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, casting crooked shadows on the ground below, he told me the story with quivering hands 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 himself. 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 real horror took hold in my mind.

We moved to Willow Glen from Hartford at the beginning of June that year. I was not especially happy to leave my friends behind in Hartford, but let's face it, I wasn't the most popular kid anyhow. My friend Troy was about all I would miss, and we were only a short drive away by car, so I could go back and visit now and again. The hardest part was moving during the summer. Since school was not in session, I didn't get a lot of opportunities to meet new friends. Stan lived next door, in a large whitewashed Queen Anne style home with an overgrown yard and a German Shepard who barked the entire time we unloaded our truck. He and I were the same age, and being the only kids on our block, we became fast friends. I probably would have ended up Stan's friend regardless of proximity since he was a lot like me. We were both a 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 started. I was happy 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. Our backyard opened up right into the woods, 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 downstream. 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 because of my father's new job, surveying sites for the New England Mining Company. The company brought him in to ensure the mine was safe as there had been seismic activity on the mountain recently. Once he had surveyed the shaft locations, he would stay on with the company, find new veins, and make 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, the only one for some miles, so he would be taking home a pretty good living as long as the mines kept producing. He was more interested in the research he was doing for the university, however. Someday he would publish his findings and would be known around the world, he told me, at least to geologists around the world.

The day we pulled up to the massive colonial dwelling we would now call home, 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 delighted to let me run off with my new companion, mostly because she was worried that I would have difficulty finding new friends in this new town. Stan took me over to his house to see his pet snake. I intently watched 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. I watched as the snake slowly ingested its prey. Wondering what it might feel like to be devoured slowly while still alive, staring into the darkness as your body is compressed. Realizing your fate as each gasp for air 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, unable to make a sound, simply succumb to the inevitable blackness. Needless to say, feeding time was not on the top of my list of things to do. Stan didn't seem to care. He didn't bat an eye for all of his sensitivities 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. A bit strange of interest and even stranger of mannerisms. Pale and often sickly, he was not the first pick on the playground. His love of bugs and reptiles didn't help much either. In me, he had a person with 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. Our friendship was one of mutual respect and interest, a bond of which none but us knew 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 intelligence and even less impressed with his lack of physical prowess. Stan's 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. One such occurrence of Stan's father berating him about crying at night 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 see that he had been crying, and so I kept on prodding him. Eventually, I got it out of him. 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, Stan's father had the 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 hear the tale somewhere if not from Stan. There were two things worth talking about in our town, 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 story unfolded. From that day on, I would never be the same.

The story of the Seed Man was an old one passed down through generations in this town. The Mohegan tribes had passed it down long before the white man came and built a village on this spot. To them, this was a place to be shunned. There was a Mohegan village here long ago, but the Seed Man came. Eventually, everyone fled, leaving it abandoned. The Mohegan considered the area forsaken, an evil place, avoided until white settlers came and claimed the territory. 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. Founded in the glen was a small town called Harrows Field. It would later gain the moniker Sorrows Field due to several tragedies that occurred during its construction. Stan said that he had seen books in the town library that chronicled the town's early days. He said they mentioned the Seed Man probably for the first time in written history.

In 1643 a plague of unexplained disappearances of several children began in the town. Everyone was in an uproar, with neighbors blaming neighbors for the disappearances. A man named Connel Saybrook showed up at the constables late one night, claiming that something attacked him in his room. He said that this thing set upon him while he was sleeping, and before it struck, he heard a sound like seeds being shaken in a paper sack. He laid in bed listening when something dark loomed over him then wrapped around him, trying to lift him. Kicking and screaming, he broke free of it and ran, not stopping until he reached the constable's door.

A search of the house turned nothing up, and the constables shrugged off the incident as a wild fancy from a man not unfamiliar with the drink. Connel swore up and down that he hadn't had anything to drink that night and continued maintaining that position until he disappeared several years later. Connel told wild tails of a Seed Man who took 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 gone to face the Seed Man and was defeated since the children's disappearances 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 horrors beyond imagining. He comes each night, chipping away at the soul, adding to their nightmares until the unfortunate victim is at the brink of insanity. It is then that the Seed Man calls. With the mind and soul so damaged by his nightly visits, the victim succumbs and wanders off into the night to meet some unspeakable fate. There was a wide variety of opinions on what that 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 torment his future prey. Some said that the Seed Man would bring his victims to his lair in the dark woods where he devoured them body and soul. Stan believed he would eat the brain and remove the heart, which would then be dried to a shriveled pea and added to his sack. That is why, he said that you could 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. Over the years, there were reports of human remains turning up, all of which 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 ancient and perhaps dated back several hundred years. The near impossibility of combing the woods' entirety ensured these oddities were never well documented or investigated by the local police. 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 was an exceptionally high number of missing children reported in Willow Glen. In a town of this size, it was peculiar that 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, they could tell you of at least a few summers that they remember when a rash of missing children gripped the town. It 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 his last fevered monologue. The Seed Man 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. Convinced that his reveries the previous night, the cause his father's constant tongue lashings earlier in the day, were the start of the Seed Man's process, Stan was sure of his doom. For after Stan had awoken from a terrible unremembered dream, a sound in his room froze him solid. As he sat in the dark, fear paralyzing him, trying to scream, his ears caught the unmistakable sound of seeds 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. Was there no one who had investigated the disappearances in the past? Were there indeed no useful leads? What about the bodies found in the woods? Why were the police not investigating what had happened to the remains? It was as if the events were purposely being disregarded until they faded into the past, becoming nothing more than a fantastic legend. We had to see this in terms of the Seed Man being real, not some tale told to children to make them eat their vegetables. Previous investigations discarded the story as nonsense and weren't able to connect the disparate pieces of evidence. 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, 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. We planned to head to the library the following day to research everything we could find about the old legend. Neither of us was eager to fall asleep as we conspired into the early morning. Slowly the late hours of the night passed silent and dark as pitch. Still, 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 sheer 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 rode down the tree-lined lane from our houses to Main street in town without incident, telling jokes and laughing as we went. It was as if nothing sinister was afoot. It seemed like a typical 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 town's dark, sinister past. It was the first of many trips I would make throughout my life to various research institutions, digging 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 very little 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 Pequot War in 1638, a reservation was established on the Thames River in Uncasville. Most of what we could find was historical. We found very little biographical or anecdotal information in our small town's 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. It was nothing more than a small field split into three sections to which each man laid claim. They had no trouble with local tribes due to their irrational fear of 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 residing in the deepest woods near the glen. It cited the beginning of local legends in the area of a wendigo type creature that took people away in the night. It was also 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. It gave me an eerie feeling to read in the pages of legitimately published works the same account that Stan had laid out. A sense 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. It was real and quite possibly deadly, for if what we suspected was right, the Seed Man was coming for Stan and perhaps me by association. We exhausted our resources at the town library with little more information than we had before. We had spent most of the day wading through old histories and biographies, both Stan and I were tired and tense. It was getting close to dinner time, and we needed to secure another sleepover to protect Stan that coming night. The sun was low on the horizon as we rode back home, barely talking.

It was around one in the morning when we heard Stan's dog Wolf 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 couldn't see anything in the blackness of the forest by the scarce moonlight. A feeling came over us as we stared into the black wall of trees that the dog 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 climbed into my bed and hid 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 the 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 about 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. However, our plans were cut short when my father returned early from work with some tragic news from the mines. They were digging some new tunnels as father examined 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 rumbling sound as the floor gave way under four men digging at the wall section. 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 faded to silence. "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 instantly. 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. The section of the tunnel was closed off as it was too dangerous to go down in that hole to find them. My father, who was near obsessed about exploring the open cavern and retrieving the men that it claimed, was the only one willing to investigate. The other miners and the management felt it was too dangerous to pursue a lost cause. 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 while managing to look after himself. 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 family's monetary responsibilities at only twelve years old. Everyone 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 of the evil thing and bringing peace to the community at long last.

Unknown to us was my father's investigation, not into the Seed Man legend, but into the unexpected cave-in that claimed the four men at the mine. My father began spending more time at the mines, staying on after hours to examine the rock formations and sedimentary patterns 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. He was sure there were no chambers, especially of that size in the area. My mother was permissive of my father's obsessive behavior, as she told me because he must have felt terrible guilt over the accident. It was his reports that cleared the site safe 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 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. To us, the unthinkable 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 undoubtedly be connected to the Seed Man. We needed only to figure out how.

Our trip to the Mohegan reservation was less helpful then we had initially hoped. We rode our bikes several miles outside of town to reach the reservation. It must have been another three miles before we came upon the Mohegan general store. The general store was a social hub for the tribe and the one place where goods from off the reservation could be purchased. It would be an understatement to say they were surprised to see two young boys from town show up without parental supervision. The store clerk stared at us, unblinking as we approached the counter and asked if he knew how we could talk to the tribe elders. Taken back by our request, the clerk reluctantly agreed to make a call and see if the Chief had a moment to speak with us. After what seemed like an eternity of uncomfortable silence and words we did not understand whispered into the receiver, the clerk turned to us and motioned towards the wooden bench outside the front door. We both looked back questioningly. He waved again, adding, "Go sit outside. He will be along shortly."

Stan and I nervously waited outside as patrons eyed us suspiciously on their way in and out of the store. After a short time, a man riding a black horse approached us. His long grey hair tied back into two braids, and his weathered bronze face marked him as a tribal elder. He tied his horse to the pole out front and made his way up the three steps onto the planked porch.

"I hear you wanted to speak with me?" he said with an emotionless expression.

"We won't take up too much of your time sir, we are wondering about the village that was there before Harrow's Field," I said, pointing toward town.

"That was way before my time, young man. I don't think I will have much to tell you. What do you want to know?" he looked back toward town as he sat on the polished wood bench.

"We are trying to find out about the missing children." His face fell flat, erasing what little kindness was there, to begin with.

"Leave it alone. Nothing good will come of it. Stay out of the woods on the mountain and stay in at night." He stood and began to move back to the porch steps.

"The Seed Man is after him." I frantically said, pointing at Stan. "We need to stop him."

He stopped with his back to us. "Get him away from here. That mountain is a cursed place. There is no stopping it. There is only running. Leave and don't look back. There is nothing I can do to help." With that, he continued down the steps and hoisted himself onto his horse.

"But we are only children." Stan pleaded, "We can't just leave; our parents won't believe us." Tears were flowing unhindered now.

"Stay awake; don't sleep in the same place twice. It's all you can do."

We left the reservation defeated. Somehow, we both believed that we would hear something from the tribal elder that would help us combat the horrible specter. We were on our own now. No one would listen to us, and we were powerless to act of our own volition, we were just kids. We rode back to our houses in silence. I could tell Stan was scared. He didn't say it, but his eyes betrayed him.

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 up nothing. 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 in the tall grass. The grass was flattened along a twisting path that ran through. The depression was about 3 feet across and looked 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 were covered in sweat and panting from the brisk pace we were keeping after seeing the strange 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 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 movement. There was none, and eventually, we fell asleep from exhaustion.

The days slowly passed as we looked for new avenues of research. It wasn't until my father invited us to come with him to the university where he did research that we gained a break in the case. The library at the university was vast. It held many volumes that were deemed inappropriate for most public libraries in the area. We found history, census logs, personal letters, memoirs, and old newspapers that dated back further than we had previously encountered. We spent two days in the library doing research. My father thought we were crazy and tried 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 was doing his research at night when he thought we had gone to bed. Instead of getting proper sleep, we were devising our plans and going over the day's investigation.

We had mapped out all of the missing person reports that we could foresee being related to the Seed Man. Then narrow that down further by removing anyone 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 older than that. 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 phenomenon's re-occurrence. It seemed utterly random, but one thing did not. The ages of the children taken seem to be increasing. The earliest records we could find were of babies being abducted from the Mohegan tribes. Upon each re-occurrence, the age of the victims increased. From one event to another, it was hard to distinguish this oddity. Still, when you put the timeline out over a longer span, you could see that the ages were increasing. We could not puzzle out why that would be, but we each had our 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 research that had caused a change in him. After that trip, my father appeared 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 a look on their faces as if they had seen a ghost. The trip home was a quiet ride. Nobody was willing to speak; all of us lost in our 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 Seed Man's movements. Stan was 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, which was tolerated by my mother since she felt terrible for Stan, alone and taking care of his grieving mother. We planned to have Stan in his 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 happened 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. We planned to have me hidden away, only recording sound, not trying to get a glimpse, hoping that this would catch the nocturnal specter unaware. Hopefully, we would get 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 relatively late that night, discussing our plans for the evening. Stan was nervous and seemed more jumpy than usual. His mental state had deteriorated slowly since the first night he suspected that the Seed Man had visited him. He was generally more irritable and 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, and once we located its lair, destroying the thing in whatever way we could. After much deliberation, Stan went off to his room tired and ready for the night's events. I was in the next room 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. I sat in a chair next to the wall adjacent to his room with butterflies in my stomach, listening intently for the telltale 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 creak of the door to the room beside me. My eyes shot open, and I fought the urge to call out as I listened to the sound, which was familiar to me after the many times hearing the legendary tale of the Seed Man. It was a bit more organic than I had imagined and had a wet 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 nearly full moon's light was shown through the window falling on the phonograph, which I was to use to record the sound of the thing. Shaking myself out of a trance caused by the rhythmic sound produced by the Seed Man, I moved silently to the phonograph and turned on the device.

I will never know what compelled me to cross the room and creep into the hallway that night. Maybe it was necessary to protect Stan from this nocturnal fiend or the need to know what it was that tormented us for these last weeks. Regardless of the reason, my feet, as if not under my control, led me out into the hallway to peer into the open doorway of Stan's room. My heart pounded in my chest as I quietly moved into the threshold. In the dim moonlight spilling in through the curtained window, I saw a figure standing over Stan. Fully six to seven 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 challenging to reconcile in my mind. Its thick black mass stayed uniform until the upper part of the body then tapered into a sort of head. 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 began excreting something from its tendrils into Stan's slightly open mouth. I gasped at this. 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 its face, which was dominated by one gaping circular maw lined with three 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. When I came to, 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 more into blackness.

We were both terrified the next morning, but we had our plans firmly in our minds. In horrified silence, we listened to the recording. We heard it all, the telltale 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. Now we had the proof, 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 path was identical to what we had seen 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. Find the ancient hidden lair of this mythical monstrosity and destroy the beast with all the fury we could muster. We could not let fear get the better of us. It was a matter of life and death for Stan and possibly myself now that the thing had seen me observe its 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 where it hides and today I will end it."

My father stalked off into the woods following the trail of the thing that had visited us the night before. With a startled look, I followed after. Stan fell in line behind me a moment later. We hung back just far enough so that my father could not see that we were following him. Not a word was spoken as we entered the woods, and it was another half an hour before either of us 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 seen evidence that the thing had used this path before. It was a full hour before we found our quarry. The trail led to a cliff wall that extended well over the height of the trees. However, it was not possible to see the clifftop 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 its 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 steadying force for Stan and I. Silently, he descended into the Stygian depths. Stan and I braced ourselves for the horrors that we knew must lay in wait within the inky blackness, then we crept slowly to the entrance of the cave. Once we were sure my father was far enough in not to notice us, we followed.

A rush of damp hot air hit us as we entered the break in the rock. Stan explained that this cave system must extend far into the earth and be connected to a hot spring or other thermodynamic activity. Calcium deposits covered the cavern making the walls look like the skeletal insides of some massive beast as the glow my father's flashlight panned across them. The darkness was oppressive, and the humidity soon made our clothes damp and more burdensome on our bodies. There was only one tunnel leading steadily downward with no other openings on either side. The floor was surprisingly easy to navigate, as it seemed it had been worn smooth through years of slowly running condensation. We had gone down several hundred yards, which accounted for a descent of around two hundred or so feet when we heard a strange sound ahead of us in the dark.

We moved toward the sound and found ourselves standing at the edge of a deep fissure whose size was so large that our light could not reach the other side. My father grabbed me by the shoulders with a look of horror and deep concern on his face.

"What are you doing here?" he hissed quietly.

"We came to help. This thing is after Stan." I pleaded. The sounds of our voices echoing in the dank darkness.

My father took in the looks on Stan's and my face and turned back to the opening before us. There was nothing he could do. We were in this together now. Looking into the yawning maw, we could see something that encompassed the entire width of the chasm. In the dim light of our flashlight, it seemed at first to be the floor of the pit. After staring down for some time, we noticed moments of movement. We came to the unfathomable conclusion that whatever this was, we only saw a portion of it. The rest was buried beneath eons of ancient rock, exposed by some seismic activity. Father confirmed this as he whispered, "It's just as I thought, this, thing must have generated the same quakes that created the unexpected chamber."

As the words slipped from my father's lips, the thing began to undulate, causing rock and dirt to fall and cracks to appear on the walls to either side. The cave, which we stood in, was in danger of collapse. Before we could react, several boils appeared on the surface of the thing. They rose, then disgorged what looked like giant slug type creatures. Their thick slime-covered bodies and clusters of writhing appendages at the top looked like an anemone in the location that appeared to be its head. Scores of these burst out of the host thing and began moving towards us. They were terrifyingly fast as they climbed the sheer walls of the fissure and were upon us almost instantly.

The first to crest the lip of the ledge on which we stood shot out several of its appendages, which wrapped quickly around Stan's head and shoulders and pull him to itself. Then as soon as it came, it returned into the pit with Stan. In an instant, Stan was gone; this was the last I would ever see of my faithful childhood friend. My father turned to me and screamed for me to run. I stood frozen in terror as he reached into his pants pocket. At that moment, I knew that my father must have been researching the same phenomenon we were but from a different angle entirely. He knew where we were heading and what we would find there, and he was prepared to deal with it. His hand moved from his pocket to bring up a stick of dynamite. Handing me the flashlight, he drew a lighter from his breast pocket, lit the fuse, and screamed for me to run. His shouts broke my catatonia, and my legs began moving before my mind had made out what was happening. It felt like slow motion as I ran for the tunnel entrance. Moving as fast as I could, the light of my flashlight pointing wildly about in the darkness of the cave. As I stumbled out of the entrance, I heard a defining whip-crack sound of the dynamite as it exploded. It was only seconds before the cave began to fall in on itself, sending a rush of dirt and rock out after me. I ran and did not stop, driven by terror and my father's last words. I made it almost the whole way back home before I collapsed in the dirt, and darkness surrounded me.

I woke in my bed, thinking I had dreamed the entire episode until my mother came to my side and asked me what had happened. She said that after my father and I had not come home for dinner, she searched for us and found me not more than fifty yards from the edge of the forest and our backyard. As she told me this, I was struck with the horrible reality of what had happened. Tears immediately sprang from my eyes as she asked me if I had seen my father. The look on my face told the story, her face went pale as tears began to roll from her eyes. We held each other and sobbed in the waning twilight and on into the night.

My mother was never the same after that. Stan's mother was committed to the Danbury Sanatorium several miles from town. It was bad enough after her husband had died, but losing her little boy was too much to endure. She finally broke and could no longer care for herself. My mother became more withdrawn after the incident pulling away from everyone around her. Our relationship grew stronger as we were left to pick up the pieces and carry on. A heavy shroud hung over our lives from that day forward. Nothing would ever be the same. My mother never knew the truth of the thing. I explained that my father, Stan, and I had gone walking in the woods and found a cave entrance. My father, as a geologist, could not resist investigating the uncharted depths. There was a cave-in, and I had made it out. That was my story. I did not tell of the thing we saw or the horror that plagued this area for centuries. No one would ever know the sacrifice my father had made for the people of the town. No one that is, except me.

I write this down now because of a discovery that I have come to find. I am now older, and after years even I had forgotten the tale of the Seed Man. I had convinced myself that my fake story was the truth and that I had created the other in my mind as a coping mechanism for my grief at losing my father. My mother died five years ago and with her went the last remnants of the truth of that day in my mind. That is until this morning. I read in the paper that a seismic event had opened an undiscovered cavern in the old abandoned mine. The mine that claimed those miners all that time ago. The mine that launched my father into the investigation that ended in his demise. I immediately went to the attic and searched through old boxes for what might be left of my father's research. I found a bound leather folder in a crate at the far corner of the attic and opened it. It was the research my father had gathered since the day of the cave-in at the mine. I sat in the dust through the day and pored over my father's last contribution to the Seed Man's tale.

My father had tracked occurrences of seismic activity in the region, going back to the Mohegan tribe's tales of the shaking mountain. He had correlated these events to happenings of cave-ins and missing children in the area. It was a match, each event started with seismic activity followed by some sort of cave-in somewhere on the mountain, then promptly followed by tales of missing children. It tracked with everything Stan and I had found about the missing children in the area. The conclusion my father came to was that something was being unearthed when these seismic events took place. The rock in the area would crack and open new avenues for whatever this thing was to access the world above. My father believed it was some sort of parasite that preyed on human beings and hypothesized that it could be thousands of years old. I, in turn, speculated that somehow it was feeding on the intellect of its victims. It was gaining knowledge with each passing event allowing it to infect the minds of more developed hosts. It seemed that the slug-like detachments of the thing we're using some organic poison to cause nightmares in its victims. Those dreams would break down their grip on reality until it was able to call them to it. It had to start with younger minds because they were more easily stripped of their grip on reality. As it gained more knowledge, it would be able to develop more complex dreamscapes that could work on more evolved minds. My father and Stan were two of the smartest people I have ever known, and whatever this thing was able to absorb from them sent shivers down my spine.

As I sit in the fading light this August night, the heat of the attic sending sweat trails down my shirt. I am acutely aware of what has been gnawing at the back of my mind since I saw the newspaper article this morning. The headline read. "Another quake causes cave-ins at the old mine." I knew when I read it as I know now, it is coming for me. I will not escape its grasp this time around. I write this as a warning. Seal those mines for good; do not let this ancient evil loose on the world ever again.

I can hear it now, behind me, I don't need to turn and look, the sound of seeds being shaken in a paper sack.