

The Black Book



Berglund

Cornford

DeBill, Jr.

Francis

Graetzmacher

Guenther

Hamlet

Niswander

Price

Ross

Sargent

Schwader

Searight

Urban

Ken Withrow & PAW 2002

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Editorial

Peter A. Worthy

Welcome to the second issue of *The Black Book*.

Firstly, I wish to express my thanks to Ken Withrow of Hive Press. He sent me the original of the cover art and during an email correspondence over a few days, we created the cover as a collaborative piece. I feel that Ken deserves more kudos for the success in the eerie atmosphere of the picture. I hope to have more work from Ken to grace these pages with in future. Also, to tease all you cover art fans out there, Daniel Alan Ross and Stanley C. Sargent—both of San Francisco—have agreed to provide material for future issues of the magazine. It is pleasing to be able to offer first class artwork to complement the contents.

Of the reprints here, several demand comment. “The Black Brat of Dunwich” from the highly charged imagination of the above mentioned Stanley C. Sargent poses a different version of events that took place in Dunwich, circa 1928. It may seem odd to say so, but I find his interpretation of the ‘Dunwich Horror’ and his reasoning behind the motivations of several key characters so much more plausible than in the original tale.

“The Horror South of Red Hook” appears here thanks to the kind efforts of the author, Richard A. Lupoff. It first appeared in *Fantastic* under his Ova Hamlet pseudonym. He was very helpful and went to a lot of effort to make sure this tale reached you readers. In the field of Lovecraftian parody, this tale is one of the best and certainly requires reading. Keep your eyes on Fedogan & Bremer, they will be publishing a collection of Lupoff’s outstanding fiction, *Tentacular Tales* at some point in the near future.

Adam Niswander has supplied the unexpurgated text of his tale, “The Book of the Overseer”. The first part has never seen print before, while the second made its debut in a considerably abridged form in *Horrors: 365 Scary Stories*. I want to thank Adam deeply for allowing me to print the tale here in its entirety for the first time.

“Attack of the Deep Ones” comes to us, complete with a superb illustration, from Daniel Alan Ross. The reporting of the events in the tale from the eyes of a child is handled very expertly. I hope to see more work from this master of digital art.

Also, in this issue, we see work from the hand of *Disciples of Cthulhu* contributor, Walter C. DeBill, Jr. It has been a while since he has been seen actively in the Mythos, but he tells me that his collected tales are soon going to be made available from The Great Library of Celaeno. Here we get a sneak preview of this must have collection, “The Barrett Horror”.

Finally, I am pleased to be able to reprint Peter F. Guenter’s atmospheric tale, “The Wind on the Lakes”. It debuted at *Mythos Online* and deserves to be placed here alongside all the excellent contributions that make this issue.

Thanks to everyone who has responded to the call for submissions. Read on!

The Black Brat of Dunwich
Stanley C. Sargent

*"In effect we have unsettled and reversed the given configuration,
suggesting an alternative - culture/nature."*

- Donald R. Burleson

At the bartender's suggestion, Jeffrey and James made their way to the rear of the dimly lit Arkham bar. They saw only one person in the smoky shadows of the back room, a thin ancient man seated alone amidst the shadows and smoke; they casually approached his table.

"Pardon me, mister," Jeffrey proffered, "my friend and I are collecting data for a book we're writing about the so-called 'Dunwich horror.' The bartender said you'd actually met Wilbur Whateley and might be willing to speak with us."

The dark, seated figure offered no immediate response. After a few moments, the two intruders looked at each other, then shrugged and turned to walk away. Their retreat was halted by a gritty voice inviting them to sit. The pair eagerly retraced their steps.

Before they could seat themselves, the mysterious figure raised an empty glass and waved it in the air. Jeffrey headed back to the bar in response to the signal while James pulled a chair up to the table. During the awkward silence that followed, James noted the excellent though somewhat old-fashioned quality of the stranger's apparel. If the fellow had really been acquainted with the Whateley boy, his comments might well prove key elements for their book. He certainly looked old enough to have been Wilbur's contemporary.

Jeffrey soon returned, bearing a trio of glasses and a bottle of whiskey. He joined the silent pair, poured three drinks, and waited for the old man to speak.

As the two researchers sipped their drinks, the old man downed his shot, then poured himself another. He coughed, then gruffly blurted out, "So somebody's finally writing a book about my old friend Wilbur, are they? Well, I reckon I knew him better than anybody. I haven't spoken to anyone about him for years, but that's 'cos nobody cares to hear what I have to say on the subject. If you boys aren't prepared to hear the truth, you might as well be on your way."

Jeffrey assured the man that he and his friend wanted only the truth, which they would not hesitate to print, assuming it could in any way be verified. They explained that they hoped to write the first definitive history of the events leading up to the series of mysterious deaths in 1928, the responsibility for which had been attributed to the Whateley family of Dunwich. To date, the pair had studied police reports, newspaper articles, the famous Armitage account, and various coroners' reports.

"The circumstances surrounding the tragedy," added James, "have become so entwined with legend that it has become impossible to separate reality from fiction.

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We hope to clarify some of the issues and portray the Whateleys accurately. We would also like to take notes and tape record this conversation if that's acceptable to you, sir." He placed a notebook and pen on the table as Jeffrey extracted a hand-held tape recorder from his coat.

"Whatever you want to use is fine by me," responded the man seated opposite them. "Only three people ever knew the truth of what happened in Dunwich: Wilbur Whateley, that goddamned Armitage, and me, Abe Galvin," the old man proclaimed. "Since Wilbur's gone and you'd play hell finding Armitage, I'd say it's up to me to set the record straight before I die."

Despite their surprise at the aspersions cast upon a person as widely respected as Dr. Armitage, the authors encouraged Galvin to impart his recollections. If the man proved legitimate, he was undoubtedly the only person still alive to have actually known young Whateley.

"I left Miskatonic University in the spring of 1924," Galvin began, "after spending six years in the linguistic program. Once I'd satisfied all of my commitments, I decided I'd like to wander around New England for a while, just exploring the back-water areas and maybe earning my keep by hiring myself out as a private tutor. I walked or took buses, answered newspaper ads for tutoring work, and occasionally placed an ad of my own. Between jobs, I'd sleep under the stars; the weather was warm so it was pleasurable to camp out.

"Dunwich was too small to have a newspaper of its own, but somehow Old Elezer Whateley, or 'Wizard Whateley' as most people knew him, came across my ad in the Aylesbury Transcript and made it his business to look me up. I'd never heard of Dunwich or the Whateleys, so I saw nothing unusual in an offer for room and board for the winter in exchange for helping Whateley's young grandson with some difficult translations of archaic Greek and Latin. I admit the old buzzard struck me as a might strange - his eyes were about the eeriest I'd ever seen - but with winter just around the corner, I accepted his offer and accompanied him back to Dunwich in his horse-drawn wagon that very same day.

"The country was green and beautiful along the way, yet once we'd passed through an old tunnel bridge, things began looking pretty rustic and run-down. I was willing to put up with a lot rather than face winter without food or shelter, however, even if it meant spending time in a previous century."

The narrator poured himself another glass before resuming his tale. "Whateley's peak-roofed farmhouse came as one hell of a surprise. It was out in the middle of nowhere and smack up against a dirt incline, with one end extending right on into the hillside. The entire upper story had been boarded up, for reasons I didn't know at the time, and a wooden runway sloped right up from the ground to where a gable window had been replaced with a solid plank door.

"The old barn was a wreck and the cattle all looked diseased as hell. I was actually relieved to learn my quarters were to be in one of two unused tool sheds. The inside of the shed stunk so bad I was obliged to scrub it out with disinfectant, then it

still required airing out for two days before I could stand to sleep inside with the door closed."

He stopped to address James, who was furiously writing down every word. "Am I going too fast for you, son?" Galvin asked.

James put his pencil down just long enough to take a sip of whiskey and assure Galvin that, with shorthand, he could easily keep up.

"Just thought I'd check," Galvin said, before nodding and returning to his monologue. "Old Whateley occupied three ground-floor rooms of the farmhouse along with his albino daughter, Lavinia, and grandson, Wilbur. Lavinia, or 'Lavinny' as the old boy called her, struck me as a bit 'off,' though it's hard to say exactly what was wrong with her beyond her paleness and her too-long arms. She could read, though she lacked any kind of formal education. Housework wasn't exactly her forte, but she managed to keep everybody fed. Her favorite pursuits were day-dreaming and running through the hills during thunderstorms, if you can imagine. She struck me as being fidgety and afraid all the time, which tended to get on one's nerves, but I got along well enough with her. I guess you could say she spent most of her time trying to keep out of everybody's way." He paused in reflection, and then added, "For some time, no one so much as hinted about who Wilbur's father might be."

The speaker suddenly burst into a fit of coughing that ended in painful wheezing and choking. Another hefty gulp of whiskey brought him temporary relief, but it was obvious his health was not good.

"Is this the kind of stuff you boys are looking for?" he asked.

The two men tripped over each other in response, agreeing that this indeed was exactly the material they were seeking. Both urged Galvin to go on with his tale, hoping to get as much information as possible before alcohol began to affect his memory.

"I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw my prospective student for the first time. Old Whateley had told me his grandson was eleven years old, and then he introduces me to this fellow who looks older than me. How many eleven year olds you ever seen who are over six feet tall and fully bearded? I started to wonder if I'd been had, but I decided to play along and humor the old fool least I forfeit the promised winter provision. Wilbur and I took to each other right away, and that clinched the arrangement."

James leaned forward and asked hesitantly, "Could you tell us more about Wilbur's appearance?"

Galvin smiled. "I'll get to that. You two have a drink with me first." The tiny, wrinkled man winked at James. "Whiskey helps keep the throat and the mind lubricated, you know," he joked.

He waited patiently as the reluctant pair filled their half-empty glasses, and then raised his own glass in a toast. "May you never know the true depths of loneliness!" Galvin called out. Although the sentiment seemed out of context, the pair oblig-

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ingly clinked their glasses with his before downing the fiery liquid.

"Wilbur was a hell of a peculiar looking fellow, certainly not what one would call handsome. A goatee covered his lack of chin, but his skin had a sallowness to its hue. He had great big ears and long, black hair that framed his face and added to his goatish look.

"I guess I'd have to say his features were coarse by traditional standards, and there was something wild about his appearance, something amazingly feral that recalled the forest satyrs of the ancient Greeks. His pupils were black as coal so it was easy as hell to get lost in those eyes - he must of caught me staring a hundred times at least!"

A dreamlike tone had entered Galvin's voice as he recalled Wilbur's countenance, but he forced himself to focus on the business at hand.

"I don't think Wilbur ever got much chance to play as a child, except maybe occasionally with Lavinia. We had lots of fun, though the first time I made a joke, that booming laugh of his damn near made me jump out of my seat. He looked and sounded like an adult, but he was just a lonely kid inside. It didn't take long for me to realize he was still growing and that, plus his shuffling walk, caused me to wonder if he'd inherited some congenital deformity. He was shamed by his difference and tried to cover it by wearing two or three pairs of pants under his old fashioned Cossack breeches. People said he smelled bad too, but if he did, I never noticed it."

Galvin lapsed into silence but did not reach for the bottle. When he spoke again, it was in softer, more intimate tones. "The few visitors we had, including Dr. Armitage, treated Wilbur like some kind of dangerous, deformed misanthrope, though some, like Earl Sawyer, did their best to overcome their qualms. I had mixed feelings about the boy myself, but only at first," he laughed. "He confused the hell out of me! But after a while, I developed a real respect for him and was proud to call him my friend."

An uncomfortable silence followed. Galvin's last statement had been a revelation after all the negative descriptions the authors had heard of "the black brat of Dunwich." James carefully reached over, grabbed the whiskey bottle, and refilled the others' glasses as well as his own.

Jeffrey found himself trying to picture Galvin at age twenty-five. His artistic bend made it easy to visualize a younger Galvin simply by filling in the lines and darkening the hair of the grandfatherly figure before him. He concluded that Galvin had once been the good looking, though probably not the handsome, rugged type. A man of Galvin's average height and build must have felt quite intimidated at having a student whose boyish lack of experience belied his towering visage. It suddenly occurred to Jeffrey that Galvin was reading his thoughts, and when he looked up, he saw that Galvin was looking directly at him with a knowing smile on his face. That made Jeffrey slightly uncomfortable, and he felt a certain relief when the old man resumed his account.

"Wilbur's room also came as a great surprise. It was on the eastern side of the

ground floor where the house dug into the hillside. He'd hauled an old bureau into one corner and had been using it as a desk; that's where they later found the big ledger he used as a diary. Only one wall contained a window; every other wall was lined with shelves filled with hundreds of the rotting books that the family had collected through several generations. The majority of those books concerned various aspects of occultism, alchemy, black magic, and the like. I thought it strange that several of the volumes could be found outside the back rooms of university libraries. The rarer tomes must have been worth a fortune, even in their deteriorated condition. He owned copies of d'Erlette's *Cultes des Goules*, the *Liyuhh*, Borellus' forbidden text, Von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, and others I'd never even heard of. I held Joseph Curwen's own handwritten copy of Bryce's *Biblia Sinistre* in my hands! Hell, even Miskatonic University doesn't have a copy of that! Yet with all those treasures around him, Wilbur still craved a Latin edition of the *Necronomicon* printed in 17th century Spain. I was allowed freedom of his library, but I didn't have much interest in things about 'blasphemous outer spheres'."

Galvin experienced a second coughing fit, this one worse than the first. In the meantime, Jeffrey managed to replace the tape in the recorder with a fresh one.

"Wilbur needed help translating certain passages from those books, only a few of which were actually written in archaic Greek and Latin. That's the reason I was there. Wilbur spoke a crude dialect he'd picked up from his mother, but his was such a brilliant mind that he could easily translate French, German, Arabic, and even enciphered passages without my aid."

James asked Galvin to wait until he got back from the restroom before proceeding.

Jeffrey stayed with Galvin. "Why weren't you afraid of Wilbur like everyone else?" he asked the shadowed figure seated across from him. "His appearance must have been intimidating."

Galvin chuckled softly and answered, "Wilbur was very special, and I guess I saw that right away. Armitage has since made Wilbur sound like a goat-faced monster, but people didn't scream and run when he came around, so even you must realize that was an exaggeration."

James returned. As he sat down, he tried to check the alcohol level in the whiskey bottle as inconspicuously as possible.

"You needn't worry, son," Galvin snidely commented, "it takes a lot more than one bottle to get me lathered."

The dim lighting hid the blush that immediately flooded James' face.

Jeffrey turned to James in an attempt to dispel the awkwardness of the situation. "Mr. Galvin," he proffered, "was just about to tell me how special Wilbur was."

Somewhat amused at his interviewers' apprehension, Galvin resumed his discourse. "That's right. For instance, we'd sneak out at night to chase across the countryside in the dark while the others slept. Wilbur would steer us safely around the deep ravines and gorges that I could barely see, past what they called the Devil's

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Hop Yard, to the rounded hilltops where folks said the Pocumtuck Indians had buried their dead. I'd squat among circles of ancient stone pillars while he set up an odd sort of telescope of his own design. Through that telescope we'd gaze upon a sky the rest of mankind has never seen, and he'd talk for hours about the endless universes revolving above us, just as if he'd toured them personally. What we now call nebulas, he claimed were colossal sprays of blood marking the demise of entities beyond imagination. Other entities, he said, had come to Earth eons ago and more were yet to come. He taught me about Cthulhu, Dagon, and the Winged Ones, and told me the story of Qom-maq, the blender of flesh, who'd been the scourge of ancient Crete. I'd lie next to him in the cool grass while he wove his wonderful tales. He made it easy to stare into the sky and envision other worlds as he described them."

"That's incredible!" exclaimed Jeffrey.

"Not as incredible as Wilbur himself," Galvin responded dreamily. After a few moments, he reluctantly moved on to the next phase of his account.

"Once he felt sure he could trust me, he told me about his twin brother, the 'Other' we called him, who was confined in the upper half of the house. Wilbur confessed to being only half human himself, though I didn't really believe him until later."

James nearly jumped out of his seat, exclaiming, "You mean you got a good look at him and even that didn't scare you off?"

Galvin rolled his eyes. "There's a great deal more to a person than what reveals itself to the eye, son; the ability to see beyond the physical is about the only thing that raises us above the level of monsters ourselves. All I knew was that the boy was deformed below the waist to some extent. He was always real concerned with privacy whenever he bathed, so it was obvious he was ashamed of his difference. He said the other kids had made fun of him when he'd tried to make friends; you know how cruel kids can be, and I saw the proof of pain in his eyes. He hated his difference and always fought to keep it hidden.

"I tried to get him over it, show him it didn't matter to me. I even kept talking to him on a couple occasions to keep him in the room while I took a bath, figuring he'd eventually loosen up, seeing as how I was no Adonis myself, but it didn't work. He just sat there staring at me all over, like he was studying me as an example of how folks are supposed to look. I just wanted him to accept himself for who he was and stop worrying about what anyone else thought." He stared directly at James. "You'd best get that disgusted look off your face damn quick, young man, or I'm done talking."

An embarrassed James apologized, and then added, "But you didn't actually see, well, what Armitage and the others saw when Wilbur died, did you?"

Galvin responded forcefully, "No, I didn't, but Armitage had folks scared half out of their wits! I doubt any of them even know what they really saw that night! Certainly no one had the guts to refute the shiftless bastard later on, after his own

written account made him out to be some kind of savior."

His outburst was greeted with silence, so after a moment, a calmer Galvin continued. "Wilbur said Old Whateley'd done his bare best to convince Wilbur that the Other was some kind of avatar that needed nurturing until the stars came into the proper alignment for some legendary cosmic Armageddon to enter our dimension through some kind of gate. As a child, Wilbur accepted his grandfather's philosophy, but as his human aspect became dominant and started thinking for itself, he began to look for a way to thwart the Other or at least keep it under control. He said all he needed were some special incantations, but only Old Whateley knew where to find those spells and he wasn't about to tell as long as he had any doubts about Wilbur's loyalty to the cause.

"Wilbur said I shouldn't worry about any cosmic disaster, though, and assured me the stars wouldn't be right yet for decades. He also said any premature attempt to open the gate would bring immediate misfortune upon the conjurer.

"He told me as much as he dared, fearing my curiosity might prove dangerous to me if I knew too much. I think he was also afraid of scaring me off and losing the only friend he knew he was ever likely to have."

During the awkward pause that followed, James and Jeffrey pretended to check their notes and recorder, respectively; obviously Galvin felt very strongly about Wilbur Whateley.

"Old Whateley spent most of his time repairing the house, whether it needed it or not," Galvin suddenly began again. "He was a nervous old codger who fussed over his pathetic livestock incessantly, often spending half the night transferring steers back and forth from the barn to holding pens he'd built on the far side of the house, adjacent to the ramp to the second story."

Wilbur woke me up one night in August about ten o'clock. He said Old Whateley'd been taken seriously ill and he was going to Osborn's store in Dunwich to call the doctor in Aylesbury. He asked me to help Lavinia watch over the old man until he got back. I wanted to go with him since the townspeople were afraid of him, but he pointed out that no one would recognize him if he wore his grandfather's old fashioned bang-up coat with a three-cornered hat cocked down low. He knew he could make better time alone on horseback than two of us could in the old wagon. Still, I worried about him as dogs always attacked him on sight; it got so bad at one point that he had to carry a pistol to protect himself from them.

"By the time Dr. Houghton arrived, the old man was nearly gone; Wilbur agreed, pointing out the whippoorwills that had gathered en masse around the house. Even the doctor noticed their cries were keeping time with Old Whateley's breathing. Houghton did his best, but Whateley's heart finally gave out long about two in the morning."

James jumped in with a question. "Were you actually in the room when Wizard Whateley passed away? Supposedly he said something very special to Wilbur just before he died."

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"You're baiting me now, son, just to see if I know what I'm talking about," Galvin answered.

The researcher admitted as much and offered an apology.

"Oh, I'd do the same if I was you," Galvin remarked. "Yes, I was in the room. I heard the same as Doc Houghton heard, but he didn't understand what was going on. The old man knew Wilbur wanted to keep the Other captive, so on his deathbed, the old man tried to bend Wilbur to his will. The first time I heard the name Yog-Sothoth was when, with his dying breath, the old wizard reminded Wilbur that his brother required constant feeding and room to expand. He also told Wilbur about a certain passage in the Spanish edition of the *Necronomicon* that would make the Other strong enough to reproduce and savage the planet.

"What Houghton didn't know was that Wilbur had absolutely no intention of carrying out that part of Old Whateley's instructions. Was he supposed to argue with a dying man? Hell, not much of it made sense to me, especially with the ruckus those damn birds were making outside.

"But the instant Old Whateley died, all the birds fell silent at exactly the same instant. Wilbur told me the locals believed whippoorwills gathered when someone was about to die; if they dispersed after the person died, like they did that night, it meant the person's soul had escaped them. I was never too clear on it all, but I guess the birds are supposed to be like psychopomps that escort the souls they catch to heaven or hell. When they miss, the soul remains earth-bound and can trouble the living. After all I've seen, I have to consider there might be some truth in that particular superstition.

"Wilbur asked me to stay on after his grandfather died. I helped him bury Old Whateley up near Sentinel Hill, then left Wilbur and his mother to say their farewells in private. Wilbur held up, but Lavinia broke down and cried some. She seemed to get progressively worse after that day, such that we worried about her sanity, and Wilbur wouldn't allow her to light fires up on Sentinel Hill anymore, like she'd always done before twice a year. He told her the neighbors didn't like it, and he didn't want her continuing the wizardry.

"The first thing he did after the burial was clear the house of all the old man's occult trappings. He single-handedly carried over a hundred jars and bottles out of Old Whateley's room and stacked them in a pyramid of glass behind and away from the house. Every one of the bottles contained some bit of alien monstrosity preserved for reasons I feared to ask. I'd wager your best biologists couldn't identify even half the things floating in those jars. After he emptied the room, he did some chanting and arm waving over the jars and such, then doused it all with kerosene and set it afire. Some of the bottles exploded right away from the heat, but some of the other specimens burned red hot for more than two days.

"Once that chore was done, Wilbur seemed to have more peace of mind. A little after that, he started boarding up the unused parts of the downstairs. I helped whenever I could, but the work took his mind off his troubles, and he said there was

no rush."

Jeffrey abruptly took advantage of the lull to ask a question. "What did he tell you about Yog-Sothoth?"

A deep ridge formed upon the heavily creased brow of the old man. "I don't recall all that much of what he said about most of that hocus pocus stuff; I guess I just wasn't all that interested. But I can't forget his telling me that this Yog-Sothoth was father to both him and the Other. It belonged, he said, in some other dimension, but it wanted to infest this one too. He said it was a big formless thing that could only come into our world at all when it stretched itself out into threads or tendrils so thin that they could squeeze through the empty space between neutrons, electrons, and the like. The Other was meant to prepare the way for the time when a gate would open, giving its daddy full access to our universe, but Wilbur was dead set against letting that come about."

"Did Wilbur explain how Lavinia had a child by this non-material being?" Jeffrey asked.

Galvin chuckled. "I'd of thought you boys would be smart enough to figure that one out for yourselves! Seems self-evident to me that Wizard Whateley allowed himself to be possessed for an incestuous encounter with his daughter. You've read Armitage's account, don't you recall that Curtis Whateley described the giant face on top of the monster as bearing an unmistakable likeness to Wizard Whateley?"

"Wilbur told me about it after Armitage came to the farm to check on him."

The mention of the famous doctor at that point in the story caught Galvin's listeners by surprise. "Armitage wrote that he met Wilbur at the Miskatonic library in 1926!" James objected.

Galvin smiled. "Is that so? Well, to begin with, there are a lot of things Armitage felt it prudent not to include in his 'authoritative' account. But if you read it carefully, you'll note he mentioned being sent to the Whateley farm in 1925 as a 'scholarly correspondent' for the university."

"But that makes no sense," Jeffrey piped in. "Why would the university send a head librarian somewhere as a correspondent? Let alone to the Whateley farm? The public lost all interest in the Whateleys long before 1925!"

"Curious, ain't it?" Galvin sniggered. "The truth is, Armitage had been visiting the farm for years; he and Wizard Whateley were old friends! After Old Whateley passed away, Armitage felt obliged to drop in, just to make sure Wilbur was following the instructions his grandfather had given him. Armitage only mentioned the visit in writing because he was seen there by someone he hadn't expected to be there - me. I was introduced then Old Whateley whisked Armitage off to talk in private."

Jeffrey couldn't believe his ears. "Mr. Galvin, are you saying Dr. Armitage knew about the twins and Old Whateley's plans for destroying mankind long before he encountered Wilbur at the library? That's diametrically opposed to everything the man has stood for!"

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Galvin laughed out loud before adding, "You're slow, but I think you're finally starting to catch on!"

"Armitage had what you could call a hidden agenda and the old bastard wasn't exactly pleased to hear Wilbur didn't want anything to do with him and Old Whateley's plan. By the time Armitage left the farm that day, he was madder than a hornet! He threatened Wilbur up and down, but Wilbur wouldn't budge. Wilbur wanted to find the spell that would reverse the Other's growth or even kill it if need be, but he didn't dare tell that to Armitage. But Armitage counted on Wilbur changing his mind - least he counted on it 'til Wilbur came to his library and asked to see the complete edition of the *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab. After reading the section Old Whateley had pointed out to him, Wilbur started looking for spells he could use to control or destroy the Other, unaware that Armitage was spying on him over his shoulder. When Armitage figured out what Wilbur was up to, he denied Wilbur further access to the book and ordered him out of the library.

"The bastard later admitted he'd written to the head librarians of every library that had a copy of the *Necronomicon*, advising them not to allow Wilbur or anyone named Galvin access."

James was outraged, unable to accept this new view of Armitage. "Dr. Armitage was a respected scholar!" he protested. "He held a doctorate from Princeton and a Doctor of Letters degree from Cambridge!"

Chuckling to himself, Galvin challenged, "Have you ever wondered why such a brilliant scholar ended up as a simple librarian? Truth is, the university's Board of Governors got wind of his delving into certain unacceptable aspects of the occult, and they decided it would be best to put him where they could keep an eye on him."

Galvin openly relished the disillusioned shock now apparent on both writers' faces. After harboring Armitage's secret for so many years, it gave him immense pleasure to slaughter that sacred cow. He allowed the pair a few minutes for recovery before resuming his revelations.

"In the meantime, Wilbur managed to keep the Other fed with the cattle he got from Earl Sawyer. The house started smelling something fierce though, 'cos he couldn't always get all the chewed up carcasses out. The darn thing was getting unpredictable and didn't always recognize him anymore. Wilbur said its mind never developed beyond that of a human infant's despite its size, and it wouldn't be long before its bulk would require the whole of the house. Wilbur was still growing too, though he kept hoping to find some way to stop. By early '26, he measured over seven feet tall."

A sadness seeped into Galvin's voice as he began to impart the next chapter of his incredible tale. "Just before Halloween, or Hallowmass as they called it, that same year, we lost Lavinia. Wilbur and I were wrestling with a particularly knotty passage from Vogel's *Von denen Verdammten* one afternoon when Lavinia burst into the room in a full-blown panic. She was drenched in sweat and raving like a madwoman. Wilbur held her and stroked her hair for a while, trying to calm her, but she

pushed him away, screaming: 'I cain't deny him nay longer! He needs 'es ma, an' not yew ner n'b'dy else'll keep me from a-goan' to him nay more!'

"There'd been a god-awful sloshing noise coming from the second floor all morn-ing, but I never figured if it was a reaction to Lavinia's hysterics or vice-versa. Sounded like a herd of elephants was stomping around up there. I'd always tried to ignore the noise from up there before, but God himself must o' heard the uproar that day.

"Wilbur asked me to step outside while he reasoned with Lavinia's madness. She was twitching and a-fighting him, but Wilbur held her fast. Nobody could match Wilbur's strength by then, let alone a frail little thing like Lavinia. He finally got her to lie down in her room, and I heard him chanting or singing to her for more than an hour before she settled enough for him to leave her. He went back to his studies, thinking she was asleep, but as it turned out, she was just pretending."

James interrupted to ask, "Do you think Wilbur loved his mother?"

The question seemed to catch Galvin off guard, causing him to hesitate before answering. "I guess I never heard him say it right out, though he once recalled the fond memories he had of wandering through the hills with her when he was real young. Sometimes he spoke harshly to her, and we both ignored her ramblings, but when she was hurting, he was always real tender with her. It was kinda hard not to feel protective of her, especially when she'd get all worked up and confused."

Galvin drained the last of the bottle into his own glass. Jeffrey rushed off for another even before Galvin could set the empty bottle down. He rejoined them moments later, apparently anxious for Galvin to begin the next phase of his narration.

"Just before sunset, I heard a door slam and someone ran past my door toward the hillside. I poked my head out the door and caught sight of Lavinia's tiny, crinkly-haired form careening at top speed up the wood incline toward the boarded-up window on the east gable. The moment she reached the top, she let fly with the ax she'd brought with her, trying to hack the lock off and get inside. I was at a loss for action 'til Wilbur ran out of the house and saw what she was up to. I offered to help, but he was sure she'd gone mad and that there was no way to stop her. He told me to stay in the shed, saying he'd call me if there was anything I could do."

Galvin sighed. "A while later, I heard Lavinia screaming like all possessed. I headed for the door, but Wilbur had locked me in. I had heard him chanting or singing in his room just before the screaming started, so I knew it wasn't him that was hurting Lavinia."

"Were you frightened?" asked James.

"I was too busy trying to figure out what was going on to be too afraid. I couldn't believe the Other would hurt its own mother, but then I got scared for her when I heard whippoorwills calling. They got so loud I didn't hear the lock turn when Wilbur opened my door a while later.

"He didn't try to talk over the racket the birds were making, but I could see tears

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on his cheeks. He just walked over to where I was lying on the bed and picked me up. He set me on my feet, looked long and hard into my eyes, and then wrapped both arms around me. I found myself returning his embrace, and we stayed there holding and comforting each other for some time. Then the tone of the birds changed, getting louder and wilder, so finally Wilbur let go of me."

James rose half way out of his seat in excitement. "Didn't he offer any sort of explanation?"

Galvin nodded. "All he said was, 'The 'wills got 'er, Abe. She'll rest easy naow. She ne'er understood all that Gran'pa got her inta; she wuz jest his pawn.'"

None of the trio spoke for several minutes. Finally, Jeffrey focused on the fresh bottle of whiskey and poured a round of drinks. All three joined in a silent toast in memory of Lavinia.

"The birds didn't fully disperse 'til dawn. Wilbur climbed the ramp with me behind him. He told me to stay back while he went through the gable to fetch Lavinia.

"My curiosity got the best of me when he didn't come right out, so I climbed up high enough to peek in. There's no way I can describe the feeling that came over me when I spotted Wilbur, standing just a little way inside, struggling in what looked like a tug o' war with Lavinia's limp and lifeless body floating like some kind of Kewpie doll about six feet in the air. Wilbur had told me the Other was invisible, but I guess I hadn't expected to see the walls right through it like there was nothing there at all. I could only really be sure there was something there by the way Lavinia's body was being pulled back and forth. The Other was grunting and whining like a frustrated child clinging onto its favorite toy.

"It let out a squeal when it saw me gaping at it in the doorway, and it let go of Lavinia. Wilbur ran by me, cradling what was left of his mother in his arms and yelling for me to shut the door on the thing, to hold it as best I could until he got back with new locks from the shed, which I did. Wilbur carried the withered body downstairs and laid Lavinia out in her room, then returned to secure the door with new locks and boards. Lavinia's clothes were all ripped up and her body was covered with big round welts from top to bottom. She'd been sucked dry as a leaf."

"But why did she feel compelled to go in there?" It was James this time.

Galvin poured another drink without bothering to offer the bottle to the others. He slammed it on the table before answering in a voice choked with emotion. "Wilbur just said, 'She a'ways felt it wuz her duty ta suckle us both.'"

"He wouldn't accept help with her burial, and he didn't bother notifying the authorities. After performing some kind of esoteric service over her body, he never spoke her name in my presence again."

The control returned to Galvin's voice as he continued.

"Wilbur didn't need my help with translating any more, but he begged me not to leave as he couldn't bear the idea of being there alone. He had to stay to keep the Other contained. I told him I'd become too attached to just leave him there.

"During the summer of 1927, Wilbur repaired the large tool shed next to mine

and moved the wood burning stove from the house to outside so heat could be piped into both sheds. Then we started moving his books and makeshift desk from the house to Wilbur's shed as the Other was getting way too big for the upper half of the house. I boarded up the windows and doors of the house's ground floor while Wilbur gutted the remaining partitions between rooms and floors."

"That winter saw Wilbur doubling his efforts to get access to the *Necronomicon* we didn't know then that Armitage had already contacted the libraries to warn them against him. They wouldn't even allow him to copy particular pages from the book. He was so desperate for a way to control his own growth as well as that of the Other that he traveled on horseback all the way to the library at Cambridge. Armitage had done his work well, though, so Wilbur wasn't allowed near the book."

Again Galvin paused, hesitant to relive the next series of events.

"We managed to keep things in check all that winter and on into 1928, but by late summer it became obvious that the Other was quickly outgrowing the old farmhouse. The walls bulged whenever it turned around, and its movement in general became very constrained. Something had to be done to stop its growth before all hell broke loose. That's when Wilbur realized he had to try and steal the book from the library at Miskatonic. He wouldn't allow me to come with him as someone had to keep feeding the Other while he was away or it would break out for sure and go on a killing spree."

"You blame Armitage for Wilbur's death, don't you?" James asked.

Galvin reacted adamantly. "You're damn right I blame him! He knew Wilbur couldn't control the Other any longer without the spell, yet he did everything possible to force the crisis. He wanted Wilbur to come crawling to him and agree to his hellish plan. The only other option was for Wilbur to steal the book. Armitage knew that too. Why do you think, knowing how dogs universally hated Wilbur, Armitage suddenly added watch dogs in addition to the regular security at the library? When he found Wilbur bleeding to death on the library floor, Armitage did nothing to save him. He feigned shock at seeing such an alien monster simply for the benefit of his colleagues!"

Neither interviewer knew what to say, so they waited silently for Galvin's fury to subside. His story was fascinating despite many surprising revelations.

"Wilbur felt there was a real good chance he'd be arrested while attempting to steal the book, so he made me promise to leave if he hadn't returned within a week. It never occurred to me that worse might happen, but it must have occurred to him.

"Before he left, he said he could feel the Other's claustrophobia. As often happens with twins, he and the Other shared strong emotional feelings to a certain extent. He said it felt trapped and afraid.

"I hesitated to leave, however, hoping my friend would come back safely with the means to halt or even reverse the Other's growth.

"I decided it was time to leave when I had used up all the cows to feed the Other. That was on the first of September. Earl Sawyer had been providing them regularly

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for that purpose, but he heard the creaking and the straining sounds coming from the house and it frightened him away. I admit I was afraid too, so on the ninth I decided to leave. I was packing a bag when I heard a real loud noise, like the logs of the farmhouse wrenching and cracking apart. I stepped out of the shed to get a better look, and the whole world exploded around me.

"It was pouring down rain so hard I could barely see. Doors, plaster, and glass filled the air; huge chunks of walls were flying in every direction. The farmhouse had been ripped into sections, parts of which were still moving. A huge chunk of roof floated in the air, the gables and chimney still intact. Mud was splashing up in waves and an ungodly stench hit me so hard, I threw up.

"The next thing I knew, something slimy grabbed one of my legs and thrust me thirty feet or so into the air. I couldn't see what had me, but it felt like a mass of wet, living rope winding and knotting all over me. I tried to get a grip on whatever held me, but it was like trying to grasp an armload of oily snakes - only these were as thick as my thigh. I could feel mouths clamping down and biting me right through my clothes, and I saw the rain turn red as it struck my body. My chest felt like it was being squeezed in a vice, so with the first air I caught, I started screaming and hollering for all I was worth.

"Everything was getting dark and blurry but I fought against passing out. All at once, a desperate clarity came over me and pushed away the fear. Without thinking, I began yelling at my invisible attacker, 'I'm Abe, Wilbur's friend! Don't you recognize me? I'm a friend! Please, put me down - you're killing me!'"

Galvin paused. "You may not believe me, but all of a sudden my feet touched the ground and the things that were binding me let go all at once."

Unable to restrain his excitement, James leaned back in his chair and shouted, "Jesus!"

Galvin, who had almost crept over the table toward his listeners, also leaned back, releasing his audience from the stifling tension he had produced as he described his ordeal.

An excited Jeffrey begged, "But did it let go of you?"

After a moment, Galvin whispered, "I believe it remembered me from its telepathic link with Wilbur; it experienced Wilbur's trust and love for me. It was as if Wilbur reached out from beyond the grave to save me."

Galvin now sat perfectly upright in his chair. His hands were shaking to the extent that he spilled half his drink even before he could raise it to his mouth. The second bottle lay empty on the table before him.

"I never did actually see what the Other looked like, but from what I heard later about it, that was probably a blessing'.

"I guess I blacked out then, 'cos Earl Sawyer's kid stumbled across me the next morning. He fetched his daddy, who said I was more dead than alive when he found me lying half inside a footprint as big as an old hogshead barrel and over a foot deep. They took me to Dr. Houghton and so saved my life. Nearly all my ribs

were crushed, my sternum was fractured, and I was bleeding all over. I swore all three to secrecy about my presence, hoping Armitage would assume the Other had killed me. He'd have come after me if he thought I was still alive."

For several minutes Galvin sat quietly in his chair, as if he had finished his tale. The whir of tape rewinding alerted Jeffrey to stop his recorder. He felt a certain relief that Galvin had reached the end of his tale before his speech got any worse. He had been slipping more and more into colloquial speech patterns for several minutes.

"Well," offered James, "I guess that's about it then. Armitage killed the Other up on Sentinel Hill for whatever motive, and the day was saved!"

Galvin leaned forward with a disgusted look on his face and sneered, "And I thought you boys was smart!"

James stumbled over a few syllables in search of some response, but Galvin wasn't finished yet.

"The whole story's in Wilbur's diary, which I read after he left for Arkham; the code wasn't all that hard to figure out. Later on, when Armitage got the diary, he read it and only let his buddies see bits and pieces so he could interpret the text to mean whatever he wanted it to mean. He burned it before anybody else got a chance to see it. Now, just how scholarly does an action like that sound to you? Yet if you read his account carefully, you'll see the wily old bastard couldn't resist tossing in a few tantalizing clues to the truth."

Galvin was obviously getting drunk, occasionally slurring a few words. "Okay, so I'll explain it to you kids. The Indians had been performing weird rites in the area in and around Dunwich for over four hundred years before Wizard Whateley came along and figured out just exactly what they were up to. And he was just crazy enough to try and do the same.

"The Indians had been breeding their women with things from other dimensions, but they were smart enough to keep the offspring imprisoned in underground caves. It was safer that way and the hybrids grew slower in the dark. Old Whateley'd thought he'd do the same, 'cept Lavinia gave birth to twins and refused to part with either of them. Living above ground, both of the twins grew a whole lot faster than their half-brothers and half-sisters below the ground."

Gasps escaped the mouths of his listeners as Galvin rambled on.

"You mean you never wondered what it was that has been rumbling and moaning under the hills? It's been consistently reported since the first white men settled on Dunwich land!

"Armitage didn't destroy the Other and make everything safe! That's all just a load of crap. Did anyone actually see what happened when the lightning struck? Nobody but Armitage and those two fools he had believing anything he told them. He said himself that the damn thing couldn't be killed! It sought out the altar stone because that stone was the door to an entrance to the pits below, where it could be safe! The Other called out for help in English, but the eyewitnesses said they heard

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an unearthly calling from the altar stone as well! All Armitage did was call down a bolt of lightning that lifted the altar stone up just long enough for the Other to squeeze its elastic form through and down to where the others were just waiting!

"Ain't you figured out that Sentinel Hill and all the hills in Dunwich are hollow? They're rounded 'cos the things underneath are growing and slowly pushing the earth up higher and higher. The standing stones mark the hills where the Indians 'planted' the spawn of Yog-Sothoth!"

"But Dr. Armitage ..." James began.

"Dr. Armitage my arse," interrupted Galvin. "That son of a bitch high-tailed it back to Arkham and wrote his lying account before going back to live with his family . . ."

Jeffrey started to butt in, but fell silent after Galvin finished his sentence. ". . . in Innsmouth."

"What?" James cried out in disbelief.

"Yessir, I said Innsmouth!" Galvin exclaimed. "The only thing he didn't know was that his parents were taken away by the FBI when they raided Innsmouth. And the ones they took away were the ones that weren't human, and neither was Armitage, though he covered it well. Folks think he took sick and died soon after that day on Sentinel Hill, but I defy any man to show me the record of his death."

Both Jeffrey and James were stunned.

"At least I put one over on the old bastard; I got all the Whateley gold. He wanted it bad, but Wilbur gave it to me before he left. I had it on me when Earl found me, and I've been living on it ever since. Look here if you don't believe me," he added as he tossed two shiny coins onto the table.

The two authors snatched up the coins and stared at them in disbelief. One bore the imprint of Arabic lettering that they would later learn spelled out 'Irem,' a lost city of Arabian myth; the other was impressed with the easily recognizable features of Augustus Caesar.

"Yessir, the Other and hundreds more like him are down there still, just growing and waiting for the day they're full grown and the stars all line up as their signal. When that day comes, the earth'll rise up beneath our feet and they'll emerge to smite mankind by the millions - and nothing on this Earth can stop them!"

Galvin paused, belched, then concluded with a snicker, "If you boys finish your book in a real hurry, you just might get it published afore the apocalypse!"

For my good friend, Wilum Hopfrog Pugmire

The Horror South of Red Hook

Ova Hamlet

The food here is palatable although bland, wickedly bland, I suspect by design, for our keepers do not wish us to be over—stimulated in any way. Over-stimulation means excitement and excitement leads to the stirring up of memories, hideous memories of blasphemous horrors, unnatural recollections of savage and unnatural events upon which a gibbous moon leered monstrously.

And yet they are permitting me to write this account of the terrible events that transpired in Dutchess City that horrid autumn day. They have granted me the use of this soft crayon and floppy-edged paper, that you whose blessed eyes are smitten by the impious and decayed occurrences which befell me may judge whether such things can be in this accursed and doom-clouded world, or whether it was all a monstrous dream, a figment of a blasted mind slithering its slime-laden way down the squirming path to madness.

I have not always been the shattered and trembling husk of humanity I am today. Once I was a youthful and vigorous man, but recently graduated from the University with a degree in certain matters which excited the malicious interest of numerous prospective greedy employers. Residing happily as I was in the great Eastern metropolis, I received the awful summons to visit a small town some miles above Gotham on the edge of the dank and fetid river.

Why I chose to accept that accursed invitation I will never know. Perhaps it was in the mistaken belief that a day's excursion into the rank and weed-choked countryside would assuage the ennui provoked by the mad whirl of metropolitan existence, perhaps it was a desire to immerse myself in the ancient towns and countryside where my ancestors, blue-eyed, pale-skinned and roman-nosed, had settled incredible lustra ago, forsaking the looming towers and hideously shrieking boulevards of the city to the ill-spoken mongrel immigrant hordes who pollute its dreadful towers and disgusting byways with their evil-smelling viands and uncouth speech.

O, how I curse the mad impulse that made me accept that accursed invitation, and yet, as I boarded the grimy and deteriorating coach at the rail terminus I felt only a slight foreboding of the doom-laden malign fate which lurked in that northern hamlet waiting to snare the innocent and unwary in its scaly claws.

The car made its uneven way, swaying and lurching evilly with each hideous curve and devilish bump of the ancient and unholy rails, wicker seats that looked balefully out at archaic passengers in a forgotten past creaking cacophonically and ceiling lights in their ancient fluted cones faltering and dimming as the train rattled ever farther on its evil way to the indescribable terrors of the ancient exurb which was my ill-fated destination.

At length, weary of peering anxiously through yellowed and cracking windows coated with savage centuries of black grime, I felt my blond-tousled and pure-bred

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head fall upon my cleanly garbed chest, my clear blue eyes closed and I dreamed. I dreamed a hideous and dreadful dream, a somnambulism in which certain awful shapes capered and howled beneath a leering moon and winking stars whose ancient malignity showered hollowly down upon a stench-ridden and blasphemous throng.

It was the lurch of the car which awakened me, trembling and hot-eared, from my terrible dream. With grateful hands I took my hat from the high and terrifying rack and jammed it fearfully upon my aristocratic head, and with feet that quivered and jounced with relief I made my fearsome way from that terrible old car, watching gladly as the train pulled out and continued along its terrible route to the northward.

I ascended an ancient and decaying stairway, drawing shudderingly away from the archaic creatures that seemed more to *slither* or to *climb* the stairs all about me than they did to walk as any natural creature would do. At incredible and weary length I found myself at the dizzying top of the terrible stairway, and forced to enter a gigantic room whose towering roof and vaulted windows seemed to smirk down evilly upon those of us who crept fearfully about on the frigidly *dry* flagging upon the floor.

Involuntarily I crouched against a cruel and superannuated wall, my Anglo-Saxon fingers anxiously and without conscious will tracing the old scrollerly that remained under untold eras of accumulated foetor. As I drew away from the horrible pediment I saw that my white patrician fingers were *marked a grimy shade where they had contacted that dreadful wood!*

Screaming in terror I capered madly across the cold stones, crashing cacophonously into the ominously *heavy* and garment-clad figures that clustered and gibbered there in that awful room. Even as I burst through the tarnished portals the vaulted ceiling threw back my shrieks unmercifully, the dread portents of my own cries echoing horridly in my small and well—positioned ears.

Not daring to stand exposed beneath the pollenous and smirking sky I hurled my trembling form into the back seat of an ancient but incredibly ill—preserved hack that stood beside the doors of that cursed and horrible building, never even taking note of the unholy coven of terrible creatures already inhabiting the passenger section of the dreadful vehicle.

Recoiling in horror from them and sending another scream of monstrous fear crashing to the baleful roof of the hack I threw my entire weight upon the mouldy door and, gibbering a prayer of gratitude to whatever malign deity had seen fit to provide me with even the momentary succour of release, tumbled painfully upon the cruelly gravel-encrusted turf upon which the hack rested.

Staring frantically in all directions in desperate hope of visioning an alternative means of transportation, I reached the harrowing conclusion that *only that single hack stood ready to carry passengers from the station*. Had I but noticed this evil and maxillary anomaly my keen Caucasian suspicions had inevitably driven me to flee madly

across the ancient fields and decrepit roadways that mark Dutchess City.

But, terrified by the black and inescapable fate that seemed, with a tacit and noisome persistency to seek to ensnare me, I lurched despairingly around the rusted and grime-coated rear of the hack and made my unhappy way to the blasphemous door which let onto a seat beside that already occupied by the driver.

May I never again gaze upon a countenance so filled with wise and cynical malignity as that of the hackman! His hair hung uncouthly to the grimy collar of his ancient and tattered camisole, his eyes glared redly out of a sallow skin marked with the awful signs of foreign blood and indescribable dissolution. His teeth showed blackened stumps of what once must have been hideous yellow fangs, while most terrible of all his frightful and malevolent nose showed incontestable signs of a fatal and hideous convexity.

Emitting from his aged and terrible throat a chuckle of indescribable hideousness the driver threw his gears into motion with a terrifying clash that rattled and boomed horribly off the echoing rocks that surround the rutted roadway leading away from the stagnant and odorous river. I cast fear-sharpened vision into the rear compartment of the hack where the dread creatures I had so narrowly escaped awful moments earlier were gathered in evil comity, nodding and hissing scabrously over stacks of books whose very titles I dared not whisper under my breath lest the ancient gods of madness come crashing up from the abyss into which they had long been cast and uncertainly chained by sorcerers of incredible antiquity and wicked puissance.

“You girls all going to the college,” the driver hissed in a dry and serpentine sibilance that sent tremors shuddering up and down my well-clad spine. From the terrifying creatures in the rear compartment there echoed a terrible cackle of affirmation, whereupon the aged but somehow dreadfully *strong* driver turned to me, his baleful gimlet eyes taking in my noble native-born countenance and modern garb. “And you, sir?” he mouthed arcanelly.

Aye had I but had the presence of mind to cancel then and there my projected interview, to return even with that mind-blasting monstrosity of a driver to the terrible towering terminal and return to the metropolis where I had my mad and abandoned abode in those days, what horrors might have I avoided! But no, driven by the noble honesty of mine ancestors I whispered fearsomely, “To the factory.”

What expression of terror those words provoked upon his face, what new paleness infused his mottled and wattled epidermis when he heard me croak those foully portentous words, and yet, pursuing his evil course to the end, he replied in that terrible and incredibly malign voice, “What building number?”

Numbed with fear at this new demand I clawed frantically at my breast, extracting from the neatly-tailored pocket of my modern jacket the very invitation in response to which I had undertaken this terrible and unprecedented journey. My eye slithered across the deathly pale document which, claw-like, my fingers unfolded and, reading the terrible words again I hissed back in terror and remorse the num-

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ber which he required.

Down decaying byways and along rutted lanes the terrible hack swayed and clattered, its ancient frame protesting with frightful squeaks each new turn and grade. Hideous buildings of terrifying and unholy antiquity leered down upon us, cracked and discoloured windows peering balefully at the noisome intruders while rotting walls, long bared of cracked and flaking paint, loomed obscenely in the terrible afternoon sunlight. What horrors had they witnessed in untold eons that stretched hack before the recollection of infant humanity!

For what seemed endless intervals we swayed and rattled between the shacks and shanties of Dutchess City. My blood crept fearfully through my terrified veins and arteries while tremors of fear shook my gorgeous frame as my terrified glances into the rear compartment were met by impudent and unfathomably evil glares from the kohl-lined orbs of the terrible creatures there clustered.

At length the hack drew up before the vine-coated and stone-walled buildings of the college, buildings in which untold rites were performed by flickering tapers as the horrible creatures of which a clutch gathered and writhed behind me pursued such blasphemous studies as the merest syllabus of which would drive any sane and wholesome Celt gibbering and drooling down the awful corridors of madness in horror and fright.

The hackman exited mercifully from his side of the ancient vehicle to aid the *creatures* in extricating themselves from the rear compartment while I fearsomely sought to ascertain that the lock which might hold any menace out of my own section of the conveyance was well secured. With savage cries and malign laughter the creatures retrieved their noisome and menacing luggage from the rear of the hack and made their way into the menacing gate-arch of that savage institution.

I cringed away from that terrible *strong* driver as he remained in his seat at the wheel of the hack and, engine droning menacingly, we rolled once more in the direction of the establishment to which the terrible pale document had summoned my pitiable but handsome figure. The hackman sought to draw from me, as we rode down one decrepit thoroughfare after another beneath looming structures of ramshackle menace, such pitiful few secrets as remained mine. "Up from the city, huh?" he queried in that dry, frightening voice of his. "Comet' work at the factory?"

My throat too dry with terror and apprehension to permit the formation of even simple answers, I nodded a silent yes or no as each question threatened the poor tottering remnant of my once proud sanity. What awful motive could this hideous and clammy driver have for probing, digging, seeking out the very secrets of my existence?

Finally he pulled up at the frightful doors of the building to which I had been summoned. I pressed the full sum demanded into the hideous claw and fled in terror through the awful and aged portal which presented itself to my terrified eyes. Another of those frightful *creatures* awaited within, but thankfully, even as I could feel a scream of indescribable terror welling up within my throat, I espied a figure of

tolerable horror hastening down a balefully lighted corridor to conduct me, trembling as with an ague, into a cubicle where I was permitted to sit in a frightful chair of incalculable antiquity and gradually regain possession of my shattered wits.

My host made small talk of a dark and foreboding nature, then, drawing from his pocket a packet of rolled tobacco, offered me a smoke which I declined with a violent wave of my trembling hand and fearful shake of the head. He lit a terrible cylinder of tobacco himself, dropping his baleful and malevolent matchstick into an ancient and hideously menacing ashtray that stood in all its menacing frightfulness on the edge of his cruel and impious desk.

What events then transpired I shudder to recollect. The terrors to which I was subjected no sound mind could comprehend and yet retain its sanity as, mine host ever at my elbow, murmuring obscenities foul beyond decent repetition, we toured corridors and chambers of untold horror wherein laboured pale-faced and pale-shirted creatures whose awful and scabrous countenances bespoke such horrors as only some denizen of the nether regions might conceive in a hideous nightmare of terrifying decay.

Whether the creatures we viewed, at once terrifying and pitiable, were the malign perpetrators unfathomable horrors, or wore themselves the whimpering victims of indescribable maltreatment it was impossible to fathom, for upon each visage there was written a foul compendium of the terrifying characteristics that tend to mark eldritch fiend and tortured subject alike: cruelty, vice, greed, dissipation, suffering, nausea, hatred, bitterness, ineffable sadness and fierce ambition, indescribable yearnings for unnameable satisfactions, these and a thousand more emotions met and were blended into the expressions of anger, misery, and terrible satisfactions far more revolting than their denials.

Beside each of the things that we saw, both pitiable and fearsome in their visage, stood either or both of a pair of artefacts of malign and baleful significance. Many of the wretches had seemingly been furnished by their masters with ashtrays as terrible as that which I had seen on the desk of my terrible host, ashtrays which they perpetually filled and emptied, filled and emptied with a terrible nervous compulsiveness which caused me to avert my eyes in nausea and pity.

Others seemed to have chosen to forgo the questionable relief of the ashtrays, and were furnished instead with little pasteboard cups the exteriors of which were blazoned with arcane slogans of such mind-blasting savagery that I dare not set them down in this document, even though my keepers assure me that I am perfectly safe and even though they permit me, nay, encourage me to record with my soft crayon every detail of the horror which sent me shrieking and capering to the very doorways of madness and beyond.

Ho! There are some blasphemies too horrid to be repeated, even in a private document such as this, which is unlikely to be read save by my keepers and, if they deem it helpful, perhaps someday by those members of my family adjudged strong and calm-natured enough to face truths more horrible than the average man can

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even imagine.

And yet those pasteboard cups were filled, many of them, with a brownish and murk-tempered liquid of such disgusting appearance that only once did I permit myself to approach a cup closely enough for my nostrils to be assailed by the fetor that rose from the noxious brew along with a hideous and unwholesome steam. Further, and by far the most terrifying of all, those frightful creatures of pity and cruelty were compelled by some unseen agency to take that disgusting and horrifying liquid into their very mouths, where some I saw swirling it about with signs of the most frightful agony before swallowing, whereupon it might commence whatever work of terrible malignity as its manifest evil nature might dictate.

Aye, the rooms in which those poor demons, if such be what they were, and may such gods as exist and loom terribly over mankind, take rare pity and grant that I never again return there to find out, the rooms I say in which they were penned, were small, there being in most cases a mere handful of the brutes in each, a few being penned in solitary misery, while hideous black objects resting near them would eternally burst upon what peace they might attain through resignation to their miserable state, shrilling hellishly until they would detach part of the object and hold it to their tortured faces, hold it like a half—mask covering one side of their countenance from ear to mouth, while to my sickness I could hear the murmuring tones of their masters oozing slimily from the ear-piece into their poor organs while they made quick and obsequious obeisance in their own pained murmurs into the mouth pieces of the instruments, replacing them and returning to whatsoever terrible and *squishy* task they might have been engaged in when the shrill summons came, thus to occupy themselves miserably until such time as another shrill summons should again call them to the terrible black *things*.

For what seemed unending centuries my terrible host, a look of detached glee fixed firmly upon his terrible face, led me from doorway to corridor, from corridor to lobby, from lobby to hallway, from hallway to room, through occasional changes of furnishing and dress, but yet always the omnipresent terrible ashtrays and hideous cups with their disgusting brown contents and blasphemous slogans, until shuddering with terror and revulsion I prayed succour.

Mine host now led me down yet another terrible corridor, through a line in a hideous room filled with terrible odours and the sounds of hundreds of the poor demon—slaves whispering over the blasphemous details of their awful tasks while they shovelled mouthfuls of nauseating stuff which I assumed to be the dreadful food of the demon-slaves, into their sweating and pasty-complexioned faces.

Guided by my host I seated myself near the end of a long table and waited, immobile, crushed beyond protest or the impulse to escape by the horrors which I had witnessed, until that tormentor returned with two trays of the demon-slave food, one of which he placed before me, apparently convinced that I would be capable of drawing nourishment from the vile concoctions which these dreadful creatures were forced to consume.

Dreadful chunks of burned cadavers littered my tray, drenched to a soft and disgusting consistency by rancid gravies, while clumps of deceased vegetation, long boiled to a pale and uniform tastelessness from which there yet emanated a horrid and disgusting, odour on waves of lukewarm fetor, lay mouldering between the partial corpses. Most horrifying of all, a dread china cup stood at one edge of the tray, filled with the horrible brown fluid I had seen earlier in the slave pens I had been compelled to tour.

So filled was I with horrified disgust that I permitted myself to mouth pewling inanities in response to my host's questions and remarks during that horrid meal, after which he led me through long and terrible corridors until we exited from that building of torment and walked painfully across a field covered with rank vegetation until we reached a second edifice of even more gigantic and unnatural proportions than that we had just exited.

To the reader of this crayoned account it may now seem that my tale is merely a recounting of horror piled upon horror, of one repellent experience following another equally dreadful, and indeed, now that it is all over (pray God that it *is* all over, that my present refuge is a reality and not merely the figment of a fevered somnambulism from which I may reawaken to find myself once more ensnared in Dutchess City!) it seems that such was the case. But I am a plain man, not accomplished in the construction of tales, and I seek merely to record with my soft crayon on my floppy-edged paper the reality which overtook me that day in that terrible town.

For the second edifice was larger even than the first, and instead of the many small chambers in which there laboured the pale-garbed demon-slaves, my host now conducted me into a single quarter of inconceivable dimensions, a room — if so puny a word as room may be applied to so vast and terrible a place as that one — filled with the clattering and pounding of machinery.

And yet you must understand, you who read these words scrawled with my soft crayon on my floppy-edged paper, that the machines were not making the noises, nor were the machines the permanent occupants of this room through which passed humans or whatever pitiable creatures these were which I saw before my terrified and decaying eyes. Ah, no!

The humans, or demon-slaves, or whatever these poor wretches were, resembled those of the smaller chambers in the other building, but could be distinguished by their darker garb and generally gruffer manner, but what was most horrifying to contemplate was the fact that these poor organisms were apparently penned within the giant room, forced to perform obeisance and offer grovelling labour to the machines which entered, apparently of their own choice, at one end of the giant room, travelled its entire huge length, and exited at the other end.

And each machine, as served by the poor things that had their being in this monstrous prison-room, would each receive additional parts, or adjustments, or be cleaned or oiled or given a new case, or have a broken or maladjusted piece repaired

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or replaced, so that each machine, by the time it left the room, was in more desirable condition and order than it had been at the time of its arrival in the room, while the slaves, who, I finally discovered, were replaced and permitted to go to other pitiable hovels for periods of sleep, invariably left the place of their torment far more worn and dispirited than they had been when they entered it.

I speculated upon the energy-flow of the operations I had witnessed, hardly noticing the nonsensical murmurs of my guide as I tried to fathom the nature and purpose of this place in which life force was transplanted each day from the beings of human workers (if such they were) into the cold and sterile form of machines.

And yet, at length I did comprehend the baleful burden of the malign whispers of my host. With slowly dawning comprehension I came to grasp the meaning and the incredible horror of the awful whispers and imprecations which had been falling for so long a period upon my ears. It was almost impossible to credit my senses with the facts which they transmitted to my brain, and yet it could not be denied, it could not be turned away from.

Mine host was inviting me to become one of the demon-slaves who laboured in such hopeless agony. In the first building, designing and controlling the machines which robbed the life-energies of the poor wretches who worked in the second!

My brain reeled at the thought. What happened next I can only surmise, for even as I passed into a faint I seemed to enter a dread fantasy in which, seized by an inexplicable madness and a sort of demoniacal greed I actually *accepted* mine host's vile and despicable suggestion.

Somehow in this fugue my tormented brain seemed to live out a phantasmagoria of indescribable horror and vileness in which, returning to the great metropolis in which I had at that time my home, I somehow contrived to lure my own most loved ones back to the accursed village known as Dutchess City, and install them in one of its rotting and disgusting hovels, there to exist in horror and a kind of disgusting hopelessness for year after horror—filled year, while I myself rose each morning from my bed of misery and despair and made my way to that cursed edifice where I somehow joined the pale-faced and pale-shirted demon-slaves, labouring at onerous and meaningless tasks, swilling cup after cup of the disgusting brown fluid to which all the demon-slaves swiftly became addicted, forcing myself daily to that terrible place where the trays of blasted matter were served as alleged nourishment, watching with a malign satisfaction whenever a newcomer was lured to join and share our depraved existence and with ill—concealed envy whenever one should contrive to escape....

Until finally, driven nigh upon the farthest shore of madness by the horror which was my daily fare and by the guilt of having caused such misery to be visited likewise upon my loved ones, I contrived a scheme of abandoning all and, packing my loved ones into a carefully concealed conveyance, stealing away by night and making our way, 'ere the demon-masters could miss us, to some pleasanter spot.

And in my dream, if dream it was, I succeeded, and yet found myself here, pro-

vided by my keepers with a soft crayon and floppy-edged papers upon which I record my thoughts, for they encourage me thus to record my thoughts, and assure me that I will yet be well, and will be permitted to return to my family.

And yet I wonder betimes, when a gibbous moon leers balefully and my thoughts turn back to what was, can such places as Dutchess City really be? Do demon-slaves labour at their hopeless tasks and gorge themselves with horrible brown fluid? Was I really one such, and have I really made my escape, or will they come some time in the night, when I am not wary, and by such weird methods of persuasion as my poor feeble brain cannot even guess, re-ensnare me and lure me back to that place of horror and despair?

Please God that it be not so!

The Book of the Overseer **Adam Niswander**

The Book

In elder days, before man held sway over the world, the gods ruled. In the hierarchy of the all-powerful were things defying description, creatures so alien and superior to the animal that is man that they did not choose to notice as that hairy mammal with the opposable thumb climbed its way upward from the slime. Omnipotent and ancient before the cataclysm that created the universe, these beings themselves sprang from a myriad of origins.

Deities unbound by the laws of the physical universe, they played upon the grander stage of multidimensional space, slipping surreptitiously from one reality to another through the mere application of whim. They visited the newly born earth and observed with amusement as life crawled forth from the vast elder sea and stood blinking in the light.

These visits were infrequent and brief. The scientist may spend a small portion of time watching through his microscope the antics of the creatures on a slide, but--compared to his lifetime--such observations are momentary glimpses of another world. These were the gods. Ephemeral entities like man merited no special notice, stirred no significant or lasting interest on the part of the eternal.

There was one, however, that became intrigued with the struggles of the beings on youthful Earth. It was a creature of no physical form which floated from object to object, melding with the native rock or plant or flesh, studying the ways in which such things manifested themselves within the limits of physical space.

Time, to such a being, has no more substance than a cloud. It might possess a rock for centuries, delving deep into rockness, or take over the form of Tyrannosaurus Rex for the brief cosmic moment of its entire existence. Such excursions into matter were less to it than geologic ages or the passage of a nanosecond.

Thus it was that this deity, this immortal being, did not observe the rise of man. It might have been exploring treeness, or learning the majesty of mountain-top-ness through all the ages that it took the fragile bipeds to learn the hunt, to use tools, to build shelters, to develop civilization and imagine greater things than survival.

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One day, however, man stumbled into its path and it saw the potential of the creature. At that period in history, the earth shook as fires deep within erupted from great flumes on the surface. Near one of these, a village, crouched in the hills, the home of an unfortunate man called Osprey the hunter.

One day, the man appeared different. All the members of the tribe noticed it. He who had been a pleasant and gregarious fellow suddenly became taciturn and reclusive. The change set tongues wagging.

Osprey began to lurk about, always glimpsed in the dark of night sneaking through the forest to unknown destinations. He eavesdropped and spied on villagers, stealing things, intruding on the women when they went to the river to bathe.

No one understood it. The hunter had been a well enough behaved individual before then. All felt a growing unease. It seemed he had forgotten how to be human and had to learn all over again. His speech slowed, his physical aspect underwent a drastic change--not for the better.

He no longer bathed nor donned clean clothing. A thick layer of grime covered his garments and his flesh. He did not scrape the hair from his face or neck. In truth, one could whiff him from twenty yards away.

One noted the change but kept his distance--the shaman, Wormeater. He suspected possession by some evil spirit from the first, but kept suspicion to himself. No villager could claim to be craftier than Wormeater.

As the village wizard, it was his task to tend the fires of the earth that rose from a great chasm on the mountain behind. Though a true wizard, not a fake, the power he wielded did not make him popular.

Until Osprey's transformation, it could have been truly said that Wormeater held title as the most unpopular and shunned male in the village. With the change in the hunter, though, Wormeater's slovenly habits and odd behavior seemed tame.

The only people less popular than the wizard and the hunter were the overseers who impressed the people into hard labor for the elders. The overseers would go out each day and select those who were to work in the fields or draw the water or dig in the mines. The servitude lasted only for a day, but none dared resist.

Wormeater, twisted by a childhood disease that bent his bones into an odd configuration, reminded men of an ape rather than man. The sorcerer lived as an outcast, valued only for the magic he wrought for the tribe and known for the curious oddities he had collected from villages scattered throughout the wider world.

One never knew what the old man might have in his reeking hovel. He collected talismans and charms, fetishes, books of dark lore and even had in his possession the head of a human being, shrunken to the size of a mango.

Wormeater had been shunned, but now the village elders sought him out, seeking answers to the troubling questions asked by those over whom they ruled.

"What is this," they inquired, "that has taken control of the once reliable hunter?"

The wizard had smiled under his wispy moustache. "I can discover it," he an-

swered, "but it will take time and I have other tasks--endeavors of great moment--awaiting me. What would you give that I might put aside the pressing business of my craft to solve this niggling puzzle for you?"

"Wormeater, my friend," said the village chief, looking about and inviting the others to join him in his jocularly, "you know how fond I am of you. I have always thought you to be the wisest and best of us. What would you ask in payment for such a trivial diversion?"

"Your daughter's hand, Elder," replied the sorcerer in an ingratiating whine.

"What? Outrageous! How dare you, cur, aspire to your betters?" The village council cursed the temerity of the fool.

Wormeater only smiled. He knew how to play this game. In time, he would have his way. Till then, let the fools think they were in control. "If it is matter of so little importance," he replied, "then it is unworthy of the attention of a great mage. Go! Leave me to my work."

And such was the vehemence of his reply that the council backed uneasily from his hovel.

"Perhaps he is right," said one to the others. "There has been no real trouble. We are wasting our own valuable time."

"Yes," said another. "The wretch Osprey is unimportant. Let us forget about him. If he becomes too troublesome, we will simply execute him."

"I agree," said a third. "Leave Wormeater to his dark works and let us get on with the business of living. The hunter is no danger at this time."

And so they all agreed that the change in Osprey was nothing with which to spend the time of the council of elders. Let the unfortunate hunter suffer whatever fate has decreed. They had better things to do.

For a time, that was the end of it. The man continued to behave oddly, but no one would intrude. Though he frightened many, he harmed none and his slinking form was soon the butt of many jests.

Then, one morning, a woman turned up dead--not merely dead, but sliced open against a tree. Her flesh had been pinned back by sharp sticks and her entire form laid open so that one could see the inner parts as well as the outer.

It was not the work of a wild creature, but an intentional act. Villagers gathered and stared in morbid fascination as the elders sent for Wormeater, afraid to touch the remains until they understood what had happened.

The shaman rushed upon the scene, his robes in disarray, his hair still spiked from sleep.

After whispered words with the village chief, he approached the body cautiously, as if it might suddenly leap from the tree and fall upon him.

Those closest said he muttered incantations and prayers under his breath as he poked here and there at the ruined form, never touching it but moving in close, as if to peer at hidden things one could only see from hard upon.

The wizard looked up at the village chief and smiled slyly. "The hunter," he

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said. "The demon that possesses him has begun to explore the workings of man."

The chief raised a finger to his lips. "Shhhhhhhh. We will speak more of this later. Is it safe to move the body from this place?"

"Yes," replied Wormeater. "This which once lived is truly dead."

"Good," said the chief. "Come to my hut when the sun sets. I have decided to pay your price."

The sorcerer smiled and nodded. "I live only to serve you," he whined.

That evening, as great Dis sank into the sea, Wormeater came to the large hut of Soma, the village chief.

"I have come as you bid me to," he said in that wheedling tone he was known for. He walked around the room fingering tapestries, hefting the gold and silver goblets, snooping among the possessions of the chief.

"Leave my things alone, Wormeater, and come sit down." Soma indicated a comfortable chair covered in soft fur.

When the wizard had complied, his host poured a goblet full of mead and handed it to him.

"The discovery of the morning has disturbed our people. There is muttering about our ineffectiveness, talk of revolt. The matter must be resolved quickly."

Wormeater looked up from under shaggy brows. "What would you have me do, elder?"

"Either restore Osprey to himself or kill him," snapped the chief. "What did you think?"

Seeing his opportunity, the shaman spoke quickly. "I think, Soma, that you and the elders have come upon something over which you have no control. I think you need me more than you wish to admit."

The chief sighed. "What do you want, Wormeater?"

"I told you," answered the mage, an evil leer on his face.

"Do this and it shall be as you wish," said Soma. "But do it quickly."

The wizard stood and bowed. "Assemble all the people in the great meeting circle at sunset tonight and I shall fulfill my part of our pact," he said.

"Whatever you say," snapped Soma. "Now get out of my house. Your very presence fouls the air."

The shaman obeyed.

All through the day, word passed from one villager to another that they were being summoned to the great circle to see justice done. Rumor and gossip made it seem as if they would witness wonders.

When the time arrived, however, they found Wormeater seated cross-legged in the middle of the circle, a huge book on a stone table before him.

Soma approached and spoke, his tone sharp. "What is this, Wormeater? Where is the hunter?"

"He will be here," answered the wizard. "Just be sure that everyone stays back. I must not be interrupted."

The chief returned to the others and relayed the wishes of the shaman. The other elders deputized some of the stronger warriors to aid in keeping the crowd back. As the sun set, the gathering became quite large and noisy.

Wormeater had built a fire in a deep hole and continually muttered over it and the book. Candles of mutton fat sputtered in a second ring of fire on flat stones several paces out from the central pit.

The wizard created several of his most complicated and powerful enchantments, including the spell of summoning, the spell of binding and the truth spell. Joy filled him. Now the fools would see him as a mage of power, one who could be shunned only at great personal peril.

In truth, to the surprise of many, Osprey staggered into the circle from the forest. He acted even more strangely than what had become usual. He would come forward several paces as if being dragged by forces unseen, and then pull back, all the while moaning in a hideously inhuman voice.

Once the hunter had entered the inner circle of candles, the moaning stopped, but Osprey staggered from stone to stone as if seeking a means of escape.

Wormeater stood robed in black, his hair jammed up under a strange floppy hat, mouthing incantations and chanting in a language none of those present understood. Suddenly, he threw back one side of his cloak and raised his hand high in the air.

"I command you to answer me, spirit," he yelled in a loud voice. "Where have you come from?"

The voice that replied was soft and deep, yet some trick carried it to every ear in the outer circle--as if it came from the bottom of a well, all filled with echoes and hollowness.

"I have no name," it replied. "I am a traveler from afar and pass among you only briefly. Why have you summoned me?"

"What do you wish here, traveler?" All present would later remark that Wormeater sounded confident and more powerful than they had imagined he could be.

"I watch," said the voice. "I study the groupings of your kind."

"Like an overseer," yelled a voice from the crowd. "You think you can just take one of us, as you have poor Osprey, and make us into beasts of burden that carry you from place to place."

"I do what I wish," said the voice. "You may not interfere."

"You lie, Overseer," yelled Wormeater. "I can. And I do so now. That you may learn the value of a man, I will chain you to this world until you have found the key to unlock this book." He pointed to the large hidebound tome that sat on the stone before him.

"Fool," said the voice, "I can have it anytime I want. Where is this key?"

The mage's face broke into a wide smile. "I threw it into the deeps of the earth, Overseer, into the fires I tend."

"Then you shall fetch it for me," said the voice, and the hunter fell to the ground

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as if he had been held up by ropes that were suddenly cut.

Hanging there in the lamplight, a ghostly shape floated in the air like mist--yet it changed even as people began to notice it.

Wormeater had begun to back away when the apparition seemed suddenly to leap toward him. With a cry, he snatched up the book, holding it like a shield between him and the advancing mist. At the same instant, he cried out the Spell of Binding.

A brilliant flash split the night.

The mage hurled the huge tome into the fire, but a ghostly light surrounded it, keeping it from the flames. Even hours later, it had not been so much as scorched.

Osprey the hunter came to himself with no memory of what had occurred since his possession by the Overseer. Though the women nursed him back to physical health, ever after he suffered bad dreams.

That night, the chief sent his daughter to the wizard, keeping his part of the bargain. Two hours later, he found her before his hut unconscious, a note pinned to her bodice.

"I have returned the rest, Soma," it said. "Do with it what you will."

When he unwrapped her, the chief elder found her right hand missing--severed at the wrist.

They never found it.

Overseers sent to the hovel of the mage found it empty and, the next day, the chief noted that the book had disappeared from the fire pit. Neither book nor wizard were seen by the people again.

Of such things are legends born.

The Bookseller

I sell books. It has been my business for ten years now. One of the questions often asked by customers is how I came into this line of work. Though I cannot tell them, I will tell you.

I am a prisoner trapped in my own body, a body over which something dark and terrible rules.

It began when I entered this very bookshop. The afternoon sun rode high in the sky and I had been wasting time, wandering the streets and window shopping.

As I came in the door, the proprietor approached me. His clothing looked old-fashioned, as if he had stepped directly out of the 1930s, his pin-striped trousers pleated and held up by suspenders. I noticed that he had terribly scarred and calloused hands. His eyes looked almost feverish as he asked, "What may I show you today?"

I felt reckless. My rambling walk through town had been a whim and the strange little shop amused me. I looked the old man straight in the eye and replied, "Bring me the rarest item in the store."

To tell the truth, I don't know what I expected him to produce. My demand had been a joke, not serious. I hoped the request might bring a moment--just a breath--of excitement to his day. How often, after all, does a customer in such a tawdry shop imply a willingness to pay the price of genuine scarcity?

His face changed. He suddenly glowed with pleasure. Considering how dour he had been when the conversation began, the transformation could not have been more dramatic had he metamorphosed from a caterpillar to a butterfly.

He placed a hand on my shoulder and I could swear I saw tears of gratitude in his burning eyes.

"This way, sir," he replied, then guided me to a curtained arch. His grip on my shoulder still firm, he led me through and into a small room walled in stone. Low light came from oil lamps set in niches cut into rough stone walls.

The light reflected eerily from the domed ceiling overhead and I felt a cold chill ripple through my body, causing me to tremble. He led me to a box resting on a pedestal by the wall. The wood was worm-eaten but trimmed in silver. On all sides were carved symbols, but I did not even recognize the language, let alone what it might say.

"Here," he said, opening the hasp with an air of reverence. Carefully, he lifted the lid which was secured by thick silver hinges and two light chains of the same metal. "Here is the rarest treasure in my shop."

I looked within and could not repress a grunt of acknowledgement, for, resting in a bed of plush velvet, sat a book more beautifully bound than any I have ever seen. My breath grew short. In a thick royal binding wreathed in chased silver, the thing must have been two and a half feet high, eighteen inches wide and as thick as a fist.

"What is it?" I asked, unable to look away even for a moment.

"It is *The Book of the Overseer*," he answered. "A repository of great power."

"How much?" I asked, still unable to tear my eyes away.

"How much do you have?" he asked.

I reached for my wallet . . . only to discover it missing. "My God!" I exclaimed. Then I remembered. Since I had departed the house that morning with no plans, I left it behind intentionally. You cannot spend money you don't have.

I patted my pockets but found nothing except my old folding knife and the lucky coin, a golden Liberty, a twenty-four dollar gold piece I had inherited from my father.

I turned to the old man prepared to explain, holding the coin in the palm of my hand. I planned to offer it as security with a promise to rush home and get the money when he snatched it from me with a look of unadulterated joy on his face.

"Done," he said.

He reached into the box and lifted the huge volume carefully, almost reverently, then pressed it to my chest while I, not believing my luck, folded eager arms over it and held it tight.

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At that moment, I felt the weight of the Overseer as it settled over me. With a whimper, my will vanished and the monster seized my body.

The proprietor stumbled backward as if suddenly relieved of a great burden and his face broke into a wide grin.

"Free!" he cried. "Free at last!" He backed to the archway, his face glowing like that of a drowning man dragged at the last instant to the safety of the shore. There he paused. Fumbling in his pocket, he drew forth a ring of keys. He hurled them to the floor at my feet.

"Yours," he said, backing from the room. "Yours now and God's pity on you. It will remain this way until some other fool comes to request what you did."

With that, he was gone.

I have been here seven years now, imprisoned within walls of meaningless words, compelled to open the door at 9 am and close it again at sunset. The Overseer has trained me, It holds me under a spell from which there is, apparently, only one escape.

The worst thing is the silence. The creature has not said a word to me since taking control. It must be utterly merciless.

Twice a week, the Overseer walks me down to the corner store where I purchase bland provisions and clean clothing. Customers come into the shop and I am compelled to show them the volumes lining the shelves, accepting their money as dictated by a master list behind the counter. I have learned to talk the talk of books.

Every night, I am forced to climb down to the basement under the shop where shovels and picks beckon me to labor at a great excavation. I do not know the reason for this digging but, from the depth into the solid rock that it now extends, it must have been in progress for many years. I am permitted to sleep only four hours before I am awakened and driven to open the shop for business.

If I understood the old man, my release from this hell will not occur until someone else comes into the shop and requests that I sell them the treasure that chains me, the rarest item in the store.

The only remaining pleasure in my life is when a customer approaches me and I can say, "What may I show you today?"

I cling desperately to hope.



Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos
Franklyn Searight

This Mighty Messenger arrives
To visit troubled Man
And tell him what the Old Ones have
Considered next to plan.
Communication is his skill;
It's what he does the best;
And so he's delegated to
Report at their behest.
He seems to be an honest chap
In all assorted ways,
But don't be fooled, you can't believe
One thing that he conveys

God of a Thousand Forms, he comes
In different incarnations
To meet the folk at darkest night
In clandestine locations.
Appearing as "The Black Man" he's
Convincingly disguised,
And for assorted awfulness
Is frequently despised.
He's really not a "black" guy though;
He just appears as one,
With eyes that warn of one bad dude
That honest folk should shun.

He's known to visit darkened woods,
And frequently he aids
The cheerless hags who romp at night
And dance in moonlit glades.
He seals the pacts 'tween witches and
The devil that appears
To boast and make fine promises
Then promptly disappears.
Keziah Mason knew him well *
And Robert Blake, the writer, **
Who might have lived throughout the night
By flicking on his lighter.

One time, when in the guise of man,
He took great pains to fool
Naive Egyptians and their slaves
And as their Pharaoh rule.
He told how he had risen from
Long epochs since their birth
And heard strange messages that came
From places not of Earth.
His lordly way deceived them all;
They bowed in adoration;
Collectively they followed him
As leader of their nation.

Once worshipped by Surama, that
Bizarre Atlant'an priest,
He frolicked with the simple folk
And joined their rowdy feast.
With them he celebrated all
The black arts he had mastered
And served them potent alcohol
Till everyone was plastered.
They reveled through the bawdy night;
They shed their scanty clothes
And didn't pause to think of what
The morning would disclose.

This messenger sure gets around
And makes you start to wonder
If he's the one responsible
For each mistaken blunder
That people with computers make.
It seldom seems to fail:
They send a message off then crave
Return of just-sent mail.
But it's too late, of course; once shipped
It's gone forever after;
But listen closely; you might hear
Nyarlathotep's vile laughter.

* *The Dreams in the Witch-House*

** *The Hunter of the Dark*

The Worm in the Wood

Laurence J. Cornford

No, you wouldn't get me to go into the wood. Not now, not now. And I would advise you to avoid it too. It's not for nothing that they fenced it in. Leave it alone and it won't do anyone any harm. It's been left alone all these years, and its best left that way.

No, I'm not saying that there's anything in there. New Species? No, it's not a thing, nothing you can put in a zoo or photograph. There's no glory in looking for it. It's a presence. A ghost if you like. Scoff all you like, the Indians knew of it and they wouldn't go there. White men tried. One in particular, he and his kin owned the land between here and Arkham. But his folks are all dead. The folk round here keep the fence in good repair, even though no-one claims the land now. If you want to picnic round here there's Miller's Hill. That's very nice this time of year.

I'm not hiding anything! I've been tolerant with you. Now be on your way!

Hubert! Where did you hear that name? Who's been saying things to you about Hubert? I'll tell you about Hubert! He's dead. Dead these thirty years. He went into the wood and he's dead!

We were just kids, in the hot summer of '46, and we used to skip school, Hubert, Seth, Clyde and me, to wander the land and fish the streams that run through the hills, or walk to the neighboring villages. Once we cycled to Arkham and down to the beach at Cairn's Point, but it was pretty dead, even then.

The folks were not long back from the war that year and the fence had been allowed to decay more than was proper. Well, the group of us found a patch where we could squeeze through. It was cool in the wood, shaded from the burning sun, and the air was cool and earthy, dappled with shafts of light through the trees. We didn't go far on those first trips. Just out of sight of the road and the grown-ups. We pretended we were Indian Scouts. We found apple trees, untended for God knows how long, laden with fruit, fit to burst. They were sweet, like the fruit in the Garden of Eden must have been. But maggots had got into some of 'em, so we ate them with care. We didn't take any back with us in case the grown-ups asked were we got them from.

We played through those long summer days. With our pen-knives we made weapons of wood, and hollered among the boughs. They were good days, at first.

But the more time we spent in the wood, and the deeper we got, the more we came to believe that we were not alone. It was little things at first and they added spice to our adventures, rather than curtailing them. We had built a fire in a clearing; though we hadn't lit it for fear that someone would see the smoke. When we came back the next day the wood we had pilled-up was spread out over the clearing as if something had run through the center of it. Then there were the animal trails, and whatever took the fallen apples. Perhaps there were deer in the wood? When we found half eaten carcasses and fish bones we revised our theory to a bear.

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When we started to hear the sounds things changed. I think we had been hearing them for some time, but had passed them off as caused by other members of our group, hiding among the trees, or something. I think we all felt we were being observed from time to time also. Some intellect from the dense undergrowth seemed to be eyeing us. Yet none of us would voice the fear. But occasionally we would catch one another off-guard and see fear in his face. Seth had even seen a black shape, humped like a bear further in the wood. When we got there we found only broken twigs and strange foot-prints, which we could not identify. But on that occasion we were all sitting round having a pow-wow when it dawned on us that we were truly not alone. It came from the deep wood, where the light struggled to penetrate. It was like a dragging sound, the snap of branches and the rustle which was not the rustle of leaves. The cold of the wood closed about us as we looked from one to the other.

"What was that?" I asked.

"It's the bear!" whispered Hubert, a light shinning in his eye.

Clyde and Seth caught Hubert's excitement.

"A bear! Let's go and hunt it," Seth almost shouted.

The three of them clambered to their feet and picked up their spears and bows.

"Bears are dangerous," I stuttered, but it was not this rational thought that caused me to pause. It was inkling that something was very wrong. Something I could not put into words then, but which I realized later. There was nothing normal about that wood - not the gnarled trees, not the cool in the height of summer, and certainly not the silence - the silence which had made that one noise stand out so sharply. For not a single bird sang or cricket chirped in that wood. There was only us and the thing.

"You're yella," Seth said, matter-of-factly.

"No, but we ought to be careful."

"We're scouts, aren't we? It's a chance to practice our tracking on something other than a clod."

"Yeah," piped up Hubert, "perhaps we'd be better off without him."

"No, I'll come," I said, just to prove them wrong.

We headed off through the boughs at running pace, our little feet hardly patting the grass under us. Soon we had to slow as the forest thickened and the air darkened. We paused to get our bearings as our eyes accustomed themselves to the gloom. Soon the ragged boundary of daylight blazed brightly through the boughs of the trees far behinds us, and our eyes picked out dark roots and fungi clinging to the boles of the trees as they twisted. The branches thickened and almost scraped the ground as if seeking for some indefinable thing they lacked but which they might catch by chance.

The sound had not grown much louder and it was our guess that it was moving across in front of us. I think the thrill of the chase must have been carrying us along, for Seth and Clyde had started to glance back toward me as if they were having sec-

ond thoughts about tackling a bear in near darkness armed only with a sharpened stick. But when our eyes met, he looked away. He could not back out now.

The four of us came up short as we turned the corner of a great tree which must have grown there before White Men had even dreamed of America. I said the branches were low, well; here a path had been forced through the branches, a path that was circular, about eight feet high by my reckoning, though that's based my memories as child. Certainly two of us could have stood on each other's shoulders and barely touched the top of it. But strangest of all was that its edge was defined by strands which stretched from branch to branch along the length of this "tunnel". They were almost like giant funnel-spider webs, or perhaps a membrane, such as covers sheep's guts. The ground of this tunnel was sticky with something, which conjured strange thoughts. Looking behind me I saw that this was the junction of a network of such "tunnels" through the dense forest.

The sound of the beast came ahead of us. Clearly it was using these trails to travel quickly through the wood.

"We can catch it!" whispered Hubert.

"No, it's too dangerous. What if we get caught in these tunnels by it?"

"Yeah, we can set a trap for it along one of these trails," suggested Clyde, "we don't need to follow it."

I smiled at him, grateful for his support.

"No, we've got it now. Where's the sense in letting it go just to build a trap for it?"

Hubert had a point, sort of.

We padded forward slowly, eight eyes searching out danger. Our breathing shallowed and our hearing sharpened. We all felt that we were now within the beast's domain. At the edge of the wood the trees were under the influence of Man and they were like any other forests Man had conquered. But here, where no man had walk for centuries, where no wood was cut and no fire lit, here the wood was shaped by the beast. It was twisted, or perhaps it was our straight lines that were abnormal and here it was, by its nature, what it was. It had a right to be here and the beast had a right to walk here as it had done for all those centuries, under those same trees. This was its wood.

The sounds ahead almost reconciled themselves into several distinct elements. There was a slapping, squelching sound, then there was the shift of a bulky object, dragging, or sliding across moist soil. Lastly there was the snapping of brittle objects.

We found that the tunnel lead up to the top of a ridge, where it ended. Other branches of similar tunnels also converged here, suggesting that he had tracked the thing to its lair. It was almost lightless and yet there was a faint glow ahead. Stepping cautiously forward we peered ahead, down into the bowl.

I do not know how long we looked into that recess. My guess is that it was mere moments, but it might have been hours. We lost track of time somewhere. It was a

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place where time didn't matter a jot.

I still remember it clearly; in nightmares, when I close my eyes. The ground below us was thick with leaf-mould, which glowed gently. Scattered over this mould were wind-fall apples, animal remains and half-devoured fish. To the left side of the indentation there was a cave mouth in among the tree roots of an earth bank. It was certainly big enough for a bear's den. Around the wall of trees, which were also cocooned with the web-like substance, were the entrances of other tunnels. The horror lay on the leaf-mould - in the apples! Worms! Hundreds of worms writhed and crawled, and the slapping, squelching noise was their mandibles feeding on the rotting fruit pulp. But they were big. Some were small, so small they might have passed for maggots, but some were big as cats, sticky with mucus. Then it dawned on me that the white strands which cocooned the edge of the pit, lined the trees, lined the tunnels was dried mucus.

God! Something moved in the cave. Something larger than a bear and pale, moved towards the opening! It could have been mist, I do not know. We all felt that if it touched us we would die. It was the guardian of the wood and we had eaten its apples and killed the maggots inside. God, I dare not think of that!

We four ran, without thought of caution we turned and ran, screaming back the way we came, as the white mass streamed from the cave. It is a half memory, that run. A memory dominated by the sounds that followed us. The squeezing slimy sound of a great bulk; of our mad, slipping dash along those "tunnels". When we were out of the tunnels, in the wood proper, thorns ripped at us, but fear dulled our pain. When I looked back, flickering among the trees, setting the branches swaying, a pale shape ran, hunched like a bear. It would surely overtake us unless we got back to the safety of the road. Somehow I knew it would not walk on man-laid tarmac, could not bring itself to come into sunlight. But we were lost! The band of sunlight below the canopy had faded into dusk-light and we could no longer tell if we were heading for the road or merely along the woodland.

Then I saw our clearing, and I sighed with relief. I knew the way from here. I looked back and called to the others. As I had been at the back on the way in, I had been first out. Hubert conversely was last, and he was fading. The beast was indefatigable. Its body seemed to slip through the trees, so that they did not impede it.

I paused as Seth and Clyde ran past me, down to the gap in the fence.

"Come on, Hubert!" I screamed.

The beast gained on him. Its shadowy bulk now resolved into pale waxy flesh, and I saw how it had closed so quickly on us. Hubert turned slightly, raising his spear to fend it off, but he stumbled and lost balance. A black circular hole, or a parting of the mist, appeared in the top of the beast and it descended on top of Hubert as he flailed on the ground. There was a snapping sound which might have been the spear breaking.

I turned away, knowing there was nothing I could do, so I scrambled out onto the road and we three ran for help, bloody and crying.

Men went to the wood to look for Hubert and they took an old Indian with them. The Indian spoke to me about it. He called the beast by a name, said it was a Manitou, said it was the Spirit of the Trees, called it 'The Worm in the Wood'. After a day the men came back, grim and silent, carrying a small sealed coffin. That week the men went right round the wood, rebuilding the fence. Hubert's body was buried the week after. There was an inquest, but it isn't a story you can tell a court, not without causing even more trouble. So we told that he had died by falling on his spear as we played. The grown-ups backed us up.

To my knowledge no-one has ever been in that wood since and they have given us no more trouble. Now I'm one of the men who repair the fence.

I have been to Arkham since, and have had cause to look in at the library. I think I know what it was we found that day in the wood. But you don't need to know that. If what I saw that day is a guide to their numbers then there are lots of them in there now. But they like the dark and the soft soil - they are creatures of the prime and want nothing from Man, so I'll trust in the fence and in common sense. Don't go in the wood.

Now, I'll bid you good day. You'll get to Miller's Hill up that-a-way. Me, I've got my orchard to tend. There's always a call for apples in these parts.

Shunned Things

Ann K. Schwader

Men bury what they dare not understand,
But never deep enough. Its poison rises
From unacknowledged graves in strange disguises,
To wrest from living flesh the dead's demands.
No wholesome vegetation burgeons there,
No live-born babe draws in a single breath,
While darker energies undimmed by death
Bleed vengeance-tithings from the very air.

So fared the daemon taint of Paul Roulet:
Though slaughtered by his fellows out of fear
& superstition in a stricter day,
The ebon essence of his soul fought clear
Of earth's restraints to rise unfettered . . . maim
The lives of generations with its blame.

(after Lovecraft's "The Shunned House")

Philosophy in the Work of H. P. Lovecraft

E. P. Berglund

H(oward) P(hillips) Lovecraft was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1890 and died there in 1937. In his youth he had a consuming interest in chemistry and astronomy, but he earned his living as a fiction writer. His work was professionally published primarily in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in the 1920's and 1930's. His fiction has been considered either science fiction or horror fiction, depending upon which authority is asked, but actually is a combination of the two genres. He is best noted for those stories that are considered a part of his creation, the Cthulhu Mythos. **1** Lovecraft's philosophy influenced his writing, especially in the creation of the Cthulhu Mythos.

Lovecraft was a materialist all of his life, without any belief in either religion or the supernatural. Some critics have called him a scientific materialist, **2** while others have called him a mechanistic materialist. **3** Lovecraft was "pessimistic with respect to man's ability to cope with the realization of his meaningless and insignificance in an indifferent universe." **4** In his voluminous correspondence, Lovecraft gave numerous examples of his philosophy. This philosophy also pervaded his work, whether he was writing fiction or non-fiction.

In Lovecraft's essay, "Supernatural Horror in Literature," he said, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown." **5** He also said, "Cosmic terror appears as an ingredient of the earliest folklore of all races, and is crystallized in the most archaic ballads, chronicles, and sacred writings." **6** These statements were made to show why supernatural horror literature appealed to the masses. A climate of fear pervaded the classics of supernatural horror, and Lovecraft incorporated this climate of fear into his own fiction.

Lovecraft demonstrated in his own work that the climate of fear could be served quite as well by daylight as it could by night. **7** In using this climate of fear, Lovecraft structured his stories so that they contained three important elements which made up his style. His work starts with the resolution of the story, or the insights of the narrator. **8** This is the first element of Lovecraft's style, which is called confirmation, as opposed to revelation. The end of the story is a "convincer." **9** The second element is the terminal climax, in which the high point of the story coincides with the final sentence. **10** The third and last element is orchestrated prose. Sentences are repeated, each time becoming more specific with the use of more potent adjectives, adverbs, and phrases, "just as in a symphony a melody introduced by a single woodwind is at last thundered by the whole orchestra." **11** These elements were important in the creation of Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos.

The Cthulhu Mythos "is a sequence of stories, unrelated in locale, characters or period, yet connected by a common background of invented mythological lore." **12** The Mythos "refers to various alien entities, cults, books, and places." **13** The stories

of Lovecraft's cannot be called "Cthulhu Mythos stories" since they only utilize the Cthulhu Mythos as background. **14** In using this lore as background, Lovecraft enforced it through documentation, surrounding the lore of the Cthulhu Mythos with "learned anthropological allusions, data drawn from the literature of archaeology, [and] spurious quotations from rare texts of ancient lore." **15** The lore was incorporated into his work "in such a way that the Mythos was a reflection -- in fact, it was the truth behind [actual] mythologies all over the work." **16** This technique, combined with his philosophy of life, ensured "*verisimilitude*, that sense of *life not story* without which *memorability* is impossible." **17** Lovecraft was completely aware of what he was accomplishing.

On July 5, 1927, Lovecraft wrote a letter to the editor of *Weird Tales* in which he said, "All my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. . . . To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all." **18** This was the foundation for Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos. The following two examples are illustrious of this foundation.

In 1926, Lovecraft wrote his story "The Call of Cthulhu," **19** from which the Mythos drew its name. The story tells of the narrator who acts as the executor for his great uncle's estate. He discovers a sculpture and some manuscripts relating to a cult devoted to a being called "Cthulhu." As the narrator does his own investigation into these items, he comes to believe that his great uncle's death was not of natural causes, but due to his great uncle having learned too much. And now the narrator also knows too much. **20**

At the beginning of "The Call of Cthulhu," the narrator says, "The most merciful thing in the world . . . is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age." **21** This initial paragraph (of the story) is from the resolution of the story, "containing the *insights* of the narrator after a *mass of documentary proof* has opened his eyes to reality." **22**

In 1934, Lovecraft wrote "The Shadow Out of Time." **23** The narrator of this story has his personality displaced by a secondary personality for a period of five years. When his own personality returns, with no memory of the preceding five years, he begins having barely remembered dreams about life in a city 150,000,000 years in the past. As they become clearer to him over the years, he writes up some of these dreams for the psychiatric journals. He receives a letter from an Australian, which says that the Australian has seen some of the stones that the narrator has described

as being used as building materials in this ancient city. The narrator goes to Australia with an archaeological expedition and finds the city of his dreams -- beneath the sands of Australia's Great Sandy Desert. [24](#)

At the revelatory beginning, the narrator says, ". . . man must be prepared to accept notions of the cosmos, and of his own place in the seething vortex of time, whose merest mention is paralyzing. He must, too, be placed on guard against a specific, lurking peril which, though it will never engulf the whole human race, may impose monstrous and unguessable horrors upon certain venturesome mentions of it." [25](#) At the end of the story, the narrator has come to know that mankind is a "tiny inkblot amongst the whole vast spectrum of creatures that have lived and will continue to live before and after mankind on this planet and on other planets." [26](#)

These two examples show how Lovecraft's materialistic philosophy moved his supposedly supernatural horror stories out of the realm of the supernatural and closer to true science fiction. The two genres were combined and inseparable in his work; ghoulies, beasties, and things that go bump in the night met head on with the wonder and awe of the unknown.

Lovecraft used his fiction to show his philosophy of materialism and man's "meaninglessness and insignificance in an indifferent universe." [27](#) As a materialist, this was Lovecraft's world-view. Even though the majority of his readers could not, or would not, accept his philosophy as their own, that philosophy, as imparted in his fiction and in the Cthulhu Mythos in particular, showed the climate of fear in the stark realism of daylight. And this made his fiction memorable. His fiction was neither science fiction nor horror fiction, but a combination of the two, and Lovecraft's work has been remembered. It has been said that Lovecraft's work is "a work of genius, a cosmic-minded oeuvre embodying a mechanistic materialist's brilliant conception of the imaginary realms and frightful reality 'beyond the fields we know,' a literary rhapsody of the cosmos and man's laughable position therein." [28](#)

NOTES

1 The series name of the Cthulhu Mythos was created by August Derleth. Lovecraft referred to his stories as his tales of Yog-Sothotherie. [\[return\]](#)

2 de Camp, L. Sprague. *Lovecraft: A Biography*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1971; p. 89. [\[return\]](#)

3 Mosig, Dirk W. "Myth-Maker." *Whispers*, December 1976; p. 48. [\[return\]](#)

4 Mosig; p. 49. [\[return\]](#)

5 Lovecraft, H.P. "Supernatural Horror in Literature." *In Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*. Corrected 6th printing. H.P. Lovecraft. Ed. S.T. Joshi. Sauk City, Wisconsin:

Arkham House Publishers, Inc., 1986; p. 365. [\[return\]](#)

6 *Ibid*; p. 369. [\[return\]](#)

7 Gatto, John Taylor. *The Major Works of H.P. Lovecraft*. New York: Monarch Press, 1977; p. 48. [\[return\]](#)

8 *Ibid*; p. 50. [\[return\]](#)

9 Leiber, Fritz. "A Literary Copernicus." In *Something About Cats and Other Pieces*. H. P. Lovecraft. Ed. August Derleth. Sauk City, Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1949; p. 297. [\[return\]](#)

10 *Ibid*. [\[return\]](#)

11 *Ibid*. [\[return\]](#)

12 *Ibid*; p. 298. [\[return\]](#)

13 Carter, Lin. "About The Spawn of Cthulhu and H.P. Lovecraft: The Cthulhu Mythos." In *The Spawn of Cthulhu*. Ed. Lin Carter. New York: Ballantine Books, 1971; p. 2. [\[return\]](#)

In regard to the stories utilizing the lore of the Cthulhu Mythos, there are some authorities that believe that there are actually two versions of the Cthulhu Mythos, but for differing reasons.

One authority has it that one version of the Cthulhu Mythos is a body of lore, whereas the second version sees it as a network of stories. [29](#)

Another authority sees the Cthulhu Mythos as two versions, one a supernatural mythos and the other a scientific mythos. However, this authority does admit that the supernatural mythos may be a distortion of the scientific mythos. [30](#)

14 Mosig; p. 54. [\[return\]](#)

15 [David E. Schultz in] Burleson, Donald R., et al. "What Is the Cthulhu Mythos?" *Lovecraft Studies*, Spring 1987; p. 5. [\[return\]](#)

16 Carter; p. 3. [\[return\]](#)

17 [Will Murray in] Burleson, Donald R., et al. "What Is the Cthulhu Mythos?" *Love-*

[Contents](#)

craft Studies, Spring 1987; p. 9. [[return](#)]

18 Gatto; p. 51. [[return](#)]

19 Mosig; p. 53. In using the quotations from Lovecraft's letter to Farnsworth Wright, dated July 5, 1927, Mosig underscored the quotation. It is not known if this underscoring was in the letter as published in the February 1928 issue of *Weird Tales* or if the underscoring was placed by Mosig for emphasis. [[return](#)]

20 de Camp; p. 286. [[return](#)]

21 Lovecraft, H.P. "The Call of Cthulhu." In *The Dunwich Horror and Others*. Corrected 8th printing. H.P. Lovecraft. Ed. S.T. Joshi. Sauk City, Wisconsin: Arkham House Publishers, Inc., 1982; pp. 125-154. [[return](#)]

22 *Ibid*; p. 125. [[return](#)]

23 Gatto; p. 50. [[return](#)]

24 de Camp; p. 422. [[return](#)]

25 Lovecraft, H.P. "The Shadow Out of Time." In *The Dunwich Horror and Others*. Corrected 8th printing. H.P. Lovecraft. Ed. S.T. Joshi. Sauk City, Wisconsin: Arkham House Publishers, Inc., 1982; pp. 368-433. [[return](#)]

26 *Ibid*; p. 368. [[return](#)]

27 [S.T. Joshi in] Burleson, Donald R., et al. "What Is the Cthulhu Mythos?" *Lovecraft Studies*, Spring 1987; p. 12. [[return](#)]

28 Mosig; p. 55. [[return](#)]

29 Price, Robert M. "H.P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos." *Crypt of Cthulhu*, Halloweenmas 1985; p. 10. [[return](#)]

30 Bertin, Eddy C. "The Cthulhu Mythos: A Review and Analysis." *Nyctalops*, June 1971; pp. 3-4. [[return](#)]



Attack of the Deep Ones

Daniel Alan Ross

Rain. . .

Rain, rain, rain . . .

Rain, rain, rain, rain, rain . . .

It's still raining. It's just wet everywhere and I'm wet and everyone is just plain wet. It started raining after all the weird stuff started in the oceans all over the world. Big ships and small ships started disappearing. Well, some disappeared but others would show up just floating in the water or worse, with their engines still on, crashing into the shores just wherever. I'm talking little sailing boats and big oil tankers and navy war ships and just everything that floats. All these coast guard and war ships would go searching for the lost ships, and then they would disappear too. Helicopters and planes would search too and sometimes they would find these boats just drifting in the water with no people on them. It was freaky, because you could see those big oil rigs out there and you knew there wasn't anyone on them anymore. Just gone. People were getting really scared.

Then all the wires and cables under the oceans started breaking down. Good thing for satellites or all the talk between countries would be gone now.

All the big people like the cops and the President said not to panic, but they were scared too. You could see it in their faces, even on TV. There were Army and National Guard people all over, especially in the big coastal towns like New York and LA and San Francisco. Tanks and jeeps and weird cars with satellite dishes on them driving all up and down the streets. All the ports and wharves and any place like that where boats could pull in were sealed off and big iron and cement barricades were put around the places where the sewer pipes go into the sea. It looked to me like they were getting ready for an enemy to come walking out of the ocean.

Mom and Dad were on one of the little boats and I was with a babysitter. We waited for them to come back but when they never did so she took me to the cops. They tried to be nice to me but they were too busy to help me. They said for me to wait at the station for these social worker people to take me somewhere, but I ran away before they got there. That was real easy and I don't think they would have ever shown up anyhow.

That's why I'm by myself now. Mom and Dad's house is in San Francisco and I didn't want to stay there because I think the Army was right that something was going to come out of the sea and it wasn't going to be very nice when it did. So I started walking towards the Bay Bridge to get out of San Francisco and head to Kansas or Missouri. I hoped it wouldn't take too long to get there because it had started raining that day I left. And it's still raining now.

Anyway, even though you're not supposed to walk across that bridge, it was pretty easy to do with the cops being so busy with all this other stuff. It seemed like other people were doing the same thing because I didn't see any traffic going into

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San Francisco, but a bunch of traffic was all jammed up going east. It had been a long day with the babysitter and the cops and all this walking so I stopped at Treasure Island which is kinda midway across the bridge to see if I could find some place to get some food and maybe take a nap. I don't think there was anyone on that island but me and I broke into a house and made some sandwiches to eat and also some to take with me for later.

I turned on the TV and the news was on. It was always on now and they talked about what was happening with the oceans. They said that they didn't know yet what was going on but they were pretty sure that it wasn't natural, that there must be intelligent people making this happen. I fell asleep on the couch and had dreams that made me feel sick when I woke up. The dream was all fuzzy like when a cable channel isn't working very well, but I could see that I was underwater. There was this ugly head with tentacles and there were these big dinosaur-like wings flapping around, churning up the water and mud and the fish and other stuff. There were a lot of people down there with me. Lots of different people like sailors and army guys and people that looked like tourists with their Hawaiian shirts and Mom and Dad were there too. I wanted Mom and Dad to come over and pick me up but they just swam around with all the other people. The way they moved started to make me feel kinda funny though and I wanted to get away from them. They were really white and fat and they just flopped around like broken GI Joe dolls, their arms and legs just going floppy with the crazy waves the big dinosaur wings made.

I woke up then. My head hurt and I went to get a drink of water. A drink of water. . . That's funny. Anyway, I got in the kitchen when I heard the firecrackers. It sounded like when we have Chinese New Year in our neighborhood, but really far away. I looked out the window but couldn't see anything so I went outside and climbed up a tree so I could get on the roof. It was dusk but I could see more, and now the sound was changing from the firecracker pops to big explosions. Across the bay in San Francisco I could see a bunch of smoke and flashes of light. I've seen that night time news footage of the Gulf War and this looked just like that except for one thing, the bullets that look like white streams of light were going into the water instead of into the air. It was weird looking and all of a sudden it was everywhere. Big flashes of light and explosions that were breaking my eardrums were hitting all over the bay and in the city and even in Oakland and Berkeley. I couldn't see what our guys were shooting at though, and it seemed like the army had just gone crazy all at once. The night sky became red with smoke and fire at both ends of the bridge. I was trapped on Treasure Island and I was getting really scared.

A bunch of jets flew over and went way out to sea. In a while I saw a really big white flash out on the horizon like they dropped a nuclear bomb on the ocean. Then another and another. I had to get out of here!

I got ready to walk back to the bridge when I saw one of them. One of the guys the army must be fighting. He was walking out of the water underneath the bridge so I ducked under a parked car so that he wouldn't see me. He was big and ugly

and naked. He looked like a fish with legs and arms, or maybe like a frog that walked sort of like a man. He smelled bad, and I think he could smell me too because he started looking around like he had lost something and he was walking right towards me. I started to feel cold and weak in my arms and legs and I started trembling because he was definitely coming right to where I was.

I scrambled to get out from under the car and away from that ugly thing but I felt slow and tired. As I got up and started running I heard my dad calling my name. I looked around and there he was! Dad! How did he get here and how did he know I was here? I was just so happy to see him and I was so tired from being scared that I just stopped and held out my arms for him to pick me up. But why was he walking so funny and why did he smell so bad, like dead fish, and where was that frog guy at?

"Hey Dad, what's that over there?" I pointed off in the distance behind him. Sucker, he actually looked, and while he did I ran like crazy away from him and towards the bridge.

The bridge didn't have regular cars on it anymore, just tanks and cop cars and stuff like that. They were all leaving the city too. A cop saw me and yelled at me wondering where the heck I came from and to get in his car. I told him there was this frog guy chasing me. He yelled for me to forget about that and to just get in the car because everyone was leaving, we had to go before they dropped the big bomb on San Francisco.

"You're dropping a bomb on our own city?"

"It's not our city anymore kid . . ." and under his breath I could hear him say "It's not our world anymore."

"Can we go to Missouri? There's not an ocean there is there?" He looked at me with this really sad and kinda mean look on his face, and then he looked ahead and kept on driving. "Yeah, sure. Missouri. You know anyone there?"

"No." I said.

"Hmm. Me neither."

That was a week ago and now my new friend Mark is dead. Being a cop didn't help him any. Yesterday we were in Kansas City Missouri and we stopped for gas when he saw his wife there at the station. He thought she had died back in San Francisco last week during the first attack, but here she was. It wasn't her though. I could tell by the smell and the way she was walking. I yelled for Mark to listen to me and to shoot her but he cussed at me until she was next to him. Then I could see what it was and I think Mark could too right before it got him and killed him. I screamed and ran to the car. Mark had showed me how to shoot his gun and his shotgun and how to drive in case anything happened to him. I got the shotgun and even though it hurt my shoulder each time I pulled the trigger, I shot that thing three times. It didn't die but it was hurt and it held its eyes when I shot it in the face. It was blindly grabbing for me when I grabbed the keys, gun and some ammo from Mark's belt. I shot it with the shotgun again right up against its neck and it



died that time with its head blown off and just dangling down its back.

I cursed at it, and then got in the car. Those things couldn't have been so fast as to beat us to Missouri. But there are the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. Maybe they've come up through the rivers too. They must be everywhere where there is water. And it's been raining a really long time.

The car got stuck in deep water on a flooded part of I-70 between Kansas City and Columbia. The police radio hasn't picked up any voices for about 12 hours. I was just sitting in here thinking about what Mark had said about it not being our world anymore. I'm looking east and there's another nuclear flash. I don't think Columbia is there anymore. I don't think there's many places left for regular people. I'm glad I have the gun. Whether any of the bad guys show up or not, I think I'll be using it soon.

Sonnet: Cthulhu
Scott H. Urban

Lines written upon receiving a pin in the image of Cthulhu created by G. Warlock Vance

With fingers atremble I raise the bust
And bring it before disbelieving eyes:
They meet a visage, filled with loathsome lust;
Nightmare portrait, promising only lies.

O, how presumptuous of mortal men,
How innocent, naive! With hands of clay,
They fashion idols far beyond their ken . . .
To the Old Ones, man's life spans but a day.

By viewing His image, I am guilty.
To keep safe, I must watch forever.
His tentacles rise from waters silty
While the strands of my consciousness sever.

I fall into slumber with silent screams
Towards the black maw of the One Who Dreams.



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-- **Ken Faig**



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The Mark of Yig
Robert M. Price

Colin Gilman sat at the desk in his crowded study. The room was neither especially large nor small, but it seemed almost like a phone box because of the choking jam. Books and journals were crammed everywhere. A surprising number of these were his own published works, for Gilman was an avid and prolific writer in many fields. His titles spanned, it seemed, the whole register, dealing as they did with subjects as diverse as literary criticism, the history of violent crime, systems of esoteric thought and theology, parapsychology, and deviant sex. He worked, and sold, in both fiction and non-fiction genres. Yet despite their great diversity, the close reader of his *oeuvre* would not be long in discovering the common thread that tied all his many works together. Colin Gilman was a pioneer on the frontiers of consciousness.

He found the tether binding humanity to the conventional five senses altogether too restrictive. Concerned friends often joked that reality was just not good enough for Colin; rather, he would retort, he was convinced reality is bigger than most people think, and he wanted to see more of it. Thus his intensive and extensive researches. His books he regarded as so many research reports which he shared with the reading public. Reviewers called him a popularizer, damning him with faint praise, but he understood himself better: as a synthesizer. Today's scientific establishment, he reasoned, was too much blinded by its micro-specializations, and it took a look through the other end of the magnifier to see how their many insights fit together. This he tried to do.

Just now he was concerned with split-brain research and what it meant for the nature of consciousness. He had penned a couple of tomes about it already, hazarding the theory that efficient thinking and increased creativity might be enhanced if we would learn to play the two brain hemispheres off against each other, rather like both feet pedaling a bicycle. But now he was beginning to glimpse another possible step that no scientist had yet taken. What if the supposedly vestigial reptile part of the brain had more activity going on in it than the textbooks said? He had in fact come to suspect that it ought to be regarded as no less than a "third hemisphere" of the brain. The challenge, then, was to figure out just what role it played along with the two others.

The trouble was that Colin was no medical man. In matters such as this he was dependent on the researches of others. But why must he wait for crumbs to fall from their table? Why not try to prod research along a bit for once? It might work. Colin sat back, spun the swivel chair half-way round, and gazed up to the ceiling, which had a number of posters tacked to it, but he saw none of them. He was searching through the vault of possibilities, the steamer trunk of schemes. Why humans look upward when they do this, he did not know, but it might make for a good book sometime, if Desmond Morris didn't beat him to it, that is.

Possibilities began to take shape and branch out to touch one another, like the

ganglia in the brain. Hmm. A call to his old friend Allen Enslin over at Oakdeene Sanitarium might yield some fruit. He had first come to know Allen while researching an early book called *A History of Perversion and Violent Crime*. He had arranged to interview some of the criminally insane patients at Oakdeene, and that with great profit. Allen seemed to understand and appreciate Colin's work. He might be willing to join him in an experiment now. Perhaps he could be brought round to see how it could assist in his own work, since Colin's provisional theory was that the old reptile brain harbored the most primal and atavistic impulses. If one could isolate these, even extinguish them, what might the future of the human enterprise be like? Perhaps no more leaden progress with two steps backward into savagery for every one into the light.

Colin was firm in his opinion that a certain vanguard of the populace, maybe 5% of them, possessed an extra something, call it the X Factor, that lent genius to some but seemed to make others into maniacs and madmen. There was a genius to evil, too, sometimes. Hitler had had it; so did Charles Manson, Jim Jones. But what made the difference between the superman and the monster? He now suspected it might be the degree to which this X Factor was filtered, channeled, through the reptile brain. It was certainly worth an experiment, and there was no point in putting off the call. Now where was Allen's extension number?

Colin did his best sell job, something he had a lot of experience doing, every time he took a new manuscript idea to one of his publishers. It was not long before he had Allen sold on the project. Basically what Dr. Enslin saw as their best option was to take one of the "lifers," a serial rapist perhaps, and administer a serum to suppress the activity of the relevant portion of the brain. Since there should be no immediate reaction, the best procedure would be simply to have the man under observation for a few weeks. In view of this, Allen assured him, Colin hardly need appear in person to witness the injection. There would be nothing to see. But Colin Gilman hated to be restricted to the sidelines, so he insisted on being there, and to this Allen had no significant objection.

Half a week later Colin stood outside the two-way mirror opening into the padded cell of one of the brutish inmates of Oakdeene, a man well known as the Camside Ripper. He had not hoped for so ideal a test subject. He knew well the sanguine career of the Ripper, as he had devoted fully half a chapter to him in his book *The Children of Whitechapel*. Dr. Enslin had just administered the drug and was joining Colin in the observation booth while a couple of orderlies tried to soothe the big, hulking man who retained the childhood fear of inoculation. They seemed to have succeeded, and, though the men lingered in the cell just to make sure, Allen and Colin had begun chatting in the booth, expecting no immediate reaction.

Colin was just telling his friend which of two directions his next book might take, depending on the eventual outcome of this test and others like it, when suddenly it appeared that they might not be in for so long a wait after all. The human beast at bay in the glass cage before them was getting agitated, very agitated indeed.

Something seemed to be wrong with the microphone, so the ensuing scene was played out in eerie silence, at least from where Colin and Allen stood in helpless paralysis. Other orderlies had appeared from nowhere and were frantically trying to get the cell door open, but for some reason it refused to cooperate. One of the men inside must have somehow jammed the thing in a desperate attempt to exit.

With incredible speed the Ripper had exploded into a supernova of violence. Springing upon the orderlies, he proceeded to vivisect them, tearing their muscular forms to great, ragged hunks of gore. Very little wall space remained the original shade of hospital beige, most of the surface now running red. Before the impotent and incredulous eyes of the men safely outside the cell, the man-monster began to greedily devour the nearest charnel fragments. By the time, moments later, that the security officers managed to burst the door in and shoot him dead, the thing had seized what remained of the buttocks section of one body and was enthusiastically raping it.

Colin had seen enough, enough both to sicken him and to destroy his first hypothesis. Allen stared at him in shock, almost as if he blamed his friend for the tragedy, though there was no way either man might have predicted it. The doctor darted through the door and around the partition to gaze firsthand on the shambles of flesh, as if his skills could be of more use. As for the dumbfounded Colin, as soon as he could collect his wits he judged it best to leave without further words. He would call within the week to apologize. He only hoped he hadn't made things unbearably difficult for Dr. Enslin at the Sanitarium.

Back in his flat, he tried to slough off the shock of what he had witnessed with the aid of a good, stiff drink. The drink didn't hurt, but, as usual, the most effective healing balm proved to be speculation. He could give his emotions the night off by taking refuge in the intellect.

He now found himself firmly ensconced at square one. Ought he to abandon this line of research completely? But no, whatever had happened at Oakdeene, it surely meant there was something to his idea of the power of the reptile brain. He soon felt a new hypothesis beginning to gestate. The Camside Ripper had erupted into savagery precisely when the emissions of the reptile brain had been *blocked*. Was it possible, then, that the relation was the opposite of what he had first suspected? Could it possibly be that the source of the animalistic passions in the human breast was some part of the "advanced" *mammalian* brain? If that were so, it would imply that the role of the archaic reptile brain was instead to *hinder* these impulses, to dilute them, to cool them down with the slow, calm logic of the cold-blooded reptile.

The thought staggered him. What if the task *were* to inhibit the passions of the mammal brain? Here we might be talking about a significant twist in the evolutionary path. Before, he had considered it a matter of eradicating the baser instincts by cutting them off at their source. But if the negative passions were simply one of the vivid colors on the palette of the dual mammalian brain, who knew what drastic effects might come from tampering with them? What would happen to the other emo-

tions?

One thing seemed sure: he would get no further help from Oakdeene. One choice faced him. Would he dare to use *himself* as an experimental subject? The Faustian lure was something he'd lived with all his life. He didn't imagine that in the final analysis he'd be able to resist it now. But it would be a moot point unless he could find out what sort of chemicals would do the job. He'd have to give that some thought for the next few days. He must have *some* contacts *somewhere* who'd know what to do. And there were other things to be busy with in the meantime. One of them was a good night's rest.

He awoke mid-morning and clicked on the television, looking for regional or local news. And there it was: the atrocity of the day before. He'd been afraid they wouldn't be able to keep this one hushed up, despite the fact that Oakdeene's administrators had learned over the years to do some surprising feats of public relations and media disinformation. He listened for a few minutes, then sampled a few other television and radio broadcasts, and finally turned both machines off, satisfied that his good name was not being connected with the Oakdeene business, at least not yet.

After a shower, Colin fired up the computer and typed away for a while on a new, revised edition of one of his earlier books, *Heroes of Heresy*. It was a rogue's gallery of spiritual dissidents who had dared reject the conventional understanding of the world, and to try to make the world over in the image of their own sometimes peculiar visions. There were Swedenborg, Jan of Leiden, Enoch Bowen, Joanna Southcott, James Jezreel, and the Ghost Dance Prophet Smohalla: a motley crew, to be sure. He let himself get lost in the not unpleasant job of dialoguing with the earlier version of himself who had written this book so many years ago. If his other projects allowed the time, he'd love to rewrite the book completely; some of his subsequent researches shed interesting new light on the subject of outlaw religion. And then the phone rang.

Surprisingly it was Allen Enslin. Even more amazing, he wasn't furious. "Listen, old man, I'm sorry for my attitude yesterday. I know you weren't to blame. It just rather blew my circuits, I'm afraid. I see a lot in my line of work, but nothing even in the Ripper's previous repertoire came close to what we saw. In fact, the outcome of the experiment has made me more convinced that you're onto something important. No, don't worry, I'm in no trouble. I grieve for those poor bastards he took with him, but nobody's going to be very surprised a chap like our Ripper goes wild and kills people."

Colin's eyes widened. This seemed impossibly good luck. Here's hoping it held.

"That's a relief to know, Allen. Still and all, I'm quite sorry the way it turned out. I must say you handled yourself superbly with those reporters. And thanks for keeping my name out of it. But tell me this: if you're still willing to help me in this research, can you give me a bit of insight . . . ?"

In the end Allen's surmise was that the more hopeful approach was not to sup-

press the mammalian instincts but to increase the output of the reptilian brain, just the opposite of what they'd done before. Such advice as this Allen was happy to give, but he simply could not subject any more of the poor devils in the asylum to such guinea pig treatment. Damned souls they might be, but it was not his privilege to play games with them.

"I realize that, Allen, and that's not what I'm asking. If you can administer the necessary drug, I think I'd be willing to undergo the process myself... Yes, I rather doubted your professional ethics would accommodate that, either. Let's put it this way: can you tell me, purely theoretically now, what one would do, just speculatively, if one wanted to set up an experiment like this? Let's say it's for one of my books. Maybe I won't try it myself. Maybe some animal experiments first."

"All right, Colin. I'll assume you mean that. You'd have to be crazy to try it on yourself after what happened to the Ripper. And if it's animal experiments you want, I could help you with that. Let's try to get together in a couple of weeks, shall we?"

In a day or two, true to his word, Allen had written up a rough prospectus of what chemicals might be required for a series of experiments and posted it to his friend. But of course Colin Gilman was not in the least interested in animal experiments. What he wanted to test was the effect on the human disposition if the reptile brain was stimulated, and no amount of tests on lower animals could ever tell him that.

So, list in hand, he was off to some alternative medicine people he knew in this or that far quarter of the city. London harbored a great many things in its nooks and crannies invisible to those not expressly looking for them. Over the years Colin had had reason to search out a good number of them. Just now he betook himself to a man, sort of a modern shaman, who dealt in all manner of unorthodox substances used by the AIDS underground. These wretches would try anything in hopes they might chance upon the Philosopher's Stone of a cure.

As luck would have it, most of the substances he needed were ready to hand. Feeling optimistic, Colin even hinted at his intention for the drug, only to find a keen interest on the part of his benefactor, a "doctor" Albert Phineas. The man had once been a practitioner of orthodox medicine but had lost his license over certain experiments with drugs and obscure surgical procedures. The good doctor continued his practice unofficially, circumspectly presenting himself as a dealer in exotic health food and dietary supplements. Colin had come to know him a couple of years earlier when working on an article on homeopathic medicine and faith healing. Phineas denied none of the risks that so concerned Allen Enslin, but he shared with Colin the pioneer spirit and was quite willing to assist him.

The day arrived, and Colin, sleepless all the previous night, greeted it with a mixture of anticipation and fear. He was fairly sure that, whatever happened, he would soon mourn the loss of his old self as he knew it. Even should he find himself advancing to a new evolutionary plateau, the cost might be great in terms of those

gentle emotions that made life livable. But in one way or another, he reasoned, it was a sacrifice all pioneers of science had to be willing to make. There can be no advance, no adventure, without risk.

When Dr. Phineas arrived, he announced that there would be little actually to do. The administration of the drugs would not even require sedation. Colin insisted on the application of firm wrist restraints he had secured from a nearby S-&-M shop. He didn't want to chance any repeat of the horrors of the Oakdeene experiment, no matter how unlikely they seemed. These precautions Dr. Phineas dismissed with a laugh, though in the end he humored him. He did warn, however, that there would be a danger of temporary blindness. Given the meandering circuitry of the brain, a temporary obstruction of the optic nerves was not unlikely, though this should clear up in a week or two. Even then Colin would find himself abnormally light-sensitive and should not venture outside without appropriate cover.

"Here goes, then," was all Colin could think of as he prepared to enter the stream of scientific destiny. The injection was no more daunting than donating blood. He did feel drowsy and soon fell asleep. When he woke up some hours later, his familiar time sense apparently gone, he was indeed quite blind. A small price to pay, he hoped, assuming the results would compensate him. Hearing him stir, Phineas came to his side and gently assured him that all was well. He stayed there for a few days, as it happened, feeling it his obligation to supervise his charge and see to his needs, until finally Colin announced he cared not to detain him further. Anticipating the blindness, he had for several days made a project of learning to navigate the interior of his flat, as well as the immediate neighborhood, blindfolded. He now felt sure he was able to be largely self-sufficient.

The days passed slowly. Yes, he could navigate the blocks around his flat, but reading and writing were beyond him. Colin played his entire collection of recordings two or three times until he grew sick of them. He grew mad with anticipation. At first there was relief that nothing overtly drastic had occurred. After that, he began to feel disappointment that nothing of any kind seemed to be happening except, of course, for his blindness. But then his impatience began imperceptibly to dwindle. A mood of increasing equanimity crept over him, finally something approaching impassivity.

As he grew reconciled to the waiting game, he decided to keep alert by a form of mental gymnastics. Why not attack a couple of the old windmills? The Ontological Argument of Saint Anselm, for instance. There was brain-twister that continued to exasperate professional philosophers fully a millennium after the old Archbishop of Canterbury had tossed it, like the Apple of Discord, into the philosophical tea party. That ought to keep him busy for a while!

But it didn't. Colin was at first sure that he had forgotten some turn of the argument, for it seemed so childishly simple that he was certain he must be doing the saint a disservice. But, no, that was it all right: ". . . that than which nothing greater

can be conceived."

It struck him suddenly that something had happened after all. He was able to inventory the contents of his mind and to analyze them with a clarity he had never before dreamt of. It seemed, in fact, that any direction in which he now turned the searchlight of his thought disclosed jigsaw puzzles with the hitherto-missing pieces ready to hand, Gordian knots which were as easy to unravel as a recalcitrant shoelace.

And yet he accepted all this with not the slightest hint of exultation or even excitement. This was his first signal that he had indeed paid an emotional price for his intellectual gain. Even this realization might have been expected to occasion alarm, but it was with a cool and detached curiosity that he began to contrive ways of testing his emotions. First he sought to exhume some tender scars of the past, the frustration from the old days before his recognition as a writer and thinker, when he had lived in the most makeshift of dwellings and spent his days, like the young Karl Marx, reading through as much of the British Museum Library as he could before closing time. But there was nothing there, just frozen memory, like accessing a data bank. Neither the echo of bitterness (they had called him one of the "Angry Young Men" back then) nor even nostalgia for a simpler time.

Not even lust answered his summons, as he tried to think of the women he'd bedded once he'd realized that even academics have their groupies. No remembered vision of breast or bottom titillated him in the least. No question: he had changed. He had, among other things, lost the ability to regret the loss. But then no harm done. He began to view the passions of the mammalian brain as an addiction well broken.

As the weeks passed, Colin Gilman came to relish the cool darkness as a most conducive atmosphere for quiet contemplation. But his sight did begin to return, recapitulating, he mused, the gradual dawn of light-sensitivity among his remote pre-reptilian ancestors. With the return of vision, however, came sharp pains, so he was in no hurry to open his eyes again. Finally Colin contrived a type of heavy veil through which he could just about see his way before him, though reading was still impossible. He judged that he would not need to wait much longer before making his discovery public.

And for this he thought he already had the suitable forum. He was scheduled to speak at a city auditorium to a group of business, academic, and civic leaders interested in questions of futurology: charting out the rapid impacts of new technologies and social trends. He had always found such audiences receptive to his lectures, as he was one of the few who kept his finger upon so many pulses at once. His promised topic was that of the utility of the computer in enhancing the learning ability of students, soldiers, and employees. He had been engaged to develop certain suggestions, first broached in his book *The Computer in your Skull*, to the effect that mastery of the computer would function like bio-feedback enabling the user to employ the learning systems of his own brain with increased efficiency.

Now he had, to say the least, found something of a short-cut to the same end. And there was much bigger news where that came from. Later he would be prepared to submit to whatever testing the echelons of science might require of him, but for now he would reveal himself to the same audience he always addressed: the interested layman.

His sight had improved still more when the date arranged for the lecture arrived. He did his best to get dressed up for the event, nonetheless sure that he looked a mess and must be as pale as an albino from his long seclusion. Summoning a taxicab, Colin made his way to the auditorium. The day was cold and, for him, acutely uncomfortable. He had foreseen this and located an old pair of gloves, which clothing he usually eschewed on account of their clumsiness. He did not need a set of lecture notes and could hardly have read them in any case. He intended simply to describe the series of events (skipping the unfortunate mishap at Oakdeene) and the results to which they had led.

Once arrived at the auditorium, he asked to be led to the gentleman who was to introduce him, a prominent educator at one of the city's technical institutes. Colin apologized for his peculiar appearance and requested that, given his still-painful sensitivity to light, there be no spotlight on the lectern. He would take off the heavy veil so that he might be heard, but then his tender eyes must have protection. His host readily agreed and explained to the assembled crowd as he introduced the renowned Mr. Colin Gilman.

Colin stepped hesitantly up to the podium with rather less ease than he had expected. But he got there. He grasped the edges of the podium and began to speak, thanking the audience for their kind reception, commending them on their forward-looking interest, assuring them that their evening would be an investment of time well-spent.

A silent note of tension from the audience greeted his announcement that he would be taking certain liberties with his assigned topic. But he had them on his side again when he promised them, as it were, front page news. He had started to outline his original thinking about the suppression of the reptilian brain when the trouble began. Later he guessed that the word had not gotten to one of the men in charge of power and lights in the facility. Thinking the lack of a spotlight an embarrassing error, someone must have sought to rectify it. Colin found himself in mid-sentence when the spotlight fell full force upon him. The half-blind speaker reeled from the ocular pain as if struck by a fist. The audience groaned with empathy, but this turned at once into a sea of gasps and screams as they panicked.

Colin's own lancing agony gave way to fear, as the sound of shrieking told him something had gone dreadfully wrong. Had the flash come from some electrical failure? Whatever was going on, he was absolutely vulnerable. He tried to sort out his confusion by calling out questions which no one seemed to hear or to answer: was the hall on fire? Was there a sniper? Anything might have happened. Only his new cold-blooded equanimity, rapidly returning now, saved him from bolting in

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panic like the rest. For him flight would have been as deadly as whatever threat might have descended, since he could scarcely see where he went.

But then it occurred to him that he *could* see, better than he had expected, at any rate. Though still sensitive, his eyes must have recovered a great deal of their former strength after all. Colin had timidly lingered among the shadows for too long. Now he found he could easily behold the fast-emptying auditorium -- *and the puzzling absence of any apparent threat!*

A gunman might crouch concealed in the balcony, he theorized, so he made at once for stage left, from whence he had first emerged. No one left here either! Lurching about, bumping painfully into a half-dozen shadowy obstacles, he finally tripped and fell head-on into a full-length mirror. It came free of its hanger and fell to the floor with a bang, but miraculously it did not shatter.

Colin stood puffing and gave the mirror a look. It would be the first time he had seen his familiar features in many a week. He expected to see a scabby outbreak of itchy psoriasis which had irritated him for days. But he saw something else.

In fact, he saw *someone* else, or thought he did. Staring back at him was something on the order of an iguana's head perched atop a rumpled suit of clothes. He had not the emotions to share the revulsion experienced by the crowd (he now knew its occasion). But he was numb nonetheless. His first thought, when one came, was simply to realize his eyelids had days ago stopped blinking. Up to now he had not marked it.

He looked for his discarded veil but could not locate it. It was getting dark out, the short winter days doing him a favor. He had remained self-consciously gloved, since the temperature of the place seemed too low for him, and now he pulled up his coat collar and hoped he could get back to his flat unnoticed. Calling a cab was obviously out of the question, so he decided to walk it, keeping to the back streets, no easy task with the limits on his sight. But neither did he relish encountering either unsuspecting wayfarers or the police who must soon come investigating. He took the plunge, hastening out the door and down the sidewalk.

Colin passed glowing tavern doors and red-lit brothel windows, reflecting with inhuman calm that he would have no more welcome in the havens of the once-kindred human race. He felt no sorrow at the fact, only observed it. But there was a sense of emptiness. He was now truly a loner among the common run of humanity. And he did not expect they would easily tolerate his strange company. But where to turn?

One street looked almost familiar as he neared a sidewalk church. There must be scores of these, Salvation Army storefronts and obscure Holiness sects, all over London. But he doubted there would be any welcome for such as he under any of their roofs. For here he was, the serpent of Eden in person! But someone was coming out the door, a drunk, oblivious, Colin turned away as if to avoid a blow and almost lost his footing with the surprising momentum of his own motion. Righting himself, he paused to risk a glance up at the half-familiar sign on the door.

Yes, he had visited this one some years ago while researching *The Far Reaches of Religion* for the BBC. There would be a cheaply appointed chapel within, manned by a caretaker who doubled as pastor of this tiny flock, The Church of the Ophite Gnosis. Some impulse made him enter as he effortlessly retrieved the filed-away memories of that interview long ago.

The portly, unimpressive-looking rector had assured him that his church represented a revival of the real Christianity as taught by the ancient Ophite Gnostics whose belief was that Christ was like Prometheus. He had visited Adam and Eve to bring them enlightenment against the peevish threats of Jehovah who wanted to keep all knowledge as his private preserve. "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, lest ye die? Nay, but your eyes will be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The little, pot-bellied man in his preposterous ceremonial robes had proudly shown Colin the various books of lore which supposedly proved all this, from *The Hypostasis of the Archons* to some treatise of the church father Epiphanius, to the infamous *Book of Dead Names* by the medieval heretic Martin the Gardener. At the time this sect had not impressed him more than a dozen other fringe-religions whose eccentric members believed themselves in touch with flying saucers or the ascended masters or Essenes from Lemuria. But now some inkling made him change his course and step inside.

The sounds of traffic and of loud revelry from nearby pubs and bawdy houses seemed somehow far away in here. At first he was alone. But then, perhaps drawn by the signal of some unseen electric eye, a custodian appeared from behind a beaded curtain. It was the same man, a little grayer, a little plumper, Colin thought. Also a little blinder, since the man made no move to recoil from him as the others had. Instead, embarrassingly, the little man went to his knees, gingerly doubtless on account of his arthritis, and began to mumble a prayer. Colin then realized the man was praying to *him*.

The old fellow hoisted himself back to his feet by supporting himself with the edge of one of the chairs they used for pews. "I *knew* you would come, my Lord," said the man, not venturing to meet his guest's eyes. And yet it did not seem his reluctance could be laid to fear. If anything, it was reverence.

"You remember me, do you? I'm surprised, as it's been some years. I thought I did fair by you in my book." The scene was absurd. Colin felt like Scrooge speaking to the materialized ghost of his own past, a phantom of reverie. "But how *can* you recognize me after what's happened? You needn't worry, I'm not going to harm you. You must help me, though."

"I rejoice to serve the Lord Yig, the revealer, even that Old Serpent whom men blaspheme as Satan. Let my Lord command."

"Look, my friend, I don't know what you're on about, but . . ."

"Your arrival was foretold to us by your brethren. You will soon understand if you do not now. It is mine to direct your steps."

"Direct me? Where?" He knew not how, but Colin had begun to sense a rightness

in what the man said, as if an after-effect of the experiment had been to reawaken deep and dormant memories. "I suppose direction is one thing I could use. Everything's gone topsy-turvy for me, that's for sure."

The man motioned him to silence, then drew back the curtain and opened a hidden door. He indicated Colin should go on in, and then followed immediately. "I will show you the Holy of Holies. None but our eyes may see it save on the High Day of Initiation." Now he had produced a small metallic box, baroquely inscribed, that came open with some rusty resistance. He pressed a button, and a dim blue ray shone down from a hidden place amid the hanging drapes. The light fell directly upon an asymmetrical block of basalt no more than 10 inches round at its widest diameter. It was like a distorted dice cube, and every black surface bore peculiar carved runes. After a moment's scrutiny, Colin rather half-fancied he knew the thing. He turned to the man and uttered one word:

Ixaxar.

His companion nodded.

Colin shifted his gaze again, staring off into the unilluminated recesses of the sanctum. He felt the first hint of emotion he had felt for a long time. There came a mental image of happier days among the brilliant green hills, of sunning oneself and feeling the caress of rocky bank, crystalline fountain, and grassy blanket. And then there was the longing of regret and loss after the coming of those who had shown no mercy to any not of their species. His people had been driven underground only to emerge stealthily and take sporadic revenge against their usurpers. They had been vilified as the Little People of the hills, their once great glory reduced to a story to scare infants off to bed.

For some time Colin stood transfixed, gazing again at, or into, the strange angles of the Black Stone. When his reverie was done, he knew what he had to do, where he had to go. Without further words, words which he sensed his vocal apparatus was less and less capable of forming, he strode over to the cellar staircase and found his way into a hidden opening in the basement wall. From there a newly recovered instinct led him to thread his way through a series of forgotten tunnels connecting many of the tenements and alleyways in the district.

Exiting a drainage tunnel hours later, he made for box car transit into the Welsh Hills, where he headed unerringly for certain coal shafts long ago abandoned on account of unexplained disappearances there. Beneath blind lanterns and the shells of naked bulbs strung from the ceilings, he picked his way through rotten boards and ore heaps, penetrating at last into the unknown windings that led to the deep glories of red-litten Yoth.

The London news made much of the strange disappearance of famous author Colin Gilman. Fanciful theories circulated wildly. Even the relatively sober *Times* suggested the disappearance was part of a hoax designed to heighten public interest in a new book the author must have written about flying saucers. No doubt he himself

would turn up hale and hardy, claiming to have ridden in one. The tabloids framed with lurid color shots of naked women a supposedly "inside" report that poor Gilman had met a bad end while researching another of his sex crime novels.

Allen Enslin and Dr. Phineas each wondered which report to credit, though both had inklings that something far stranger might have happened. But all such newsprint rumors only caused the old caretaker of the Church of the Ophite Gnosis to smile. It was a poor world whose wildest fancies paled next to the truth. Clutching the latest of the news editions in one hand, with the other he retrieved a crumpled note brought to him by secret means. In it he was pleased to read that one who had been known as Colin Gilman now sported in the pale currents of unguessed grottos in the serene company of souls untroubled by the degradations of hot mammal blood. Always a loner, he now rejoiced to be an outsider among those who still claimed the name and heritage of man.

The Sealed Casket

Richard F. Searight

...And it is recorded that in the Elder Time, Om Oris, mightiest of the wizards, laid crafty snare for the demon, Avaloth, and pitted dark magic against him; for Avaloth plagued the earth with a strange growth of ice and snow that crept as if alive, ever southward, and swallowed up the forests and the mountains. And the outcome of the contest with the demon is not known; but wizards of that day maintained that Avaloth, who was not easily discernible, could not be destroyed save by a great heat, the means whereof was not then known, although certain of the wizards foresaw that one day it should be. Yet, at this time the ice fields began to shrink and dwindle and finally vanished; and the earth bloomed forth afresh.

- Fragment from the Eltdown Shards

For nearly an hour Wesson Clark had been studying the sealed casket, his shrewd black eyes feasting avidly on its crudely carved metal contours. It lay before him in the pool of light from the desk lamp; the light which illumed his classic, calculating features with a pallid glow, while making a shadowy obscurity of the cavernous, book-lined study. Outside, the high March wind shrilled, and plucked with icy fingers at the cornices and gables of the old house. It gave Clark a pleasing, luxurious sense of security to relax in the overheated gloom of the upstairs study and listen to the rising moan without. Careless, slipshod old Simpkins had gone for the night, after stoking the ancient furnace to capacity; and Clark was alone in the house, as he had wished to be for this occasion.

He smiled lightly and hummed a snatch from the latest Gershwin hit, as his gaze

returned to his prize. The casket was small and compact, perhaps sixteen inches long by six or seven wide, and formed of a dull, age-tarnished metal that defied casual identification. The crude, writhing images carved into its surface offered no aid to classification: Clark failed to assign them to any known period of early art.

A gratifying legacy to a connoisseur of antiques was this ancient box. Old Martucci had never suspected, then. There had been times when Clark had wondered – and feared – as he carried on his surreptitious affair with Martucci’s youthful wife. Not that it mattered now – the sinister, old scientist, with his perverted sense of humor, was dead; and Nonna, though filled as ever with Latin fire, seemed much less fascinating, now that legal barriers were removed. Also, she was growing a bit proprietary, a little too assured. Clark knew the signs. He smiled ironically as he studied the casket. While Martucci lived, Clark had cultivated his friendship and enjoyed the conquest of Nonna at stealthy assignments, employing the greatest caution. But now there was nothing to fear. For the moment, at least, he was surfeited with Nonna’s charms; and he felt free to discard her as he saw fit, without the haunting dread of discovery and vengeance by the suspicious old archeologist. Besides, he needed freedom to reel in his new catch; one more alluring than the Italian girl had ever been, and endowed with a fortune that ran into almost mythical figures. His intentions were very serious here.

His smile deepened as he recalled the peculiar clause that formed a part of the codicil to the last testament of Martucci – the clause which was the instrument conveying the casket:

“And I do hereby bequeath to my one-time friend, Wesson Clark, the ancient coffer of Alu-Tor; and urge him only to leave the leaden seal thereon intact, as I have done for thirty years.”

Clark chuckled softly. Martucci had been a naïve fool in spite of his dubious reputation in scientific circles, where certain ruthless and unethical practices attributed to him were frowned on heavily. He’d kept the seal intact, had he? And no guessing what rare treasure of antiquity might be hidden inside! He had spent his life delving in the earth and incidentally acquiring the meager fortune (now almost dissipated) with which he had retired, while, quite possibly, real wealth waited in the casket. But then, the Italian had been a strange character – one of those rare, incomprehensible creatures who appear to place little importance on the mere possession of money. The aggrandizement of his name in scientific discoveries, the search for the forbidden in hidden occult lore, the cynical study of human nature, had seemed to mean much more to him. Certainly he had never opened the casket, for the splotch of melted lead that sealed it was black with age and bore no signs of having been tampered with.

With all the leisurely indolence of his sybaritic nature, Clark lay back and gloated over his acquisition. He scrutinized more closely the cryptic, wavering symbols, vague and spidery, which had been impressed at some remote time on the leaden seal, no doubt while the metal was still hot. They were quite unfamiliar in

that they resembled nothing he could recall having seen before; but there was something indefinably disturbing in their almost sentient lines. They brought to mind some utterly impossible *living* thing. He laughed at the absurdity of the impression.

But whatever they represented, the symbols were very old. Their primitive crudeness suggested an antiquity antedating the Phoenician alphabet, or even the Mayan inscriptions. Clark regretted his scanty knowledge of such things; for here, he half suspected, might lie a specimen of the very first primal writing; the groping pictorial attempt to transcribe thought, from which had developed the earliest known written characters. He would preserve the seal intact and have it examined by an authority. Very possibly it possessed a definite intrinsic value of its own. Martucci must have known: his knowledge of epigraphy had been profound, and it was whispered that all his developments in that field had not been turned over to science. It was even possible that he had deciphered the inscription, if inscription it were. But in the meantime Clark intended to open the thing.

Certainly he was going to open it. It was quite characteristic of Martucci that, because of some squeamish eccentricity or other, he had refrained from doing so himself. But had he really thought the new owner would use such illogical restraint? Clark chuckled again.

Still, it was odd that the Italian had never spoken of the casket, especially as he must have decided on its disposal some months before. The date of the codicil showed that. No doubt a little surprise for the "one-time friend" – but odd, just the same, for it was an object over which the failing scientist, with his wide knowledge of antiquities, and Clark with his dilettante love for them, might have had many of the discussions the archeologist seemed to enjoy.

And that was a strange wording – "one-time". It almost suggested that Martucci had suspected when he dictated the sentence. But that was impossible. The very assignment of such a rare relic was proof in itself of complete trust and good feeling. After all, the import of the words, intended for reading after the writer's death, was plain enough.

Well, there was no need for further delay. He had gloated long enough. His black eyes sparkled greedily as he picked up the heavy brass paper knife from his desk and dug tentatively at the seal. The leaden smear seemed surprisingly hard; perhaps it was some strange alloy. He pried harder, finally succeeding in inserting the knife point between the seal and the age-blackened metal of the box itself. The lead refused to bend farther; it clung tenaciously to its age-old moorings. At length Clark left it to rummage about through the house for tools. He returned with a hammer, and carefully relocked the study's only door before he sat down.

He used the knife as a wedge, and at the first blow the lead peeled neatly away, disclosing a patch of dully shimmering metal beneath. He had not expected to find that the seal covered a keyhole, and nothing of the sort was visible. Evidently the box was far too ancient for that contrivance.

His heart was pounding. He drew an anticipatory breath, and pried the knife

point under the lid. A little leverage and it was done. The cover came up. The casket was empty.

Clark was genuinely surprised. Strange that the box should be so tightly sealed when it held no contents to be guarded. This lacked plausibility.

As he stared in puzzled bewilderment at the burnished inner surface, he became aware of a faint, fetid odor creeping into his nostrils. He sniffed, his nose wrinkling in distaste. Slight though it was, the smell suggested vaguely the charnel emanation from some long-closed tomb.

Then came the cold draft.

Through the close air of the study, which was gradually becoming oppressively hot, it breathed against his face in a single icy gust, laden with a sudden augmentation of the nauseating odor of putrescence. Then it was gone, and the heated air had closed about him as if nothing had disturbed it.

Clark started up, then sank back in the chair. He frowned, staring hard at door and windows, half hidden in the shadowy gloom beyond the circle of lamplight. He knew them to be locked securely, and an uneasy disquiet stirred in his breast as his probing eyes verified the fact.

His attention was drawn back to the subtle odor of corruption which had gradually grown stronger. It permeated the room now – a dank, mephitic feter, grotesquely out of place in the quiet study. He rose slowly to his feet, alarm spreading over his features. And as he did so, the icy, noisome chill puffed again upon his face like a breeze from some glacial sepulchre. His head jerked back, and fear dawned in his eyes. Here, in a locked room on the top floor of the old house he had lived in for years, something utterly uncanny, something entirely beyond the realms of sanity, was taking place. Clark started slowly across the study toward the door, then stopped abruptly.

A faint sound had come from the shadows at the far side of the room where the heavy Sarouk rug stopped short a foot from the wall. It was an insidious, barely audible, rustling noise – such a noise as might be made by a great snake writhing along the uncarpeted strip. And it came from *between* him and the door!

Clark had prided himself, in the past, on his cold-blooded imperturbability; but his breath came quickly now, and the wild, unreasoning fear of a trapped animal flooded his mind. Whatever the nature of the Thing in the room with him – could he doubt its presence? – it was intelligently cutting off his escape. It must be watching his every movement with malignant, brooding eyes. A shudder of stark horror convulsed him at the realization.

He stood very still in the center of the study, his mind racing in frenzied, terror-driven circles. A sense of the crowding presence of some bestial, primordial depravity, of overwhelming defilement, surged with paralyzing certainty through his brain. Thoughts of escape were crowded out – the imminence of the danger routed reasoning power. And yet, through the waves of terror which beat through his consciousness, he realized that his life – yes, his very soul – was menaced by an un-

speakable cosmic malevolence.

With a tremendous effort he checked the rising, smothering hysteria and succeeded in regaining a partial control of his thoughts. His eyes pierced the gloom ahead and about him. Nothing stirred. What hideously ancient entity had been imprisoned in the casket? He could not guess, nor did he wish to know. But Martucci had known – Martucci the authority on ancient writings; the delver in hidden lore! Martucci had known everything. He had schemed – oh, so cunningly – for revenge, and this was the result. If the dead could know, how the old man must be gloating to see his crafty trap closing about his victim.

Now Clark felt cold vibrations beating upon him; vibrations of inhuman, impersonal evil. His nerves crawled and shrank as from a loathsome physical contact. He shifted uneasily, and there came the sound of a stealthy, slithering movement toward him across the rug. He backed away; backed until his shoulders bumped against the wall behind him. Still the soft noises continued, slowly drawing near. They detoured to one side, then to the other; then they were back in front of him, and much closer. His eyes searched the shadows desperately. Empty, formless, mysterious, they were; but nothing moved that his physical sight could detect. The lurking menace, its presence proclaimed by every taut nerve in his body, was still invisible. If he could trust his eyes, he was alone in the room. But he felt the close proximity of something infinitely cold and yet alive; something which was a definite physical presence, manifesting itself to him through pre-human senses, semi-atrophied by eons of disuse. Whatever it was, it was absorbing the suffocating heat of the room, actually lowering the temperature, and at a rapid rate.

Quite suddenly, the utter horror of the impossible, incredible situation broke through the dam of desperate resistance his mind had built up. Something snapped, and he laughed – a high-pitched cachinnation of rising hysteria that echoed wildly from lips drawn back in a grinning frenzy of terror. He cringed, flinging up his arms in an abject surrender to fear. A torrent of gibbering incoherency pushed the terrible laughter from his lips. The dusky room swam about him and he did not know that his knees had buckled and that he had plumped forward on them, his arms rigid before his face to ward off the approaching danger.

Again came the icy breath, rank with primeval filth, making him retch and gag with its overpowering fetor. Then he shrieked once in paralyzed despair, as slender, groping tentacles, cold as outer space, caressed his throat and body, their deathly chill striking through his clothing as if he had been naked. A vast, flabby amorphous coldness enveloped him. Repulsively soft and bulky it was, but as he struggled it gripped him with the resistless strength of chilled steel. He could feel the regularly spaced vibrations of some utterly alien, incomprehensible life – a life so frightful that he shrieked again and again as its purpose became apparent.

Then the murky room whirled about him – he had been whisked up, was staring with starting eyes at the ceiling, through which little flames were eating, while the fetid horror gradually compressed its icy folds. Sensation left him; the stench stran-

gled him. The room spun, and darkness fell crushingly.

He was falling down, down, through endless shafts of icy blackness into a bottomless quagmire of primordial slime. A vast roaring filled his ears. Monstrous phantasms leered through the bursts of flame that punctuated the rushing descent. Then all was silence and blackness and oblivion

Fanned by the high wind, the flames had rather thoroughly gutted the old house when firemen arrived. Little remained to aid the coroner in his investigation. Naturally, he discounted heavily the fantastic testimony of certain early arrivals regarding a high-pitched, agonized whistling sound which they claimed had proceeded from the upper part of the building, and the belching clouds of foul smelling smoke which had found an exit after the upper floors collapsed and the whistling stopped. Simpkins' admission that he had neglected to close the drafts of the furnace cleared up the cause of the fire; but, privately, the coroner was exceedingly puzzled by certain peculiarities that the post mortem disclosed in the charred and blackened corpse, identified by a dentist as Wesson Clark's. It was surely a matter of wonder that practically every bone in this body had been broken, as if in the embrace of some gigantic snake of the constrictor species; and it was an insoluble mystery how the veins and organs had been *drained of every drop of blood!*

The Hound
Mark Francis

Too long abused by dark, despotic dreams-
sick shut-eyed visions shaken from the pit
of my prone skull, half-conscious twilight fits
in spasming limbs, unmedicable screams-
I creep the old course without companion
through paling moonlight, grasping trees, a burst
of overfed bats, to a grave accursed-
though less so than my own sad skeleton.
Resuming shovel, lantern, amulet,
I'd make amends for all my poisoned ways:
but, elemental malice rules this place;
takes wicked cognizance; will not forget.
From out the circle of its stone-capped bed
the fanged, flesh-famished figure flaunts its head.

The Barrett Horror
Walter C. DeBill, Jr.

I.

In the void he slept alone; as the primordial dust clouds gathered he drowsed and dreamed; when the sun and the planets were formed he woke to frightful consciousness and that consciousness was Ngyr-Khorath. And the living things that walked the earth were never alone and unnoticed, for he watched them with implacable wrath. He waits and probes for weakness in the forces that guard us; where his all-destroying wholeness cannot enter comes his emissary and extension, the shadowy thing of many shapes which is 'Ymnar. And where the forces weaken, the evil of Ngyr-Khorath filters through the veil to destroy, to slay, to seize men's very minds . . .

Gualterus Vasconium

1. Excerpt from *The Truth Behind the Barrett Horror*: The first Victim

It was a tribute to the state of law and order in Barrett, Texas that Barbara Koehler and Lisa Eckhart were walking up Crockett Avenue at all. The street is narrow and poorly lit and at 1:05 A.M. it was quite deserted. From the Travis Theater, where they were employed as usherettes they could have reached Miss Eckhart's car almost as quickly by walking down brightly lit Broad Street, turning right along well-patrolled Cañon Avenue, then doubling back a hundred yards up First Street to the parking lot. But street crime is not yet common in Barrett, and the girls thought nothing of climbing a steep and blackened side street to save two minutes. A block and a half up Crockett in front of Stern's Jewelry Store, Miss Koehler stopped to re-tie the lace of her left shoe. They both disliked the high heels they were required to wear at the theater and always changed shoes before going home. The habit undoubtedly saved Miss Koehler's life and possibly Miss Eckhart's.

As Miss Koehler knelt, Miss Eckhart turned and saw the man behind her in the shadowy doorway. Afterward the newspaper accounts used the hackneyed word "crouched", but in her interview with the police she was more specific. He was squatting with his elbows on his knees. He was resting flat on his heels. She is quite certain about this point because she saw the man shift onto the balls of his feet in order to spring at Miss Koehler. He covered the full nine feet between them with one leap, landing with his fingernails on her shoulder blades and his teeth on the right side of her neck. The teeth inflicted superficial wounds, by which the police surgeon identified the assailant as an adult male of below average size. Contrary to some of the more sensational reports the teeth were in no way abnormal, and though some accounts have described the man as snarling, both Miss Koehler and Miss Eckhart agree that he made no sound.

As Barbara jumped to her feet his fingernails raked her back, making deep scratches and tearing the top of her low-cut blouse. He made no effort to grab the handbag slung over her left shoulder. She began to run west, up the hill, while Lisa ran north across the street then east toward the lights of Broad Street. The assailant followed Miss Koehler. He seemed to have trouble finding his feet; in fact the whole incident suggests clumsiness and lack of coordination. All accounts of the Barrett horror have stressed the progressive brutality and gruesomeness of the crimes, yet none has pointed out the equally obvious progression from crude brutishness to diabolically skillful butchery. Miss Koehler's escape was almost comic. She angled out between two parking meters into the street; the fiend of Barrett ran into the first meter full tilt and went sprawling onto the pavement. She doubled back down the hill after her friend. By the time they reached Broad Street and found a police car the man had disappeared.

In most large cities the abortive attack on Barbara Koehler would have attracted little notice. The police would have classified it as an attempted mugging and the newspapers would have given it at best a few lines just ahead of the sports page. But in Barrett the story was assigned to page one. After the two women were interviewed, the story was expanded to a column and a half and the Barrett Horror began.

2. Howard Grey: August 25

The 5:30 bus arrived early that day and Carl's assistant wasn't there to meet me yet, so I bought a Barrett paper and sat down to wait. The waiting room was dirty and smelled of old cigarette butts, and the paper was as interesting as the directions on a can of soup. I noticed a story about an attack on two women the night before but didn't read it, not then. I was too preoccupied with my irritation at Carl, it was so like him to insist that I come halfway across the country to help him and not even come to meet me himself. And of course there was no real Barrett Horror yet, just a trumped-up newspaper version of an attempted street robbery. When the assistant arrived he proved to be a thin pale wolf-faced youth of less than medium height, though still taller than Carl. After introducing himself as Johnny Venable he lapsed into monosyllables. He wore jeans and walked with a sort of drugstore cowboy swagger. I found him amusing because I had predicted to myself what sort of assistant Carl would have and had been dead right: Carl wasn't comfortable around tall men (my own six-two annoyed him terribly), no one with any personality could avoid clashes or tolerate his domineering for very long, and he wouldn't want anyone intelligent enough to understand the implications and hazards of what he was doing. In fact, he was so secretive that I had no clear idea what he was up to, other than that it involved proof of a real basis for the Mlandoth myths.

Johnny was silent after we got into Carl's Misty station wagon. The seedy downtown area just north of the river was small, but in rush hour traffic it still took too

long to get out it. The streets hadn't been improved much since the violent frontier times when the scattered limestone and yellow brick relics new. I didn't like Barrett, having left it in disgrace after a ruined academic career, and opined that the area had gone steadily downhill since the Texicans took it away from the Comanches and Tonkawas. It must have been beautiful before that, with the broad Colorado River winding placidly out of the hill country into the lush coastal plain. It looked better after we crossed the bridge and turned west along the river bank into an area of old tree-shaded homes on spacious grounds. But I still would have voted to give it back to the Indians, or even to the Cretaceous ichthyosaurs who swam above while the seas deposited the stone of the hills.

As the river broadened into an arm of Lake Bowie the homes grew larger and the lush yards grew into good sized estates. The road curved inland along a low bluff while the land below us on the right became a flat alluvial plain bordering the lake, thickly forested. Finally we descended through a cut in the bluff, drove about a mile through the trees to the edge of the lake and pulled up in front of a fine old two-and-a-half-story Victorian relic facing the water. Carl had certainly found the seclusion he wanted; on this side of the lake there wasn't another house in sight.

Johnny led me through the oval-paned door and deposited me in the living room to the left while he went to get Carl. I sat down in a plush armchair and saw a cloud of dust motes catch the lamplight.

"Good to see you, Howard," said Carl as he charged through the door. "Glad you could come." His short barrel-chested figure and pop-eyed look had a way of dominating a room. He was twenty-eight and looked younger with his hair down over his collar. "I suppose you haven't eaten?"

"No, but that can wait. What's this project I've come seven hundred miles to assist you with?"

"As you will. Have some coffee, anyway." It was unlike him to be solicitous of guests; he was amusing himself by teasing my curiosity. The project must be really good.

"Coffee will be fine, thanks. Black." I tried not to give him any satisfaction. While he was out of the room a tall girl with stringy blond hair and a tie-dyed shift wandered into the room and murmured "Hello". Carl reappeared with the coffee and introduced her as Cindy Blankenship. She had vacant blue eyes and a full figure, going soft but not fat yet.

"She's a telepathic sensitive. Johnny's an electrician." He mused, hoping I would ask the obvious question, then went on. "I was using mechanical hypnosis to enhance extrasensory faculties. At first I used simple rotating discs with geometrical patterns on them. Then I added a strobe light. Never a trance state, just strong suggestion while fully conscious. I soon found that I could get impressive scores identifying symbols on cards, good enough to rule out luck anyway. I had rented a house by a small college in West Texas and hired a series of students to help me test myself, and of course I tested them too. That's how I discovered Cindy.

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“Her first tests were amazing, nearly eighty per cent correct in tests where random chance would account for only twenty. After a while she dropped down to about forty, probably from the boredom of repetition. But I could raise her scores again temporarily by changing details of the routine to put some novelty in them without altering the twenty per cent random probability.

“In the course of devising minor novelties I discovered that some figures on the rotating wheel got much better results than others. Symmetrical figures worked best, especially with slow rotation. A basic four-point symmetry seemed to be important. I also found that the frequency of the strobe light was important and guessed that synchronizing the light with the subject’s brain waves might prove interesting.

“The breakthrough came when I used a simplified version of an ancient Indian mandala, a symbol of mystical completeness. The first day she scored one hundred per cent, even reporting details of the appearance of the cards accurately. I had been building a device to deal the cards mechanically so that she could call them before I saw them and tested it for the first time that day; she couldn’t call the cards unless I saw them. It was telepathy rather than ESP.

“The next day was a crashing disappointment. She began with some mediocre scores, complaining of a vague feeling of uneasiness and apprehension. She mentioned a sort of blue-green mist which seemed to interpose itself between her mind and the cards. Eventually her scores dropped to random chance. I tried the tests myself; I saw the same mist and felt the same creepy sensation.

“At that point something rang a bell in my memory. I recalled something from the *Chronicles of Thrang* about the use of moving symbols and lights for magical purposes. I had a Xerox copy of Braithwaite’s partial translation with me and soon found what I was after. It was a technique obscure even to the wizards of ancient Ngarathoe who had written that portion of the *Chronicles*, a method of unknown origin which had been tried only by a few ill-regarded men of those eon-distant times. It involved a ritual with a large complex design on a rotating table, a converted potter’s wheel no doubt, which was moved in a peculiar rhythm. There were colored candles placed at certain points of the design, and it was necessary to keep them in a flickering condition; the rate of the flickering was said to be of critical importance. It all fitted in beautifully with what I was doing.

“But the exciting thing was the purpose of the ritual. The object was communication with a being not of this earth. I know you’re familiar with the Mlandoth myth cycle, Howard. You know of Ngyr-Khorath, the evil non-material entity that inhabited this region of space before the solar system was formed and hated all matter and life. Consciousness was not its natural state, however, and after the coming of the planets it was slow to awaken. By the time Earth life had evolved sufficiently to arouse it to action, the creature known as Paighon had come from the great galaxy in Andromeda and established itself deep within the earth. Paighon was able to keep Ngyr-Khorath at bay and protect the planets and the evolving life forms of

earth. But Ngyr-Khorath lurks eternally in the void, seeking to penetrate the mysterious forces controlled by Paighon and his spawn.

“Unable to break in by main force, he resorted to subversion, contacting aberrant individuals on earth and persuading them to work for his end. Direct communication was difficult and hazardous owing to the alien nature of Ngyr-Khorath’s consciousness and life force, but from time to time it was achieved.”

My eyebrows went up.

“I thought direct contact was supposed to be impossible,” I said, “and the attempt extremely dangerous. I know von Könnenberg said so in his *Uralte Schrecken*.”

“So he did, and so do most of the more recent works that touch on the Mlandoth cycle. But they’re just parroting old legends. The oldest source, the *Chronicles*, says clearly that it was done.” He was very deliberate and consciously relaxed, his bright button eyes level and steady like a chess master making a decisive move. He had known that this would be the crux, inducing me to accept the risk of exposing a human mind to an awesomely potent alien sentience. “Dangerous, yes, but possible,” he went on. “That’s where you come in, Howard. We are near the greatest breakthrough in the history of human knowledge. There’s no doubt that we can do it. And will. We have the mandala the Ngarathans used. We aren’t certain of the pattern of motion, but we’re experimenting and getting close; and Johnny’s built a device to synchronize both the lights and the mandala movement with the subject’s brainwaves, something the Ngarathans could never have managed. But the passage in the *Chronicles* that discusses the details, and the results and dangers, isn’t available in translation. They have a copy of the original here at the university, and we need you to translate it. Or we continue to work in the dark, and risk the consequences.”

Checkmate; I almost laughed. He knew how much a brilliant success in Barrett would mean to me, and he had crafted the perfect appeal to reckless curiosity, caution and my love of elder lore.

“Count me in,” I said. “Where do I start?”

“You might want to go over the material I’ve collected on Ngyr-Khorath in English, it’s all upstairs. I think I have just about everything that’s been translated. It will give you something to do while Johnny gets the equipment set up for the test run tonight. If the brain wave synchronization works, we can program the motion and alter the mandala to correspond to anything new that you come up with, and I’d like for you to see what we’ve done before you start translating. That way you’ll have a better idea what to look for. But first let’s have some food.”

The food turned out to be cold sandwiches and canned soup prepared by Cindy. I tried not to imagine the condition of the kitchen, she didn’t look like the fastidious type. While we ate, Carl monopolized the conversation with an ostentatious technical harangue with Johnny, who replied with his usual monosyllables; I suppose he didn’t want to give me a chance to bring up the subject of hazards. I wolfed down

the food as quickly as I could and followed Carl's directions to the upstairs bedroom that had been prepared for me. The reading material he had gathered on Ngyr-Khorath was arranged neatly on a table by the window.

I skipped all of the modern secondary sources on mythology and the occult. I was familiar with most of them and they contained only rehashes of the material in von Könnenberg. His *Uralte Schrecken* was there in the 1903 English version, but Carl had also obtained a priceless copy of the 1832 German original, which he couldn't read. I picked up the latter.

Through the ponderous Teutonic sentences I followed the primordial horror of the thing of neither matter nor energy as we know them, a vortex of primal life force itself, one of an inconceivable number born of the struggle or interaction between Mlandoth and the Cosmic Mother at the beginning of time. Alone it slept in darkness and empty space until the sun and the Earth coalesced. The new presence of concentrated matter was an irritant, but the thing had been slow to wake. By the time it was sufficiently aroused to react a life form potent enough to hold it at bay had settled within the now cooling Earth. After the Earth's crust hardened, intelligent space-wandering races came to colonize the new world and the telepathic babble of conscious thought intensified his irritation to cosmic rage.

It was unclear whether domination and control were satisfactory substitutes for destruction of the intruding life, or whether they were intended as preliminaries to ultimate annihilation. In any event Ngyr-Khorath began to make contact with the races inhabiting the Earth and attempted to recruit them to serve his ends. Direct contact, whether physical or telepathic, proved unworkable, resulting in physical or at least psychic destruction. The life force of Ngyr-Khorath was too destructive, his consciousness too hideously alien. Thus he created a sort of organ or projection or fragment of himself in the image of the chemical life forms typical of Earthlike planets throughout the universe, the entity known in elder lore as 'Ymnar.

'Ymnar appeared to earthly creatures in a form similar to their own, though capable of changing his shape to resemble almost anything. This latter ability caused von Könnenberg, and others before him, to speculate that 'Ymnar's material form might be merely illusion. The mind of 'Ymnar was sufficiently Earth-like to employ speech and other methods of symbolic communication, thus insulating the Earth-creatures from the maelstrom of Ngyr-Khorath's sentience. By promising power, knowledge or whatever a race or creature most craved, or by subtly stirring powerful emotions of awe, fear or megalomaniacal lust he drew individuals and even entire races into the service of Ngyr-Khorath. Just before the evolution of life native to Earth, he had succeeded in controlling life upon the surface through an oceanic race called the Rloedha, who succeeded in destroying or driving off all other races present at that time.

But the Rloedhan race eventually proved to be an inadequate tool. Von Könnenberg and his predecessors didn't have the scientific knowledge to describe what happened clearly, but I guessed that the Rloedha were dependent on the complex

organic substances which theoretically existed in the oceans before the evolution of native Earth life. These substances were, in fact, the material from which Earth life evolved, but once terrestrial organisms began to reproduce, they multiplied and scavenged all organic substances present in the seas. The terrestrial microorganisms mutated and developed the ability to synthesize what they needed from mineral substances. The complex Rloedha could not. They became dormant or died, though there have been hints that they could revive under certain circumstances.

As the native life of Earth grew complex and sentient, 'Ymnar attempted to corrupt it. But von Könnenberg's accounts of this were unreliable, being based on faulty translations of ancient human texts. Fortunately Carl had a copy of Braithwaite's excellent unpublished translation of the *Texts of Mloeng*. I didn't get to read in it that night, because just then Johnny knocked and announced that the equipment was ready for a test. His eyes were more alive than before and he had a sly half smile as though at some private joke; I found out this was his standard expression when he had done something clever with the equipment.

While I was reading I had heard sounds in the room below me, so I wasn't surprised when he led me there. It was a room about twenty feet square, papered in a dark old-fashioned pattern and fitted with heavy black curtains, even in the only window overlooking the lake. The only pieces of furniture were four chairs, the spindly kind with padded seats and curved armrests, spaced evenly around the wheel in the center. Carl and Cindy were sitting in two adjacent chairs talking in low voices and ignored me at first, while Johnny fiddled with the knobs on a rack of heavy electrical parts next to the empty chair to Cindy's left. She was worried about the green mist with its feeling of mounting terror and Carl was reassuring her, trying to keep her calm.

The wheel was a wooden disc three feet wide, lying flat like a table. There were electrical cords running from under it to Johnny's apparatus. It was painted black with a design in white, in general outline a curved swastika like two s's crossed, but formed of much intertwining filigree. Within each curved arm was a different letter of the Ngarathan alphabet. I thought this odd because the Ngarathans generally used older prehuman glyphs in their ritual magic. Set in the center of each letter and passing through to the underside of the wheel was a black tube surmounted by a small colored bulb, red, green, blue and yellow at the four arms of the design.

After a few minutes Johnny declared the apparatus ready and Carl placed a narrow band around Cindy's head. To it were attached two small electrodes which pressed against her temples and a bundle of very thin wires which hung down over the back of her chair and ran over to the equipment rack. Johnny sat down in the chair next to the rack where he could reach the knobs. Carl asked me to turn out the overhead light at the switch by the door. After an instant of darkness the small colored bulbs on the mandala came on with a steady glow. Carl got up and took the chair opposite Cindy, leaving me the chair to her right. He explained that formerly, with only three people present, he had sat next to her for symmetry, but with four

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he preferred to be able to watch her face without turning his head.

He told everyone to relax and watch the lights; we were to clear our minds and think of nothing else. Cindy would try to describe her sensations as well as she could without disturbing her concentration; otherwise only Carl would speak, giving Johnny instructions if necessary and questioning Cindy. I thought he sounded pompous. I was staring fixedly at the red light in front of me and had lost track of what he was saying when I heard the click of a toggle switch and the lights began to flicker; another click and they began to move.

They moved in a bizarre compound pattern, moving back and forth with an asymmetrical rhythm, gradually drifting around clockwise. I found my eyes had a tendency to follow the red bulb around. We watched in silence for what seemed like hours before I first saw the green mist. Though awareness came suddenly, I had the feeling it had grown gradually in my mind. It reminded me more than anything else of the retinal images that persist after looking at a bright light, except that it didn't move with my eyes. With it came a feeling of profound dread, welling up in me like a wave of nausea; at the time I thought this might be imaginary, brought on by Carl's prior description. The color was very intense and lucid, a deep blue-green. It was in the mind, overlaying the scene before me and when I concentrated on it the room vanished momentarily. It grew more vivid when I stared at the red light, most intense when the red light was near me. It also seemed to fade in and out as the rate of flickering varied slightly, presumably getting stronger when Cindy's brain wave frequency was near my own. I had been aware of it for about five minutes when Cindy began to speak of it.

She was terrified and rather incoherent, but it was clear that we were seeing the same thing. The patch of color was roughly circular with ill-defined edges and had grown until it filled the whole field of mental view. Both Cindy and I saw detail in it near the end, faint dark markings and tiny bright specks with an impression of swirling motion. Carl said later that he did not see this, though the circle of green was plain. Johnny never saw any of it.

I saw the red spot in the center before Cindy did. At first I wasn't sure of it. I thought it might be a persistent retinal image of the red bulb. Carl asked Cindy if there was any sense of direction associated with the cloud and she said it seemed to be coming from her right; about that time she became almost hysterical and raved of an "eye of flame" rushing toward her. Carl was trying to calm her when the lights went out. Johnny said "damn", followed by a steady stream of equally unimaginative obscenity as he moved to the overhead light switch and turned to check out the equipment.

Carl was trying to get Cindy calmed down and apparently didn't think it wise to question her then about what she had seen. I had a headache and could see that there would be no more tests that night, so after being ignored for fifteen minutes I slipped out the door and went up to bed.

II.

But while there are many good passes through these mountains travelers usually follow the river around them, though it is a week's journey longer, because of the terrible men who dwell there, who are called the Katheroi. These men were once as Greeks, but fell under the spell of a strange god of the sky whom they call Gir-Chorath. It is said that they call upon him with strange rites, and that when the stars are right his spirit comes down upon them and they become as savages and even as wild beasts and know not their own souls . . .

The Lost Book of Herodotus

1. The Second Victim

The sun was not quite above the horizon as Juan Morales walked to work along River Street at 6:00 A.M. on August 26. Though there was a light mist from the river, he could see clearly as far as the bridge ahead and to his left. The maze of warehouses, rail spurs and alleys on his right between River Street and Canon Avenue was not noted for neatness, and a large dark object of indeterminate shape on that side of the street would not have attracted his attention. But the area on his left between the street and the water was maintained as a public park with well-cropped grass and a scattering of small trees, and the object was quite noticeable. Still, he would probably not have bothered to investigate it if he had not been early for work at the Cunningham Furniture Warehouse. He stopped, lit a cigarette and walked down the grassy embankment.

He had not recognized the shape of the object because the body of Jeannette Hagerty lay on its side facing away toward the river with the knees drawn up in front, and her head had been smashed almost flat. As the cigarette dropped from his nerveless fingers and he stepped back, he was unaware that his left heel, as the subsequent police investigation showed, kicked the murder weapon; the blood-clotted enigma which makes the case one of the most bizarre in the annals of crime. It was a flint hand-axe of Middle Acheulean pattern, a weapon common a quarter of a million years ago.

It is a sinister thing. Some of the more optimistic experts believe that the hand-axe was an innocuous general-purpose tool, but one cannot but suspect that in the dawn of man it was often used for exactly the sort of operation performed on Miss Hagerty.

The Barrett specimen is a flat piece of flint, an inch thick, five inches long, in profile shaped like a rather pointed egg. Viewed edge-on the sharp cutting edges are curved in an S-twist, a characteristic of the Middle Acheulean style. It had been fashioned with great skill using what archaeologists call the cylinder hammer technique, in which thin flakes are struck off with a round object of wood or bone. Stripping off the weathered outer surface had exposed the unweathered inner part of the

flint, leading a geologist from the university to conclude that it had been shaped within a day of the murder; perhaps only hours before.

The police did not accept blindly the theory of an irrational murder by a complete stranger. They explored Jeannette's personal background meticulously for motives. She was twenty years old, a short girl with auburn hair and a well-padded but attractive figure. She had come to Barrett two years earlier as a university student, dropping out after two semesters. She had remained in Barrett, circulating in the "hippy" community and holding a series of waitress jobs. The Barrett police, who are recruited primarily from the rural "redneck" class, had a field day harassing the various "longhairs" she had known, without turning up anything of interest. The night of the murder she had been at "Armadillo Heaven", a rock club with a light show and no liquor license, There had been an argument with her current boyfriend (subsequently cleared by a polygraph test) and she had left alone at 1:15 A.M.

The most direct route from "Armadillo Heaven" to her seedy one-room apartment ran along Cañon Avenue. It is hardly a cheerful street in the small hours, but reasonably well lit and certainly more inviting than the blackened warehouse district which lay on her right. There is no evidence to indicate why she turned down some gloomy side street and headed for the river. It is unlikely that she was lured by curiosity; anything unusual in the shadows would probably have scared her off. And to chase her that way her pursuer would have had to come from her left, exposing himself to the lights of Cañon Avenue. Possibly she simply decided to cut over for a walk along the river.

By the time she was halfway to River Street she was running. The testimony of Ernest Freeman has been largely discounted; he admits that he was sleeping off a half gallon of wine in an alley that night, and that he only half roused from a drunken stupor. But his account is consistent with the known facts. He saw a woman running through the murk toward the river. He says she made no sound. I find this credible because she knew there was little chance of summoning help in this neighborhood, and she needed all of her breath; she was running for her life. Freeman saw the thing behind her as a moving shadow, sometimes running erect, sometimes in a crouching lope, at times apparently descending on all fours, freeman sat against a wall, sweating and wandering in the dark for a while before passing out again. And on the grassy river bank Jeannette Hagerty died, horribly.

The police formed no conclusions about the killer's route of escape. He had to have been drenched with blood and it is hard to believe that he could have been behaving normally immediately after the bloody debacle. Yet the warehouse quarter is bounded on three sides by wide, well-lit streets where cars and pedestrians pass every few minutes throughout the night. It is of course *possible* that he escaped this way, but it is not likely. The police first assumed that he must have remained in the district or on the fringes of it and searched literally every inch. They found nothing suspicious. In particular they found no bloodstains; not a single one. I think this makes it almost certain that he never even crossed River Street.

A few hundred yards west of where Jeannette Hagerty died is the main bridge across the river. There is a pedestrian walk across it; a blood-soaked maniac would surely have been seen crossing it, but he could have come from that way before the murder. And he could have swam back. On the south bank opposite the park is a wide divided road lit by vapor lamps. But west of the bridge is an older residential area where the bank is quite dark, and there are no obstacles to a man making his way along it. It is unfortunate that the police never examined the south bank of the river.

2. Interlude: A Half-Awakening

. . . a dream, a nightmare, so clear, yet swiftly fading . . . must hold it, hold the dream . . . fading . . . won't remember . . .

3. Howard Grey, August 26

It was almost noon when I woke up. I went to the window and stood looking out over the lake, waiting for the fog to clear out of my brain. I felt washed out, fatigued by the long trip (I can never sleep on a bus) and the high-tension excitement of the night before. I dressed and went down to the kitchen, which was even worse than I expected. I settled for toast and coffee.

Afterwards I found Johnny in the mandala room working on the electrical apparatus. He said Carl was out buying parts. The stupid smirk he wore told me he had found the trouble and we would be able to test again that night. There was no sign of Cindy; later Carl told me she never got up before two in the afternoon.

I was on my third cup of coffee when Carl showed up. He looked more excited and smug than ever. After carrying some cartons in to Johnny, he cornered me with an incomprehensible explanation of the problem with the equipment. I doubt if he understood what he was saying much better than I did; my mind kept wandering. I am not normally an imaginative person but somehow all the bustle and keen excitement seemed far away and hollow; it was like watching people playing a game on a ship about to strike an iceberg. I broke away and went upstairs to tackle the books again.

I picked up the *Texts of Mloeng*. Though scorned by the professional scholars of the academic community, the work has been well-authenticated by more open-minded investigators. Mloeng was a realm in what is now Asia Minor, populated by men of the Neanderthal race who called themselves the Wafakhar. Mloeng was the name given it by its destroyers, the Ngarathans; its own people had no name for the nation.

With knowledge obtained from 'Ymnar, they built a civilization which was supreme in its time. They seem to have been a naturally unambitious and unaggressive people, and 'Ymnar was unable to induce the race as a whole to use the magical

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technology he gave them against other Earth life or against Paighon and his subterranean spawn. Knowledge and contact with 'Ymnar were rigorously limited to a small hierarchy of sorcerer-priests.

This situation led a few abnormally ambitious individuals outside the hierarchy to attempt to communicate directly with Ngyr-Khorath. Quite possibly 'Ymnar instigated this for his own obscure reasons, connected with his dissatisfaction with the unambitious hierarchs. The accounts of these attempts were disappointingly sketchy, but the priests of Mloeng seemed to assume that controlled communication was indeed possible and that, if successful, would lead to great and dangerous power. But it was never successfully achieved; those who attempted it generally went mad. One aspirant is said to have been consumed with supernatural flame.

The rigid centralization of power and knowledge, concentrated in the hands of a small priesthood eventually led to the Wafakhar's downfall. Shortly after the last ice age, Mloeng was attacked by a less advanced non-Neanderthal people from the east. The barbaric ancestors of the Ngarathans, known in the *Texts* as the Naked Scourge, were at first routed by eerie forces which they personified as gods and demons, but they soon learned that they could easily defeat the Wafakhar in battle as long as they avoided a direct confrontation with a high priest.

In a millennium-long war of attrition, recorded with great pathos in the *Texts*, the great Wafakhar empire eroded and shrank to the very walls of Belegyr, its capital city. The *Texts of Mloeng* end at that point, for of the Wafakhar, none survived to tell of the city's fall.

When the Ngarathans became civilized enough to keep historical records, they added their accounts to a composite work known as the *Chronicles of Thrang*, whose earliest portions came down from fabulous prehuman antiquity. The massive text is extant in the Ngarathan language, but no complete translation has ever been made into a modern tongue. Carl didn't have a copy but I had seen the chapters dealing with earliest Ngarathan history, and I knew that the doom of Belegyr was mentioned but not described. That chapter consists of oral traditions written down centuries after the events, but even that is not enough to explain its vagueness; evidently the end of Belegyr was too horrible even for the bloodthirsty Ngarathans. The one thing that is certain is that Belegyr was destroyed from within. Possibly 'Ymnar turned against the Wafakhar in favor of more promising pupils.

Eventually the Ngarathans learned much about the gods of Mlandoth from the *Texts of Mloeng* and the prehuman portions of the *Chronicles of Thrang*, but while individuals often dealt with 'Ymnar and learned much from him, he never succeeded in bringing the whole of Ngarathoe under his sway. Throughout its long and turbulent history political power and organization above the city-state level remained militaristic rather than theocratic and while the constantly warring nobles, kings and emperors courted the powerful wizards as allies, no wizard ever controlled any large group of people.

The wizards for their part never developed any scientific understanding of the

powers derived from ancient wisdom and unholy intercourse with things from the void, and never tried to reduce their potent resources to techniques usable by other than advanced mystical adepts. If they had, the subsequent history of the planet might have been radically different; a Ngarathoe united in the service of Ngyr-Khorath could well have been the terminal chapter.

I knew most of this from previous reading; all Carl had of the voluminous *Chronicles* was a Xerox copy of a fragment typed in English. I don't know who translated it, but it wasn't Braithwaite, though he was known to have been working on a translation of the *Chronicles* when he was murdered in New England, because the text had been rendered into rather awkward English and Braithwaite would never have done that. There were also some grammatical twists that had an un-Ngarathan look even in translation, and made me suspect faulty interpretation. I guessed Carl had been hoaxed into paying an exorbitant price for an amateurish piece of work.

This excerpt was much more explicit about the phenomenon of contact than the *Texts* had been. After the fall of Belegyr the tribal wise men of the Ngarathans captured and learned to read the *Texts of Mloeng* and also obtained, from some unknown source, the already existing portions of the *Chronicles of Thrang*. Within a few generations the traditional sages became powerful wizards, vying for supremacy in occult power. 'Ymnar was present and furtively active, but the wizards of Ngarathoe were aware of his destructive goals and dealt with him cautiously; for his part 'Ymnar cunningly limited the power and knowledge he passed on. Bargaining with 'Ymnar came to be known as tricky and dangerous business; it may have been the ultimate source of our own folklore of "deals with the devil".

Thus 'Ymnar never achieved the power he sought and no wizard was ever entirely satisfied with the knowledge and power he obtained. A few of the most ambitious ones seized upon the legend or rumor that direct contact with Ngyr-Khorath could infuse one with miraculous power. There was a method handed down from Mloeng involving an alkaloidal herb, but this led only to hideous death. Later however another method began to spread slowly among the secretive sorcerers, leaving a trail of terror and madness among those who dared to attempt it; the method of the *dlith pygon* or wheel of flame.

The *Chronicles of Thrang* recounted many tales of these attempts. Some aspirants simply went raving mad, babbling of a menacing blood-red eye; some were found dead with looks of monstrous fear frozen on their features; a few perished in flame (not surprising if they wore loose robes near candles) and Ngaph the Sinister was found in his tower in Balthon Throl with his eyes and brain burned away. But apparently a few had made some sort of contact and remained alive and sane, at least in a relative sense. Of these the scribes of Ngarathoe had written with horror; they gave no details, but it was clear that they had become a menace and been destroyed, usually assassinated by servants or close colleagues. Oenokh the Star-Mad "was set upon in the night by Tliretha his mistress and murdered, his body torn limb from limb and left to the jackals."

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However, I was suspicious of the entire passage discussing these attempts; it intermittently lapsed into language much smoother than most of the rendition as though the translator had made deletions and improvised to provide continuity.

Carl's useful resources pretty well ended there. It was still early in the afternoon, so I decided to have a go at the university library. Carl loaned me the key to the station wagon. I took an attaché case full of writing materials and stopped off for a sandwich along the way. The former proved optimistic and the latter providential; the Texas educational establishment wasn't going to yield up its treasures in an hour.

The campus was a hodge-podge of concrete boxes, each in a different "style" and jammed together into a sort of intellectual slum. The students too were polyglot, scruffy hippies beside fanatic-looking engineers with calculators hanging from their belts, well on their way to their first ulcer. There was no unified personality to the place, no tradition, probably no coherent policy or control. The thought of their formidable collection of occult and antediluvian volumes, windows on lost eons and keys to outer forces, made me think of a hydrogen bomb in the hands of savages.

I began in the tower building, a twenty-five-story dungeon topped by a ridiculous pseudo-classical thing which, it turned out, contained an out-of-tune carillon. The main library was there and a card file reassured me that one of the seven existing copies of the *Chronicles of Thrang* was there. It and the other two million books were, however, defended by an effeminate young man with a nasal voice who briefed me on the special problems of non-student non-Texas-resident scholars who wished access to it. I visited five buildings, spent three hours in anterooms waiting for interviews with various undesirables, told an ingenious variety of lies, filled out thirteen forms and posted over ninety dollars in deposits before I got back to him. He had one last bureaucratic quibble; I was grimly pursuing the most awesome book in existence, to use its ancient knowledge for an experiment which could lead to hideous disaster or the greatest revelation in several millennia, and this limp-wristed dolt was babbling about a "Building-Use Fee". I was considering throttling him when he finally gave in. I could see the book. Tomorrow. The library was closing for the day. I had to laugh; Carl's weird household was beginning to seem a haven of sanity.

Back at the house I opened the oval-paned door and was confronted with a reek of burning insulation. In the mandala room Johnny was no longer smirking, he was perspiring and his eyes were bulging as he frantically switched wires and prodded things with the probes of a little meter. Carl was in a state of righteous indignation and started simultaneously lecturing me on the perfidy of electrical parts dealers, one of whom had given him the wrong transformer or a defective one, and giving technical advice, which just made Johnny's eyes bulge more.

I retreated to the kitchen and made a sandwich. There was a newspaper on the table: I suppose Carl had picked it up. The death of Jeannette Hagerty was all over the front page. While I ate and read in the living room Cindy wandered in and

asked if I wanted to go swimming. I started to demur for lack of a suit but I remembered a pair of walking shorts in my suitcase and it had been miserably hot all day. After I changed she led the way to a pretty little cove a few hundred yards down the shoreline. When she took off her robe it turned out she didn't believe in suits. I was embarrassed at my own inhibition.

The lake water was just cool enough to feel better than the summer air and I floated and did lazy breast strokes. The cove was a semicircle in a little limestone outcrop detached from the rein cliffs by the road. There were nodules of gray flint in the tan walls of the cove and a scattering of black fragments where one of them had been smashed.

After a while we both sent ashore and stretched out on a flat shelf of rock there to dry out. I lay facing out across the lake looking at the twinkling lights of the houseboats and apartment houses along the far shore, mainly to avoid embarrassing myself by staring at Cindy. It was 8:30 and getting dark and we soon went in. I had a headache, probably sinus this time from the murky lake water. I could hear Johnny and Carl tinkering with the equipment in the mandala room, and judged from the tones of their voices that they weren't making much progress, so I went upstairs and to bed.

III.

1. The Third Victim

The afternoon paper for August 26 carried a very detailed account of the Hagerty murder. It caused a great stir in town, many chain bolts were purchased and quite a bit of pistol ammunition, letters were written to the editor of the paper and to the chief of police. And the downtown area was absolutely deserted on the night of August 26-27. But there was no hysteria, as yet no one suspected that most terrifying of all criminals, the psychotic who kills at random till he is stopped.

While the downtown area was empty except for an unusual number of patrol cars there was no effect at all on the region west of it. There, along where a steep bill rose from the edge of the lake, the area was heavily populated, brightly lit and often very busy at all hours of the day and night. This was an area where most of the old homes had been bought out long ago. There were now modern apartment buildings, big old houses converted into rentals and a few houses owned by the very wealthy who could afford to live both right on the water and practically downtown. In past times the residences had been built all the way down to the river and many houses stood partly on pilings extending out over the water. The more picturesque of these had survived and been renovated. One of them was owned by a prominent state senator and throughout that summer it was inhabited by his daughter and three friends. It was Friday night and they were having a party.

Houses of that vintage are much sought after these days because they were de-

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signed to be comfortable without air conditioning. The senator's house was fitted with window units but they were not in use that night; all windows and doors were open to let in the night air. It was the only house built entirely on stilts above the water and had to be reached by a fifty foot walkway. It painted dark green and flanked on both sides by private marinas. The dark color may have been important to the occurrence that night, as we shall see.

The house was a small specimen, high and narrow, from the turn of the century when gingerbread and long covered porches were fashionable. This one had a porch running around three sides of the ground floor, one running the width of the second floor lake side and three smaller unconnected balconies on the dormered third floor where the murder took place.

It was a very lively party of wealthy students from the fraternity-sorority set and the first floor of the building was crowded and brightly lit, including the first floor porch, from in the evening on. Guests swam in the water off the house, in a few cases fully clothed. Not far away the lake bottom dropped off rapidly, but it was only six feet deep around the house. The second floor, reached by a staircase in the center of the house, contained the only bathroom and several spare bedrooms which were used for coats, and perhaps romance, that night. There was no constant crowd on the second floor but there was constant traffic up and down the stairs. It is absolutely impossible that anyone not a member of the party could have passed that way unnoticed. The third floor was all bedrooms; the bedroom on the northeast corner, facing the shore and one marina, was used by Mary Ann Morse, who was destined to be the third victim of the fiend of Barrett.

By a little after twelve o'clock Mary Ann had overindulged in frozen Daiquiris and had gone up to her room to lay down. About 1:30 A.M. she was seen coming out into the hall and heading for the bathroom. By 4 A.M. twenty-one-year-old Rodney Weinberger had had enough of the party and went up to the second floor, where he had left his sport coat earlier. The party had quieted down to isolated and desultory conversations and he heard the ceiling creak above him in Mary Ann's room. He glanced upward. There was a spreading stain on the paper on the ceiling, dark red. He immediately thought of red wine.

There had been a lot of it at the party. But the thing was still somehow disturbing. He went quietly out into the hall; he heard the floor creak again. He went upstairs to see if Mary Ann was sick.

He saw no one on the stairs or in the third floor hallway. There was a light on in Mary Ann's room and the door was ajar. He looked in and saw what lay on the bed, then rushed down the hall to the screen door which opened onto the small balcony overlooking the water. He was certain that the screen door was unlatched at that time. When he leaned over the rail of the balcony, very, very sick, he says he saw nothing in the water below. But remember that it was very dark, except for bright spots where the lights from the house and the other buildings illuminated the water. As soon as he was able to control his stomach he went back down stairs and called

the police.

The remains of Mary Ann Morse lay face up on the bed. The throat had been cut and the coroner considered this to be the cause of death. It must have happened very quickly, because no one heard a scream. The abdomen had been partly opened and most of the organs of the abdominal cavity carefully removed. Certain organs were missing. The murder weapon lay on the bed beside the victim's right leg, half in a pool of clotted blood. It was a carefully made flint knife with a straight sharp edge on one side, and a deliberately flattened surface on the other, by which finger pressure could be exerted comfortably. It was only about three inches long. It was not polished but it had been very carefully chipped into shape and was still quite sharp, even after the sustained use that night.

The blood spot had dripped down onto the floor after the bed itself had become soaked. The dissection must have taken some time. Is it possible that Mary Ann was still alive at the time Rodney heard the floor creak from below? There were people standing near the stairs on the second floor at the time Rodney went up, and it is also impossible that anyone came back down by this route. The creaking floor was undoubtedly the movement of the murderer. It is quite certain that he escaped from the building in the few seconds between the time Rodney heard the creaking and the time he got to the top of the stairs. Later the comings and goings of all of the guests at the party were fully accounted for. The unofficial police opinion was that one of them was the murderer because they cannot believe that anyone could get in and out of the house unseen. However, it is inconceivable that the murderer could avoid being splashed with blood from head to toe, and it is also inconceivable that anyone could have descended the stairs in that condition without being noticed. There were no bathrooms on the third floor, and no way for anyone to get clean even if there were time. There was, however, a drainpipe from the rain gutter which rises up the side of the building next to the third floor balcony, the only one which the first floor porch does not reach.

This writer has seen it. It is not particularly strong, but experiments show that it is possible for a man to climb such a pipe if he does it slowly, carefully and smoothly with no sudden or jerky movements, and with no force exerted away from the wall. The pipe goes directly down to within a foot of where the water level was that night, and rises up the wall between the window to Mary Ann's room on the right and the balcony on the left. The window screen was latched when the police arrived. In addition there were no tracks or blood at the window. The balcony passes about five feet from the drain pipe. It would not be too difficult for a reasonably athletic person to get from the pipe to the balcony but I believe it would take the strength of a madman to climb the thing silently in the dark.

But no one could have descended the pipe between the time Rodney heard the floor creak above him in Mary Ann's room and the time he went out on the balcony. He would surely have seen anyone climbing down at that time. The police reject the idea that anyone escaped this way on the grounds that if he had jumped, the splash

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would have been too noisy and would have been heard and if he had dived into six feet of water he would have broken his neck. However, it is possible to dive this way.

I believe that someone swam up to the house in the dark, on the side toward the balcony where there was no stairs, and saw the light in Mary Ann's room. He climbed the pipe gently, with the strength and stealth of a hunting animal. Perhaps he reached out silently to the window to see if it could be opened. Then he reached out the other way, grasped the railing of the balcony and climbed over in silence and entered. I think this must have happened while Mary Ann was down stairs in the second floor bathroom around 1:30, and that he was waiting behind the door when she returned. This is the only way to explain the lack of any scream. At 4 o'clock, having finished his work, he heard Rodney coming up the stairs, padded out into the hallway and onto the balcony and dove into the water, parting the water cleanly and curving to miss the muddy bottom and swimming away as silently as he had come. Terror spread through the city of Barrett.

2. Interlude: A realization

. . . real, the dreams were real . . . I killed them . . . can't stop, they'll catch me sooner or later . . . but now I have the power, to terrify, to kill . . . no one suspects, they are stupid, foolish little creatures . . . He comes, so terrible, so beautiful, I am he . . . He stirs the ancient feelings . . . the flints, must hide the flints where I made the knife . . . will I remember this time? . . . will I remember?

2. Howard Grey: August 27

I slept very late that morning and woke up tired. Carl and Cindy were still asleep when I got downstairs and Johnny was smirking again. I headed out for the library and picked up breakfast and a newspaper along the way. The murder was all over the front page.

Even with classes not in session I had to park a mile away. It was a long walk to the tower library in the stifling summer heat and it did nothing for my concentration.

The books of interest to me were all in a special section of the rare book card index. The selection shown in the index was tempting but I started directly with their copy of *The Chronicles of Thrang*. I filled out a card and asked to see it. I also requested the inadequate but helpful dictionary compiled by Laszlo from Braithwaite's notes. I had brought Carl's copy of Braithwaite's partial translation with me. After a forty-five minute wait they brought me the dictionary and a clumsily bound photocopy of the *Chronicles* and informed me that I would have to read them in a special corner of the reading room and that I would not be allowed to make any Xeroxes from them.

There was no identifying information on the *Chronicles* but I recognized the copy Flannery brought back from Greenland in 1912. I carried the books into the reading room, a high-ceilinged cavern of reinforced concrete made to look like stone. The drafty air conditioning felt good after the heat outside.

There was of course no translation or footnotes or concordance with the copy, so I had to try to remember or guess the order of things in the huge book and translate a couple of sentences on a page to see where I was. The earliest non-human portions were the most difficult to read. The book had been originated by the 'Ithria, a shadowy race about which little can be deduced. They arrived on earth three billion years ago, the first material race to do so. Their time-sense was so different from ours that it is difficult to extract their meaning even through the literal parallel inscriptions of their successors, the Dhraion Throl. Prefacing the history of their own tenure on Earth was a distillation of cosmic lore handed down from race to race from the beginning of life in the universe.

Indeed sentience had been present at the primal explosion which began the universe, for it had separated from a former unity the dark "Yidh Nak" or Mother of Space from radiant Mlandoth and their struggle to reunite created innumerable vortices of matter, energy, life force, and other more subtle quantities in all combinations to fill the cosmos with immortal things alive and, in many cases, sentient. One of these was Ngyr-Khorath.

Alone in empty space his condition resembled sleep, but long before the arrival of the 'Ithria the dust of space had swarmed together to form the solar system, and the nuclear force-creature Paighon had settled here, and Ngyr-Khorath was awake with an infinitely patient and horrible rage. The exact conditions of their struggle and their effect on life on Earth were too difficult for even the 'Ithria to comprehend. But they came to know of the sinister *presence* that came in the night when the planets lay in certain positions before the stars, and seized certain among them and killed them in fearful ways or sent them ravaging like mad beasts that must be destroyed.

The Dhraion Throl were a small dark-skinned anthropomorphic race who arrived half a billion years after the emigration of the 'Ithria. With their intense passion for knowledge they found and deciphered the copies of the *Chronicles* carefully stored in Antarctica by the 'Ithria and built their own Earthly annals on it. Near the end of the Pre-Cambrian Age they developed a limited ability to travel in time, and mapped the history of the Earth forward through the Paleozoic as far as the time when a race of crystalline spider-like creatures came from a distant galaxy.

They communicated with patterns of color running through their legs and left records in long narrow hieroglyphs. They wrote of many eerie presences on Earth, strange descendents of the struggle between Paighon and Ngyr-Khorath like the *Ta Svani* or Black Eddies which were bound to one place but could seep into the soul of one who came near and seize control of him for malignant purposes. But above all, they feared Ngyr-Khorath himself, who periodically corrupted a few of their num-

ber and sent them murderously berserk.

The next additions to the *Chronicles* were made eighty million years later in Australia, by men who had been adopted by a race from a passing interstellar planet, Wu'unaya, first as pets and then as servants. When their mentors left they had already produced a few dozen men capable of founding a civilization and preserving the ability to read the records unearthed by the aliens in Antarctica. It is not known how the document traveled to Asia Minor where it appears among the Ngarathans long after the demise of the Australian Ngkuliibong civilization.

The Ngarathans were one among many civilizations which flourished in the wake of the last ice age, before a dark age of unknown cause descended on the Earth: they wrote of their battles with the agile horsemen of Mong, their intercourse with the evil men of Hsia to the east and the mysterious empire of Qam to the south, the terrors of the African rat-masters of Ppkung and the wonders of distant cities like Stera, Sperap, Dera . . . relics of far older cultures. Their portion of the *Chronicles* is much easier to read, and I soon spotted the passage containing the anecdote about Oenokh the Star-Mad.

I immediately saw the error that had been made in Carl's bootleg translation. Oenokh had not been set upon by Tliretha, he had set upon or attacked her. Where Carl's copy said "torn limb from limb" the text here used a verb which means "separated" or "cut", as with a knife. Concerning Oenokh's behavior the scribe had used a peculiar phrase, translating literally as "ancient force" which meant something like animal instinct, suggesting that Oenokh had been overcome by atavistic impulse.

A horrible thought began to grow in my mind.

I continued to turn the pages looking for the mandala diagram. There it was, identical with the one in Carl's copy. When I looked at the text I spotted another error. The translator of Carl's copy had translated the word *plaatna* as "rotating", indicating that the disc should rotate. This was a likely mistake because it had the form of a gerund, but was just an emphatic form of the word *plo*, "round", sometimes used to mean "circular". So the wheel should not rotate. The letters of the Ngarathan syllabary at four points of the diagram were also there as in Carl's copy with no explanation in the text. They were 'a, ba, dy, and 'e. I thought a minute. Of course -- 'alan, band, dy, 'egor -- north, south, east and west. The wheel should not rotate but should be properly aligned with the four points of the compass. The red candle should go at the north.

And here were two sentences completely omitted from Carl's copy. The first said "Only in the north is the way opened." The second said that the persons sitting at the other points feel only the fear of Nggr-Khorath and for them the way remains closed. Johnny was going to be very disappointed. It must have been a lot of work to make the wheel do its little crabwise rhythmic dance, around the circle.

It had taken me several hours to get this far and I must have been getting tired because I suddenly felt dizzy looking at the mandala. I looked up to see a very tall

man in a dark suit and tie standing by my side.

“Good afternoon,” he said. “I noticed you looking at the *Chronicles of Thrang*. I was curious, Ngarathan scholars are extremely rare. He had very fair skin with dark eyes and hair and high brows. It was a comic book face, very simple and smooth and striking, all straight lines and bold contrasts. I felt a little flustered. I hadn’t anticipated being accosted like this and had no cover story prepared. I tried to think fast.

“Yes,” I said, “I got interested in it years ago in college, and learned it gradually over time. I think it’s a marvelous addition to human folklore and legend.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet a fellow enthusiast. How do you do, my name is Theodore Ramny. I see you are reading at the page where the *dlith pygon* is described.”

“Yes, it and the stories surrounding it interest me very much. It seems to me to bear a close resemblance to the sort of mandala that appears in Indian and early Indo-Aryan symbolism, and was discussed in such a fascinating way by Jung.”

He started translating at sight from the page in front of me in an odd toneless voice, the inflections as neat and precise as those of a ham actor. I felt myself getting dizzier; I had been sitting down too long and still hadn’t recuperated from the long bus ride.

At this point the librarian descended upon us like an effeminate hornet and shushed us, adding that the library would close in five minutes. Ramny suggested that we go to the campus coffee shop together. On the way we talked about the Ngarathan language and the *Chronicles*. He said he had the Trieste copy, which is less complete but more legible than the one in the library, and invited me to his home to consult it.

When we arrived at the coffee shop we found that it was closed because classes were not in session and the coffee shop was keeping short hours. He offered to drive me to his house and then drop me back by my car later. He led me out of the building and removed a thing that looked like a transistor radio from his coat pocket and pressed a button. We strolled to the curb at the large street that bordered the campus. I was amazed to see a long black limousine with a liveried chauffeur pull up in front of us. The car was long and low and quiet and I lost track of the route as the chauffeur whisked us out of the university area with its old run-down houses converted to rooms for students through the suburbs and then on up toward the top of one of the hills that crowd in on three sides of the city.

Ramny was still making conversation, talking about various manuscripts of the *Chronicles* very accurately. I was still feeling dizzy at times and still groping with the connection between the mandala and Ngyr-Khorath, Oenokh and atavism, flint knives and Mary Ann Morse. As we climbed the hill the houses showed more custom architecture and more money. They were arranged from bottom to top in a hierarchy of wealth.

The house we pulled up in front of was at the top. It was not enormous, but the brick and ivy look and the terrace and the heavy paneled door and the circular

driveway all said “rich”. There were two lithe guard dogs slinking around in the shrubbery. Ramny led me inside and turned left off a corridor into a room with ceilings twelve feet high with bookshelves almost to the top. There was something wrong about the room. It took me a moment to put my finger on it; there were no knickknacks sitting around anywhere, no cherished oddments sitting on the bookshelves, no pictures, no ash trays. It was an impersonal room.

Ramny brought the book immediately and I was amazed to see that it was the original manuscript found in Trieste. I had assumed he would have some sort of copy. He got the book from a locked cabinet full of books and scrolls. I would give much to know exactly what was in that cabinet. Of course I had to handle the incredibly old document before me with the utmost care and it took a long time to find anything in it. No one knows what the material is, it seems to be some sort of fiber other than ordinary wood pulp or papyrus that lasts longer. As I searched Ramny was talking about the danger of attempting to contact Ngyr-Khorath with the *dlith pygon*.

“Altogether, it would seem much better to deal with ‘Ymnar,” he said.

I tried to play dumb.

“It doesn’t make sense,” I said. “Why all the rigmarole? If Ngyr-Khorath wants Earth creatures to deal with ‘Ymnar, why answer the summons of the *dlith pygon* ritual?”

He smiled slightly.

“You see, Ngyr-Khorath’s mind works at a vastly slower rate than ours and is much greater and less unified. Only the specialized fragment of it that is ‘Ymnar can operate at approximately our pace. The fire wheel and other direct methods attract the psychic center of Ngyr-Khorath’s consciousness in a sort of reflex or tropism much more rapidly than he can reach what we would consider a reasoned decision. And while theoretically this sudden invasion of primal life force could result in union, in practice it always . . .,” he hesitated slightly, “. . . works out badly.”

“Yes, but how is one to find ‘Ymnar?’ I said. “There is no explanation in any of the books.”

“That’s true. Perhaps he will come to you,” he said. His dark eyes were bright and still.

“And isn’t he supposed to be pretty tricky to deal with? I’d probably get out-smarted.”

“I think that’s just a matter of misunderstanding. Ngyr-Khorath wants only union with sentient life, he rejects only chaotic and destructively fragmented sentiences.”

I didn’t like his tone. He was beginning to sound like some kind of fanatic devil-worshipper. I found the mandala in his copy much more easily than I had in the library. I knew about where it came in the text and when I searched that portion the pages came open to that page of their own accord, as though that had been the last page consulted by other hands. The passage was in better shape than in the library,

more legible. Undoubtedly the way was to be opened at the north. Who had been sitting north at Carl's? I have a poor sense of direction and had no idea how things had been oriented there.

"Yes, but don't men want to preserve their own identity and freedom?"

"Their fate is to be enslaved by their own kind anyway." He abruptly changed the subject. "Where are you staying? The hotels here are dreadful."

"I have friends here who are putting me up," I said.

"Fellow scholars? I didn't know of anyone who knew of Mlandoth here."

"My cousin." Could he be pumping me? "My cousin Carl knows something of it, but he's hardly a scholar," True enough.

"Does he live near the university library? It's so hard to park in that area."

I saw no reason to lie, but felt reluctant to tell him more. I made some vague reference to the lake and started avoiding all specifics about the household. I was feeling dizzy again and at times his face seemed to blur or fade, leaving only the phosphorescent depths of his eyes. I caught myself staring fixedly. He returned to the subject of 'Ymнар.

"But the direct methods," he said, "with the wheel of fire or the oil of the black lotus, are much more dangerous. You read of Oenokh the Star-Mad. Ngyr-Khorath seized his brain and body and, operating through the ancient savage instincts, caused him to run amok in his own household and cut his mistress Tliretha to pieces with a ceremonial knife."

I needed to break away and get out of there.

"I realize it's all very dangerous," I said, "and I take it seriously enough not to try to do anything like that. I really must go now, Carl will be looking for me and they will have supper prepared." Fat chance.

"My chauffeur can drive you," he said. "You don't mind if I don't accompany you?"

He led me out past the guard dogs and the luxuriantly planted foliage, and instructed the chauffeur to drop me off where he had picked us up. As we wound our way down the hill, I had a magnificent view of the city below. The sun had set behind us and the lights were coming on all over the big buildings in the downtown area and the sprawl of suburbs to the north. On my right to the south the broad dark river swelled into Lake Bowie. I tried to make out Carl's house along the far curve but the shore was blurred by a mystical haze in the dusk. Was it my imagination or was there a green glow in the eastern sky where Jupiter would soon rise? There were strange flashes going on in my mind, where instantaneously the city would recede and grow dim and the great glowing green cloud in the east, in the sky or in my mind, would grow more prominent. I never saw the red spot though. Who was Ramny? If he spelled it r-a-m-n-y it would be an anagram of 'Ymнар . . .

Was that the original Trieste copy? I mused about what we were doing and my adventure with Ramny, and what I had found out about the method of the wheel of fire. Who had sat north? There was the lake shore-- I couldn't quite figure it out. The

line of the shore was erratic. That was when I first accepted the fact of a connection between what we were doing and the killings. I felt a sense of dread.

IV.

1. The Fourth Victim

North of the shoreline where Mary Ann Morse died, a hill rises precipitously from the water. The top of the hill is an extensive plateau of shady streets, magnificent old oaks and old but well-kept houses built shortly after the turn of the twentieth century. They are generally quite large, and in many an extra room or two is rented out to a student. Some have had additional rooms built on just for this purpose. Twenty year old Sheila Koch lived in such a room. The Barker house at 4111 Goliad Street was a three story frame structure clad in white clapboards. Rentals had long been the sole source of income for the last of the Barkers, seventy-year-old Miss Emma, and on the night Sheila died no fewer than nine students had rooms there.

In the 1920's a garage had been added along the left side of the house, sixty feet down the straight driveway from the street. In 1953 had another rent room built over it. It was a small but pleasant room, with windows on three sides and a private entrance via an exterior stairway at the back, out of sight of the street. At two A.M. on the morning of August 28 the windows were glowing. Sheila was drinking black coffee and cramming for a rescheduled final exam, which she had postponed in her summer Spanish course. No doubt she got up and walked around the room from time to time to stretch.

One can usually find students walking the sidewalks at any time of day or night. The killer's approach to the Barker house is a mystery only if one assumes, as the police and the people of Barrett did, that he had the same brutish appearance and behavior that terrified Barbara Koehler three days before. But I have pointed out the progression from crude savagery to most sophisticated violence. It is reasonable to suppose that as he approached the Barker house he appeared quite normal and simply walked down the sidewalk.

He may have been seen. George Pollock, a student, was walking down Goliad street on his way to an all-night hamburger stand at about ten minutes to two. He passed a man in the shadowy stretch just south of the Barker house. The man was walking slowly and normally, and all George remembers is that the man was taller than he and was carrying a small shapeless bundle under his left arm. George is five-foot six. As George continued down the street the man reached the driveway leading to Sheila's room. Perhaps Sheila was moving about the room; he would have seen the silhouette of a woman pass by her window.

is she alone? . . . wait a while and see . . . oh yes, they'll catch me soon, but not now, not now . . . catch me when you can . . . how can they catch a god? . . . there she is again . . . no sound, surely she's alone . . . Jupiter burns, it burns, and the green storm is upon me, the eye

fills me with power! . . . have to send them something to chew on, I'll write a letter to the police-- maybe I'll even send them a little souvenir, perhaps an ear . . .

"Who's there?"

"Police, ma'm. Just like to ask you a few Questions."

The physical evidence tells us much more about the murderer's actions here than in the previous killings. He grabbed Sheila from the front, just inside the door, placing a hand over her mouth and bruising her lips. They scuffled, disarranging the little throw rug in front of the door. He turned her around without allowing her to make a sound loud enough to arouse the inhabitants of the house, three of whom were awake. He cut her throat from the rear, holding the knife in his right hand and cutting from left to right, and held her up until her violent twitching had ceased. The knife was at least six inches long and extremely sharp; it could not possibly have been made of stone.

He then lay the body down gently (no loud thump was heard in the main house) and calmly stepped to the wash basin and cleansed his hands. He would have gotten some blood on his clothes during the killing, but not necessarily very much. Next he returned to the landing outside the door and picked up the bundle George Pollock had noticed. It was cheap white laboratory smock.

He closed the door, put it on, and carried the body to the bed. After cutting off the blood-soaked clothing completely, he began a systematic dissection resembling standard autopsy procedures. He opened the abdomen and thorax with what is called a butterfly incision, and in the hour and a half before he was interrupted he emptied the body cavity almost completely, laying the organs neatly on the bed, the small table, and the desk.

The ovaries were never found. The cuts were all very neat and carefully executed except for the rather clumsy removal of both ears. These were also never found.

At 3:30 A.M. he heard someone climbing the outside stair. Ann Elroy, a roomer in the main house and a friend of Sheila's, had been up reading and, hearing movement in Sheila's room, had come around to suggest stepping out for fresh air and coffee. She heard indistinct sounds from within the room as she knocked softly several times and called Sheila's name.

At the first sound on the stairs the killer froze. Then he leaned forward and quickly removed the ears. We may speculate that he placed them in a small plastic bag brought for the purpose. Then he calmly removed the blood-spattered smock and dropped it across Sheila's feet. The window at the rear of the room was already up. He unhooked the screen, lifted it off its hinges, and drew it into the room. He stepped up onto the windowsill and jumped out.

Ann heard the thud as he hit the ground, making indentations in the lawn and smearing the grass with traces of blood. She felt fear; she called Sheila's name twice more, while the killer walked between the houses behind the Barker place. Then she leaned out to the left over the railing, peered through the side window and

screamed.

Sixty feet away the killer carefully wiped his shoes on the grass before stepping onto the sidewalk. Four feet from the place where he wiped his feet, a tiny blood stain on the concrete tells us that he headed toward the lake.

2. Howard Grey: August 28

I was going to say “What the hell is all this racket at 5 A.M. when I’m trying to sleep?” when I stalked into the mandala room, but I didn’t because I could see right off that Johnny was dead. He was lying on his back with one hand in the electrical apparatus; his eyes were bulging and his mouth was drawn into a ghoulish rictus. Carl’s eyes were bulging too, and his mouth was open: he was standing over Johnny with his pasty face sweating profusely. He looked up at me, “He’s dead, he’s dead . . .” he said. “What are we going to do? He was fooling with the equipment . . .” I could smell burnt insulation mingled with burnt flesh. Carl started pacing around the room, he wasn’t exactly wringing his hands but he didn’t know what to do with them. “My god, if we call in the police . . . what could they charge us with? It was an accident, an accident . . . but we’d have to explain the equipment . . . the publicity . . . laughing stock . . .”

I sat down in my usual chair by the mandala. The wheel was sitting askew with the Ngarathan letter for north pointing at Johnny.

“Maybe we could cover it up,” I said. Carl’s eyes turned to me with a look of panicky hope.

“Cover it up?” he said.

“If we got rid of the body is there anyone who would look for him?”

“No, I don’t think so, but then we really would be guilty of a serious . . . committing a felony. What could we do with him?”

“You’ve got a whole goddamn lake within fifty feet of here,” I said. “Are you sure no one would look for him?”

Carl put his hands on his head. I suppose he was trying to think. “No, he has a mother in . . . somewhere in town, but he hasn’t been in contact with her since he met me. It’s too dangerous,” he said. He really was wringing his hands now, off and on. He stepped over and pulled back the curtains in the bay window and looked out at the lights of Barrett. “No, it’s too dangerous. We’d be committing a *felony* . . . God, they’ll search the house . . . What have we got? . . . I think Cindy’s got some grass. Where the hell is she? She went swimming a couple of hours ago.”

3. The Fifth Victim

The skin of Cindy Blankenship showed that she had left the water only a few minutes before she died. She lay on a large bath towel on a flat rock by the water. Did she feel death in the black water under the starry void? Did she shiver in the night-

wind? The lapping of the low ripples against the rock masked the sound of someone swimming up in the dark. Someone with a knife.

The cove in which her remains were found is lined with limestone slabs dotted with flint. It is undoubtedly the place where the weapons used on Jeannette Hagerty and Mary Ann Morse were manufactured. It lies at a point on the shoreline almost exactly opposite the house where Mary Ann died and, further inland, the Barker house.

The dissection of Cindy Blankenship was even more thorough than that of Sheila Koch, as though the killer were improving with practice. He used a stag-handled hunting knife, freshly honed to razor sharpness. The remnants were laid out neatly, diagrammatically, as one might pin the parts of a laboratory frog to a board. No organ was wholly missing, but several were damaged; the fiend of Barrett had indulged in cannibalism.

4. Howard Grey: August 28 (continued)

"It might work," said Carl. "It just might work. But we don't have a boat. How could we get him out into the deep water?"

I stepped over to the window and looked out. A low clinging mist was curling up from the water, making the scattered lights of Barrett twinkle and dance. I could see Jupiter going down in the west.

"We weight him down with chains, bricks, anything heavy that we can tie to him," I said. "Do you have anything like that here?"

"I've got the snow chains I used out in West Texas," he said. He was calming down a little, looking at Johnny again. Poor Carl, the flamboyant one, the man of action. "Then we need something to float him out into the water-- an inner tube, an inflatable raft, anything like that."

"I think Cindy's got an air mattress," he said. Jupiter going down in the west to my left . . . north. North would be across the lake toward Barrett, the way I was looking. My chair. I had been sitting north, of course. And I remembered Carl saying Johnny had sat there the night before I came, the night of the first attack, before the god came so near.

"I think she's got one," he said. "I saw her using an air mattress to sunbathe out in the water."

What a fat little neck you have, Carl.

"Would that be enough?" he said. "I didn't know you could swim so well." Jupiter in the west. I could see the green glow. "Afterwards, of course, we should clean everything up and leave quickly. We'll be hard to trace if he . . . he comes up. I'll get my lab coat."

I don't think you'll be wanting to use it, Carl. It's all bloody now.

I turned away from the window and walked slowly toward the wheel.

"We have to make sure there are no police boats around when we do it," I said.

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“I saw a few lights here and there on the water.”

He stepped nervously over to the window and looked hard.

. . . I remember . . . the dreams were real . . . I killed them . . . when did I know? . . . my mind, like a jigsaw puzzle, waiting for the last piece . . . I remember it all now . . . the gaps, the puzzling dreams I couldn't quite remember, the dizziness, the disoriented feeling, the headaches . . . and I remember the savage thing growing within me, growing, leering, hating . . . making the killing tools in the ancient ways . . . I remember them all, the rage, the blood, the ecstasy...then planning more and more, knowing it all . . . the last ones, I knew then . . . in the little room up the stairs... I was ONE . . . Howard and the savage thing and HE . . . I am HE now . . . I know the microscopic room where the little man-thing looks out the window . . . I know the hateful blue globe and the hateful yellow moon and the hideous roiling sun and the cold soft space which they befoul which is HOME and the infinite void beyond which cold and soft and empty but is not HOME and I know the microscopic room where the little man thing . . .

I moved in quietly behind him. I had the knife in a scabbard in my belt behind me.

V. Excerpt from *The Truth Behind the Barrett Horror*: Epilogue

The house by the lake was very old, the wood very dry. It burned completely to the ground before the first fire truck arrived. In the confusion it was assumed to have been deserted. No one even looked for bodies in the smoldering ash until the remains of Cindy Blankenship were discovered. After that the ashes of the house were sifted carefully, though the fire had been thorough that almost nothing was found except the tell-tale odor of kerosene and the two charred bodies. There was enough left of one to identify him as the Carl Thurlough who had leased the house, and to determine that his throat had been cut to the bone. The other, presumed by the police to be the fiend of Barrett, was never identified and the cause of death never determined. In height, build, sex, and age he fit the description given by Barbara Koehler.

The police theorize that he parked Thurlough's station wagon in the downtown area, walked to the Barker house, then, probably because his clothes were stained with blood, was afraid to go back to the brightly lit area where the station wagon was parked. They believe that he started the fire and, either accidentally or suicidally, was overcome by smoke.

But nothing is really known of the group in the old house. Could there have been a third man? The station wagon was parked just two blocks from the bus station.

The Wind on the Lakes

Peter F. Guenther

Hey there! Mind if I join you for a spell? Been a long day of paddling, and I need a rest. I'll just pull my canoe up onto the rock here, and that should be okay. There we go.

Walter Ryan's my name. Is that the portage from Alice Lake into Russell Lake there across the way? Thought so. I had wanted to make that one last portage today, but I don't know. It's starting to get dark. I might just make camp a little further down and wait until tomorrow to press any farther.

Been in the park long? Three days? Hmm. Me? Oh, I've been in the park a while. Not sure how many days it's been. But I know where I am, and I know where I'm going, and that'll get me through. Yes sir, nice extended vacation I'm on.

I love it up here in Canada. There's no water purer than this lake water, no air fresher than the wind that blows through these pines. It's been blowing pretty strong the past few nights, eh? Enough to blow my tent over, almost.

Coffee? Why, sure, I wouldn't mind some. Thank you much. Yeah, I do have a bad sunburn. I've been out here a while, like I said. Does it really look like my skin's starting to crack?

Not many people would choose to go alone through Quetico Provincial Park! I'm sure that's what you're thinking. The rigor of canoeing all day, of having to portage everything over land between two lakes, without anyone to help. And what if anything happens to me? That's what people always ask. Well, I'm too careful for that. I'm not going to make a misstep on a portage and break my ankle, and I'm not going to drown. I'm not too worried about that. Muskeg Molly, though; that gave me pause to think.

Wouldn't want to tangle with her.

Oh, you don't know the legends of Muskeg Molly? Well, looks like it's getting too late for me to move on much further anyhow. I'll just make camp down the way a little. I've got time then.

Muskeg Molly, she's one of those legends that just won't die. See, she was an Indian woman, big strong thing, but young. She had been born on a reservation not far from here. Ojibwa. She got married to an Englishman; he was quite an outdoorsman too. They decided they'd take their honeymoon out here - rigorous honeymoon, eh? It was about twenty years ago now. So they went into the park. A few weeks went by, 'til it was well after they were supposed to be home again. Relatives started to get worried. They had the rangers start to search the park. The husband . . . the husband they found pretty soon. He was out of clear view but not far from a lake. Not far from their canoe either. His body was smashed on a rock, broken in several places. They decided he must have fallen from a large rock right there. Thing is, though, he must've fallen in an awfully strange way to do that much damage to his body. Cliff wasn't that high . . .

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Ol' Molly they never found. A little distance from her husband's body they found their campsite, with everything just left there. They figured she went crazy, seeing her new husband die like that. Although some allow she was crazy to begin with, crazy with some of those Indian legends... Anyhow, they kept searching but didn't find her, so they figured they wouldn't. Either she was dead someplace they'd never find her, or she found another way out of the park, or she'd drag herself into someone's camp soon enough. No one really expected her to be alive though.

What they weren't figuring on, see, is that she was one of them Indian women! If anyone knew how to survive in the park, it was her. And soon enough, there were some strange sightings. Some say it's Molly's ghost, too attached to the park, but then, some fools say her husband died naturally. Me, I think she's still alive. Maybe she doesn't know her husband's dead and is still looking for him; maybe she's looking for a new one. Here's why I say that.

My old friend Bob, he thinks he almost fell into her trap one time about ten years ago. We were camped way south of here, and as it started to get dark, he went fishing. Pretty soon the wind blew up and he was further away than he could paddle back to camp easily. Over on the shore he saw another campsite, with a nice inviting fire, like yours. So he made his way over there. Found a nice neat campsite, but no one nearby. Coffee was sitting over by the fire, so he helped himself, figuring he would talk to the people whose camp it was when they came back. Shoot the breeze for a while. When he looked around, though, he realized something was wrong with the campsite. He couldn't put his finger on what at first; just had the feeling something weird was going on. Then he got spooked; felt like someone was watching him from the edge of the camp. He started to look all around, but he couldn't see anyone. Then he realized what was wrong; the camp's stuff was a real hodgepodge. A lot of it was the kind of stuff that hadn't been made in a while. It looked like someone had just kept whatever they found and was living with it. Like I said, Bob was spooked, and he got out of that camp awfully quick. He swears that it was a trap set by Muskeg Molly. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't, but you had better be sure I saw people sitting around the fire before I approached this campsite tonight!

Other people have their own stories about Muskeg Molly. Being followed over a portage by something big but quiet in the bush, something they could never see... but that whistled like a person sometimes. Silhouettes cast on a tent wall by a fire, like a person going through their camp very quietly. Anyhow, a lot of the people who camp here regularly swear that she's real. And that's why it took some determination for me to camp here alone. Ol' Bob, we used to camp together, but he hasn't been back since that time. So if I want to camp up here, it's alone or it's not at all.

Oh, so you think you can laugh at the stories of Muskeg Molly, do you? Well, you've got another thing coming, because I've seen her, you know. And it's not something to laugh about.

Listen to the way that wind howls! Funny how it does that right about the time it gets completely dark, often times. What do you think causes it? Heh heh.

Oh, now you're getting impatient. I guess Muskeg Molly does have your attention, if you're so anxious to hear about my run-in with her. Well then...

It was shortly after I came into the park this time. I was a couple of days in... It was an evening like this, you know? Wind was howling like anything. It was loud--almost seemed like a voice, calling, calling all night. The sun had set several hours before, and I had to use the facilities. Time to dig a hole, if you know what I mean. I muttered to myself because I knew the mosquitoes would be biting fiercely at that time of night. Wasn't anything to do but to get out of my tent, though, so I got out of the tent, got my trowel, and got moving as quickly as I could. Didn't even use my flashlight - it was a well-moonlit night and my eyes had long since adjusted to the night. I got going into the woods - didn't intend to go more than fifty feet from my tent though. Underbrush was pretty thick and all. I probably went a little further, cause I wanted a nice clear area to dig my hole, right? Nothing worse than squatting in a bunch of bushes. Finally I found a clear spot. As soon as I put the trowel to the moss, though, I had a feeling I was being watched. At first I shook my head to clear it. If anything was watching me - man or beast - it would make some crackling in the undergrowth. But I couldn't shake the feeling, so I stood up and looked around. Sure enough, off to my one side, I saw a shadow of a figure hunched over. The way it was hunched, I thought it was a bear. I didn't want a bear attacking me, so I made some noise to scare it away. Only it didn't scare. Matter of fact, it stood up. Not quite straight, but straight enough for me to tell it was human. I was really scared by this point - a person lurking in the woods at night can be up to no good. I figured maybe I could call it out into the open, though - she knew I had seen her, so what good was stealth. I called out a greeting.

The only response I got was a gust of wind. It scared me, how much that gust seemed to be an answer. But how can the wind answer? The figure did come out a minute later though. Oh, how I wished it had stayed unseen, but there was a little too much moonlight for that. She came into the clearing - just seemed to drift there, like a leaf caught in a breeze. Didn't make a sound. Didn't move her feet. It was like she was lifted and set down a few feet away from me.

And then I got a look at her. She had some kind of crazy clothes, the kind you can make out here in the wilderness, but I don't know what they were. Birch bark, maybe. But the clothes weren't what got my attention. It was her face - all her skin, really, but the face was the worst. The body was limp, like there was little life left in it. I think maybe it did get blown around, or at least led around by her mind. All the life that left the body, though, it was in her eyes. Those eyes gleamed, sparkled with a green fire, and it wasn't the moonlight, either. It was some strange power, some strength inside her. Those eyes were most of what was left of her!

Oh, but that face! I still can't bear to think of it! The skin was all blackened, by almost twenty years of being out in the wilderness. Only it wasn't the sun or anything - it was the air! It was the air rushing around her face, hot air, freezing air, chapping that skin again and again until it was all but dead, cracking all over the

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place, still oozing in a few spots, chapping right off her bones. How could there have been anything left? Oh, the way it burns! The way it must have burned her!

That sight was all I needed. I was screaming like a banshee and scrambling through the forest. She had been kinda between me and my camp, but I just tried to get around her. And I did; she took a minute to take after me. But once she did take after me - there was nothing stopping her. Branches that hit me, roots that tripped me, she just went right around her, moving in that way she had of not moving. Because she kept right after me, but never did I see one of her limbs move. And those fiery green eyes, right behind me.

I stumbled right through my camp, grabbed the canoe near the shore, and dragged it, stumbling, down into the water. I found a paddle somehow and got going. Don't know why I did; she seemed to go at whatever speed she cared. Why run? But I did. I got that canoe moving over the water faster than I ever had in my life. When I got out to about the middle of the lake, I finally dared to look back. Not like I could see that much at that distance, but there sure weren't any gleaming eyes back on the shore.

But then I heard it. High overhead - this keening sound. The lake had been calm before, but all of a sudden the wind was whipping it up. I knew I had to get to shore right away if some kind of storm was blowing in, so I paddled with everything I had until I neared the opposite shore. But when I got there - she was there first. Waiting for me. Never saying a word. I paddled away, got to another part of the shore - and as I went I could see her flit through the trees, moving like nothing human ever moved. I just couldn't get away from her. And she could cross the lake, but didn't like being right on it . . . I guess she must've gone way over it.

Eventually I gave up, exhausted. I slumped down in the canoe and gave myself over to whatever Fate had in mind for me. I just didn't have the strength to care.

The waves and the wind blew me onto the shore pretty quick. And of course, there she was, waiting for me, that horror worse than any hell could hold. She wasn't human. Not at that point, though maybe she was once.

She never touched me, but in an instant I was lifted up. I hung in the air, barely brushing the ground, like she was doing. And we were off - right through the densest forest. We blew between all the branches - I swear we blew right through some of them. Then we went up, high into the air, and it was like I could see the whole world up there.

It was then that I realized the world held worse things than her. One of them was right above us. Maybe it had been a man once, too. Still had this real hazy outline like one - but it was huge. And those eyes blazed with the same impure fire that ignited the woman's. And the power that I could feel up there - you know the way the air feels right before an electrical storm? It was like that, only more. And I was held there, my body unresponsive, in that field, with terrible Molly and her even more horrible Master. I still don't know what he was. I think she was becoming like him, though. And I think I might find out what he was, someday.

Nothing was said there, nothing was done. I was just held, powerless, and shown an awesome power. And then I dropped. It seemed like I dropped forever, down and down and down. I passed out, and when I came to, I was back at my camp, lying on a rock, and the sun was shining. Now don't go and tell me it was a dream, because it wasn't!

I haven't seen Molly or that other thing since. But . . . oh God, help me, but I feel the same kind of thing inside me. I have the strangest dreams - I don't know what happens to me at night anymore. But my face! How it burns in the morning!

No, that last part is nonsense. It's just that what happened scared me so much. And I don't sleep so well anymore. Don't look at me that way! Why do you stare at my eyes so?

Oh God, what's happened to me? What am I?
Excuse me. I'm sorry to have troubled you; I've just been unstrung lately. Ignore my story. I'd better get back to my canoe and find a campsite. I'm sure you don't want me here anymore. Odd, though, the way this wind blows - isn't it?

The Crawlers from Beyond **James Gruetzmacher**

Beneath filtered moonlight in twilights realm,
Nameless things slither beneath moldering soil,
As an ancient evil is summoned back to life,
Arising from the demise of life's putrid decay.

Through expanses of forsaken time,
Blighted squeals of malevolence suddenly cry ravenously,
Weaving sinister shrouds of sibilant laughter,
Into a cascading falls of hideous resoundence.

I sense *them* now encroaching upon my presence,
Crawling through desolate caverns and hidden sepulchres,
A rampant, omnivorous hunger the never ceases,
Searching for those who summon itself from its lair.

For now The Crawlers From Beyond,
From their abominable spawn between time's endless domain,
Will soon manifest their selves upon my being,
As a thousand sucking proboscises foam with anticipation.

For it was I,
Who summoned The Crawlers From Beyond,
In my endless screams of despair and insanity,
From the endless depths of the Black Abyss.

