

I have a melody stuck in my head that I cannot get out. It is the the climbing melody of the water bottle as it swells, filled from the kettle, set to the rhythm of that same liquid sloshing back and forth as I maneuvered the precious thing upstairs and slowly down the hallway to my wretched, icy room, the temperature having dropped after Mrs Alvin left for the evening and abandoned me to the chill. I'm caught by the need to jot down my thoughts before I make it back to bed, and so I'm here at the writing desk instead of the blanket, the bottle cooling on the ledge with my collection.

As it often does, the collection again reached out to me through the door of the study, and less and less often I do bother to dodge its reach despite the late hour. The collection reignites my energy and my curiosity, always, and I'm driven to write about it.

My collection swells but it still feels sparse, and I retain that I will find the pattern that exists between them if I can flesh it out, grow it through. Tomorrow I meet with Rebecca Staunton to see if she'll add her inheritance to mine to dig out more from the corners of the earth.

So far I've found it threaded through stone and flower, but surely I can't be the first eyes to recognize it. Simon is writing letters to the

fellows at the universities in Europe to see if that red pattern is etched elsewhere.

I think now, it's grown strong enough to emanate its influence through the door even in the daylight. Mrs Alvin hates to come up here now, and never to this room, nor does young Violet when she visits. I wonder if it's my own memory of these objects that strengthens their reach across the hallway to my bedroom, where at night I dream about them. I feel it webbing behind like strings down the staircase, following me out into the streets. I think of them now when I'm anywhere. Flowers growing in my mind at the club, someone else's bones in with mine at the bank. Perhaps Violet is correct and this inclination is making me perverse and silly to talk to. There is a story running in my mind even when my voice is used for something else, something mortal. a story and a presence.

Linus Willing, 1912