house in the woods it was, if anything, compounded.

### III

After a light repast, he walked outside in the dusk, considering what he ought to do. It would be folly, he thought, to offer the property for sale as far away as Boston, for the Dunwich country was too far from that urban center, and had nothing to attract a potential buyer from the coastal towns; it would be better to advertise it for sale in Springfield, for Dunwich was not too far from that city, though it was quite likely that the reputation Dunwich had must have reached Springfield, and that might deter an investor. Even as he turned the problem over in his thoughts, he was conscious of a failure of conviction; he was not yet certain that he wished to move so precipitously; something about the house and its reputation interested him to the verge of obsession; the hints and suggestions thrown out by Tobias Whateley, added to those so casually dropped by the lawyer, Boyle, were beginning to persuade Walters that there was considerably more to be learned

about the house before he offered it for sale. Furthermore, the property was his, he need not make haste to dispose of it, however much part of him wanted to be off to England once more.

As he walked, turning the problem over and over in his mind, the dusk deepened toward night; stars began to glimmer among the treetops and over the house—Acturus and Spica, with Vega rising in the northeast—and the last of the winter constellations low in the west, Capella and the Heavenly Twins following Taurus and great Orion with the Dogs under the western rim. The evening was fragrant with the exhalation of the woods, an herb-like musk, added to that of the Miskatonic not far away, and the fresh-water smell of the nearby brook, and there was a rising tide of sound emanating from the near woods and, more distantly, from the hilltops around Dunwich, at first but the voices of birds—the diminishing songs and cries of day-birds, the increasing voices of nocturnal birds.

He reflected upon the differences between night in the American countryside and night in the England where he had grown up. Neither cuckoo nor nightingale was to be heard here in north central Massachusetts, but whippoorwills seemed to be vociferous indeed, and the harsh cries of what must be the American equivalent of nightjars rang out from above now and then, accompanied by the booming sound of wind in their wings as they plummeted downward and vaulted up again. And of

batrachian voices there was no dearth; they seemed to rise not only from the river but also from every pond and bog within range, a piping, ululant chorus marking the season's height.

But now, as he listened, he was aware of other sounds that did not seem to emanate from either avian or batrachian throats. The cries and booming of the nighthawks fell away; stranger sounds took their place—piping or fluting cries, but certainly not of frog or toad. He gave over walking and stood to listen. He heard voices, however distorted, which were surely those of men crying out, shouting; but at some distance away, and from on high. He decided presently that they came from the hilltops; and on the crest of the round hill behind Dunwich there was a glow in the now dark heavens, as of a bonfire burning there. What could be taking place there?

But there were other sounds that were oddly disturbing—animal sounds of some kind, but the kind of which he had never heard before, though he had visited zoos and was familiar with the cries and gutturals and trumpeting of many animals foreign to England's shores, animals taken from the entire range of the British Commonwealth; and these sounds were utterly alien and filled the darkness with hideous suggestiveness. Now and then they rose to crescendo, but soon fell back again into a more normal pattern, blending with the voices of the dark woods and the marshes, and making a troubling harmony with the

incessant calling of the whippoorwills and the frogs.

He concluded finally that Boyle's casual references to the strangeness and remoteness of Dunwich might have been in reference to certain customs of the inhabitants; and of these whatever was going on in the hills by night might well be one. He shrugged himself free of further concern, and went into the house, intent upon developing the photographs he had taken. He had already foreseen that he might spend the evening in this fashion, and to that end had moved in his materials at the same time he had brought his camera. A cistern pump in the kitchen would be a source of water, and any room in the house would serve as a dark-room, for the house was darker than the starlit woods outside. Still, in the absence of electricity, it would take some doing.

He persevered, though it took him longer than he had estimated to complete a set of photographs and hang them to dry. His skill had not deserted him, though he was not satisfied with the views he had taken of the interior of the house, particularly that of the study, that curious central room that was so much a vortex around which the remainder of the house seemed to have been constructed. And his photograph of the decoration on the wall above the fireplace struck him as uncommonly odd; he took it, wet, from the line, and carried it into an adjoining room where he could look at it in a stronger light.

The wall and the carving on it were beautifully clear. But the glass eye seemed oddly clouded. He studied it for a while, growing somewhat disquieted; he did not believe what he fancied he saw, and he disliked what he fancied. He returned to the improvised dark-room, sought out the negative of the fireplace wall, and set out enlarging the section centered on the ornament. This done, he repaired once again to the adjoining room and peered closely at the result.

There was no mistaking what he saw. The “clouding” he had seen was the unmistakable outline of two human faces—the one, of an old man, bearded, looked directly out of the glass; the other, a lean, hawklike face, with the skin drawn tight over its bones, looked out from behind the first, his face slightly tilted as if he were deferring to the older man, though the age of the one was no greater to the eye than the age of the other, for all that the one wore a beard and the other’s leathery, parchment-like face was free of any hirsute adornment. Walters’s baffled astonishment knew no bounds; in any other medium he would have dismissed what he saw as an optical illusion—but the photograph could not lie, and the outlines could not be dismissed as illusion. It was odd that he had not seen these outlines when he had looked at the ornament; but perhaps he had been too hasty, perhaps the light had reflected from the glass in such a way as to blur the outlines beyond recognition.

He went forthwith to the study, carrying one of the lamps he had lit. As he approached the open doors, he was further surprised to see light flickering in the room, as if he had left a lamp burning there; but he had not been in the room at all in his transit from outside to the dark-room. He put down the lamp he carried and walked forward quietly in its reflected glow to the threshold of the study. There he stood, transfixed.

The source of the glow he had seen was the glass eye in the carved triangle above the fireplace. It was clouded, opalescent; it seethed and swirled with movement, spilling a pale light into and across the room; it was as if some life within reached out to make itself manifest. Though the eye was as milky as a moonstone, it flashed with hidden colors suddenly disclosed, as in an opal—roseate, pale green, blue, red, yellow. He stood and watched the swirling colors, the seething clouds in the glass eye; then he turned abruptly and went back to where he had put down the lamp.

With it in hand, he advanced confidently into the room. But its light seemed to have a diminishing effect on the glow of the eye in the wall. The swirling clouds settled, grew still; the light faded; the glinting colors became motionless. He waited upon it. Nothing happened. All was now still.

There was in one corner of the room a small stepladder manifestly for use in reaching books on the top shelves of the cases around the walls. Walters went over and got it.

He put it up against the fireplace wall, caught up the lamp again, and climbed the ladder, lamp in hand, until he stood almost abreast of the uncommon ornament.

He examined it, looking first at the eye itself. After a few moments of scrutiny, about all of which he could be reasonably certain was that it was assuredly not any common form of glass. He could not be sure that it was indeed glass, at all. Were it not for its uncommon size, it might in appearance alone have been an opal. But it was not that, either.

The carving which framed it was fully as baffling. The eye appeared in what was almost its optical center. The outer frame was a triangular pediment. At first glance, the carving appeared to be classically conventional in design. But now, in the light of the lamp Walters held, it bore a disquieting resemblance to a huge octopus-like being, yet unearthly to look upon; in it the convex circle of glass lay like a huge, central eye, opaque to sight now, but still cloudy with pale light that shifted oddly even now.

The whole exerted a strong fascination on Walters, who felt it difficult to take his eyes from it. He could not put down the expectation of something's appearing in the glass, and wherever his eye wandered, following the tentacular lines of the carving, he invariably returned to the convex glass, as if he anticipated some further change. But there was nothing. That it was luminous of itself could hardly be denied, but the

source of that luminosity was a mystery, one incapable of solution at this point.

Walters backed down the stepladder with reluctance. He stood below and looked back up at the triangular frame. The carving was undeniably octopoid, but equally certain not in the same way that common octopi were.

He put out the light and waited upon the effect of darkness.

At first all was black, so much so that it was impossible to distinguish even the walls. But in moments a wan iridescence became apparent. Not very much to Walters's surprise, it emanated from the convex eye in the ornament on the fireplace wall. And presently the room was once more aglow, as it had been when first Walters had entered it from the dark-room. The convex eye was again agitated, and its appearance was that of a cloudscape in the grip of a violent wind, save only that its colors were more brilliant.

Watching it and trying to find some explanation of its extraordinary properties, Walters was insidiously aware of a kind of compulsion in his interest; it was as if his attention to the eye in the wall was not entirely voluntary, as if something outside himself impelled him to gaze at it, some influence he could not define. At the same time, his thoughts took an amazing turn; he was less concerned with the glass and its properties, and more with an ambiguous,



ill-defined concept of vast dimensions and spaces beyond the terrestrial scenes familiar to him; and he felt himself being drawn into some vortex of dream and speculation that profoundly disturbed him. It was as if he were falling into a bottomless pit.

He relit the lamp.

It took a few moments for his equilibrium to return. The glow of the convex eye had once again vanished, and insofar as it was possible for the room to become prosaic, prosaic it had become. He was consciously relieved. Indeed, he discovered that a fine beading of perspiration had begun to form on his forehead. He wiped it away.

Whatever its source, his experience had been extraordinary. He sat down somewhat shakily and tried to think how it had come about, and why. Obviously, the eye in the wall had far more than ornamental significance. Who had put it there?

He climbed the stepladder again and studied the carving with greater care in the lamplight. He could find nothing to indicate its age. Presumably it had been put in at the time the house had been built. He must therefore learn something about its construction; and since it was very probably older than any living inhabitant of Dunwich, he would have to search elsewhere. He must also discover what he could about the previous inhabitants. Perhaps they

had had similar experiences with the eye in the carving? Perhaps their experiences had transcended his? The thought filled him with apprehension and also a sense of excitement and discovery simultaneously.

It was borne in upon him that if he meant to accomplish the research that clearly impended, his stay in Aberath Whateley's house would be of appreciably longer duration than he had intended. Somewhat sobered, he descended the ladder once more.

Resolutely putting the extraordinary eye in the wall from his thoughts, he returned to the dark-room to look at his drying photographs, and then climbed the stairs to the gable room in which he had chosen to sleep. It was now past mid-evening and he was tired. He put down the lamp and opened the window; outside all was as before—the whippoorwills, the frogs, the unusual cries and sounds from the dark hills. The gable faced toward the village of Dunwich; looking out, he saw that the fire on Round Mountain had gone out; but another crowned a different hill across the valley to the left, on the far side of the road that led in from the Aylesbury Pike, and the sounds that were so unusual to his ears now seemed to come from that direction.

He undressed and got into bed. But, tired though he was, he was not yet ready for sleep. A multitude of thoughts churned in his mind, all to the obligato of the sounds from

outside. Tobias Whateley might have more to tell him. But if he could find one of the “eddicated” Whateleys, he might learn more fact and less superstition, compounded by leering hints and scornful, dark references. The library in Springfield might offer some data about the building of the house; in any case, some Whateley family history could be found there, since the family had been so prominent for several generations in the Dunwich country.

As he lay there, he grew slowly conscious of the *presence* of the house, as it were—as of an entity that suffered him as a guest, perhaps—as something alive on its own terms, and of its heart that was unmistakably the study below, which was the source of the anima that gave the house its being; he felt it like a force drawing all to itself, and he had to exert some effort of will to prevent himself from leaving his bed and descending to that room once more. How extraordinary it was! He felt himself prey to fascination, apprehension, alarm, fear—and a kind of supranormal awareness, as if he lay on the edge of some momentous discovery and waited only upon the turning of the hour to bring him to some supreme knowledge that would confer upon him a kind of immortality.

At last, past midnight, he slept. At that hour the whippoorwills had fallen silent; a few frogs still piped; the night was still, for after midnight the sounds that fell so strangely to his ear from the surrounding hills had ceased. But his sleep was troubled by many strange dreams of a

sort that he had never before experienced—dreams of his remote childhood—of someone he knew as his grandfather—but only in dream, for he had but a vestigial memory of that old man, his father's father, and he had no waking knowledge of him—dreams of vast, megalithic buildings, of alien landscapes, of cold spaces far out in the universe among the stars. And, waking between dreams, he was constantly aware of a kind of pulsing in the house, as if its secret heartbeat throbbed in its very walls.

#### IV

In the morning he drove to Springfield. After lunch in a restaurant in that city, he made his way to the public library where he introduced himself to the reference librarian, a middle-aged gentleman whose name, duly set down on a card that rested on his desk, was Clifford Paul. To him Walters explained the nature of his quest.

“Well, you have come to the right place, Mr. Walters,” said Paul. “We have some material on file on both the house to which you refer, and on the Whateleys in general. A very old family. Armigerous, too. But now sadly decadent, I believe. Our interest, though, is primarily in the past, not so much in the present.”

He was taken to the reading-room, and there presently a county history and some voluminous files were put down before him. He tackled the county history first. It was one of

those heavy tomes, filled with autobiographical and biographical accounts by various hands, usually members of the subjects' families, and published at a profit made chiefly from the members of the families mentioned in its pages. Most of this material was factual and hopelessly prosaic.

He found a photograph, rather poorly reproduced evidently from a poorer tintype, of Cyrus Whateley. It bore a disquietingly familiar resemblance to someone he had not long ago seen, which was patently absurd. The account of his life was disappointingly brief. He had acquired his home near Dunwich from one Dudley Ropes Glover, who was the legatee of Sir Edward Orme, who had built it in 1703, twenty years before he disappeared, after many years spent in Europe. Glover had sold the house too after long absences from it, also in Europe. So much for the house. And of Cyrus Whateley there was little more; he too had travelled; he had married twice and had fathered two sons, one from each of his wives; one son had inherited; the other had left home as a young man and had been seen no more. Nothing had been set down about Cyrus Whateley's occupation, save that he was a "landowner" and presumably speculated in land. There was no independent entry on Aberath Whateley, the son of Cyrus who had inherited his property.

The file on the Whateley family, however, was another matter. Here, if anything, the various pieces were almost

too numerous. It began with a straightforward account of the Whateley family in the Dunwich area, from the time of their coming into north central Massachusetts in 1699, from Arkham, down to the date of the publication of the county history, 1920; it had evidently been assembled for inclusion in that volume, but had not been used. There was an extensive family tree, which included Aberath and his lost brother, Charles. There were many individual biographies, principally in the form of obituary notices clipped from the *Springfield Republican* or the *Arkham Advertiser*. But there were also unclassified clippings which Walters chose to read with more care than he read the more formal obituaries, for clearly some more imaginative soul than the average reference librarian had taken care that they be included.

These entries dealt with country lore involving the Whateleys in one way or another. There was, for instance, a report of a fiery sermon delivered by the Reverend Jephtha Hoag, come from Arkham to take the charge of the Methodist Church at Dunwich, in 1787—" 'Tis said of a certain family in these parts that they do consort with the devil and raise up monsters, both by magic means and by the sins of the flesh. But forty years ago my predecessor, the Reverend Abijah Hoadley, from the pulpit of the Congregational Church in this village, preached on this same subject in these words: 'It must be allow'd, that these Blasphemies of an infernall Train of Daemons are Matters of too common Knowledge to be deny'd; the cursed Voices

of heard now from under Ground by above a Score of credible Witnesses now living. I myself did not more than a Fortnight ago catch a very plain Discourse of evil Powers in the Hill behind my House; wherein there were a Rattling and Rolling, Groaning, Screeching, and Hissing, such as no Things of this Earth cou'd raise up, and which must needs have come from those Caves that only black Magick can discover, and only the Divell unlock.' I, too, have heard these noises in the hills, a caterwauling and a cacaphony of which not all are natural to our Earth. Be warned! You know of whom I speak!"

There was more in this vein; indeed, the sermon was reprinted at such length that, despite his interest, Walters tired of reading it. Attached to it, however, was another, manifestly related article, which was an account of the closing of the Methodist Church, by a majority of the congregation, because of the alleged "lack of prudence" on the part of the Reverend Jephtha Hoag in the first part, and of his unexplained absence in the second, the Reverend Hoag having followed his colleague of four decades previously into limbo, for the Reverend Hoadley had also vanished within a month after delivering his sermon against the powers of darkness.

A thick envelope proved to contain clippings of a more or less facetious nature about "Odd Happenings at Dunwich," as one headline announced. These were largely from the *Arkham Advertiser*, and set forth, tongue in cheek,

accounts of “monsters” which had been conjured into some kind of illusory life by the bootleg-whiskey drinkers of Dunwich. Walters read them with some amusement, but he could not escape the fact that *something* had indeed taken place at Dunwich, something well out of the ordinary that someone from Miskatonic University had finally succeeded in keeping out of the paper after the *Advertiser* had had its fun with the tales. Too, there was associated with the events at Dunwich the very real death of one Wilbur Whateley, which had taken place just prior to their occurrence, and not in Dunwich at all, but within the grounds of Miskatonic University in Arkham. Some additional clippings from the *Aylesbury Transcript* were no less amusing, but again, all the facetiousness did not conceal the fact that there had been rather strange occurrences at Dunwich in that summer of 1928, culminating in September of that year.

Not quite seven years ago, thought Walters. There had been mention of one Dr. Henry Armitage, librarian at Miskatonic University, in connection with the events at Dunwich; Walters made a mental note to explore the possibility that Dr. Armitage might still be available for an interview, if he decided to go that far in his exploration of the Whateley family background. Certainly there was nothing concrete in the tales of the “Goings-On” in the Dunwich country; the only definite facts seemed to add up to the death of a large number of cattle and other livestock, and some disappearances among the country people



there, but even in these instances the names were garbled and altered in one account after another, and none of these were Whateleys, though a Bishop in one instance was a cousin. But how distant, it was impossible to say; the Whateley family tree abounded with other names—Bishop, Hoag, Marsh, and more; and it was decidedly possible that the Reverend Hoag who had so unwisely leveled his charge at one of the Dunwich families—(Walters had the strong suspicion that the object of his sermon was the Whateley family)—might himself have been a distant cousin.

He turned to the family tree and scrutinized it a little more attentively. He sought but did not find the Reverend Jephtha Hoag there, though there was a round dozen of Hoags listed. Plainly, too, there was considerable intermarriage within the family—cousins married cousins frequently—Elizabeth Bishop to Abner Whateley, Lavinia Whateley to Ralso Marsh, Blessed Bishop to Edward Marsh, and so on; thus decayed and degenerate stock would tend to increase the decadence in the family, or at least that branch of it that was in the habit of referring to the others as “the eddicated ones.”

Walters did not know what to make of what he had read when he sat back to contemplate it. He had in reality learned little more than the lawyer, Boyle, had told him—that Dunwich was a forgotten backwater, that the Whateley family was decadent, that many odd tales came out of Dunwich, very probably much exaggerated by more

superstitious neighbors, and as much derided by those who considered themselves free of superstitious beliefs. Yet it seemed to him that there was a singular variety of material recorded, in one vein or another—he did not want to undertake further reading of what appeared to him to be only variations on the same theme—but all with a dark undercurrent, an oddly disturbing one, all the more so since he felt himself irresistibly bound to what he had read in some way beyond his understanding; and while he told himself that he could not now take more time to read further in the Whateley file, he was aware of a disquieting unwillingness to read more.

He closed the file and brought it back to the reference librarian.

“I trust it has been of some use to you, Mr. Walters,” said Paul.

“Yes, indeed, it has. I thank you. I may return to study it a little further as time permits.”

“By all means, sir.” He hesitated diffidently. “Do I take it you are related to the Whateleys?”

“I have inherited some property there,” said Walters. “I am not aware of a relationship.”

“Forgive me,” said the librarian hastily. “I only thought—I knew some of those people. You do bear a certain

superficial resemblance, but then, I suppose, we could find equally superficial resemblances among a great many totally unrelated people.”

“I am sure we could,” agreed Walters amiably. But he was nettled, and at the same time unpleasantly disturbed. Tobias Whateley had not troubled to conceal his conviction that there was a relationship; he had called him “cousin”—though with an edge of scorn in his voice. Mr. Paul’s casual suggestion had been made with utmost deference, however. The librarian looked so apologetic that he was moved to add, “Of course, there may be some distant connection. That family tree is quite extensive, and I am not informed as to why my late father came into the property.”

“May I ask which property it is?”

“They call it the old Cyrus Whateley place.”

Mr. Paul’s face cleared. “That Mr. Whateley was...”

Walters interrupted, smiling. “Don’t tell me. The natives in Dunwich would have called him one of ‘the eddicated’ Whateleys.”

“I was about to say so,” rejoined the librarian.

“And I can see that that puts a different face on the presumed relationship, Mr. Paul. You needn’t deny it.”

“I won’t. There really are some terrible stories about the other branch, sir. You’ll uncover them, I have no doubt. I know those clippings you examined treat them all lightly, but there is more than a grain of truth in them, and I am convinced that there are very strange—and I fear, hideous—things happening in the remoter parts of the Dunwich country.”

“As there are in many remote areas of the world,” said Walters.

He left the library with mixed emotions. The possibility of a relationship to the Whateley clan could not be readily dismissed. His father had said little about his family background, though he had not concealed the family’s American origin. He did not feel particularly pleased at the thought; but on the other hand he was not conscious of any viable antipathy, either.

The ambivalence of his attitude troubled him. He felt at one and the same time involved and withdrawn. The England he had left but so short a while ago seemed infinitely more remote than he would have thought possible; the Dunwich country toward which he drove held for him an indefinable attraction, not alone in its wildness that presented a dark attractiveness to the eye and the imagination, but as well in its curious alienation from the surrounding world that pressed ever more hastily and madly toward some looming goal that must, at man’s ever-

increasing pace, be utterly destructive to humanity and civilization.

The house, when he reached it, seemed to anticipate him, as were it waiting upon his return. Its presence was tangible, yet he could not isolate its source, though it seemed to him anew that the central room was the heart of the house, and he almost consciously expected to hear the same odd pulsing he had been aware of in the night. This absurd impression passed, but, as he entered the central room, he was prey to another.

The room, now that he saw it, seemed to have been arranged for company, with the chair drawn up to the table and the ledgers lying there. He crossed over and sat down to the table. He had looked into the ledgers before. Now he lifted the cover of the top one, and saw before him a thin envelope across the face of which had been scrawled, "For Him Who Will Come."

It was unsealed. He picked it up, and drew out the thin sheet of paper folded inside.

"For Charles," he read, "or the son of Charles, or the grandson of Charles, or Who Comes After..."

"Read, that you may know, that you may prepare to wait for Those Who Watch, and fulfill that which is meant to be."

There was no signature, but the writing was crabbed and

uncertain.

*Unfinished at the time of August Derleth's death, July 4, 1971.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

AUGUST DERLETH was a friend and literary student of H. P. Lovecraft, with whom he shared a great deal of correspondence. After Lovecraft's death, he and Donald Wandrei attempted to publish a collection of the author's stories, but in the face of little interest from extant publishers, they founded Arkham House in 1939 with the aim of publishing Lovecraft's work themselves. Derleth also wrote many stories after Lovecraft's passing based on fragments and notes he had left behind.

HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT was raised in Providence, Rhode Island, by his mother and two maiden aunts. As a young man, he suffered a nervous breakdown and gradually became a recluse, emerging years later as a prolific essayist, poet, and correspondent. It was not until after the failure of his brief marriage and New York habitation that he returned to Providence and began to produce the

writings for which he is now most famous, including *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Call of Cthulhu*. Lovecraft died of cancer in the town of his birth in 1937.



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The Definitive Edition*

The stories collected in *The Watchers Out of Time* are works of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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