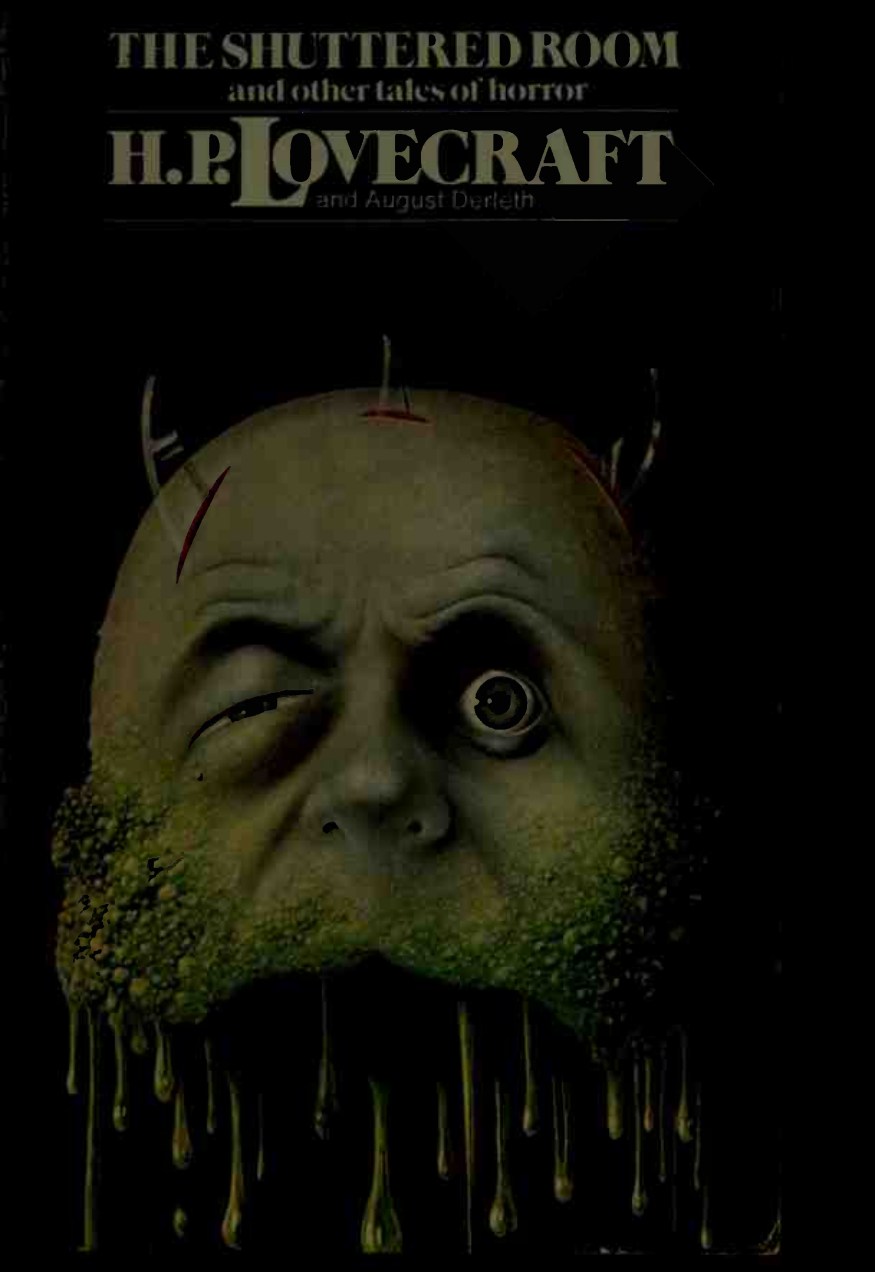
THE SHUTTERED ROOM

and other tales of horror

H.P. LOVECRAFT

and August Derleth



THE TESTAMENT
OF THE SHUTTERED ROOM

"Destroy every living thing in that room—every living thing, no matter how small," Abner Whately's grandfather wrote in the strange letter he left after his death.

Abner did not understand, until he saw the prints in the dust of the shuttered room—*prints of tiny, webbed,* human *hands and feet!*

Masterpieces of the macabre by

H. P. LOVECRAFT

THE TOMB
AND OTHER TALES

AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS
AND OTHER TALES OF TERROR

THE LURKING FEAR
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THE SHUTTERED ROOM
AND OTHER TALES OF HORROR
(with August Derleth)

TALES OF THE CTHULHU MYTHOS
Volume 1

TALES OF THE CTHULHU MYTHOS
Volume 2

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CONTENTS

The Shuttered Room

I

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

On his way to Dunwich, Abner Whateley felt all this again, as once in childhood he had felt it and run screaming in terror to beg his mother to take him away from Dunwich and Grandfather Luther Whateley. So many years ago! He had lost count of them. It was curious that the country should affect him so, pushing through all the years he had lived since then—the years at the Sorbonne, in Cairo, in London—pushing through all the learning he had assimilated since those early visits to grim old Grandfather Whateley in his ancient

house attached to the mill along the Miskatonic, the country of his childhood, coming back now out of the mists of time as were it but yesterday that he had visited his kinfolk.

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

He turned off the main street and followed a rutted road up along the river, until he came within sight of the great old house with the mill wheel on the river-side. It was his property now, by the will of Grandfather Whateley, who had stipulated that he must settle the estate and 'take such steps as may be necessary to bring about that dissolution I myself was not able to take.' A curious proviso, Abner thought. But then, everything about Grandfather Whateley had been strange, as if the decadence of Dunwich had infected him irrevocably.

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

events which had overtaken the country branch of the family on Sentinel Hill.

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

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

The lamplight disclosed something more. On the kitchen table lay an envelope addressed to him in handwriting so crabbed that it could only be that of a very old or infirm man—his grandfather. Without troubling to bring the rest of his things from the car, Abner sat

down to the table, blowing the dust off the chair and sufficiently from the table to allow him a resting place for his elbows, and opened the envelope.

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

'Grandson:

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

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

'Heed me in this.

'If I seem to have the sound of madness, pray recall that worse than madness has spawned among the Whateleys. I have stood free of it. It has not been so of all that is mine. There is more stubborn madness in those who are unwilling to believe in what they know not of and deny that such exists, than in those of our

blood who have been guilty of terrible practices, and blasphemy against God, and worse.

'Your Grandfather, Luther S. Whateley.'

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

'Grandpa, where's Aunt Sarey?'

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

Aunt Sarey had offended the old man in some dreadful way—dreadful, at least, to that firm disciplinarian—for from that time beyond even Abner Whateley's memory, his aunt had been only the name of a woman, who was his mother's oldest sister, and who was locked in the big room over the mill and kept for ever invisible within those walls, behind the shutters nailed to her windows. It had been forbidden both Abner and his mother even to linger before the door of that shuttered room, though on one occasion Abner had crept up to the door and put his ear against it to listen to the snuffling and whimpering sounds that went on inside, as from some large person, and Aunt Sarey, he had decided, must be as large as a circus fat lady, for she devoured so much, judging by the great platters of food—chiefly meat, which she must have prepared herself, since so much of it was raw—carried to the room twice daily by old Luther Whateley himself, for there were no servants in that house, and had not been since the time Abner's mother had married, after Aunt Sarey had come back, strange and mazed, from a visit to distant kin in Innsmouth.

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

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

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

He was tired now. The heavy traffic around Boston had tired him. The contrast between the Boston region and this desolate Dunwich country depressed and troubled him. Moreover, he was conscious of an intangible uneasiness. If he had not had need of his legacy to

continue his research abroad into the ancient civilizations of the South Pacific, he would never have come here. Yet family ties existed, for all that he would deny them. Grim and forbidding as old Luther Whateley had always been, he was his mother's father, and to him his grandson owed the allegiance of common blood.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Abner put the lamp on a bureau drawn away from the wall, crossed to the window above the mill wheel, unlocked it, and raised it. He strove to open the shutters before he remembered that they had been nailed shut. Then he stood back, raised his foot, and kicked the shutters out to let a welcome blast of fresh, damp air into the room.

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

room above it be torn down or otherwise destroyed. What mattered a broken pane!

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

He went out of the room, locked the door again, and returned to the master bedroom downstairs. He felt, obscurely, that he had made a beginning, however trivial; he had scouted the ground, so to speak. And he was twice as tired for his brief look around as he had been before. Though the hour was not late, he decided to go to bed and get an early start in the morning. There was the old mill yet to be gone through—perhaps some of the machinery could be sold, if any remained—and the mill wheel was now a curiosity, having continued to exist beyond its time.

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

He undressed and got into bed, but he did not sleep for almost an hour, bedevilled by the chorus of natural

sounds outside the house and from within himself by a rising confusion about what his grandfather had meant by the 'dissolution' he himself had not been able to make. But at last he drifted into a troubled sleep.

II

He woke with the dawn, little rested. All night he had dreamed of strange places and beings that filled him with beauty and wonder and dread—of swimming in the ocean's depths and up the Miskatonic among fish and amphibia and strange men, half batrachian in aspect—of monstrous entities that lay sleeping in an eerie stone city at the bottom of the sea—of utterly *outré* music as of flutes accompanied by weird ululations from throats far, far from human—of Grandfather Luther Whateley standing accusingly before him and thundering forth his wrath at him for having dared to enter Aunt Sarey's shuttered room.

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

But the main street of Dunwich was no more reassuring under the light of the sun than it had been in the dusk of the past evening. The village huddled between the Miskatonic and the almost vertical slope of Round Mountain, a dark and brooding settlement which

seemed somehow never to have passed 1900, as if time had ground to a stop before the turn of the last century. His gay whistle faltered and died away; he averted his eyes from the buildings falling into ruin; he avoided the curiously expressionless faces of passers-by, and went directly to the old church with its general store, which he knew he would find slovenly and ill-kept, in keeping with the village itself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Abner was disagreeably affected. The brightness of the morning had dimmed for him, though the sun shone from the same unclouded heaven. He hastened away from the store and main street, and hurried along the lane towards the house he had but recently quitted.

He was even more disturbed to discover, standing

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

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

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

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

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

Zebulon Whateley took it.

The three of them made slow progress towards the verandah, where the old man halted at the foot of the steps, turning his dark eyes upon Abner from under their bushy white brows, and shaking his head gently.

'Naow, if ye'll fetch me a cheer, I'll set.'

'Bring a chair from the kitchen, boy,' said Abner.

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

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

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

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

Zebulon Whateley shook his head. 'Ye know no more'n the rest, and less'n some,' he said. 'What Luther was abaout, only God knowed. Naow Luther's gone, and ye'll have it to dew. I kin tell ye, Abner, I vaow

afur God, I dun't know why Luther took on so and locked hisself up and Sarey that time she come back Innsmouth—but I kin say it was suthin' turrible, turrible—and the things what happened was turrible. Ain't nobody left to say Luther was to blame, nor poor Sarey—but take care, take care, Abner.'

'I expect to follow my grandfather's wishes,' said Abner.

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

'How'd you find out I was here, Uncle Zebulon?' Abner asked.

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

'Now, Grandpa—don't ye git yer dander up,' chided the boy.

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

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

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

'Why?'

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

'What was Aunt Sarah doing in Innsmouth?'

'Visitin' kin.'

'Are there Whateleys there, too?'

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

'I do.'

'Ye dew? I never knowed. They say Sarey was visitin' Marsh kin—Obed's son or grandson—I never knowed which. Never heerd. Dun't care. She was thar quite a spell. They say when she come back she was different. Flighty. Unsettled. Sassed her pa. And then, not long after, he locked her up in that room till she died.'

'How long after?'

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

'What else, Uncle Zebulon?'

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

Abner smiled.

'Dun't ye laugh, boy!'

'I'm not laughing, Uncle Zebulon. I agree with you.'

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

'With what?'

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

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

'I'll learn what I can, Uncle Zebulon,' he promised.

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

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

'Thank you.'

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

Abner stood for a moment looking after the departing vehicle. He was both troubled and irritated—troubled at the suggestion of something dreadful which lurked beneath Zebulon Whateley's words of warning, irritated because his grandfather, despite all his adjurations, had left him so little to act upon. Yet this must

have been because his grandfather evidently believed there might be nothing untoward to greet his grandson when at last Abner Whateley arrived at the old house. It could be nothing other by way of explanation.

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

He went into the house with his groceries, put them away, and sat down to map out a plan of action. The very first thing to be accomplished was a survey of the mill part of the structure, to determine whether any machinery could be salvaged. Next he must find someone who would undertake to tear down the mill and the room above it. Thereafter he must dispose of the house and adjoining property, though he had a sinking feeling of futility at the conviction that he would never find anyone who would want to settle in so forlorn a corner of Massachusetts as Dunwich.

He began at once to carry out his obligations.

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

He worked his way around the wooden ledge to the frame of the wheel, somewhat uncertain, lest the wood give way and plunge him into the water beneath; but the construction was firm, the wood did not give, and he was soon at the wheel. It appeared to be a splendid example of middle nineteenth-century work. It would be a shame to tear it apart, thought Abner. Perhaps the wheel could be removed, and a place could be found for it either in some museum or in some one of those buildings which were for ever being reconstructed by wealthy persons interested in the preservation of the American heritage.

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

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

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

but, apart from the unaccustomed daylight streaming into the room, there was no alteration.

He crossed to the window.

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

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

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

III

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

commitments and had to return to Dunwich with the promise that they would come 'in a week or ten days.'

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

'Luther, what happened to cousin Obed is a singular thing. I do not know how to tell it to you. I do not know how to make it credible. I am not sure I have all the facts in this matter. I cannot believe but that it is a rigmarole deliberately invented to conceal something of a scandalous nature, for you know the Marshes have always been given to exaggeration and had a pronounced flair for deception. Their ways are devious. They have always been.

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

'Now that is the *legend*. Here are the *facts*. Ever since that time, the Marshes have prospered mightily in the trade. Mrs. Marsh is never seen abroad, save on such occasions as she goes to certain closed affairs of

the Order of Dagon Hall. "Dagon" is said to be a sea god. I know nothing of these pagan religions, and wish to know nothing. The Marsh children have *a very strange* look. I do not exaggerate, Luther, when I tell you that they have such wide mouths and such chinless faces and such large staring eyes that I swear they sometimes look more like frogs than human beings! They are not, at least as far as I can see, *gilled*. The "Deep Ones" are said to be possessed of gills, and to belong to Dagon or to some other deity of the sea whose name I cannot even pronounce, far less set down. No matter. It is such a rigmarole as the Marshes might well invent to serve their purposes, but by God, Luther, judging by the way the ships Captain Marsh has in the East India trade keep afloat without a smitchin of damage done to them by storm or wear—the brigantine *Columbia*, the barque *Sumatra Queen*, the brig *Hetty* and some others—it might also seem that he has made some sort of bargain with Neptune himself!

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

The letter dwindled down to commonplaces about prices—ridiculously low figures seen from this vantage of over half a century later, for Luther Whateley must have been a young man, unmarried, at the time this letter had been written to him by Ariah, a cousin of whom Abner had never heard. What it had to say of

the Marshes was nothing—or all, perhaps, if Abner had had the key to the puzzle of which, he began to believe with mounting irritation, he held only certain disassociated parts.

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

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

Abner opened it eagerly.

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

'Well, Luther, you may be right in this matter of race prejudice as responsible for the feeling against the Marshes. I know how people here feel about other races. It is unfortunate, perhaps, but such is their lack of education that they find much room for such prejudices. But I am not convinced that it is *all* due to race prejudice. I don't know what kind of race it is that would give the Marshes after Obed that strange *look*. The East India people—such as I have seen and recall from my early days in the trade—have features much like our own, and only a different colour to the skin—copper, I would call it. Once I did see a native who had a similar appearance, but he was evidently not

typical, for he was shunned by all the workers around the ships in the harbour where I saw him. I've forgotten now where it was, but I think Ponape.

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

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

Thereafter not a word. Abner went through bundles of letters in vain. What Ariah wrote in subsequent letters dealt scrupulously with family matters of the utmost triviality. Luther Whateley had evidently made his displeasure with mere gossip clear; even as a young man, Luther must have been strictly self-disciplined. Abner found but one further reference to any mystery at Innsmouth—that was a newspaper clipping dealing in very vague terms, suggesting that the reporter who sent in the story did not really know what had taken place, with certain Federal activity in and near Innsmouth in 1928—the attempted destruction of Devil Reef, and the blowing up of large sections of the waterfront, together with wholesale arrests of Marshes and Martins and some others. But this event was decades removed from Ariah's early letters.

Abner put the letters dealing with the Marshes into his pocket, and summarily burned the rest, taking the mass of material he had gone through out along the riverbank and setting fire to it. He stood guarding it, lest a chance wind carry a spark to surrounding grass, which was unseasonably dry. He welcomed the smell of

the smoke, however, for a certain dead odour lingered along the riverbank, rising from the remains of fish upon which some animal had feasted—an, otter, he thought.

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

By the time the fire was sufficiently low to permit his leaving it, the day was drawing to a close. He ate a meagre supper, and, having had his fill of reading for the day, decided against attempting to turn up his grandfather's 'record' of which Uncle Zebulon Whateley had spoken, and went out to watch the dusk and the night from the verandah, hearing again the rising chorus of the frogs and whippoorwills.

He retired early, unwontedly weary.

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Was it jest that one caow took?'

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

Quietly, Abner replaced the receiver. He smiled grimly at this evidence of the rampant superstitions of the Dunwich natives. He had never really known the depths of ignorance and superstition in which dwellers in such out-of-the-way places as Dunwich lived, and this manifestation of it was, he was convinced, but a mild sample.

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

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

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

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

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

'He was at the house,' said Abner.

'Yew talk to him?'

'We talked.'

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

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

To that end, he returned to the task of sorting his

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

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

IV

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

From the beginning, the entries were cryptic. They were undated, except for the day of the week.

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

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

Why?

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

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

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

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

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

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

in size rapidly.' (To this Luther had appended four scournful exclamation marks.)

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

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

'You ask who is responsible for those *ridiculous* tales about the Marshes. Well, Luther, it would be impossible to single out any one or a dozen people over several generations. I agree that old Zadok Allen talks too much, drinks, and may be romancing. But he is only one. The fact is this legendary—or *rigmarole*, as you call it—has grown up from one generation to the next. Through three generations. You have only to look at some of the descendants of Captain Obed to understand why this could have come about. There are some Marsh offspring said to have been too horrible to look upon. Old wives' tales? Well, Dr. Rowley Marsh was too ill to attend one of the Marsh women one time; so they had to call Dr. Gilman, and Gilman always said that what he delivered was less than human. And nobody ever saw that particular Marsh, though there were people later who claimed to have seen *things moving on two legs that weren't human.*'

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

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

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

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

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

'*Ariah was right*!'

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

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

'R. out again.'

If Luther and Sarah were the only people in the house, who was 'R.'? Could it have been Ralsa Marsh come to visit? Abner doubted it, for there was nothing to show that Ralsa Marsh harboured any affection for his distant cousin, or certainly he would have pursued her before this.

The next notation seemed to be unrelated.

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

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

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

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

These notations, however, were more in the nature of notes for something to be completed later; they were unaccountably cryptic, unless one had the key of basic knowledge which belonged to Luther Whateley. But a growing sense of urgency was clearly manifest in the old man's further entries.

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

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

The record was now near its end. Many pages, unfortunately, had been detached from it—some with violence—but no clue remained as to why this violence had been done to Grandfather Whateley's account. It could not have been done by anyone but Luther himself; perhaps, thought Abner, Luther felt he had told too much, and intended to destroy anything which

might put a later reader on the track of the true facts regarding Aunt Sarey's confinement for the rest of her life. He had certainly succeeded.

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

'R. back at last.'

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

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

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

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

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

Oddly, this very thought, for all that it was so casual, startled him. The insistence of frogs and toads on sing-

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

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

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

After an hour's hasty search, he found three vague articles, none of them in the regular Dunwich columns, which corroborated entries in Luther Whateley's ledger. The first appeared under the heading: *Wild Animal Slays Stock Near Dunwich—*

'Several cows and sheep have been slain on farms just outside Dunwich by what appears to be a wild animal of some kind. Traces left at the scenes of the slaughter suggest some large beast, but Professor Beth-

nall of Miskatonic University's anthropology department points out that it is not inconceivable that packs of wolves could lurk in the wild hill country around Dunwich. No beast of the size suggesed by the traces reported was ever known to inhabit the eastern seaboard within the memory of man. County officials are investigating.'

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

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

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

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

'Some time during the night of the twenty-first Howard Willie, 37, a native of Dunwich, was brutally slain as he was on his way home from a fishing trip along the upper reaches of the Miskatonic. Mr. Willie was attacked about half a mile past the Luther Whateley property, as he walked through an arboured lane.

He evidently put up a fierce fight, for the ground is badly torn up in all directions. The poor fellow was overcome, and must have been literally torn limb from limb, for the only physical remains of the victim consisted of his right foot, still encased in its shoe. It had evidently been cruelly torn from his leg by great force.

'Our correspondent in Dunwich advises us that people there are very sullen and in a great rage of anger and fear. They suspect many of their number of being at least partly to blame, though they stoutly deny that anyone in Dunwich murdered either Willie or Mrs. Wilkerson, who disappeared a fortnight ago, and of whom no word has since been heard.'

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

Though it was now close to midnight, Abner massed the discarded newspapers together and took them out to the riverbank, where he set them on fire, having saved only torn pages relative to the occurrences at Dunwich. The air being still, he did not feel obliged to watch the fire, since he had already burned a considerable area, and the grass was not likely to catch on fire. As he started away, he heard suddenly above the ululation of

the whippoorwills and frogs, now at a frenzied crescendo, the tearing and breaking sound of wood. He thought at once of the window of the shuttered room, and retraced his steps.

In the very dim light flickering towards the house from the burning newspapers, it seemed to Abner that the window gaped wider than before. Could it be that the entire mill part of the house was about to collapse? Then, out of the corner of his eye, he caught sight of a singularly formless moving shadow just beyond the mill wheel, and a moment later heard a churning sound in the water. The voices of the frogs had now risen to such a volume that he could hear nothing more.

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

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

Abner stood for a moment, wavering on the threshold. True, the odour in the room could have come in through the open window. He raised the lamp so that more of its light fell upon the wall above the mill wheel. Even from where he stood, it was possible to see that not only was all the window itself now gone, but so was the frame. Even at this distance it was manifest that the frame had been broken out *from inside!*

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

V

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

He was badly shaken, particularly because he had the uneasy conviction that he did indeed have all the facts he needed to know, that it was his scientific training which made it impossible for him to make the primary assumption, to state the premise which the facts before him would inevitably prove. The evidence of his senses told him that something laired in that room—some bestial creature; it was folly to assume that odours from outside could so permeate Aunt Sarey's old room and not be noticeable outside the kitchen and at the windows of his own bedroom.

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

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

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

'It's Luke Lang!'

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

'Luke, what is it?' asked a woman's voice.

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

'Git off the wire so's we can call for help,' interrupted another subscriber.

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

'Luke! Luke! Git off'n the wire!'

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

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

'Git help!'

'We'll meet at Bishop's place.'

And someone put in, 'It's Abner Whateley done it!'

Sick with shock and half-paralysed with a growing

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

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

But he had come, he had gone through the old man's things—all save the books—he had made arrangements to tear down the mill part of the house—he could manage its sale through some agency; there was no need for him to be present. Impulsively, he hastened to the bedroom, threw such things as he had unpacked, together with Luther Whateley's note-filled ledger, into his bags, and carried them out to his car.

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

He read it over carefully, thoughtfully. What had the old man meant when, in referring to the madness that

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

And what had he intended to hint at when he adjured Abner to kill anything in the mill section of the house, anything that lived? *No matter how small it may be. No matter what form it may have* . . . Even something so small as an inoffensive toad? A spider? A fly? Luther Whateley wrote in riddles, which in itself was an affront to an intelligent man. Or did his grandfather think Abner a victim to the superstition of science? Ants, spiders, flies, various kinds of bugs, millers, centipedes, daddy long-legs—all occupied the old mill; and doubtless in its walls were mice as well. Did Luther Whateley expect his grandson to go about exterminating all these?

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

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

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

His thoughts were still in turmoil, but he had decided

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

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

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

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

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

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

He returned to the kitchen and lit the lamp.

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

Arriving at the door, he listened. At first he heard nothing—then a susurration smote his ears.

Something in that room - *breathed*!

Fighting back his fear, Abner put the key in the lock and turned it. He flung open the door and held the lamp high.

Shock and horror paralysed him.

There, squatting in the midst of the tumbled bedding from that long-abandoned bed, sat a monstrous, leathery-skinned creature that was neither frog nor man, one gorged with food, with blood still slavering from its batrachian jaws and upon its webbed fingers—a monstrous entity that had strong, powerfully long arms, grown from its bestial body like those of a frog, and tapering off into a man's hands, save for the webbing between the fingers . . .

The tableau held for only a moment.

Then with a frenzied growling sound—*'Eh-ya-ya-ya-yaa-haah-ngh'aaa-h'yuh, h'yuh—'* it rose up, towering, and launched itself at Abner.

His reaction was instantaneous, born of terrible, shattering knowledge. He flung the kerosene-filled lamp with all his might straight at the thing reaching towards him.

Fire enveloped the thing. It halted and began to tear frantically at its burning body, unmindful of the flames rising from the bedding behind it and the floor of the room, and at the same instant the calibre of its voice changed from a deep growling to a shrill, high wailing— *'Mama-mama—ma-aa-ma-aa-ma-aaah!'*

Abner pulled the door shut and fled.

Down the stairs, half falling, through the rooms below, with his heart pounding madly, and out of the house. He tumbled into the car, almost bereft of his senses, half-blinded by the perspiration of his fear, turned the key in the ignition, and roared away from

that accursed place from which the smoke already poured, while spreading flames in that tinder-dry building began to cast a red glow into the sky.

He drove like one possessed—through Dunwich—through the covered bridge—his eyes half-closed, as if to shut out for ever the sight of that which he had seen, while the dark, brooding hills seemed to reach for him and the chanting whippoorwills and frogs mocked him.

But nothing could erase that final, cataclysmic knowledge seared into his mind—the key to which he had had all along and not known it—the knowledge implicit in his own memories as well as in the notes Luther Whateley had left—the chunks of raw meat he had childishly supposed were going to be prepared in Aunt Sarey's room instead of to be *eaten raw*, the reference to 'R.' who had come 'back at last' after having escaped, back to the only home 'R.' knew—the seemingly unrelated references also in his grandfather's hand to missing cows, sheep, and the remains of other animals—the hideous suggestion clearly defined now in those entries of Luther Whateley's about R.'s 'size commensurate with amt. of food,' and 'he must be kept on a careful diet and to a controllable size'—like the Innsmouth people!—controlled to nothingness after Sarah's death, with Luther hoping that foodless confinement might shrivel the thing in the shuttered room and kill it beyond revival, despite the doubt that had led him to adjure Abner to kill 'anything in it that lives'—*the thing Abner had unwittingly liberated when he broke the pane and kicked out the shutters, liberated to seek its own food and its hellish growth again, at first with fish from the Miskatonic, then with small animals, then cattle, and at last human beings—the thing that was half-batrachian, half human, but human enough to come back to the only home it had ever known and to cry out in terror for its Mother in the face of the fatal*

holocaust—the thing that had been born to the unblessed union of Sarah Whateley and Ralsa Marsh, spawn of tainted and degenerate blood, the monster that would loom for ever on the perimeter of Abner Whateley's awareness—his cousin Ralsa, doomed by his grandfather's iron will, instead of being released long ago into the sea to join the Deep Ones amongst the minions of Dagon and great Cthulhu!

Witches' Hollow

DISTRICT SCHOOL NUMBER SEVEN STOOD ON THE VERY edge of that wild country which lies west of Arkham. It stood in a little grove of trees, chiefly oaks and elms with one or two maples; in one direction the road led to Arkham, in the other it dwindled away into the wild, wooded country which always looms darkly on that western horizon. It presented a warmly attractive appearance to me when first I saw it on my arrival as the new teacher early in September, 1920, though it had no distinguishing architectural feature and was in every respect the replica of thousands of country schools scattered throughout New England, a compact, conservative building painted white, so that it shone forth from among the trees in the midst of which it stood.

It was an old building at that time, and no doubt has since been abandoned or torn down. The school district has now been consolidated, but at that time it supported this school in somewhat niggardly a manner, skimping and saving on every necessity. Its standard readers, when I came there to teach, were still *McGuffey's Eclectic Readers,* in editions published before the turn of the century. My charges added up to twenty-seven. There were Allens and Whateleys and Perkinses, Dunlocks and Abbotts and Talbots—and there was Andrew Potter.

I cannot now recall the precise circumstances of my

especial notice of Andrew Potter. He was a large boy for his age, very dark of mien, with haunting eyes and a shock of touseled black hair. His eyes brooded upon me with a kind of different quality which at first challenged me but ultimately left me strangely uneasy. He was in the fifth grade, and it did not take me long to discover that he could very easily advance into the seventh or eighth, but made no effort to do so. He seemed to have only a casual tolerance for his schoolmates, and for their part, they respected him, but not out of affection so much as what struck me soon as fear. Very soon thereafter, I began to understand that this strange lad held for me the same kind of amused tolerance that he held for his schoolmates.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the challenge of this pupil should lead me to watch him as surreptitiously as I could, and as the circumstances of teaching a one-room school permitted. As a result, I became aware of a vaguely disquieting fact; from time to time, Andrew Potter responded to some stimulus beyond the apprehension of my senses, reacting precisely as if someone had called to him, sitting up, growing alert, and wearing the air of someone listening to sounds beyond my own hearing, in the same attitude assumed by animals hearing sounds beyond the pitch-levels of the human ear.

My curiosity quickened by this time, I took the first opportunity to ask about him. One of the eighth-grade boys, Wilbur Dunlock, was in the habit on occasion of staying after school and helping with the cursory cleaning that the room needed.

"Wilbur," I said to him late one afternoon, "I notice you don't seem to pay much attention to Andrew Potter, none of you. Why?"

He looked at me, a little distrustfully, and pondered

his answer before he shrugged and replied. "He's not like us."

"In what way?"

He shook his head. "He don't care if we let him play with us or not. He don't want to."

He seemed reluctant to talk, but by dint of repeated questions I drew from him certain spare information. The Potters lived deep in the hills to the west along an all but abandoned branch of the main road that led through the hills. Their farm stood in a little valley locally known as Witches' Hollow which Wilbur described as "a bad place." There were only four of them—Andrew, an older sister, and their parents. They did not "mix" with other people of the district, not even with the Dunlocks, who were their nearest neighbors, living but half a mile from the school itself, and thus, perhaps, four miles from Witches' Hollow, with woods separating the two farms.

More than this he could not—or would not—say.

About a week later, I asked Andrew Potter to remain after school. He offered no objection, appearing to take my request as a matter of course. As soon as the other children had gone, he came up to my desk and stood there waiting, his dark eyes fixed expectantly on me, and just the shadow of a smile on his full lips.

"I've been studying your grades, Andrew," I said, "and it seems to me that with only a little effort you could skip into the sixth—perhaps even the seventh—grade. Wouldn't you like to make that effort?"

He shrugged.

"What do you intend to do when you get out of school?"

He shrugged again.

"Are you going to high school in Arkham?"

He considered me with eyes that seemed suddenly piercing in their keenness, all lethargy gone. "Mr.

Williams, I'm here because there's a law says I have to be," he answered. "There's no law says I have to go to high school."

"But aren't you interested?" I pressed him.

"What I'm interested in doesn't matter. It's what my folks want that counts."

"Well, I'm going to talk to them," I decided on the moment. "Come along. I'll take you home."

For a moment something like alarm sprang into his expression, but in seconds it diminished and gave way to that air of watchful lethargy so typical of him. He shrugged and stood waiting while I slipped my books and papers into the schoolbag I habitually carried. Then he walked docilely to the car with me and got in, looking at me with a smile that could only be described as superior.

We rode through the woods in silence, which suited the mood that came upon me as soon as we had entered the hills, for the trees pressed close upon the road, and the deeper we went, the darker grew the wood, perhaps as much because of the lateness of that October day as because of the thickening of the trees. From relatively open glades, we plunged into an ancient wood, and when at last we turned down the sideroad—little more than a lane—to which Andrew silently pointed, I found that I was driving through a growth of very old and strangely deformed trees. I had to proceed with caution; the road was so little used that underbrush crowded upon it from both sides, and, oddly, I recognized little of it, for all my studies in botany, though once I thought I saw saxifrage, curiously mutated. I drove abruptly, without warning, into the yard before the Potter house.

The sun was now lost behind the wall of trees, and the house stood in a kind of twilight. Beyond it stretched a few fields, strung out up the valley; in one, there

were cornshocks, in another stubble, in yet another pumpkins. The house itself was forbidding, low to the ground, with half a second storey, gambrel-roofed, with shuttered windows, and the outbuildings stood gaunt and stark, looking as if they had never been used. The entire farm looked deserted; the only sign of life was in a few chickens that scratched at the earth behind the house.

Had it not been that the lane along which we had travelled ended here, I would have doubted that we had reached the Potter house. Andrew flashed a glance at me, as if he sought some expression on my face to convey to him what I thought. Then he jumped lightly from the car, leaving me to follow.

He went into the house ahead of me. I heard him announce me.

"Brought the teacher. Mr. Williams."

There was no answer.

Then abruptly I was in the room, lit only by an old-fashioned kerosene lamp, and there were the other three Potters—the father, a tall, stoop-shouldered man, grizzled and greying, who could not have been more than forty but looked much, much older, not so much physically as psychically—the mother, an almost obscenely fat woman—and the girl, slender, tall, and with that same air of watchful waiting that I had noticed in Andrew.

Andrew made the brief introductions, and the four of them stood or sat, waiting upon what I had to say, and somewhat uncomfortably suggesting in their attitudes that I say it and get out.

"I wanted to talk to you about Andrew," I said, "He shows great promise, and he could be moved up a grade or two if he'd study a little more."

My words were not welcomed.

"I believe he's smart enough for eighth grade," I went on, and stopped.

"If he 'uz in eighth grade," said his father, "he'd be havin' to go to high school 'fore he 'uz old enough to git outa goin' to school. That's the law. They told me."

I could not help thinking of what Wilbur Dunlock had told me of the reclusiveness of the Potters, and as I listened to the elder Potter, and thought of what I had heard, I was suddenly aware of a kind of tension among them, and a subtle alteration in their attitude. The moment the father stopped talking, there was a singular harmony of attitude—all four of them seemed to be listening to some inner voice, and I doubt that they heard my protest at all.

"You can't expect a boy as smart as Andrew just to come back here," I said.

"Here's good enough," said old Potter. "Besides, he's ours. And don't ye go talkin' 'bout us now, Mr. Williams."

He spoke with so latently menacing an undercurrent in his voice that I was taken aback. At the same time I was increasingly aware of a miasma of hostility, not proceeding so much from any one or all four of them, as from the house and its setting themselves.

"Thank you," I said. "I'll be going."

I turned and went out, Andrew at my heels.

Outside, Andrew said softly, "You shouldn't be talking about us, Mr. Williams. Pa gets mad when he finds out. You talked to Wilbur Dunlock."

I was arrested at getting into the car. With one foot on the running board, I turned. "Did he say so?" I asked.

He shook his head. "You did, Mr. Williams," he said, and backed away. "It's not what he thinks, but what he might do."

Before I could speak again, he had darted into the house.

For a moment I stood undecided. But my decision was made for me. Suddenly, in the twilight, the house seemed to burgeon with menace, and all the surrounding woods seemed to stand waiting but to bend upon me. Indeed, I was aware of a rustling, like the whispering of wind, in all the wood, though no wind stirred, and from the house itself came a malevolence like the blow of a fist. I got into the car and drove away, with that impression of malignance at my back like the hot breath of a ravaging pursuer.

I reached my room in Arkham at last, badly shaken. Seen in retrospect, I had undergone an unsettling psychic experience; there was no other explanation for it. I had the unavoidable conviction that, however blindly, I had thrust myself into far deeper waters than I knew, and the very unexpectedness of the experience made it the more chilling. I could not eat for the wonder of what went on in that house in Witches' Hollow, of what it was that bound the family together, chaining them to that place, preventing a promising lad like Andrew Potter even from the most fleeting wish to leave that dark valley and go out into a brighter world.

I lay for most of that night, sleepless, filled with a nameless dread for which all explanation eluded me, and when I slept at last my sleep was filled with hideously disturbing dreams, in which beings far beyond my mundane imagination held the stage, and cataclysmic events of the utmost terror and horror took place. And when I rose next morning, I felt that somehow I had touched upon a world totally alien to my kind.

I reached the school early that morning, but Wilbur Dunlock was there before me. His eyes met mine with sad reproach. I could not imagine what had happened to disturb this usually friendly pupil.

"You shouldn't a told Andrew Potter we talked about him," he said with a kind of unhappy resignation.

"I didn't, Wilbur."

"I know I didn't. So you must have," he said. And then, "Six of our cows got killed last night, and the shed where they were was crushed down on 'em."

I was momentarily too startled to reply. "A sudden windstorm," I began, but he cut me off.

"Weren't no wind last night, Mr. Williams. And the cows were *smashed*."

"You surely cannot think that Potters had anything to do with this, Wilbur," I cried.

He gave me a weary look—the look of one who *knows*, meeting the glance of one who should know but cannot understand, and said nothing more.

This was even more upsetting than my experience of the previous evening. He at least was convinced that there was a connection between our conversation about the Potter family and the Dunlocks' loss of half a dozen cows. And he was convinced with so deep a conviction that I knew without trying that nothing I could say would shake it.

When Andrew Potter came in, I looked in vain for any sign that anything out of the ordinary had taken place since last I had seen him.

Somehow I got through that day. Immediately after the close of the school session, I hastened into Arkham and went to the office of the Arkham *Gazette*, the editor of which had been kind enough, as a member of the local District Board of Education, to find my room for me. He was an elderly man, almost seventy, and might presumably know what I wanted to find out.

My appearance must have conveyed something of my agitation, for when I walked into his office, his

eyebrows lifted, and he said, "What's got your dander up, Mr. Williams?"

I made some attempt to dissemble, since I could put my hand upon nothing tangible, and, viewed in the cold light of day, what I might have said would have sounded almost hysterical to an impartial listener. I said only, "I'd like to know something about a Potter family that lives in Witches' Hollow, west of the school."

He gave me an enigmatic glance. "Never heard of old Wizard Potter?" he asked. And, before I could answer, he went on, "No, of course, you're from Brattleboro. We could hardly expect Vermonters to know about what goes on in the Massachusetts back country. He lived there first. And old man when I first knew him. And these Potters were distant relatives, lived in Upper Michigan, inherited the property and came to live there when Wizard Potter died."

"But what do you know about them?" I persisted.

"Nothing but what everybody else knows," he said. "When they came, they were nice friendly people. Now they talk to nobody, seldom come out—and there's all that talk about missing animals from the farms in the district. The people tie that all up."

Thus begun, I questioned him at length.

I listened to a bewildering enigma of half-told tales, hints, legends and lore utterly beyond my comprehension. What seemed to be incontrovertible was a distant cousinship between Wizard Potter and one Wizard Whateley of nearby Dunwich—"a bad lot," the editor called him; the solitary way of life of old Wizard Potter, and the incredible length of time he had lived; the fact that people generally shunned Witches' Hollow. What seemed to be sheer fantasy was the superstitious lore—that Wizard Potter had "called something down from the sky, and it lived with him or in him until he died";—that a late traveller, found in a dying state

along the main road, had gasped out something about "that thing with the feelers—slimy, rubbery thing with the suckers on its feelers" that came out of the woods and attacked him—and a good deal more of the same kind of lore.

When he finished, the editor scribbled a note to the librarian at Miskatonic University in Arkham, and handed it to me. "Tell him to let you look at that book. You may learn something." He shrugged. "And you may not. Young people now-days take the world with a lot of salt."

I went supperless to pursue my search for the special knowledge I felt I needed, if I were to save Andrew Potter for a better life. For it was this rather than the satisfaction of my curiosity that impelled me. I made my way to the library of Miskatonic University, looked up the librarian, and handed him the editor's note.

The old man gave me a sharp look, said, "Wait here, Mr. Williams," and went off with a ring of keys. So the book, whatever it was, was kept under lock and key.

I waited for what seemed an interminable time. I was now beginning to feel some hunger, and to question my unseemly haste—and yet I felt that there was little time to be lost, though I could not define the catastrophe I hoped to avert. Finally the librarian came, bearing an ancient tome, and brought it around and to a table within his range of vision. The book's title was in Latin—*Necronomicon*—though its author was evidently an Arabian, *Abdul Alhazred,* and its text was in somewhat archaic English.

I began to read with interest which soon turned to complete bewilderment. The book evidently concerned ancient, alien races, invaders of earth, great mythical beings called Ancient Ones and Elder Gods, with outlandish names like Cthulhu and Hastur, Shub-Niggurath and Azathoth, Dagon and Ithaqua and Wen-

digo and Cthugha, all involved in some kind of plan to dominate earth and served by some of its peoples—the Tcho-Tcho, and the Deep Ones, and the like. It was a book filled with cabalistic lore, incantations, and what purported to be an account of a great interplanetary battle between the Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones and of the survival of cults and servitors in isolated and remote places on our planet as well as on sister planets. What this rigmarole had to do with my immediate problem, with the ingrown and strange Potter family and their longing for solitude and their anti-social way of life, was completely beyond me.

How long I would have gone on reading, I do not know. I was interrupted presently by the awareness of being studied by a stranger, who stood not far from me with his eyes moving from the book I was busy reading to me. Having caught my eye, he made so bold as to come over to my side.

"Forgive me," he said, "but what in this book interests a country school teacher?"

"I wonder now myself," I said.

He introduced himself as Professor Martin Keane. "I may say, sir," he added, "that I know this book practically by heart."

"A farrago of superstition."

"Do you think so?"

"Emphatically."

"You have lost the quality of wonder, Mr. Williams. Tell me, if you will, what brought you to this book?"

I hesitated, but Professor Keane's personality was persuasive and inspired confidence.

"Let us walk, if you don't mind," I said.

He nodded.

I returned the book to the librarian, and joined my new-found friend. Haltingly, as clearly as I could, I told him about Andrew Potter, the house in Witches'

Hollow, my strange psychic experience,—even the curious coincidence of Dunlocks' cows. To all this he listened without interruption, indeed, with a singular absorption. I explained at last that my motive in looking into the background of Witches' Hollow was solely to do something for my pupil.

"A little research," he said, "would have informed you that many strange events have taken place in such remote places as Dunwich and Innsmouth—even Arkham and Witches' Hollow," he said when I had finished. "Look around you at these ancient houses with their shuttered rooms and ill-lit fanlights. How many strange events have taken place under those gambrel roofs! We shall never know. But let us put aside the question of belief! One may not need to see the embodiment of evil to believe in it, Mr. Williams. I should like to be of some small service to the boy in this matter. May I?"

"By all means!"

"It may be perilous—to you as well as to him."

"I am not concerned about myself."

"But I assure you, it cannot be any more perilous to the boy than his present position. Even death for him is less perilous."

"You speak in riddles, Professor."

"Let it be better so, Mr. Williams. But come—we are at my residence. Pray come in."

We went into one of those ancient houses of which Professor Keane had spoken. I walked into the musty past, for the rooms were filled with books and all manner of antiquities. My host took me into what was evidently his sitting room, swept a chair clear of books, and invited me to wait while he busied himself on the second floor.

He was not, however, gone very long—not even long enough for me to assimilate the curious atmosphere of

the room in which I waited. When he came back he carried what I saw at once were objects of stone, roughly in the shape of five-pointed stars. He put five of them into my hands.

"Tomorrow after school—if the Potter boy is there—you must contrive to touch him with one of these, and keep it fixed upon him," said my host. "There are two other conditions. You must keep one of these at least on your person at all times, and you must keep all thought of the stone and what you are about to do out of you mind. These beings have a telepathic sense—an ability to read your thoughts."

Startled, I recalled Andrew's charging me with having talked about them with Wilbur Dunlock.

"Should I not know what these are?" I asked.

"If you can abate your doubts for the time being," my host answered with a grim smile. "These stones are among the thousands bearing the Seal of R'lyeh which closed the prisons of the Ancient Ones. They are the seals of the Elder Gods."

"Professor Keane, the age of superstition is past," I protested.

"Mr. Williams—the wonder of life and its mysteries is never past," he retorted. "If the stone has no meaning, it has no power. If it has no power, it cannot affect young Potter. And it cannot protect you."

"From what?"

"From the power behind the malignance you felt at the house in Witches' Hollow," he answered. "Or was this too superstition?" He smiled. "You need not answer. I know your answer. If something happens when you put the stone upon the boy, he cannot be allowed to go back home. You must bring him here to me. Are you agreed?"

"Agreed," I answered.

That next day was interminable, not only because of

the imminence of crisis, but because it was extremely difficult to keep my mind blank before the inquiring gaze of Andrew Potter. Moreover, I was conscious as never before of the wall of pulsing malignance at my back, emanating from the wild country there, a tangible menace hidden in a pocket of the dark hills. But the hours passed, however slowly, and just before dismissal I asked Andrew Potter to wait after the others had gone.

And again he assented with that casual air tantamount almost to insolence, so that I was compelled to ask myself whether he were worth "saving" as I thought of saving him in the depths of my mind.

But I persevered. I had hidden the stone in my car, and, once the others were gone, I asked Andrew to step outside with me.

At this point I felt both helpless and absurd. I, a college graduate, about to attempt what for me seemed inevitably the kind of mumbo-jumbo that belonged to the African wilderness. And for a few moments, as I walked stiffly from the school house toward the car I almost flagged, almost simply invited Andrew to get into the car to be driven home.

But I did not. I reached the car with Andrew at my heels, reached in, seized a stone to slip into my own pocket, seized another, and turned with lightning rapidity to press the stone to Andrew's forehead.

Whatever I expected to happen, it was not what took place.

For, at the touch of the stone, an expression of the utmost horror shone in Andrew Potter's eyes; in a trice, this gave way to poignant anguish; a great cry of terror burst from his lips. He flung his arms wide, scattering his books, wheeled as far as he could with my hold upon him, shuddered, and would have fallen, had I not caught him and lowered him, foaming at the mouth, to the ground. And then I was conscious of a great, cold

wind which whirled about us and was gone, bending the grasses and the flowers, rippling the edge of the wood, and tearing away the leaves at the outer band of trees.

Driven by my own terror, I lifted Andrew Potter into the car, laid the stone on his chest, and drove as fast as I could into Arkham, seven miles away. Professor Keane was waiting, no whit surprised at my coming. And he had expected that I would bring Andrew Potter, for he had made a bed ready for him, and together we put him into it, after which Keane administered a sedative.

Then he turned to me. "Now then, there's no time to be lost. They'll come to look for him—the girl probably first. We must get back to the school house at once."

But now the full meaning and horror of what had happened to Andrew Potter had dawned upon me, and I was so shaken that it was necessary for Keane to push me from the room and half drag me out of the house. And again, as I set down these words so long after the terrible events of that night, I find myself trembling with that apprehension and fear which seize hold of a man who comes for the first time face to face with the vast unknown and knows how puny and meaningless he is against that cosmic immensity. I knew in that moment that what I had read in that forbidden book at the Miskatonic Library was not a farrago of superstition, but the key to a hitherto unsuspected revelation perhaps far, far older than mankind in the universe. I did not dare to think of what Wizard Potter had called down from the sky.

I hardly heard Professor Keane's words as he urged me to discard my emotional reaction and think of what had happened in scientific, more clinical fashion. After all, I had now accomplished my objective—Andrew Potter was saved. But to insure it, he must be made free

of the others, who would surely follow him and find him. I thought only of what waiting horror that quartet of country people from Michigan had walked into when they came to take up possession of the solitary farm in Witches' Hollow.

I drove blindly back to the school. There, at Professor Keane's behest, I put on the lights and sat with the door open to the warm night, while he concealed himself behind the building to wait upon their coming. I had to steel myself in order to blank out my mind and take up that vigil.

On the edge of night, the girl came . . .

And after she had undergone the same experience as her brother, and lay beside the desk, the star-shaped stone on her breast, their father showed up in the doorway. All was darkness now, and he carried a gun. He had no need to ask what had happened; he *knew*. He stood wordless, pointed to his daughter and the stone on her breast, and raised his gun. His inference was plain—if I did not remove the stone, he meant to shoot. Evidently this was the contingency the professor expected, for he came upon Potter from the rear and touched him with the stone.

Afterward we waited for two hours—in vain, for Mrs. Potter.

"She isn't coming," said Professor Keane at last. "She harbors the seat of its intelligence—I had thought it would be the man. Very well—we have no choice—we must go to Witches' Hollow. These two can be left here."

We drove through the darkness, making no attempt at secrecy, for the professor said the "thing" in the house in the Hollow "knew" we were coming but could not reach us past the talisman of the stone. We went through that close pressing forest, down the narrow lane where the queer undergrowth seemed to reach out

toward us in the glow of the headlights, into the Potter yard.

The house stood dark save for a wan glow of lamplight in one room.

Professor Keane leaped from the car with his little bag of star-shaped stones, and went around sealing the house—with a stone at each of the two doors, and one at each of the windows, through one of which we could see the woman sitting at the kitchen table—stolid, watchful, *aware,* no longer dissembling, looking unlike that tittering woman I had seen in this house not long ago, but rather like some great sentient beast at bay.

When he had finished, my companion went around to the front and, by means of brush collected from the yard and piled against the door, set fire to the house, heedless of my protests.

Then he went back to the window to watch the woman, explaining that only fire could destroy the elemental force, but that he hoped, still, to save Mrs. Potter. "Perhaps you'd better not watch, Williams."

I did not heed him. Would that I had—and so spared myself the dreams that invade my sleep even yet! I stood at the window behind him and watched what went on in that room—for the smell of smoke was now permeating the house. Mrs Potter—or what animated her gross body—started up, went awkwardly to the back door, retreated, to the window, retreated from it, and came back to the center of the room, between the table and the wood stove, not yet fired against the coming cold. There she fell to the floor, heaving and writhing.

The room filled slowly with smoke, hazing about the yellow lamp, making the room indistinct—but not indistinct enough to conceal completely what went on it the course of that terrible struggle on the floor, where Mrs. Potter threshed about as if in mortal convulsion and

slowly, half visibly, something other took shape—an incredible amorphous mass, only half glimpsed in the smoke, tentacled, shimmering, with a cold intelligence and a physical coldness that I could feel through the window. The thing rose like a cloud above the now motionless body of Mrs. Potter, and then fell upon the stove and drained into it like vapor!

"The stove!" cried Professor Keane, and fell back.

Above us, out of the chimney, came a spreading blackness, like smoke, gathering itself briefly there. Then it hurtled like a lightning bolt aloft, into the stars, in the direction of the Hyades, back to that place from which old Wizard Potter had called it into himself, away from where it had lain in wait for the Potters to come from Upper Michigan and afford it new host on the face of earth.

We managed to get Mrs. Potter out of the house, much shrunken now, but alive.

On the remainder of that night's events there is no need to dwell—how the professor waited until fire had consumed the house to collect his store of star-shaped stones, of the reuniting of the Potter family—freed from the curse of Witches' Hollow and determined never to return to that haunted valley—of Andrew, who, when we came to waken him, was talking in his sleep of "great winds that fought and tore" and a "place by the Lake of Hali where they live in glory forever."

What it was that old Wizard Potter had called down from the stars, I lacked the courage to ask, but I knew that it touched upon secrets better left unknown to the races of men, secrets I would never have become aware of had I not chanced to take District School Number Seven, and had among my pupils the strange boy who was Andrew Potter.

The Horror From the Middle Span

I

The Bishop Manuscript was found by authorities investigating the disappearance of Ambrose Bishop. It was enclosed in a bottle evidently thrown wide into the woods at the rear of the burning house. It is still being held in the office of the sheriff in Arkham, Massachusetts.

IT WAS ON MY SEVENTH DAY OUT OF LONDON THAT I reached the place in America to which my ancestors had come from England over two centuries before. It lay in the heart of wild, lonely country above Dunwich, Massachusetts, along the upper reaches of the Miskatonic River, and well away here even from the brier-bordered stone walls that line so much of the road away from the Aylesbury Pike—a country of great old trees, pressed darkly together, many brambles, and here and there—though rarely seen for the underbrush grown up about them—the ruins of a dwelling abandoned long ago. I might easily have missed the place, for the lane leading to the house—now totally concealed by trees and bushes—was long overgrown, but the remains of a stone pillar next the road still bore the last four letters of *Bishop*, and thus I knew I had reached my goal, from which my Great-uncle Septimus Bishop had vanished in his middle years almost two decades be-

fore. I fought my way up the lane, through brier and bramble, over fallen limbs of the trees that lined it, up the slope for half a mile.

The house stood on the side of a hill—squat, though it was of two storeys, and hybrid in construction, being partly of stone, and partly of wood that had once, long ago, been painted white, but had now lost all but traces of its original color and had long since reverted to its natural state. I observed its most unusual aspect at once—unlike the other houses I had espied along the road wholly or partly in ruins, it stood intact, stone upon stone, and not a window-pane broken, though the weather had had its way with the wood of its superstructure, particularly the circular cupola that crowned it, in which I could detect several apertures surrounded by what was clearly rotten wood.

The door stood ajar, but the pillared verandah opening outward from it had protected the interior from the worst of the weather. Moreover, though dust lay thickly inside, it was quickly apparent that nothing had disturbed the interior—no vandal had laid hands upon so much as a stick of furniture, nor disturbed the still open book on the desk in the study, though mildew was everywhere, and the house smelled of damp and mustiness, which perhaps no amount of airing out would dissipate, and no intensiveness in cleaning would entirely eradicate.

Nevertheless, I undertook to try, a decision that made necessary a return journey to Dunwich; so I made my way back to the main road—though that road was little more than a rutted lane—where I had left the car I had rented in New York, and drove back to Dunwich, a squalid hamlet crouched between the dark waters of the Miskatonic and the brooding mass of Round Mountain, which seemed eternally to shadow the village. There I went to the only general store the

settlement offered, one that occupied an abandoned church and boasted the proprietorship of one Tobias Whateley.

Though I had had some experience with the rustics of remote corners of the earth, I was hardly prepared for my reception by the bearded, gaunt-faced old man who advanced to wait upon me, and who produced almost all the articles I wanted without a word, until I had finished and paid him.

Then he looked me full in the face for the first time. "Ye'll be a stranger here?"

"I—yes," I said. "Come from England. But I once had relatives here. Name of Bishop."

"Bishop," he said in a voice that had fallen to a whisper. "Yew said 'Bishop'?" Then, as if to reassure himself of something beyond my knowledge, he added in a stronger voice, "There be Bishops still heareabouts. Yew'll likely belong to them?"

"Not likely," I said. "My uncle was Septimus Bishop."

At mention of the name, Whateley went a shade paler than his normal pallor. Then he made a move to sweep the articles I had bought back from the counter.

"No, you don't," I said. "I paid you for these things."

"Ye kin have ye're money back," he said. "I don't want truck with any kin o' Septimus Bishop's."

I had little trouble taking from him the articles I had bought for he had no strength in his lean arms. He backed away from the counter and stood over against the shelves behind.

'Ye'll not be goin' to that house?" he asked, again in a whisper, and with some alarm manifest on his old face.

"There's nobody to stop me," I said.

"Ain't nobody from Dunwich 'd set foot on that ground—let alone the house," he said fervently.

"Why?" I demanded.

"Doan't yew know?" he asked.

"If I did, I wouldn't ask. All I know is that my great-uncle disappeared from his home nineteen years ago, and I'm here to lay claim to his property. Wherever he is, he must be dead by now."

"He was dead then," said the proprietor, again in little more than a whisper. "Kilt."

"Who killed him?"

"The people. Them as lived all around. Him and his."

"My great-uncle lived alone."

I had begun to tire of this yokel's fears and superstitions, and at his manifest lack of knowledge about Great-uncle Septimus, I felt justified in concluding that his attitude represented the typical response of the illiterate and ignorant to knowledge and education, such as my Great-uncle Septimus had possessed.

Whateley had begun to mumble. "..... In the night ..... buried him and that other alive ..... cursed 'em ..... an' their houses fell an' they died one after t'other. . . ."

On this disagreeable note I left the store, determined to do any further shopping I needed to do in Arkham. Yet the aged proprietor's words had stirred sufficient doubt to impel me forthwith to drive to Arkham, there to consult the files of the *Arkham Advertiser*—an impulse that was but ill-rewarded, for the entire month of June carried but two stories date-lined Dunwich—the one concerning Septimus—

"Nothing has been heard of Septimus Bishop, who apparently vanished from his home in the country above Dunwich ten days ago. Mr. Bishop was a recluse and a bachelor, to whom the folk of Dunwich were in

the habit of ascribing many superstitious abilities, calling him at various times a 'healer' and a 'warlock'. Mr. Bishop was a tall, spare man, aged about 57 at the time of his disappearance."

—and the other an amusing account of the strengthening of one of the piers, that supporting the middle span of a disused bridge over the Miskatonic above Dunwich, evidently by private initiative, since the county in charge stoutly denied—refuting the voluble criticism directed at it for repairing a bridge no longer in use—having had anything to do with it.

Nevertheless, I reflected on my return drive toward and beyond Dunwich that the superstitions of the natives doubtless accounted for the attitude of Tobias Whateley, who only reflected the general beliefs, however laughable they might be to someone decently educated in this scientific age, when all such ridiculous concepts as healing by the laying on of hands of any other method and of witchcraft were known to be but the product of ignorance. My Great-uncle Septimus had been educated at Harvard, and was known to the English branch of the Bishop family as a bookish man, profoundly inimical to any form of superstition, surely.

It was dusk when I returned to the old Bishop place. My Great-uncle had evidently never laid in electricity or gas, but there were both candles and kerosene lamps—some of the latter still containing kerosene. I lit one of the lamps and made myself a frugal meal, after which I cleared a place in the study where I could lie down without too much discomfort, and readily fell asleep.

II

In the morning I set about tidying up the place, though there was little that could be done about the mildewed books in my great-uncle's library, other than to get a roaring fire going in the fireplace—for all that it was midsummer and there was no lack of warmth—and so drying out this area of the house.

In time I had dusted and swept the lower floor—which consisted of the study, a bedroom adjacent, a small kitchen, a pantry, and a room that was obviously intended as a dining-room but clearly used for more, for mounds of books and papers indicated some kind of storage. I mounted to the second storey, but before beginning work there, I continued to the cupola, by way of a narrow stairs which permitted only one person at a time to move along it.

The cupola proved to be somewhat larger than I had thought it, with ample room for a man to stand and move about without impediment. It had patently been used for astronomical observation, for there was a telescope there, and the floor, for some reason I could not fathom, was covered with all manner of designs, in which circles, pentacles, and stars predominated, and there were, quaintly, in addition to texts on astronomy, some on astrology and divination, all quite old, one dating to 1623, some of them in German, but the majority in Latin, which certainly were the property of my great-uncle, though I could not conceive of any use to which he could put them. There was, in addition to a sky-light on the north, an opening through which the telescope could be thrust, once its covering was removed.

This cupola was surprisingly free of dust and lint, for

all that there were openings in its wall, where some of the wood had rotted away, as I had observed on my approach to the house; at these openings there was some manifest water damage from rain and snow, but none of this was beyond repair, and it seemed to me—if I did ultimately conclude to make my home here for even a short time—that such repair could be accomplished with but comparatively little cost.

I had yet, however, to ascertain the condition of the foundation of the house; and, leaving the second storey—which consisted, I saw in a brief examination, of but two bedrooms, two closets, and a store-room, only one bedroom being furnished and looking as if it had never been put to the use for which it was intended—I descended again to the ground floor and made my way to the cellar below through the door that opened to it off the kitchen.

Somewhat to my surprise I saw by the light of the lamp I carried that the floor of the cellar, which extended to only about half of the area covered by the house, was of laid brick, while the walls were of limestone all of a foot and a half thick, as the window embrasures showed. I had expected a floor of earth, as was commonly to be found in the cellars of old houses; but on closer examination, I concluded that the brick had been laid considerably after the building of the house, quite probably by my Great-uncle Septimus.

In this floor, at opposite corners, there were two square trapdoors with large iron rings in them, the one, I judged by the evidence of a drainage pipe leading from the side of the wall to it, and the presence of a pump rising out of it, to cover a cistern. The other, however, gave no indication of its purpose, though I assumed that it might cover a fruit or root cellar, and went over confidently to lift it and prove my assumption correct.

Much to my astonishment, however, there was disclosed a succession of brick steps leading downward—certainly not, as the rays of the lamp revealed when I thrust it into the stair-well—any kind of cellar, but rather a passageway of some sort, into which I promptly climbed to find myself in a tunnel leading away from the house and, as nearly as I could determine, into the hill and away from the house along the slope to the northwest. I walked, crouching, a little way along this tunnel, following a turn, and then hesitated, unsure of the tunnel's purpose.

I was, however, reasonably certain that the tunnel had been constructed by my Great-uncle, and was prepared to turn back when I caught sight of something gleaming only a little way ahead, and went forward, only to find myself gazing down at yet another trapdoor. This too I opened, and looked down into a large circular room, reached by seven brick-steps.

I could not forbear descending into it, and, holding the lamp high, looking around. A brick floor had been laid here, as well, and some curious structures had been erected in it—something very much like an altar, of stone, for one, and benches, also of stone. And on the floor there were crude drawings very similar to those in the cupola of the house; though I could readily explain those astronomical designs in the cupola, which was open to the skies, I found it impossible to adduce any reason for their presence here.

There was, too, yet another opening into the floor before the altar. The great iron ring tempted me, but for some reason caution held me back from lifting the trapdoor. I went only close enough to detect a draft that indicated the circulation of air and suggested another opening to the outside below this subterranean chamber. Then I retreated to the passageway above, and, instead of returning to the house, pressed on.

In perhaps three quarters of a mile I came to a great wooden door, barred on the inside. I put down the lamp and lifted the bar. Opening the door, I found myself looking into a tangle of growth that effectively concealed the opening into the tunnel from anyone outside. I pushed through this tangle sufficiently to find myself looking down the hill toward the countryside below, where I could see the Miskatonic some distance away, and a stone bridge across it—but nowhere a dwelling of any kind, only the ruins of what had once been isolated farms. For a long minute I stood looking out upon that prospect; then I returned the way I had come, pondering the reason for being of the elaborate tunnel and the room below it—and whatever lay below that; for there was no key to their use, save only, remotely, as a secret way out of the house, if any were needed.

Once back in the house, I abandoned the cleaning of the second storey to another day, and set myself to bring about some order in the study, which, with papers on the desk and the floor around it, and the chair hurriedly pushed back, bore the aspects of having been precisely so left at my great-uncle's departure, as if he had been suddenly summoned and had gone straightway, and had then never returned to right the room.

I had always understood that Great-uncle Septimus Bishop was a man of independent means, and that he had been engaged in some kind of scholarly research. Astronomy perhaps—perhaps even in its relation to astrology, however unlikely that seemed. If only he had corresponded freely with those of his brothers who remained in England or if he had kept up some kind of diary or journal or daybook; but there was nothing of that kind in his desk or among the papers there, and the papers themselves were concerned with abstruse matters, filled with many diagrams and drawings, which

I took to be related to geometry since they were all angles and curves and represented nothing familiar to me; and such lettering as was set down on them was little more than gibberish, since it was not in English but in some language too ancient to be known to me, though I could have read anything in Latin and in half a dozen other languages still spoken on the Continent.

But there were some letters, carefully tied together, and, after a light lunch of cheese and bread and coffee, I undertook to look into them. The very first of these letters amazed me. It was headed "Starry Wisdom" and bore no address. Written in a broad-pointed pen and in a flourishing hand, it read:

"Dear Brother Bishop,

"In the Name of Azathoth, by the sign of the Shining Trapezohedron, all things will be known to you when the Haunter of Dark is summoned. There must be no light, but He who comes by darkness goes unseen and flees the light. All the secrets of Heaven and Hell will be made known. All the mysteries of worlds unknown to Earth will be yours.

"Be patient. Despite many setbacks, we flourish still, however secretly, here in Providence."

The signature was not decipherable, but I thought it read "Asenath Bowen " or "Brown." This first astonishing letter set the tone for almost all the rest. They were almost to a letter the most esoteric communications, dealing with mystical matters beyond my ken—and also beyond that of any modern man, belonging as these matters did to an age of superstition all but lost since the Dark Ages, and what my great-uncle had to do with such matters—unless, indeed, he were studying the survival of superstitious rites and practises in his time—I could not estimate.

I read them one after another. My great-uncle was hailed in the name of Great Cthulhu, of Hastur the

Unspeakable, of Shub-Niggurath, of Belial and Beelzebub, and many another. My great-uncle seemed to have been in correspondence with every kind of quack and mountebank, with self-professed wizards and renegade priests alike. There was one quasi-scholarly letter, however, that was unlike the others. It was written in a difficult script, though the signature—Wilbur Whateley—was easily read, and the date, January 17, 1928, as well as the place of origin—nearby Dunwich—offered me no difficulty. The letter itself, once deciphered, was arresting.

"Dear Mr. Bishop,

"Yes, by the Dho formula it is possible to see the inner city at the magnetic poles. I have seen it, and hope soon to go there. When the earth is cleared off. When you come to Dunwich, come to the farm, and I will say the Dho formula for you. And the Dho-Hna. And tell you the angles of the planes and the formulas between the Yr and the Nhhngr.

"They from the air cannot help without human blood. They take body from it, as you know. As you, too, will be able to do if you are destroyed other than by the Sign. There are those hereabouts who know the Sign and its power. Do not speak idly. Guard your tongue, even at the Sabbat.

"I saw you there—and what walks with you in the guise of a woman. But by the sight given me by those I had summoned I saw it in its true form, which you must have seen; so I guess some day you may look upon what I can call forth in my own image, and it may not affright you.

"I am yours in the Name of Him Who Is Not To Be Named."

Certainly the writer must have belonged to the same family as Tobias, who so shunned this house. Small wonder, then, at the fellow's fear and superstition: he

must have had some first hand acquaintance with it in more tangible form than my great-uncle could have offered him. And if Great-uncle Septimus had been friendly with Wilbur Whateley, it was not surprising that another Whateley might suspect him, too, of being what Wilbur was. Whatever that was. But how explain that friendship? Clearly, there were many things about my great-uncle I did not know.

I tied the letters up again and put them back where I had found them. I turned next to an envelope of newspaper clippings—all, I took it, recognizing the typeface, from the *Arkham Advertiser,* and found them no less puzzling than the letters, for they were accounts of mysterious disappearances in the Dunwich and Arkham region, principally of children and young adults—evidently just such as my Great-uncle Septimus had ultimately fallen victim to. There was one clipping that concerned the fury of the local inhabitants and their suspicion of one of their neighbors, who was unnamed, as the author of the disappearances; and their threatening to take matters into their own hands, the local constabulary having failed them. Perhaps my great-uncle had interested himself in solving the disappearances.

I put these, too, away, and sat for some time pondering what I had read, disquieted by something recalled from Wilbur Whateley's letter. "*I saw you there—and what walks with you in the guise of a woman.*" And I remembered how Tobias Whateley had referred to my great-uncle—"*Him and his.*" Slain. Perhaps the superstitious natives had blamed Great-uncle Septimus for the disappearances and had indeed taken vengeance on him.

Abruptly I felt the need to escape the house for a little while. It was now mid-afternoon, and the need of fresh air after so long in the musty house was strong.

So I walked outside, and again to the road, and turned away from Dunwich, almost as if impelled to do so, curious to know what the country beyond the Bishop House was like, and certain that the view I had seen from the mouth of the tunnel on the side of the hill lay in this general direction.

I expected that country to be wild, and indeed it was. The road carried through it, obviously little used, perhaps chiefly by the rural mailman. Trees and shrubbery pressed upon the road from both verges, and from time to time the hills loomed over on the one side, for on the other was the valley of the Miskatonic, drawing in now parallel to the road, then again swinging wide away from it. The land was utterly deserted, though there were fields that were clearly being worked, for grain flourished there for those non-resident farmers who came in to work it. There were no houses, only ruins or abandoned buildings; there were no cattle; there was nothing but the road to point to human habitation of recent date, for the road led somewhere, and presumably to another place where people lived.

It was at a point some distance from the river that I came upon a side road that wound away to the right. A leaning sign-post identified it as Crary Road, and an ancient barrier across it—itself all overgrown—marked it as "Closed," with another sign tacked below it that read: "Bridge out." It was this latter that inclined me to take the road; so I walked in along it, struggling through shrubbery and brambles for a distance of a little over a half a mile, and thus came upon the Miskatonic where a stone bridge had once carried traffic across.

The bridge was very old, and only the middle span stood, supported by two stone piers, one of them thickened with a large outcropping of concrete, upon which whoever had constructed it had etched a large five-

pointed star in the center of which was embedded a stone of the same general shape, though very small by comparison with the outline. The river had worn away both bridgeheads and carried down into it a span from either end, leaving the middle span to stand as a symbol of the civilization that had once flourished in this valley and had since passed away. It occurred to me that perhaps this was the very bridge that had been strengthened, though no longer used, as recorded in the Arkham *Advertiser.*

Strangely, the bridge—or what was left of it—exercised a curious attraction for me, though its architecture was crude; it was a purely utilitarian structure, and had never been built as an aesthetic object; yet, like so many old things, it had now the attraction of its great age, though the concrete reinforcement detracted from it in every way, making a great blister or bulge up from the foundation almost to the top. Indeed, studying it, I could not understand how it could in fact serve as a reinforcement of the pier, though both piers were clearly very old and crumbling, and would not stand for long, what with the action of the water at their base. The Miskatonic here was seemingly not very deep, but it had a respectable width that surrounded both piers supporting the middle span.

I stood gazing at the structure, trying to estimate its age, until the sun darkened suddenly, and, turning, I saw that great mounds of cumulo-nimbus clouds were pushing up the west and southwest, presaging rain; then I left the ruin of the bridge and went back to the house that had been the home of my Great-uncle Septimus Bishop.

It was well that I did so, for the storm broke within the hour, and was succeeded by another and another; and all night the thunder raged and the lightning flared

and the rain came down in torrents hour after hour, cascading off the roof, running down the slope in scores of rills and freshets for all the hours of darkness.

III

Perhaps it was only natural that in the fresh, rain-washed morning, I should think again of the bridge. Perhaps it was, instead, a compulsion arising from some source unknown to me. The rain had now been done for three hours; the rills and freshets had dwindled to little trickles; the roof was drying under the morning sun, and in another hour the shrubbery and the grasses too would once again be dry.

At noon, filled with a sense of adventurous expectancy, I went to look at the old bridge. Without knowing quite why, I expected change, and I found it—for the span was gone, the very piers had crumbled, and even the great concrete reinforcement was sundered and seared—obviously struck by lightning, a force which, coupled with the raging torrent the Miskatonic must have been in the night (for even now it was high, swollen, brown with silt; and its banks showed that in the night it had been higher by over two feet), had succeeded in bringing to final ruin the ancient bridge that had once carried men and women and children across the river into the now deserted valley on the far side.

Indeed, the stones that had made up the piers had been carried well down river and flung up along the shores; only the concrete reinforcement, riven and broken, lay at the site of the middle span. It was while I followed with my eyes the path of the stream and the disposition of the stones that I caught sight of something white lying on the near bank, not far up out of

the water. I made my way down to it, and came upon something I had not expected to see.

Bones. Whitened bones, long immersed in the water perhaps, and now cast up by the torrent. Perhaps some farmer's cow, drowned long ago. But the thought had hardly entered my mind before I discarded it, for the bones upon which I now looked were at least in part human, and now I saw, looking out from among them, a human skull.

But not all were human, for there were some among them that bore no resemblance to any bones I ever saw—long whips of bones, flexible by the look of them, as of some creature but half formed, all intertwined with the human bones, so that there was hardly any definition of them. They were bones that demanded burial; but, of course, they could not be buried without notification to the proper authorities.

I looked around for something in which to carry them, and my eye fell upon some coarse sacking, also cast up by the Miskatonic. So I walked down and took it up, wet though it still was, and brought it back and spread it out beside the bones. Then I picked them up—at first all intertwined as they were, by the handful; and then one by one to the last finger-bone—and having finished, gathered them up in the sacking by tying the four corners of it together, and in that fashion carried them back to the house, and took them down into the cellar until I could take them into Dunwich later in the day, and perhaps to Arkham and the county seat, thinking then that I had ought to have resisted the impulse to gather them up, and left them where I had found them, which no doubt the authorities would have preferred.

I come now to that portion of my account which, by any standard, is incredible. I have said that I took the bones directly to the cellar; now, there was no reason

why I could not have deposited them on the verandah or even in the study; yet without question I took them to the cellar, and there I left them while I went back to the ground floor to prepare and eat the lunch I had not troubled to eat before I walked to the old bridge. When I had finished my repast, I determined to take the bones from the river to the proper authorities, and went back down into the cellar to fetch them.

Judge my baffled astonishment to find, when I lifted the sacking, which lay just as I had left it, to find it empty. The bones were gone. I could not believe the evidence of my own senses. I returned to the ground floor, lit a lamp, and carried it into the cellar, which I proceeded to search from wall to wall. It was futile. Nothing was changed in the cellar since first I had looked into it—the windows had not been touched, for the same cobwebs still covered them—and, as far as I could see, the trapdoor leading to the tunnel had not been lifted. Yet the bones were irrevocably gone.

I returned to the study, bewildered, beginning to doubt that I had in fact found and carried home any bones. But indeed I had! As I sat trying to resolve my perplexity, one possible—if farfetched—solution to the mystery occurred to me. Perhaps the bones had not been as firm as I had thought them; perhaps exposure to the air had reduced them to dust. But in that case surely that dust would have been in evidence. And the sacking was clean, free of the white detritus to which the bones would have been reduced.

Manifestly, I could not go to the authorities with such a tale, for certainly they would have looked upon me as a madman. But there was nothing to prevent my making inquiries, and, accordingly, I drove into Dunwich. Perversely, I went first into Whateley's store.

At sight of me, Tobias glowered. "Wun't sell yew nothin'," he said before I had had a chance to speak,

and, to another customer—a slovenly old fellow—he said pointedly, "This here's thet Bishop!" which intelligence caused the old man to sidle quickly out the door.

"I came to ask a question," I said.

"Ask it."

"Is there a cemetery along the Miskatonic up a piece fom that old bridge above my place?"

"Dun't know uv any. Why?" he asked suspiciously.

"I can't tell you," I said. "Except to say I found something that made me think so."

The proprietor's eyes narrowed. He bit at his lower lip. Then his sallow face lost the little color it had. "Bones," he whispered. "Yew found some bones!"

"I didn't say so," I answered.

"Where'd yew find 'em?" he demanded in an urgent voice.

I spread my hands. "I have no bones," I said, and walked out of the store.

Looking back as I walked up toward the rectory of a little church I had seen on a side street, I saw that Whateley had closed his store and was hurrying along the main street of Dunwich, evidently to spread the suspicion he had voiced.

The name of the Baptist minister, according to his mailbox, was Abraham Dunning, and he was at home—a short, rotund man, rosy-cheeked and with spectacles on his nose. He appeared to be in his middle sixties, and, gratifyingly, my name obviously meant nothing to him. He invited me into his spare parlor, which evidently served as his office.

I explained that I had come to make inquiries of him.

"Pray do so, Mr. Bishop," he invited.

"Tell me, Reverend Dunning, have you ever heard of warlocks hereabouts?"

He tented his fingers and leaned back. An indul-

gent smile crossed his face. "Ah, Mr. Bishop, these people are a superstitious lot. Many of them do indeed believe in witches and warlocks and all manner of things from outside, particularly since the events of 1928, when Wilbur Whateley and the thing that was his twin brother died. Whateley fancied himself a wizard and kept talking about what he 'called down' from the air—but of course, it was only his brother—horribly misshapen through some accident of birth, I suppose, though the accounts given me are too garbled for me to be sure."

"Did you know my late great-uncle, Septimus Bishop?"

He shook his head. "He was before my time. I do have a Bishop family in my charge, but I rather think they are a different branch. Ill-educated. And there is no facial resemblance."

I assured him that we were not related. It was clear, however, that he knew nothing that would be of any assistance to me; so I took my departure as soon as I decently could, for all that the Reverend Dunning was patently anxious for the company of an educated man, not commonly found in Dunwich and its environs, I gathered.

I despaired of learning anything in Dunwich; so I made my way back to the house, where I could not prevent myself from descending once more to the cellar to make certain anew that the bones I had brought home were gone. And, of course, they were. And not even rats could have have carried them, one by one, past the door of the study and out of the house without my having seen them.

But the suggestion of rats set in mind a new train of thought. Acting on it, I went again into the cellar with the lamp and searched carefully for any opening such

as rats might use, still seeking some natural explanation for the disappearance of the bones.

There was none.

I resigned myself to their vanishing, and spent the remainder of that day trying to keep my mind upon something else.

But that night I was troubled by dreams—dreams in which I saw the bones I had brought reassemble themselves into a skeleton—and the skeleton clothe itself in flesh—and the whiplike bones grow into something not of this world that constantly changed shape, and was once a thing of utter horror and then a large black cat, once a tentacled monster and then a lissome naked woman, once a giant sow and then a lean bitch running at its master's side; and, waking, I lay hearing distant sounds I could not identify—a strange snuffling and a slobbering that seemed to rise from far below, from deep in the earth, a rending and grinding that suggested somethind dreadful and malign.

I rose to shake myself free of dream and hallucination, and walked the house in the dark, pausing now and then to gaze out into the moonlit night, until hallucination troubled me even there, for I thought I saw at the edge of the close-pressing wood the long lean figure of a man together with a thing of abominable shape that loped at his side—seen so for but a few minutes before both vanished into the dark wood which the moonlight did not penetrate. If ever I wished for the guiding wisdom of my Great-uncle Septimus, it was then; for the hallucination was even more vivid than the dream, with which I had done now, as I had with the sounds I had fancied I heard from below.

Nevertheless, in the clear light of day that dawned soon enough, I was persuaded to descend into the cellar, and enter the tunnel with the lamp, and go on to the subterranean room—compelled to do so by some force

I did not understand and could not withstand. At the entrance to the underground room I thought that the earth was disturbed by more than my footprints at my earlier visit, disturbed not only by alien prints, but by the marks as of something dragged there from the direction of the door in the hillside, and I was apprehensive when I went down into that room. But I need not have been, for there was no one there.

I stood with lamp held high and looked about. All was unchanged—stone benches, brick floor, altar—and yet. . . . There was a stain upon the altar, a great dark stain I could not remember having seen before. Slowly, reluctantly, I moved forward, though I had no will or inclination to do so, until the lamplight disclosed it—freshly wet and gleaming—undeniably *a pool of blood.*

And I saw now, for the first time seeing the altar close, that there were other and far older stains, dark, too, and still faintly red, that must have been blood spilled there a long time ago.

Badly shaken, I fled the cellar, ran along the tunnel, and blundered up into the cellar immediately below the house. And there I stood to catch my breath until I heard a sound of footsteps above, and made my cautious way up to the ground floor.

The steps had seemed to come from the study. I blew out the lamp, for the light from outside the house, despite the massed trees, was ample, and I made my way to the study.

There sat a man, lean of face, saturnine of countenance, his tall body concealed by a cloak, his eyes like fire fixed upon me.

"You are clearly a Bishop," he said. "But which one?"

"Ambrose," I said, when I found my voice. "Son of William, grandson of Peter. Come to see about the property of my Great-uncle Septimus. And you?"

"I have been hidden away a long time. Nephew, I am your Great-uncle Septimus."

Something stirred behind him, and looked out from behind his chair, though he pulled out his cloak as if to hide what was there—a squamous thing with the face of a lovely woman.

I fainted dead away.

As I was coming around to consciousness again, I fancied he stood near me and said to someone, "We shall have to give him a little more time."

Opening my eyes fearfully, I looked to where he had been.

There was no one there.

IV

Four days later the first issue of the *Arkham Advertiser* was delivered to me, left under a stone on top of what remained of the pillar at the roadside. I had entered a six-month subscription when I had taken the opportunity of studying its files for mention of my great-uncle. I resisted my initial impulse to discard it, for I had subscribed merely as a courtesy in return for the privilege accorded me, and carried it into the house.

Though I had no intention of reading it, a two-column heading caught my eye. *Dunwich Disappearances Resume.* Somewhat apprehensively, I read the story below.

"Seth Frye, 18, employed at the Howard Cole farm immediately north of Dunwich, has been reported missing. He was last seen three nights ago walking out of Dunwich on his way home. This is the second disappearance in the Dunwich area in as many days. Harold Sawyer, 20, vanished from the outskirts of Dunwich without trace two days ago. Sheriff John Houghton and

his deputies are searching the area, but as yet report no clue. Neither young man had any known reason to disappear voluntarily, and foul play is suspected.

"It will be remembered by older readers that a rash of similar disappearances took place over twenty years ago, culminating in the vanishing of Septimus Bishop in the summer of 1929.

"The Dunwich area is a backwater which has a curious reputation and has figured from time to time in the news, usually in a strange way, ever since the mysterious Whateley affair of 1928. . . ."

I lowered the paper, overcome with the knowledge that events were shaping toward only one explanation, one I was loath even now to accept. It was then that I determined to set down everything that had occurred, in the hope of seeing everything that had happned in its proper relation, one event to another, for those events were hopelessly garbled in my mind, and I kept thinking of the bones that had disappeared from the cellar and of Wilbur Whateley's words in his letter to my great-uncle—*"They from the air cannot help without human blood. They take body from it . . . . . as you, too, will be able to do . . . . ."* and of Great-uncle Septimus's mysterious return and his equally mysterious vanishing again, for there had been no sign of him since the sight I had had of him in the study.

I threw the paper to the floor, my mind awhirl with the lore of warlocks and familiars, the power of running water to contain ghosts and witches and all such superstitious manifestations, my reason embattled, besieged. Impelled by a wild curiosity to learn more, I ran from the house; unmindful of the brambles in my path, I pushed through the lane to the car, and drove down the road to Dunwich.

I had hardly set foot into Tobias Whateley's shop before he confronted me, eyes ablaze.

"Git aout! I wun't wait on yew," he cried fiercely. "Yew done it!"

I found it impossible to break into his anger.

"Git aout a taown, afore it happens again. We done it once—we kin do it again. I known thet boy, Seth, like I known my own. Yew done it—yew cursed Bishops!"

I backed away from his naked hatred, and saw, as I retreated to my car, the way in which other inhabitants of Dunwich grouped along the street staring at me with unconcealed loathing.

I got into the car and drove back out of Dunwich, knowing for the first time a spreading fear of the unknown against which all rationalization was powerless.

And once back at the Bishop house, I lit the lamp and descended to the cellar. I entered the tunnel and walked along it to the trap door into the subterranean room. I lifted it, and such a charnel odor rose up from it—perhaps from that other opening I had never looked into below, for the room, as much as could be seen in the glow from my lamp, was unchanged from the last time I had looked into it—that I could not bring myself to descend.

I dropped the trapdoor and fled back the way I had come.

Against all reason, I knew now what horror I had unwittingly loosed upon the countryside—I and the blind forces of nature—the horror from the middle span....

* * *

Later. Great-uncle Septimus has just awakened me from my dream-haunted sleep, a firm hand on my shoulder. I opened my eyes to see him dimly in the

dark, and behind him the white, unclothed body of a long-haired woman, whose eyes shone as if with fire.

"Nephew, we are in danger," said my great-uncle. "Come."

He and his companion turned and left the study.

I swung off the couch where I had fallen asleep fully dressed to set these last words to the account I have written.

Outside, I can see the flickering of many torches. I know who is there at the woods' edge—the hateful inhabitants of Dunwich and the country around—I know what they mean to do.

Great-uncle Septimus and his companion are waiting for me in the tunnel. There is no other course for me.

If only *they* do not know of the door in the hillside. . . . .

* * *

The Bishop manuscript ends at this point.

By way of coincidence, seekers after curiosa will find in the inside pages of the Arkham *Advertiser* dated eleven days after the destruction by fire of the old Bishop house, this paragraph:

"The Dunwichers have been at it again.

"Hard upon the disappearance of Ambrose Bishop, the Dunwichers have been building again. The old Crary Road bridge, which was recently completely destroyed during a flash flood on the Miskatonic, apparently holds some charm for the Dunwichers, who have quietly rebuilt one of the central piers in concrete, and crowned it with what old-timers in the area call 'the Elder Sign'. No one in Dunwich, approached by our reporter, would admit any knowledge of the old bridge. . . ."

The Shadow in the Attic

I

MY GREAT-UNCLE URIAH GARRISON WAS NOT A MAN to cross—a dark-faced, shaggy-browed man with wild black hair and a face that haunted my childhood dreams. I knew him only in those early years. My father crossed him, and he died—strangely, smothered in his bed a hundred miles from Arkham, where my great-uncle lived. My Aunt Sophia condemned him, and she died—tripped on a stair by nothing visible. How many others might there have been? Who knows? Who could do more than whisper fearfully of what dark powers were at Uriah Garrison's command.

And of how much of what was said of him was superstitious gossip, baseless, and malicious, none could say. We never saw him again after my father's death, my mother hating her uncle then and until the day she died, though she never forgot him. Nor did I, either him or his gambrel-roofed house on Aylesbury Street, in that part of Arkham south of the Miskatonic River, not far from Hangman's Hill and its wooded graveyard. Indeed, Hangman's Brook flowed through his grounds, wooded, too, like the cemetery on the hill; I never forgot the shadowed house where he lived alone and had someone in—by night—to keep his house for him—the high-ceilinged rooms, the shunned attic which no one entered by day and into which no one was permitted, ever, to go with a lamp or light of any kind, the

small-paned windows that looked out upon the bushes and trees, the fan-lit doors; it was the kind of house that could not fail to lay its dark magic upon an impressionable young mind, and it did upon mine, filling me with brooding fancies and, sometimes, terrifying dreams, from which I started awake and fled to my mother's side, and one memorable night lost my way and came upon my great-uncle's housekeeper, with her strange emotionless, expressionless face—she stared at me and I at her, as across unfathomable gulfs of space, before I turned and sped away, spurred by new fear imposed upon those engendered in dreams.

I did not miss going there. There was no love lost between us, and there was little communication, though there were occasions on which I was moved to send Uriah Garrison a short greeting—the old man's birthday, or Christmas—to which he never responded, which was as well.

It was, therefore, all the more surprising to me that I should have inherited his property and a small competence at his death, with no more annoying a provision but that I inhabit the house for the summer months of the first year after his death; he had known, clearly, that my teaching obligations would not permit occupancy throughout the year.

It was not much to ask. I had no intention of keeping the property. Arkham had even in those years begun to grow outward along the Aylesbury Pike, and the city which had once been so detached from my great-uncle's home, was now pressing close upon it, and the property would be a desirable acquisition for someone. Arkham held no particular attraction for me, though I was fascinated by the legends that haunted it, by its clustering gambrel roofs, and the architectural ornamentation of two centuries ago. This fascination did not run deep, and Arkham as a permanent home

did not appeal to me. But before I could sell Uriah Garrison's house, it was necessary to occupy it in accordance with the terms of his will.

In June of 1928, over my mother's protests and in spite of her dark hints that Uriah Garrison had been peculiarly cursed and abhorred, I took up my residence in the house on Aylesbury Street. It required little effort to do so, for the house had been left furnished since my great-uncle's death in March of that year, and someone, clearly, had kept it clean, as I saw on my arrival from Brattleboro. My great-uncle's housekeeper had evidently been instructed to continue her duties at least until my occupancy.

But my great-uncle's lawyer—an ancient fellow who still affected high collars and solemn black attire—knew nothing of any arrangements Uriah Garrison had made, when I called upon him to investigate the provisions of the will. "I've never been in the house, Mr. Duncan," he said. "If he made arrangements to have it kept clean, there must have been another key. I sent you the one I had, as you know. There is no other, to my knowledge."

As for the provisions of my great-uncle's will—these were barrenly simple. I was merely to occupy the house through the months of June, July and August, or for ninety days following my coming, if my teaching obligations made it impossible to take up occupancy on the first of June. There were no other conditions whatsoever, not even the ban on the attic room I had expected to see set down.

"You may find the neighbors a trifle unfriendly at first," Mr. Saltonstall went on. "Your great-uncle was a man of odd habits, and he rebuffed the neighbors. I suppose he resented their moving into the nieghborhood, and they for their part took umbrage at his independence and made much of the fact that, because

he took walks into the cemetery on Hangman's Hill, he seemed to prefer the company of the dead to that of the living."

As to what the old man had been like in his last years, about which I asked,—"He was a lusty, vigorous old fellow, very tough, actually," answered Mr. Saltonstall, "but, as so often happens, when his decline came, it came fast—he was dead in just one week. Senility, the doctor said."

"His mind?" I asked.

Mr. Saltonstall smiled frostily. "Well, now, Mr. Duncan, you must know there was always some question about your uncle's mind. He had some very strange ideas which were, in a real sense, archaic. This witchcraft exploration, for one thing—he spent a good deal of money investigating the Salem trials. But you'll find his library intact—and filled with books on the subject. Other than this obsessive interest in one subject, he was a coldly rational man—that describes him best. Unfriendly, and holding himself aloof."

So Great-uncle Uriah Garrison had not changed in the years that had intervened between my childhood and my late twenties. And the house had not changed, either. It still had that air of watchful waiting—like someone huddled together against the weather, waiting for a stage-coach—nothing more recent, certainly, for the house was two hundred years old, and, though well kept up, it had never been invaded by electricity and its plumbing was archaic. Apart from its appointments, and some aspects of its finishing lumber, the house had no value—only the property on which it stood had considerable monetary worth in view of the expansion of Arkham along the Aylesbury Pike.

The furniture was in cherry and mahogany and black walnut, and I more than half suspected that if Rhoda—my fiancée, saw it, she would want to keep

it for our own house when we built one—and, what with the money the sale of the property and the furniture might realize, we should be able to build that house, leaving my salary as an English Department assistant and hers as an instructor in philology and archaeology to keep it up.

Three months' time was not long to do without electricity, and I could endure the ancient plumbing for those weeks, but I decided forthwith that I could not do without a telephone; so I drove into Arkham and ordered a telephone installed without delay. While I was in the business section, I stopped in at the telegraph office on Church Street and sent wires to both my mother and Rhoda, assuring them of my arrival and inviting Rhoda, at her leisure, to drive around and inspect my newly acquired property. I stopped long enough, too, for a good meal at one of the restaurants, bought a few necessary provisions for breakfast—however little inclined I might be toward building a fire in the old iron range in the kitchen—and went back fortified against hunger for the remainder of that day.

I had brought with me various books and papers necessary to the doctoral dissertation on which I was at work, and I knew that the shelves of the library of Miskatonic University, scarcely a mile from the house, would offer me all the additional assistance I might need; Thomas Hardy and the Wessex country hardly constituted a subject so obscure as to make necessary application to the Widener or some more expanded college library. So to that work I set myself until mid-evening of my first day in Uriah Garrison's old house, when, being tired, I went to bed in what had been my great-uncle's room on the second floor rather than in the guest-room on the ground floor.

II

Rhoda surprised me by coming to visit late the following day. She arrived without any prior notice, driving her own roadster. Rhoda Prentiss. It was, actually, a ridiculously prim name for such a lively young lady, one so filled with excitement and so vigorously alive. I failed to hear her drive in, and was not aware of her until she opened the front door of the house and called out, "Adam! Are you home?"

I bounded out of the study where I was at work—by lamplight, for the day was dark and louring with squalls—and there she stood, with her shoulder-length ash-blonde hair damp with raindrops, and her thin-lips parted, and her candid blue eyes taking in what she could see of the house with lively curiosity.

But when I took her in my arms, a faint tremor ran through her body.

"How can you bear three months in this house?" she cried.

"It was made for doctoral dissertations," I said. "There's nothing here to disturb me."

"The whole house disturbs me, Adam," she said with unaccustomed gravity. "Don't you feel anything wrong?"

"What was wrong about it is dead. That was my great-uncle. When he was here, I admit, the house reeked of evil."

"And it still does."

"If you believe in psychic residue."

She might have said more, but I changed the subject.

"You're just in time to drive into Arkham for dinner. There's a quaint old-fashioned restaurant at the foot of French Hill."

She said no more, however much, as I saw by the small frown that held for a while, she was of a mind to say. And at dinner her mood changed, she spoke of her work, of our plans, of herself and of me, and we spent over two hours in the French House before we returned to the house. It was only natural that she should stay for the night, taking the guest room, which, being below my own, enabled her simply to rap on the ceiling if she wanted for anything, or if, as I put it, "the psychic residue crowds you."

Nevertheless, despite my jesting, I was aware from the moment of my fiancée's arrival of a kind of heightened awareness in the house; it was as if the house had shaken off its indolence, as if, suddenly, it had come upon need to be more alert, as if it apprehended some danger to itself in somehow learning of my intention to dispose of it to someone who would unfeelingly tear it down. This feeling grew throughout the evening, and with it a curious response that was basically sympathetic, unaccountably. Yet, I suppose this should not have been so strange to me, since any house slowly assumes an atmosphere, and one of two centuries in age has undeniably more than a house less old. Indeed, it was the great number of such houses that lent to Arkham its chief distinction—not alone the architectural treasures, but the atmosphere of the houses, the lore and legendry of human lives come into being and spent in the relatively small confines of the city.

And from that moment, too, I was aware of something on another plane about the house—not that Rhoda's intuitive reaction to it had been communicated to me, but simply that her arrival spurred events, the first of which took place that very night. I have thought afterward that Rhoda's appearance on the scene hastened the happenings that were bound to take place in

any even, but which would, in the normal course of circumstances, have taken place more insidiously.

We went to bed late that night. For my part, I fell asleep instantly, for the house was set well away from most of the city traffic, and there was nothing in the house of those settling and creaking noises so common to old houses. Below me, Rhoda still moved restlessly about, and she was still up and around when I drifted off.

It was sometime after midnight when I was awakened.

I lay for a few seconds growing to full wakefulness. What was it that had awakened me? A sound of breathing not my own? A nearby presence? Something on my bed? Or all these things together?

I thrust forth a hand and encountered, unmistakably, a woman's naked breast! And at the same moment I was aware of her hot, fervid breath—and then, instantaneously, she was gone, the bed lightened, I felt, rather than heard, her movement toward the door of the bedroom.

Fully awake now, I thrust back the light sheet covering me—for the night was sultry and humid, and got out of bed. With hands that trembled a little, I lit the lamp and stood there, undecided as to what to do. I was clad only in my shorts, and the experience had unsettled me more than I cared to say.

I am ashamed to admit that I thought at first it had been Rhoda—which was only evidence of the mental confusion the incident had brought me to, for Rhoda was incapable of such an act; had she wished to spend the night in my bed, she would have said as much—she had done so before this. Further, the breast I had touched was not Rhoda's; her breasts were firm, beautifully rounded—and the breast of the woman who lay next to me on my bed was flaccid, large nippled, and

old. And the effect of it, unlike Rhoda's, was one of shuddering horror.

I took up the lamp and stepped outside my room, determined to search the house. But at the moment of my entry into the hall I heard, drifting down as if from somewhere outside, high up over the house, the wailing and screaming of a woman's voice, the voice of a woman being punished—only a drift of sound that grew more and more tenuous and was finally lost. It could not have lasted thirty seconds in all, but it was, in its way, as unmistakable as what I had felt beside me on my bed.

I stood, shaken—and in the end retreated to my bed and lay sleepless for over an hour, waiting for what might happen.

Nothing did, and when at last I slept again, I had begun to wonder whether I had not confused dream with reality.

But in the morning, the cloud on Rhoda's face told me that something was wrong. She had got up to prepare breakfast for the two of us, and I came upon her in the kitchen.

Without a greeting, she turned and said, "There was a woman in the house last night!"

"Then it wasn't a dream!" I cried.

"Who was she?" she demanded.

I shook my head. "I wish I could tell you."

"It seems to me an extraordinary thing to have a cleaning woman in in the middle of the night," she went on.

"You saw her?"

"I saw her, yes. Why?"

"What did she look like?"

"She seemed to be a young woman—but I had a strange feeling that she wasn't young at all. Her face

was expressionless—fixed. Only her eyes seemed to be alive."

"She saw you?"

"I don't think so."

"My great-uncle's cleaning woman!" I cried. "That's who it must have been. I found the house clean when I came. You see how clean it is. He must never have left orders for her not to come again. I remember seeing her once when I was a child. He always had her in at night . . ."

"How utterly ridiculous! Uriah Garrison died in March—over three months ago. Only a cretin couldn't tell by this time that he was no longer alive. Who pays her?"

Who, indeed? I could not answer.

Furthermore, in the circumstances, I could not tell Rhoda of my experience in the night. I could only assure her that I had not seen a woman in the house since that night in my early years when I had inadvertently caught a glimpse of the cleaning woman at her work.

"I remember having the same impression, too—the expressionlessness of her face," I said.

"Adam, that was twenty years ago—perhaps more," Rhoda pointed out. "It couldn't be the same woman."

"I shouldn't think so. Still, I suppose it isn't impossible. And in spite of what Mr. Saltonstall said, she must have a key."

"It simply doesn't make sense. And you've hardly been here long enough to hire anyone yourself."

"I didn't."

"I believe it. You wouldn't lift a finger to dust if you were drowning in it." She shrugged, "You'll have to find out who she is and put a stop to it. It won't do to have people gossiping, you know."

On this note we sat down to breakfast, after which, I knew, Rhoda intended to be on her way.

But the troubled frown remained on Rhoda's forehead, and she said very little during the meal, responding to my comments with only the briefest of monosyllables, until at last she burst forth with, "Oh, Adam—can't you *feel* it?"

"Feel what?"

"Something in this house wants you, Adam—I sense it. It's you the house wants."

After my initial astonishment, I pointed out soberly that the house was an inanimate object, I was to the best of my knowledge the only living creature in it, exclusive of mice I may not have seen or heard, and that the house could not want or not want anything.

She was not convinced, and when, an hour later, she was ready to leave, she said impulsively, "Adam come away with me—now."

"It would be folly to surrender a valuable property we can both turn to good use simply to satisfy your whim, Rhoda," I answered.

"It's more than a whim. Take care, Adam."

On this note we parted, Rhoda promising to come again later in the summer, and exacting my promise to write her faithfully.

III

The experience of that second night in the house stirred my memory to thoughts of the sinister gloom that had pervaded the house for me as a boy—gloom which radiated from my Great-uncle Uriah's forbidding countenance, and from the locked attic room which no one dared enter, however often my great-uncle went in and out of it. I suppose it was only natural that eventu-

ally I would think again of the challenge represented by the attic room and would respond to it.

The rain of yesterday had given way to bright sunlight which streamed into the house through the windows on the sunny side and gave to it an air of genteel and mellow age, one far removed from the sinister. It was such a day as to make all that was dark and ominous seem very far away, and I did not hesitate to light a lamp to dispel the darkness in the windowless attic and set out forthwith for the top of the old house, carrying along all the keys Mr. Saltonstall had surrendered to me.

None was necessary, however. The attic room was unlocked.

And empty, too, I thought, when I stepped into it. But not quite. A single chair stood in the middle of that gabled room, and on it lay a few prosaic objects and one which could not be so described—some woman's clothing—and a rubber mask—one of that kind which moulds to the features of the wearer. I crossed to it, astonished, and put the lamp down on the floor the better to examine the things on the chair.

They were nothing more than what I had seen at a glance—a common cotton house dress in a very old-fashioned square print design, in various shades of grey—an apron—a pair of skin-tight rubber gloves—elastic stockings—house slippers—and then the mask, which, on examination, proved to be ordinary enough, save for having hair attached to it—however unusual it was to find it here. The clothing could very likely have belonged to Great-uncle Uriah's cleaning woman—it would have been like him to let her use only the attic room in which to change. And yet, of course, this did not ring true, considering the care he had always taken to allow no one to enter that room but himself.

The mask could not be so readily explained. It was

not at all hardening, betokening long disuse; it had the softness and flexibility of rubber that is being used, which was all the more mystifying. Moreover, in common with all the rest of the house, the attic was spotless.

Leaving the clothing undisturbed, I picked up the lamp again and held it high. It was then that I saw the shadow, which lay beyond my own, against the wall and sloping ceiling—a monstrous, misshapen, blackened area, as if some vast flame had flared forth and burnt its image into the wood there. I stared at it for some time before I realized that, however grotesque it was, it bore a resemblance to a distorted human figure, though its head—for it had a surmounting blob of shapelessness that served it as head—was horribly out of shape.

I walked over to examine it, but its outlines faded as I drew close. Yet, undeniably, it had the appearance of having been burned into the wood by some searing blast. I moved back again, toward the chair, and a trifle beyond it. The shadow bore the appearance of having come from a blast of flame virtually at floor level; its angle was odd and inexplicable. I turned, accordingly, and tried to find the possible point from which whatever had made this strange blemish on the wall and ceiling could have come.

As I turned, the light fell upon the opposite side of the attic room and disclosed, at the point I sought, an opening at the juncture of the roof and the floor—for there was along this side of the house no wall between floor and roof—an opening no larger than that for a mouse, and I assumed instantly that it was, indeed, a mouse-hole, and it did not attract my attention for more than a second, but what was painted in garish red chalk or oil all around it did—a sequence of curious angular lines, which seemed to me completely unlike

any geometrical designs with which I was familiar and which were arranged in such a fashion as to make the mouse-hole seem their precise center. I thought instantly of my great-uncle's absorption in witchcraft, but no, these were not the familiar pentagrams and tetrahedrons and circles associated with sorcery—rather their opposite.

I carried the lamp toward the painted lines and examined them; up close, they were simply lines, no more—but from the middle of the attic they had a strange kind of design, essentially other-dimensional, I thought. There was no telling how long they had been there, but they did not seem to be of recent origin—that is, within the last three decades or so, and they might very well have been a century old.

It was while I was pondering the meaning of the strange shadow and the painted lines opposite it, that I began to grow aware of a kind of tension in the attic; it was actually indescribable; it felt—how curious it is to put it into words—as if the attic *were holding its breath!* I began to grow uneasy, as if not the attic but I were under observation, and the flame on the wick wavered and began to smoke, and the room seemed to grow dark. There was a moment that was as if the earth had taken a half turn backward or something of that kind, and I had not gone along with it but were suspended somewhere far out in space at the instant before plunging into orbit of my own—and then the moment passed, the earth resumed its regularity of turning, the room lightened, the flame in the lamp steadied.

I left the attic in unseemly haste, with all the whispered lore of my childhood pressing after me out of the store of memories. I wiped away from my temples the fine beading of perspiration which had gathered there, blew out the lamp, and started down the narrow stairs, considerably shaken, though, by the time I reached the

ground floor I had regained my composure. Nevertheless, I was now a little less ready than I had been to brush aside my fiancée's perturbation about the house in which I had consented to spend the summer.

I pride myself on being a methodical man. In her lighter moments, Rhoda has referred to me as her "little pedant,"—referring strictly, of course, to my concern with books and writers and the circumstances of literature. Not that I mind. The truth, no matter how it is put, is no less truth. Once recovered from my momentarily frightening experience in the attic, following so hard upon the events of the night, I resolved to get to the bottom of the matter and uncover some tenable explanation for what had happened in both instances. Had I, in fact, been in an hallucinatory state on both occasions? Or had I not?

The cleaning woman obviously was the nearest point of departure.

An immediate telephone call to Mr. Saltonstall, however, only confirmed what he had said before—he knew of no cleaning woman, he had no knowledge that my great-uncle had ever employed a housekeeper of any kind, and to the best of his knowledge there was no other key to the house.

"But you do understand, Mr. Duncan," finished Mr. Saltonstall, "that your great-uncle was a reclusive sort of man, secretive almost to the point of fanaticism. What he did not wish others to know, others did not know. But, if I may make a suggestion—why not make inquiry among the neighbors? I've set foot in the house only once or twice, and they've had it under daily observation for years. There isn't much, you know, that neighbors don't find out."

I thanked him and rang off.

Approaching the neighbors, however, apart from a frontal attack, represented a problem, for most of the

houses in the area were at more than lot-line distances from my great-uncle's house. The nearest house was two lots away, off to the left of my great-uncle's ancient house; I had noticed very little sign of life about it, but now that I peered from the windows, I saw someone in a rocking-chair taking the sun on the porch of that house.

I pondered for a few minutes about my best approach, but I could think of nothing but a direct question. So I walked out of the house and down the lane to the house next door. As I turned into the yard, I saw that the occupant of the chair was an old man.

"Good morning, sir," I greeted him. "I wonder if you could help me."

The old man stirred. "Who're you?"

I identified myself, which aroused an immediate responsive interest. "Duncan, eh? Never heard the old man mention you. But then, I never spoke with him more'n a dozen times. What can I do for you?"

"I'm trying to find out how to reach my great-uncle's cleaning woman."

He gave me a sharp glance out of suddenly narrowed eyes. "Young fellow, I'd like to have known that myself—just out of curiosity," he said. "I never knew her to have any other place."

"You've seen her come?"

"Never. Saw her through the windows at night."

"You've seen her leave, then?"

"Never saw her come, never saw her leave. Neither did anybody else. Never saw her by day, either. Maybe the old man kept her there—but I wouldn't know where."

I was baffled. I thought briefly that the old man was being deliberately obstructive, but no, his sincerity was self-evident. I hardly knew what to say.

"That's not the only thing, Duncan. You seen the blue light yet?"

"No."

"You heard anything you couldn't explain?"

I hesitated.

The old man grinned. "I thought so. Old Garrison was up to something. I wouldn't be surprised if he's still at it."

"My great-uncle died last March," I reminded him.

"You can't prove it by me," he said. "Oh, I saw a coffin carried out of that house up to the cemetery on Hangman's Hill—but that's as much as I know about it. I don't know who or what was in the coffin."

The old fellow went on in this vein until it was clear to me that he knew nothing, no matter how much he suspected. He gave me hints and innuendos, but nothing tangible, and the sum of what he hinted was little more than what I had known myself—that my great-uncle kept to himself, that he was engaged in some "hellish business," and that he was better dead than alive—if in fact he were dead. He had concluded also that there was something "wrong" with my great-uncle's house. He did concede that, left alone, he did not trouble the neighbors. And he had been left strictly alone ever since old Mrs. Barton had gone to his house and upbraided him for keeping a woman there—and was found dead of a heart attack next morning at her home, "scared to death, they said."

There was plainly no short-cut to information about my great-uncle to be had; unlike the subject of my doctoral dissertation, there were no references in libraries—other than my great-uncle's own, to which I repaired at once, only to find there an almost solid array of books, both ancient and modern, on the subject of sorcery and witchcraft and allied superstitions—the *Malleus Maleficarum*, for example, and very old books

by Olaus Magnus, Eunapius, de Rochas and others. Few titles meant anything to me; I had never heard of Anania's *De Natura Daemonum* or De Vignate's *Quaestio de Lamiis* or Stampa's *Fuga Satanae*.

It was evident that my great-uncle had read his books, for they were marked up with annotations—principally cross-references jotted down for his easy use. I had no difficulty reading the often ancient printing, but it was all on related themes—my great-uncle's interest ran not only to the ordinary practises of witchcraft and demonology, but to a persistent fascination with succubi, the retention of the "essence" from one existence to another—not, apparently, a reference to reincarnation, familiars, the wrecking of vengeance by means of sorcery, incantations, and the like.

I had no intention of studying the books, but I took time to follow through some of his references on the "essence," and found myself led from book to book from a discussion of the "essence" or "soul" or "life-force," as it was variously called, through chapters on transmigration and possession, to a dissertation on taking over a new body by driving out the life-force within and substituting one's own essence—the sort of rigmarole which might conceivably have appealed to an aging man on the threshold of death.

I was still at work among the books when Rhoda called from Boston.

"Boston!" I was astonished. "You didn't get very far."

"No," she said. "I just began to think about your great-uncle and stopped off here at the Widener to look at some of their rare books."

"Not on sorcery?" I hazarded a guess.

"Yes. Adam, I think you ought to get out of that house."

"And just throw a tidy little inheritance over my shoulder? Not a chance."

"Please don't be stubborn. I've been doing some research. I know what a closed mind you have, but believe me," she said earnestly, "your uncle was up to no good when he made that stipulation. He wants you there for a definite reason. Are you all right, Adam?"

"Perfectly."

"Has anything happened?"

I told her in detail what had taken place.

She listened in silence. When I had finished, she said again, "I think you ought to leave, Adam."

As she spoke, I was conscious of a growing irritation with her. Her possessiveness, her assumption of the right to tell me what I ought to do—which did, certainly, postulate her conviction of knowing better than I what served my welfare, angered me.

"I'm staying, Rhoda," I said.

"Don't you see, Adam—that shadow in the attic—some monstrous thing came in by way of that hole and blasted that shadow there," she said.

I'm afraid I laughed. "I've always said women simply aren't rational creatures."

"Adam—this isn't a man-woman thing. I'm scared."

"Come back," I said. "I'll protect you."

Resigned, she rang off.

IV

That night was memorable for what I chose then to believe pure hallucination. It began, literally, with a step on the stair some time after I had gone to bed. I listened for a moment, to hear it again; then I slipped out of bed, made my way in the dark to the door, and opened it just enough to enable me to look out.

The cleaning woman had just passed my door, bound for the ground floor. I backed into my room at once, fumbled my way to my dressing-gown in my bag—I had not had occasion to use it before—and let myself out of the room, bent upon facing the woman at her work.

I moved quietly in the darkness down the stairs, though the dark was alleviated somewhat by the iridescence of moonlight flowing into the house from outside. Not quite midway down, I experienced that curious sensation I had known previously—of being watched.

I turned.

There in the well of glowing darkness behind and a little above me hung the spectral likeness of Great-uncle Uriah Garrison—something as ephemeral as air—the heavy bearded face distorted a little by the moonlight's iridescence, the burning eyes, the shock of touseled hair, the high bones of his cheeks with the parchment skin tight over them—seen for an instant so, unmistakably—then it collapsed like a pricked balloon and vanished, save for a thin, serpentine coil or rope of some dark substance which seemed to flow writhing and turning, down the stairs to where I stood, until it, too, disappeared like smoke.

I stood frozen with terror until reason reasserted control. I told myself I had had an hallucination of a kind not to be entirely unexpected, in view of my concern during the day about my great-uncle and his curious preoccupations, though I should have thought this far more likely to have occurred in dream than in a vision while awake. But at this moment, too, I questioned the degree of my wakefulness. I had to think what I was doing on the stairs, and remembered the cleaning woman. I had an impulse to return to my

room and go to sleep, but I would not. I pulled myself together and went on.

There was a light in the kitchen—a lamp burning dimly and low, by the glow of it. I crept silently toward the kitchen and stood where I could look in.

The woman was there, cleaning, as always. Now was the time to front her directly and demand an accounting of her presence.

But something held me where I was. Something about the woman repelled me. Something other stirred my memories, and I remembered that other woman I had seen there in the years of my childhood. Slowly, certainly, I became aware that they were one and the same; the woman's impassive, expressionless face was unchanged over twenty years or more, her actions were mechanical, and she seemed even to be wearing the same clothing!

And intuitively I knew that this was the woman whose body I had felt beside me on the bed in the night!

My reluctance to face her grew. But I forced myself to step into the room just over the threshold, on the tip of my tongue the demand for an accounting of her presence.

But no word left my lips. She turned and for but a brief few moments our eyes met—and I looked into pools of glowing fire, eyes that were hardly eyes at all but so much more—the epitome of passion and hunger, the apex of evil, the embodiment of the unknown. In every other respect the confrontation was no different from what it had been in the earlier years—she did not move, her face save for her eyes remained expressionless. Then I lowered my eyes, unable to gaze into hers any longer, and stepped back across the threshold into the darkness behind me.

And fled up the stairs to my room, where I stood

trembling, my back to the door, my thoughts confused, for I knew that what I had seen was something more than a woman, but I did not know what, something in bondage to my dead uncle, something bound to return night after night and perform these rites. Where she came from remained unknown.

It was while I still stood there that I heard her once again on the stairs, starting up from below. For a few moments I thought her bound for my room—as once before—and I felt myself grow cold with fear—but her steps carried her past, on to the stairs that led to the attic.

As the sound of her steps receded, my courage returned, and, emboldened, I opened the door and looked out.

All was in darkness. But no—up at the top of the stairs, out from under the attic door, shone a blue glow.

Even as I mounted to the attic, the blue glow began to fade.

I stood with my ear pressed to the door, listening. There was no sound.

Pressed by mounting courage, I threw open the door.

There was no sign of the woman. But over against the floor, where the angle of the roof joined it, the blue light I had noticed under the door was flowing out like water through the mouse-hole there! And the painted lines all around the hole glowed as with a light all their own, which faded even as I watched.

I lit a match and held it high.

The clothing the woman had worn lay as before, on the chair. And the mask.

I crossed to the chair and touched the mask.

It was warm.

The match burned my fingers and went out.

All was now black as pitch. But from the direction

of the mouse-hole I felt such a drawing power as must I fling myself on my knees and try to follow the blue light, if I did not at once escape—a pulsing, sensate evil—and once again the earth seemed to stop in its turning, there was a lurch in time, and a great cloud of paralyzing fear enveloped me.

I stood as if transfixed.

Then, from the mouse-hole, a drift of blue light like smoke came seeping into the attic. The sight of it burgeoning there broke the spell that held me—I ran, crouching, to the door, and flung myself out of the attic. I raced down the stairs to my room, looking back as if I expected some eldritch thing to be hot on my heels.

There was nothing but blackness, nothing but the dark.

I went into my room and threw myself upon the bed, fully clothed, and there I lay, waiting apprehensively, for whatever might come—knowing I should do as Rhoda had asked, yet curiously reluctant to leave the house on Aylesbury Street—not because it was my inheritance, but for a frightening kind of bondage, almost kinship, that kept me there.

I waited in vain for even the ghost of a sound to disturb the quiet. Nothing whatsoever came to ear but the natural sounds the house made on a windy night, for a wind had come up—and the occasional keening of a screech owl from the direction of Hangman's Hill.

And presently I slept, fully clothed as I was, and in my sleep I dreamed—dreamed that the blue light burgeoned and mushroomed into the attic, came flowing down the stairs and into the room where I lay, and out of the mouse-hole at the apex of the angle of roof and floor came to swell and grow the figures of the cleaning woman, now clad and rubber-masked, now hideous

with age, now naked and beautiful as a young woman, and beside her my Great-uncle Uriah Garrison, invading the house and the room and at last me—a dream from which I woke bathed in perspiration on the edge of dawn which lay pale blue in the room before it gave way to the roseate hue of the morning sky.

What kept me awake, exhausted as I was, was the pounding at the outside door. I struggled to my feet and made my way to the door.

Rhoda stood there.

"Adam!" she cried. "You look terrible."

"Go away," I said. "We don't need you."

I was momentarily shocked to hear my own words, but in a few moments I was resigned to them, I began to understand that I meant them, I resented Rhoda's interference—as if she thought I could not take care of myself.

"So—I'm too late then," she said.

"Go away," I said again. "Just leave us alone."

She pushed past me and strode into the house. I went after her. She was bound for the study, and when she got there she put together my notes and manuscript for my Hardy dissertation and confronted me with them.

"You won't need these any more, will you?" she asked.

"Take them," I said. "Take them all."

She took them. "Goodbye, Adam," she said.

"Goodbye, Rhoda," I said.

I could hardly believe the evidence of my eyes, but Rhoda went, as meek as any lamb. And though I was still vaguely troubled by it, I was aware of a secret satisfaction at the way things were turning out.

V

I spent most of the rest of that day just relaxing and, in a sense, waiting upon the events of that night. It is impossible now to describe my frame of mind. All fear had left me, and I was consumed with a vivid curiosity, even with a kind of eagerness.

The day dragged. I slept through part of it. I ate very little. My appetite now was for something no food could satisfy, and it did not trouble me that this was so.

But the night and darkness came at last, and I set myself to waiting with keen anticipation for whatever might come from that room in the attic. I waited at first down stairs, but at last I understood that it was the room above—my Great-uncle Uriah's old room—where I must wait upon the events of night in the house; so I went there and sat in the darkness.

I waited while the night grew older, hearing the old clock downstairs strike the hours of nine and ten and eleven. I expected to hear, soon, the step of the woman on the stair, the woman called Lilith, but it was the blue light that came first, seeping in under the door—as in my dream.

But I was not sleeping, I was not dreaming.

The blue light came, filling the room, until I could just faintly see the naked form of the woman and the shaping form of Great-uncle Uriah looming up, with a writhing, twisting, serpentine coil reaching out from where he was taking shape to where I sat on the bed . . .

And then something more, something that filled me with sudden terror. I smelled smoke—and I heard the crackling of flames.

And from outside came Rhoda's voice calling, "Adam! Adam!"

The vision collapsed. The last thing I saw was the expression of terrible rage on my great-uncle's spectral face, the fury on the face of the woman changing in that light from that of a lissome girl to that of an ancient hag. Then I flung myself to the window and opened it.

"Rhoda!" I cried.

She had taken no chances. There was a ladder up against the windowsill.

* * *

The house burned to the ground with everything in it.

Its burning did not affect my great-uncle's will. As Mr. Saltonstall put it, I had been fulfilling his condition when circumstances beyond my control made it impossible to continue. So I did inherit the property, and I sold it, and Rhoda and I were married.

In spite of her insistently feminine delusions.

"I set fire to it myself," she said. She had spent the day after she had left with my papers and books at the library of Miskatonic University, famed for its collection of arcane books, studying witchcraft lore. She had concluded that the spirit animating the house and responsible for the events in it was that of Great-uncle Uriah Garrison, and that his sole reason for the condition that I must live there was to place me within his reach so that he could usurp my own life-force and take possession of my body. The woman was a succubus, perhaps his mistress. The mouse-hole obviously an opening into another dimension.

Trust a woman to construe some kind of romantic

angle out of even the most curious events. Succubus, indeed!

There are times even now when her notions affect me. From time to time I find myself unsure of my own identity. Am I Adam Duncan or Uriah Garrison? It does no good to mention it to Rhoda. I did so once and she said only, "It seems to have improved you, Adam."

Women are fundamentally not rational creatures. Nothing will shake her free of her notions about the house on Aylesbury Street. It annoys me that I find myself unable to come up with a more rational explanation myself, one that will satisfy all the questions that occur to me when I sit down and think about the events in which I played such a small, if motivating, part.

The Fisherman of Falcon Point

ALONG THE MASSACHUSETTS COAST WHERE HE LIVED many things are whispered about Enoch Conger—and certain others are hinted at in lowered voices and with great caution—things of surpassing strangeness which flow up and down the coast in the words of sea-farers from the port of Innsmouth, for he lived only a few miles down the coast from that town, at Falcon Point, which was so named because it was possible to see the peregrines and merlins and even sometimes the great gyrfalcons at migration time passing by this lonely finger of land jutting into the sea. There he lived until he was seen no more, for none can say he died.

He was a powerful man, broad in the shoulders, barrel-chested, with long, muscular arms. Even in middle age he wore a beard, and long hair crowned his head. His eyes were a cold blue in colour, and set deep in his square face, and when he was clad in rainproof garments with a hat to match, he looked like someone who had stepped from an old schooner a century ago. He was a taciturn man, given to living alone in a house of stone and driftwood which he himself had constructed on the windswept point of land where he heard the voices of the gulls and terns, of wind and sea, and, in season, of migrants from far places passing by, sometimes invisibly high. It was said of him that he answered them, that he talked with the gulls and terns, with the wind and the pounding sea, and with others that could

not be seen and were heard only in strange tones like the muted sounds made by great batrachian beasts unknown in the bogs and marshes of the mainland.

Conger made his living by fishing, and a spare one it was, yet it contented him. He cast his net into the sea by day and by night, and what it brought up he took into Innsmouth or Kingsport or even farther to sell. But there was one moonlight night when he brought no fish into Innsmouth, but only himself, his eyes wide and staring, as if he had looked too long into the sunset and been blinded. He went into the tavern on the edges of town, where he was wont to go, and sat by himself at a table drinking ale, until some of the curious who were accustomed to seeing him came over to his table to join him, and, with the aid of more liquor, set his tongue to babbling, even though he talked as though he spoke but to himself, and his eyes did not seem to see them.

And he said he had seen a great wonder that night. He had brought his boat up to Devil Reef more than a mile outside Innsmouth, and cast his net, and brought up many fishes—and something more—something that was a woman, yet not a woman, something that spoke to him like a human being but with the gutturals of a frog speaking to the accompaniment of fluting music such as that piped from the swamps in the spring months, something that had a wide slash of a mouth but soft eyes and that wore, beneath the long hair that trailed from her head, slits that were like gills, something that begged and pleaded for its life and promised him his own life if ever the need came upon him.

'A mermaid,' said one, with laughter.

'She was not a mermaid,' said Enoch Conger, 'for she had legs, though her toes were webbed, and she had hands, though her fingers were webbed, and the skin of her face was like that of mine, though her body wore the colour of the sea.'

They laughed at him and made many a jest, but he heard them not. Only one of their number did not laugh, for he had heard strange tales of certain things known to old men and women of Innsmouth from the days of the clipper ships and the East India Trade, of marriages between men of Innsmouth and sea-women of the South Pacific islands, of strange happenings in the sea near Innsmouth; he did not laugh, but only listened, and later slunk away and held his tongue, taking no part in the jesting of his companions. But Enoch Conger did not notice him any more than he heard the crude baiting of his tavern companions, going on with his tale, telling of how he had held the creature caught in the net in his arms, describing the feeling of her cold skin and the texture of her body, telling of how he had set her free and watched her swim away and dive out of sight off the dark mound of Devil Reef, only to reappear and raise her arms aloft to him and vanish for ever.

After that night Enoch Conger came seldom to the tavern, and if he came, sat by himself, avoiding those who would ask him about his 'mermaid' and demand to know whether he had made any proposal to her before he had set her free. He was taciturn once more, he spoke little, but drank his ale and departed. But it was known that he did not again fish at Devil Reef; he cast his net elsewhere, closer to Falcon Point, and though it was whispered that he feared to see again the thing he had caught in his net that moonlit night, he was seen often standing on the point of land looking out into the sea, as if watching for some craft to make its appearance over the horizon, or longing for that tomorrow which looms for ever but never arrives for most searchers for the future, or indeed, for most men, whatever it is they ask and expect of life.

Enoch Conger retired into himself more and more,

and from coming seldom to the tavern at the edge of Innsmouth, he came not at all, preferring to bring his fish to market, and hasten home with such supplies as he might need, while the tale of his mermaid spread up and down the coast and was carried inland to Arkham and Dunwich along the Miskatonic, and even beyond, into the dark, wooded hills where lived people who were less inclined to make sport of the tale.

A year went by, and another, and yet another, and then one night the word was brought to Innsmouth that Enoch Conger had been grievously hurt at his lonely occupation, and only rescued by two other fishermen who had come by and seen him lying helpless in his boat. They had brought him to his house on Falcon Point, for that was the only place he wished to go, and had come back hastily to Innsmouth for Dr. Gilman. But when they returned to the house of Enoch Conger with Dr. Gilman, the old fisherman was nowhere to be seen.

Dr. Gilman kept his own counsel, but the two who had brought him whispered into one ear after another a singular tale, telling how they had found in the house a great moisture, a wetness clinging to the walls, to the doorknob, even to the bed to which they had lowered Enoch Conger only a short while before hastening for the doctor—and on the floor a line of wet footprints made by feet with webbed toes—a trail that led out of the house and down to the edge of the sea, and all along the way the imprints were deep, as if something heavy had been carried from the house, something as heavy as Enoch.

But though the tale was carried about, the fishermen were laughed at and scorned, for there had been only one line of footprints, and Enoch Conger was too large a man for but one other to bear him for such a distance; and besides, Dr. Gilman had said nothing save

that he had known of webbed feet on the inhabitants of Innsmouth, and knew, since he had examined him, that Enoch Conger's toes were as they should have been. And those curious ones who had gone to the house on Falcon Point to see for themselves what was to be seen, came back disappointed at having seen nothing, and added their ridicule to the scorn of others for the hapless fishermen, silencing them, for there were those who suspected them of having made away with Enoch Conger, and whispered this, too, abroad.

Wherever he went, Enoch Conger did not come back to the house on Falcon Point, and the wind and the weather had their way with it, tearing away a shingle here and a board there, wearing away the bricks of the chimney, shattering a pane; and the gulls and terns and falcons flew by without hearing an answering voice; and along the coasts the whispers died away and certain dark hints took their place, displacing the suspicions of murder and some deed of darkness with something fraught with even greater wonder and terror.

For the venerable old Jedediah Harper, patriarch of the costal fishermen, came ashore one night with his men and swore that he has seen swimming off Devil Reef a strange company of creatures, neither entirely human not entirely batrachian, amphibian creatures that passed through the water half in the manner of men and half in the manner of frogs, a company of more than two score, male and female. They had passed close to his boat, he said, and shone in the moonlight, like spectral beings risen from the depths of the Altantic, and, going by, they had seemed to be singing a chant to Dagon, a chant of praise, and among them, he swore, he had seen Enoch Conger, swimming with the rest, naked like them, and his voice too raised in dark praise. He had shouted to him in his amazement, and Enoch had turned to look at him, and he had seen

his face. Then the entire school of them—Enoch Conger as well—dived under the waves and did not come up again.

But, having said this, and got it around, the old man was silenced, it was told, by certain of the Marsh and Martin clan who were believed to be allied to strange sea-dwellers; and the Harper boat did not go out again, for afterwards he had no need of money; and the men who were with him were silent, too.

Long after, on another moonlit night, a young man who remembered Enoch Conger from his boyhood years in Innsmouth, returned to that port city and told how he had been out with his young son, rowing past Falcon Point in the moonlight, when suddenly out of the sea beyond him rose upward to his waist a naked man—so close to him he might almost have touched him with an oar—a man who stood in that water as if held aloft by others, who saw him not, but only looked towards the ruins of the house on Falcon Point with great longing in his eyes, a man who wore the face of Enoch Conger. The water ran down his long hair and beard, and glistened on his body, and was dark where beneath his ears he appeared to wear long slits in his skin. And then, as suddenly and strangely as he had come, he sank away again.

And that is why, along the Massachusetts coast near Innsmouth, many things are whispered about Enoch Conger—and certain others are hinted at in lowered voices. . . .

The Dark Brotherhood

It is probable that the facts in regard to the mysterious destruction by fire of an abandoned house on a knoll along the shore of the Seekonk in a little habited district between the Washington and Red Bridges, will never be entirely known. The police have been beset by the usual number of cranks, purporting to offer information about the matter, none more insistent than Arthur Phillips, the descendant of an old East Side family, long resident on Angell Street, a somewhat confused but earnest young man who prepared an account of certain events he alleges led to the fire. Though the police have interviewed all persons concerned and mentioned in Mr. Phillips' account, no corroboration—save for a statement from a librarian at the Athenaeum, attesting only to the fact that Mr. Phillips did once meet Miss Rose Dexter there—could be found to support Mr. Phillips' allegations. The manuscript follows.

I

THE NOCTURNAL STREETS OF ANY CITY ALONG THE Eastern Seaboard afford the nightwalker many a glimpse of the strange and terrible, the macabre and *outré*, for darkness draws from the crevices and crannies, the attic rooms and cellar hideaways of the city those human beings who, for obscure reasons lost in the past, choose to keep the day secure in their grey

niches—the misshapen, the lonely, the sick, the very old, the haunted, and those lost souls who are for ever seeking their identities under cover of the night, which is beneficent for them as the cold light of day can never be. These are the hurt by life, the maimed, men and women who have never recovered from the traumas of childhood or who have willingly sought after experiences not meant for man to know, and every place where the human society has been concentrated for any considerable length of time abounds with them, though they are seen only in the dark hours, emerging like nocturnal moths to move about in their narrow environs for a few brief hours before they must escape daylight once more.

Having been a solitary child, and much left to my own devices because of the persistent ill-health which was my lot, I developed early a propensity for roaming abroad by night, at first only in the Angell Street neighbourhood where I lived during much of my childhood, and then, little by little, in a widened circle in my native Providence. By day, my health permitting, I haunted the Seekonk River from the city into the open country, or, when my energy was at its height, played with a few carefully chosen companions at a 'clubhouse' we had painstakingly constructed in wooded areas not far out of the city. I was also much given to reading, and spent long hours in my grandfather's extensive library, reading without discrimination and thus assimilating a vast amount of knowledge, from the Greek philosophies to the history of the English monarchy, from the secrets of ancient alchemists to the experiments of Niels Bohr, from the lore of Egyptian papyri to the regional studies of Thomas Hardy, since my grandfather was possessed of very catholic tastes in books and, spurning specialization, bought and kept

only what in his mind was good, by which he meant that which involved him.

But the nocturnal city invariably drew me from all else; walking abroad was my preference above all other pursuits, and I went out and about at night all through the later years of my childhood and throughout my adolescent years, in the course of which I tended—because sporadic illness kept me from regular attendance at school—to grow ever more self-sufficient and solitary. I could not now say what it was I sought with such determination in the nighted city, what it was in the ill-lit streets that drew me, why I sought old Benefit Street and the shadowed environs of Poe Street, almost unknown in the vastness of Providence, what it was I hoped to see in the furtively glimpsed faces of other night-wanderers slipping and slinking along the dark lanes and byways of the city, unless perhaps it was to escape from the harsher realities of daylight coupled with an insatiable curiosity about the secrets of city life which only the night could disclose.

When at last my graduation from high school was an accomplished fact, it might have been assumed that I would turn to other pursuits; but it was not so, for my health was too precarious to warrant matriculation at Brown University, where I would like to have gone to continue my studies, and this deprivation served only to enhance my solitary occupations—I doubled my reading hours and increased the time I spent abroad by night, by the simple expedient of sleeping during the daylight hours. And yet I contrived to lead an otherwise normal existence; I did not abandon my widowed mother or my aunts, with whom we lived, though the companions of my youth had grown away from me, and I managed to discover Rose Dexter, a dark-eyed descendant of the first English families to come into old Providence, one singularly favoured in the proportions

of her figure and in the beauty of her features, whom I persuaded to share my nocturnal pursuits.

With her I continued to explore nocturnal Providence, and with new zest, eager to show Rose all I had already discovered in my wanderings about the city. We met originally at the old Athenaeum, and we continued to meet there of evenings, and from its portals ventured forth into the night. What began lightheartedly for her soon grew into dedicated habit; she proved as eager as I to inquire into hidden byways and long disused lanes, and she was soon as much at home in the night-held city as I. She was little inclined to irrelevant chatter, and thus proved admirably complementary to my person.

We had been exploring Providence in this fashion for several months when, one night on Benefit Street, a gentleman wearing a knee-length cape over wrinkled and ill-kept clothing accosted us. He had been standing on the walk not far ahead of us when first we turned into the street, and I had observed him when we went past him; he had struck me as oddly disquieting, for I thought his moustached, dark-eyed face with the unruly hair of his hatless head strangely familiar; and, at our passing, he had set out in pursuit until, at last, catching up to us, he touched me on the shoulder and spoke.

'Sir,' he said, 'could you tell me how to reach the cemetery where once Poe walked?'

I gave him directions, and then, spurred by a sudden impulse, suggested that we accompany him to the goal he sought; almost before I understood fully what had happened, we three were walking along together. I saw almost at once with what a calculating air the fellow scrutinized my companion, and yet any resentment I might have felt was dispelled by the ready recognition that the stranger's interest was inoffensive, for it was rather more coolly critical than passionately involved. I

took the opportunity, also, to examine him as carefully as I could in the occasional patches of streetlight through which we passed, and was increasingly disturbed at the gnawing certainty that I knew him or had known him.

He was dressed almost uniformly in sombre black, save for his white shirt and the flowing Windsor tie he affected. His clothing was unpressed, as if it had been worn for a long time without having been attended to, but it was not unclean, as far as I could see. His brow was high, almost dome-like; under it his dark eyes looked out hauntingly, and his face narrowed to his small, blunt chin. His hair, too, was longer than most men of my generation wore it, and yet he seemed to be of that same generation, not more than five years past my own age. His clothing, however, was definitely not of my generation; indeed, it seemed, for all that it had the appearance of being new, to have been cut to a pattern of several generations before my own.

'Are you a stranger to Providence?' I asked him presently.

'I am visiting,' he said shortly.

'You are interested in Poe?'

He nodded.

'How much do you know of him?' I asked then.

'Little,' he replied. 'Perhaps you could tell me more?'

I needed no second invitation, but immediately gave him a biographical sketch of the father of the detective story and a master of the macabre tale whose work I had long admired, elaborating only on his romance with Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, since it involved Providence and the visit with Mrs. Whitman to the cemetery whither we were bound. I saw that he listened with almost rapt attention, and seemed to be setting down in memory everything I said, but I could not decide from his expressionless face whether what I told

him gave him pleasure or displeasure, and I could not determine what the source of his interest was.

For her part, Rose was conscious of his interest in her, but she was not embarrassed by it, perhaps sensing that his interest was other than amorous. It was not until he asked her name that I realized we had not had his. He gave it now as 'Mr. Allan,' at which Rose smiled almost imperceptibly; I caught it fleetingly as we passed under a street lamp.

Having learned our names, our companion seemed interested in nothing more, and it was in silence that we reached the cemetery at last. I had thought Mr. Allan would enter it, but such was not his intention; he had evidently meant only to discover its location, so that he could return to it by day, which was manifestly a sensible conclusion, for—though I knew it well and had walked there on occasion by night—it offered little for a stranger to view in the dark hours.

We bade him good-night at the gate and went on.

'I've seen that fellow somewhere before,' I said to Rose once we had passed beyond his hearing. 'But I can't think where it was. Perhaps in the library.'

'It must have been in the library,' answered Rose with a throaty chuckle that was typical of her. 'In a portrait on the wall.'

'Oh, come!' I cried.

'Surely you recognized the resemblance, Arthur!' she cried. 'Even to his name. He looks like Edgar Allan Poe.'

And, of course, he did. As soon as Rose had mentioned it, I recognized the strong resemblance, even to his clothing, and at once set Mr. Allan down as a harmless idolator of Poe's so obsessed with the man that he must fashion himself in his likeness, even to his out-dated clothing—another of the curious specimens of humanity thronging the night streets of the city.

'Well, that one is the oddest fellow we've met in all the while we've walked out,' I said.

Her hand tightened on my arm. 'Arthur, didn't you *feel* something—something *wrong* about him?'

'Oh, I suppose there is something "wrong" in that sense about all of us who are haunters of the dark,' I said. 'Perhaps, in a way, we prefer to make our own reality.'

But even as I answered her, I was aware of her meaning, and there was no need of the explanation she tried so earnestly to make in the spate of words that followed—there was something wrong in the sense that there was about Mr. Allan a profound note of error. It lay, now that I faced and accepted it, in a number of trivial things, but particularly in the lack of expressiveness in his features; his speech, limited though it had been, was without modulation, almost mechanical; he had not smiled, nor had he been given to any variation in facial expression whatsoever; he had spoken with a precision that suggested an icy detachment and aloofness foreign to most men. Even the manifest interest he showed in Rose was far more clinical than anything else. At the same time that my curiosity was quickened, a note of apprehension began to make itself manifest, as a result of which I turned our conversation into other channels and presently walked Rose to her home.

II

I suppose is was inevitable that I should meet Mr. Allan again, and but two nights later, this time not far from my own door. Perhaps it was absurd to think so, but I could not escape the impression that he was

waiting for me, that he was as anxious to encounter me again as I was to meet him.

I greeted him jovially, as a fellow haunter of the night, and took quick notice of the fact that, though his voice simulated my own joviality, there was not a flicker of emotion on his face; it remained completely placid—'wooden,' in the words of the romantic writers, not the hint of a smile touched his lips, not a glint shone in his dark eyes. And now that I had had it called to my attention, I saw that the resemblance to Poe was remarkable, so much so, that had Mr. Allan put forth any reasonable claim to being a descendant of Poe's, I could have been persuaded to belief.

It was, I thought, a curious coincidence, but hardly more, and Mr. Allan on this occasion made no mention of Poe or anything relating to him in Providence. He seemed, it was soon evident, more intent on listening to me; he was as singularly uncommunicative as he had been at our first meeting, and in an odd way his manner was precisely the same—as if we had not actually met before. But perhaps it was that he simply sought some common ground, for, once I mentioned that I contributed a weekly column on astronomy to the Providence *Journal*, he began to take part in our conversation; what had been for several blocks virtually a monologue on my part, became a dialogue.

It was immediately apparent to me that Mr. Allan was not a novice in astronomical matters. Anxious as he seemed to be for my views, he entertained some distinctly different views of his own, some of them highly debatable. He lost no time in setting forth his opinion that not only was interplanetary travel possible, but that countless stars—not alone some of the planets in our solar system—were inhabited.

'By human beings?' I asked incredulously.

'Need it be?' he replied. 'Life is unique—not man. Even here on this planet life takes many forms.'

I asked him then whether he had read the works of Charles Fort.

He had not. He knew nothing of him, and, at his request, I outlined some of Fort's theories, together with the facts Fort had adduced in support of those theories. I saw that from time to time, as we walked along, my companion's head moved in a curt nod, though his unemotional face betrayed no expression; it was as if he agreed. And on one occasion, he broke into words.

'Yes, it is so. What he says is so.'

I had at the moment been speaking of the sighting of unidentified flying objects near Japan during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

'How can you say so?' I cried.

He launched at once into a lengthy statement, the gist of which was that every advanced scientist in the domain of astronomy was convinced that earth was not unique in having life, and that it followed therefore that, just as it could be concluded that some heavenly bodies had lower life forms than our own, so others might well support higher forms, and, accepting that premise, it was perfectly logical that such higher forms had mastered interplanetary travel and might, after decades of observation, be thoroughly familiar with earth and its inhabitants as well as with its sister planets.

'To what purpose?' I asked. 'To make war on us? To invade us.'

'A more highly developed form of life would hardly need to use such primitive methods,' he pointed out. 'They watch us precisely as we watch the moon and listen for radio signals from the planets—we here are still in the earliest stages of interplanetary communica-

tion and, beyond that, space travel, whereas other races on remote stars have long since achieved both.'

'How can you speak with such authority?' I asked then.

'Because I am convinced of it. Surely you must have come face to face with similar conclusions.'

I admitted that I had.

'And you remain open-minded?'

I admitted this as well.

'Open-minded enough to examine certain proof if it were offered to you?'

'Certainly,' I replied, though my scepticism could hardly have gone unnoticed.

'That is good,' he said. 'Because if you will permit my brothers and me to call on you at your home on Angell Street, we may be able to convince you that there is life in space—not in the shape of men, but life, and life possessing a far greater intelligence than that of your most intelligent men.'

I was amused at the breadth of his claim and belief, but I did not betray it by any sign. His confidence made me to reflect again upon the infinite variety of characters to be found among the night-walkers of Providence; clearly Mr. Allan was a man who was obsessed by his extraordinary beliefs, and, like most of such men, eager to proselytize, to make converts.

'Whenever you like,' I said by way of invitation. 'Except that I would prefer it to be late rather than early, to give my mother time to get to bed. Anything in the way of an experiment might disturb her.'

'Shall we say next Monday night?'

'Agreed.'

My companion thereafter said no more on this matter. Indeed, he said scarcely anything on any subject, and it was left for me to do the talking. I was evidently not very entertaining, for in less than three blocks we

came to an alley and there Mr. Allan abruptly bade me good night, after which he turned into the alley and was soon swallowed in its darkness.

Could his house abut upon it? I wondered. If not, he must inevitably come out the other end. Impulsively I hurried around one end of that block and stationed myself deep in the shadows of the parallel street, where I could remain well hidden from the alley entrance and yet keep it in view.

Mr. Allan came leisurely out of the alley before I had quite recovered my breath. I expected him to pursue his way through the alley, but he did not; he turned down the street, and, accelerating his pace a little, he proceeded on his way. Impelled by curiosity now, I followed, keeping myself as well hidden as possible. But Mr. Allan never once looked around; he set his face straight ahead of him and never, as far as I could determine, even glanced to left or right; he was clearly bound for a destination that could only be his home, for the hour was past midnight.

I had little difficulty following my erstwhile companion, for I knew these streets well, I had known them since my childhood. Mr. Allan was bound in the direction of the Seekonk, and he held to his course without deviation until he reached a somewhat rundown section of Providence, where he made his way up a little knoll to a long-deserted house at its crest. He let himself into it and I saw no more. I waited a while longer, expecting a light to go up in the house, but none did, and I could only conclude that he had gone directly to bed.

Fortunately, I had kept myself in the shadows, for Mr. Allen had evidently not gone to bed. Apparently he had gone through the house and around the block, for suddenly I saw him approach the house from the direction we had come, and once more he walked on, past

my place of concealment, and made his way into the house, again without turning on a light.

This time, certainly, he had remained there. I waited for five minutes or a trifle more; then turned and made my way back towards my own home on Angell Street, satisfied that I had done no more in following Mr. Allan than he had evidently done on the night of our initial meeting following me, for I had long since concluded that our meeting tonight had not been by chance, but by design.

Many blocks from the Allan house, however, I was startled to see approaching me from the direction of Benefit Street, my erstwhile companion! Even as I wondered how he had managed to leave the house again and make his way well around me in order to enable him to come towards me, trying in vain to map the route he could have taken to accomplish this, he came up and passed me by without so much as a flicker of recognition.

Yet it was he, undeniably—the same Poesque appearance distinguished him from any other night-walker. Stifling his name on my tongue, I turned and looked after him. He never turned his head, but walked steadily on, clearly bound for the scene I had not long since quitted. I watched him out of sight, still trying—in vain—to map the route he might have taken among the lanes and byways and streets so familiar to me in order to meet me so once more, face to face.

We had met on Angell Street, walked to Benefit and north, then turned riverwards once more. Only by dint of hard running could he have cut around me and come back. And what purpose would he have had to follow such a course? It left me utterly baffled, particularly since he had given me not the slightest sign of recognition, his entire mien suggesting that we were perfect strangers!

But if I was mystified at the occurrences of the night, I was even more puzzled at my meeting with Rose at the Athenaeum the following night. She had clearly been waiting for me, and hastened to my side as soon as she caught sight of me.

'Have you seen Mr. Allan?' she asked.

'Only last night,' I answered, and would have gone on to recount the circumstances had she not spoken again.

'So did I! He walked me out from the library and home.'

I stifled my response and heard her out. Mr. Allan had been waiting for her to come out of the library. He had greeted her and asked whether he might walk with her, after having ascertained that I was not with her. They had walked for an hour with but little conversation, and this only of the most superficial—relative to the antiquities of the city, the architecture of certain houses, and similar matters, just such as one interested in the older aspects of Providence would find of interest—and then he had walked her home. She had, in short, been with Mr. Allen in one part of the city at the same time that I had been with him in another; and clearly neither of us had the slightest doubt of the identity of our companions.

'I saw him after midnight,' I said, which was part of the truth but not all the truth.

This extraordinary coincidence must have some logical explanation, though I was not disposed to discuss it with Rose, lest I unduly alarm her. Mr. Allen had spoken of his 'brothers'; it was therefore entirely likely that Mr. Allan was one of a pair of identical twins. But what explanation could there be for what was an obvious and designed deception? One of our companions was *not*, could not have been the same Mr. Allan with whom we had previously walked. But which? I was

satisfied that my companion was identical with Mr. Allan met but two nights before.

In as casual a manner as I could assume in the circumstances, I asked such questions of Rose as were designed to satisfy me in regard to the identity of her companion, in the anticipation that somewhere in our dialogue she would reveal some doubt of the identity of hers. She betrayed no such doubt; she was innocently convinced that her companion was the same man who had walked with us two nights ago, for he had obviously made references to the earlier nocturnal walk, and Rose was completely convinced that he was the same man. She had no reason for doubt, however, for I held my tongue; there was some perplexing mystery here, for the brothers had some obscure reason for interesting themselves in us—certainly other than that they shared our interest in the night-walkers of the city and the hidden aspects of urban life that appeared only with the dusk and vanished once more into their seclusion with the dawn.

My companion, however, had made an assignation with me, whereas Rose said nothing to indicate that her companion had planned a further meeting with her. And why had he waited to meet her in the first place? But this line of inquiry was lost before the insistent cognizance that neither of the meetings I had had after leaving my companion at his residence last night could have been Rose's companion, for Rose lived rather too far from the place of my final meeting last night to have permitted her companion to meet me at the point we met. A disquieting sense of uneasiness began to rise in me. Perhaps there were three Allans—all identical—triplets. Or four? But no, surely the second Mr. Allan encountered on the previous night had been identical with the first, even if the third encounter could not have been the same man.

No matter how much thought I applied to it, the riddle remained insoluble. I was, therefore, in a challenging frame of mind for my Monday night appointment with Mr. Allan, now but two days away.

III

Even so, I was ill-prepared for the visit of Mr. Allan and his brothers on the following Monday night. They came at a quarter past ten o'clock; my mother had just gone upstairs to bed. I had expected, at most, three of them; there were seven—and they were as alike as peas in a pod, so much so that I could not pick from among them the Mr. Allan with whom I had twice walked the nocturnal streets of Providence, though I assumed it was he who was the spokesman for the group.

They filed into the living-room, and Mr. Allan immediately set about arranging chairs in a semi-circle with the help of his brothers, murmuring something about the 'nature of the experiment,' though, to tell the truth, I was still much too amazed and disquieted at the appearance of seven identical men, all of whom bore so strong a resemblance to Edgar Allan Poe as to startle the beholder, to assimilate what was being said. Moreover, I saw now by the light of my Welsbach gas-lamp, that all seven of them were of a pallid, waxen complexion, not of such a nature as to give me any doubt of their being flesh and bone like myself, but rather such as to suggest that one and all were afflicted with some kind of disease—anaemia, perhaps, or some kindred illness which would leave their faces colourless; and their eyes, which were very dark, seemed to stare fixedly and yet without seeing, though they suffered no lack of perception and seemed to perceive by means of some extra sense not visible to me. The sensation that rose in

me was not predominantly one of fear, but one of overwhelming curiosity tinged with a spreading sense of something utterly alien not only to my experience but to my existence.

Thus far, little had passed between us, but now that the semi-circle had been completed, and my visitors had seated themselves, their spokesman beckoned me forward and indicated a chair placed within the arc of the semi-circle facing the seated men.

'Will you sit here, Mr. Phillips?' he asked.

I did as he asked, and found myself the object of all eyes, but not essentially so much their object as their focal point, for the seven men seemed to be looking not so much at me as through me.

'Our intention, Mr. Phillips,' explained their spokesman—whom I took to be the gentleman I had encountered on Benefit Street—'is to produce for you certain impressions of extra-terrestrial life. All that is necessary for you to do is to relax and to be receptive.'

'I am ready,' I said.

I had expected that they would ask for the light to be lowered, which seems to be integral to all such seance-like sessions, but they did not do so. They waited upon silence, save for the ticking of the hall clock and the distant hum of the city, and then they began what I can only describe as singing—a low, not unpleasant, almost lulling humming, increasing in volume, and broken with sounds I assumed were words though I could not make out any of them. The song they sang and the way they sang it was indescribably foreign; the key was minor, and the tonal intervals did not resemble any terrestrial musical system with which I was familiar, though it seemed to me more Oriental than Occidental.

I had little time to consider the music, however, for I was rapidly overcome with a feeling of profound malaise, the faces of the seven men grew dim and coa-

lesced to merge into one swimming face, and an intolerable consciousness of unrolled aeons of time swept over me. I concluded that some form of hypnosis was responsible for my condition, but I did not have any qualms about it; it did not matter, for the experience I was undergoing was utterly novel and not unpleasant, though there was inherent in it a discordant note, as of some lurking evil looming far behind the relaxing sensations that crowded upon me and swept me before them. Gradually, the lamp, the walls, and the men before me faded and vanished and, though I was still aware of being in my quarters on Angell Street, I was also cognizant that somehow I had been transported to new surroundings, and an element of alarm at the strangeness of these surroundings, together with one of repulsion and alienation began to make themselves manifest. It was as if I feared losing consciousness in an alien place without the means of returning to earth—for it was an extra-terrestrial scene that I witnessed, one of great and magnificent grandeur in its proportions, and yet one completely incomprehensible to me.

Vast vistas of space whirled before me in an alien dimension, and central in them was an aggregation of gigantic cubes, scattered along a gulf of violet and agitated radiation—and other figures moving among them—enormous, iridescent, rugose cones, rising from a base almost ten feet wide to a height of over ten feet, and composed of ridgy, scaly, semi-elastic matter, and sporting from their apexes four flexible, cylindrical members, each at least a foot thick, and of a similar substance, though more fleshlike, as that of the cones, which were presumably bodies for the crowning members, which, as I watched, had an ability to contract or expand, sometimes to lengthen to a distance equal to the height of the cone to which they adhered. Two of these members were terminated with enormous claws,

while a third wore a crest of four red, trumpetlike appendages, and the fourth ended in a great yellow globe two feet in diameter, in the centre of which were three enormous eyes, darkly opalescent, which, because of their position in the elastic member, could be turned in any direction whatsoever. It was such a scene as exercised the greatest fascination upon me and yet at the same time spread in me a repellence inspired by its total alienation and the aura of fearful disclosures which alone could give it meaning and a lurking terror. Moreover, as I saw the moving figures, which seemed to be *tending* the great cubes, with greater clarity and more distinctness, I saw that their strange heads were crowned by four slender grey stalks carrying flowerlike appendages, as well as, from their nether side, eight sinuous, elastic tentacles, moss green in colour, which seemed to be constantly agitated by serpentine motion, expanding and contracting, lengthening and shortening and whipping around as if with life independent of that which animated, more sluggishly, the cones themselves. The whole scene was bathed in a wan, red glow, as from some dying sun which, failing its planet, now took second place to the violent radiation from the gulf.

The scene had an indescribable effect on me; it was as if I had been permitted a look into another world, one incredibly vaster than our own, distinguished from our own by antipodally different values and life-forms, and remote from ours in time and space, and as I gazed at this far world, I became aware—as were this intelligence being funnelled into me by some psychic means—that I looked upon a dying race which must escape its planet or perish. Spontaneously then, I seemed to recognize the burgeoning of a menacing evil, and with an urgent, violent effort, I threw off the bondage of the chant that held me in its spell, gave vent to the uprushing of fear I felt in a cry of protest, and rose to my feet,

while the chair on which I sat fell backwards with a crash.

Instantly the scene before my mind's eye vanished and the room returned to focus. Across from me sat my visitors, the seven gentlemen in the likeness of Poe, impassive and silent, for the sounds they had made, the humming and the odd word-like tonal noises, had ceased.

I calmed down, my pulse began to slow.

'What you saw, Mr. Phillips, was a scene on another star, remote from here,' said Mr. Allan. 'Far out in space—indeed, in another universe. Did it convince you?'

'I've seen enough,' I cried.

I could not tell whether my visitors were amused or scornful; they remained without expression, including their spokesman, who only inclined his head slightly and said, 'We will take our leave then, with your permission.'

And silently, one by one, they all filed out into Angell Street.

I was most disagreeably shaken. I had no proof of having seen anything on another world, but I could testify that I had experienced an extraordinary hallucination, undoubtedly through hypnotic influence.

But what had been its reason for being? I pondered that as I set about to put the living-room to rights, but I could not adduce any profound reason for the demonstration I had witnessed. I was unable to deny that my visitors had shown themselves to be possessed of extraordinary faculties—but to what end? And I had to admit to myself that I was as much shaken by the appearance of no less than seven identical men as I was by the hallucinatory experience I had just passed through. Quintuplets were possible, yes—but had anyone ever heard of septuplets. Nor were multiple births

of identical children usual. Yet here were seven men, all of very much the same age, identical in appearance, for whose existence there was not a scintilla of explanation.

Nor was there any graspable meaning in the scene that I had witnessed during the demonstration. Somehow I had understood that the great cubes were sentient beings for whom the violet radiation was life-giving; I had realized that the cone-creatures served them in some fashion or other, but nothing had been disclosd to show how. The whole vision was meaningless; it was just such a scene as might have been created by a highly organized imagination and telepathically conveyed to a willing subject, such as myself. That it proved the existence of extraterrestrial life was ridiculous; it proved no more than that I had been the victim of an induced hallucination.

But, once more, I came full circle. As hallucination, it was completely without reason for being.

Yet I could not escape an insistent disquiet that troubled me long that night before I was able to sleep.

IV

Strange enough, my uneasiness mounted during the course of the following morning. Accustomed as I was to the human curiosities, to the often incredible characters and unusual sights to be encountered on the nocturnal walks I took about Providence, the circumstances surrounding the Poesque Mr. Allan and his brothers were so *outré* that I could not get them out of mind.

Acting on impulse, I took time off from my work that afternoon and made my way to the house on the knoll along the Seekonk, determined to confront my

nocturnal companion. But the house, when I came to it, wore an air of singular desertion; badly worn curtains were drawn down to the sills of the windows, in some places blinds were up; and the whole milieu was the epitome of abandonment.

Nevertheless, I knocked at the door and waited.

There was no answer. I knocked again.

No sound fell to ear from inside the house.

Powerfully impelled by curiosity now, I tried the door. It opened to my touch. I hesitated still, and looked all around me. No one was in sight, at least two of the houses in the neighbourhood were unoccupied, and if I was under surveillance it was not apparent to me.

I opened the door and stepped into the house, standing for a few moments with my back to the door to accustom my eyes to the twilight that filled the rooms. Then I moved cautiously through the small vestibule into the adjacent room, a parlour sparely occupied by horsehair furniture at least two decades old. There was no sign here of occupation by any human being, though there was evidence that someone had not long since walked here, making a path through dust visible on the uncarpeted flooring. I crossed the room and entered a small dining-room, and crossed this, too, to find myself in a kitchen, which, like the other rooms, bore little sign of having been used, for there was no food of any kind in evidence, and the table appeared not to have been used for years. Yet here, too, were footprints in substantial numbers, testifying to the habitation of the house. And the staircase revealed steady use, as well.

But it was the far side of the house that afforded the most disturbing disclosures. This side of the building consisted of but one large room, though it was instantly evident that it had been three rooms at one time, but the connecting walls had been removed without the

finished repair of the junctions at the outer wall. I saw this in a fleeting glance, for what was in the centre of the room caught and held my fascinated attention. The room was bathed in violet light, a soft glowing that emanated from what appeared to be a long, glass-encased slab, which, with a second, unlit similar slab, stood surrounded by machinery the like of which I had never seen before save in dreams.

I moved cautiously into the room, alert for anyone who might prevent my intrusion. No one and nothing moved. I drew closer to the violet-lit glass case and saw that something lay within, though I did not at first encompass this because I saw what it laid upon—nothing less than a life-sized reproduction of a likeness of Edgar Allan Poe, which, like everything else, was illuminated by the same pulsing violet light, the source of which I could not determine, save that it was enclosed by the glass-like substance which made up the case. But when at last I looked upon that which lay upon the likeness of Poe, I almost cried out in fearful surprise, for it was, in miniature, a precise reproduction of one of the rugose cones I had seen only last night in the hallucination induced in my home on Angell Street! And the sinuous movement of the tentacles on its head —or what I took to be its head—was indisputable evidence that it was alive!

I backed hastily away with only enough of a glance at the other case to assure myself that it was bare and unoccupied, though connected by many metal tubes to the illuminated case parallel to it; then I fled, as noiselessly as possible, for I was convinced that the nocturnal brotherhood slept upstairs and in my confusion at this inexplicable revelation that placed my hallucination of the previous night into another perspective, I wished to meet no one. I escaped from the house undetected, though I thought I caught a brief glimpse of a Poesque

face at one of the upper windows. I ran down the road and back along the streets that bridged the distance from the Seekonk to the Providence River, and ran so for many blocks before I slowed to a walk, for I was beginning to attract attention in my wild flight.

As I walked along, I strove to bring order to my chaotic thoughts. I could not adduce an explanation for what I had seen, but I knew intuitively that I had stumbled upon some menacing evil too dark and forbidding and perhaps too vast as well for my comprehension. I hunted for meaning and found none; mine had never been a scientifically-oriented mind, apart from chemistry and astronomy, so that I was not equipped to understand the use of the great machines I had seen in that house ringing that violet-lit slab where that rugose body lay in warm, life-giving radiation—indeed, I was not even able to assimilate the machinery itself, for there was only a remote resemblance to anything I had ever before seen, and that the dynamos in a powerhouse. They had all been connected in some way to the two slabs, and the glass cases—if the substance were glass—the one occupied, the other dark and empty, for all the tubing that tied them each to each.

But I had seen enough to be convinced that the dark-clad brotherhood who walked the streets of Providence by night in the guise of Edgar Allan Poe had a purpose other than mine in doing so; theirs was no simple curiosity about the nocturnal characters, about fellow walkers of the night. Perhaps darkness was their natural element, even as daylight was that of the majority of their fellowmen; but that their motivation was sinister, I could not now doubt. Yet at the same time I was at a loss as to what course next to follow.

I turned my steps at last towards the library, in the vague hope of grasping at something that might lead me

to some clue by means of which I could approach an understanding of what I had seen.

But there was nothing. Search as I might, I found no key, no hint, though I read widely through every conceivable reference—even to those on Poe in Providence on the shelves, and I left the library late in the day as baffled as I had entered.

Perhaps it was inevitable that I would see Mr. Allan again that night. I had no way of knowing whether my visit to his home had been observed, despite the observer I thought I had glimpsed in an upper window in my flight, and I encountered him therefore in some trepidation. But this was evidently ill-founded, for when I greeted him on Benefit Street there was nothing in his manner or in his words to suggest any change in his attitude, such as I might have expected had he been aware of my intrusion. Yet I knew full well his capacity for being without expression—humour, disgust, even anger or irritation were alien to his features, which never changed from that introspective mask which was essentially that of Poe.

'I trust you have recovered from our experiment, Mr. Phillips,' he said after exchanging the customary amenities.

'Fully,' I answered, though it was not the truth. I added something about a sudden spell of dizziness to explain my bringing the experiment to its precipitate end.

'It is but one of the worlds outside you saw, Mr. Phillips,' Mr. Allan went on. 'There are many. As many as a hundred thousand. Life is not the unique property of Earth. Nor is life in the shape of human beings. Life takes many forms on other planets and far stars, forms that would seem bizarre to humans, as human life is bizarre to other life forms.'

For once, Mr. Allan was singularly communicative,

and I had little to say. Clearly, whether or not I laid what I had seen to hallucination—even in the face of my discovery in my companion's house—he himself believed implicitly in what he said. He spoke of many worlds, as if he were familiar with them. On occasion he spoke almost with reverence of certain forms of life, particularly those with the astonishing adaptability of assuming the life forms of other planets in their ceaseless quest for the conditions necessary to their existence.

'The star I looked upon,' I broke in, 'was dying.'

'Yes,' he said simply.

'You have seen it?'

'I have seen it, Mr. Phillips.'

I listened to him with relief. Since it was manifestly impossible to permit any man sight of the intimate life of outer space, what I had experienced was nothing more than the communicated hallucination of Mr. Allan and his brothers. Telepathic communication certainly, aided by a form of hypnosis I had not previously experienced. Yet I could not rid myself of the disquieting sense of evil that surrounded my nocturnal companion, nor of the uneasy feeling that the explanation which I had so eagerly accepted was unhappily glib.

As soon as I decently could, thereafter, I made excuses to Mr. Allan and took my leave of him. I hastened directly to the Athenaeum in the hope of finding Rose Dexter there, but if she had been there, she had already gone. I went then to a public telephone in the building and telephoned her home.

Rose answered, and I confess to an instantaneous feeling of gratification.

'Have you seen Mr. Allan tonight?' I asked.

'Yes,' she replied. 'But only for a few moments. I was on my way to the library.'

'So did I.'

'He asked me to his home some evening to watch an experiment,' she went on.

'Don't go,' I said at once.

There was a long moment of silence at the other end of the wire. Then, 'Why not?' Unfortunately, I failed to acknowledge the edge of truculence in her voice.

'It would be better not to go,' I said, with all the firmness I could muster.

'Don't you think, Mr. Phillips, I am the best judge of that?'

I hastened to assure her that I had no wish to dictate her actions, but meant only to suggest that it might be dangerous to go.

'Why?'

'I can't tell you over the telephone,' I answered, fully aware of how lame it sounded, and knowing even as I said it that perhaps I could not put into words at all the horrible suspicions which had begun to take shape in my mind, for they were so fantastic, *so outré,* that no one could be expected to believe in them.

'I'll think it over,' she said crisply.

'I'll try to explain when I see you,' I promised.

She bade me good-night and rang off with an intransigence that boded ill, and left me profoundly disturbed.

V

I come now to the final, apocalyptic events concerning Mr. Allan and the mystery surrounding the house on the forgotten knoll. I hesitate to set them down even now, for I recognize that the charge against me will only be broadened to include grave questions about my sanity. Yet I have no other course. Indeed, the entire future of humanity, the whole course of what we call

civilization may be affected by what I do or do not write of this matter. For the culminating events followed rapidly and naturally upon my conversation with Rose Dexter, that unsatisfactory exchange over the telephone.

After a restless, uneasy day at work, I concluded that I must make a tenable explanation to Rose. On the following evening, therefore, I went early to the library, where I was accustomed to meeting her, and took a place where I could watch the main entrance. There I waited for well over an hour before it occurred to me that she might not come to the library that night.

Once more I sought the telephone, intending to ask whether I might come over and explain my request of the previous night.

But it was her sister-in-law, not Rose, who answered my ring.

Rose had gone out. 'A gentleman called for her.'

'Did you know him?' I asked.

'No, Mr. Phillips.'

'Did you hear his name?'

She had not heard it. She had, in fact, caught only a glimpse of him as Rose hurried out to meet him, but, in answer to my insistent probing, she admitted that Rose's caller had had a moustache.

Mr. Allan! I had no further need to inquire.

For a few moments after I had hung up, I did not know what to do. Perhaps Rose and Mr. Allan were only walking the length of Benefit Street. But perhaps they had gone to that mysterious house. The very thought of it filled me with such apprehension that I lost my head.

I rushed from the library and hurried home. It was ten o'clock when I reached the house on Angell Street. Fortunately, my mother had retired; so I was able to procure my father's pistol without disturbing her. So

armed, I hastened once more into night-held Providence and ran, block upon block, towards the shore of the Seekonk and the knoll upon which stood Mr. Allan's strange house, unaware in my incautious haste of the spectacle I made for other night-walkers and uncaring, for perhaps Rose's life was at stake—and beyond that, vaguely defined, loomed a far greater and hideous evil.

When I reached the house into which Mr. Allan had disappeared I was taken aback by its solitude and unlit windows. Since I was winded, I hesitated to advance upon it, and waited for a minute or so to catch my breath and quiet my pulse. Then, keeping to the shadows, I moved silently up to the house, looking for any sliver of light.

I crept from the front of the house around to the back. Not the slightest ray of light could be seen. But a low humming sound vibrated just inside the range of my hearing, like the hum of a power line responding to the weather. I crossed to the far side of the house—and there I saw the hint of light—not yellow light, as from a lamp inside, but a pale lavender radiance that seemed to glow faintly, ever so faintly, from the wall itself.

I drew back, recalling only too sharply what I had seen in that house.

But my role now could not be a passive one. I had to know whether Rose was in that darkened house—perhaps in that very room with the unknown machinery and the glass case with the monster in the violet radiance.

I slipped back to the front of the house and mounted the steps to the front door.

Once again, the door was not locked. It yielded to the pressure of my hands. Pausing only long enough to take my loaded weapon in hand, I pushed open the door and entered the vestibule. I stood for a moment to

accustom my eyes to that darkness; standing there, I was even more aware of the humming sound I had heard—and of more—the same kind of chant which had put me into that hypnotic state in the course of which I had witnessed that disturbing vision purporting to be that of life in another world.

I apprehended its meaning instantly, I thought. Rose must be with Mr. Allan and his brothers, undergoing a similar experience.

Would that it had been no more!

For when I pushed my way into that large room on the far side of the house, I saw that which will be for ever indelibly imprinted on my mind. Lit by the radiance from the glass case, the room disclosed Mr. Allan and his identical brothers all prone upon the floor around the twin cases, making their chanting song. Beyond them, against the far wall, lay the discarded life-size likeness of Poe I had seen beneath that weird creature in the glass case bathed in violet radiance. But it was not Mr. Allan and his brothers that so profoundly shocked and repelled me—it was what I saw in the glass cases!

For in the one that lit the room with its violently pulsating and agitated violent radiation lay Rose Dexter, fully clothed, and certainly under hypnosis—and on top of her lay, greatly elongated and with its tentacles flailing madly, the rugose cone-like figure I had last seen shrunken on the likeness of Poe. And in the connected case adjacent to it—I can hardly bear to set it down even now—lay, identical in every detail, *a perfect duplicate of Rose!*

What happened next is confused in my memory. I know that I lost control, that I fired blindly at the glass cases, intending to shatter them. Certainly I struck one or both of them, for with the impact the radiance vanished, the room was plunged into utter darkness,

cries of fear and alarm rose from Mr. Allan and his brothers, and, amid a succession of explosive sounds from the machinery, I rushed forward and picked up Rose Dexter.

Somehow I gained the street with Rose.

Looking back, I saw that flames were appearing at the windows of that accursed house, and then, without warning, the north wall of the house collapsed, and something—an object I could not identify—burst from the now burning house and vanished aloft. I fled, still carrying Rose.

Regaining her senses, Rose was hysterical, but I succeeded in calming her, and at last she fell silent and would say nothing. And in silence I took her safely home, knowing how frightening her experience must have been, and resolved to say nothing until she had fully recovered.

In the week that followed, I came to see clearly what was taking place in that house on the knoll. But the charge of arson—lodged against me in lieu of a far more serious one because of the pistol I abandoned in the burning house—has blinded the police to anything but the most mundane matters. I have tried to tell them, insisting that they see Rose Dexter when she is well enough to talk—and willing to do so. I cannot make them understand what I now understand only too well. Yet the facts are there, inescapably.

They say the charred flesh found in that house is not human, most of it. But could they have expected anything else? Seven men in the likeness of Edgar Allan Poe? Surely they must understand that whatever it was in that house came from another world, a dying world, and sought to invade and ultimately take over Earth by reproducing themselves in the shape of men! Surely they must know that it must have been only by coincidence that the model they first chose was a likeness of

Poe, chosen because they had no knowledge that Poe did not represent the average among men? Surely they must know, as I came to know, that the rugose, tentacled cone in the violet radiance was the source of their material selves, that the machinery and the tubing—which they say was too much damaged by the fire to identify, as if they could have identified its functions even undamaged!—manufactured from the material simulating flesh supplied by the cone in the violet light creatures in the shape of men from the likeness of Poe!

'Mr. Allan' himself afforded me the key, though I did not know it at the time, when I asked him why mankind was the object of interplanetary scrutiny—'To make war on us? To invade us?'—and he replied: *'A more highly developed form of life would hardly need to use such primitive methods.'* Could anything more plainly set forth the explanation for the strange occupation of the house along the Seekonk? Of course, it is evident now that what 'Mr. Allan' and his identical brothers afforded me in my own house was a glimpse of life on the planet of the cubes and rugose cones, which was their own.

And surely, finally, most damning of all—it must be evident to any unbiased observer why they wanted Rose. They meant to reproduce their kind in the guise of men and women, so that they could mingle with us, undetected, unsuspected, and slowly, over decades—perhaps centuries, while their world died, take over and prepare our Earth for those who would come after.

God alone knows how many of them may be here, among us, even now!

Later. I have been unable to see Rose until now, tonight, and I am hesitant to call for her. For something unutterably terrible has happened to me. I have fallen prey to horrible doubts. While it did not occur to me during that frightful experience in the shambles

following my shots in that violet-lit room, I have now begun to wonder, and my concern has grown hour by hour until I find it now almost unbearable. How can I be sure that, in those frenzied minutes, I rescued the *real* Rose Dexter? If I did, surely she will reassure me tonight. If I did not—God knows what I may unwittingly have loosed upon Providence and the world!

From *The Providence Journal* - July 17

LOCAL GIRL SLAYS ATTACKER

Rose Dexter, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Elisha Dexter of 127 Benevolent Street, last night fought off and killed a young man she charged with attacking her. Miss Dexter was apprehended in an hysterical condition as she fled down Benefit Street in the vicinity of the Cathedral of St. John, near the cemetery attached to which the attack took place.

Her attacker was identified as an acquaintance, Arthur Phillips . . .

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