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 never again sees the light of day. 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 without any complaints. I came to the firm after graduating at the head of my class with many recommendations from professors and firms, of 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 whoever 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 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 journals, do not go to that cursed house.

I found this file waiting for me on my desk, just four days ago, February 13th, 1922. I saw the client's name and, from research, I had done prior to taking my position with the firm, knew it to be the first and most fortuitous acquisition 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 McGinley estate was taken on by the firm with an initial fee that far exceeded any other for its 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 the college friends of Mr. Colton McGinley and it was perceived that this friendship prompted such an exorbitant initial infusion of capital into what was yet to be a law firm. Nevertheless, the McGinley 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 McGinley 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 from the school's archives to corroborate their friendship. They graduated in 1852, Billings and Lafayette in law and McGinley in history. I found it interesting to note that two other men were frequently mentioned and featured in photographs. Mr. Wesley Lawton a student of medicine and a Mr. Abram Penkin a student of philosophy. I was able to divulge from old yearbook photos, student newspaper articles, and local papers from the time that the group of men were part of a club of sorts which was documented in the school's archives. 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. McGinley to offer a large sum of money to the two law students to handle his estate. Lawton and Penkin were both 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 to be dead.

This event took its toll on the three men. McGinley 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. McGinley 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. McGinley. After setting up the estate with Billings and Lafayette very little was done with the family assets for some time. After what would appear to be a grieving period Mr. McGinley began to take more of an active role in the family business and began taking many trips abroad, presumably striking new partnerships overseas. After some years, McGinley 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. McGinley'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. McGinley 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. McGinley 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 McGinley 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 unease from 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. McGinley was frantic and immediately put together a search party. The local police advised McGinley 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 boy's body broken and twisted fifty feet down at the bottom.

Mr. McGinley 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 Christopher left the home for college at the nearby Miskatonic University. It was a year later in 1879 that Colton McGinley, 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 McGinley family over the years since Colton McGinley 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. McGinley's college friends, was the order of inheritance. The estate would be passed on to the last surviving and capable dependent of the McGinley family. If there were no surviving descendants the estate and all holdings and assets would be transferred to the last surviving and capable descendants of Wesley Lawton, and if none could be found in the Lawton line all would be passed 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 McGinley'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 family's tragedy had taken place, the very house in which Colton McGinley took his own life, was never to be sold or torn down. It was 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 by its 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 whoever 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 business's books and take a look at the family's assets to determine what could be sold off and what could be salvaged. The company's 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 Brooks, 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 keen attention to detail. I felt comfortable that Mr. Brooks would make the correct recommendations and afford the best return on the estate's investments. He was to meet me at my office the next morning and begin to wade through the sea of disorganized paperwork that had been dropped off earlier in the day. I also took the liberty of acquiring the services of a Ms. Agnes 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 McGinley 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 the night accompanied only by the ticking of my wall clock and the glow of the streetlamp outside the office window. It seemed that the tragedy that befell the McGinley family did not end with the death of Colton McGinley. His son Christopher, after graduating with a master's 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 Ms. Claudette Morrow. Their firstborn, a daughter, Agatha McGinley was born in 1892 and a son Peter 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 estate's file that Claudette McGinley requested the key to a safe deposit box that Christopher's 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 estate's records.

In the winter of 1897, Mrs. Claudette McGinley 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. McGinley was away at the time of the accident, traveling for business purposes in Russia. The McGinley'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 girl's 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 explained that the thing flung her mother out the window and she had run before it could turn to see her behind it. Grabbing the baby, she 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 loss of his wife and became more withdrawn and reclusive. He hired 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 locales. Among the notable locations which both his father, and now Christopher visited, included 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 Arkhangelsk Russia, Christopher McGinley added a sealed letter to the estate's documents, which is oddly enough missing from the current file, returned the safe deposit box key, then proceeded to hang himself. Mr. McGinley's corpse was found hanging, prominently displayed in the large bay window, which dominates the front of the home, two days later.

Peter McGinley 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, Arkhangelsk Russia that Peter McGinley returned home. Like 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 McGinley 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 won't 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. Brooks 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. Brooks 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 McGinley Manufacturing Inc. I asked Mr. Brooks 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 day's work I excused myself 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 that she could 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 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 metal box containing the treasured possessions of the McGinley family. To our surprise, there were only three items in the box. A thin leather-bound journal that 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, an 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 religious relic that held some value. Ms. Waterford could not offer 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 the coming 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.

To the great beyond,

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 estate's finances or assets and I shrugged it off as a footnote in the strange story of the McGinley 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 good-day. 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 McGinley was not of sound mind and I thought it prudent to find the descendant of the Penkin family as well, in case 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 adulthood. 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 ax 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 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 McGinley house is in.

Now that I had detailed information about the two persons who could lay claim to the inheritance I needed to take a trip to the Roxbury Sanitarium to visit Agatha McGinley 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. Brooks was coming along with the company's books, I made a trip to the sanitarium to interview Agatha.

Agatha McGinley 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 it. 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. There was a 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. McGinley I collected myself 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 insane 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 no 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. Brooks 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. Brooks had made it through a fourth or so of the boxes and files which made up the entirety of the company's financial history. I asked about the progress and was relieved to hear that nothing odd or inappropriate had, as of yet, been discovered. Mr. Brooks informed me that he has been through much of the early years of the company and was just beginning the era when Colton McGinley 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. Brooks 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 McGinley 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. Gerald Lawton answered the phone and I explained to him the circumstances that had transpired to facilitate the transfer of the McGinley estate to the Lawton family. Mr. Lawton did not know any of the history connected with the McGinley family but he was aware of the tragic cave-in that 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 set up 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 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 McGinley 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 McGinley 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 completely illegible journal, could not be studied to extract its contents. I thought that I might show it to Mr. Brooks 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. Brooks showed up promptly as expected and got right down to work on the remaining mountain of paperwork. I showed Mr. Brooks the strange journal to which he took a cursory glance and came to the conclusion that it was some sort of cipher. I was astonished to hear this and since Penkin had referred to the book as a key it seemed like a logical conclusion. Brooks 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 dusty 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 right 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 for 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 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. A dizziness and dryness of mouth came upon me, 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 doorway 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. 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, 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 heating 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 smashed 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. I left Agnes 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 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. Glancing around for damage I 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. 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 plain to see that the earth around the base of the tree was significantly disturbed.

After checking that everyone was all right 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 found that the basements north side brick wall, 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. 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. I was eager to take these volumes back to the office for further study.

Mr. Elliot and I set up 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 which were now beside me in the front seat of my auto as I drove through the sleepy forested two-lane roads that eventually gave way to the lights and bustle of the city.

Mr. Brooks had finished 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 the days delving 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 McGinley 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. Brooks noted that it was more from disinterest and flamboyant spending of his own than any sort of mismanagement. The house was the first major purchase that the young McGinley had made and that was not the end of it. There were several trips abroad for himself and Mr. Penkin in which extravagant accommodations and the procurement of guides for excursions into uncharted 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. Brooks 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. Brooks 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 McGinley. The entries began in 1849 in his fourth year at Harvard. Initially, the entries were fairly mundane and typical for a student describing the day to day life at university. In September that year, Mr. McGinley 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 the 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 wild speculation. It was not until they returned to school after the 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 back into the swing of day-to-day life at Harvard. It was during the first semester that Mr. Penkin came to McGinley with some rather exciting news. Penkin had spent the summer researching various occult volumes, focusing on dimensional travel and had found the 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 had finally found one, 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 that 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 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 its 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 the winter session began again.

The book they extracted from that god-forsaken graveyard which McGinley referred to as "akin to hell on earth", was written in Old East Slavic. Penkin immediately began the arduous process of translating 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 that Penkin began a transformation and 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. McGinley at this time had stepped back from the feverish and obsessive research the two had been engaged in and began to focus 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 McGinley 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 in the bizarre and fantastic. He then began a slow process of introducing the men to some of the things that he and Penkin had discovered. The two were apprehensive and dismissive at first but once McGinley 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. McGinley purchased the house outside of Boston. With a base in which to operate McGinley introduced Penkin to the other men and they all began meeting at the house on weekends. The group began to engage in what McGinley 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. Mr. Wesley Lawton, a student of medicine and a dyed in the wool skeptic, then approached them. 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 an integral piece for the group.

It was just before graduation when Mr. Penkin came to McGinley 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 steal their work and take credit for the discoveries they were so close to obtaining. He gave the key portion to Mr. McGinley and kept the encoded portion for himself. McGinley 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. The ritual 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 then bring them back into our dimension when the ritual was completed. Penkin was ecstatic about the discovery and wanted to attempt the ritual straight away. It was a few weeks after graduation and the group was 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 McGinley for safekeeping, 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 that was to send Mr. Penkin to the other side. The group met at the house on a Friday evening and had what 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 night's 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 performed, 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. They were astonished and could not believe what they had seen. The remaining men stood before the gate gazing in wonder when the abomination crossed back over the threshold. The thing that came back through the gate was not Abram Penkin though it bore his face. It was a figure standing on two legs, which were bent in awkward places and from its torso extended several writhing pseudo-pods that undulated with some sort of unheard rhythm. The skin of the thing was dark and wet with some sort of mucus which constantly ran down the thing. Atop that blasphemous torso was the visage of their friend Penkin but bloated with pus-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 McGinley 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 that bore Penkin's visage bit deeply into the neck of Lawton and began to devour the lifeless body. McGinley had prepared for trouble and had created a single silver disc bearing the symbol of a five-pointed star emblazoned with a flaming eye in its center. He rushed to the thing pressing the disk to its skin; it dropped the limp form of Lawton to the ground and shrank back staring wildly at McGinley. He called for Lafayette to bring something to bind the foul beast with and Lafayette rushed off, returning with a length of rope that they hastily tied around the abomination. With the symbol subduing the thing they quickly located a chain that was used to secure the outside basement doors and bound the thing with it affixing the disk to the chain. Then they dragged the thing and Mr. Lawton's body down into the basement. On through the night, until morning they worked at bricking the thing and Lawton's corpse into the north-eastern wall of the basement. All the while they worked the thing stared at them and made no sound. Once finished they carved the same symbol on the freshly made brick wall and set about carving it into each of the entryways 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.

McGinley convinced the other two remaining men that it would be best to keep the incident quiet and create a story that could explain the absence of 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 befit the description. They told their tale to authorities and the families. An investigation was never pursued. The guilt at what they had done was almost too much to bear. Mr. McGinley, 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, beginning with such a large estate in hand that they would not be struggling for clients within the early years. The firm was created with blood money given to them by Colton McGinley for the express purpose of keeping the horrible secrete they had walled into the basement of the house on Waverley Oaks road. I could not believe what I was reading, this firm which I took so much pride in, which I was striving to become a partner of, was the front of a terrible, abhorrent and diabolical event that left one 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. McGinley 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, McGinley decided to sell off the large mansion which was his family home and move into the smaller house on Waverley Oaks. 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 McGinley 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. However, everything changed with the death of Mrs. McGinley.

Entries leading up to this time begin to have McGinley 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 McGinley was going through a mental break brought on by keeping his horrible secret for so many years. It was this portion of the journal that led me to question the validity of the rest of the entries. Could it be that McGinley 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. McGinley 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. He came around 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 McGinley off on a quest to rid the home of the evil thing he now believed was controlling his mind. He took Penkin's 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 globe 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 Maxim Utkin in the hope that it would lead to a solution. He traced the man back to Russia and the town of Arkhangelsk but the trail went cold there. He returned home and attempted to resist the evil thing that was forever calling him to release it from the precarious prison the men had created for it. Then McGinley's youngest son went missing.

Horrified by the possible reasons, McGinley immediately put together a search party and set a reward for information on the whereabouts of his son. Five days later they found him in the well behind the house where he had deposited Penkin's portion of the horrid translation. He surmised that the eldritch entity trapped in the house must have compelled his son to search for the missing piece of the translation and in doing so the boy slipped and met his end in that cursed well. McGinley was inconsolable and resumed his search with hysterical vigor. Leaving his older son in the care of hired caretakers he began more aggressively searching for a way to lift the curse he had brought upon his kin.

Years passed and the elder McGinley rarely came back to the house. He spent his time traveling the world looking for the means to put an end to the misery and tragedy that he brought onto his family. He returned home when his son left for college and remained. Once his son and all of the hired help had left that house, Colton was alone with the thing and the incessant taunting began with much more intensity. He wrote in his journal several times about the dreams and voices in his head. He had gone mad at this point and the loneliness and isolation pushed him to the brink. His last entry states that he built a secret compartment in the bedroom to conceal his part of the translation and his journal. He put the key to this secret compartment in a safe deposit box at the bank and gave the key and number to the law firm to add to the estate holdings. The day after, he took his own life.

I was visibly shaking at this point as I closed the journal and looked over to the second almost identical book on my desk. I was resolved to read all three but I shuddered at what I might find in the journal that could only be Christopher McGinley's. I poured a large glass of brandy and drank deeply. So far, the tale seemed so unreal that it could only be an elaborate hoax. There were pieces of physical evidence, however, that spoke to the contrary.

Christopher's journal began much the way his fathers had, detailing daily life at Miskatonic University. His father had suggested the school and though he could never understand why he respected his father's recommendation. It was a good fit for Christopher however, and he enjoyed the mysterious, shadow shrouded town of Arkham in which the university was located. When he got word of his father's death he was mortified. Even though his father had been absent for almost his entire childhood, he did remember the times when he was present and the love that he had for his mother. Somehow, he knew that his father's absence was not by choice but brought on by some unfulfilled duty to the family. He inherited the estate at that point but stayed in school and did not return to his childhood home. There were too many bad feelings in that place. He remembered the horrible dreams he had there and the tragic death of his mother and younger brother. After graduation, he took time to travel abroad and returned to the states with a renewed energy and a desire to put the family back on course. He began to take a hand in the company, which was slowly falling, to ruin from neglect. In short order, he managed to pull it up from its downward spiral. After a time, Christopher took a wife and eventually had a daughter, Agatha, and a son, Peter. Things seemed to be going well for the family and it looked like the shadow of tragedy and despair had been lifted from the family.

It was not Christopher but his wife, Claudette who looked into the estate holdings and upon finding the safe deposit box, extracted the single key that it contained. So confounded was she by this single item that she began a complete search of the house in hopes of finding a mate for this strange key. It had to have some importance or it would not have been locked away at the bank. It became an obsession to which she was becoming increasingly irrational. Christopher tried to dissuade her from the preoccupation that was becoming a detriment to the children but she would not relent. She began to speak of strange dreams that she was having and that she would find herself in the basement without realizing why she had come down there. He was worried about her health and safety and tried to preoccupy her with other hobbies but nothing seemed to break her focus on the basement and her search for the keyhole to match that key.

And so it went for months until late one night Christopher was awoken by a sound coming from the basement of the house. He noticed that his wife was not with him in bed and was concerned that she may be down in the basement. When he came down the basement stares he was confronted with a chilling scene. His wife was kneeling before a section of the brick wall on the east side. The wall had a strange symbol carved into it that had previously been obscured by dust, cobwebs and old furniture. Mrs. McGinley had moved the furniture and had cleared an area before the wall in which she now knelt muttering quietly to herself. When Christopher called to his wife, she turned her head in his direction and he was shocked at the visage before him. Her face was contorted and strained and her eyes were rolled back into the sockets revealing only the whites. Then in a grotesque baritone, guttural and accented voice, she uttered three words then fell unconscious on the ground. The words ran over in his mind as he attempted to wake her to no avail. The three words, which sent him on a quest beginning where his father before him had left off, attempting to rid the world of the evil that was contained in the McGinley home were, "set me free".

After this Claudette slipped into what the doctor's diagnosed as a self-induced coma of some sort. She lay in bed and could not be roused in any way. Some nights she would stir in her bed but that was the most interaction she would have. Christopher was beside himself with grief and was determined to find out what was causing this malady. He was convinced it had something to do with the obsession and that symbol on the wall in the basement.

While attempting to fix a floorboard that was coming loose in the master bedroom Christopher found the curious lever that hung just out of sight inside the heating vent in the wall. He pulled the lever and as Ms. Waterford and myself had done. A shiver went down my spine as he explained that he heard the click as the secret compartment concealed in the wood paneling came open, just as we had earlier that day. Inside he found his father's journal and the detestable cipher key which unknown to him was the seed from which his family's misfortune had grown. After reading his father's journal he began to again pick up the trail where his father had left off.

He was able to locate a tome in the library of his alma matter which contained the ritual required to create the sign carved onto each window and door in the house, chiseled into the wall in the basement and according to his father's journal chained fast to the creature contained within. His journal entries also make mention of the white stone which Ms. Waterford now had in her possession.

Christopher was abroad in Russia when he received news of his wife's death. He had uncovered a key piece to the puzzle but unfortunately, he was too late to save his wife. He returned home to arrange the funeral and the subsequent commitment of his daughter to the Roxbury sanitarium. Broken severely by these events, this only bolstered his determination to send the thing back to the hell it came from. The information that he found in Russia was integral to this end. It was the sorcerer Maxim Utkin who carried the dark knowledge required to open a gate to the realm of his dark god. Christopher had identified this entity as one mentioned in many tomes of great evil. One of which he was able to locate, the German Unaussprechliche Kulte which spoke of cults worshiping an entity associated with dimensional travel and time itself. The malevolent entity bore the name Yog-Sothoth and was by all accounts a being beyond human comprehension. Utkin's lineage propagated the worship of this dark deity through the years and it was in old ship manifests that Christopher found that several generations after the sorcerer had been put in the ground at The Executioners House, his decedents had made the long journey to the new world and upon arrival, changed their name from the original Utkin to the present day Penkin. It was Abram Penkin, a direct descendant of Maxim Utkin who had used them all to cross the threshold and become a true servitor of his dark god. He had become the horrible half-man, half-eldritch being that touched the minds of all who came into this house from its tomb in the basement walls.

He struggled against the will of the creature as it pecked at his mind daily. He, like his wife, found himself in the basement without recollection of how he had come to be there. He tried to stay away from the house as much as he could taking his son away for months at a time and finally when Peter was of age the boy left for college just as he had done. Leaving Christopher alone in the house to confront the thing that Penkin had become. Day by day it called to him over and over as he tried desperately to find the correct incantations, which would build a gate strong enough to send the thing, back to the blackness. In the end, his resolve broke, he was not strong enough to resist. One night he found himself swinging a pick-ax against the wall breaking large chunks of it away. Knowing then that he would eventually bend to the will of the thing and release it upon the world. The servitor would then usher in the true power allowing the opener of ways to enter into our plane of existence and set about the ruination of mankind. Christopher added the journal to his fathers inside the secret compartment in the master bedroom, he then took the key, the stone bearing the symbol and the cipher key to the bank and locked it away in the safe deposit box. He returned the key for the box to the firm to add to the estate's holdings, and then went home. The entries end there; it was two days after the last entry that Mr. Christopher McGinley was found dead in his home hanging in full view from the large bay window at the front of the house.

The night was getting late and I was struggling to stay awake, the brandy, which had at first been calming my nerves, was now beckoning me to sleep. I looked at the last journal on the desk and picked it up. Upon opening it an envelope fell from the pages onto my desk. There was writing on one side that read, "Peter". The envelope was open and the contents still inside. I slid the letter out and opened it. It was a letter from Christopher McGinley to his son Peter. It spoke in a condensed form of all the things contained in the two journals I had just been through. It explained that Peter should not go to the house unless he had plans to send the thing back. It begged him to stay away from the house. Finally, it put forth that the translation done by Penkin was incomplete, he had never intended to translate the full book but only the portions that he needed to make his transformation. He then alluded that the book itself was needed to send the thing back to its nightmarish world. Unfortunately, the only soul who knows where the original text ended up was entombed in the basement of the house on Waverley Oaks. He apologized to his son for not being able to rid the family of this burden and tells him that he fears he cannot hold out against the constant beckoning of the thing in the basement. He would eventually succumb and set it free and so he was resolved to take his own life.

The journal of Peter McGinley was sparse and uninformative for the most part. Much of it was from his childhood and spoke of terrible dreams and his mother's obsession with finding the lock to which the key would fit. He spoke of Agatha and how much he wished he could have helped her and the guilt he felt at visiting her less and less. He too saw the skulking specter of the beast in the home but unlike Agatha, he realized it was only a shadow, not a physical manifestation. It was a projection of some horrible evil thing that Peter believed lived in the basement and that this is why his mother was so obsessed with that part of the house. He knew that it was also the subject of his father's many trips and long nights of study with old and dusty books. It was also the reason he chose Anthropology as his major in school. He hoped that he could study various peoples around the world looking for signs in their legends and traditions that would somehow relate to the thing he had seen in the house. After school his travels aimed at the same goal and as his father and grandfather before him he searched for a way to send the thing back.

Returning home for the first time in many years, he accessed the estate records and found the letter his father had left for him. This confirmed all of his childhood speculations and set his determination even stronger to rid the world of this terrible thing, which lies in wait in the cold dark basement of the house on Waverley Oaks.

The final entries of his journal were focused on a plan which Peter was determined to execute which, for better or worse, would end the family curse. He had found in a certain unspeakable tome that was under the strictest guard at the Oren Library, of which he spent years endearing himself to the head librarian in order to be allowed access to, a specific ritual which would create a dimensional passage or gate. He planned to use this gate to send the abomination in the McGinley home to some other plane and seal it there. God help the denizens of that alternate world, but he could no longer afford to be scrupulous, he must act before the thing found a way to escape its tenuous prison and open the way for its dark master.

He attempted the gate ritual several times but was unable to create one large enough to send the thing through. The toll this was taking on his mind and body had been immense and he believed he could not withstand the constant assault his mind was under from the thing below. There was no recourse, he could not withstand the thing, and he feared that the longer he stayed in the house, the eventuality of him releasing it grew exponentially. Four days after the last entry in the journal, Peter McGinley was found dead in the house hanging in front of the same bay window as his father and thus ending the McGinley line forever.

I realized then that the bay window, the location of so much dread through the years was unremarkable but for one fact. This window that bore witness to four suicides, which was a constant reminder of the home's dark past was in a position directly above the northeast wall of the basement. Directly above the cramped dark prison of the monstrosity that Penkin had become.

I set the book down on my desk unable to believe what I had read in the McGinley family journals. It seemed impossible, but there was an increasing amount of physical evidence to corroborate the story. If it was a hoax it was a deeply intricate and well-planned one. It would have been a hoax perpetrated from years in the past to this date. If there was even an inkling of truth to this terrible narrative then I must get to the house tomorrow and warn the others to stay away. I could not in good faith allow them to continue in such an unsafe environment.

I woke up with my head on the desk as I heard Mrs. Lampton unlocking the doors of the main office. Quickly hiding the bottle of brandy and the glass I attempted to put myself together. Mr. Brooks would soon be here and I had overslept. With my hair a mess and three days of stubble on my face I tried to greet Mrs. Lampton as if nothing was amiss. She inquired about my well-being and remarked that I shouldn't spend every night working late. Mr. Brooks arrived promptly as always and gave me an odd look as he entered the office and set about the day's work. He let me know that he should be finished with everything today and that he would check in with me tomorrow if I did not come back to the office before he was gone. I bid him a quick farewell and stumbled out of the office.

I drove as quickly as I could to the house to try and intercept the others. I thought it best to tell them that something was amiss with the inheritance and call off the inspection of the house until a later time. When I arrived, however, the work truck of Mr. Elliot was already in the driveway. Ms. Waterford was there as well in her car parked on the street. Mr. Stark's car was also on the street, he was not in his car and must be helping Mr. Elliot with something inside. As I got out of the car, Ms. Waterford intercepted me immediately and began a quick and nervous dialog about the stone, which she had attempted to research the night prior. She told me that she had consulted a colleague who was a professor of history at the Miskatonic University, a Mr. Bernard Pembrook. The professor examined the stone and determined that the symbol was familiar to him; he said it was an old symbol and most referred to it as the elder sign. It was said to be repellent to entities that had an association with certain ancient deities and was used for warding or sealing. Ms. Waterford seemed nervous as she mentioned that this symbol was depicted throughout the house. I attempted to assure her that there was nothing to worry about but she could see on my face that I did not believe that.

We entered the house and found no one in the great room and so we began to call out for the others. Our calls were returned from the basement where Mr. Elliot was presumably working. We went down to see what the man was doing down there and I was half expecting to see him enthralled by the thing I had been reading about the night before. So apprehensive was I as I descended the stairs, that Ms. Waterford gave me an odd look and asked if I was all right. Shaking my head as we reached the bottom of the stairs, I inquired what Mr. Elliot was doing. He let me know that he was working on setting up jacks to bear the load of the house so that he could work on repairing the section of the basement wall that was damaged by the falling tree the day before. I as we spoke my eyes could not help but dart over to the wall on the east side of the basement, the one which the journals told concealed the horrible, vile abomination which was once Abram Penkin. After discussing the work Mr. Elliot was doing I asked if he had seen Mr. Stark. He related that he had not since the day before. I left Elliot to continue his work and set about moving some of the boxes and furniture that was obstructing a clear view of the northeastern wall. Once I did I was horrified at what I had uncovered. The claims I had read in the journals of the McGinley's were substantiated as on the wall was a chiseled representation of the elder sign Ms. Waterford had spoken of. She audibly gasped as she saw the making, her horrible assumptions at what it could mean. Once more to my horror I also spied the marks in the brick where the pick-ax of Christopher McGinley had struck. It was almost too much to take in and my knees began to weaken.

At that instant, the tree outside shifted again causing breakage in the north wall where Mr. Elliot was working. This, in turn, caused some cracking of the bricks on the east wall and much to the horror of everyone in the room a portion of the eastern wall fell away to reveal what none of us could believe. In the dark recess of the exposed section, barely visible through the hole revealed by the crumbling brick, we saw what looked to be the face of a man. A horrible stench came from inside and Mr. Elliot being the closest gaged as the noxious odor engulfed him. Ms. Waterford was exclaiming that we should not go near it as Elliot stepped closer to the thing in the wall. We could see it was a human face though it had strange deformities on either side, which looked like large tumors or growths. Before I could move to turn Mr. Elliot away from the thing we were all struck by a feeling of heinous dread and fear as the thing in the wall opened its eyes. Elliot bellowed out a curse as Ms. Waterford covered her eyes in shock and terror. I sprang into action with fear coursing through my veins, moving toward Elliot to pull him away from the thing but I was a moment too late. Several sickly slender and writhing appendages squirmed out from the broken section of the wall and wrapped themselves around the unsuspecting contractor. It pulled him quickly into the open section of the wall, which obscured the grotesque face that lurked within. I could hear a sickly sucking sound as Mr. Elliot's legs began to shake and kick wildly. Waterford screamed but even so moved past me with a revolver in her hand. In a moment the thing released Mr. Elliot and his lifeless body crumpled to the floor. Ms. Waterford fired all five of her rounds into the thing to no effect, it only stared at us with an evil malignant calm that spoke of unearthly patience. It was then that Mr. Stark scrambled down the stairs holding a mud-smeared book in one hand and a large hunting knife in the other.

I backed away from the deranged looking man and asked what he thought he was doing. The wild look in his eyes told me what he was about before his words confirmed it.

"Give me the key," he said in a throaty voice.

"It isn't here Mr. Stark, please calm down and we can talk about this" I attempted to persuade the man.

"Stand aside, we must release it, it must be free" he bellowed as he lunged forward towards me.

I leaped to the side and fell as I did, but I narrowly escaped the thrusting blade. Ms. Waterford stepped forward with the gun now pointed at Stark and demanded he relent. This was a bold bluff since the gun was empty. Stark was not intimidated and lunged at Waterford plunging the knife deeply into her chest, both falling to the floor with the blow. Stark rolled off of her and I could see the large knife protruding from Ms. Waterford's chest, she was not moving and I could see her lifeless eyes as she stared vacantly in my direction. Stark then stood and moved toward the opening of the wall and began pulling bricks from it widening the breach. I moved quickly to my feet pulling the knife from the lifeless body of Ms. Waterford and drove it into the back of Mr. Stark. He gasped as a sudden rush of air released from his lungs then slowly slumped to the floor leaving me face to face with the Penkin thing trapped in the wall.

I staggered back as the rope-like appendages reached toward me, falling over the body of Ms. Waterford. As I did, I saw the smooth white stone we had found in the safe deposit box half-exposed in the pocket of her sweater. I grabbed it hoping that it would afford some protection from the beast now beginning to excrete more of itself from the ever-widening opening. I raised the stone in my fist as I struggled to get to my feet. As if sourced by fire it shrunk back into the safety of its walled tomb and I could see that the stone was indeed a talisman with the power to repel the ghastly monstrosity. It called to me then, a voice in my head that I felt compelled to comply with, telling me to release it. I fought back the desire to do so and searched the basement for the materials I needed to repair the broken section of the wall. I fought with every ounce of my being to resist the voice in my head.

"Release me" it beckoned.

With the stone in my hand, I went about replacing the broken bricks in the wall with the cold calculating eyes of the thing staring at my every movement. I was able to resist long enough that I walled the thing back into its prison. Those eyes staring back at me all the while until the last brick was in place. Still, in my mind, the voice was tormenting me.

"Release me".

I managed to get upstairs though it was difficult to resist the temptation to return to the basement and take down that wall. I returned the journals to the secret compartment in the master bedroom and left the house. The further from the cursed place I got the weaker the compulsion became. It was dark now as I drove back to my small office on Washington Street and set about writing this testament. It will be difficult to believe the words put down in this confession. It may be tempting to look into the matter yourself to see if what I say is true. Please do not. Leave that house to decay and be forgotten, do not attempt to find the journals, and for the love of god do not speak with poor Agatha.

Boston Police Department A-1 Downtown February 17th, 1922:

The above document was submitted as evidence in the case of Mr. Jonathon Crown's suicide. Mr. Crown jumped from the window of his office and fell seven stories to his death. The document above was on his desk freshly written. The only other object on the desk was an old key that was part of the McGinley estate. The man was unstable which the document clearly shows. The house on Waverley Oaks was searched and the bodies of Nathanial Elliot, Agnes Waterford, and Carl Stark were found in the condition described in the document, however, the fingerprints on the knife were Mr. Crowns. It is the opinion of this department that Mr. Crown had suffered a mental break under pressure of his job and his desire to become a partner in the firm of Billings and Lafayette and in a delusional state murdered the three aforementioned individuals then committed suicide.

Upon investigation of the home, the secret compartment in the master bedroom was discovered but it was empty. The books referred to in Mr. Crown's confession, as the cipher key and the translated text, were also not present in the house or Mr. Crown's office. Mr. Stewart Brooks the accountant mentioned in the confession reported the suicide after returning to Mr. Crown's office on Friday the 17th 1922 to find the window open and Crown's body below in the alley. Mr. Brooks confirmed his part in the processing of the McGinley estate but denied the claims that Mr. Crown had shown him a journal identified as a cipher key. The other mentions of his involvement were confirmed as correct.

This was a horrible and unfortunate incident however the firm of Billings and Lafayette denied all claims of any involvement in the wildly fanciful testimony of Mr. Crown. The McGinley estate has been properly transferred to the Lawton family and is no longer part of the firm's open clients. Though the circumstances were horrible, the Lawton family has moved into the house on Waverley Oaks road and is free from any suspicion. It is clear that Crown was the sole perpetrator of this crime and has ended his own life as a result. This case is considered closed.

Boston Daily Globe March 10th, 1922

Police arrived at the apartment of a Mr. Stewart Brooks Thursday evening when neighbors complained that Mr. Brooks was wailing incessantly for several hours. Arriving on the scene police found the man huddled in the corner of his small one-bedroom apartment scratching at his face and arms viciously. Weak from blood loss and apparent lack of food, water, and sleep Mr. Brooks was taken to Boston Memorial Hospital for evaluation.

The police found no drugs or alcohol in the apartment and nothing seemed to be out of order. One curious note, the police reported finding two books at Mr. Brooks' desk, both of which were written in no language they could determine. Officers said it looked to be gibberish.

Mr. Brooks was committed to the Roxbury Sanitarium after full evaluation from the medical staff at Boston Memorial. Brooks had no immediate family and is considered a ward of the state.