An Unfortunate Assignment

I am writing this in the hope that the next person charged with handling this case will read these notes before doing any research or work with this estate. I beg of you, leave this now, for in trying to right the wrongs contained herein you will only seal your certain demise, as I have done. I will provide a full account of my findings, which I hope, will satisfy your curiosity enough and give an adequate amount of evidence with which to bury this case file so deep that it will never again be brought to the attention of anyone. Let this file fall away and be forgotten, let the house which it suggests fall to ruin and be claimed by the earth and do not, under any circumstances, attempt to contact poor Agatha.

My name is Jonathan Crown, and I have worked for this firm these last five years with the intent of one day becoming a full partner. I have given my best efforts to every client and case file that has come across my desk and I have done so happily and with out any complaints. I came to the firm after graduating head of my class and with many recommendations from professors and firms, which I had interned for during my years as a student. Billings and Lafayette hired me under advisement from several noteworthy sources and I have been told many times that I am in line to be made full partner. I tell you this not to prop myself up but to assure whom ever reads this that I do not put forth this assessment due to dissatisfaction with the firm or my employment within it. This is not the ranting’s of a disgruntled or abused man wanting to disparage the good name of Billings and Lafayette. No, I write this as a warning, to the one who will come after me. Do not dig deeper, do not read the journal, do not go to that cursed house.

I found this file waiting for me on my desk, just three weeks ago, February 13th 1922. I saw clients name and, from research I had done prior to taking my position with the firm, knew it to be the first and most fortuitous acquisitions the firm held. In fact the money paid to handle this estate opened the doors of Billings and Lafayette and has kept them open for many years. The McGinnly estate was taken on by the firm with an initial fee that far exceeded any other of it’s kind for it’s time, even today the sum initially put forward would be considered extravagant to say the least. From my initial research it was clear that Mr. Stewart Billings and Mr. Bernard Lafayette were college friends of Mr. Colton McGinnly and it was perceived that it was this friendship that prompted such an exorbitant initial infusion of capital into what was yet to be a law firm. Nevertheless the McGinnly estate became the first in a long line of real estate and financial holdings the firm would base its practice on and be the foundation of which the firm would stand. Knowing how important this particular client was, it was of the utmost importance that I handle this estate with care and expertise.

Before delving too deeply into the files I thought I would do a bit of research on the men who began this all those years ago. I knew that Billings, Lafayette and McGinnly were old school chums and so I decided to start there. All three attended Harvard University and it was not at all difficult to find information in the schools archives to corroborate their friendship. They graduated in 1852, Billings and Lafayette in law and McGinnly in history. I found it interesting to note that two other men were frequently mentioned and featured in photographs, a Mr. Wesley Lawton a student of medicine and a Mr. Abram Penkin a student of philosophy. I was able to divulge from old year book photos, student newspaper articles and the local papers from the time that group of men were part of a club of sorts which was documented in the schools archives and from all accounts the men were inseparable. It was three weeks after graduation that an indecent involving Mr. Lawton and Mr. Penkin would break apart the group and prompt Mr. McGinnly to offer a large sum of money to the two law students to handle his estate. Lawton and Penkin both were lost in an accident while spelunking caverns in northern Massachusetts, buried alive with no hope of rescue. The other three men who were with them gave statements that a cave-in had separated the two men from the others and they were presumed dead.

This event took its toll on the three men. McGinnly became reclusive and guarded, spending most of his time in the large house that he purchased before graduation. Located several miles outside of Boston, nestled in the forests of rural Massachusetts, this large three-story dwelling was his last connection to the group of friends that he cherished so dearly before the accident. McGinnly was the only son of a prominent manufacturing tycoon who had died before his last year at Harvard, leaving the business and all the family holdings to Mr. McGinnly. After setting up the estate with Billings and Lafayette very little was done with the family assets for some time. After was would appear to be a grieving period Mr. McGinnly began to take more of an active roll in the family business and began taking many trips abroad, presumably striking new partnerships overseas. After some years, McGinnly married and fathered two sons, Charles and Christopher. It seemed as though the sadness that had consumed him after the deaths of his friends was finally lifted. He moved his wife and two children into the house outside of Boston. With the business doing well they lived without incident for some time.

During the winter of 1864 an unfortunate accident took the life of Mr. McGinnly’s wife Bethany. She was found at the foot of the basement stairs with her neck broken. The police report states that she slipped on a frozen step while going down into the basement early in the morning. It was her husband who found her after coming down to breakfast and noticing the basement door ajar. Mr. McGinnly told police that the basement stairs freeze on cold nights because of improperly sealed windows that he grieved over not having had time to fix. The death was deemed accidental and the funeral services were handled a week after. Mr. McGinnly hired a small staff to take care of the house and the two children ages two and four. It was noted in various journals and found within the estate documents that McGinnly became an almost complete recluse at this point, spending most of his time locked in his study or taking trips abroad for what appeared to be no reasonable goal. Several newspaper articles from this period speak of the unease from the investors of the company, as the figurehead seemed to be in a downward spiral.

Three years later in the summer of 1867 the youngest boy Charles went missing and was found dead in an exposed well five days later. The boy was reported missing on a Sunday when he did not come in for lunch; he had been playing in the fields behind the home and did not return with his brother when the boys were called in. Mr. McGinnly was frantic and immediately put together a search party. The local police advised McGinnly to wait and see if the boy would turn up, but he would not be dissuaded and a search party was formed. The offer of a five thousand dollar reward was put up and the locals were stirred into a frenzy looking for the boy. After an exhaustive search a hole in the ground was found some distance behind the house, which was mostly covered in leaves and branches. When investigated it was found that the hole opened up into an old dry well that had been buried for years. The spring rains must have uncovered the well and after noticing an odor coming from the within the search party uncovered the rest of the well and found the young boys body broken and twisted fifty feet down at the bottom.

Mr. McGinnly continued in his strange and eccentric ways for years following the death of his youngest child. Strangely enough it did not seem to create a closer bond with the older boy, on the contrary it only served to have them drift further apart. In 1878 the oldest son Meacham left the home for college at the nearby Miskatonic University. It was a year later in 1879 that Colton McGinnly, standing in front of the large bay window at the front of the house, with the curtains open for all to see, used his thirty eight caliber revolver to take his own life.

I was taken aback by the amount of tragedy that had befallen the McGinnly family over the years since Colton McGinnly inherited the family estate, but in my years at Billings and Lafayette I had seen much tragedy and loss in the cases I worked on. After a thorough examination of the estate’s holdings, assets and stipulations I was ready to take action on the transition of the estate to the new beneficiary. There was nothing out of the ordinary in the documentation with the exception of two stipulations that were listed as the most stringent of the requests. The first, which did not strike me as odd, knowing the tragic tale of Mr. McGinnly’s college friends, was the oder of inheritance. The estate would be passed on to the last surviving and capable dependent of the McGinnly family. If there were no surviving descendents the estate and all holdings and assets would be transferred to the last surviving and capable dependents of Wesley Lawton, and if none could be found in the Lawton line all would pass on to the descendants of Abram Penkin. If no surviving person could claim the inheritance, the entire estate would be liquidated and donated to the Miskatonic University. I found it strange that the money should go to the small mystery shrouded school in Arkham, instead of McGinnly’s alma matter Harvard. The other stipulation, which was, worded so strongly that it made me take pause. The house outside of Boston at 1747 Waverley Oaks Road in Waltham, the house at which all of the families tragedy had taken place, the very house were Colton McGinnly took his own life, was never to be sold or torn down. It was so emphatically stated that the house must never be sold outside of the three families who would be beneficiaries of the estate and even then was never to be torn down or otherwise demolished except of its own decay over the years. This stipulation was the one worry I had in being the executor of this estate, I was worried that it would be difficult to keep whom ever was to take it over from simply selling or tearing down the house to rebuild on the property.

I made arrangements to hire an accountant to look through the businesses books and take a look at the families assets to determine what could be sold off and what could be salvaged. The companies ledgers were sent to my office along with several other boxes of paperwork accumulated over the years, the sum of which invaded nearly half of the space provided by my cramped corner office. I hired an old friend, Stanley Brookes, who I knew from school and who I had worked with several times in the past. Stanley was a no nonsense type of man with a strong work ethic and a keen attention to detail. I felt comfortable that Mr. Brookes would make the correct recommendations and afford the best return on the estates investments. He was to meet me at my office the next morning to begin to wade threw the sea of disorganized paper work that had been dropped off earlier in the day. I also took the liberty of acquiring the services of a Ms. Agnis Waterford, a local antiquarian whose eye for expensive antiques and amassed knowledge of local history were unmatched. She would be invaluable in appraising the various items that would no doubt be uncovered once we evaluated the McGinnly home. With all of that squared away I settled in for a long night of research into the family line, to find a surviving descendant.

I worked into night accompanied only by the ticking of my wall clock and the glow of the street lamp outside my office window. It seemed that the tragedy that befell the McGinnly family did not end with the death of Colton McGinnly. His son Christopher, after graduating with masters in linguistics, went abroad for the following four years. It was within the estate records where I found traces of his adventures. Transfers of money into foreign bank accounts, passage on ships and trains throughout Europe and the African continent. Christopher returned to the states in 1888 and it seemed a transformation had taken place. He began taking an active hand in the family business and for the first time in many years it began to make more than it was losing. Two years later in 1890 he was married to a Ms. Claudette Morrow. Their first born, a daughter, Agatha McGinnly was born in 1892 and a son William in 1894, it looked as though the family was shrugging off the weight of their rocky past. Things changed in 1896 when it is recorded in the estates file that Christopher McGinnly requested the key to a safe deposit box that his father had acquired at the bank. The contents of the safe deposit box were not recorded anywhere in the files and there only remained a key and a number within the estates records.

In the winter of 1897 Mrs Claudette McGinnly fell from a second story window landing poorly and breaking her neck. Her body was found in front of the large bay window that fronts the house. Mr. McGinnly was away at the time of the accident, traveling for business purposes in Egypt. The McGinnly’s four-year-old daughter Agatha was found walking down the road holding her two year old brother and murmuring about a beast, which had thrown her mother from the window. The house was thoroughly searched and nothing could be found that resembled the young girls ramblings. The description in the police report, which I found later, was as such. Agatha described a large creature that had to stoop down to fit in the confines of the house, it had dark green skin which glistened as if covered with some sort of mucus or slime. She saw it from behind and so did not get a look at the face of the thing but noted that it walked on two legs and had multiple appendages coming off the torso, which she took for arms. These arms however did not appear to be jointed as she described them as waving like hair in the wind. The thing had her mother tangled in its multiple appendages and was pulling her close to its body. She described a loud sucking sound and finally the sound of something ripping open. After that she stated that the thing flung her mother out the window and she had ran before it could turn to see her behind it. She grabbed the baby and ran from the house. Needless to say Agatha was institutionalized after this incident and a trust was formed as part of the estate to pay for her continued care. I noted that Agatha was still alive and jotted down the location of the hospital so that I could visit her and establish if she was in a good enough mental state to receive the inheritance.

Like his father before him Christopher was rocked by the lost of his wife and became more withdrawn and reclusive. He hired on some staff to help him with the day-to-day management of the house and the care of the two year old Peter. Again the pattern emerged of unsubstantiated trips to various exotic locals. Among the notable locations which both his father and now Christopher visited Egypt, Italian North Africa, various locations in central and south America and Russia. In 1913 his son Peter left the home for college at the Miskatonic University, which his father also attended. During Peter’s sophomore year, after returning home from Arkhangelisk Russia, Christopher McGinnly added a sealed letter to the estates documents, which is oddly enough missing from the current file, returned the safe deposit box key, and proceeded to hang himself. Mr. McGinnly corpse was found hanging, prominently displayed in the large bay window, which dominates the front of the home, two days later.

Peter McGinnly inherited the estate at that point and completed his degree in anthropology. After which he traveled abroad for several years. The company fell to ruin as it was completely ignored by Peter and the family’s assets were being slowly siphoned off by his frequent and extravagant trips around the globe. It was after a trip to, again the last place his father had visited, Arkhangelisk Russia that Peter McGinnly returned home. As his father before him he requested the key to the safe deposit box and was not seen or heard from for the next two months. He resurfaced after two months and came again to the firm, he added a folded note to the estate’s documents, returned the key, and hung himself in the exact spot which his father had eight years prior. This was only four weeks ago and it is the singular incident that brought me to write this testament for the next unfortunate soul to wade through the tragic history of the McGinnly estate.

The note left by Peter remained in the file, it was a single small sheet of paper folded in half, and written in a cramped disorganized hand. The note read as follows “It wont be dismissed, let the Penkin line take on this burden, it was Penkin who cursed us to begin with”. I did not understand what this could mean but judging from the state of mind Peter must have been in before his suicide, it could only be deemed the writings of a man whose mind was on the brink of collapse.

The night’s research had taken its toll and I was to meet Mr. Brookes early the next day, so I decided to sleep in the office on a small but fairly comfortable couch that I had acquired to accommodate larger groups of clients if the need arose. I woke in the morning to the sound of Mrs. Lampton opening up the office and getting things ready for the start of the business day. As prompt as ever Mr. Brookes entered my office at the exact agreed upon time and with a slightly disguised sigh, began to dig through the unorganized pile of paperwork provided by McGinnly Manufacturing Inc. I asked Mr. Brookes if there was anything I could help with knowing full well that he would not let me anywhere near the documents as he worked. After setting the man up with everything he needed for a days work I excused my self to head off to my meeting with Ms. Waterford. We would be meeting at the bank to check on the state of any accounts held and to examine the contents of the safe deposit box. I decided to take Ms. Waterford along in case there were any items of importance contained within the safe deposit box that she should identify and appraise.

As planed I met Ms. Waterford at the bank at 10 am and we quickly set to the task at hand. After speaking with the bank manager and getting the the information about the various accounts attached to the estate I was pleased to find that a respectable sum remained. The inheritor of these funds would be pleased indeed. With the accounts in order we then proceeded to investigate the contents of the safe deposit box. Ms. Waterford and I were escorted to a private room in which to unlock the twelve by twelve inch metal box containing the treasured possessions of the McGinnly family. To our surprise there were only three items in the box. A thin leather bound journal which seemed old but unremarkable, a key which looked old as well, and finally a smooth white stone with a symbol carved into it. The stone was the size of a fist, smooth and stark white. Chiseled onto one side and filled with some type of dark ink was the symbol, a oddly asymmetric five pointed star with a flaming eye in its center. The symbol looked like the pentacles depicted on various pagan artifacts and my initial thought was that this might have been some sort of religions relic that held some sort of value. Ms. Waterford could not afford any deeper information about the stone but dated the key and journal at around seventy or more years old. The journal contained mostly illegible text, which seemed to be in many different languages. The only legible text appeared on the first page, it was written in the same hand as the rest of the book but this was in English and was short but coherent.

The text read as follows;

“Dear Colton,

Everything has been set in motion and we are close to embarking on a fabulous journey. All is in place, there is nothing to stop us now, I only hope that the others will be willing to embrace the transformation and can see it for the truly astounding achievement that it is. I know there is apprehension but I believe after this weekend there will be no question of the importance of our endeavor. This book is the key, without it nothing would be possible. Your contributions have been great and will not go unrewarded. Keep this safe for it took great effort to create it. Come this weekend everything will change, the anticipation is overwhelming. Our work over this last year has now come to its triumphant conclusion.

I will see you this weekend,

A.P.

I could only assume that the “A.P” must be the initials of Abram Penkin and the weekend he was referring to must have been the tragic weekend in which Mr. Penkin and Mr. Lawton lost their lives. I could not fathom what this book would have to do with cave exploration but it seemed to be connected in some way. At any rate it had no bearing on the estates finances or assets and I shrugged it off as a footnote in the strange story of the McGinnly estate. Ms. Waterford seemed interested in the strange stone and so I gave it to her for further study, she could not make anything of the book but did verify its age and apparent authenticity. I arranged to have Ms. Waterford meet me at the home on Waverley Oaks road the next day and bid her goodbye. Before returning to the office I wanted to take the opportunity to research the family lines of Lawton and Penkin. Lawton would be the next in line for inheritance if Agatha McGinnly was not of sound mind and I thought it prudent to find the descendant of the Penkin family as well, incase there was trouble transferring the estate to the Lawton’s.

I ran the usual gambit of newspaper morgues, libraries and police files and turned up the last descendants of each family. The Lawton’s were simple to track down and in fact the last descendants still lived in Boston. Mr. Gerald Lawton an alienist of some repute and Mrs. Colleen Lawton a nurse at Boston General Hospital. I would contact them tonight and see if they were available to meet at the property outside of Boston tomorrow. I hoped that it would not be too short of notice but I needed to get the home appraised and the paperwork started for the transfer of assets to the Lawton family.

The Penkin line was a bit more challenging. Abram Penkin had two older sisters and one younger brother. The oldest sister was never married, and the other sister was married but was never able to bear children. The younger brother married and had three children. Of the three children only one survived to adult hood. The other two died in a tragic fire that took the lives of the mother, father and two children. The middle son, Sergei Penkin survived the fire and was a key witness in the murder trial of Langford Potts who was convicted of setting the fire that killed the family based on the testimony of Sergei. Mr. Potts last words after the sentencing were “I put them down in the name of God, my only failure is that I didn’t get them all”. Sergei Penkin married and had a son and daughter. The only living descendant of the Penkin line is Maxim Penkin. Maxim Penkin was the sole survivor of the family after his father murdered the mother and daughter with a wood axe before taking his own life with a double-barreled shotgun in the barn. Martin was found in the house hiding, which saved his life. He has spent several years in a sanitarium after wards and then lived in a Boston orphanage until he was of age. He now lives in Waltham Massachusetts, which coincidentally is the same town that the McGinnly hose is in.

Now that I had detailed information about the two persons who could lay claim to the inheritance I needed to make a visit to the Roxbury Sanitarium to visit Agatha McGinnly and determine if she would be fit to make her claim on the estate. Before heading back to the office to find out how Mr. Brookes was coming along with the companies books, I made a trip to the sanitarium to interview Agatha.

Agatha McGinnly was now thirty years old, having lived twenty-five years in the institution. I met with Agatha in her room escorted by an orderly who remained in the room while we spoke, for my safety, the attending doctor insisted. Agatha was drawing at a desk when I entered the room. I called to her quietly at first and more loudly when she did not respond. I moved over to get a closer look at what she was drawing and was taken back by what I saw. The drawing depicted a black spiral design, which at first seemed like the mad scrawling of a lunatic but upon closer scrutiny I was able to see smaller patterns in the spiral lines which made up the whole design. I could see that she had been completely focused on the drawing and didn’t notice me until I got closer to inspect the drawing. She looked up from her work and I asked her what it was she was drawing.

She responded, “This is the end.”

To which I asked “The end of what Agatha?”

She paused at that and looked me in the eyes. I could see it then and I knew that I need not interview her any further for the vacancy behind those eyes, as if she was looking right through me into some other dimension that I could not fathom. I could see in those eyes an unending terror, as if she could see some terrible cataclysmic event occurring as we spoke.

She paused for a time and said, “The end of us.”

“Can you tell me about the night your mother died?” I probed, more from curiosity than to determine her mental well being.

“She let it out, it called to her, we weren’t supposed to go in there, but she did and it made her do it.” she said dryly through quivering lips.

“How did she let it out?” I pressed on.

“She used the magics it taught us, it always wants out, it calls to you until you can’t resist. Daddy was going to fix it but he was too late. I

don’t think it can be fixed, I know, it will devour the world, it won’t stop.” as she spoke the last words, I could see a change in her eyes, as if some force not her own had taken residence there. In an instant she lunged at me, swinging the pencil toward my neck, the orderly stepped in immediately and restrained her; I took one last look and saw rage and hatred in her eyes. She looked as a woman possessed, and as I stumbled fearfully from the room I could hear her scream, “You’ll be the next, it will call to you, don’t let it out.”

Shaken by my meeting with Ms. McGinnly I collected my self and made my leave of the sanitarium. On the ride back to my office I could not stop thinking of those last tormented words that Agatha spoke to me. You’ll be next she said which ran shivers up my spine. I took solace, at the time, in believing these to be the words of an utterly mad woman, whose traumatic experience as a child and a life spent in an institution, had warped her sense of reality so severely that she could not longer form any rational thoughts. Still the encounter had pierced my resolve and I was looking forward to the hidden bottle of brandy I had tucked away in my office.

When I returned to my cramped seventh floor corner office on Washington St. Mr. Brookes was still there finishing up for the night. The disorganized pile of boxes containing the company’s books was smaller than before and a new pile of orderly boxes had appeared on the other side of the room. It seemed as though Mr. Brookes had made it through a fourth of so of the boxes and files which made up the entirety of the companies financial history. I asked about the progress and was relieved to hear that nothing odd or inappropriate had, as yet, been discovered. Mr. Brookes informed me that he has been through much of the early years of the company and was just beginning the era when Colton McGinnly took over as its head. I bid the stoic accountant farewell and set an early start for the next day. I assumed I would be spending another night in the office and would welcome the early wakeup, as I knew his punctuality was second to none.

After Mr. Brookes departed I had a bit of brandy to settle my nerves, making sure there was no one else in the office to see my small indiscretion. Since it was obvious that Agatha McGinnly was completely unstable the estate would move to the Lawton family. Having tracked down the appropriate descendants of Wesley Lawton I set about calling the Lawton’s to let them know the good news. Mr. Thomas Lawton answered the phone and I explained to him the circumstances that had transpired to facilitate the transfer of the McGinnly estate to the Lawton family. Mr. Lawton did not know any of the history connected with the McGinnly family but he was aware of the tragic cave in the claimed the life of his great grand uncle. The Lawton’s had not maintained any connection to the other families involved in the odd history of the estate, and I saw no reason to convey some of the unsavory facts of the parties involved. I setup a time to meet at the property in Waltham and Mr. Lawton agreed to the meeting. He seemed excited about the inheritance and the idea of acquiring the property. He let me know that he would be procuring the services of an architect friend of the family and a contractor who he wanted to assess the cost of any construction or repairs that would need to be made.

When I ended the call I felt a sense of relief that this assignment would soon be coming to a close. There was a strange sense of foreboding that was settling in and I wanted to be done with it as soon as possible. It was the words of Agatha McGinnly that repeated in my mind over and over. I am not a man easily shaken, but the encounter with Agatha mixed with the tragic and strange history of the McGinnly family set some seed of malignant malevolence in my mind regarding the estate. I sat at my desk staring at the contents of the safe deposit box which I had laid out on the desk in front of me. The key, which could not be for the doors since I had a set of keys for the property, none of which were similar to this one in age or style. The journal, which was completely illegible and so, could not be studied to extract its contents. I thought that I might show it to Mr. Brookes to see what he could make of it. There were some pages which had what seemed to be mathematical formulas and so being a man of numbers maybe he could glean something from its pages. Finally the strange stone, which Ms. Waterford took for further study. I was hoping that she would have more information for me when we met at the house the next day.

The next morning I woke when Mrs. Lampton opened the office for the day receiving an odd look from the stalwart office assistant but she said nothing. Mr. Brookes showed up promptly as expected and got right down to work on the remaining mountain of paperwork. I showed Mr. Brookes the strange journal to which he took a cursory glance and came to the conclusion that it was some sort of cypher. I was astonished to hear this and as Penkin had refereed to the book as a key it seemed like a logical conclusion. Brookes also divulged that without the corresponding encrypted text it was essentially useless. Putting this to the back of my mind I set out for the trip to the house in an attempt to get to the location before any of the others in case there were issues getting into the home.

Making good time, I arrived at the house at nine am, just a half hour before I was to meet the others. The house looked to be in decent shape from the outside if a bit overgrown where the landscaping was concerned. It would probably need a fresh coat of paint but there didn’t appear to be any major structural damage. I climbed the four wooden steps onto the porch and tried the key in the front door. The key easily slid into the lock and turned without protest. As I entered the home I had the slightest bit of anticipation of some horrible scene that would be displayed before me. When the door opened on the mundane quiet abode, I smiled slightly, thinking myself silly for falling prey to the macabre stories of the house. It was a house like any other, unfortunate events had transpired here, but this could be said of many old houses. I walked into the foyer and then on into the main house. The place was kept tidy if a bit dust for the last few weeks of disuse. The furniture was sparse but well maintained and things appeared to be in order. I turned to the left and on into the great room of the house and there paused for a moment as I gazed upon the often mentioned large bay window which was the focal point of so many of the tragic endings this house bared witness to. Against my irrational desire to avoid this portion of the house, I stepped slowly to the window and drew back the curtains so that I could let more light in. I believed at the time that there must have been some subconscious reaction to the cursed and sinister window but indeed my stomach turned, as I got close enough to draw back the window treatments. I also felt a slight dizziness and a dryness of mouth, which I could not explain. Thinking myself silly for engaging in such flights of fancy, I quickly moved through the rest of the house. Opening the curtains and shades so that the house had a bright cheery quality to it. As I went back out of the front door to get some paperwork from my auto I glanced above the door way and there, carved perfectly and almost decoratively in the wooden framing was the same symbol that appeared on the strange rock Ms. Waterford had been so interested in. I then began to believe that it must be some sort of family crest or religious symbol that I was not familiar with. In any case it was carved into the wood with obvious care and was a nice conversation piece.

The others arrived soon after and I greeted them all in kind and showed them into the house. Mr. Lawton was impressed by the size of the home and could not believe his fortune at having unexpectedly been attached to this inheritance. He brought with him his architect friend and a contractor as promised. The architect, a Mr. Carl Stark was impressed by the condition of the home and was conveying to Mr. Lawton how fortunate he was that the home had not fallen into disrepair, while the contractor Mr. Nathanial Elliot began to take measurements and inspect the home. Ms. Waterford got right to work cataloging the various pieces of furniture and the other items in the house. After an hour of this, Ms. Waterford called me into the master bedroom upstairs, insisting that I must see something, which she had found there. When I entered the room she was standing to the left side of a large canopy bed just before the heading register. I asked what was so exciting and without answering she crouched down and reached a finger into the heating grate. I could see her fiddle with something inside the duct that hung down from above just barely noticeable if one were to crouch down and look in. She pulled back on the small lever and with a quiet click a two-foot by two-foot section of the wall opened slightly, the seam of which was so cleverly disguised in the wood paneling that it would never have been noticed. Amazed I went to the wall and pulled the door the rest of the way open. Beyond the door was another flat metal door with a small handle and a keyhole. I was excited to see the keyhole as I had tried the strange old key that we found in the safe deposit box everywhere throughout the house to no avail. I cautiously inserted the key into the hole and turned it. I almost called out with excitement as I heard the audible click of the tumblers and pulling the handle the door easily opened. At that moment a loud crash as if something large had crashed into the side of the house cause both Ms. Waterford and I to call out in shock. Just before I rushed out of the room and downstairs to see what caused the cacophony, I spied beyond the small curiously hidden door what looked to be three small books or journals and one large obviously ancient tome. I left Agnis to the books and rushed downstairs.

As I reached the foot of the stairs I saw Mr. Lawton standing with Mr. Stark both gesturing to the wall to the north of the bay window in the great room. When I asked what had happened they both did not have an answer but relayed that Mr. Elliot had gone around the side of the house to investigate. Hurried out the front door and to the left around the north side of the house. To my utter amazement when I rounded the corner it was unquestionably apparent what had caused the horrible crash. An old elm tree had fallen onto the side of the house. Luckily it was close enough to the house that the fall did not allow the bulk of the tree to pick up momentum as if fell. It didn’t seem to have done any major structural damage, only cosmetic and one of the upstairs windows had been broken. Mr. Elliot was examining the tree when I reached it and I asked his opinion on the situation. In his assessment it was strange that the tree had fallen since it appeared healthy however he believed that it may have been a shifting of the sediment that caused the root system to dislodge and allow the weight of the tree to topple it. It was plan to see that the earth around the base of the tree was significantly disturbed.

After checking that everyone was ok and informing the others what had happened we took a look into the basement to see if the displacement of earth had caused any damage. Unfortunately we did find that the basements brick wall on the north side, the side where the tree had been uprooted was cracked and bulging. There seemed to be an uncertain amount of damage to the wall and possibly the foundation of the house. Mr. Elliot assured me that, though the damage, may be significant, it would not be difficult to repair and it opened up possibilities for remodeling if the Lawton’s desired.

Once the excitement had died down I returned to the master bedroom to investigate the secret wall nook that I had left Ms. Waterford with. When I returned to the room she had the books displayed on the bed and was scrutinizing other objects in the room. I asked about the books and she let me know the three journals were of no real value, the oldest being seventy or more years old and the most recent dating within the last ten years. The large book however she was unsure of the exact age without further study and said she would need to consult other experts to be certain. Her initial estimate was, incredibly, somewhere nearing five centuries old. My excitement at the prospect of such and old tome was difficult to contain and I was eager to take these volumes back to the office for further study.

Mr. Elliot and I setup a time to meet the next day and I gave him a spare key so that he could get to work early before I arrived. Mr. Lawton did not seem concerned about the tree and was consulting with his architect about changes that he would like to make to the layout of the house. I left them to lock up as they were still taking measurements and discussing potential renovations and headed back to my office in Boston. I was eager to begin looking into the journals and the book, which were now beside me in the front seat of my auto as I drove through the sleepy forested two lane roads that gave way to the lights and bustle of the city.

Mr. Brookes was finishing up his work when I arrived and I could see that a considerable portion of the documents had been moved from the disorganized quagmire of boxes and folders to the neat and accounted for collection on the other side of the room. I asked him if there was anything to note from todays delving’s and I was surprised to hear that he had found some odd expenditures which were of no concern but left some questions in his mind. He began with the fact that the company took a sharp downward trend once Colton McGinnly inherited it after his father died. He was a student at Harvard and couldn’t be expected to maintain a company of that size so it was understandable, however Mr. Brookes noted that it was more from disinterest and flamboyant spending of his own than any sort of mismanagement. The house which I had just left being the first major purchase that the young McGinnly had made and that was not the end of it. Apparently there were several trips abroad for himself and a Mr. Penkin in which extravagant accommodations and the procurement of guides for excursions into uncarted regions had been frequent. There was even a large sum paid out for excavating equipment in some remote region of Denmark. It was unclear what this excavation was for or what the result had been. He also noted that Colton’s son had not done much better though he for a time kept the company afloat but then as his father before him descended into exorbitant spending on travel and soliciting the services of certain experts in history, anthropology, mythology, folklore and even physics. None of which had ever produced any gains for the company or the family. It seems as though these were just personal interests that the men were feeding money into. Before leaving for the night Mr. Brookes inquired about the journal which he had examined, he seemed excited to find its partner, I told him about the new journals we had discovered and assured him that if one of these was a presumed match, he would have the first crack at deciphering their contents.

After seeing Mr. Brookes to the door I eagerly returned to my office and began to dig into the journals we had found. I tackled the oldest first in an attempt to begin whatever narrative I would find there from the beginning.

As I suspected, the first journal was that of Colton McGinnly. The entries began in 1849 in his fourth year at Harvard. Initially the entries were fairly mundane and typical for a student describing day to day live at university. In September that year Mr. McGinnly met Abram Penkin and it seemed that the two became fast friends. Both men had an interest in the idea held in some occult circles that one could travel alternate dimensions than our own or look into the future or past by use of magical principals and techniques. In the beginning it seemed to be a flight of fancy for both men, some strange and exciting phenomenon, which they discussed and theorized about but at that point, did not believe to be achievable. They began researching the occult in earnest, as well as other broader topics in physics and mathematics. It seemed innocent at first, just a young mans wild speculations. It was not until they returned to school after summer holiday in 1850 that things took a dramatic turn. Colton’s father had died and left the entirety of the family fortune and business to him. He had never had a strong relationship with his father and so was not grieving for long before getting to back into the swing of day to day live at Harvard. It was during the first semester that Mr. Penkin came to McGinnly with some rather exciting news. Penkin had spent the summer researching various occult volumes, focusing on dimensional travel and had found a specific mention of a book entitled Cabala of Saboth written in 1686 by an unknown author. He had spent a significant amount of time trying to locate a copy of the text and finally found a copy, which was in the restricted section of the Oren Library at the Miskatonic University. Penkin had managed to convince the head librarian to allow him to view the accursed book, and had taken down some information, which he believed was the break they had been looking for in uncovering the mysteries of the universe. The book hinted at some malevolent entity worshiped by witches and sorcerers who could grant its supplicants, through certain rituals, passage through dimensional rifts referred to as gates by the author. One such sorcerer was Maxim Utkin, who as the story told, had perfected rituals or spells which could in fact allow him to travel through dimensions and even time itself. It was said that his powerful grimoire was buried with him in an infamous graveyard in Denmark, De Beulen Huis, roughly translated from it’s native Danish as “The Executioners House”.

The two men launched into extensive research of this man and his fabled book of shadows, as well as the horrible doom shadowed cemetery, which held what both believed to be the key to extra dimensional travel. Utkin was a bit of a legendary figure in Russian mythology according to Penkin who was himself Russian. The stories say that he was over two hundred years old and was the object of many tales told to children who did not behave. Penkin remembered his grandmother telling him stories of the evil sorcerer Utkin who would come for children who did not obey their elders. According to some of the research the men had done Utkin was a real man who was buried with, as the stories called it, his evil book, in De Beulen Huis cemetery. It was during winter break that year that the two young men traveled to Denmark in search of their prize. Indeed they found De Beulen Huis and indeed they found the grave of the foul Mr. Utkin. They managed to extract the book from its vile resting place and returned home as winter session began again.

The book they extracted from that god forsaken graveyard which McGinnly refereed to as “akin to hell on earth”, was written in Old East Slavic. Penkin immediately began the arduous process of attempting to translate the text. He, being a Russian speaker, had an advantage however the old dialect was extremely difficult to decipher into modern Russian and then further into English. It was at this time the Penkin began a transformation which was not for the better. He became more withdrawn and paranoid. He would lock himself away with the book for days on end working into the night with reckless disregard for his own health. Rarely eating or sleeping he had lost weight and began to display dark circles under the eyes and a sickly pale tone to his skin.

Mr. McGinnly at this time had stepped back from the feverish and obsessive research the two had been engaged in and began to focus again on his studies. It was at this time that he met Stewart Billings and his close friend Bernard Lafayette. The two men were a welcome change of pace from the oppressive darkness of Abram Penkin, Colton’s social life began to renew with vigor. It did not take long however for McGinnly to fall back into his old ways, asking the two law students if they had any interest in the occult or the unexplained. Much to his surprise both men had an interest for the bizarre and fantastic. He then began a slow process of introducing the men to some of the things that Penkin and he had discovered. The two were apprehensive and dismissive at first but once McGinnly had shown them some of the less exotic things they had uncovered they were eager for more.

It was near the end of the school year when Mr. McGinnly purchased the house outside of Boston. With a base in which to operate McGinnly introduced Penkin to the other men and they all began meeting at the house on weekends. They began to engage in what McGinnly called experiments, trying out various rituals they had found in old dusty tomes from the Miskatonic and Harvard libraries alike. Deeper they went into the shadowed realms in an effort to understand and hone their craft. At this point they began referring to their group as Tenebris Circuli, latin for the dark circle. When school renewed they were in full swing, reveling in the idea that they were going to discover mysteries of the unknown that their peers could not fathom. They were then approached by Mr. Wesley Lawton, a student of medicine and a died in the wool skeptic. He challenged all of their claims and demanded proof. This endeared Mr. Lawton to the group, they agreed that a skeptic would keep them balanced, and keep them from seeing success where there was none. It didn’t take much time for Lawton to become a full member of Tenebris Circuli and a integral piece for the group.

It was just before graduation when Mr. Penkin came to McGinnly with the finished translation of the book. To keep it safe, he said, he had written the translation in a code which required a key to decode. He was concerned that others may try to obtain their work and take credit for the discoveries they were so close to obtaining. He gave the key portion to Mr. McGinnly and kept the encoded portion for himself. McGinnly notes at this time, a marked change in Penkin. Something behind the eyes, a colder tone and humorless presence. It was as if the old Penkin was gone, replaced by a cold and calculating doppelganger whose only drive was to unlock the mysteries of that book.

Penkin had been studying the text and had finally come upon the rituals he had been looking for. It was said to be a ritual that was to be performed by multiple participates and would, if done properly, deliver one of the group across the veil to other dimensions for a short time and then bring him back into our dimension. Penkin was ecstatic about the discovery and wanted to attempt the ritual straight away. It was a few weeks after graduation and the group were to congregate at the house outside of Boston to attempt to send Mr. Penkin through a gate and into another dimension. Penkin, now with the key complete gave it to McGinnly for safe keeping, and the men told their close relations that they were taking a camping trip that weekend in northern Massachusetts.

The next section which ends the first journal is too incredible to be believed. I was taken totally off guard by the statements put forth and I was remiss to believe any of it. This must be some sort of elaborate hoax, but how could it be, the journal was verified authentic by Ms. Waterford.

The final entries in the journal catalog what happened the night of the ritual which was to send Mr. Penkin to the other side. The group met at the house on a Friday evening and had was seemed to be a nice night discussing the specifics of the coming ritual. All seemed in order and the next day they set about getting things ready for the nights festivities. From all accounts the ritual was a complete success, a gate was drawn on the floor in the great room of the house, the proper incantations and rituals were preformed, and finally Mr. Penkin stepped into the circular symbol they had created as the gate. If the journal is to be believed he then vanished. The other man were astonished and could not believe what they had seen. The remaining men stood before the gate gazing in wonder, but then, the abomination crossed back over the threshold. The thing that came back through the gate was not Abram Penkin though it boar his face. It was a figure standing on two legs which were bent in awkward places and from its torso extended several writhing pseudopods which undulated with some sort of unheard rhythm. The skin of the thing was dark and wet with some sort of mucus which constantly rand down the thing. Atop that blasphemous torso was the visage of their friend Penkin but bloated with puss filled tumors bulging from random locations around the head. It turned to the three men who could only stare frozen in fear and exhibited what McGinnly described as a victorious smile.

At that Billings crumpled to the floor in terror and began to shriek, Lawton, apparently mesmerized by the creature stepped forward and was engulfed in the undulating grasp of the multiple appendages then pulled closer into the thing where the face the boar Penkin’s visage bit deeply into the neck of Lawton and began to devour the lifeless body. McGinnly had prepared for trouble and had created a single silver disc baring the symbol of a five pointed star emblazoned with a flaming eye in its center. He rushed to the thing pressing the disk to it’s skin, it dropped the limp form of Lawton to the ground and shrank back staring wildly at McGinnly. He called for Lafayette to bring something to bind the foul beast with and rushed of, returning with a length of rope which, they hastily tied around the abomination. With the symbol subduing the think they quickly secured a chain that was used to secure the outside basement doors and bound the thing with it affixing the disk to the chain. Then dragged the thing and Mr. Lawton’s body down into the basement. On until morning they worked at bricking the thing and Lawton’s corpse into the center wall of the basement. All the while they worked the thing stared at them and made no sound. Once finished they carved the symbol on the freshly made brick wall and set about carving the same symbol into each of the entry ways and windows of the home. With their grisly work completed both men sat on the couch in the great room before the large bay window and succumbed to exhaustion.

McGinnly convinced the other two remaining men that it would be best to keep the incident quiet and create a story that could explain the missing Lawton and Penkin without producing any bodies. They came up with the spelunking accident since the initial cover story was a camping trip and Lawton knew of a cave system to the north that would easily be fit the description. They told there tale to authorities and the families and an investigation was never pursued. The guilt at what they had done was almost too much to bare. Mr. McGinnly, fearing the others would eventually crack and reveal the truth of that ill fated weekend, approached Billings and Lafayette with the idea of them handling his estate. He gave them a large sum of money upfront that he told them could be seed money for a practice of their own. The two lawyers could not pass up such an opportunity. They could open a firm before either had even passed the Barr, and begin with such a large estate in hand that they would not be struggling for clients within the early years. Billings and Lafayette was created with blood money given to them by Colton Billings with the express purpose of keeping the horrible secrete that walled into the basement of the house on Waverley road. I could not believe what I was reading, this firm which I took so much pride in, which I was striving to become parter of, was the front of a terrible, abhorrent and diabolical event that left a man dead and another in god knows what state.

At this point the entries in the journal stopped and don’t begin again for several years. It is evident that Mr. McGinnly wished to put the horrible incident behind him as he moved back into his family home and left the house outside of Boston to sit uninhabited for years. After some poorly managed business decisions McGinnly, decided to sell of the large mansion which was his family home and move into the smaller home. He believed that the Penkin thing in the basement must now have died of starvation trapped within its tomb in the basement. It was not long after the McGinnly met and married his wife and subsequently had their first and second children. Life seemed to have turned to normal and the dark past seemed to be behind him. The entries in the journal at this time are happy and joyful, without mention of the terrible deeds of that night or the obsessed desire to travel dimensions and time. Everything changed with the death of Mrs. McGinnly.

Entries leading up to this time being to have McGinnly again thinking about the thing in the basement. He was having strange dreams of other nightmarish worlds where abominations walk freely. He writes of finding himself in the basement staring at that brick wall only to realize that he did not remember coming down. He spoke of a voice in his head which was calling to him to open the wall and set the thing free. It was obvious that McGinnly was going through a mental break brought on by keeping his horrible secrete for so many years. In fact it was this portion of the journal that led me to question the validity of the rest of the entries. Could it be that McGinnly was mad all along, it certainly would be easier to believe that than the wild narrative he put forth thus far. Then an entry in the journal took the wind from me and left me completely stunned. Mr. McGinnly describes coming to his senses standing at the top of the stairs down to the basement not realizing how he had come to be there, only to notice the body of his wife at the foot of the stairs with her neck broken. In that instant the memories came rushing back, in a fit of rage due to an argument they were having about his preoccupation with the basement, he pushed her down the stairs, where she died. He told the authorities that she had fallen down the stairs in the morning before he had come down for breakfast.

This incident set McGinnly off on a quest to rid the home of the evil thing he now believed was controlling his mind. He took Penkins portion of the horrid book and cast it into the unused well behind the house hoping to keep anyone from discovering its vile secrets. He began to travel around the glob searching for a way to cast the demon thing out back to the hell it came from. He went back to the graveyard in Denmark in an attempt to trace back the lineage of the Maxim Utkin in the hope that it would lead to a solution. He traced the man back to Russia and the town of Arkhangelisk.