The Seed Man

I’ll never forget how horrified I was when I first heard the tale of the Seed Man. Being only eight years old didn’t help, but damn, the idea of the thing kept me up for weeks after. It was Stanley Whitestone who spilled out the local legend as we sat in our treetop hideaway that summer evening. While the woods behind my new house began to darken he told me the story with quivering lips and sweat beads on his upper lip. Not that Stan was a particularly brave individual but the way he visibly shook, the way his eyes got glassy with tears you would think he had seen the thing with his own eyes. I guess it haunted all of the children in Willow Glen, the adults too I suppose, but it wasn’t until I found out the truth about The Seed Man that the true horror took hold in my mind.

We moved to Willow Glen from Hartford in the beginning of June that year. I was not especially happy to leave my friends behind in Hartford but lets face it, I wasn’t the most popular kid anyhow. My best friend Troy was about all I would miss, and we were only a few hours by car away so I could go back and visit now and again. The hardest part was moving during summer. Since school was not in I didn’t get a lot of opportunities to meet any new friends. Stan lived next door so we became fast friends. I probably would have ended up Stan’s friend regardless of his proximity since he was a lot like me. We both were bit shy, interested in less than popular topics and not quite as athletic as the other boys our age. None of these traits were going to help either of us out much once school was back in session. I was happy though to have somebody to show me around and help make the transition easier.

My mother loved the new house and to tell the truth so did I. It was much bigger than the cramped brownstone we had back in Hartford. My room was huge and I could climb right out of my window, down the tree and into the backyard. The backyard opened up right into the woods, which is where Stan and I spent most of our days. There was a creek not too far back where we would swim and race paper boats down stream. It was the beginning of a great summer. Troy even came to visit a few weeks after we moved. Troy and Stan hit it off great and the three of us had fantastic adventures in the woods behind our house.

We moved for my father’s new job, surveying sites on the mountain for the New England Mining Company. Once he had surveyed the shaft locations he was going to stay on with the company, finding new veins and making sure the shafts were structurally sound. He was also doing research for a university in Massachusetts, on sedimentary histories of New England or some such. My father was a geologist, and being the only one for some miles, he was going to be taking home a pretty good living as long as the mines kept producing. He was always more interested however in the research he was doing for the university. He told me that someday he would publish his findings and would be known around the world, at least to geologists around the world.

It was on the day we pulled up to the massive colonial dwelling we would now call home, that Stan came over to introduce himself. I was happy to have someone my age to show me around and get me out of helping with unloading our belongings. Mother seemed happy to let me run off with my new companion. Mostly I believe because she was worried that I would have a hard time finding new friends in this new town. Stan took me over to his house to see his pet snake. I watched intently as he fed it a small white mouse. After the snake took its query I couldn’t help but feel bad for the little thing. As I watched the snake slowly ingest its prey I thought of what it might feel like to be slowly devoured while still alive. Staring into darkness as your body was compressed. Realizing your fate as each breath becomes harder and harder to draw until at last you cannot draw a breath at all. With no more room in your lungs for air you can make no sound simply succumb to the inevitable blackness. Needless to say feeding time was not on the top of my list of things to do after that. Stan didn’t seem to care. For all of his sensitivities he didn’t bat an eye when it came time to feed that snake. He loved the thing, it’s funny how love can take the emotion out of certain things, and add it to others.

Looking back I think Stan must have seen me as a godsend. He was not popular with the other kids our age. He was a bit strange of interest and even stranger of mannerisms. Pale and often sickly, he was not the first pick on the playground for any type of game. His love of bugs and reptiles didn’t help much either. But in me he had a person who had no preconceived notion of him. There was no history of shunned awkwardness and countless botched attempts to reinvent himself. To me he was just the kid next door. The bonus for him was that I was just about as strange and awkward as he was. We were destined to be friends I suppose, even if we didn’t live right next door to each other. We had a friendship of mutual respect and interest, a friendship of which none but us could know the depths.

Stan’s father also worked for the New England Mining Company as a foreman. He was a rough sort of man who was not impressed with his son’s inelegance and even less impressed with his son’s lack of physical prowess. His mother on the other hand was an ever kind and protective guardian to her first and only child. His father was always pushing him to be tough, face his fears, and stop being so emotional. While his mother coddled her little boy at any chance she got. It was one such occurrence of Stan’s father berating him about crying at night that sent us out to our hideout in the woods where Stan related to me the tale of the Seed Man.

He didn’t want to tell me what was bothering him at first but I could tell he had been crying and so I kept on prodding him to tell me. Eventually I got it out of him that he had a nightmare the night before and woke in his room crying and calling for his mother. His father who was none too happy to be woken in the night began to yell at Stan about growing up and being a man. The yelling didn’t stop the next morning and continued at various intervals throughout the day. It being a Saturday his father had a whole day to verbally abuse his son into not crying at night and sucking it up. As far as I could tell it wasn’t an approach that was going to work, Stan was sensitive and nothing was going to change that.

Finally I asked him what he had dreamed that was so horrible. To this day I wish I had never asked that question. It wouldn’t have mattered; I was bound to here the tale somewhere if not from Stan. In this town there were two things to talk about, the mines and the Seed Man, both of which were depressing and pervasive. At the time I had no idea how closely related those two things were. For now I sat quietly and listened to Stan spin the tale of the Seed Man. As the sun slowly sank on that hot summer day fear slowly grew inside me as the tale unfolded and from that day I would never be the same.

The story of the Seed Man was an old one passed down threw generations in this town. Apparently the Mohegan tribes had passed it down as well long before the white man came and built a town on this spot. To them this was a place to be shunned, it was said that there was a Mohegan village here long ago but the Seed Man came and eventually everyone fled, leaving the village abandoned. The area was considered forsaken by the Mohegan, an evil place, which was avoided until white settlers came and claimed the area. Its fertile soil, its abundance of water from the rivers and streams and the rich ore deposits in the surrounding mountains made this an ideal place to establish a community. A small town was founded in the glen called Harrows Field. It would later gain the moniker Sorrows Field due to several tragedies that occurred while the town was being built up. Stan said that he had seen books in the town library that chronicled the towns early days, and he said, mentioned the Seed Man probably for the first time in written history.

The town was plagued by a number of unexplained disappearances of several children in summer of 1643. Everyone was in an uproar with neighbor blaming neighbor for the disappearances. A man named Connel Saybrook showed up at the constables late one night claiming that he had been attacked by something in his room. He said that this thing attacked him while he was sleeping, and before it attacked he heard a sound like seeds in paper being shaken. He laid in bed listening to the strange sound when something dark loomed over him. He felt it wrap around him and try to lift him up. Kicking and screaming he broke free of it and ran, not stopping until he reached the constables door.

A search of the house turned nothing up and the incident was shrugged off as a wild fancy from a man that was not unfamiliar with the drink. Connel swore up and down that he hadn’t had anything to drink that night and continued to maintain that position until he himself disappeared several years later. Connel told wild tails of a Seed Man that was taking the children away into the mountains for God knows what purpose. He gained notoriety as a lunatic or at the least the town drunk and then one day he trekked off into the mountains and was never seen again. Stan said he thought that Connel must have went to face the Seed Man and was defeated as the disappearances of children continued in the summer of the next year.

As the story goes the Seed Man steals small pieces of the soul in the form of dreams and replaces them with nightmares. He comes each night, chipping away at the soul adding nightmares until the unfortunate victim is at the brink of insanity. It is then that the Seed Man calls. With mind and soul so damaged by his nightly visits his victim succumbs and wanders off into the night to meet some unspeakable fate. There were a wide variety of opinions on what the fate might be. Some said the victim’s soul was trapped in the land of dreams to become legions for the Seed Man who would then torment his future prey. Some said that the Seed Man would bring his victims to his lair in the dark woods where he would devourer them body and soul. Stan believed he would eat the brain and remove the heart, which would then be shriveled dried and added to his sack. He said this is why it is said that you can hear a sound when the Seed Man comes, like the shaking of seeds in a paper sack.

Stan’s justification for this was a series of strange findings in the woods around Willow Glen. It was reported that over the years human remains had been found which all displayed the same characteristics. The skulls had perfectly circular and completely smooth edged holes in the tops, which were around 3 inches in diameter. The breastbones of the bodies had the same hole in the precise area above the heart. Some of the remains found were very old and perhaps dated back several hundred years. These oddities were never well documented or investigated by the local police due to the near impossibility of combing those wood for clues. It was as if the police believed the wild tale of the Seed Man and felt that nothing could be done about it.

The worst part about it was the fact that there were an exceptionally high number of missing children reported in Willow Glen. In a town of this size it was rather peculiar anyone could go missing without notice, let alone scores of children through the years. Stan said that it happened every few years and if you asked the older folks in town they can tell you of at least a few summers that they remember in which a rash of missing children gripped the town. This was generally forgotten after a few years allowing the next occurrence to seem somewhat unique.

Stan got very intense, looking me in the eye almost whimpering and let out the last in a fevered monolog. The Seed Man he said comes to you at night, stealing your dreams and replacing them with nightmares. He breaks you down until there is nothing left to fight him. Stan was convinced that his nightmare from the previous night, the cause of all his fathers constant tongue lashings earlier in the day and what led him to finally tell me this incredible tale was the start of the Seed Man’s process. He was doomed he told me and he was sure of it for after he had awoke from a terrible dream, which he could not now remember, he heard something in his room that froze him solid. As he sat in the dark, fear paralyzing him, trying to scream, he heard the unmistakable sound or seeds being shaken in a paper sack.

Stan began to cry as the sun finally made its full descent beyond the horizon. I consoled him awkwardly putting my arm around him and telling him I would not let the Seed Man take him. We can figure this out I told him. The town’s people just kept sweeping this under the rug and no one had ever looked at this in a way that would actually create some useful leads. We had to see this in terms of the Seed Man being real, previous investigations discarded this folk tale as nonsense and so none of the evidence made any sense. We would be the ones to figure this out, we had no choice, failure meant that Stan was doomed, we had to try.

Stan spent the night at my house that night, being a Saturday it was best to keep him away from his father that night, we got no resistance from either of his parents in that regard. We stayed up late to make our plans. I was secretly worried that Stan’s presence would bring the Seed Man to my house in the night but I wasn’t going to let my fears slip. Stan was already worried enough and didn’t need the added stress of thinking he was responsible for my safety as well. We planed to head to the library the following day to research everything we could find about the old legend. We conspired into the early morning as neither of us were eager to fall asleep. The late hours of the night passed silent and dark as pitch but we heard no shaking of seeds and no indication that anyone or anything was prowling the grounds. The sun came up before we finally fell asleep from shear exhaustion. My mother woke us at mid morning complaining about sleeping the day away and lazy boys. We had a decent breakfast and headed into town to start our investigation.

We road down the tree lined lane from our houses to the main street in town without incident, telling jokes and laughing as we went as if nothing sinister was afoot. It seemed like a normal day in those moments as if we were simply two boys riding to town on a summer day. The morning sun was bright and felt good on my face as I rode. It was a welcome change from the fearful oppressive darkness of the night before. We made it to the library before noon, parked our bikes out front and headed in to begin our morbid inquiries into the towns dark sinister past. This was the first of many trips I would make through my life to various institutions of research to dig up the truth of the simple yet terrifying legend of the Seed Man.

We started with excerpts and fragments that we could find about the Mohegan tribes from the area but found very little that was useful. Before the seventeenth century, the Mohegan were part of the Pequot tribe. Granted independence as a sovereign nation after helping defeat the English during the Prequot War in 1638 a reservation was established on the Thames River in Uncasville. Most of what we could find was historical, very little biographical or anecdotal information could be dug up in our small towns library. We did manage to find the names of a few tribal elders who were still alive and living on the reservation. We put a visit to the Mohegan Indian Reservation on our list of possible leads and moved on to histories about the town of Harrow Glen.

Harrows Field was established in 1640 by Wilbur Smythe, Thomas Becker and Johnathan Waitley, a small field split into 3 sections to which each man laid claim. They had no trouble with local tribes due to the irrational fear that the local tribes had for the narrow glen nestled between the dark forbidding mountain forests. There was mention of a tribal chief that came to warn the three men of an evil spirit that resided in the deepest woods near the glen. This was sited as the beginning of the local legends in the area of a windego type creature that took people away in the night. This was the only information we could find that seemed connected to the Seed Man before the accounts of missing children in 1643 and the story of Connel Saybrook which Stan had already related to me. It gave me an eerie feeling to read in the pages of legitimately published works the same account that Stan had laid out. A feeling of dread came over me as I began to realize that this was not just a fun little adventure or flight of fancy cooked up by two young boys to fill the summer days. This was real and quite possibly deadly, for if what we suspected was true, the Seed Man was coming for Stan and possibly me by association. After wringing out all we could at the library we decided to head home. It was getting close to dinner time and we needed to secure another sleepover to protect Stan on the coming night.

It was around one in the morning when we heard Stan’s dog barking furiously at something in the woods behind his house. With wide eyes we crouched at the window to my bedroom squinting in the darkness to see what had the dog up in arms. We could not see anything in the blackness of the forest by the scarce moonlight, but there was a feeling as we stared at the spot in the black wall of trees that the dog was focused on that something was there staring back at us. It was such an overwhelming feeling that both of us jumped back from the window. We jumped into my bed and hide under the covers as if the blankets could somehow shield us from the thing lurking at the edge of the forest. After some time we both fell asleep from exhaustion and the night passed on into morning. My mother was surprised to find us sleeping in the same bed when she came to rouse us for breakfast the next morning. Whatever she may have thought she did not inquire out it at the breakfast table.

Stan and I made plans to get out to the Mohegan reservation that day and see if we could talk to one of the elders about why they had shunned this place in the past. Our plans however were cut short when my father returned early from work with some tragic news from the mines. They were digging some new tunnels and my father was examining the sedimentary layers in the freshly dug walls when a deep cavern opened up under the men on the front line. My father heard a crumbling sound as the floor gave way under four men digging on the front line. They disappeared quickly into the pitch black maw that opened up beneath them. My father was visibly shaken as he related the events. He said he could hear the men’s screams for a few agonizing seconds before they were silenced. “It must be hundreds of feet deep” he said looking into the palms of his hands. There was no time to catch them he said, he was close but it happened in an instant. As he said the last he looked up at Stan and said quietly, “I’m so sorry son”. Stan knew immediately what that meant and took off running to his house yelling for his mother. Stan’s father and three other men were lost that day and presumed dead. That section of the tunnel was closed off as no one believed that there was any reason to go down in that hole to find them. My father, who was near obsessed about exploring the open cavern and finding the men that it claimed, was the only one who was willing to investigate. The other miners and the management felt it was too dangerous to peruse a lost cause, and so it became my father’s secret project.

Stan’s mother was devastated by the news. She spent the next months in her bedroom rarely coming out even to eat. Stan was basically on his own and trying to help his mother as he could and managing to look after himself as well. The company paid out a large settlement to the family. It was good that we lived in such a small town since Stan had to take over the monetary responsibilities for the family though he was only twelve years old. Everyone in town knew the story and tried to help Stan as much as they could. Meanwhile Stan and I were in a battle for his very soul, without any parental supervision we were free to explore our fantasies however wild and imagined. We were devising a plan to end the Seed Man once and for all, ridding the town if the evil thing and bringing peace to the community at long last.

Unknown to us was my father’s own investigation, not into the Seed Man legend, but into the unexpected cavern that claimed the four men at the mine. My father began spending more time at the mines, staying on after hours so that he could examine the rock formations and sedimentary patters around the cavern. He told me in passing that things just didn’t add up. He had taken numerous readings and samples from the location and was sure there were no caverns, especially of that size in the area. My mother was permissive of my fathers obsessed behavior because as she told me one night before he came home, he must have felt terrible guilt over the accident for it was his reports that cleared the site for digging. It was something my father said late one night that led me in a new direction in our Seed Man investigation. I passed by the family room late one night to get some water and I overheard my father absently thinking out loud. He was saying that it made no sense for the cavern to be there. It was as if something had created this cavern from below after he had taken his initial readings. He also wondered aloud how a cavern that big could possibly be created in that short amount of time. It was impossible according to my father. Stan and I were taking a much less scientific approach to our investigation however and to us the impossible was the basis for our entire inquiry. It was not impossible to assume that a centuries old mythical monster could be responsible for the cavern. This strange occurrence must certainly be connected to the Seed Man we needed only to figure out how.

A few days after the cave in Stan’s dog Wolf went missing so we trekked off into the woods behind the house to find him. We searched all day and turned nothing up. Once the sun began its downward climb we started back home. Stan was sad but was also not too concerned since Wolf had run off like this before. Probably looking for a female to spend the summer evening with we joked. We were about a half mile from home when we noticed a small clearing in the woods which had the most peculiar indention running through the tall grass. The grass was flattened along a twisting path through the clearing. The depression was about 3 feet across and curved threw the grass as if some gigantic snake had slithered through. There was a mucus type substance on the trampled grass. It had a horrible odor and was greasy to the touch. Neither of us said what we were thinking but we both were relieved to move on from the clearing. Our pace quickened as the light dimmed and we made it home just after dusk both of us panting and sweating from the brisk pace we had been keeping since we saw the unusual tracks in the clearing. That night Stan had another nightmare and again the sound of seeds shaking in a paper sack followed after he woke. Stan ran out of his house and scurried up the tree outside my window calling to me to let him in. I let him in and tried to calm him down. We spent the rest of the night staring out the window into the dark woods for any sign of movement. There was none and eventually we fell asleep from exhaustion.

The days passed slowly as we look for new avenues of research. It wasn’t until my father invited us to come with him to the university that he was doing research for that we gained a break in the case. The library at the university was vast and held many volumes that were deemed inappropriate for most public libraries in the area. We found histories, census logs, personal letters and memoirs and old newspapers that dated back further than what we had previously found. We spent the two days in the library doing research, my father thought we were crazy and tried many times to get us to come with him to see the town. I told him that Stan and I had never had access to this many books before and being a book worm himself he understood. He himself was doing his own research at night when he thought we had gone to bed. We instead were devising our plans and going over the days research instead of getting proper sleep.

We had mapped out all of the missing persons reports that we could foresee being related to the Seed Man. We then narrowed that down further by removing any one over a specific age. We set the limit at twelve years of age since that was our age and for all the stories Stan could remember, none of the children taken were that old and certainly not older. We began to notice a strange pattern. The reports of missing persons and claims of the Seed Man would generally come up every several years however there was no distinct pattern to the reoccurrences of the phenomenon. It seemed utterly random however one thing did not seem to be random. The ages of the children taken seem to be increasing. The earliest record we could find was of babies being taken from the Mohegan tribes. Each reoccurrence had the age of the victims increased. From one event to another it was hard to distinguish this oddity but when you put the time line out over a longer span of time you could see that the ages were increasing. We could not puzzle out why that could be but we each had our own theories. The trip was invaluable and the information we acquired was much to be pondered. My father seemed a bit dismayed to head back home and it seemed as though he had found something in his own research that had caused a change in him. After that trip my father seemed to be a bit less himself, a bit more distracted and scatterbrained. On the last day we saw him talking at length to the university head librarian Dr. Armitage and they both had the look on their faces as if they had seen a ghost. The trip home was a quiet ride as nobody was willing to speak, all of us lost in our own minds trying to puzzle out what we had learned.

After our trip to the university Stan and I began to devise a plan to capture or track the movements of the Seed Man. Stan being the ultimate bait and we had the run of his house now that his mother had descended into debilitating grief over the loss of her husband. I spent most nights at Stan’s house which was tolerated by my mother since she felt bad for Stan being alone and taking care of his grieving mother. Our plan was to have Stan in his usual room while I was in the spare bedroom next to his. I would monitor his sleep and attempt to capture on phonograph the sounds of the Seed Man if he made an appearance. We found that though the visits were consistent they were not sequential, this led us to believe that this creature was intelligent in some way. It knew when Stan was not in the house and it was careful not to come calling when Wolf was out in the yard. Since Wolf’s disappearance there was less protection from the nightly visits but when it did come it was always the same. It came when Stan was asleep and it was gone once he woke from a nightmare. No matter how we tried it somehow knew if I was awake while Stan slept. So we planed to have me hidden away and only recording sound not trying to get a glimpse, we were hoping that this would catch the nocturnal specter unaware and give us our first real proof that the Seed Man was not just a child’s tale but a corporeal monstrosity that walks among us.

We stayed up fairly late that night discussing our plans for the evening. Stan was nervous and seemed more jumpy than usual. Stan’s mental state had been deteriorating slowly since the first night he suspected that the Seed Man had visited him. He was generally more irritable and was getting more and more scatterbrained as the days wore on. It had been a month since the first occurrence and we counted that he had been visited at least 15 times now. We had mitigated the number of visits by having Wolf in the back yard, until he went missing and having Stan stay the night at my house. Tonight was the first step in tracking the beast to ground and once we located it’s lair, destroying the thing in whatever way we could. After much deliberation Stan went off to his room tired and ready for the nights events. I was in the next room and tasked to stay awake and begin the recording device when I believed that something had entered Stan’s room. We had assured that his door was slightly closed and provided enough of a creak when opened that I would be alerted of an intruder. With butterflies in my stomach I sat in a chair next to the wall adjacent to his room listening intently for the tell tale creaking of his bedroom door.

Midnight came and went and my eyes were beginning to fall closed as I listened to the rhythmic cadence of Stan’s breathing. I was half in a dream as I heard the tell tale creak of the door to the room beside me. My eyes shot open and I fought the urge to call out as I heard a sound which was familiar to me after the many time hearing the legendary tale of the Seed Man. It was a bit more organic than I had imagined and had a damp gurgling to it that suggested things which I dared not think in the post midnight darkness. It was unmistakably the sound of seeds being shaken inside of a paper sack. The near full moon’s light shown through the window falling on the phonograph which I was to use in recording the sound of the thing. I shook myself out of the trance I had fallen into while listening to the sound and hurried over to turn on the device.

I will never know what compelled me to cross the room and creep into the hallway that night. Maybe it was a need to protect Stan from this nocturnal fiend or the need to know what it was that tormented us for these last weeks but regardless of the reason my feet, as if not under my own control, led me out into the hallway and over to pear into the open doorway of Stan’s room. Through the dim moonlight spilling into the curtained window I saw a figure standing over Stan. Fully 6 to 7 feet tall and oddly uniform in thickness from the base to the head. I assumed that the darkness was casing strange shadows, which made the form difficult to reconcile in my mind. From the floor its thick black mass stayed uniform until the upper part of the body which tapered into a sort of head although the entire thing seemed to be one single mass like a giant slug. At the top were several moving tendrils, which seemed to writhe randomly in the moonlight as if testing the air about them. It bent down closer to Stan and seemed to be excreting something from its tendrils into Stan’s slightly open mouth. I gasped at this and the thing shifted in the darkness, it whirled around to face me and in the dim light I could barely make out the outline of it’s face which was dominated by one large circular maw lined with 3 rows of needle like teeth. It did not appear to have eyes that I could tell nor any other recognizable facial features. It let out a squealing sound that shot through my mind like electricity and rendered me unconscious in an instant. When I came too it was Stan who was standing over me asking what had happened. I could only get out three words before I again lost consciousness and I saw the terror on Stan’s face as I groaned out “He was here” then fell once again into blackness.

We were both terrified the next morning however we had our plans firmly in our mind. We listened to the recording and heard it all, the tell tail sound of seeds shaking in a paper sack and the squeal that rendered me unconscious. Listening to the latter caused us both to relieve our stomachs of their contents. We now had the prof and as we walked out into the backyard to look for possible clues we were confronted with another horror. We found a trail leading from the back door out into the woods, the trail was identical to the one we had found in the forest clearing when looking for Wolf several weeks back. Our course was laid out for us at that point, we needed to follow this trail to ground and possibly find the ancient hidden lair of this mythical monstrosity and once found destroy the beast with all the fury we could muster. We could not let fear get the better of us, this was a matter of life and death for Stan and possibly myself as well now that the thing had seen me observe it’s nightly machinations. As we set to strike off after the beast my father rounded the corner and called for us to yield. With wild hair and wrinkled sweat stained clothes he came to us and said. “I know about that thing you have been searching for, I know this terrible secret and this is the day we will end this”.

My father stalked off into the woods following the trail left behind by the thing that had visited up the night before. With a startled look I followed after. Stan fell in line behind me a moment later. None of us spoke a word as we entered the woods and it was another half an hour before anyone spoke at all. We passed the clearing that Stan and I had encountered previously and I took a mental note of the precise location. I thought this could be a potential ambush spot since we had see evidence that the thing had used this path before. It was a full hour before we found our quarry. The trail lead to a cliff wall that extended well over the height of the trees, however it was not possible to see the top of the cliff from our location beneath the canopy. A single fissure that ran horizontally from the ground to a height of about forty feet marred the cliff face. It reminded me of a scare scratched into the cliff by some gigantic claw. At it’s base the opening was about three to 4 feet wide with nothing but pitch blackness beyond. We had one flashlight among us which my father wielded with the expertise of a veteran geologist. No stranger to the dark depths of the earth was my father, and his presence was a steading force for Stan and I. Not a word was spoken as we descended into the stygian depths bracing ourselves for the horrors that we knew must lay in wait within the inky blackness.