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 Johnathan 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 rantings of a disgruntled or abused man wanting 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 17th 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 payed 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 the firm would base it’s 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 man were frequently mentioned and featured in photographs, a Mr. Wesley Lawton a student of medicine and a Mr. Danforth Phillips 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. Phillips 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 Phillips both were lost in an accident while spelunking caverns in norther 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 Gerald 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.