

QUILL: SHADOW AND INK

By Scott Malthouse

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QUILL: SHADOW AND INK

INTRODUCTION



Quill: Shadow and Ink is a campaign book for Quill: A Letter-Writing Roleplaying Game for a Single Player. You will require the main Quill rules to use this book.

A campaign book is a string of interlinked scenarios that tell a complete story. In this case, the story is heavily inspired by the works of H.P Lovecraft, the author that popularised the cosmic horror genre. The game takes you from Paris 1887, to the early 1900s in New England, on a disturbing journey of terror, magic and death. Be aware that this campaign does deal with mature themes.

Lovecraft's work is a perfect fit for the Quill game. Many of his stories are told through the use of letters, with protagonists recording their investigations into horror and insanity by sending close companions missives. The idea behind Quill: Shadow and Ink is to emulate this spiral into dread by having you, the player, write letters from a number of different perspectives. You are never the same person twice - instead selecting a new character for each letter.

One of the best things about running this campaign is the physical artefacts you are left with at the end. Once you have completed all the scenarios you will have a stack of missives that emulates what a protagonist in a Lovecraftian story would also have at their end of one of their tales.

It's recommended that if you're not familiar with Lovecraft's works, you check out some of the most popular stories. All are in the public domain so can be found on the internet for free. The Whisperer in Darkness is one of the best tales told through letters, but it's worth reading The Call of Cthulhu, Dagon, The Shadow Over Innsmouth and At the Mountains of Madness too as a starter. These will give you a good idea how these stories are paced and the language used, which is quite archaic for the time they were published.

RULES

CHARACTERS

The Journalist

A muckracker from the local gazette who yearns to get to the bottom of a story. The journalist is a tenacious soul whose mastery of language is second-to-none. With only her words she can topple the most powerful members of society.

Armed with a trusty notepad and pen, the journalist is able to get notes down fast to relay the facts as expediently as possible.

Penmanship: Poor

Language: Good

Heart: Average

The Historian

The historian is an expert in antiquity - a collector of lost tomes, of sacred ancient objects and, just sometimes, curiosities of an occult nature.

Penmanship: Good

Language: Average

Heart: Poor

The Scientist

The scientist works in a field of study such as physics, biology, geology or chemistry. Scientists are rational and reasoned, while being methodical in their mannerisms and analysis.

Penmanship: Poor

Language: Average

Heart: Good

The Student

Students are eager to learn and wear their heart on their sleeve. The best students will waste no time trying to gain experience and best their peers, although they have much to learn about the world.

Penmanship: Average

Language: Poor

Heart: Good

The Linguist

The linguist is a master of languages, likely knowing more than three. They often work as translators for large companies, having to travel often for their job.

Penmanship: Average

Language: Good

Heart: Poor

The Artist

Artists are aesthetes above all else. They can paint and draw beautifully, although few are lucky enough to make money from their passion.

Penmanship: Good

Language: Poor

Heart: Average

CHOOSE YOUR SKILL

Now you have chosen your character, you need to select a skill. Skills can be used once per scenario, potentially giving you an advantage when writing your letter. There are three skills in the game:

Inspiration: Gain +1 dice to a Language Test

Steady hand: Gain +1 dice to a Penmanship Test

Detailed: Gain +1 dice to a Heart Test

CHOOSING CHARACTERS

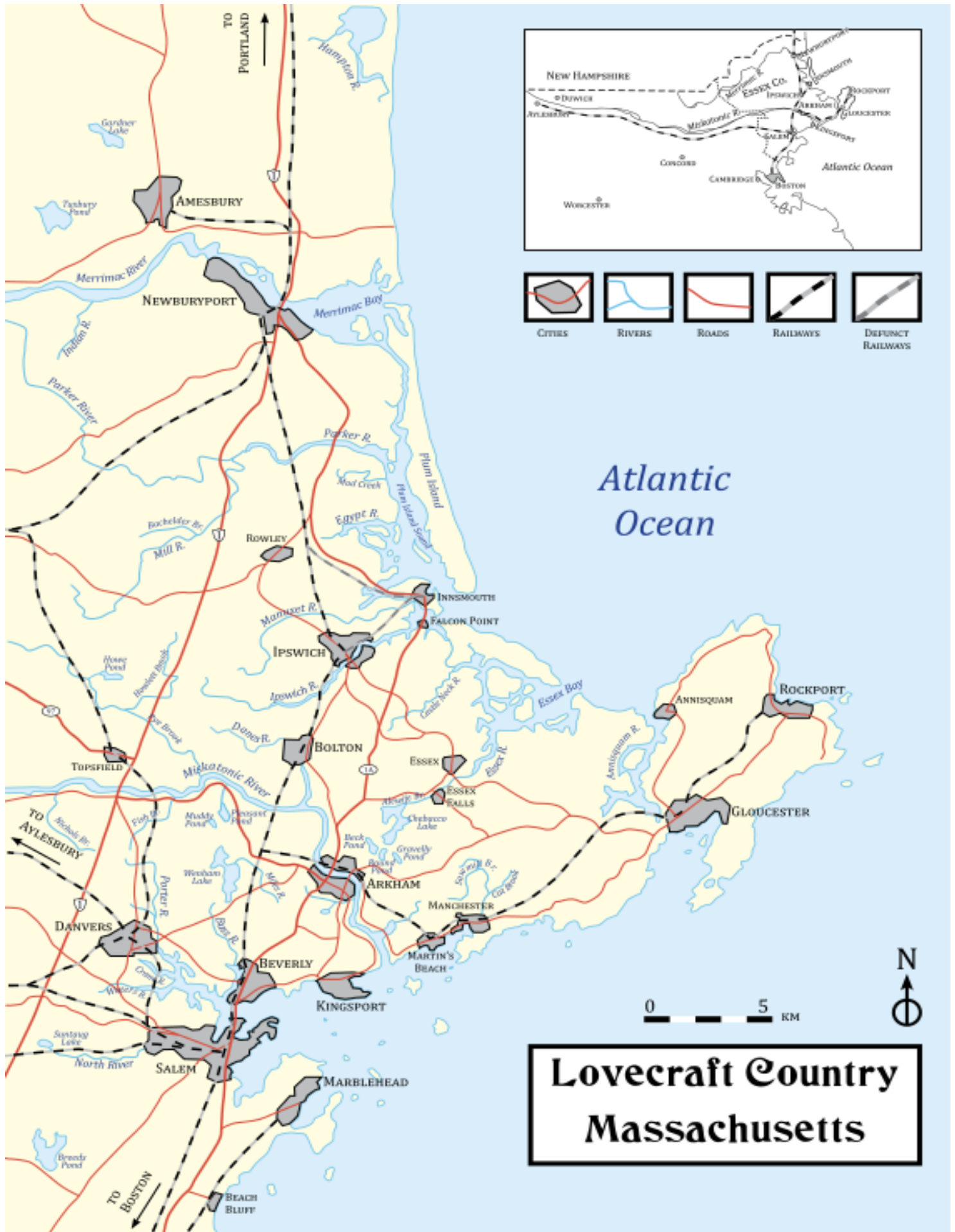
In each scenario you will be taking on the role of a different character, so you are encouraged to select a new character at the beginning of each letter.

SPECIAL RULE: REPLYING

In Quill: Shadow and Ink there may be times that you end with 'Your story has come to an end'. The first time this happens in a scenario you have you opportunity to reply to the outcome and try the letter again. If you get the same outcome again, you are unable to try another time.

SPECIAL RULE: STORY POINTS

In Quill: Shadow and Ink each scenario is linked into a larger story. If you manage to score a certain number of points at the end of a letter, you will be awarded either 1 or 2 Story Points. If you manage to complete the campaign you will be given the option of reading one of two conclusions, depending on how many Story Points you acquired from scenarios.



SCENARIO ONE

VIR STELLAS

The year is 1887 and the location is London, England. You have travelled here from Paris on the hunt for antiquity, a hobby of yours. You are particularly interested in old esoteric texts, so when you discovered a 16th century book being auctioned off at Sotheby's that you had never heard of - Vir Stellas. You purchased the book for a princely sum, feeling somewhat guilty about spending so much on one tome, but it was one of the fiercest bidding wars you had ever been a part of.

You are staying in London for the next few weeks and have spent much of the time locked in your dingy rooms pouring through the strange text. Odd symbols and disturbing illustrations fill the book and the more you read, the more unsettled you become. You decide to write to a friend, Pierre Durand, back in Paris who you know to be an expert on the occult, as this is what you believe the book to be written about.

Profile

- The letter is written to give details about the Vir Stellas and hopefully encourage Pierre to write back with answers to what the provenance of the text could be. You will be recounting your disturbances at the book, explaining what you found in there. While you don't know details and cannot read the language - you will be noting some of the strange symbology and weird illustrations you have found.

Rules of Correspondence

You may choose from one of the following:

- You will try to put forward your disgust and disturbance at the text - gain +1 to Heart rolls.
- You will try to impress your friend with knowledge of texts - gain +1 to Language rolls

Ink Pot

Hello/ Good day

Sold/ Auctioned

Book / Tome

Pictures/ Illustrations

Scared/ Disturbed

Piece/ Fragment

Image / Emblem

Quickly/Hastily

Stars/ Heavenly bodies

Unbearable/ Oppressive

Consequences

Fewer than 5 points

You receive a response after a longer period than you expected. In the letter, Pierre's is almost mocking in his language. He has never heard of the Vir Stellas and dismisses it as a fake - possibly written centuries later. Pierre believes that you have been hoodwinked, but wishes you well and will speak with you when you are back in Paris. **Your investigation has come to an end.**

6-8 points

After several days you receive a letter from Pierre, who admits while he has never heard of the Vir Stellas, he is intrigued by its provenance. He believes that, while it may be a fake, if it is real the text could be of great importance in the study of the history of the occult. **Gain 1 story point.**

9+ points

It doesn't take long to receive a response from Pierre, who is clearly excited in the way he writes. He has read of Vir Stellas many years ago. The tome was said to have been a myth, but he always believed there was evidence to suggest that it was real. While he is unsure of exactly what the contents are about, he does believe it could be a magical text. He says that he is visiting you immediately to see the book for himself. **Gain 2 story points.**

SCENARIO TWO

INHERITING DARKNESS

The year is 1903 and the location is Paris, France. You have recently inherited a collection of antique books after your grandparents passed quite suddenly, and have been told that you can do what you will with the books, but not to sell the tome locked away in the library's safe. Your curiosity piqued, you unlocked the safe with a brass key left in a brown envelope and pulled out the book - Vir Stellas.

Like the one you inherited the book from, you quickly became enthralled and, at the same time, disturbed by the text. Along with the tome you found stacks of notes written by one Pierre Durand - a family friend who also passed recently.

You took the book on a trip to Arkham, Massachusetts, where you were visiting a hospitalised friend. Holing yourself away for days on end, you poured through Durand's notes and attempted to decipher the text. After several weeks you determine that the text is indeed magical, and appears to contain information about a world beyond our own. It appears that you require a second person in order to carry out some of the simpler rites in the book - and as you become more obsessed with the book, you also become more obsessed with the idea of carrying out one of the rites. You decide to write to a friend in New Orleans, Jemima Carter, who you know has always dabbled in the wicked arts.

Profile

- You need to persuade Jemima to travel to New England and enact some of the strange rites that have been de-encoded in the book. Use your most persuasive language and paint a picture of what you might be able to achieve - namely, a potential window into another world.

Rules of Correspondence

You may choose from one of the following:

- You are setting out to use your most persuasive language. Your first Language roll automatically succeeds.
- You know that Jemima loves symbology and hieroglyphs. You painstakingly spend time filling margins with these. Your first Penmanship roll automatically succeeds.

Ink Pot

Spells/ Invocations

Witch/ Magic-user

Shapes / Hieroglyphs
Persuade/ Inveigle
Ritual/ Ceremony
Piece/ Fragment
Nice / Beautiful
Shot/Opportunity
Call/ Summon
Immortality/ Deathlessness

Consequences

Fewer than 5 points

Jemima writes back after a month of waiting. Her response disappoints you greatly and you fall into a great depression after reading her words. She says she no longer works with the dark arts and warns you about doing the same. She tells you not to write again unless it's to warm her soul with good news. **Your investigation has come to an end.**

6-8 points

Jemima is intrigued by your proposal, although is concerned about invoking a power that she knows nothing about. She says that she will visit, but must be convinced further by reading the book herself. **Gain 1 story point.**

9+ points

Jemima writes back with enthusiasm and excitement about the endeavour. She believes that the ritual could call a being into the world who could offer to take them to this other place. Her life on Earth has been disappointing, so is eager to see if she can travel to a new, better place. She will be packing for New England tomorrow. **Gain 2 story points.**

SCENARIO THREE

CEREMONY OF SCARS

The year is 1904 and the location is Arkham, Massachusetts. You have traveled from New Orleans after receiving a letter from your close friend Jemima Carter, who had travelled to New England some months ago for what she said was to be an experience to open 'all the eyes of the mind'. However, she was apparently growing concerned about her companion, who had become so obsessed with an occult text that they had begun doing terrible things to their own body. You decide to visit to help your friend.

When you arrive, you are unprepared for what you find. The house she has been staying in is silent but the door ajar. You ascend the stairs and enter a room, only to find a scene that chilled your blood and sent you into shock. Two bodies covered in scars shaped like hieroglyphs lay on the floor, face down in a pool of dried blood. One was Jemima. All over the room are documents and on the walls are symbols, and mad writings that portray these poor souls' descent into madness.

One phrase from the room stuck in your mind since you discovered the wretches scene - The Man from the Stars. The police took most of the material away as evidence but you can't shake the feeling that this was more than a potential suicide. You take it upon yourself to delve further into this. After speaking with neighbors and townsfolk in the area, you find that there have been reports of awful chants and screams coming from the sycamore wood in the middle of the night. Some say they saw strange lights coming from within that unsettled them. You decide you need a companion to help you in your investigation, so write to Paul Washington, an old university friend and journalist in Boston.

Profile

- You must encourage Paul to join you in your investigation, as you mean to set out into the woods to discover any clues about the cause of Jemima's death.

Rules of Correspondence

You may choose from one of the following:

- Paul is fact-oriented and does not enjoy exaggeration. You have a -1 to Heart rolls.
- You are writing in haste on poor quality paper. You have a -1 to Penmanship rolls.

Ink Pot

Horrid/ Grisly

Break/ Rend

Star Man / Man from the Stars

Loud/ Cacophonous

I'm sorry/ Forgive me
Lights/ Incandescence
Bad/ Sinister
Bodies/ Corpses
Spell/ Incantation
Speed/ Haste

Consequences

Fewer than 5 points

Paul is glib in his response to you. He tells you that you should seek help as you are clearly not in the right frame of mind. He asks you whether you have been hitting the bottle too many times.

Your investigation has come to an end.

6-8 points

Paul is concerned for your well-being and his tone has an air of disbelief about your story.

However, he tells you to expect him tomorrow and he looks forward to seeing you. **Gain 1 story point.**

9+ points

Paul writes back, telling you he will be over at once. He says this could be the story of the decade and wouldn't miss an opportunity to find out what happened to the bodies and to investigate the strange sounds and lights. **Gain 2 story points.**

SCENARIO FOUR

NYARLATHOTEP

The year is 1904 and the location is Arkham, Massachusetts. You have lived on the outskirts of the Sycamore Woods for a decade but you are ready to pack up and move to Nebraska to live with your mother. The chantings and lights began a month ago and have only grown more intense since then. You heard that an out-of-town journalist and his companion were last seen heading into the damned place before vanishing. Now Charlie is dead - a detective and your closest friend in the world. You had grown worried about his health recently. Ever since he discovered two mutilated bodies in an old house, their bodies covered in scars as if they were enacting some sort of occult ceremony, he hadn't been the same. He would jabber incessantly about a book he found in the house - the *Vir Stellas* - and how the Man from the Stars would come to bring him peace. You put it down to his suffering after his son passed a year ago - it must be hard on the guy.

You were the one who found his body. There is a field to the north of the wood where people walk their dogs. You were walking Betsy, your spaniel, when you found Charlie's body, naked and covered in horrific cuts resembling hieroglyphics. That night the chantings were louder than ever, so you decided to investigate, mustering up all the courage you could find. You crept into a clearing where ten people danced and contorted naked - each covered in scar symbols. In the centre stood a man dressed in gentleman's attire with a cane. You remember him being tall - about 8ft tall. He was monstrous and as the scarred people danced he laughed a disgusting cackle. You could hear clearly what they were chanting: *Ie, ie Nyarlathotep, thusai cul nubula Nyarlathotep*. You were shaken and immediately fled. Now you are writing to the *New England Journal* with an account of what you saw - people must know what dark devilry is happening in those woods and who this strange man is.

Profile

- You must relay the events to the editor at the *New England Journal* - telling them what you saw and that people have the right to know about it. Convince them to report on it at once.

Rules of Correspondence

You may choose from one of the following:

- Your descriptions of the horrors you saw are vivid. Reroll your first Heart test and take the highest number.
- You write on high quality vellum paper with professional stationery. Reroll your first Penmanship test and take the highest number.

Ink Pot

Danced/ Writhed

Dog/ Spaniel

Snoop / Investigate
Tall man/ Lanky giant
Cop/ Detective
Cuts/ Flesh carvings
Dusk/ Gloam
Doom/ Quietus
Ran/ Fled
Peepers/ Eyes

Consequences

Fewer than 5 points

You receive no response from the Journal. You clearly didn't do enough to convince them of the story's importance, or perhaps they do not believe you. **Your investigation has come to an end.**

6-8 points

You receive a letter from the editor saying that the story interest them, but they can't put their full resource in to cover it, so they will be sending a junior reporter in the next couple of days to investigate.. **Gain 1 story point.**

9+ points

The letter from the editor is everything you hoped for. He is extremely interested in following this story and is immediately dispatching the Journal's most seasoned reporter. Before long you're getting paid a visit by journalist Jacob Hughes who interviews you about what you saw and decides to set out into the woods at night.. **Gain 2 story points.**

SCENARIO FIVE

PARADISE FOUND

The year is 1904 and the location is Arkham, Massachusetts. Upon visiting your friend, who owns a modest home on the border of the Sycamore Wood, you found the door off its hinges, lying in the centre of the kitchen. You reasoned there must have been a break in, but you soon realised that a smear of blood coated the ground, leading out of the back door - as if some poor soul was wounded and dragged outside. You followed the trail of gore through the woods, your heartbeat quickening - what had become of your friend? You came across the body of a small dog, recognising it as Betsy. There were marks on its body as if it had been bitten or clawed by something - perhaps a cougar, you thought.

The trail brought you to a clearing where you stopped dead at the sight. Twenty or thirty men and women were writhing on the ground, heavily wounded. Feeding on their flesh were grotesque beings the likes of which you have never seen and whose bulbous, gnashing forms will never leave your mind. They were a grey colour, with awful membranous wings and several jaws. But the most horrifying aspect of the grisly scene wasn't the chewing of flesh and sinew, nor was it the tall man looming over them, face fixed with a grin. No, it was the laughing. The naked people who were being feasted upon were cackling madly, as if they were enjoying every moment - as if it were an ecstasy. A man, looked up at you giggling and snorting, his legs were all but gone now. He shrieked out words that rang in your soul: "Nyarlathotep has brought paradise to us, praise be to him." The man expired before you and you cried out in horror.

You are in your hotel room, panting for breath in disbelief of what you just saw. You had run for your life, not looking back at the evil unfolding behind you. You grasp a pen and paper and begin to write. Not to anyone but yourself. You need to get everything down to prove your sanity.

Profile

- You must convince yourself that you are sound of mind and that what you saw was a figment - a chemical reaction in your brain. Reason as to what happened and try to maintain your sanity.

Rules of Correspondence

- There is only darkness. He is here by your door. Your final paragraph must be in capitals.
- Wake up, you are dreaming. You must be dreaming. Once you have finished, seal the letter away forever.
- Don't look. Head down. He can't hurt you. You may only attempt this letter once.

Ink Pot

Dream/ Reverie

Burgled/ Ransacked

Fancy / Imagination

Monsters/ Otherworldly Beings

Music/ Symphony

Practical/ Pragmatic

Shadows/ Silhouettes

Mind/ Intellect

Cheer/ Rejoice

Vanish/ Dissipate

Consequences

0-7 points

You seal the envelope and slip it into a drawer, holding your head. Writing has made you feel better, but you can't shake the feeling that something is drawing in. You look outside and see the shape of a tall man. **Gain 1 story point.**

8+ points

You seal away the letter and take a breath. You have convinced yourself that what you saw was merely your imagination - a reaction in your brain that you must consult a doctor about. You feel better and smile. There was nothing there. Your friend is still alive and the things you saw were the conjurings of a tired mind. **Gain 2 story points.**

CONCLUSION

Count up each of your Story Points and consult the relevant conclusion below.

5-7 Story Points

You wake up to sunlight beaming through the window. You feel groggy and your limbs ache. Was yesterday really just a dream? You pack your case and dress yourself, noticing yourself quivering as you fasten your buttons. On your desk is a newspaper open at a story about strange goings on in the Sycamore Woods. Looking a second time you realise there is no newspaper. You shake your head violently and sit on the bed. Something isn't right - you can feel it in your bones.

Heading downstairs you realise everything is silent. The owners of the establishment are nowhere to be seen. You strike the bell on the counter to alert someone but after five minutes of waiting you realise that nobody is coming.

You step out into the street. Like the hotel, there is not a soul around. You are beginning to panic - where has everyone gone? You notice a grey swirling cloud overhead, a portent of rain. However, looking closer, you realise that it is no cloud. Thousands of flapping wings descend through the air, shrieking and gnashing. You fall to your knees before the cloud envelopes you.

8-10 Story Points

After waking up you are soon dressed and on your way. The events of yesterday seem like a bad dream but you smile and shake your head - what a fool you have been. Saying goodbye to your hosts you take the first train to Boston, thankful to be leaving that damned place.

Months go by and you decide to take a trip to Paris to see your relatives, many of whom you have never met - besides, you have never been to the city and it's always been a dream of yours to go. When you arrive you're greeted by smiling faces, hugs and kisses from your uncle and aunt. They take you back to a beautiful chateau that has been in the family for generations. You while the evening away telling stories and drinking fine red wine from the local vineyard, feeling like you're finally home.

The next day your uncle shows you around the chateau. You are drawn to the beautiful library, filled with rows of antique books. Your uncle tells you that his brother Pierre was a great collector of old tomes, particularly those that are esoteric in nature. He left his entire collection to your uncle, who became somewhat of a collector himself. Your uncle has an excited look in his eye as he giddily guides you over to an ornate mahogany desk. Sitting on the desk is an object dressed in cloth. He tells you that his brother had written much about a certain book he had studied years ago, but wished he could have in his collection. Your uncle tells you that as luck

would have it, he met a well-kept gentleman from New England who had access to this book and sold it to your uncle for a reasonable price. He unfurls the book from the cloth and you marvel at the black leather binding and the archaic lettering on the spine. It read: *Vir Stellas*.