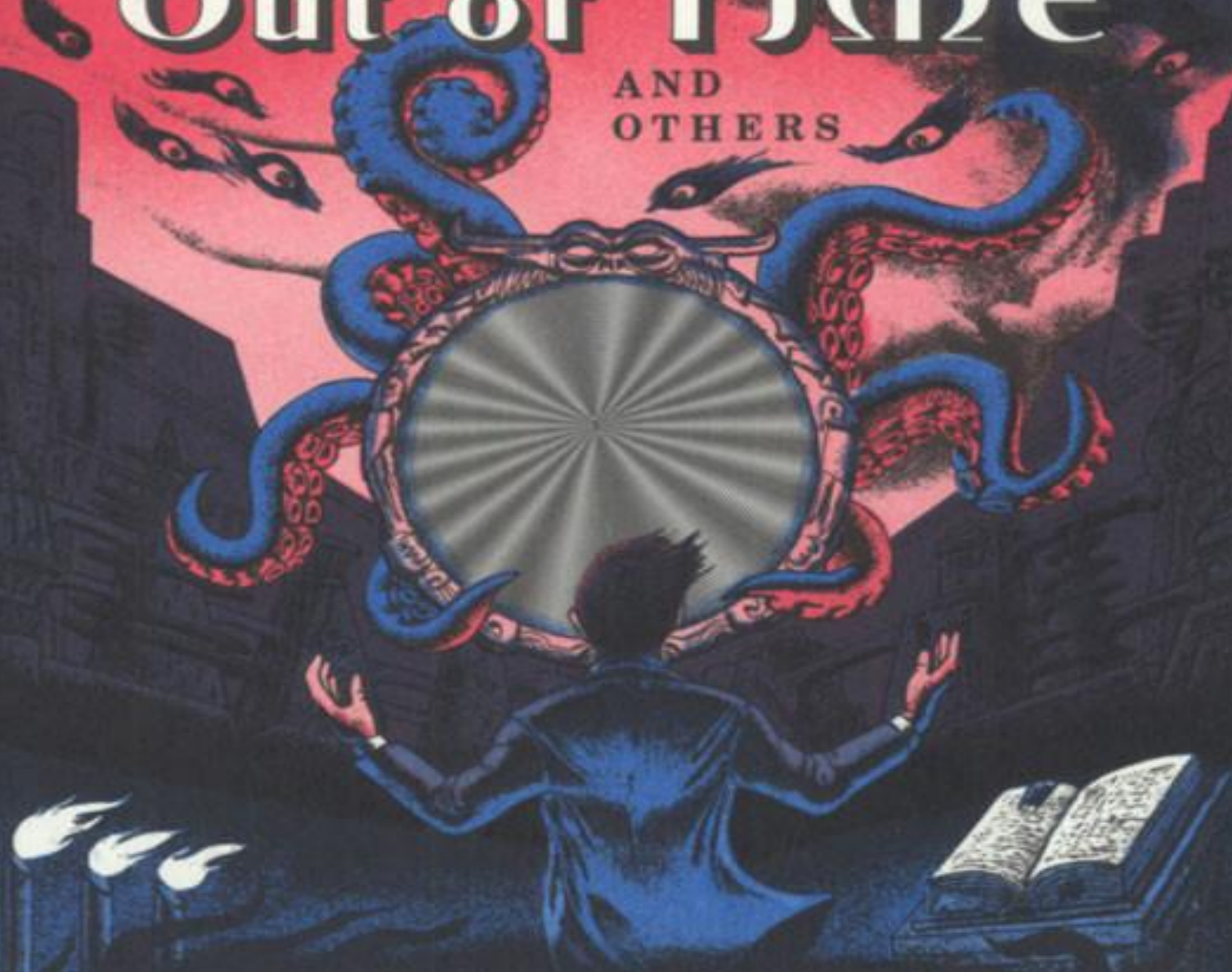


# The WATCHERS Out of TIME

AND  
OTHERS



h.p. Lovecraft  
& august Depleth

August Derleth

The Watchers Out of Time (Unfinished!)

# I

On a spring day in 1935, there arrived at the home of Nicholas Walters in Surrey a communication from Stephen Boyle, of Boyle, Monahan, Prescott & Bigelow, 37 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts, addressed to his father, Charles Walters, seven years dead. The letter, couched in rather old-fashioned legal terminology, puzzled Nicholas, a solitary young man, almost as old as the century; it made reference to “ancestral property” situated in Massachusetts, to which the addressee had fallen heir seven years before, though, because of the uncertain health of one Ambrose Boyle of Springfield - “my late cousin” - there had been a failure to notify the heir, accounting for a delay of seven years, during which the property - “a house and various outbuildings, set in north central Massachusetts, the entire land area of the property comprising fifty acres more or less,” had been untenanted.

Nicholas Walters had no memory of his father’s ever making mention of any such property. Indeed, the elder Walters had been a close-mouthed man, and, after the death of his wife a decade before his own passing, had grown increasingly reclusive and morose, much given to solitary introspection and very little communication with anyone. What Nicholas chiefly remembered about him was his father’s habit on occasion of studying Nicholas’s features, always with some faint apprehension and a disturbing habit of shaking his head forbiddingly as if he did not like something of what he saw - certainly not the finely-chiseled nose, but perhaps the wide mouth, or the curious lobeless ears, or the large pale blue slightly bulging eyes behind the spectacles Nicholas had worn since he was a child, to facilitate his favorite pastime of reading. Nicholas could not recall that his father had even so much as made a passing reference to the United States, though his mother had told Nicholas that he had been born in that same state of Massachusetts to which the solicitor’s letter referred.

He pondered the matter for two days. His initial perplexity gave place to curiosity; his reluctance to stir thinned, and an odd kind of anticipation rose in him, investing the American property in a mysterious haze that made it

seem attractive; so that, by the third day after his receipt of the letter addressed to his father, he cabled Stephen Boyle and announced his coming. Within the day he booked a flight to New York, and within the week he presented himself at the offices of Boyle, Monahan, Prescott & Bigelow.

Stephen Boyle, the senior partner, proved to be a tall, thin gentleman of some seventy years; he was quite grey, but nevertheless carried a full head of hair and long sideboards. He wore a pince-nez on a long black silk ribbon, his face was somewhat pinched with wrinkles, his thin lips were pursed, and his blue eyes very sharp. There was about him that general air of preoccupation, so common to men of affairs, suggesting that his mind was so busy with various matters that the problem in hand was almost too trivial to command his attention. His manner, however, was extremely courteous.

After the exchange of the customary pleasantries, he plunged directly into the matter of the estate. "You will forgive me, Mr. Walters, if I come straight to the point. We know very little of this matter. It was inherited from my cousin Ambrose - as I believe I wrote your father. He maintained an office in Springfield, and when we took it over on his death we discovered among folders pertaining to unsettled estates one devoted to the property in question, with a clear notation that it belonged, following the death of your father's - we could not make that out, but it appeared to be 'stepbrother' - to your father, whose name was appended to the documents, together with a notation in my cousin's execrable Latin which we could not satisfactorily read, but which seemed to be a paragraph referring to an alteration in name - but whose name is not clear. In any case, the estate is known locally in the Dunwich area, not far from Springfield, where it lies, as the old Cyrus Whateley estate, and your father's stepbrother - if that is what he was - was the late Aberath Whateley."

"I'm afraid those names mean nothing to me," Walters said. "I was scarcely two years old when we reached England - so my mother told me. I don't recall my father ever mentioning any of his relatives on this side, and there was very little if any correspondence with them except in the last year of his life. I have some reason to believe that he intended to tell me something of the family background, but he was stricken with what the medical

profession now calls a cerebral accident, which deprived him not only of virtually all mobility, but also of speech, and though the expression in his eyes indicated that he wanted desperately to speak, he died without ever regaining the power to do so. And of course he could not set down anything in writing.”

“I see.” Boyle looked thoughtful, as if coming to a decision in regard to the problem, before he continued. “Well, Mr. Walters, we’ve made some inquiries, but they haven’t come to much. That country around Dunwich - which is north central Massachusetts, as I wrote, - is a sort of backwater. In Aylesbury they call in ‘Whateley country’ - and many of the old farms there do still carry mailboxes that show the onetime presence of many members of that family, though these farms are now largely deserted - following some sort of trouble there in 1928 or thereabouts - and the area itself seems to be quite decadent. But you will see that for yourself. The estate in question still stands, and is apparently in remarkably good shape, for Aberath Whateley’s been dead only about seven years and a companion who lived there with him only three. Ambrose should have written at once on Whateley’s death, but he was in precarious health for years before he died, and I suppose it was for that reason the matter slipped from mind. I take it you have your own means of transportation?”

“I bought a car in New York,” said Walters. “As long as I’m over here, I mean to see something of the States, beginning with Walden Pond, which appears to be on the way to Springfield.”

“At least in that general direction,” observed Boyle dryly. “Now, if there is anything we can do for you, please do not hesitate to call on us.”

“I’m sure I’ll be able to manage,” Walters said.

Boyle looked dubious. “What will you do with the property, Mr. Walters?”

“I’ll have to make up my mind about that when I’ve seen it,” he answered. “But I have my home in England, and it strikes my fancy. Candidly, what I’ve seen of the States so far hasn’t seemed to me encouraging.”

“I advise you not to get up any hope of selling it at even a fraction of its value,” said Boyle then. “That country is pretty decayed. Furthermore, it has an unsavory reputation.”

Walters’s interest was unaccountably quickened. “Precisely what does that mean, Mr. Boyle?”

“They tell strange tales about Dunwich.” He shrugged. “But I suppose they’re no stranger than those to be found in other remote corners of the country. And they are very probably much exaggerated.”

It was obvious to Walters that Boyle was not inclined to repeat specific tales, if he had heard them. “How do I get there?” he asked.

“It’s off the beaten path. You take a loop from the Aylesbury Pike through Dunwich and back to the Pike again at a considerable distance from there. Quite a bit of wooded terrain there, too. It’s picturesque country. What farming is done is, I believe, largely dairying. It’s very backward country - I don’t exaggerate. You can pick up the Aylesbury Pike near Concord, if you’re bound for Walden - or due west of Boston if you bear toward Worcester. Once on the Pike, continue west. Watch for a hamlet named Dean’s Comers. Just past it you’ll find a junction. You turn left there.” He chuckled. “It’ll be like turning into the American past, Mr. Walters - the far past.”

## II

He had not traveled far from the Aylesbury Pike on the Dunwich road before Nicholas Walters understood readily what Boyle had meant in his reference to the area. As the terrain rose, many brier-bordered stone walls made their appearance, pressing upon the road; most of these were broken down in places, with field stones scattered along the foot of the walls. The road wound into hills past great old trees, bramble-covered fences, and barren fields and pastures in country that was only sparsely settled. Occasional farms could be seen; these wore an aspect of age he had not previously encountered west of Boston; many wore an air of depressing desertion, though they were architecturally of singular interest to Walters, for he had long ago made the photographing of buildings a hobby, and such farms as he could see closer to the road, though squalid, revealed curious decorative motifs hitherto unknown to him. Some of the old barns bore on their gables designs which could only have been cabalistic, though many of these seemed not to have been otherwise painted. Here and there lesser outbuildings - sheds, cribs, and storage buildings - had fallen together. Among these abandoned farms there occurred from time to time well-kept and clearly still inhabited farms, with cattle in pasture and corn in the fields and rocky meadows that gave evidence of being cropped.

He drove slowly. The mood and atmosphere of the country filled him with an odd fascination; it was as if he had been there before, as if some ancestral memory had risen up to set his own mood. Surely it was not possible that some bridge to memory had reached back to his first two years! - and yet there were vistas and turns of the road that rose before him with a disturbing familiarity. The rounded hills brooded over the valleys; the woods were dark and crowded with trees, as if no axe or saw had ever been wielded in them; and now and then he caught sight of strange circles of tall stone pillars on the summits of the hills, reminding him of Stonehenge and the cromlechs of Devon and Cornwall. From time to time the hills were broken by deep gorges, crossed by crude wooden bridges; and openings along the base of the hills afforded glimpses of the Miskatonic River, and upper reaches of which he had seen on road maps took rise not

far west of the Dunwich country and wound serpentinely through the valley beyond and on to the seat at Arkham. Occasionally, too, he saw lesser streams emptying into the Miskatonic, hardly more than rills which very probably came from springs in the hills; and once there flashed upon his vision the blue-white column of a waterfall cascading out of the dark hills.

Though the hills pressed almost precipitously upon the dusty road for much of the way, there were some infrequent openings that revealed high marshland or meadows, and now and then more farms - or what remained of them. The landscape was forbidding; the enclosing hills, the looming, pillared summits of the higher ridge leaning over, the dreary, deserted farms - all combined to convey the impression of a cleavage not only in time but in place between this area and the country along the Aylesbury Pike; and, insofar as the area around Boston was concerned, the Dunwich settlement was centuries removed.

The mood of the region pervaded him oddly; he could not explain it; he was both drawn to the country through which he drove, and repelled by it, and the deeper he penetrated into it, the greater the confirmation of that mood. The conviction that he had been here before grew upon him, even as he smiled at the thought; he was not troubled at the thought, and only remotely curious. Such impressions, he knew, are common to all mankind, and only the unlettered and superstitious tend to read meaningful mystery into them.

He came out of the hills suddenly into a broader valley, and there lay the village of Dunwich, on the far side of the Miskatonic, huddling between the river and Round Mountain on the far side. A quaint covered bridge crossed the river, a relic of that distant past to which the settlement itself obviously belonged. Rotting gambrel roofs, ruined, deserted houses, dominated by a church with a broken steeple, met his eye as he emerged from the bridge. It was a place of desolation, where even the few men and women on the streets seemed gnarled and aged by more than the passage of time.

He drew his car up at the broken-steepled church, for it had patently been given over to use as a general store, and went in to inquire of the gaunt-faced storekeeper behind the counter for directions to the property he had come to inspect.



“Aberath Whateley’s place,” he repeated, staring at him. His wide-lipped mouth worked, his lips making chewing motions, as if he were masticating Walters’s inquiry. “Ye-kin? Kin to Whateley’s?”

“My name is Walters. I’ve come from England.”

The storekeeper did not seem to have heard. He studied Walters with open-faced interest and curiosity. “Ye hev the Whateley look. Walters. Never heerd none o’ my kin speak thet name.”

“The Whateley place,” Walters reminded him.

“Might be twenty sech places. Aberath’s place, ye said. It’s shet up.”

“I have the key,” Walters said, with ill-concealed impatience and some irritation at what seemed to him the storekeeper’s crooked and mocking smile.

“Go back crost the bridge, an’ turn right. Go mebbe half a mile. Can’t miss it. Stone fence in front - medder down from thet toards the river. Wood the other three sides. ‘Twant Aberath’s - ‘twas Cyrus Whateley’s - Old Cyrus, the smart one, the eddicated one.” He said this with an arresting sneer and added, “Ye’ll be eddicated, too. Ye dress like it.”

“Oxford,” said Walters.

“Ain’t never heerd uv it.”

With that, he turned, dismissing Walters. But he could not wholly cut Walters off, for when he reached the threshold, the storekeeper spoke again. “I’m Tobias Whateley. Ye’re likely kin. Tek keer out there. Ain’t nobody livin’ in thet house, but tek keer jest the same.”

The peculiar accent he put on “livin’ ” touched Walters with foreboding, though superstition was not part of his education. He left the store with an annoying edge of apprehension gnawing at him.

The house was not difficult to find, given Tobias Whateley’s directions. It was evident at but a glance, as Walters drove toward the stone fence that

bounded the property along the rutted road, that the house was far older than the generation of Cyrus Whateley. Its dating could not have been later than early eighteenth century, and its lines were classic and utterly unlike the worn houses of the village or the farms along the road leading in from the Aylesbury Pike. It was a wooden structure, rising from a high base of brown sandstone rocks, and quite plainly thick-walled. It was of a storey and a half in height, though the central section rose somewhat taller than the wings. A broad verandah crossed the front of the central section, framing a Queen Anne door with a brass knocker. Around the door and the fanlight on top were elaborate carvings, narrow along the sides, broader above the fanlight, an ornamentation in rather odd contrast to the severity of the door itself.

The house had at one time been painted white, but many years had passed since last a coat of paint had been applied to it; now its general appearance suggested brown rather than white, for the house had weathered without paint for many decades. Walters saw outbuildings to the rear of the house, among them what must certainly be a spring house of fieldstone, for a rill ran from under it toward the Miskatonic beyond the meadow on the other side of the road. Along the left side of the house, but some two yards removed from it, ran a lane that had once been a driveway, leading toward the outbuildings; but this had been for so long unused that trees grew in it. Walters could drive no farther than just in from the road.

The key Boyle had given him fitted the front door. The door stuck a little, which was not surprising, for presumably it had not been opened since the death of the last resident, Aberath's companion. It opened into a hallway that ran the length of the front of the house, as far as Walters could determine at a glance; and it faced upon a pair of handsome double-doors, made of mahogany. These, too, were locked, but in the circlet of lesser keys Boyle had given him, Walters found the key to it.

Walters had been surprised at the lack of vandalism at sight of the house, so remote from a well-traveled highway; now, opening the double doors, he was even more astounded to find the room fully furnished and in excellent condition, save for minimal dust and lint; patently, nothing had been disturbed here, and it struck him as odd indeed, considering the remoteness

of the house in an almost deserted countryside, it should have escaped the vandalism commonly done to abandoned buildings. Moreover, the furniture was almost all period, antique and of far greater value than pieces ordinarily on offer in shops specializing in such furniture.

This central room was that around which all the rest of the house had been built. It accounted for the tallness of the central section of the house, for its ceiling was at least ten feet from the floor. The far wall, that facing the double doors, was occupied by a fireplace framed by woodwork, exquisitely panelled, which masked on the right a hidden pullout desk and cabinet above it. The chimney wall was crowned by an extensive carved ornament in the center of which had been placed a convex glass circle a trifle more than half a foot in diameter. The ornament itself was triangular in shape, its apex reaching almost to the ceiling.

From the fireplace area bookshelves encircled the room, broken only by doors; these shelves were laden with what, Walters saw at a glance, were very old books. He crossed to the opposite wall, and examined some of them. Nothing more recent than Dickens stood among the leather-bound tomes, and many of them were in Latin and other languages. High atop a bookcase lay a telescope; here and there small ornaments broke the even rows of books - carvings, small statuary, and what appeared to be ancient artifacts. On the massive table that occupied the middle of the room lay papers, pen and ink, and several ledgers, lying as if but recently left there, and but waiting to be put to use again.

Walters could not imagine what manner of accounts might have been kept by the previous occupant of the house. He crossed to the table and opened one of the ledgers. There was no accounting in it, he saw at a glance; the pages were filled with a fine script, very small - so much so that two lines of script occupied each rule on the page. He read a line on one page - "taken the boy and gone, leaving no word; but it will not matter; They will know where he has gone..." He opened an older ledger and read: "no question but she is gone, and Wilbur could tell if he will; the fires on Sentinel Hill, and the whippoorwills screeching all night long as on the night the Old Man died." The presence of dates suggested that the ledgers held some kind of journal or diary. He closed the book and turned away, and at that moment

was aware of a small sound that had been present in the house, he recognized, from the beginning. It was the ticking of a clock.

A clock! And no one had lived here for at least three years. He was astonished. Someone must have had entrance to the house and set it. He looked around and saw in an alcove close to the door by which he had entered a curious, obviously hand-carved clock standing almost three feet tall, its face covered with strange designs - of serpentine coils and primitive creatures belonging clearly to some pre-human era, he thought, utterly alien - and yet the sight of them rilled him with a disturbing, almost shocking, mushrooming of familiar terror, as if in some remote corner of his memory, lost in the murky years of his childhood, he had known their like - not in the face of a clock, but in a vague, misty reality. Nevertheless, the clock fascinated him, drew him, and he stared at it long enough to conclude that it was intended to tell more than time, for the numerals and lettering on its face clearly pertained to more than minutes and hours. Or days, for that matter.

He drew away from the clock and withdrew from the room. There was more of the house to be seen, and he set about to examine it. If he had hoped to discover anything other in the building that held the odd fascination of its central room, he was disappointed; for the remainder of the house was ordinary, its rooms were sparsely furnished, if completely. There were two bedrooms, a kitchen, a pantry, a dining-room, a storeroom, and, under the gables upstairs, three cramped rooms used for additional storage and a fourth as a bedroom, the second storey of the house being interrupted here and there by the slope of the roof. These gable rooms were intimately cozy, with one window in each - commodious too, for they were dormer windows of a sort, shaped to repeat the design of the gable in a fashion he had not previously encountered.

He must, he reflected, add photographs of the house to his extensive collection; the architectural details of the gables with their dormer windows were unique. But there were other aspects of the house, too, that aroused his professional interest, and there was no time like the present to take a sequence of pictures, before the sun slipped down the western heavens and the shadows of the woods pressed upon the building.

He went back down the narrow stairway and out to his car, got out his paraphernalia, and made it ready for use. He began with exteriors, taking pictures of the house from every elevation, and particularly of the dormered gables; then he went inside, and took photographs of the great central room - of the clock, with a close-up of its strange face, and at last of the glass ornament in its carved setting above the fireplace, to complete a record for his future reference.

By this time the day was drawing to its close, and he had to decide whether he would drive to a nearby town for the night or whether he would stay here. In view of the evident cleanliness of the house, it seemed foolish to go elsewhere to spend the night. He would sleep, he decided, in the cozy gable bedroom. Accordingly, he brought in his luggage, and having done this, he decided that he would need some minimal supplies - a modicum of groceries, preferably nothing that necessitated extensive preparation: cookies and crackers, perhaps, cereal, milk, bread and butter, together with some fruit, if that were available, and cheese, for he had not seen even a lunch counter on his brief visit to the village, to say nothing of a restaurant, of which the reclusive rural inhabitants of this remote area clearly had no need. And he would need, above all else, some kind of fuel for the kerosene lamps that stood empty in the pantry, unless he were to use some of the candles that were to be seen in all the rooms and showed every sign of having been used.

He needed to return to Dunwich for his supplies, and he felt a curious compulsion to get there and back before darkness closed down on the countryside. He locked the house and set out at once.

Tobias Whateley had a look of anticipation on his gaunt face when Walters mounted the steps to his store. It disconcerted Walters a little; Tobias had evidently been expecting him, but for what reason mystified and troubled Walters.

"I need some groceries and kerosene," said Walters, and without giving Whateley an opportunity to reply, rattled off the things he wanted.

Whateley stood unmoving, staring at Walters in a speculative manner. "Yew aim to stay?" he asked finally.

“Overnight at least,” Walters said. “Maybe a little longer. Until I can make up my mind what to do with the property.”

“What to do?” repeated Whateley in manifest astonishment.

“I may put it up for sale.”

Whateley gave him a baffled look. “Ain’t even a Whateley’d buy it. None a the eddicated Whateleys’d want a thing to do with it - an’ the others - wal, the others ‘re tied down to places all their own. Ye’ll have to git in an outsider.”

He said this as if the possibility were too unlikely to contemplate, nettling Walters, who said curtly, “I’m an outsider.”

Whateley gave a short bark that was like a derisive laugh. “Ye kin tell it! Ye’ll not be stayin’ long, I reckon. Ye kin sell it from Springfield or Arkham or Boston - but ye wun’t find a buyer in these parts.”

“That house is in perfect condition, Mr. Whateley.”

He gave Walters a fierce, blazing stare. “Ain’t ye been aksin’ yerself who kep’ it thet way? Nobody’s lived in thet house since Increase died. Nobody’s bin near it. Three years naow. Cousin, I couldn’t git a body around here to so much as bring yer groceries up thar.”

Walters was disconcerted. “Locked up as tight as it was, it’s not likely the house would be much run down. Three years isn’t a long time. Aberath Whateley’s been dead seven. Who was Increase?”

“Increase Brown, they said his name was,” answered Whateley. “I dun’t know who he was - or what he was.” He gave Walters a hard, challenging stare as he spoke. “Nor where he come from. He belonged to Aberath.”

What a strange way to put it! thought Walters.

“One day he was jist thar. An’ then he was allus thar! Follered Aberath around like a dog. An’ then he wasn’t thar. So they said he died.”

“Who claimed his body, then?”

“No body to claim,” said Whateley brusquely.

It seemed plain to Walters, however much to his astonishment, that Tobias Whateley regarded him with something akin to contempt; he looked upon Walters as at someone unaware of some basic knowledge he ought to have. This was galling, for Whateley was unmistakably a bumpkin, with an education that was halted somewhere in the grades; that he should look upon him with such ill-concealed scorn was irritating, particularly since it was patent that his attitude was not that of the ignorant yokel by temperament antipathetic to the educated man, and Walters was as much perplexed as he was irritated; indeed, his irritation washed away as his perplexity grew; for Whateley continued to talk, and his talk was filled with odd allusions and puzzling references, and he kept glancing at Walters from time to time almost hopefully as if to catch some sign of comprehension that Walters might not otherwise be willing to betray.

As he listened to Whateley, his mystification increased. It was obvious from what Whateley said as he went about putting Walters's order together that Aberath Whateley, though one of “the eddicated ones,” was nevertheless as shunned by the educated Whateleys as by the decayed branch of the family. As for Increase Brown, who remained a somewhat shadowy figure whose description in the course of Whateley's monologue painted him as “gaunt” and “brown” of skin with black eyes and bony hands - “never seen him eat - never come after Aberath died for food” - but “thar was allus chickens and onct a hog and twict a cow gone” and people said “dark things” - the sum total of what he had to say of Increase Brown was that he was loathed and feared, and fearsomely avoided - not that he was ever about much to be avoided. Walters could not escape the conclusion that the Dunwichers were manifesting considerably more than the ignorant countryman's resentment of the outsider in their attitude toward Brown; but what was it that Whateley sought in his sometimes guarded, sometimes frank glances at Walters's eyes, what reaction was he looking for? Whateley succeeded in giving Walters a profoundly uneasy conviction that he not only was expected to react in a certain way, but ought to so react.

His uneasiness did not drain away when he left the store and drove out of Dunwich; and when he came to a stop at the house in the woods it was, if anything, compounded.



### III

After a light repast, he walked outside in the dusk, considering what he ought to do. It would be folly, he thought, to offer the property for sale as far away as Boston, for the Dunwich country was too far from that urban center, and had nothing to attract a potential buyer from the coastal towns; it would be better to advertise it for sale in Springfield, for Dunwich was not too far from that city, though it was quite likely that the reputation Dunwich had must have reached Springfield, and that might deter an investor. Even as he turned the problem over in his thoughts, he was conscious of a failure of conviction; he was not yet certain that he wished to move so precipitously; something about the house and its reputation interested him to the verge of obsession; the hints and suggestions thrown out by Tobias Whateley, added to those so casually dropped by the lawyer, Boyle, were beginning to persuade Walters that there was considerably more to be learned about the house before he offered it for sale. Furthermore, the property was his, he need not make haste to dispose of it, however much part of him wanted to be off to England once more.

As he walked, turning the problem over and over in his mind, the dusk deepened toward night; stars began to glimmer among the treetops and over the house - Acturus and Spica, with Vega rising in the northeast - and the last of the winter constellations low in the west, Capella and the Heavenly Twins following Taurus and great Orion with the Dogs under the western rim. The evening was fragrant with the exhalation of the woods, an herb-like musk, added to that of the Miskatonic not far away, and the fresh-water smell of the nearby brook, and there was a rising tide of sound emanating from the near woods and, more distantly, from the hilltops around Dunwich, at first but the voices of birds - the diminishing songs and cries of day-birds, the increasing voices of nocturnal birds.

He reflected upon the differences between night in the American countryside and night in the England where he had grown up. Neither cuckoo nor nightingale was to be heard here in north central Massachusetts, but whippoorwills seemed to be vociferous indeed, and the harsh cries of

what must be the American equivalent of nightjars rang out from above now and then, accompanied by the booming sound of wind in their wings as they plummeted downward and vaulted up again. And of batrachian voices there was no dearth; they seemed to rise not only from the river but also from every pond and bog within range, a piping, ululant chorus marking the season's height.

But now, as he listened, he was aware of other sounds that did not seem to emanate from either avian or batrachian throats. The cries and booming of the nighthawks fell away; stranger sounds took their place - piping or fluting cries, but certainly not of frog or toad. He gave over walking and stood to listen. He heard voices, however distorted, which were surely those of men crying out, shouting; but at some distance away, and from on high. He decided presently that they came from the hilltops; and on the crest of round hill behind Dunwich there was a glow in the now dark heavens, as of a bonfire burning there. What could be taking place there?

But there were other sounds that were oddly disturbing - animal sounds of some kind, but the kind of which he had never heard before, though he had visited zoos and was familiar with the cries and gutturals and trumpeting of many animals foreign to England's shores, animals taken from the entire range of the British Commonwealth; and these sounds were utterly alien and filled the darkness with hideous suggestiveness. Now and then they rose to crescendo, but soon fell back again into a more normal pattern, blending with the voices of the dark woods and the marshes, and making a troubling harmony with the incessant calling of the whippoorwills and the frogs.

He concluded finally that Boyle's casual references to the strangeness and remoteness of Dunwich might have been in reference to certain customs of the inhabitants; and of these whatever was going on in the hills by night might well be one. He shrugged himself free of further concern, and went into the house, intent upon developing the photographs he had taken. He had already foreseen that he might spend the evening in this fashion, and to that end had moved in his materials at the same time he had brought his camera. A cistern pump in the kitchen would be a source of water, and any room in the house would serve as a dark-room, for the house was darker

than the starlit woods outside. Still, in the absence of electricity, it would take some doing.

He persevered, though it took him longer than he had estimated to complete a set of photographs and hang them to dry. His skill had not deserted him, though he was not satisfied with the views he had taken of the interior of the house, particularly that of the study, that curious central room that was so much a vortex around which the remainder of the house seemed to have been constructed. And his photograph of the decoration on the wall above the fireplace struck him as uncommonly odd; he took it, wet, from the line, and carried it into an adjoining room where he could look at it in a stronger light.

The wall and the carving on it were beautifully clear. But the glass eye seemed oddly clouded. He studied it for a while, growing somewhat disquieted; he did not believe what he fancied he saw, and he disliked what he fancied. He returned to the improvised dark-room, sought out the negative of the fireplace wall, and set out enlarging the section centered on the ornament. This done, he repaired once again to the adjoining room and peered closely at the result.

There was no mistaking what he saw. The “clouding” he had seen was the unmistakable outline of two human faces - the one, of an old man, bearded, looked directly out of the glass; the other, a lean, hawklike face, with the skin drawn tight over its bones, looked out from behind the first, his face slightly tilted as if he were deferring to the older man, though the age of the one was no greater to the eye than the age of the other, for all that the one wore a beard and the other’s leathery, parchment-like face was free of any hirsute adornment. Walters’s baffled astonishment knew no bounds; in any other medium he would have dismissed what he saw as an optical illusion - but the photograph could not lie, and the outlines could not be dismissed as illusion. It was odd that he had not seen these outlines when he had looked at the ornament; but perhaps he had been too hasty, perhaps the light had reflected from the glass in such a way as to blur the outlines beyond recognition.

He went forthwith to the study, carrying one of the lamps he had lit. As he approached the open doors, he was further surprised to see light flickering

in the room, as if he had left a lamp burning there; but he had not been in the room at all in his transit from outside to the dark-room. He put down the lamp he carried and walked forward quietly in its reflected glow to the threshold of the study. There he stood, transfixed.

The source of the glow he had seen was the glass eye in the carved triangle above the fireplace. It was clouded, opalescent; it seethed and swirled with movement, spilling a pale light into and across the room; it was as if some life within reached out to make itself manifest. Though the eye was as milky as a moonstone, it flashed with hidden colors suddenly disclosed, as in an opal-roseate, pale green, blue, red, yellow. He stood and watched the swirling colors, the seething clouds in the glass eye; then he turned abruptly and went back to where he had put down the lamp.

With it in hand, he advanced confidently into the room. But its light seemed to have a diminishing effect on the glow of the eye in the wall. The swirling clouds settled, grew still; the light faded; the glinting colors became motionless. He waited upon it. Nothing happened. All was now still.

There was in one corner of the room a small stepladder manifestly for use in reaching books on the top shelves of the cases around the walls. Walters went over and got it. He put it up against the fireplace wall, caught up the lamp again, and climbed the ladder, lamp in hand, until he stood almost abreast of the uncommon ornament.

He examined it, looking first at the eye itself. After a few moments of scrutiny, about all of which he could be reasonably certain was that it was assuredly not any common form of glass. He could not be sure that it was indeed glass, at all. Were it not for its uncommon size, it might in appearance alone have been an opal. But it was not that, either.

The carving which framed it was fully as baffling. The eye appeared in what was almost its optical center. The outer frame was a triangular pediment. At first glance, the carving appeared to be classically conventional in design. But now, in the light of the lamp Walters held, it bore a disquieting resemblance to a huge octopus-like being, yet unearthly to look upon; in it the convex circle of glass lay like a huge, central eye,

opaque to sight now, but still cloudy with pale light that shifted oddly even now.

The whole exerted a strong fascination on Walters, who felt it difficult to take his eyes from it. He could not put down the expectation of something's appearing in the glass, and wherever his eye wandered, following the tentacular lines of the carving, he invariably returned to the convex glass, as if he anticipated some further change. But there was nothing. That it was luminous of itself could hardly be denied, but the source of that luminosity was a mystery, one incapable of solution at this point.

Walters backed down the stepladder with reluctance. He stood below and looked back up at the triangular frame. The carving was undeniably octopoid, but equally certain not in the same way that common octopi were.

He put out the light and waited upon the effect of darkness.

At first all was black, so much so that it was impossible to distinguish even the walls. But in moments a wan iridescence became apparent. Not very much to Walters's surprise, it emanated from the convex eye in the ornament on the fireplace wall. And presently the room was once more aglow, as it had been when first Walters had entered it from the dark-room. The convex eye was again agitated, and its appearance was that of a cloudscape in the grip of a violent wind, save only that its colors were more brilliant.

Watching it and trying to find some explanation of its extraordinary properties, Walters was insidiously aware of a kind of compulsion in his interest; it was as if his attention to the eye in the wall was not entirely voluntary, as if something outside himself impelled him to gaze at it, some influence he could not define. At the same time, his thoughts took an amazing turn; he was less concerned with the glass and its properties, and more with an ambiguous, ill-defined concept of vast dimensions and spaces beyond the terrestrial scenes familiar to him; and he felt himself being drawn into some vortex of dream and speculation that profoundly disturbed him. It was as if he were falling into a bottomless pit.

He relit the lamp.

It took a few moments for his equilibrium to return. The glow of the convex eye had once again vanished, and insofar as it was possible for the room to become prosaic, prosaic it had become. He was consciously relieved. Indeed, he discovered that a fine beading of perspiration had begun to form on his forehead. He wiped it away.

Whatever its source, his experience had been extraordinary. He sat down somewhat shakily and tried to think how it had come about, and why. Obviously, the eye in the wall had far more than ornamental significance. Who had put it there?

He climbed the stepladder again and studied the carving with greater care in the lamplight. He could find nothing to indicate its age. Presumably it had been put in at the time the house had been built. He must therefore learn something about its construction; and since it was very probably older than any living inhabitant of Dunwich, he would have to search elsewhere. He must also discover what he could about the previous inhabitants. Perhaps they had had similar experiences with the eye in the carving? Perhaps their experiences had transcended his? The thought filled him with apprehension and also a sense of excitement and discovery simultaneously.

It was borne in upon him that if he meant to accomplish the research that clearly impended, his stay in Aberath Whateley's house would be of appreciably longer duration than he had intended. Somewhat sobered, he descended the ladder once more.

Resolutely putting the extraordinary eye in the wall from his thoughts, he returned to the dark-room to look at his drying photographs, and then climbed the stairs to the gable room in which he had chosen to sleep. It was now past mid-evening and he was tired. He put down the lamp and opened the window; outside all was as before - the whippoorwills, the frogs, the unusual cries and sounds from the dark hills. The gable faced toward the village of Dunwich; looking out, he saw that the fire on Round Mountain had gone out; but another crowned a different hill across the valley to the left, on the far side of the road that led in from the Aylesbury Pike, and the sounds that were so unusual to his ears now seemed to come from that direction.

He undressed and got into bed. But, tired though he was, he was not yet ready for sleep. A multitude of thoughts churned in his mind, all to the obbligation of the sounds from outside. Tobias Whateley might have more to tell him. But if he could find one of the “edicated” Whateleys, he might learn more fact and less superstition, compounded by leering hints and scornful, dark references. The library in Springfield might offer some data about the building of the house; in any case, some Whateley family history could be found there, since the family had been so prominent for several generations in the Dunwich country.

As he lay there, he grew slowly conscious of the presence of the house, as it were - as of an entity that suffered him as a guest, perhaps - as something alive on its own terms, and of its heart that was unmistakably the study below, which was the source of the anima that gave the house its being; he felt it like a force drawing all to itself, and he had to exert some effort of will to prevent himself from leaving his bed and descending to that room once more. How extraordinary it was! He felt himself prey to fascination, apprehension, alarm, fear - and a kind of supranormal awareness, as if he lay on the edge of some momentous discovery and waited only upon the turning of the hour to bring him to some supreme knowledge that would confer upon him a kind of immortality.

At last, past midnight, he slept. At that hour the whippoorwills had fallen silent; a few frogs still piped; the night was still, for after midnight the sounds that fell so strangely to his ear from the surrounding hills had ceased. But his sleep was troubled by many strange dreams of a sort that he had never before experienced - dreams of his remote childhood - of someone he knew as his grandfather - but only in dream, for he had but a vestigial memory of that old man, his father’s father, and he had no waking knowledge of him - dreams of vast, megalithic buildings, of alien landscapes, of cold spaces far out in the universe among the stars. And, waking between dreams, he was constantly aware of a

kind of pulsing in the house, as if its secret heartbeat throbbed in its very walls.

## IV

In the morning he drove to Springfield. After lunch in a restaurant in that city, he made his way to the public library where he introduced himself to the reference librarian, a middle-aged gentleman whose name, duly set down on a card that rested on his desk, was Clifford Paul. To him Walters explained the nature of his quest.

“Well, you have come to the right place, Mr. Walters,” said Paul. “We have some material on file on both the house to which you refer, and on the Whateleys in general. A very old family. Armigerous, too. But now sadly decadent, I believe. Our interest, though, is primarily in the past, not so much in the present.”

He was taken to the reading-room, and there presently a county history and some voluminous files were put down before him. He tackled the county history first. It was one of those heavy tomes, filled with autobiographical and biographical accounts by various hands, usually members of the subjects’ families, and published at a profit made chiefly from the members of the families mentioned in its pages. Most of this material was factual and hopelessly prosaic.

He found a photograph, rather poorly reproduced evidently from a poorer tintype, of Cyrus Whateley. It bore a disquietingly familiar resemblance to someone he had not long ago seen, which was patently absurd. The account of his life was disappointingly brief. He had acquired his home near Dunwich from one Dudley Ropes Glover, who was the legatee of Sir Edward Orme, who had built it in 1703, twenty years before he disappeared, after many years spent in Europe. Glover had sold the house too after long absences from it, also in Europe. So much for the house. And of Cyrus Whateley there was little more; he too had travelled; he had married twice and had fathered two sons, one from each of his wives; one son had inherited; the other had left home as a young man and had been seen no more. Nothing had been set down about Cyrus Whateley’s occupation, save that he was a “landowner” and presumably speculated in



land. There was no independent entry on Aberath Whateley, the son of Cyrus who had inherited his property.

The file on the Whateley family, however, was another matter. Here, if anything, the various pieces were almost too numerous. It began with a straightforward account of the Whateley family in the Dunwich area, from the time of their coming into north central Massachusetts in 1699, from Arkham, down to the date of the publication of the county history, 1920; it had evidently been assembled for inclusion in that volume, but had not been used. There was an extensive family tree, which included Aberath and his lost brother, Charles. There were many individual biographies, principally in the form of obituary notices clipped from the Springfield Republican or the Arkham Advertiser. But there were also unclassified clippings which Walters chose to read with more care than he read the more formal obituaries, for clearly some more imaginative soul than the average reference librarian had taken care that they be included.

These entries dealt with country lore involving the Whateleys in one way or another. There was, for instance, a report of a fiery sermon delivered by the Reverend Jephtha Hoag, come from Arkham to take the charge of the Methodist Church at Dunwich, in 1787 - " 'Tis said of a certain family in these parts that they do consort with the devil and raise up monsters, both by magic means and by the sins of the flesh. But forty years ago my predecessor, the Reverend Abijah Hoadley, from the pulpit of the Congregational Church in this village, preached on this same subject in these words: 'It must be allow'd, that these Blasphemies of an infernall Train of Daemons are Matters of too common Knowledge to be deny'd; the cursed Voices heard now from under Ground by above a Score of credible Witnesses now living. I myself did not more than a Fortnight ago catch a very plain Discourse of evil Powers in the Hill behind my House; wherein there were a Rattling and Rolling, Groaning, Screeching, and Hissing, such as no Things of this Earth cou'd raise up, and which must needs have come from those Caves that only black Magick can discover, and only the Divell unlock.' I, too, have heard these noises in the hills, a caterwauling and a cacaphony of which not all are natural to our Earth. Be warned! You know of whom I speak!"

There was more in this vein; indeed, the sermon was reprinted at such length that, despite his interest, Walters tired of reading it. Attached to it, however, was another, manifestly related article, which was an account of the closing of the Methodist Church, by a majority of the congregation, because of the alleged “lack of prudence” on the part of the Reverend Jeptha Hoag in the first part, and of his unexplained absence in the second, the Reverend Hoag having followed his colleague of four decades previously into limbo, for the Reverend Hoadley had also vanished within a month after delivering his sermon against the powers of darkness.

A thick envelope proved to contain clippings of a more or less facetious nature about “Odd Happenings at Dunwich,” as one headline announced. These were largely from the Arkham Advertiser, and set forth, tongue in cheek, accounts of “monsters” which had been conjured into some kind of illusory life by the bootleg-whiskey drinkers of Dunwich. Walters read them with some amusement, but he could not escape the fact that something had indeed taken place at Dunwich, something well out of the ordinary that someone from Miskatonic University had finally succeeded in keeping out of the paper after the Advertiser had had its fun with the tales. Too, there was associated with the events at Dunwich the very real death of one Wilbur Whateley, which had taken place just prior to their occurrence, and not in Dunwich at all, but within the grounds of Miskatonic University in Arkham. Some additional clippings from the Aylesbury Transcript were no less amusing, but again, all the facetiousness did not conceal the fact that there had been rather strange occurrences at Dunwich in that summer of 1928, culminating in September of that year.

Not quite seven years ago, thought Walters. There had been mention of one Dr. Henry Armitage, librarian at Miskatonic University, in connection with the events at Dunwich; Walters made a mental note to explore the possibility that Dr. Armitage might still be available for an interview, if he decided to go that far in his exploration of the Whateley family background. Certainly there was nothing concrete in the tales of the “Goings-On” in the Dunwich country; the only definite facts seemed to add up to the death of a large number of cattle and other livestock, and some disappearances among the country people there, but even in these instances the names were garbled and altered in one account after another, and none of these were

Whateleys, though a Bishop in one instance was a cousin. But how distant, it was impossible to say; the Whateley family tree abounded with other names - Bishop, Hoag, Marsh, and more; and it was decidedly possible that the Reverend Hoag who had so unwisely leveled his charge at one of the Dunwich families - (Walters had the strong suspicion that the object of his sermon was the Whateley family) - might himself have been a distant cousin.

He turned to the family tree and scrutinized it a little more attentively. He sought but did not find the Reverend Jephtha Hoag there, though there was a round dozen of Hoags listed. Plainly, too, there was considerable intermarriage within the family - cousins married cousins frequently - Elizabeth Bishop to Abner Whateley, Lavinia Whateley to Ralso Marsh, Blessed Bishop to Edward Marsh, and so on; thus decayed and degenerate stock would tend to increase the decadence in the family, or at least that branch of it that was in the habit of referring to the others as "the eddicated ones."

Walters did not know what to make of what he had read when he sat back to contemplate it. He had in reality learned little more than the lawyer, Boyle, had told him - that Dunwich was a forgotten backwater, that the Whateley family was decadent, that many odd tales came out of Dunwich, very probably much exaggerated by more superstitious neighbors, and as much derided by those who considered themselves free of superstitious beliefs. Yet it seemed to him that there was a singular variety of material recorded, in one vein or another - he did not want to undertake further reading of what appeared to him to be only variations on the same theme - but all with a dark undercurrent, an oddly disturbing one, all the more so since he felt himself irresistibly bound to what he had read in some way beyond his understanding; and while he told himself that he could not now take more time to read further in the Whateley file, he was aware of a disquieting unwillingness to read more.

He closed the file and brought it back to the reference librarian.

"I trust it has been of some use to you, Mr. Walters," said Paul.

“Yes, indeed, it has. I thank you. I may return to study it a little further as time permits.”

“By all means, sir.” He hesitated diffidently. “Do I take it you are related to the Whateleys?”

“I have inherited some property there,” said Walters. “I am not aware of a relationship.”

“Forgive me,” said the librarian hastily. “I only thought - I knew some of those people. You do bear a certain superficial resemblance, but men, I suppose, we could find equally superficial resemblances among a great many totally unrelated people.”

“I am sure we could,” agreed Walters amiably. But he was nettled, and at the same time unpleasantly disturbed. Tobias Whateley had not troubled to conceal his conviction that there was a relationship; he had called him “cousin” - though with an edge of scorn in his voice. Mr. Paul’s casual suggestion had been made with utmost deference, however. The librarian looked so apologetic that he was moved to add, “Of course, there may be some distant connection. That family tree is quite extensive, and I am not informed as to why my late father came into the property.”

“May I ask which property it is?”

“They call it the old Cyrus Whateley place.”

Mr. Paul’s face cleared. “That Mr. Whateley was...”

Walters interrupted, smiling. “Don’t tell me. The natives in Dunwich would have called him one of ‘the eddicated’ Whateleys.”

“I was about to say so,” rejoined the librarian.

“And I can see that that puts a different face on the presumed relationship, Mr. Paul. You needn’t deny it.”

“I won’t. There really are some terrible stories about the other branch, sir. You’ll uncover them, I have no doubt. I know those clippings you examined

treat them all lightly, but there is more than a grain of truth in them, and I am convinced that there are very strange - and I fear, hideous - things happening in the remoter parts of the Dunwich country.”

“As there are in many remote areas of the world,” said Walters.

He left the library with mixed emotions. The possibility of a relationship to the Whateley clan could not be readily dismissed. His father had said little about his family background, though he had not concealed the family’s American origin. He did not feel particularly pleased at the thought; but on the other hand he was not conscious of any viable antipathy, either.

The ambivalence of his attitude troubled him. He felt at one and the same time involved and withdrawn. The England he had left but so short a while ago seemed infinitely more remote than he would have thought possible; the Dunwich country toward which he drove, held for him an indefinable attraction, not alone in its wildness that presented a dark attractiveness to the eye and the imagination, but as well in its curious alienation from the surrounding world that pressed ever more hastily and madly toward some looming goal that must, at man’s ever-increasing pace, be utterly destructive to humanity and civilization.

The house, when he reached it, seemed to anticipate him, as were it waiting upon his return. Its presence was tangible, yet he could not isolate its source, though it seemed to him anew that the central room was the heart of the house, and he almost consciously expected to hear the same odd pulsing he had been aware of in the night. This absurd impression passed, but, as he entered the central room, he was prey to another.

The room, now that he saw it, seemed to have been arranged for company, with the chair drawn up to the table and the ledgers lying there. He crossed over and sat down to the table. He had looked into the ledgers before. Now he lifted the cover of the top one, and saw before him a thin envelope across the face of which had been scrawled, “For Him Who Will Come.”

It was unsealed. He picked it up, and drew out the thin sheet of paper folded inside.

“For Charles,” he read, “or the son of Charles, or the grandson of Charles, or Who Comes After...

“Read, that you may know, that you may prepare to wait for Those Who Watch, and fulfill that which is meant to be.”

There was no signature, but the writing was crabbed and uncertain.

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Unfinished at the time of August Derleth's death, July 4, 1971.