

Beautified transcript - anchorhead-transcript1.txt

Transcript of Michael S. Gentry's "Anchorhead", by David A. Wheeler

{I wish I'd made a transcript while trying to solve Anchorhead, because there's a lot of interesting text in the game... but I didn't. So instead I started over, started a transcript, and used the walkthrough by Aeron Pax along with a lot of extra "examinations" and "look"s to get a sense of the place. This way, you can at least enjoy some of the text of Anchorhead. Note: In a few places the commands seem "miraculous" because they don't really search around to find out what to do, as you would in a real game. If you want to experience the game, you should just go play it.}

A N C H O R H E A D

[Press 'R' to restore; any other key to begin]

[The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind
is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind
of fear is fear of the unknown.

-- H.P. Lovecraft]

November, 1997.

You take a deep breath of salty air as the first raindrops begin to spatter the pavement, and the swollen, slate-colored clouds that blanket the sky mutter ominous portents amongst themselves over the little coastal town of Anchorhead.

Squinting up into the glowering storm, you wonder how everything managed to happen so fast. The strange phone call over a month ago, from a lawyer claiming to represent the estate of some distant branch of Michael's family, was bewildering enough in itself... but then the sudden whirlwind of planning and decisions, legal details and travel arrangements, the packing up and shipping away of your entire home, your entire life...

Now suddenly here you are, after driving for the past two days straight, over a thousand miles away from the familiar warmth of Texas, getting ready to move into the ancestral mansion of a clan of relatives so far removed that not even Michael has ever heard of them. And you've only

been married since June and none of this was any of your idea in the first place, and already it's starting to rain.

These days, you often find yourself feeling confused and uprooted.

You shake yourself and force the melancholy thoughts from your head, trying to focus on the errand at hand. You're to meet with the real estate agent and pick up the keys to your new house while Michael runs across town to take care of some paperwork at the university. He'll be back to pick you up in a few minutes, and then the two of you can begin the long, precarious process of settling in.

A sullen belch emanates from the clouds, and the rain starts coming down harder -- fat, cold drops smacking loudly against the cobblestones. Shouldn't it be snowing in New England at this time of year? With a sigh, you open your umbrella.

Welcome to Anchorhead...

[* THE FIRST DAY *

I was far from home, and the spell of the eastern sea was upon me.

-- H.P. Lovecraft]

ANCHORHEAD

An interactive gothic by Michael S. Gentry

(Type HELP or ABOUT for some useful information.)

Release 5 / Serial number 990206 / Inform v6.15 Library 6/7

Outside the Real Estate Office

A grim little cul-de-sac, tucked away in a corner of the claustrophobic tangle of narrow, twisting avenues that largely constitute the older portion of Anchorhead. Like most of the streets in this city, it is ancient, shadowy, and leads essentially nowhere. The lane ends here at the real estate agent's office, which lies to the east, and winds its way back toward the center of town to the west. A narrow, garbage-choked alley opens to the southeast.

>transcript

Start of a transcript of

ANCHORHEAD

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(Type HELP or ABOUT for some useful information.)

Release 5 / Serial number 990206 / Inform v6.15 Library 6/7
Standard interpreter 1.1 (4F) / Library serial number 970918

>look

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>e

(opening the real estate office door first)
It seems to be locked.

>x door

The door has a glass front with the name of the real estate company -- Benson & Brackhurst -- stenciled across it. The blinds are drawn, the lights are off inside, and no one appears to be home. Odd, since the agent knew you were coming today.

In the distance, you can hear the lonesome keening of a train whistle drifting on the wind.

>x glass

The door has a glass front with the name of the real estate company -- Benson & Brackhurst -- stenciled across it. The blinds are drawn, the lights are off inside, and no one appears to be home. Odd, since the agent knew you were coming today.

>unlock door

(with the sky)

(first taking the sky)
How optimistic of you.

>w

Narrow Street

As the lane winds along from east to west, it narrows until the steep, jagged rooftops on either side of the street practically touch each other. To the south, a side street leads across Whateley Bridge toward the center of town, and a twisting lane leads up a hill to the northwest. A short flight of steps to the north leads down to the local watering hole.

>n

You close your umbrella, as is your habit after coming indoors.

Local Pub

A dank, drafty old drinking hole lit by flickering, oil-burning lanterns. Smoke collects in greasy pools among the rafters, and shadows crowd thick around. The bar runs the length of the room to your right, while to the south a low doorway opens onto the street.

Mill workers and fishermen occupy a few of the tables, drinking beer or puffing grimly at long-stemmed pipes. Each is wrapped in his solitude, soaking up the general miasma of dreary fatalism.

The lantern sitting on the table nearest you sputters fitfully, throwing distorted shadows across the wall.

>get lantern

No one here looks as though they'd mind if you borrowed one of these lamps.
Casually, you purloin the nearest one.

>x lantern

It's an old-fashioned hurricane lamp, with a tall glass chimney to protect it from the wind. The cotton wick burns fitfully in its reservoir of cheap oil.

>x self

You look good, considering. A bit rattled by recent events, perhaps, but well-poised and collected, all the same.

>inventory

You are wearing your wedding ring, your trenchcoat and your clothes; in addition, you have in your hands a lantern (providing light) and your umbrella.

The pockets of your trenchcoat are empty.

>put lantern in coat

It wouldn't be very wise to put the lantern in your pocket while it's still burning.

>turn off lantern

That's not something you can switch.

>unlight lantern

That's not a verb I recognise.

>x table

It's just an ordinary-looking table.

>x bar

A dark and dour expanse of wood, pitted and scarred and stained with the rings from over a hundred years' worth of slopping beer mugs.

>x workers

The patrons of this place are taciturn and grim. No one speaks. No one looks anyone in the eye. No one, in fact, even looks up from his beer. A heavy aura of resignation -- and, it almost seems, dread -- hangs palpably over the whole crowd.

>s

As you make your way to the door, your foot strikes something under one of the tables.

>look under table

Some forgetful soul has left a flask underneath one of the tables, pushed into a shadowy corner.

>get flask

You pick up the flask. The label is faded and mostly peeled away, but what little you can make out seems to indicate that this is not a particularly distinguished brand of spirits. The words "bootleg" and "rotgut" come to mind,

probably because they are the only words legible on what's left of the label.

>put flask in coat

You slip the flask into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>s

The rain is still coming down, so you open your umbrella.

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A sudden gust of rain puts the lantern out.

>w

Junction

To the north, a gap in the crowded press of gloomy buildings opens onto a country lane, heading out over a grassy heath. The main street continues to the east, while to the northwest, over the top of a steep rise, you can just make out the vaulted rooftops of the university.

>nw

University Court

Isolated and serene within its high, ivy-covered walls, Miskaton University represents this benighted town's single, if somewhat dubious, claim to cultural achievement. Founded some time in the early 1800s, the school's reputation and enrollment have diminished somewhat as Anchorhead drifts further and further into the abyss of provincial backwaterism. Still, it is generally recognized for its collection of folklore and esoteric mythology (one of the oldest and most extensive on the east coast). The Board of Deans was also kind enough to offer Michael a full professorship upon hearing of his recently discovered heritage and his plans to move into the estate. Ivory tower, perhaps, but at least

they
take care of their own.

There are numerous buildings surrounding this cobbled court, but the only one you are interested in is the library to the west, where Michael told you he'd be until he came back to the real estate agent's office to pick you up. Which, incidentally, he has not yet done.

>w

You close your umbrella, as is your habit after coming indoors.

Library

Shadows roost thickly in the vaulted ceiling, and small, green-shaded desk lamps cast pools of warm radiance here and there around the library's dim interior. You pause a moment to let the hushed peacefulness of this place soak in -- a welcome relief from the unsettling events of the day. An exit lies east, and a small alcove to the north houses the circulation counter.

Peering through the shadows, you spot your husband sitting at one of the reading desks, absorbed in some sort of weighty tome and clearly oblivious to the time.

>x lamps

The lamps have curved, brass stands and frosted green shades; the kind of thing you'd expect to see on an accountant's desk in the 1930s.

The reading lamp is currently switched on.

>x husband

Tall and a bit on the skinny side, in an endearingly awkward sort of way; a serious, thoughtful face topped with an unruly tangle of brown hair; deep brown eyes framed by wire-rimmed glasses -- yep, that's the man you married, all right.

At the moment, Michael is largely absorbed in his reading, and is paying little attention to you.

>x michael

Tall and a bit on the skinny side, in an endearingly awkward sort of way;

a
serious, thoughtful face topped with an unruly tangle of brown hair; deep
brown
eyes framed by wire-rimmed glasses -- yep, that's the man you married, all
right.

At the moment, Michael is largely absorbed in his reading, and is paying
little
attention to you.

>x book

Michael looks up, startled, then realizes it's you and smiles. "Hi, hon,"
he
says, closing the book and stretching. Then he glances at his watch. "Good
grief, what happened to the time? I'm so sorry -- I just lost track." He
smiles
sheepishly.

"Well?" he asks. "Did you get the keys?"

>ask michael about keys

"The real estate agent is supposed to be holding them at her office," he
says.

>ask michael about agent

He frowns as you tell him about the real estate agent's disappearance.
"That is
rather odd," he says. "I wonder where she could be?"

>save

Ok.

>ask michael about help

You can't think of anything to say about that for the moment.

>examine book

Michael jerks the book away from you. "Excuse me," he says, a bit more
sharply
than you had expected, "I'll be done with it in a minute."

>examine book

It's obvious Michael is trying to hide something from you, and while you
very
much want to know what in the world it is, it would be best not to make a
scene
about it here.

>ask michael about keys

"The real estate agent is supposed to be holding them at her office," he
says.

>n

Circulation Desk

A high counter divides the public portion of the library from the reserved stacks -- all the more esoteric and mysterious volumes from the university's collection. If anything, the area behind the counter is even more shadowy than the side you're on. The main reading area lies south.

Hanging on the wall next to the counter is a small, printed sign. Beneath the sign sits a heavy, dog-eared register, and sitting next to the register is a bell.

>read sign

"All restricted books must be signed for on the register, and may not be removed from this building. Please have your faculty ID ready when you make your request."

>read register

It's basically a log, recording what book was checked out, who checked it out, and when. There must be hundreds of names here.

>ring bell

Ding.

A moment later, the gaunt and fishy-eyed librarian emerges silently from the shadows behind the counter.

>x librarian

Her slack, pallid skin looks as if it has seen little more than the inside of a cave for most of her life. She stares at you silently with disturbingly large and watery eyes.

>ask librarian for help

The librarian purses her thin, fishy lips at you. Apparently, she only lends out library books.

>s

Without a word, the librarian fades back into the shadows.

Library

Shadows roost thickly in the vaulted ceiling, and small, green-shaded desk lamps cast pools of warm radiance here and there around the library's dim interior. You pause a moment to let the hushed peacefulness of this place soak in -- a welcome relief from the unsettling events of the day. An exit lies east, and a small alcove to the north houses the circulation counter.

Peering through the shadows, you spot your husband sitting at one of the reading desks, absorbed in some sort of weighty tome and clearly oblivious to the time.

>e

The rain is still coming down, so you open your umbrella.

University Court

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>se

Junction

To the north, a gap in the crowded press of gloomy buildings opens onto a

country lane, heading out over a grassy heath. The main street continues to the east, while to the northwest, over the top of a steep rise, you can just make out the vaulted rooftops of the university.

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Narrow Street

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>e

Outside the Real Estate Office

A grim little cul-de-sac, tucked away in a corner of the claustrophobic tangle of narrow, twisting avenues that largely constitute the older portion of Anchorhead. Like most of the streets in this city, it is ancient, shadowy, and leads essentially nowhere. The lane ends here at the real estate agent's office, which lies to the east, and winds its way back toward the center of town to the west. A narrow, garbage-choked alley opens to the southeast.

>se

Alley

This narrow aperture between two buildings is nearly blocked with piles of rotting cardboard boxes and overstuffed garbage cans. Ugly, half-crumbling brick walls to either side totter oppressively over you. The alley ends here at a tall, wooden fence.

High up on the wall of the northern building there is a narrow, transom-style window.

>x window

It's about eighteen inches wide and a foot tall, with hinges along the top that allow it to swing out. It's currently closed.

>open window

The window is too high.

>x fence

One of the boards seems to be loose down at the bottom; you could probably just squeeze through.

>go under fence

(closing the umbrella first)

Dropping to your hands and knees, you wriggle underneath the loose board and scramble down a muddy slope.

Narrow Beach

This narrow strip of beach is tucked away between two outcroppings in the predominantly rocky shoreline, accessible only from a steep, muddy slope to the west. The sand is filthy and strewn with rocks, seaweed, litter and other bits of storm-tossed detritus.

Near the bottom of the slope, a sewage outflow pipe juts out over the beach, about three feet above the ground. A thin stream of acrid-smelling sewer water trickles out over the lip of the pipe, forming a puddle in the sand.

You are getting wet.

>up

You pick your way up the slope, push the loose board aside and slip back in through the gap.

Alley

This narrow aperture between two buildings is nearly blocked with piles of rotting cardboard boxes and overstuffed garbage cans. Ugly, half-crumbling brick walls to either side totter oppressively over you. The alley ends here at a tall, wooden fence.

High up on the wall of the northern building there is a narrow, transom-style window.

You are getting wet.

>open umbrella

You open the umbrella.

>move cans under window

Grunting and holding your breath, you manhandle one of the filthy cans under the window.

>stand on can

You clamber onto the wobbling garbage can, precariously balanced. You can just reach the lower edge of the window from here.

>open window

You open the transom window.

In the distance, you can hear the lonesome keening of a train whistle drifting on the wind.

>enter window

(closing the umbrella first)

It's a tight squeeze, but you just manage to wriggle through, dropping quietly to the floor inside.

File Room

Peering through the murk, you can make out the blocky outlines of filing cabinets lining the walls and a doorway to the west. A window high up on the south wall lets in a very faint illumination.

>x cabinets

There must be hundreds of files here, too many to browse through. You'll have to look up something specific if you want to find anything.

>w**Office**

Pallid gray light trickles in through the drawn blinds. The office is deserted, papers still scattered across the top of the desk. The front door lies west, and the file room lies east.

Sitting on the corner of the paper-strewn desk are a telephone and an answering machine.

Someone seems to have left a cup of coffee sitting out, half-finished and cold.

>x answering machine

A simple answering machine, with a small display indicating messages received, a button labeled "PLAY", and a button labeled "DELETE".

>push play

For a while there is nothing but a quiet hiss, followed by intermittent skirls of strange-sounding static. It sounds like one of those annoying glitches where the caller hangs up but the machine keeps recording anyway. Then, barely audible through the static, you detect what sounds like a human voice whispering a single word:

"Verlac."

The machine beeps.

A brief shudder ripples up your back. You remember now, "Verlac" is the name of this branch of Michael's family.

>e**File Room**

Peering through the murk, you can make out the blocky outlines of filing cabinets lining the walls and a doorway to the west. A window high up on the south wall lets in a very faint illumination.

>look up verlac

(in the filing cabinets)

Strange; the file on the Verlac property has been cleaned out. Title, deed, all the papers, all of it gone. There is, however, a set of keys tucked down in the hanging folder. You quickly pocket them.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>w**Office**

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Sitting on the corner of the paper-strewn desk are a telephone and an

answering
machine.

Someone seems to have left a cup of coffee sitting out, half-finished and cold.

>x cup

In the styrofoam cup is some cold, murky coffee.

>x telephone

It's just an ordinary-looking telephone.

>unlock door

You unlock the office door.

>w

(opening the real estate office door first)

The rain is still coming down, so you open your umbrella.

Outside the Real Estate Office

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of narrow, twisting avenues that largely constitute the older portion of Anchorhead. Like most of the streets in this city, it is ancient, shadowy, and

leads essentially nowhere. The lane ends here at the real estate agent's office,

which lies to the east, and winds its way back toward the center of town to the

west. A narrow, garbage-choked alley opens to the southeast.

The office door is open.

>w

Narrow Street

As the lane winds along from east to west, it narrows until the steep, jagged

rooftops on either side of the street practically touch each other. To the south, a side street leads across Whateley Bridge toward the center of town, and

a twisting lane leads up a hill to the northwest. A short flight of steps to the

north leads down to the local watering hole.

>nw

Twisting Lane

The lane narrows here to little more than a badly cobbled sidewalk as it wends

its way up through a series of tortuous bends and switchbacks. In some

places,
the street is so steep that steps have been cut into it, worn down over
the
years and slick with moss. Your progress is blocked at the top of the
street by
a blank brick wall.

>w

You take a few tentative steps back down the lane, but it seems to lead
only to
a short switchback, bringing you right back to the brick wall. You're not
entirely sure now, which direction leads back to the narrow street.

Very faintly, from somewhere over the rooftops, you hear the faint,
quavering
strains of a violin.

>s

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>se

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Junction

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country lane, heading out over a grassy heath. The main street continues
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>w

You close your umbrella, as is your habit after coming indoors.

Library

Shadows roost thickly in the vaulted ceiling, and small, green-shaded desk lamps cast pools of warm radiance here and there around the library's dim interior. You pause a moment to let the hushed peacefulness of this place soak in -- a welcome relief from the unsettling events of the day. An exit lies east, and a small alcove to the north houses the circulation counter.

Peering through the shadows, you spot your husband sitting at one of the reading desks, absorbed in some sort of weighty tome and clearly oblivious to the time.

>read book

Michael looks up, startled, then realizes it's you and smiles. "Hi, hon," he says, closing the book and stretching. Then he glances at his watch. "Good grief, what happened to the time? I'm so sorry -- I just lost track." He smiles sheepishly.

"Well?" he asks. "Did you get the keys?"

>say yes

Whom do you want to say that to?

>michael

Michael nods distractedly. He doesn't seem to be listening to you.

Michael turns to a new page in the book and begins reading intently.

>tell michael about keys

"The real estate agent is supposed to be holding them at her office," he says.

>show keys to michael

"Great!" says Michael. "You hang on to that. Just a second, I'll put this back."

He takes the book up to the circulation desk and hands it to the librarian.

"Okay then," he says, returning, "let's go."

Michael suddenly smacks his forehead. "Oh, crap, I forgot to tell you. The car

broke down." He spreads his hands. "I don't know what happened to it; one second

I'm parking outside, the next second it dies and I can't get it started again. I

called a tow truck, but the nearest garage is up in Arkham. They picked it up

but won't be able to look at it until next week at the earliest. Anyway, it

looks like we'll have to walk back to the house." He offers you a lame smile.

"You can hold the umbrella."

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>save

Ok.

>e

The rain is still coming down, so you open your umbrella.

University Court

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There are numerous buildings surrounding this cobbled court, but the only one you are interested in is the library to the west.

Michael strolls along after you.

>se

Junction

To the north, a gap in the crowded press of gloomy buildings opens onto a country lane, heading out over a grassy heath. The main street continues to the east, while to the northwest, over the top of a steep rise, you can just make out the vaulted rooftops of the university.

Michael hurries to catch up.

>e

Narrow Street

As the lane winds along from east to west, it narrows until the steep, jagged rooftops on either side of the street practically touch each other. To the south, a side street leads across Whateley Bridge toward the center of town, and a twisting lane leads up a hill to the northwest. A short flight of steps to the north leads down to the local watering hole.

Michael follows you.

Overhead, the swollen clouds flicker ominously with a greenish haze of sheet lightning.

>ask michael about direction

You can't think of anything to say about that for the moment.

>ask michael about directions

You can't think of anything to say about that for the moment.

>ask michael where

You can't see any such thing.

>ask michael about where

You can't think of anything to say about that for the moment.

>s

Whateley Bridge

A hoary monument of crumbling, moss-eaten flagstones, Whateley Bridge is possibly older than any other structure in the entire city. Ponderously it spans the dark, torpid waters of the Miskaton River, connecting the north and south halves of the city and occasionally raining bits of gravel and mortar from its underside into the water. It looks just wide enough for two cars to pass each other between the flanking stone parapets, but you wouldn't volunteer to try it.

Michael follows you.

>n

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Michael follows you.

>s

Town Square

A wide expanse of uneven pavestones lies open to the sky, bordered on all sides by the leaning, steep-roofed architecture that looms over everything in this city. The municipal courthouse stands at the south end of the square, next to the mouth of a dark, narrow alley to the southwest. Avenues to the west and east lead back into the cramped and ingrown streets, while to the north lies Whateley Bridge.

In the center of the square, rising from a circular lawn of unhealthy-looking grass and weeds, stands a strange, stone obelisk. It seems to be a monument of some sort, although you can see no plaque or marker anywhere near it.

Michael hurries to catch up.

>w

Dark Corner

The rooftops above you lean so close together as to nearly block out the sky altogether, making this a particularly dark and unpleasant section of the city. The street leads away to the east, and a shadowy driveway leads through a high brick wall to the south.

Michael hurries to catch up.

>s

Asylum Courtyard

The grim, white-washed edifice of Danvers Asylum bounds this tiny, shadowed courtyard to the south, its narrow, barred windows staring blankly down at you like ranks of shriveled, empty eye sockets. You can escape through a narrow gateway in the high, brick wall to the north.

Michael hurries to catch up.

>s

The asylum is closed for the day.

>open door

If you want to go inside, do so; you're not the doorman here.

>s

The asylum is closed for the day.

>s

The asylum is closed for the day.

Michael stops to point out some deteriorated bit of colonial architecture. "Everything is so old here," he says, genuinely delighted. "Isn't it neat?"

>n

Dark Corner

The rooftops above you lean so close together as to nearly block out the sky altogether, making this a particularly dark and unpleasant section of the city. The street leads away to the east, and a shadowy driveway leads through a high brick wall to the south.

Michael strolls along after you.

A sudden fit of coughing from Michael makes you worry. You need to find the house soon, or your husband will catch cold.

Overhead, the swollen clouds flicker ominously with a greenish haze of sheet lightning.

>e

Town Square

A wide expanse of uneven pavestones lies open to the sky, bordered on all sides by the leaning, steep-roofed architecture that looms over everything in this city. The municipal courthouse stands at the south end of the square, next to the mouth of a dark, narrow alley to the southwest. Avenues to the west and east lead back into the cramped and ingrown streets, while to the north lies Whateley Bridge.

In the center of the square, rising from a circular lawn of unhealthy-looking grass and weeds, stands a strange, stone obelisk. It seems to be a monument of some sort, although you can see no plaque or marker anywhere near it.

Michael follows you.

A sudden gust of wind blows a cold spray of rain into your face.

>e

Riverwalk

A low, irregular brick wall to the north divides this street from the steep, mud-slick banks of the sinuous Miskaton, while a rusty iron gate provides access to a precarious flight of stone steps leading down the bank to the water's edge. The street bends south here, turning into a misty avenue between the trees. The town square lies west, a vacant lot lies east.

Michael hurries to catch up.

>s

Chilly Avenue

Perhaps it is merely the effect of some unwholesome vapour rising from the murky waters of the nearby Miskaton, but the temperature along this street seems perceptibly cooler than normal, even for a New England autumn. Two dirt roads lead south and southwest, into the dense woods at the edge of town.

A clammy mist hangs thickly in the air, seeping through your clothes and making you shiver.

Michael follows you.

>sw

As you walk through, the mists part before your husband almost deferentially, quickly dissolving away into nothing.

The ground begins to rise sharply as the road climbs up into the hills south of town.

Scenic View

The treeline falls away on the north side of this northwest-northeast bend in the road, giving way to a panoramic view of the Miskaton River Valley and the grubby little town of Anchorhead nestled within it. From here you can see the paper mill almost directly to the north; the solitary lighthouse and surrounding ocean to the northeast; and the dilapidated stone church below you to the east. Winding through it all is the oily black ribbon of the Miskaton, and almost directly in the center lies the little clearing of Town Square. You can just make out the shape of the obelisk from here.

Michael hurries to catch up.

>nw

Outside the House

The lane runs up from the southeast and ends at a wide clearing surrounded by gnarled and ancient trees. A wide, curving driveway runs up to the front door of your house, which lies north.

The fabled Verlac family mansion looms before you in the gloom, its dark creaking presence dominating the clearing and, somehow, even though it is not visible through the trees, the entire valley. The foreboding shadow of the Verlacs seems to enshroud all of Anchorhead from here.

A typewritten notice has been attached to the front door.

Michael hurries to catch up.

"Well," says Michael, "this must be the place. We finally made it, honey.

We're
home!"

>read notice

It's a letter from the Arkham Regional Utilities Company, explaining that, due to wiring difficulties, the electricity will not be installed until next week.
No phone service, either.

"Well, that's wonderful news," remarks Michael dryly, reading over your shoulder.

>unlock door

You unlock the front door.

>open door

You open the front door.

>enter door

You close your umbrella, as is your habit after coming indoors.

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.
The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows,
and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not
a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and
timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

The front door stands open to the south.

Carelessly stacked in a towering heap in the middle of the room are all your
luggage and belongings, which you had sent ahead through a moving company before
driving up to Massachusetts. Everything you own is boxed away and piled up in
the middle of the floor. The reality of this move finally slams home as you
stare at the sprawling jumble of stuff, and suddenly you feel very lost and
adrift.

Night has now undeniably fallen, and the house is very, very dark. There is
probably just enough residual ambience to feel your way upstairs to the

bedroom,
but the rest of the house is a tenebrous maze of shadows, and any
exploring
would probably best be done in the morning.

Michael strolls along after you.

Michael stretches his arms and yawns. "Well," he says, "I think I'm going
to
turn in. There'll be plenty of time to unpack and explore tomorrow. Good
night,
hon." He kisses you on the cheek. "Don't stay up too late."

And with that, he goes upstairs.

A cold, noiseless draft coils through the narrow entrance hall. You
shiver,
wondering where it came from.

>n

Darkness

It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.

>s

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels
cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too
high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with
shadows,
and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This
is not
a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel
tiny and
timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

The front door stands open to the south.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>up

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of
the
house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>n

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm. Faded sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved dressing mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles quietly beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-poster bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house.

Michael is curled up in bed, sound asleep.

If it weren't for this hopelessly backwater town and the disturbing circumstances surrounding the house, you'd say this was your dream home. Even so, as much as you would like to relax and enjoy the comforts of a fully furnished historical New England estate, you can't help but be put off by the shady aura surrounding the family that used to live here. The last of the line, you remind yourself, recently committed suicide after killing his wife and two daughters with a shotgun. Involuntarily you shiver, glancing nervously at the doorways to the south and west.

>get in bed

Gratefully, you remove your clothes, leave your things on the bedroom floor, crawl into bed and pull the covers up to your chin.

>sleep

Something is nagging at you, preventing you from sleeping... suddenly you remember -- you've left the front door unlocked.

Michael tosses uneasily, one hand waving vaguely in front of his face for a moment before sinking back once again into troubled sleep.

>get up

Reluctantly, you do so.

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm. Faded sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved dressing mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles quietly beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-

poster
bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead
west and
south.

Your clothes lie in an untidy pile on the floor.

Your trenchcoat is here.

Michael is curled up in bed, sound asleep.

You can also see your umbrella, a lantern and a keyring (on which are two
keys (
a key to the house and a key to the cellar)) here.

>dress

(first taking the clothes)
You put on the clothes.

>s

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of
the
house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>d

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels
cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too
high.
The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with
shadows,
and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This
is not
a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel
tiny and
timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

The front door stands open to the south.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>close door

You close the front door.

>x luggage

It's all a huge, hopeless mess. Just looking at it instantly drains you of
any
desire to unpack.

>lock door

You don't have the correct key.

>u

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>n

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm. Faded sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved dressing mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles quietly beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-poster bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead west and south.

Your trenchcoat is here.

Michael is curled up in bed, sound asleep.

You can also see your umbrella, a lantern and a keyring (on which are two keys (a key to the house and a key to the cellar)) here.

>get all

umbrella: Taken.

trenchcoat: Taken.

lantern: Taken.

keyring: Taken.

>s

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>d

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels

cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows,
and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not
a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and
timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

A cold, noiseless draft coils through the narrow entrance hall. You shiver,
wondering where it came from.

>lock door

You lock the front door.

A cold, noiseless draft coils through the narrow entrance hall. You shiver,
wondering where it came from.

>up

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the
house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>n

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm. Faded
sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved dressing
mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles quietly
beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-poster
bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead west and
south.

Michael is curled up in bed, sound asleep.

>undress

You take off the clothes.

>get in bed

Gratefully, you leave your things on the bedroom floor, crawl into bed and pull the covers up to your chin.

>save

Ok.

>sleep

Almost immediately you fall asleep, and as the wind slithers around the eaves and the house creaks furtive secrets to itself, you drift into troubling dreams...

You are waiting in your bed, with the coverlet up under your chin, waiting for Father to come tuck you in. Footsteps in the hall pause outside your door. You close your eyes; when you open them again Father is standing at the foot of the bed. His eyes are bloodshot, rimmed with red, and you wonder if he has been crying. Slowly, he starts to take off his belt.

Only it's not your father after all, it's Michael. He hands you a golden sphere and says:

"I don't know what it opens yet but I have an idea."

Your reflection is like a little doll trapped inside the sphere. Everything is tinged with gold. Your face swells and stretches comically as you stare back at yourself through the curved, distorting walls. Reaching out, your fingers curve back on themselves... the wall breaks and...

You are running from the eyes, the terrible red-rimmed eyes, through endless, narrow corridors of wooden slats and crumbling plaster. You stumble through turn after turn, hopelessly lost. There is a small hole in the boards -- peering through it you see Michael in the study, typing diligently away. You scream, you

pound on the wall, but he can't hear you. The red-rimmed eyes draw closer; hurrying down a twisting passage you find a dead end... the wall breaks and...

Outside, you stand at another dead end, a high brick wall at the end of a steep, twisting lane. Written in black spraypaint...

He always returns to his blood.

Behind you, you hear the buzzing of a fly. You turn...

[* THE SECOND DAY *

It is hard to prevent the impression of a faint, malign odour about the village street, as of the massed mould and decay of centuries. It is always a relief to get clear of the place.

-- H.P. Lovecraft]

You wake up. Steam billows gently by, and you can hear the sound of running water coming from the bathroom.

You can hear Michael splashing around, noisily enjoying his shower.

>listen

You've never known anyone who loves a morning shower more than your husband. To him it's better than coffee. You can hear him from all the way out here, belting out "I'm Deranged" in his best David Bowie croon.

>listen

You've never known anyone who loves a morning shower more than your husband. To him it's better than coffee. You can hear him from all the way out here, belting out a spirited, one-man rendition of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy".

>listen

You've never known anyone who loves a morning shower more than your husband. To him it's better than coffee. You can hear him from all the way out here, practicing his Christopher Walken routine. "Do you know who I am? I am the Antichrist!"

>listen

You've never known anyone who loves a morning shower more than your husband. To him it's better than coffee. You can hear him from all the way out here, having a spirited conversation with himself. You can't make out any of the words; he's probably sounding out some dialogue for one of his stories.

>listen

You've never known anyone who loves a morning shower more than your husband. To him it's better than coffee. You can hear him from all the way out here, practicing his Dennis Hopper routine. "Heineken?! Fuck that shit! PABST BLUE RIBBON, MAN!"

>listen

You've never known anyone who loves a morning shower more than your husband. To him it's better than coffee. You can hear him from all the way out here, belting out "You're So Cruel" in his best Bono falsetto.

>listen

You've never known anyone who loves a morning shower more than your husband. To him it's better than coffee. You can hear him from all the way out here, belting out "I'm Deranged" in his best David Bowie croon.

>listen

You've never known anyone who loves a morning shower more than your husband. To him it's better than coffee. You can hear him from all the way out here, practicing his Gabriel Byrne routine. "Sister, when I've raised hell, you'll know it!"

>listen

You've never known anyone who loves a morning shower more than your husband. To him it's better than coffee. You can hear him from all the way out here, belting out "Rock Me Amadeus" at the top of his voice.

>look

Master Bedroom, on the four-poster bed
The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm.
Faded

sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved dressing mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles quietly beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-poster bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead west and south.

Your clothes lie in an untidy pile on the floor.

Your trenchcoat is here.

You can also see your umbrella, a lantern and a keyring (on which are two keys (a key to the house and a key to the cellar)) here.

On the four-poster bed you can see Michael's pants (in which is Michael's wallet (which is closed)).

>get up

Reluctantly, you do so.

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm.

Faded

sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved dressing mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles quietly beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-poster bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead west and south.

Your clothes lie in an untidy pile on the floor.

Your trenchcoat is here.

Michael's pants are draped across the foot of the bed.

You can also see your umbrella, a lantern and a keyring (on which are two keys (a key to the house and a key to the cellar)) here.

>x pants

(Michael's pants)

They're the same plain khakis he usually wears. You notice something in

the back
pocket.

>x back pocket

They're the same plain khakis he usually wears. You notice something in
the back
pocket.

>get wallet from pants

(Michael's pants)

With a nervous glance toward the bathroom, you slip the wallet from
Michael's
pants.

>open wallet

You open the wallet, revealing Michael's faculty card.

>get card

The shower suddenly stops. Quickly you palm the card, replace the wallet
and
arrange the pants the way you found them. A moment later Michael emerges
from
the bathroom, toweling his hair. "My, don't you look tempting this
morning," he
says, giving you a kiss. He tosses the towel back into the bathroom and
gets
dressed. "I think I'm going to stay home and get some writing done. I
don't
actually start work until tomorrow, so..." He kisses you on the cheek as
he
walks out into the hall. "If you go out today, see if you can find a
newspaper.
I want to learn as much as I can about this town."

He looks at you for a moment, and his voice becomes serious. "I love you,
hon.

You know that, don't you? I really want us to try and be happy here."

Then he turns and pads down the hall.

You take a deep breath as he goes. You've never lied to Michael or hidden
anything from him before, ever; now, hardly two days into your new life,
you're
already sneaking through his wallet.

Oh yeah. You're off to a great start.

>look

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm.

Faded
sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved
dressing
mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles
quietly
beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-
poster
bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead
west and
south.

Your clothes lie in an untidy pile on the floor.

Your trenchcoat is here.

You can also see your umbrella, a lantern and a keyring (on which are two
keys (
a key to the house and a key to the cellar)) here.

>get all

clothes: Taken.

umbrella: Taken.

trenchcoat: Taken.

lantern: Your hands are full.

keyring: Your hands are full.

>wear coat

Shouldn't you put some clothes on, first?

>dress

You put on the clothes.

>wear coat

You put on the trenchcoat.

>get all

lantern: Taken.

keyring: Taken.

>put lantern in coat

You can't see any such thing.

>put lantern in coat

You slip the lantern into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>s

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of
the
house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>d

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows, and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>w

Dining Room

Much of the elegance has faded from this room. The huge dining table running the length of it is covered with a thick gray film of dust, and the china cupboard standing against the far wall is draped in shadow. Doorways to the north and east offer little relief from the gloom. For what must be the hundredth time, you wish you could open the windows in this place.

>x table

It's a finely built table, a valued antique like much of the furniture in this house. It will need to be oiled after so many months of neglect, though.

>x cupboard

It's a free-standing cabinet about as tall as you are, crafted of cherrywood. The double paneled doors are closed.

>open cupboard

The cupboard is empty; the china must have been auctioned off, in the confusion before Michael was contacted, perhaps. Down at the bottom of the cupboard is a velvet lining, where the silverware would usually be kept.

>x lining

The lining is soft, dusky burgundy. One corner in back is pulled up a bit and slightly torn.

>pull lining

You pull the lining back a bit further and discover a thin, palm-sized journal tucked underneath it. Intrigued, you pull the little book free.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>get journal

You already have that.

>read journal

It's a slim little book, no bigger than your hand, bound in imitation leather. The mice really have been at it; most of the pages have been chewed away.

What's left of the journal reads:

Desperate. Went back to the old twisting lane and found only a blank wall. Without the amulet, how can I resist --

...bottles, bottles...

Getting worse. People I have never met smile knowingly at me in the street. The police believe I am a child molester, but have brought no charges against me as yet. Why? Head hurts all the time. I have turned the cellar upside-down... damn it all, where is it?

Dreamed of Father again. Dreamed of Grandfather. Those horrible, red-rimmed eyes...

-- into the safe, finally. 9-38-56. Won't forget THAT soon. Ha!

CANNOT DISCOVER ENTRANCE IN THE CELLAR!!! Secret eludes me still but I WILL FIND IT!!! The clue is in their names, that pestilential procession of names! If I could only --

The text breaks off as several more pages are missing. the last fragmented entry reads:

-- will fail. There is no recourse left. I know now what I must do. Julia --

>n

Kitchen

Where once pots and skillets and various utensils hung in profusion, the kitchen walls are now merely ranks of dusty cabinets and a forest of empty hooks. Doorways lead east and south, a small pantry lies to the northwest, and the back door to the north leads out of the house.

Someone's flashlight is lying on the kitchen counter; one of the movers must have left it.

An odd feeling of gloom overtakes you momentarily, and you find yourself thinking about the Verlac family's personal effects -- the everyday mundanities, such as kitchen utensils. Were they thrown out, or donated to charity, or auctioned off as grisly souvenirs? What about the canned goods? Did anyone think to take them? The cabinets might even still be stocked. Morbidly, you wonder what Mrs. Edward Verlac might have been cooking for dinner the night her husband blew her head off.

>get flashlight

(slipping the faculty card into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
You pick up the flashlight. It's battery-powered, and waterproof too, by the look of it.

The flashlight is currently switched off.

>open cabinet

The cabinets are not, after all, still stocked -- much to your relief. There's nothing in there but an old book of matches.

>get matches

(slipping the umbrella into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
You pick up the book of matches. A label on the side reads, "Water-resistant matches. Strike on cover." There are six matches left.

>nw**Darkness**

It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.

>turn on flashlight

The flashlight emits a warm yellow beam.

Pantry

The pantry is empty save for a layer of dust on the shelves. A door to the south leads down to the cellar, or you can return to the kitchen to the southeast.

Leaning in the corner is an old broom.

>get broom

(slipping the keyring into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

You pick up the broom. It's just an ordinary-looking broom.

>unlock door

(first taking the keyring)

(slipping the torn journal into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

Taken.

You unlock the cellar door.

>d

(opening the cellar door first)

You descend the gloomy steps into the dank cellar.

Cellar

The old, flagstone walls gleam with unwholesome-smelling moisture, and the sagging timbers creak uneasily above your head. Ancient, frayed wiring festoons

the ceiling like some strange species of clinging vine. Portions of the cellar

extend south and east into the clammy darkness, though you could always beat a

hasty retreat up the stairs to the north.

One largish bundle of wires leads down to a rusty old fuse cabinet bolted to the far wall.

>s**Storage**

Old crates and boxes piled high against the walls make this room seem even smaller and dingier than it actually is, which is saying a lot. A doorway lies

north; the other walls contain nothing but shadows and dirt-filled corners.

>search crates

You spend some time poking dispiritedly through boxes of second-hand table settings, discarded shoes and outdated encyclopedias, but the only thing you manage to dig up is an old cardboard box full of newspaper clippings, which might make interesting reading later if you can find the time. The only thing at all noteworthy about the room, in fact, is that it desperately wants cleaning; there's even a big, nasty-looking spider web in a corner behind one of the crates.

>remove web

You're not wearing that.

>clean web

With a single sweep of the broom, you clear the spider web away.

>get box

(the cardboard box)

(slipping the book of matches into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

You pick up the cardboard box. It's an old gray shoebox, ragged around the edges, with the lid missing.

In the cardboard box are some newspaper clippings.

>read clippings

(the newspaper clippings)

**CHURCH CLOSED, PREACHER SUSPECT IN
COMMUNIST CRACKDOWN**

The Church of Celestial Wisdom in Anchorhead, Massachusetts was shut down and its congregation disbanded yesterday after its pastor, the Rev. Mordecai Verlac, 70, was accused of distributing Communist propaganda to his parishioners. Authorities in Arkham were informed by an anonymous call two days earlier.

"The caller told us that the Reverend was 'preaching not from the Good Book, but from a terrible book,' and that he had been warning them about some kind of

'invasion' or 'great event' that would be happening soon," said Sgt. Biedermeyer of the Arkham Police Department. "It smelled Red to me, so I made the decision to call our HUAC representative up in Salem."

The raid commenced shortly after morning services began at 8:00 am, in order to confiscate printed material and catch any possible accomplices before they could hide or destroy evidence. No officers who participated in the raid were available for comment, although one man coming out of the building afterwards was allegedly overheard saying that it was "the worst thing he'd ever seen."

The Church of Celestial Wisdom was founded in 1860 by Rev. Verlac's grandfather, the notorious orator and painter Elijah Verlac. The building, which is considered by many to be a historical land-
(continued on A12)

[Please press SPACE.]

(mimeographed page, dated February 10, 1959)

Any information regarding the whereabouts of Daryl Beasley, age 9, should be reported immediately to the Anchorhead police. Daryl was last seen by his mother after she dropped him off at the Route 20 bus stop, just north of Old Mill Town Road, at 8:30 am three days ago. He was not there when the bus made its scheduled stop at 8:36 am.

Daryl is 4'10" tall, of slight build, with brown hair and brown eyes. At the time of his disappearance, he was wearing brown corduroy pants, blue sneakers, and a white, short-sleeved button-down shirt.

If you have seen Daryl Beasley, or if you know anything about his disappearance, please call 555-4362.

[Please press SPACE.]

PAINTING SELLS FOR 1000£, SIGHT
UNSEEN

The infamous mystic Aleister Crowley purchased a painting at an auction at Sotheby's for 1000 pounds sterling on Monday without so much as glancing at it. The painting, entitled "The Legacy", is by the late American Elijah Verlac, and was sold along with numerous other pieces by a representative of the Verlac estate.

Crowley reportedly strode into the auction room wearing full ceremonial robes and immediately bid 1000£ -- well over twice the going bid. He ordered it wrapped and transported immediately to his home. It is not known whether Crowley had ever seen the painting before arriving at the auction.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Sir Walton Radcliffe, Esq., presiding auctioneer for the Verlac exhibit, "but I suppose one might expect such behavior from a person who calls himself, 'The Great Beast'."

Mordecai Verlac, Elijah's grandson and executor of the Verlac estate, was not present at the auction. Crowley has stated that he has never met Mordecai Verlac and has no desire to. "I encountered Verlac in a former life," he is reported as saying, "and I would not do so again for all the kingdoms in Hades. He has gone where I dare not."

Elijah Verlac is known by art historians more for his grotesque
(continued on A25)

[Please press SPACE.]

(crumpled flyer showing a blurry snapshot of a young girl with short, curly hair)

HAVE YOU SEEN ME?

Tara Luffington

last seen: March 25, 1982

age at disappearance: 6

age today: 10

hair: red

eyes: green

last wearing: green t-shirt, white tennis shoes, blue overalls with a button

that reads: "I love cats"

Any information, please call 555-4362."

[Please press SPACE.]

Friends and Family will grieve the loss of Sgt. HOWARD BIEDERMEYER, who died on October 28, 1956 at the age of 46, of complications following a massive aneurism. Howard was a loving husband and a devoted public servant. Services will be held this Saturday at the Good Earth Funeral Home, 9:00 am.

[Please press SPACE.]

BONES DISCOVERED IN WOODS, CHILD
FEARED DEAD

The bones of what police believe to be a small child were discovered yesterday by picnickers in the woods near Birch Road, just south of Anchorhead. Police have drawn no conclusions as yet, but there is a strong suspicion that the bones may be the remains of Christopher Tillworth, who disappeared near that area two weeks ago.

Sgt. Ronald Franklin of the Arkham police was not optimistic. "We have contacted the boy's mother, and are trying to prepare her for the worst," he said. "No

one here wants to give up hope prematurely, but the general feeling here is, we've found the boy."

The remains, which consisted of a femur and partial skull, are being shipped to a forensic lab in Boston for further analysis. Rumors that the bones displayed teeth marks consistent with animal bites are so far unsubstantiated. Christopher, who would have turned 7 on the 19th, is the fifth child to disappear in the last (continued on A10)

[Please press SPACE.]

RESPECTED PHYSICIAN RETIRES UNEXPECTEDLY

Dr. Timothy Rebis, a respected obstetrician at Arkham Sisters of Mercy Hospital for the last 20 years, announced his retirement yesterday to a stunned Board of Directors.

He gave no reason for his unexpected decision.

"I am truly stunned," said Bernard Talbot, Chairman of the Board. "No one saw this coming. No one."

A source within the hospital who wished to remain anonymous ascribed the doctor's abrupt departure to a nervous breakdown, but this has not been confirmed by any of Dr. Rebis' colleagues.

(continued on D5)

[Please press SPACE.]

(photostatic copy of a much older document; a notation at the bottom dates it at the end of the 18th century)

BE IT KNOWNE that, through the Generositie and Enterprise of the Hon. Goodman

Heinrich Verlac, the Miskaton Valley Mille shall be Rebuilt, even upon the Ashes

of the Olde which was Tragically Burnt; and

BE IT KNOWNE that, upon its Newe Christening, there shall Arise a Sore Need for

Men of Able Bodie and Industrious Bent to Work therein; and

BE IT KNOWNE that the Hon. Goodman Heinrich Verlac is thereby holding a General

Call for Employment, and any Honest Man of Working Age is Encouraged to Apply.

[Please press SPACE.]

ANTHROPOLOGIST TURNED AWAY IN PROPERTY DISPUTE

Prominent anthropologist Dr. Joseph Corbin's repeated attempts to secure permission to set up an archeological dig in nearby Anchorhead came to an end yesterday when he lost his suit against the Rev. Mordecai Verlac. The case has been pending for over six months.

The Rev. Verlac has strongly disputed Corbin's right to dig in the area, contending that the land in question belongs to the ancestral Verlac estate and is therefore his private property. Last week, Rev. Verlac's lawyers presented conclusive evidence of prior ownership, and the judge quickly ruled in his favor.

Dr. Corbin, who is a protégé and close personal friend of the noted folklorist Dr. J. Arnsworth Frazer, hoped to discover relics of the little-known Misquat Indian culture, which is believed to have inhabited this area centuries prior to European settlement. Corbin called the decision "a travesty".

Many expected scholars at nearby Miskaton University to rally behind Corbin's battle, but most

of the faculty have been strangely
(continued on D8)

[Please press SPACE.]

CONFLAGRATION CLAIMS PAPER MILL -- AGAIN

Arkham firefighters worked late into the night yesterday, battling a blaze that brought Anchorhead's historic paper mill to the ground despite their best efforts.

The mill, which provides jobs for roughly two-thirds of the town's population, caught fire yesterday around 4:00 pm. Although there have been rumors of an explosion, the exact cause of the fire remains unknown.

Fire Inspector Donald Brown remains puzzled. "There is evidence of chemical burns that are inconsistent with the materials used in paper manufacture," he told reporters. "There's metal fused with metal in there... it's all messed up."

Interestingly, this is not the first time the Anchorhead mill has burned. The original mill was built by Wilhelm Verlac in the latter part of the 17th century, and historical records indicate that it burned down after only ten years. The mill was rebuilt by Wilhelm's grandson, Heinrich Verlac, a few decades later. This one lasted until shortly before the Civil War -- and some still hold that it was burned down by Confederate sympathizers.

The current mill was rebuilt in 1922 by Heinrich's great-great-grandson, Rev. Mordecai Verlac. Mordecai, in addition to being a fiery preacher and outspoken Prohibitionist, was quite wealthy and owned numerous and widespread investments. At the age of 70, this

controversial figure was accused
(continued on A16)

[Please press SPACE.]

It is with great joy that Gwyneth and Paul Ward announce the engagement of their only daughter, JULIA GWENDOLYN WARD, to Dr. EDWARD PHILLIP VERLAC. Edward is an associate professor of history at Miskaton University in Anchorhead, Massachusetts; Julia plans to attend medical school at Arkham College. They plan a late June wedding. We wish them good fortune and long happiness in their union.

(The announcement is dated December 12, 1984, and is accompanied by a picture of the young couple. She has long, dark hair and a serious expression; he, although only in his twenties, is already starting to bald a little. You find yourself unable to tear your eyes away from his face for some time. It seems open and guileless, and he is clearly very happy. There is no hint there of the nightmare his world would one day become.)

[Please press SPACE.]

Storage

Old crates and boxes piled high against the walls make this room seem even smaller and dingier than it actually is, which is saying a lot. A doorway lies north; the other walls contain nothing but shadows and dirt-filled corners.

You can see an old-fashioned iron key here.

>get key

(the old-fashioned iron key)

(slipping the keyring into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

You pick up the old-fashioned iron key. It's an old key, the kind with a round

barrel about a quarter-inch in diameter and flat, square teeth.

Your score has just gone up by one point.

>put key on keyring

(the old-fashioned iron key on the keyring)

The old-fashioned iron key is now on the keyring.

>inv

You are wearing your trenchcoat, your clothes and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a cardboard box full of newspaper clippings, a broom and a flashlight (providing light).

The pockets of your trenchcoat contain a keyring, on which are three keys (an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar), a book of matches with six matches left, a torn journal, your umbrella, Michael's faculty card, a lantern and a flask (which is closed).

>save

Ok.

>n

Cellar

The old, flagstone walls gleam with unwholesome-smelling moisture, and the sagging timbers creak uneasily above your head. Ancient, frayed wiring festoons the ceiling like some strange species of clinging vine. Portions of the cellar extend south and east into the clammy darkness, though you could always beat a hasty retreat up the stairs to the north.

One largish bundle of wires leads down to a rusty old fuse cabinet bolted to the far wall.

>x wires

The wiring runs back and forth across the ceiling in every direction -- wrapped around timbers, in and out of rusted, broken conduits, crossing and re-crossing itself in a dozen places. You can see several places where the insulation is cracked or stripped altogether. It's enough to send any self-respecting fire marshall into conniptions.

>up

Gratefully, you leave the clammy confines of the cellar behind.

Pantry

The pantry is empty save for a layer of dust on the shelves. A door to the south leads down to the cellar, or you can return to the kitchen to the southeast.

The cellar door stands open, revealing dark stairs leading down.

>se

Kitchen

Where once pots and skillets and various utensils hung in profusion, the kitchen walls are now merely ranks of dusty cabinets and a forest of empty hooks. Doorways lead east and south, a small pantry lies to the northwest, and the back door to the north leads out of the house.

>turn off flashlight

You switch the flashlight off.

>e

Back Hall

A short hallway, connecting rooms to the east, west and south.

>e

Gallery

A long, oak-paneled room, with doorways to the south and west. Paintings line the walls, mounted beneath small, shaded lamps that would illuminate the canvasses nicely if only the electricity were working. Still, even in the shadowed gloom you can see that all were done by the same artist.

>x paintings

All of them are bizarre, and most of them border on the grotesque. Alien landscapes peopled by writhing, malformed creatures; ancient temples built in strange, eye-bending architectures; monstrous beasts crawling through shadows that cannot quite conceal their disturbingly human shapes -- these seem to make up the bulk of the paintings' subject matter. And yet, despite the fantastical nature of the images painted, the style is neither abstract nor surreal. In

fact, the level of detail approaches the photorealistic. Excruciating attention has been paid to light, shadows, and textures; even the alien creatures are depicted with gruesome anatomical accuracy. It is as though the artist had worked from actual, living models rather than from what must have been a thoroughly deranged imagination, and the overall effect is rather chilling.

One scene in particular catches your eye.

>x scene

A somewhat Boschian scene, depicting a line of naked, emaciated men, their ankles shackled and chained together, shuffling forward to offer obeisance to the glowing maw of an enormous furnace. The men are malnourished and covered with terrible burns. The foremost is kneeling, offering... something, you can't make out what... up to the mouth of flames, while the rest stand as far back as they are able, their heads bowed in what appears to be fear and penitence. It isn't clear where this is supposed to be taking place; beyond the fiery glow there is nothing but soot-filled, Stygian blackness. An artist's rendition of Hell, perhaps?

For some reason, you are reminded of old photographs of the Nazi death camps, in which Jews were forced to feed the ovens with the corpses of their own.

You shake yourself suddenly, and realize you've been staring intently at the painting for minutes on end. You step back and rub your tired eyes. When you look again, however, the picture you were just examining is no longer in front of you. None of the other paintings have moved as far as you can tell, but that particular scene seems to have disappeared without leaving so much as a blank space on the wall.

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One scene in particular catches your eye.

>x scene

A group of old midwives cluster around a bed-ridden woman who is apparently giving birth. The old women are wizened and grim, with crooked hands and bloodstained aprons. They seem to confer with each other in dark whispers that the younger woman, who is drenched in sweat and obviously in great pain, cannot hear. By the corner of the bed, an ominous detail: a bucket full of murky, red water.

Strangely, though, the old women are not the only ones present at the birth. Nearby, in another bed, lies a shriveled, decrepit old man. Although seemingly at death's door, he struggles to raise himself, as if to see the birthing over the heads of the hunched midwives. His wasted visage shows an expression of satisfaction or approval, and he is reaching out with one skeletal arm in a manner curiously similar to the famous picture on the Sistine Chapel, of God giving life to His creation Adam.

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One scene in particular catches your eye.

>x scene

A group of white men in Revolutionary period clothing, taking prisoner a
group

of Native Americans. The exact situation is unclear: the white men stand around with muskets threatening, while the natives, who are chained together, file into a fenced enclosure, as though being herded into a compound of some sort.

In the extreme background, at the far end of the enclosure, stands a large brick building. Dark, grainy smoke billows up from two stone chimneys rising above the structure. Leaning very close, you can just make out another group of natives being herded into the structure by more of the white men.

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>x scene

A young apprentice butcher learns his trade in a slaughterhouse. The older man

-- heavysset, thick jaw and sloping brow -- holds his cleaver above a severed calf's head, looking expectantly at the boy as though demonstrating the proper technique. The boy, holding a smaller cleaver of his own, looks on attentively.

It would be reminiscent of something by Norman Rockwell, except for the frankly alarming amount of gore. The aprons and faces of both master and apprentice are streaked with blood; blood pools on the chopping block and overflows the gutters; blood drips from the walls and from the skinned carcasses that can be seen hanging in the background. The two butchers stand ankle-deep in a reeking abattoir.

And... there's something wrong with the boy. Most of his body is hidden behind the chopping block, but there are details about the parts you can see that... don't seem to fit quite right. The arm holding the cleaver is slightly misshapen, for example, the fingers deformed in a way that you can't quite make out. And his neck seems just a bit too thick, and his head seems just a bit too large and blocky. His face looks normal enough, except that it seems to have been placed just slightly off-center. It's a very subtly disturbing effect.

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One scene in particular catches your eye.

>x scene

A group of primitive tribesmen dance within a ring of standing stones,
beneath a
lightning-streaked sky. Their dress and some of the fetishes they carry --
feathers, rattles, ceremonial masks -- all seem to represent a Native
American
culture, but the men themselves are... strange. They look truly savage and

degenerate, in a way that you don't often see Native Americans depicted.

Peering

closely, you can see that some of them even appear to be deformed.

Overlooking the dance stands a tall obelisk on a hill, silhouetted against the

storm clouds above. The artist added a strange effect to the cloud formations

directly above the obelisk; the color and shading seem to suggest a red, baleful

eye looking down upon the strange ritual below.

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One scene in particular catches your eye.

>x scene

A madman, clad only in a filthy, ragged loincloth, his thin body covered
with
dirt and sores, dances wildly on a precipice between two massive, metal
pillars.
His long, gray hair whips about his face in an unseen wind; behind him,
beyond
the precipice, violet clouds seethe and roil. He seems to be playing some
strange sort of wind instrument, like a flute, making the whole scene look
oddly
like a macabre Jethro Tull album cover.

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One scene in particular catches your eye.

>x scene

The simple but striking image of five young women being burned to death at the
stake. Around them stand a crowd of men and women dressed in rustic, 17th
century clothing; they jeer and throw stones. The ringleader, standing in
front
of the five glowing pyres with the smoking torch still in his hand, wears
a
clergyman's collar.

The artist obviously went to painstaking lengths to depict the burning in
ghastly detail: skin curling away from blackened flesh; hair shriveling;
eyes
boiling in their sockets and melting across cracked and splitting
cheeks...
repeated five times over, on the bodies of five thrashing, screaming
girls. It
turns your stomach to look at.

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One scene in particular catches your eye.

>x scene

A simple scene, without the gruesome and fantastic detail that embellishes so many of the other paintings: a sailing ship on dark waters, coming in to port in the dead of night. A lighthouse, standing tall in the distance, lights the way.

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>x paintings

All of them are bizarre, and most of them border on the grotesque. Alien landscapes peopled by writhing, malformed creatures; ancient temples built in strange, eye-bending architectures; monstrous beasts crawling through shadows that cannot quite conceal their disturbingly human shapes -- these seem to make up the bulk of the paintings' subject matter. And yet, despite the fantastical nature of the images painted, the style is neither abstract nor surreal. In fact, the level of detail approaches the photorealistic. Excruciating attention has been paid to light, shadows, and textures; even the alien creatures are depicted with gruesome anatomical accuracy. It is as though the artist had worked from actual, living models rather than from what must have been a thoroughly deranged imagination, and the overall effect is rather chilling.

One scene in particular catches your eye.

>x scene

A madman, clad only in a filthy, ragged loincloth, his thin body covered with dirt and sores, dances wildly on a precipice between two massive, metal pillars. His long, gray hair whips about his face in an unseen wind; behind him, beyond the precipice, violet clouds seethe and roil. He seems to be playing some

strange sort of wind instrument, like a flute, making the whole scene look oddly like a macabre Jethro Tull album cover.

You shake yourself suddenly, and realize you've been staring intently at the painting for minutes on end. You step back and rub your tired eyes. When you look again, however, the picture you were just examining is no longer in front of you. None of the other paintings have moved as far as you can tell, but that particular scene seems to have disappeared without leaving so much as a blank space on the wall.

>s

Sitting Room

The east wall is occupied by a beautiful antique sofa, and a large, hand-woven rug covers the hardwood floor. The huge marble fireplace in the north wall helps complete the impression of comfort and warmth, and for a moment or two you can almost think of this place as somewhere you could live, as opposed to merely somewhere others have died. The foyer lies west, and a doorway to the left of the fireplace leads north.

Your brief sense of comfort quickly drains away, however, as you become aware of the icy and maniacal stare emanating from the great portrait hanging over the mantelpiece. Under the malefic gaze of those red-rimmed eyes, the most comforting thought you can muster is that of immediate flight.

On the sofa is a family album.

>get album

You pick up the family album. It's a slim, hardbound volume in dark leather, unadorned except for name "Verlac" embossed on the front. Glancing at the title page, you notice two details: one, the book was self-published; and two, it was published in 1944. So it's a good bet that Edward Verlac and his family aren't mentioned here.

>read album

The book contains portraits and brief biographies (although, strangely, no birth or death dates) on some two hundred members of the Verlac clan, from the central family figures to the distant second cousins. If you want to read about someone in here, you'll have to look them up by name.

>look up wilhelm in album

The entry reads:

Wilhelm Verlac

Fled with mother Eustacia Verlac during the Witch Burnings of 1653; returned to Anchorhead in 1663; elected mayor of Anchorhead in 1690; built the Miskaton River Mill in 1695; began construction of the lighthouse in 1706.

The picture is a reproduction of a charcoal sketch, probably done when he was a younger man. The similarities to the portrait in the sitting room is evident, though: the patrician nose; the harsh, thin line of the mouth; the lean, wolfish jaw. It is the eyes, however, that carry the true family resemblance. Even in the rough, colorless strokes of charcoal, you can see that they are edged with the same raw madness that haunts the red-tinged gaze of the sitting room portrait.

>look up heinrich in album

The entry reads:

Heinrich Verlac

Added cupola to the Verlac Estate in 1759; elected mayor of Anchorhead in 1765; rebuilt the Miskaton River Mill in 1770; led the battle of Quattac Bend in the Misquat Uprising of 1772; arrested as a Royalist sympathizer in 1777 but subsequently cleared of all charges; completed construction of the lighthouse in 1795.

The portrait is of Heinrich as an older man, in his late fifties, perhaps. The German ancestry shows through more clearly here, in the set of his jaw and the line of his forehead. The eyes burn with aggressive pride... and perhaps a little of the madness which stained the gaze of his ancestors as well.

>look up elijah in album

The entry reads:

Elijah Verlac

Traveled to Europe in 1824 to study painting and to research the Verlac genealogy; returned to Anchorhead in 1832; entered the seminary at Arkham College in 1834; ordained in 1844; began construction of the Church of Celestial

Wisdom in Anchorhead in 1860; accused of Confederate sympathies in 1862; retired

from the clergy and devoted life to painting in 1873.

On of the earliest photographic portraits in the album, it depicts a man in his

sixties, at least. His face is deeply scored by time, his skin mottled with

liver spots, his long, gray hair swept back from a high, bony forehead.

This man

resembles the portrait in the sitting room more than any of the others, for he

has practically the same eyes -- the raw, bloodshot madness staring out from

hollow caves in his skull.

You note one other interesting detail: he appears to have an extra digit, a

sixth finger, on his right hand.

>look up mordecai in album

The entry reads:

Mordecai Verlac

Currently residing in Anchorhead; attended seminary at Arkham College in 1906; ordained in 1912; re-established the Church of Celestial Wisdom in 1920;

rebuilt the Miskaton River Mill in 1922.

The photograph depicts a man who has returned to his Puritan roots: dressed in

spartan black, hair clipped in an archaic tonsure, clutching a Bible in his lap

as he glares stoically at the camera. This is the kind of man who would whip his

children for laughing on Sunday. His eyes still carry the Verlac madness, burning with single-minded righteousness.

>look up eustacia in album

The entry reads:

Eustacia Verlac

Born to Croseus Verlac; gave birth to one son, Wilhelm; fled Anchorhead during the Witch Burnings of 1653; remained in hiding in Arkham for 10 years,
then returned with son in 1663; died 1686.

The woman in the portrait is strikingly beautiful, with jet black hair that hangs down past her shoulders like a shining, velvet curtain. There is some resemblance to the thin, cruel features of her father, but not the ragged, red-tinged madness about the eyes. Eustacia's eyes are not red at all; they are cold and deep and very dark.

>look up croseus in album

The entry reads:

Croseus Verlac

Born the son of a provincial cabinet-maker in the Höllental Valley circa 1590; fled Germany in 1620 to avoid charges of heresy; came to the New World in 1622 on the ship Dawn Maiden; founded the town of Anchorhead in 1624; began construction of Verlac estate in 1625; signed the non-aggression pact with Chief Chuaquacqat of the Misquat tribe in 1631.

The picture is a full-page black-and-white reproduction of the portrait hanging in the sitting room. Underneath it, someone has scribbled in pencil:

his is our blood
he always returns to his blood

>w

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high. The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows, and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>get luggage

Honestly, you just can't muster enough motivation.

>x luggage

It's all a huge, hopeless mess. Just looking at it instantly drains you of any desire to unpack.

>up**Upstairs Landing**

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>e**Upstairs Hall**

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

There is a cord dangling in mid-air here, right about level with your face.

>n**Library**

Whatever else their faults may have been, the Verlacs were evidently not ones to shun the printed word. Books line the walls from floor to ceiling in this dark-paneled, green-carpeted room, interrupted only by doorways to the east and south. A rich, brown leather armchair sits in stately repose near the window, with a polished brass pipe stand nearby completing the picture of some blue-blooded country squire's literary refuge. Once again, you are struck by how easily this place could have been the perfect home.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors stand closed to the east.

Resting on the pipe stand is a sizable volume decorated with a gilded pentagram on its cover.

>get volume

(The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales)
(slipping the flashlight into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

You pick up The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales. It's an old medieval tome

dated in the early 1300s, written by one Galarian Academius desChamps.

>read volume

Which do you mean, the bookshelves or The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales?

>compleat manual

Essentially, it's a textbook on the theory and practice of magickal wards and

seals, mystic symbols inscribed on doors and containers in order to keep people

and spirits out -- or in. It's all very deliberately vague and arcane (in addition to being written in medieval French and translated into Middle English,

making it nearly impossible to understand), the kind of thing that likely got

many a scholar burned at the stake in those days.

You are surprised to find that a page in this old and probably quite valuable

book has been folded down, as though to mark the place. The section marked discusses various methods of opening doors that have been sealed with the image

of a pagan god. Speaking aloud the deity's true name will usually do the trick, apparently.

>x bookshelf

Literally hundreds of books stuff the shelves, many of them thick, cracked,

leather-bound tomes with ribbon place-holders and titles lettered in raised gold

leaf. It would take you years to peruse them all. However, one interesting title

does catch your eye. An authentic first printing of Edgar Allen Poe's Tales of

Mystery and Imagination, shelved incongruously between volumes "G" and "H" of

the Encyclopedia Americana.

>get poe

The book sticks stubbornly at first, and, thinking that it must be tightly wedged in between the encyclopediae, you give it a fierce jerk. Suddenly, the

book slides halfway out, then pops back in with a loud "snick".

Amazingly, a section of the bookshelf slides back, revealing a hidden safe.

Your score has just gone up by one point.

>x safe

It's a stark cube of black, oily steel, fifteen inches to a side. Its only feature is a large calibrated dial set into the front.

>save

Ok.

>turn dial to 9

The tumblers tick quietly as you turn the dial to 9...

>turn dial to 38

The tumblers tick quietly as you turn the dial to 38...

>turn dial to 56

The tumblers tick quietly as you turn the dial to 56... and with a hollow thunk,
the safe suddenly swings open.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>x safe

It's a stark cube of black, oily steel, fifteen inches to a side. Its only feature is a large calibrated dial set into the front. The safe is currently
open.

>look in sfae

You can't see any such thing.

>look in safe

In the safe are a puzzle box and a strange metal flute.

>get all

You'll have to be more specific about which objects you mean.

>get box and flute

puzzle box: (slipping the cardboard box into the pocket of your trenchcoat to

get a hand free)

You don't have a lid for the box. If you put it in your pocket the clippings

will just fall out and get lost.

strange metal flute: (slipping the cardboard box into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

You don't have a lid for the box. If you put it in your pocket the clippings

will just fall out and get lost.

>drop box

(the cardboard box)
Dropped.

>get box and flute

Which do you mean, the cardboard box or the puzzle box?

>drop cardboard box

You're not holding the cardboard box.

>get puzzle box

You pick up the puzzle box. It's roughly the size and shape of a cigar box,
carved from some dark and oddly streaked wood that you can't identify. All six
surfaces are decorated in a complex arrangement of grooves and panels, most of
which are illustrated with leering, demonic faces and obscene designs. As far as
you can tell, it is in fact a box, and meant to be opened; however, you see no
obvious way to do so.

>get flute

(the strange metal flute)

(slipping the family album into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand
free)

You pick up the strange metal flute. It appears to be some kind of wind instrument, fashioned out of ornately carved, greenish metal. Seven holes of
varying sizes are drilled along the top.

You can hear Michael in the next room, typing away.

>s

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light
onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

There is a cord dangling in mid-air here, right about level with your face.

>s

Children's Bedroom

This must be the children's bedroom. The bed is smaller than the one in the
master bedroom, its bright coverlet providing one of the few feeble
splashes of

color in what must have been, for most of its history, a joylessly Puritan household. A small vanity table occupies the opposite wall, and in the corner under the window stands an ancient crib. The only exit is to the north.

A child's jewelry box sits on the corner of the vanity.

>open jewelry box

You open the jewelry box, revealing a silver locket.

>x jewelry box

It's hardly larger than your hand, made of wood and charmingly decorated with a picture of children dancing around a Maypole. Most likely a plaything of one of the later Verlac children. The lid is open to reveal a silver locket.

>x locket

It is oval-shaped, held shut with a tiny clasp.

>get locket

(slipping The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
Taken.

>wear locket

You put on the silver locket.

>x bed

Not as fancy as the four-poster, but it looks comfortable enough.

>look under bed

You notice some odd scratches in the floor around the legs of the bed frame -- marks about six inches long, scored into the wood. Otherwise, nothing but shadows and dust under the bed.

>move bed

Bracing yourself, you push the bed away from the wall, revealing a ragged hole in the wood paneling.

>look in hole

(the ragged hole)
In the ragged hole is a bundle of soggy pages.

>get pages

You pick up the bundle of soggy pages. It appears to have been someone's diary.
There must have been a leak at some time behind the wall where it was hidden,

because most of the pages are water-logged and completely illegible.
However,
portions of a few entries remain untouched.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>read pages

Carefully, you turn the tattered pages. The handwriting is that of a young girl.

You idly wonder if this might have been the diary of one of Edward Verlac's daughters -- but then you notice part of a date, just visible in the corner of the page: 1953. This must have been written, then, several years before Edward was born.

The entries that are legible read as follows:

...Father came again to my bed last night... mother doesn't... tells me I can't... to be a good daughter. Sometimes it hurts, but Father always tells me I shouldn't cry. Father says a daughter must do her Duty if she wants to get into Heaven. And I do want to get into Heaven...

[this entry dated 1957] ...my poor little William. Father calls him an aberration, child of the Devil, but I don't believe... locked in the attic. I go to see him whenever Father is away. I sing to him, sometimes, through the keyhole, and slip him sweets through the crack under the door... my baby is beautiful... can't let him hurt my dear baby William... to the doctor, and he has a plan... I can never... this locket, William, and I will always keep yours... to always remember my face...

Nothing else is readable except for one fragmented entry near the very end of the book, the date in the corner reading February 27, 1961:

...dead, but not dead yet... will not allow him to do to Edward what he wanted to do to William... have learned... given him the charm against the... never take it off, dear Edward... [a page has been torn away] ...fear to sleep... mist at the window --

And that's all.

>look up william in album

There's nothing here you can look things up in.

>inventory

You are wearing a silver locket, your trenchcoat, your clothes and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a bundle of soggy pages, a strange metal flute, a puzzle box (which is closed) and a broom.

The pockets of your trenchcoat contain The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales, a family album, a flashlight, a keyring, on which are three keys (an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar), a book of matches with six matches left, a torn journal, your umbrella, Michael's faculty card, a lantern and a flask (which is closed).

>put broom in coat

The broom is too long to fit in your pockets, deep though they are.

>put flute in coat

(the strange metal flute in the trenchcoat)

You slip the strange metal flute into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>get family album

Taken.

>look up william in album

You cannot find that name anywhere in the album.

>n

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

There is a cord dangling in mid-air here, right about level with your face.

>w

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>d

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows, and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

A cold, noiseless draft coils through the narrow entrance hall. You shiver, wondering where it came from.

>n

Back Hall

A short hallway, connecting rooms to the east, west and south.

>w

Kitchen

Where once pots and skillets and various utensils hung in profusion, the kitchen walls are now merely ranks of dusty cabinets and a forest of empty hooks. Doorways lead east and south, a small pantry lies to the northwest, and the back door to the north leads out of the house.

>open back door

It seems to be locked.

>save

Ok.

>unlock door

(first taking the keyring)

(slipping the puzzle box into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

Taken.

You unlock the back door.

>n

(opening the back door first)

Path Behind the House

A gravel path starts here at the back door of the house, and marks a trail nearly overgrown by weeds and briars. It disappears into the undergrowth

to the
northwest, framed by crooked trees with overhanging branches that seem to
form a
stunted, jagged archway into the dim recesses of the forest.

>nw

Stooping to avoid the sharp, bare twigs that snag your clothes and seem to
reach
greedily for your eyes, you pick your way through the undergrowth to a
small
clearing.

Family Plot

Old, moss-slimes tombstones, many broken off and leaning crazily like an
old
man's teeth, poke up from the soft, mulchy earth. In their midst stands an
ancient marble crypt, its heavy iron door nearly obscured by thick
draperies of
ivy. The trees press close around this quiet enclave of death, leaning
together
over your head as if sharing secrets. A gap in the undergrowth to the
southeast
reveals a narrow gravel path.

>x trees

The woods are ancient, thick with undergrowth and full of shadows.
Branches
creak, leaves rustle beneath unseen, half-imagined footsteps, and strange
birdcalls echo through the trees.

>x tombstones

Years of neglect have left the tombstones in bad repair -- the ones not
broken
are eroded to near-illegibility, and those not eroded are covered with
thick,
sticky moss. From what you can make out, though, most of them are
servants'
graves. Family members were most likely buried in the larger structure in
the
middle of the clearing.

>x crypt

Grimly carved letters over the door spell out a single name: "VERLAC".

A gust of wind blows your hair into your face.

>x door

Grimly carved letters over the door spell out a single name: "VERLAC".

The cold wind blows harder, tugging at the hem of your trenchcoat.

>open door

It seems to be locked.

>unlock door

You go through all the keys on your keyring, trying each one in turn, and after several false attempts you discover that the old-fashioned iron key fits the lock.

You unlock the iron door.

In the distance, you can hear the lonesome keening of a train whistle drifting on the wind.

>open door

You open the iron door.

>enter

The faint echo of dripping water and a musty smell of decay grow stronger as you descend.

Darkness

It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.

>light flashlight

The flashlight emits a warm yellow beam.

In the Crypt

The air is clammy and frigid, the stone walls damp and streaked with mud and lichen. Pale, swollen roots push through cracks in the masonry. The smell of damp corruption is almost overpowering here, though the stairs to the south lead toward fresher air.

The walls of this chamber contain dozens of wide, shallow niches; in each niche, a coffin.

>x walls

You can't see any such thing.

>x coffin

Rank upon rank of the ancient Verlac family remains are stacked away in this
hole, left to crumble and deliquesce together, merging back into the dark matter which gave them birth. Above each niche is a nameplate indicating who was

buried
here and when they died.

>x nameplate

Most of the nameplates are illegible, corroded with centuries of rot and verdigris. There are a few names visible, however. You could look someone up if you have a specific name in mind.

>look up william on nameplate

(in The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales)
You discover nothing of interest in The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales.

>exit

You involuntarily take a deep breath of fresh air as you leave the clammy, foetid depths of the crypt behind.

Family Plot

Old, moss-slimed tombstones, many broken off and leaning crazily like an old man's teeth, poke up from the soft, mulchy earth. In their midst stands an ancient marble crypt, its heavy iron door nearly obscured by thick draperies of ivy. The trees press close around this quiet enclave of death, leaning together over your head as if sharing secrets. A gap in the undergrowth to the southeast reveals a narrow gravel path.

>se

Path Behind the House

A gravel path starts here at the back door of the house, and marks a trail nearly overgrown by weeds and briars. It disappears into the undergrowth to the northwest, framed by crooked trees with overhanging branches that seem to form a stunted, jagged archway into the dim recesses of the forest.

>s

Kitchen

Where once pots and skillets and various utensils hung in profusion, the kitchen walls are now merely ranks of dusty cabinets and a forest of empty hooks. Doorways lead east and south, a small pantry lies to the northwest, and the back door to the north leads out of the house.

>drop seales

(first taking The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales)
(slipping the bundle of soggy pages into the pocket of your trenchcoat to
get a
hand free)
Taken.
Dropped.

>n

Path Behind the House

A gravel path starts here at the back door of the house, and marks a trail
nearly overgrown by weeds and briars. It disappears into the undergrowth
to the
northwest, framed by crooked trees with overhanging branches that seem to
form a
stunted, jagged archway into the dim recesses of the forest.

>nw

Stooping to avoid the sharp, bare twigs that snag your clothes and seem to
reach
greedily for your eyes, you pick your way through the undergrowth to a
small
clearing.

Family Plot

Old, moss-slimed tombstones, many broken off and leaning crazily like an
old
man's teeth, poke up from the soft, mulchy earth. In their midst stands an
ancient marble crypt, its heavy iron door nearly obscured by thick
draperies of
ivy. The trees press close around this quiet enclave of death, leaning
together
over your head as if sharing secrets. A gap in the undergrowth to the
southeast
reveals a narrow gravel path.

>enter

**The faint echo of dripping water and a musty smell of decay grow stronger
as you
descend.**

In the Crypt

The air is clammy and frigid, the stone walls damp and streaked with mud
and
lichen. Pale, swollen roots push through cracks in the masonry. The smell
of
damp corruption is almost overpowering here, though the stairs to the
south lead
toward fresher air.

The walls of this chamber contain dozens of wide, shallow niches; in each niche,
a coffin.

>look up william on nameplate

What do you want to look that up in?

>nameplate

The nameplate reads "William Verlac, b. June 22, 1954, d. September 18, 1958".

Unlike the others, William's coffin is a ramshackle affair of cheap pine, held

together with rusting nails. It's half-rotten with age and so shabbily built you

could probably open it with your bare hands.

>open william's coffin

I only understood you as far as wanting to open William's coffin.

>open william's coffin

Compelled by a gruesome curiosity, you dig your fingers under the soft, rotting

boards and pry up the lid. With the shriek of pulling nails and a shower of

crumbling wood, the coffin comes open, and you look inside, expecting to find a

child's tiny skeleton...

Dear God.

There's no child buried here. Instead, the coffin contains only the worm-eaten

bones of some kind of animal.

Who would have buried an animal in place of the child that should have been

interred here? And why would they do such a thing? Glumly, you look around at

the rest of the coffins, and realize that anyone who might have known the answers to these questions is probably already buried in this room.

>x bones

You're no veterinarian, but these cannot possibly be the bones of a human child.

A dog seems most likely, at a rough guess.

>get bones

The skeleton is in pieces; parts of it crumble even as you touch it. Only the

animal's skull seems reasonably intact.

>get skull

You pick up the animal's skull. The gruesome thing seems to leer at you with its bleached, toothy grin.

>up

You involuntarily take a deep breath of fresh air as you leave the clammy, foetid depths of the crypt behind.

Family Plot

Old, moss-slimed tombstones, many broken off and leaning crazily like an old man's teeth, poke up from the soft, mulchy earth. In their midst stands an ancient marble crypt, its heavy iron door nearly obscured by thick draperies of ivy. The trees press close around this quiet enclave of death, leaning together over your head as if sharing secrets. A gap in the undergrowth to the southeast reveals a narrow gravel path.

>se**Path Behind the House**

A gravel path starts here at the back door of the house, and marks a trail nearly overgrown by weeds and briars. It disappears into the undergrowth to the northwest, framed by crooked trees with overhanging branches that seem to form a stunted, jagged archway into the dim recesses of the forest.

>s**Kitchen**

Where once pots and skillets and various utensils hung in profusion, the kitchen walls are now merely ranks of dusty cabinets and a forest of empty hooks. Doorways lead east and south, a small pantry lies to the northwest, and the back door to the north leads out of the house.

You can also see The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales here.

>close door

You close the back door.

>lock door

You lock the back door.

>e

Back Hall

A short hallway, connecting rooms to the east, west and south.

>s

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows,
and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not
a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and
timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>up

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the
house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>e

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light
onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

There is a cord dangling in mid-air here, right about level with your face.

>n

Library

Whatever else their faults may have been, the Verlacs were evidently not
ones to
shun the printed word. Books line the walls from floor to ceiling in this dark-
paneled, green-carpeted room, interrupted only by doorways to the east and
south. A rich, brown leather armchair sits in stately repose near the
window,
with a polished brass pipe stand nearby completing the picture of some
blue-
blooded country squire's literary refuge. Once again, you are struck by
how

easily this place could have been the perfect home.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors stand closed to the east.

A section of the shelves in the western wall has slid to one side,
revealing a
hidden safe.

You can also see a cardboard box (in which are some newspaper clippings)
here.

>get poe

The book slides halfway out, then pops back in with a loud "snick". The
safe
door swings shut, and the section of bookshelf slides seamlessly back into
place.

You can hear Michael in the next room, typing away.

>s

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of
light
onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

There is a cord dangling in mid-air here, right about level with your
face.

>d

You can't go that way.

>w

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of
the
house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>d

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels
cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too
high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with
shadows,
and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This
is not
a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel
tiny and

timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>open door

It seems to be locked.

A cold, noiseless draft coils through the narrow entrance hall. You shiver, wondering where it came from.

>unlock door

You unlock the front door.

>open door

You open the front door.

>save

Ok.

>s

Outside the House

The lane runs up from the southeast and ends at a wide clearing surrounded by gnarled and ancient trees. A wide, curving driveway runs up to the front door of your house, which lies north.

The front door stands open to the north.

The Verlac mansion looms before you, casting an air of menace over the clearing.

A typewritten notice has been attached to the front door.

>se

Scenic View

The treeline falls away on the north side of this northwest-northeast bend in the road, giving way to a panoramic view of the Miskaton River Valley and the grubby little town of Anchorhead nestled within it. From here you can see the paper mill almost directly to the north; the solitary lighthouse and surrounding ocean to the northeast; and the dilapidated stone church below you to the east. Winding through it all is the oily black ribbon of the Miskaton, and almost

directly in the center lies the little clearing of Town Square. You can just make out the shape of the obelisk from here.

>ne

Chilly Avenue

Perhaps it is merely the effect of some unwholesome vapour rising from the murky waters of the nearby Miskaton, but the temperature along this street seems perceptibly cooler than normal, even for a New England autumn. Two dirt roads lead south and southwest, into the dense woods at the edge of town.

>n

Riverwalk

A low, irregular brick wall to the north divides this street from the steep, mud-slick banks of the sinuous Miskaton, while a rusty iron gate provides access to a precarious flight of stone steps leading down the bank to the water's edge. The street bends south here, turning into a misty avenue between the trees. The town square lies west, a vacant lot lies east.

>w

Town Square

A wide expanse of uneven pavestones lies open to the sky, bordered on all sides by the leaning, steep-roofed architecture that looms over everything in this city. The municipal courthouse stands at the south end of the square, next to the mouth of a dark, narrow alley to the southwest. Avenues to the west and east lead back into the cramped and ingrown streets, while to the north lies Whateley Bridge.

A damp newspaper lies on the curb, fluttering slightly in the wind.

In the center of the square, rising from a circular lawn of unhealthy-looking grass and weeds, stands a strange, stone obelisk. It seems to be a monument of some sort, although you can see no plaque or marker anywhere near it.

>get newspaper

(slipping the family album into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand

free)

You pick up the newspaper. It's the "Weekly Arkham Herald". Anchorhead, apparently, is not large enough to warrant its own newspaper.

>read newspaper

The front page story is about Jeffrey Greer, 8 years old, who was abducted from

his home at #11 Mill Town Road last night. Little Jeffrey is the latest victim

in a series of abductions that stretches back for years, one every six months or

so, and that authorities believe is the work of a single perpetrator.

Local

police had hoped to prove that Edward Verlac had been behind the kidnappings,

but were unable to obtain a confession or any hard proof. Edward Verlac was

convicted of murdering his wife and two daughters, one of whom was 15 months

old, in January of this year; he was found not guilty by reason of insanity and

incarcerated in Danvers Asylum, where he remained until committing suicide last

March. This latest kidnapping, occurring after Edward's death, seems to have

cleared up any lingering suspicions that he might have been the culprit.

Anyone possessing information regarding the whereabouts of Jeffrey Greer is

strongly urged to speak to the authorities as soon as possible.

>x obelisk

The obelisk measures about two feet square at its base, narrowing slightly as it

rises a good fifteen feet to a bluntly pointed tip. An iron ring is embedded in

the stone high up on one side, about two feet from the top. Dense, twisting

hieroglyphs cover all four sides of the obelisk, although they are too worn to

be read clearly.

>x hieroglyphs

They are not Egyptian, which is what you first assumed from the general shape

and design of the obelisk. In fact, though you're no archaeologist, these carvings don't look like any sort of ancient writing you've ever seen. The characters, which must have been carved very deeply in order to survive this

much erosion, twist and squirm in disturbing ways, flowing into and through each other and almost seeming to shift slightly as you try to follow their lines. The effect is deeply unsettling, and you have to suppress an urge to take a step or two back away from the monument.

>x base

You can't see any such thing.

>s

Courthouse

A long, dimly lit, north-south corridor stretches away from the courthouse entrance. Closed, unmarked doors line either side of the hall, their pebbled glass windows lit from within by a murky, yellow-orange light. Silence reigns here; your footsteps echo eerily on the tiled floor, and occasionally you can hear muted conversation behind one of the doors -- you can't tell which. At the hall's southern end, a staircase leads down into the basement; a sign hanging above it reads "RECORDS". You can return to Town Square to the north.

>s

Courthouse Basement

A single bulb dangling from the ceiling casts a watery, yellow light against the brick walls. A rickety staircase to the north leads back up to the ground floor, and two narrow doorways lead into the record archives. Over the southeast door hangs a sign that reads "BIRTH RECORDS", while the southwest door bears the sign "DEATH RECORDS".

>se

Birth Records

A bare room with cinderblock walls. Thousands of records and documents, most yellow and brittle with age, are stacked everywhere in towering piles. The exit lies northwest.

>look up edward in record
(in the archives)

Edward Verlac: born April 26, 1960.

>look up mordecai in record

(in the archives)

Mordecai Verlac: born January 30, 1886.

>look up elijah in record

(in the archives)

Elijah Verlac: born December 16, 1802.

>look up elijah in record

(in the archives)

Elijah Verlac: born December 16, 1802.

>look up heinrich in record

(in the archives)

Heinrich Verlac: born October 18, 1734.

>look up wilhelm in record

(in the archives)

Wilhelm Verlac: born March 11, 1651.

>nw

Courthouse Basement

A single bulb dangling from the ceiling casts a watery, yellow light against the brick walls. A rickety staircase to the north leads back up to the ground floor, and two narrow doorways lead into the record archives. Over the southeast door hangs a sign that reads "BIRTH RECORDS", while the southwest door bears the sign "DEATH RECORDS".

>sw

Death Records

A bare room with cinderblock walls. Thousands of records and documents, most yellow and brittle with age, are stacked everywhere in towering piles. The exit lies northeast.

>look up edward in record

(in the archives)

Edward Verlac: died March 14, 1997.

>look up mordecai in record

(in the archives)

Mordecai Verlac: died April 26, 1960.

>look up elijah in record

(in the archives)

Elijah Verlac: died January 30, 1886.

>look up heinrich in record

(in the archives)

Heinrich Verlac: died December 16, 1802.

You seem to be uncovering a pattern here; all these Verlacs seem to have lived to a ripe old age and then died on the very day the next one is born. The birth records are incomplete -- no parents are listed, and no cause of death is noted on the death records -- there's just not enough information here to draw a conclusion. You'll simply have to keep digging until you find the answers...

>look up wilhelm in record

(in the archives)

Wilhelm Verlac: died October 18, 1734.

>ne**Courthouse Basement**

A single bulb dangling from the ceiling casts a watery, yellow light against the brick walls. A rickety staircase to the north leads back up to the ground floor, and two narrow doorways lead into the record archives. Over the southeast door hangs a sign that reads "BIRTH RECORDS", while the southwest door bears the sign "DEATH RECORDS".

>n**Courthouse**

A long, dimly lit, north-south corridor stretches away from the courthouse entrance. Closed, unmarked doors line either side of the hall, their pebbled glass windows lit from within by a murky, yellow-orange light. Silence reigns here; your footsteps echo eerily on the tiled floor, and occasionally you can hear muted conversation behind one of the doors -- you can't tell which. At the hall's southern end, a staircase leads down into the basement; a sign hanging above it reads "RECORDS". You can return to Town Square to the north.

>n

Town Square

A wide expanse of uneven pavestones lies open to the sky, bordered on all sides by the leaning, steep-roofed architecture that looms over everything in this city. The municipal courthouse stands at the south end of the square, next to the mouth of a dark, narrow alley to the southwest. Avenues to the west and east lead back into the cramped and ingrown streets, while to the north lies Whateley Bridge.

In the center of the square, rising from a circular lawn of unhealthy-looking grass and weeds, stands a strange, stone obelisk. It seems to be a monument of some sort, although you can see no plaque or marker anywhere near it.

>n

Whateley Bridge

A hoary monument of crumbling, moss-eaten flagstones, Whateley Bridge is possibly older than any other structure in the entire city. Ponderously it spans the dark, torpid waters of the Miskaton River, connecting the north and south halves of the city and occasionally raining bits of gravel and mortar from its underside into the water. It looks just wide enough for two cars to pass each other between the flanking stone parapets, but you wouldn't volunteer to try it.

>n

Narrow Street

As the lane winds along from east to west, it narrows until the steep, jagged rooftops on either side of the street practically touch each other. To the south, a side street leads across Whateley Bridge toward the center of town, and a twisting lane leads up a hill to the northwest. A short flight of steps to the north leads down to the local watering hole.

>w

Junction

To the north, a gap in the crowded press of gloomy buildings opens onto a country lane, heading out over a grassy heath. The main street continues to the east, while to the northwest, over the top of a steep rise, you can just make out the vaulted rooftops of the university.

>nw

University Court

Isolated and serene within its high, ivy-covered walls, Miskaton University represents this benighted town's single, if somewhat dubious, claim to cultural achievement. Founded some time in the early 1800s, the school's reputation and enrollment have diminished somewhat as Anchorhead drifts further and further into the abyss of provincial backwaterism. Still, it is generally recognized for its collection of folklore and esoteric mythology (one of the oldest and most extensive on the east coast). The Board of Deans was also kind enough to offer Michael a full professorship upon hearing of his recently discovered heritage and his plans to move into the estate. Ivory tower, perhaps, but at least they take care of their own.

There are numerous buildings surrounding this cobbled court, but the only one you are interested in is the library to the west.

>w

Library

Shadows roost thickly in the vaulted ceiling, and small, green-shaded desk lamps cast pools of warm radiance here and there around the library's dim interior. You pause a moment to let the hushed peacefulness of this place soak in -- a welcome relief from the unsettling events of the day. An exit lies east, and a small alcove to the north houses the circulation counter.

>n

Circulation Desk

A high counter divides the public portion of the library from the reserved stacks -- all the more esoteric and mysterious volumes from the university's collection. If anything, the area behind the counter is even more shadowy than the side you're on. The main reading area lies south.

Hanging on the wall next to the counter is a small, printed sign. Beneath the sign sits a heavy, dog-eared register, and sitting next to the register is a bell.

>ring bell

Ding.

A moment later, the gaunt and fishy-eyed librarian emerges silently from the shadows behind the counter.

>x librarian

Her slack, pallid skin looks as if it has seen little more than the inside of a cave for most of her life. She stares at you silently with disturbingly large and watery eyes.

>show card

You won't get much of a response.

>show card to librarian

(first taking the faculty card)

(slipping the keyring into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

The librarian looks the card over, nods slowly, and hands it back to you without a word.

>ask librarian for book

Wordlessly the librarian retreats back into the shadows, only to reappear the next moment carrying the thick, dusty tome you saw your husband with earlier.

Dutifully, you sign the register, and the librarian hands you the book before disappearing again.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>x book

(A Historical Overview of Superstitions by J. Arnsworth Frazer)
A thick and weighty tome, its full title is A Historical Overview of
Superstitions in the Miskaton Valley Region by J. Arnsworth Frazer,
published in
1906. It begins: "Although New England has always been an abundant
storehouse of
American myth and folklore, the Miskaton River Valley has long been
recognized
as particularly fecund ground for tall tales and fanciful superstition.
Legends
abound of hideous, inhuman races living within the venerable hills; of
pagan
rituals enacted at unholy burial grounds and dedicated to ancient,
blasphemous
gods..." and continues along the same lines in the typically dry and
bombastic
style of those times.

>read book

Which do you mean, A Historical Overview of Superstitions by J. Arnsworth
Frazer, the book of matches or the torn journal?

>read frazer

As you open the book, a slip of paper falls from its pages and flutters to
the
ground.

>get paper

(the slip of paper)
(slipping the animal's skull into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a
hand
free)
You pick up the slip of paper. Someone was apparently using it as a
bookmark.
There's some writing on one side.

>read paper

Which do you mean, the slip of paper or the newspaper?

>read slip of paper

It says:

born-died same date?
have to chk. records

The handwriting is unmistakably Michael's.

>read historical

A thick and weighty tome, its full title is A Historical Overview of

Superstitions in the Miskaton Valley Region by J. Arnsworth Frazer,
published in
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blasphemous
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bombastic
style of those times.

Introduction

Rituals of the Misquat Indians
The Dark Man and Other Aspects
The 'Strangling Mist' Legend
The 'Ghost Train' Legend

[Please press SPACE.]

This chapter deals with the strange mythology surrounding the person of
Croseus
Verlac, the first of the American Verlacs, who immigrated from the Black
Forest
region of Germany in the early 1600s. He settled in the Miskaton Valley
and
there helped establish the small fishing port soon to be known as
Anchorhead.

Croseus sired six raven-haired daughters and schooled all of them at home.
The
girls were reclusive and odd of habit, and by the time the eldest turned
fifteen
the town had all but openly accused them of witchcraft. The townsfolk
shunned
the Verlac daughters and called them "the Old Man's Coven" -- although
never
within earshot, since Croseus was already a very powerful and influential
man in
that region.

Although he never had a son, Croseus apparently sired a number of
grandsons by
more than one of his daughters -- ostensibly to keep the Verlac blood
pure, such

practice being not uncommon in the more secluded and xenophobic early settlements. However, most of the male children were born dead, or horribly deformed, or both, and there were furtive whispers that Croseus was practicing some form of dark sorcery on his progeny. The fact that Croseus fell ill on the day that the first healthy male child was born (to his youngest daughter), and died before day's end, did not go unnoticed.

After Croseus died, the townspeople turned against the "coven", burning all of them to death except for Eustacia, the youngest, who managed to escape along with her infant son, Wilhelm. She returned some years later, after an outbreak of smallpox wiped out much of the town's older population, including the Calvinist minister and every last man and woman who had participated in the burning of Verlac's brood.

With a start, you remember the pattern you uncovered in the city archives -- each Verlac dying on the very day his grandson is born... no parents listed on the birth certificates... no marriage records, only sons then daughters then sons... and a sickening, horrifying thought begins to take shape: what if the foul tradition begun by Croseus Verlac did not end with his death?

What if, for centuries, the Verlacs have been raping their own daughters in order to sire grandsons?

What in God's name was wrong with this family? How could this have gone on for so long without anyone knowing about it or trying to stop it? And why does each Verlac die on the very day his grandson is born?

Edward Verlac, the man from whom Michael inherited the house and all its madness, must have been the last of his line, the child of his mother and his mother's own father. He went insane and killed his entire family, and now his legacy has been passed on to your husband. With a sudden rush of urgency and fear, you realize that you have to get out of this town, and you have to get

Michael out with you, as soon as humanly possible.

[Please press SPACE.]

Little is known about the enigmatic Misquat Indians. They are believed to have occupied a small, unobtrusive area around southeastern Massachusetts, along the banks of the river which now bears their name. At the time that this book was published, various property disputes prevented any thorough archaeological investigation of the area; information regarding this tiny, sequestered tribe is therefore scarce and based largely on hearsay and folklore.

Analysis of the only known fossil -- a partial skull -- has led some anthropologists to conclude that the Misquat were not indigenous to the region. One popular theory holds that the tribe is most closely related to certain degenerate branches of the northern Esquimeaux, and were perhaps driven from their original sub-arctic clime and forced to settle in exile in what would become the northeastern United States.

Although precious few physical artifacts have been recovered -- chief among them a pair of ritual masks and a crudely carved, seven-holed wind instrument -- tall tales of Misquat ritual abound. They appear to have been a unilaterally reviled tribe. Most of the whispered stories involve horrid, ululating chants around blazing bonfires in the dead of winter night, grotesque copulations performed in honor of bestial gods, and of course abundant human sacrifice. The Misquat were generally known as child-stealers, creeping through open windows at night to perpetrate foul kidnappings. None of these claims can of course be verified; nearly all Indian tribes encountered by the first European settlers have been subject to such prejudices at one time or another.

It is known that the Misquat were most likely star-worshippers, and possessed what was likely a quite complex theology involving entities that dwelled beyond "the bowl of tiny fires" -- their term for the night sky. These entities

granted
wisdom or insanity, bestowed prosperity or famine, according to how well
or how
laxly the tribe performed its ritual appeasements. The rituals attempted
to
contact or possibly summon aspects of these entities through elaborately
carved
"beacons" -- mounds of stones or obelisks placed at significant
geographical
locations.

The few eroded hieroglyphs left by them (oddly, the Misquat were one of
the few
North American tribes to have developed a system of writing prior to any
contact
with Europeans) have proved a compelling but so far intractable puzzle for
linguists today; all further detail about their ritual and mythology
remains yet
a mystery.

[Please press SPACE.]

Nearly all of the early European settlements circulated stories of a being
known
as "The Dark Man" that lived in the primordial woods beyond the
settlements'
borders. Deeply religious and at the same time almost hysterically
superstitious, clinging precariously to the edges of an unexplored and
therefore
terrifying continent, it was only natural for people in those times to
project
their collective fears onto the unknown. For the predominantly
fundamentalist
Protestant sects that first colonized the New World, these projections
typically
were embodiments of the Christian concept of the Devil.

The Dark Man generally takes the form of a man, sometimes of large or even
giant
stature but more often no larger than a natural human. He is invariably
dark-
skinned, although rarely described as a Negro -- most often he is a
Caucasian
with jet-black skin, thus combining the refined, cunning intelligence of
the
European with the base carnality of the African. He is regularly portrayed
as
the consort of witches. He has many names: The Dark Man, The Grinning Man,
Old
Scratch, Springheel Jack, The Evil One, etc., but always his formal,

Biblical

appellation -- "Lucifer" or "Satan" -- is scrupulously avoided, a holdover from the tradition that to speak a demon's name is to attract his attention and perhaps even summon him.

More interesting to the folklorist are the names that harken further back than these simple Christian superstitions, recalling a more pagan portrayal of the dark and unknown. These tales, which originate from the more reclusive colonies, often bring out the more animalistic, nature-worshipping aspect of the Dark Man.

He is sometimes pictured as being covered with hair, or having hooves instead of feet, resembling Classical images of Pan. His names are more obscure: The Wicker (or Wicca) Man; The Black Goat With A Thousand Young. Therein lie tantalizing clues offering the enterprising folklorist still deeper glimpses into the collective unconscious.

A few rare instances of The Dark Man have been uncovered that point beyond even these antiquated references -- bizarre aspects that seem to reflect some of the less understood concepts of Native American mysticism. Such baroque names as "The Lurker At The Threshold" or "The Watcher Beyond The Stars" point to a substratum of human mythology as yet untouched. These versions typically describe not physical manifestations, but rather abstract concepts of Evil and Time that some scholars have linked to the pre-Roman god Saturn, before he became characterized as merely the father of Zeus, when he was instead identified with the Ouroburos Dragon, Devourer of Worlds. Hopefully, as more archaeological evidence is uncovered, we will be able to speak of these primordial connections with greater confidence.

[Please press SPACE.]

Rather unique to the lower Miskaton River Valley, this tale centers around a seemingly malevolent fog that roams the forests and lonely night roads, choking the unwary traveler with invisible, untouchable hands.

The experience of being attacked by this strange entity is described in an 1855

journal as: "...lyke as thowe a deade man were to put his corpsey fingers downe
yr throate withe one hande, & up yr nostrille withe the other..."

No two tellings can agree on the origins of this terrible mist. Some accounts insist that it is a spirit of the restless dead; others attribute the effect to malicious hobgoblins. Other versions implicate witchcraft, a pirate's curse, swamp faerie... the list goes on. Some of the more esoteric explanations seem to indicate that the legend was adapted by white settlers from native superstitions held by the tribes indigenous to the Miskaton region; however, there is no evidence as yet that the "strangling mist" existed in any form prior to the appearance of Europeans.

[Please press SPACE.]

Yet another colorful folk legend involves the recurring image of a "ghost train"
-- a spectral locomotive that materializes from nowhere, glides across the haunted track for a short period of time, and then disappears as mysteriously as it came.

This story did not originate among the first white settlers, of course; obviously it only came into being after the advent of the steam locomotive in our burgeoning Machine Age. The earliest known recorded version of this story, in fact, is dated 1882. Nonetheless, the legend provides us with an interesting example of how the collective unconscious adapts itself to changing aspects of our culture, cloaking old symbolism in the trappings of new technology.

Although many versions hold that the ghost train represents the ghastly echoes of a locomotive that was wrecked (derailed and lost off a mountain pass is the most popular means of destruction), this is in fact a simplistic interpretation not seen until many decades after the myth originated. More intriguing and more useful to the folklorist are versions that explain the ghost train as a transport to the land of the dead -- a modernized boat of Charon, ferrying damned souls across the shroud to the devil's newly industrial Hell. These

are
the versions which most faithfully maintain links to the traditions of the
past,
and demonstrate the curious evolutionary behavior of the myth.

In some of these tellings, the traveling soul must have a ticket to
present to
the grim conductor -- an element directly analogous to the ancient custom
of
placing of gold coins beneath the tongue to buy passage to the underworld.
Living souls who ventured too near the tracks as the ghost train made its
nightly sojourn would find themselves swept along -- echoing the
Celtic/Germanic
myth of the Wild Hunt, in which witness were compelled to join as either
hunter
or prey. Those who thus boarded the train by accident, madness or mere
foolishness were inevitably carried back to whatever eldritch dimension
from
whence the train originated. Tales of return voyages are rare and
generally held
by those who pass them along to be apocryphal.

[Please press SPACE.]

Circulation Desk

A high counter divides the public portion of the library from the reserved
stacks -- all the more esoteric and mysterious volumes from the
university's
collection. If anything, the area behind the counter is even more shadowy
than
the side you're on. The main reading area lies south.

Hanging on the wall next to the counter is a small, printed sign. Beneath
the
sign sits a heavy, dog-eared register, and sitting next to the register is
a
bell.

Your score has just gone up by one point.

>save

Ok.

>read book

Which do you mean, A Historical Overview of Superstitions by J. Arnsworth
Frazer, the book of matches or the torn journal?

>read frazer

Circulation Desk

A high counter divides the public portion of the library from the reserved stacks -- all the more esoteric and mysterious volumes from the university's collection. If anything, the area behind the counter is even more shadowy than the side you're on. The main reading area lies south.

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Hanging on the wall next to the counter is a small, printed sign. Beneath the sign sits a heavy, dog-eared register, and sitting next to the register is a bell.

>ring bell

Ding.

A moment later, the gaunt and fishy-eyed librarian emerges silently from the shadows behind the counter.

>give frazer to librarian

Wordlessly the librarian takes the tome from you and spirits it back to the shadowy depths of the reserved stacks.

>s

Library

Shadows roost thickly in the vaulted ceiling, and small, green-shaded desk lamps

cast pools of warm radiance here and there around the library's dim interior.

You pause a moment to let the hushed peacefulness of this place soak in -- a

welcome relief from the unsettling events of the day. An exit lies east, and a

small alcove to the north houses the circulation counter.

>e

University Court

Isolated and serene within its high, ivy-covered walls, Miskaton University

represents this benighted town's single, if somewhat dubious, claim to cultural

achievement. Founded some time in the early 1800s, the school's reputation and

enrollment have diminished somewhat as Anchorhead drifts further and further

into the abyss of provincial backwaterism. Still, it is generally recognized for

its collection of folklore and esoteric mythology (one of the oldest and most

extensive on the east coast). The Board of Deans was also kind enough to offer

Michael a full professorship upon hearing of his recently discovered heritage

and his plans to move into the estate. Ivory tower, perhaps, but at least they

take care of their own.

There are numerous buildings surrounding this cobbled court, but the only one

you are interested in is the library to the west.

>se

Junction

To the north, a gap in the crowded press of gloomy buildings opens onto a country lane, heading out over a grassy heath. The main street continues to the

east, while to the northwest, over the top of a steep rise, you can just make

out the vaulted rooftops of the university.

>e

Narrow Street

As the lane winds along from east to west, it narrows until the steep, jagged rooftops on either side of the street practically touch each other. To the south, a side street leads across Whateley Bridge toward the center of town, and a twisting lane leads up a hill to the northwest. A short flight of steps to the north leads down to the local watering hole.

>n

Local Pub

A dank, drafty old drinking hole lit by flickering, oil-burning lanterns. Smoke collects in greasy pools among the rafters, and shadows crowd thick around. The bar runs the length of the room to your right, while to the south a low doorway opens onto the street.

Mill workers and fishermen occupy a few of the tables, drinking beer or puffing grimly at long-stemmed pipes. Each is wrapped in his solitude, soaking up the general miasma of dreary fatalism.

>s

Narrow Street

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>nw

Twisting Lane

The lane narrows here to little more than a badly cobbled sidewalk as it wends its way up through a series of tortuous bends and switchbacks. In some places, the street is so steep that steps have been cut into it, worn down over the years and slick with moss. Your progress is blocked at the top of the street by a blank brick wall.

Odd; the wall is no longer blank. Someone has sprayed graffiti across it.

>read wall

It's a strange design done in black spraypaint; an upturned hand with an irregular triangle inscribed in the palm. Beneath it is drawn an arrow pointing roughly west, and following it with your gaze, you realize that it points directly at the narrow aperture of a sidestreet you'd never noticed before.

>w

Hidden Court

You had no idea this little courtyard even existed, cleverly tucked away amidst the confusing tangle of darker avenues. Although surrounded on all sides by steep rooftops and overshadowed by the ever-ominous clouds, this secluded circle somehow manages to convey a sense of peace and brightness, a safe harbor from the oppressive gloom pervading the rest of the town. To the south, a hanging sign marks a humble shop, while a sidestreet to the east leads back into the labyrinth.

>s

A silvery bell jingles as you open the door.

The Cauldron

A warm and pleasantly dim light surrounds you and suffuses this cozy little shop. The shelves are crammed with every conceivable variety of new age curiosity: books, crystals, pendants, charms, herbs, potions, incense, candles and -- sure enough, on a display stand right near the door -- decorative cast-iron cauldron-shaped paperweights. How cute. In the rear of the store, a lit display case contains several items of interest. The courtyard lies outside, to the north.

On the display case is a violin.

The proprietor watches you quietly from behind the display case.

>x violin

It's a gorgeous instrument -- the wood is a rich, polished mahogany, the

scroll
and fingerboard gleaming ebony. The strings almost seem to vibrate of
their own
accord, as if aching to be played.

>x proprietor

A fabulously thick and bushy tangle of moustache, beard and eyebrows frame
the
portly old proprietor's deeply seamed face. His eyes are kind, however,
and his
smile warm and ingenuous, and he seems content to watch you quietly with
his
hands folded across his considerable paunch as you browse through his
shop.

>x case

**The display case has a glass front and sliding doors in back that allow
the**
proprietor to reach inside. Lined up inside it are a deck of tarot cards,
a
geode and an amulet. Resting on top of the case is a violin.

>look at cards

A beautiful set of cards in a velvet-lined box. The top card, "The Tower",
has
been turned up, allowing you to see the exquisitely detailed artwork. In
this
representation, the tower has been painted to resemble a lighthouse,
broken by a
bolt of lightning emanating from a great, red-rimmed eye. Two figures, a
man and
a woman, tumble from the tower's summit, cast lifelessly into the sea.

>look at geode

A hemisphere of rough, gray stone, about the size and shape of a halved
cantaloupe. Its center is a glittering cavity of violet crystals,
thousands of
sparkling, faceted stalactites and stalagmites inside a cave of colored
glass.

>look at amulet

It's an unassuming silver pendant hanging from a thin leather thong,
fashioned
in the shape of a tiny, upturned hand with a triangle inscribed within the
palm.
It reminds you a little of one of those cast pewter game pieces from
Monopoly.

>ask proprietor about cards

"Mmm, yes, a rare piece of work. The cards are actually very delicate,
thinly

sliced ivory. Almost transparent. The box is walnut." He leans toward you, offering you a salesman's conspiratorial wink. "They say," he whispers, "that this very deck was used and endorsed by the infamous medium -- " he frowns. "Not Blavatski; the other one. What was her name? Anyway, it is said that by shining a light through the cards and projecting the image onto a wall, you may open gateways to other worlds. Frankly, I don't buy it."

>ask proprietor about geode

"Nice, isn't it?" beams the proprietor. "I chanced upon it while rock-hunting in the Cascades last summer."

>ask proprietor about amulet

"Now there's a fancy little thing," remarks the proprietor. "A humble charm against evil. A ward against the Eye, you might say. Young chap brought that in some twenty years ago, said he had no more use for superstitious baubles."

The proprietor reaches in through the back of the case and takes out the amulet.

It spins slowly as he holds it up to the light.

"I think, perhaps, that he eventually found different. And I think, perhaps, that you will, too." He leans forward and, before you can react, slips the leather thong around your neck. "But you won't make the same mistake, will you, Miss? No. You go on and keep that, now. My treat. You may find it useful soon."

Your score has just gone up by five points.

>give puzzle box to proprietor

(first taking the puzzle box)

(slipping the newspaper into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

The proprietor takes the puzzle box and turns it over in his hands carefully.

"Now, this is a tricky one," he says. "They don't make them like this anymore.

Frightfully difficult, unless you know the catch of course." His fingers flicker

dexterously over the box, sliding a panel here, pressing a corner in there.

Suddenly the lid pops open with a faint snick.

He places the box on top of the display case. "And there you have it," he says.

"A present for you."

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>get puzzle box

Taken.

>get amulet

You already have that.

>look

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On the display case is a violin.

The proprietor watches you quietly from behind the display case.

>x paperweights

Mostly a lot of hokey, pseudo-spiritualist knick-knacks. Junk, really. Tourist souvenirs.

>n

The old man waves as you leave. "Come back soon," he calls.

Hidden Court

You had no idea this little courtyard even existed, cleverly tucked away amidst the confusing tangle of darker avenues. Although surrounded on all sides by steep rooftops and overshadowed by the ever-ominous clouds, this secluded circle somehow manages to convey a sense of peace and brightness, a safe harbor from the oppressive gloom pervading the rest of the town. To the south, a hanging

sign marks a humble shop, while a sidestreet to the east leads back into the labyrinth.

>e

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Someone has sprayed graffiti across the wall in black spraypaint.

>sw

Narrow Street

As the lane winds along from east to west, it narrows until the steep, jagged rooftops on either side of the street practically touch each other. To the south, a side street leads across Whateley Bridge toward the center of town, and a twisting lane leads up a hill to the northwest. A short flight of steps to the north leads down to the local watering hole.

>s

Whateley Bridge

A hoary monument of crumbling, moss-eaten flagstones, Whateley Bridge is possibly older than any other structure in the entire city. Ponderously it spans the dark, torpid waters of the Miskaton River, connecting the north and south halves of the city and occasionally raining bits of gravel and mortar from its underside into the water. It looks just wide enough for two cars to pass each other between the flanking stone parapets, but you wouldn't volunteer to try it.

>s

Town Square

A wide expanse of uneven pavestones lies open to the sky, bordered on all sides

by the leaning, steep-roofed architecture that looms over everything in this city. The municipal courthouse stands at the south end of the square, next to the mouth of a dark, narrow alley to the southwest. Avenues to the west and east lead back into the cramped and ingrown streets, while to the north lies Whateley Bridge.

In the center of the square, rising from a circular lawn of unhealthy-looking grass and weeds, stands a strange, stone obelisk. It seems to be a monument of some sort, although you can see no plaque or marker anywhere near it.

>e

Riverwalk

A low, irregular brick wall to the north divides this street from the steep, mud-slick banks of the sinuous Miskaton, while a rusty iron gate provides access to a precarious flight of stone steps leading down the bank to the water's edge. The street bends south here, turning into a misty avenue between the trees. The town square lies west, a vacant lot lies east.

>e

Vacant Lot

Where once a building stood, there is now only cracked pavement and rampant weeds. A high chain-link fence surrounds this vacant lot; the only breaks lie to the west and southeast.

An old man dressed in dirty rags sits on his mattress, muttering to himself as he stares intently out to sea.

>x man

This pitiful creature might once have been a successful and healthy man, but alcohol and mental illness have dragged him down irretrievably into degenerate squalor. His clothes are filthy tatters; his hair is a matted, knotted mess; his body reeks of booze and urine. He sits on his mattress, seemingly oblivious to

you or the rest of the world, and that's where he'll stay until either
Death or
the next drink comes around.

The old bum is clutching a small object to his chest; he rubs it and turns
it in
his hands constantly, as though it were some sort of relic or charm. It's
hard
to tell, but it appears to be a key.

"I'm a doctor," the old man mutters to himself. "I was a very good doctor.
Don't
tell me about infection. You don't know. You don't know."

>ask man about himself

The old man squints at you with bleary, cunning eyes. "Don't know too much
about
that," he quavers. "Memory's not what it used to be... I'm so thirsty,
Miss, so
thirsty..."

>give flask to man

(first taking the flask)
(slipping the faculty card into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a
hand
free)
His eyes burning with greed, the old man snatches the flask from your
hand,
unscrews the cap and tips it up into his waiting mouth. Trickle of
pungent
brown liquid ooze from the corners of his mouth as he swallows
convulsively, his
hands trembling, his eyes squeezed shut and streaming tears. Finally, he
falls
back onto his mattress with a beatific smile on his mud-smeared face, the
flask
dropping from his fingers.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>ask man about himself

The old man sighs. "I was a doctor, once. I was a very good doctor. But
that was
before Edward, you know. Little Edward and his..." His voice trails off to
a
whisper, but you could swear he mouthed the word "brother".

>ask man about edward

The old man lets out a vicious cackle. "They got to him, didn't they?
Maggots
got to him good. Got into his head. The maggots got into his head, eatin'

at him

'til he had to crack it open to get 'em out. Poor boy." He shakes his head.

"Delivered him, I did. Pulled him right out of his mama. Him and his -- " Suddenly he stops, and will say no more.

>ask man about brother

The old man falls silent all of a sudden, and for a while he simply stares down

at his hands, limp and open in his lap. Then, drawing a deep breath, he begins

to speak, and for the first time his voice is steady, without the reedy whine of alcoholic craving.

"Ayuh, little Edward had a brother, so he did. And I know him. I know of William, so I do. I delivered the child. Anna Verlac was his mother. It... it was... "

He leans over and grips your arm with a hand that is suddenly steady and strong.

"It was her father's poison seed, y'see. That evil bastard poisoned her womb and put a monster inside her. What she gave birth to... it was... it wasn't... oh, God, when I held that... that abortion in the shape of an infant, that thing with hooves for feet and its crown of writhing... when it looked up at me... It looked up at me with its father's red-rimmed eyes." The old man shudders convulsively, and it is a while before he can speak again.

"Anna and I decided between ourselves, we did. The... her child... it lived for a few years, but it was sickly, and in pain, and it could never be normal nor healthy. She brought it to me... I was her doctor, you see, I'd seen her through her child's birth, and she trusted me... and I put the thing down, softly and without pain, and they laid it to rest in the family crypt.

"And Anna thanked me for it, so she did."

The old man falls silent again, and his wavering, bloodshot eyes wander once more out to sea. And he is lost, once again, to the horror and pain of the memories that can only be silenced by drink.

>ask man about anna

Tears stream unchecked down the old man's face. "Shouldn't have happened to the girl. Only seventeen, she was, still a child when he... when that red-eyed monster took her... " His eyes suddenly darken, his fists clench. "HIS OWN DAUGHTER, GODS FUCK 'EM! SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT TO HIS OWN DAUGHTER! GODS FUCK 'EM ALL!!"

>ask man about crypt

The old man stares at you suspiciously. "William was buried in the family crypt, at his mother's request, so he was; what're you getting at?"

>tell man about william

"All I care to tell of that tragedy, I've told," the old man says quietly, not looking at you. "I've no wish to speak of it again."

>tell man about skull

The old man bares his teeth. "You can't prove it! You can't prove anything, so you can't!"

>show skull to man

(first taking the animal's skull)

The old man grows sickly pale. He raises one hand, as if to ward off the sight of the skull, deny the truth one more time; then his hand drops, and he sinks down onto the mattress, groaning.

"Oh, it's true," he cries, "it's true, God help my lying soul. It was her father who wished to kill the thing, not Anna -- kill it to make way for another, he said, a 'more fitting vessel'. He wanted to try again -- Gods, the depth of his evil -- after the way the first one came out, he wanted to try again!"

"Anna came to me and asked for my help, and what could I do? What could I do? It was her child, for God's sake, no matter what else it was, and she couldn't bear to lose it. But we had to weigh the coffin down with something..."

He sits up, suddenly, fastening on you with a sick, pleading look.

"I've told you too much, now," he whispers desperately. "They'll know; the maggots'll find out for sure. They'll find me; even in my hole, they'll find me." He lets out an eye-wateringly pungent breath, "P'raps it's best they

do.

I've spent so long drowning my sins, p'raps time's come to pay for them at last.

This won't do me much good no more," he says, holding up his little copper key.

"And yet..." He closes his fist around it again. "And yet, maybe there's a way... they say there's ways to protect yourself, wards versus the Evil Eye and

such. " The old man stares greedily at the amulet around your neck.

"Perhaps, if

I could get me one o' those..."

>give amulet to man

"Thank you kindly, Miss, you're a generous one, so you are," grins the old man

as he closes his grimy fingers around the charm. "And here y'are," he says,

tossing you the copper key. "I'll pray it does you good."

The old man staggers to his feet. "I'll be gettin' on, then," he says. "If I can

make away before nightfall, p'raps I'll be out of their reach before the maggots

come out." He wraps the leather thong around his hand and closes the charm in

his fist.

He turns to you one last time. "Don't let them find you," he says earnestly.

"Get out while you can. If you stay, they'll track you down eventually.

It's the

blood. He can smell it, so he can. And he always returns to his blood."

He shambles off, up the riverwalk toward Town Square, his shadow dragging long

behind him. Looking to the sky, you realize that the sun is nearly set; you've

been talking to the old man for much longer than you thought, and it will be

dark soon.

Your score has just gone up by five points.

>get charm

You can't see any such thing.

>inv

You are wearing a silver locket, your trenchcoat, your clothes and your wedding

ring; in addition, you have in your hands a small copper key, an animal's skull,

a puzzle box (which is open), inside which is a strange black disk, a slip of paper and a broom.

The pockets of your trenchcoat contain Michael's faculty card, a newspaper, a keyring, on which are three keys (an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar), a family album, a bundle of soggy pages, a strange metal flute, a flashlight (providing light), a book of matches with six matches left, a torn journal, your umbrella and a lantern.

>put key on keyring

(the small copper key on the keyring)
The small copper key is now on the keyring.

>save

Ok.

>save

Ok.

>look

Vacant Lot

Where once a building stood, there is now only cracked pavement and rampant weeds. A high chain-link fence surrounds this vacant lot; the only breaks lie to the west and southeast.

A filthy old mattress lies among the weeds over in one corner of the lot.

You can also see a flask (which is empty) here.

>inv

You are wearing a silver locket, your trenchcoat, your clothes and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands an animal's skull, a puzzle box (which is open), inside which is a strange black disk, a slip of paper and a broom.

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pages, a strange metal flute, a flashlight (providing light), a book of matches

with six matches left, a torn journal, your umbrella and a lantern.

>se

Wharf

The gentle creaking of hawsers and the hollow slap of water beneath the wooden pier provide a faint counterpoint to the endless, rhythmic surging of the sea.

The fishing industry (like the paper industry) has all but died away in Anchorhead; nonetheless there are still a few boats tied to the pier. A path leads back through an opening in a chain-link fence to the northwest; otherwise, it's just you and the ocean.

An old, discarded tin of fish oil sits at the end of the pier.

>x tin

It's dented and rusty, and you can barely make out the words "Skagen, Denmark" printed along the side. The lid is closed.

>get tin

(slipping the slip of paper into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
Taken.

A gust of wind blows your hair into your face.

>nw

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A filthy old mattress lies among the weeds over in one corner of the lot.

You can also see a flask (which is empty) here.

>w

Riverwalk

A low, irregular brick wall to the north divides this street from the steep,

mud-slick banks of the sinuous Miskaton, while a rusty iron gate provides access to a precarious flight of stone steps leading down the bank to the water's edge. The street bends south here, turning into a misty avenue between the trees. The town square lies west, a vacant lot lies east.

>s

Chilly Avenue

Perhaps it is merely the effect of some unwholesome vapour rising from the murky waters of the nearby Miskaton, but the temperature along this street seems perceptibly cooler than normal, even for a New England autumn. Two dirt roads lead south and southwest, into the dense woods at the edge of town.

>sw

The ground begins to rise sharply as the road climbs up into the hills south of town.

Scenic View

The treeline falls away on the north side of this northwest-northeast bend in the road, giving way to a panoramic view of the Miskaton River Valley and the grubby little town of Anchorhead nestled within it. From here you can see the paper mill almost directly to the north; the solitary lighthouse and surrounding ocean to the northeast; and the dilapidated stone church below you to the east. Winding through it all is the oily black ribbon of the Miskaton, and almost directly in the center lies the little clearing of Town Square. You can just make out the shape of the obelisk from here.

>nw

Outside the House

The lane runs up from the southeast and ends at a wide clearing surrounded by gnarled and ancient trees. A wide, curving driveway runs up to the front door of your house, which lies north.

The front door stands open to the north.

The Verlac mansion looms before you, casting an air of menace over the clearing.

A typewritten notice has been attached to the front door.

>n

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows, and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

The front door stands open to the south.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

You call out to let Michael know you're home, but no one answers. The house is still, hushed; an eery prickling walks up your back like centipede legs. Michael isn't here, you realize. The house is empty. You are alone.

>close dor

You can't see any such thing.

>close door

You close the front door.

A cold, noiseless draft coils through the narrow entrance hall. You shiver, wondering where it came from.

>lock door

(first taking the keyring)

(slipping the puzzle box into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

Taken.

A thought occurs to you: what if Michael comes back and can't get in the house?

You'd better leave it unlocked for him.

>unlock door

That's unlocked at the moment.

>u

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>e

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

There is a cord dangling in mid-air here, right about level with your face.

>n

Library

Whatever else their faults may have been, the Verlacs were evidently not ones to shun the printed word. Books line the walls from floor to ceiling in this dark-paneled, green-carpeted room, interrupted only by doorways to the east and south. A rich, brown leather armchair sits in stately repose near the window, with a polished brass pipe stand nearby completing the picture of some blue-blooded country squire's literary refuge. Once again, you are struck by how easily this place could have been the perfect home.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors stand closed to the east.

You can also see a cardboard box (in which are some newspaper clippings) here.

>e

(opening the sliding doors first)

Study

This smaller room adjoining the library seems comfortable enough, although it is dusty and cluttered from having not been lived in for the better part of a year.

Aside from the desk and the chair and the empty shelves, the only real feature of the room is the large, ornate fireplace in the southern wall.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors lead west, to the library.

Michael's laptop sits in the middle of the desk, humming quietly to itself. Also on the desk is a letter opener.

>get opener

(slipping the animal's skull into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

You pick up the letter opener. It's a rather ornate thing, with a silver hilt and a slim, sharp tip.

>x laptop

A top-of-the-line model: it's sleek, lightweight and very fast, a real status symbol for the writer who wants to look as though he might stop whatever he's doing at the drop of a hat and suddenly hack out a bestseller. While you have yet to witness Michael do this, he really had been wanting one since before the two of you even met; so, to celebrate his new teaching position, you splurged and bought him one.

The laptop is currently switched on.

>remove ring

You slip the plain gold band from your finger. Usually you feel almost naked without your ring on, although sometimes you do find yourself taking it off briefly, just to read the inscription along the inside.

>x ring

Engraved along the inside are Michael's and your initials, along with your wedding date -- June 28th.

>wear ring

The gold band slides onto your finger with a comforting snugness.

>look at laptop

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two of you even met; so, to celebrate his new teaching position, you splurged and bought him one.

The laptop is currently switched on.

>look at screen

The computer is in screen-saver mode: blank except for a single window requesting a 4-digit user passcode. Odd; you didn't think Michael ever used the passcode utility.

>type 0628 on laptop

(on the laptop)

The passcode window disappears and the screen suddenly fills with text, apparently the last thing Michael was working on before he got up and left.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>look at screen

Michael has evidently been writing something, but it's not a story; it looks more like some kind of journal entry.

I cannot sleep.

Or perhaps I should say: I must not sleep, since I am perfectly capable of sleep

-- in fact, lately sleep has come to me more easily, more quickly, and more

insidiously than it ever has before. But I don't want to sleep.

I have been hoping that the terrible dreams would prove to be stress-related,

that they would fade once the move was behind us and we had finally settled in

-- but that has not turned out to be the case. They're stronger than ever. Red-

rimmed eyes pursuing me through strange corridors, and the voice -- the whisperer who tells me I am not who I am. The whisperer tells me secrets of this

house, secrets of those who lived here -- they are my blood, and he tells me he

always returns to his blood. He tells me of secret keys and combinations; I

don't know what they open yet but I have an idea --

Tomorrow I must go down to the cellar. I must see if the things revealed to me

in that terrible book are true.

I know she is worried about me. I want to tell her, but --

The entry ends there, unfinished.

>w

Library

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A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors lead east, to the study.

You can also see a cardboard box (in which are some newspaper clippings) here.

>s

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

There is a cord dangling in mid-air here, right about level with your face.

>pull cord

With a rusty, ratcheting groan and a brief shower of dust, the trap door swings down and folds back, revealing a rickety wooden ladder leading up into darkness.

>up

The ancient rungs creak alarmingly as you ascend.

Attic

It's much cooler up here than in the rest of the house, and you find it hard to suppress a shiver. Grotesque, looming shadows crawl across the low, slanted ceiling, and the dust hangs thick and motionless in the air. To the west

the
ceiling dips even lower until the space beneath leaves hardly room enough
to
crawl, while to the north stands a wooden door, draped in shadows and
half-
hidden by the slanting eaves.

>x door

It's an ordinary wooden door, unremarkable except for the antique metal
keyplate. Beneath the door, a thin line of faint light is barely visible.

>x keyplate

The keyhole is of the classic round-hole-atop-a-triangular-hole variety,
the
kind people are always peeping through in cartoons.

>look under door

**Dropping to your hands and knees and placing your eye close to the crack
beneath**
the door, you see nothing but blackness.

>push newspaper under door

You slide the newspaper under the door, leaving only an inch or two
sticking out
on your side.

>push letter opener into keyhole

I only understood you as far as wanting to push the letter opener.

>put letter opener into keyhole

The tip of the letter opener bumps against something, and you hear
something
thump onto the newspaper on the other side of the door.

>get newspaper

(slipping the old tin into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand
free)
Something metallic falls off the newspaper as you pull it out from under
the
door.

>look

Attic

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hard to
suppress a shiver. Grotesque, looming shadows crawl across the low,
slanted
ceiling, and the dust hangs thick and motionless in the air. To the west
the
ceiling dips even lower until the space beneath leaves hardly room enough

to
crawl, while to the north stands a wooden door, draped in shadows and
half-
hidden by the slanting eaves.

You can also see an old-fashioned brass key here.

>get key

(the old-fashioned brass key)
(slipping the keyring into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand
free)
You pick up the old-fashioned brass key. It's an old key, the kind with a
round
barrel about a quarter-inch in diameter and flat, square teeth.

Your score has just gone up by one point.

>put brass key on keychain

You can't see any such thing.

>put brass key on keyring

The old-fashioned brass key is now on the keyring.

>unlock door

(first taking the keyring)
You go through all the keys on your keyring, trying each one in turn, and
after
several false attempts you discover that the old-fashioned brass key fits
the
lock.
You unlock the door.

>n

(opening the door first)

Attic Cell

A cramped little annex off the main attic, with a tiny, shuttered window
high up
on the north wall. A pile of mouldering straw in the corner and what looks
like
pencil marks on the lower part of the walls seem to indicate that someone
lived
here once. Or, possibly, was kept here.

>x straw

This disgusting mess might actually have been some poor soul's bed. You
shudder,
wondering what sick relative was kept prisoner here, and when.

>search straw

You gingerly poke through the filthy straw, barely able to suppress your

disgust. However, your search is not unrewarded: underneath the thickest part of the pile, you discover a tiny gold locket.

>get locket

(the gold locket)

(slipping the letter opener into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

You pick up the gold locket. It is oval-shaped, held shut with a tiny clasp.

>x gold locket

It is oval-shaped, held shut with a tiny clasp.

>open clasp

Which do you mean, the gold locket or the silver locket?

>gold

You open the gold locket, revealing a woman's picture.

>x woman's picture

From the quality of the photograph, you'd say the picture must have been taken

sometime in the fifties. The woman looks no more than twenty years old.

Her

pale, fragile face is framed by straight, dark, mousy hair, and she seems to

stare plaintively out at you, her expression one of haunted resignation.

>close gold locket

You close the gold locket.

>s

Attic

It's much cooler up here than in the rest of the house, and you find it hard to

suppress a shiver. Grotesque, looming shadows crawl across the low, slanted

ceiling, and the dust hangs thick and motionless in the air. To the west the

ceiling dips even lower until the space beneath leaves hardly room enough to

crawl, while to the north stands a wooden door, draped in shadows and half-

hidden by the slanting eaves.

>w

Crawlspace

The ceiling descends here to no more than three feet from the floor; you are forced to crawl through the cramped darkness on your hands and knees. To the east the attic becomes more spacious, while the northwest corner opens into an oddly-angled corridor.

>nw

As you make your way down the corridor, you begin to get dizzy, then nauseous. Lines seem to cross without bending, the ceiling becomes the walls and the floor becomes the ceiling. Half-blind, unsure even of which direction you were going in, you stagger forward and suddenly find yourself in a...

Crawlspace

The ceiling descends here to no more than three feet from the floor; you are forced to crawl through the cramped darkness on your hands and knees. To the east the attic becomes more spacious, while the northwest corner opens into an oddly-angled corridor.

>e

Attic

It's much cooler up here than in the rest of the house, and you find it hard to suppress a shiver. Grotesque, looming shadows crawl across the low, slanted ceiling, and the dust hangs thick and motionless in the air. To the west the ceiling dips even lower until the space beneath leaves hardly room enough to crawl, while to the north stands a wooden door, draped in shadows and half-hidden by the slanting eaves.

>d

The ancient rungs creak alarmingly as you descend.

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

A rickety wooden ladder stands here, descending from a three-foot by three-foot

square of darkness in the ceiling.

>w

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>n

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm. Faded sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved dressing mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles quietly beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-poster bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead west and south.

>w

Bathroom

A small chamber of cold, white tile and floral-print wallpaper. It sports a genuine, whitewashed, claw-foot bathtub with a shower attachment, which is a definite plus. The bedroom lies east.

Michael's bath towel lies crumpled in the corner, next to the tub.

>get towel

(slipping the newspaper into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
You pick up the towel. It's still a little damp from Michael's shower, but otherwise it's a perfectly ordinary bath towel.

>e

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm. Faded sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved dressing mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles quietly beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-

poster
bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead
west and
south.

>drop all

towel: Dropped.
gold locket: Dropped.
keyring: Dropped.
broom: Dropped.

>undress

You take off the trenchcoat.
You take off the clothes.

>w

Bathroom

A small chamber of cold, white tile and floral-print wallpaper. It sports
a
genuine, whitewashed, claw-foot bathtub with a shower attachment, which is
a
definite plus. The bedroom lies east.

>bathe

There's no need for a bath right now; you're perfectly clean.

>bath

That's not a verb I recognise.

>e

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm.
Faded
sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved
dressing
mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles
quietly
beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-
poster
bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead
west and
south.

You can also see a broom, a keyring (on which are five keys (an old-
fashioned
brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the
house and
a key to the cellar)), a gold locket (which is closed) and a towel here.

>get in bed

Gratefully, you leave your things on the bedroom floor, crawl into bed and pull the covers up to your chin.

>sleep

You lie awake for what seems like hours, listening to the house creak and settle around you and wondering where your husband is. You try to convince yourself that he merely went for a walk and lost track of the time, as he is so often wont to do. In any case, with no telephone and no car, there is little you can do besides hope that he will turn up in the morning. With your worried thoughts chasing themselves endlessly around your mind, you eventually drift off into an uneasy sleep...

Down the road and through the woods, where the whippoorwills call their lunatic's song, you are running. The sky boils and thunders overhead. The red-rimmed eyes glare down at you. When you look up at them, they merge together, melting into a single, baleful orb -- a swollen, bloody moon.

You must escape. You veer off the road, tripping over an old, rotted stump, pushing aside a twisted sapling. Vines and brambles tear at your clothes. Rocks cut your feet. But still you must run, until you suddenly burst out of the underbrush, into a tangled, moonlit clearing.

An ancient, flagstone well stands amidst the weeds in the clearing's center, and you are drawn to it. Something is moving inside, scratching at the stones down in that circle of blackness, and for some reason all you can think is the basement, Michael is in the basement, and he's doing something bad...

Heart hammering, you lean over the crumbling lip. Your hair slips from your shoulders, dangling tantalizingly close to the well's opening...

... the whippoorwills reach a crescendo...

Your eyes adjust to the dark and you see --

-- you see the most horrible thing --[

* THE THIRD DAY *

It was his twin brother, but it looked more like the father than he did...

-- H.P. Lovecraft]

You wake up, shivering. Michael is in bed next to you, sleeping like a dead man with the sheets wrapped in a twisted snarl around his body.

>save

Ok.

>x michael

Michael is sprawled across the bed with the sheets tangled around his legs, oblivious to the world. Usually, Michael is a light sleeper; you've never seen him so thoroughly knocked out before.

You notice something odd about Michael's feet. They are covered with dried mud.

>x michael's feet

The bottoms of Michael's feet are caked with dried mud. Bits of leaves and twigs are stuck to his skin as well.

>get up

Reluctantly, you do so.

Master Bedroom

The master bedroom is a picture-postcard of rustic New England charm.

Faded

sketches of rural landscapes adorn the walls; a beautifully carved dressing

mirror stands in one corner; an old-fashioned accordion radiator gurgles quietly

beneath the window. The most striking feature, an enormous, antique, four-poster

bed, must be the largest piece of furniture in the house. Doorways lead

west and
south.

Your clothes lie in an untidy pile on the floor.

Your trenchcoat is here.

Michael is sprawled across the bed, sound asleep.

You can also see a broom, a keyring (on which are five keys (an old-fashioned
brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the
house and
a key to the cellar)), a gold locket (which is closed) and a towel here.

>dress

(first taking the clothes)

You try to get dressed as quietly as possible, but apparently Michael isn't as
knocked out as you thought he was. Michael comes awake with a jerk and a
hoarse
shout. For a moment or two he only stares about blindly, as if unsure of
where
he is and all but unaware of your presence. Then, with a grunt of
surprise, he
seems to come to his senses and painstakingly crawls out of bed.

>get all

trenchcoat: Taken.

broom: Taken.

keyring: Taken.

gold locket: Taken.

towel: Your hands are full.

>put locket in coat

Which do you mean, the gold locket or the silver locket?

>gold

You slip the gold locket into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>put broom in coat

The broom is too long to fit in your pockets, deep though they are.

Michael stops, as if suddenly remembering something. He looks down at his
feet,
and mutters, "...jesus..."

>put towel in coat

(first taking the towel)

You slip the towel into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>get all

(Michael)

You don't suppose Michael would care for that.

>ask michael what happened

You can't see any such thing.

>ask michael

What do you want to ask Michael about?

>feet

Michael stops and looks down at his feet. For a moment he looks genuinely dumbfounded. "I... I, uh... I don't know. I have no idea how that got there."

He spreads his hands and looks the other way. Suddenly you realize: he is frightened. He is hiding something from you, certainly, but he's hiding it because he is frightened of it. Maybe he doesn't himself understand what happened to him last night... or where it happened to him.

>x self

(in the mirror)

You look good, considering. A bit rattled by recent events, perhaps, but well-poised and collected, all the same.

>inv

You are wearing your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a keyring, on which are five keys (an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar), a broom and your trenchcoat.

Michael wanders off to the west, looking around aimlessly, as though searching for something without even knowing what it is that is lost.

>s

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>e

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

A rickety wooden ladder stands here, descending from a three-foot by three-foot square of darkness in the ceiling.

>n

Library

Whatever else their faults may have been, the Verlacs were evidently not ones to shun the printed word. Books line the walls from floor to ceiling in this dark-paneled, green-carpeted room, interrupted only by doorways to the east and south. A rich, brown leather armchair sits in stately repose near the window, with a polished brass pipe stand nearby completing the picture of some blue-blooded country squire's literary refuge. Once again, you are struck by how easily this place could have been the perfect home.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors lead east, to the study.

You can also see a cardboard box (in which are some newspaper clippings) here.

>e

Study

This smaller room adjoining the library seems comfortable enough, although it is dusty and cluttered from having not been lived in for the better part of a year. Aside from the desk and the chair and the empty shelves, the only real feature of the room is the large, ornate fireplace in the southern wall.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors lead west, to the library.

Michael's laptop sits in the middle of the desk, humming quietly to itself.

>look at fireplace

The fireplace is carved from beautiful, dark-veined marble, a strange shade that is not quite a deep, forest green and not quite a murky, dusky red. The mantelpiece is flanked by a pair of polished brass spheres.

>x fireplace

The fireplace is carved from beautiful, dark-veined marble, a strange shade that

is not quite a deep, forest green and not quite a murky, dusky red. The mantelpiece is flanked by a pair of polished brass spheres.

>x mantlepice

You can't see any such thing.

>x spheres

You see the room behind you in distorted miniature, and your own face swelling and stretching comically as you peer into the sphere's reflective surface.

Looking closely, you notice some smudges on the otherwise immaculately polished brass.

>x smudges

They appear to be fingerprints.

You can hear Michael moving around elsewhere in the house, the floorboards creaking uneasily with his footsteps.

>turn sphere

The sphere twists clockwise a few degrees, there is a barely audible "click", and the sphere snaps back into its original position. Suddenly, the entire fireplace slides about eighteen inches to the left with a hollow grinding sound, revealing a narrow corridor in the southwest wall.

You can hear Michael moving around elsewhere in the house, the floorboards creaking uneasily with his footsteps.

>w

Library

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>s

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square of darkness in the ceiling.

>d

You can't go that way.

>w

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the

house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

Michael wanders in from the north. He gives you a strange look, as if he hadn't

expected to find you here.

>d

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows,

and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not

a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and

timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

Michael wanders in from upstairs. He gives you a strange look, as if he hadn't

expected to find you here.

>x michael

Michael still looks half asleep; his hair is unkempt, his skin blotchy and pale,
his eyes bloodshot and red. Every so often he grimaces and raises a shaky hand
to his forehead, as though afflicted by a painful headache.

You notice something odd about Michael's feet. They are covered with dried mud.

Michael wanders upstairs, looking around aimlessly, as though searching for
something without even knowing what it is that is lost.

>e

Sitting Room

The east wall is occupied by a beautiful antique sofa, and a large, hand-woven
rug covers the hardwood floor. The huge marble fireplace in the north wall helps
complete the impression of comfort and warmth, and for a moment or two you can
almost think of this place as somewhere you could live, as opposed to
merely
somewhere others have died. The foyer lies west, and a doorway to the left of
the fireplace leads north.

The portrait gazes down at you with crimson-edged malice.

You can hear Michael moving around elsewhere in the house, the floorboards creaking uneasily with his footsteps.

>x sofa

It's a 19th century William IV-style sofa with wide, flaring armrests and beautifully scrolled mahogany woodwork. The upholstery is a soft, faded wine
color.

>x fireplace

The fireplace is carved from beautiful, dark-veined marble, a strange shade that
is not quite a deep, forest green and not quite a murky, dusky red.

>x portrait

The man in the portrait is the apotheosis of everything cruel and inhuman that
you have ever laid eyes on. His archaic Puritan dress would indicate that he
must have lived a very long time ago; perhaps he was the founder of the Verlac

family in this region. If so, it's no wonder they all wound up murdered or mad:
the red-rimmed eyes glaring down from his gaunt and haggard face seem to blaze
with a terrible insanity. There is nothing regal, fatherly or dignified about
this portrait. It is the essence of raving, gibbering evil captured on canvas.

>x portrait

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The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows,
and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not
a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and
timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Michael stands here, frowning and absently rubbing at his forehead.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

A cold, noiseless draft coils through the narrow entrance hall. You shiver,
wondering where it came from.

>u

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of

the
house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>e

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light
onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

A rickety wooden ladder stands here, descending from a three-foot by
three-foot
square of darkness in the ceiling.

>n

Library

Whatever else their faults may have been, the Verlacs were evidently not
ones to
shun the printed word. Books line the walls from floor to ceiling in this
dark-
paneled, green-carpeted room, interrupted only by doorways to the east and
south. A rich, brown leather armchair sits in stately repose near the
window,
with a polished brass pipe stand nearby completing the picture of some
blue-
blooded country squire's literary refuge. Once again, you are struck by
how
easily this place could have been the perfect home.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors lead east, to the study.

You can also see a cardboard box (in which are some newspaper clippings)
here.

>e

Study

This smaller room adjoining the library seems comfortable enough, although
it is
dusty and cluttered from having not been lived in for the better part of a
year.

Aside from the desk and the chair and the empty shelves, the only real
feature
of the room is the large, ornate fireplace in the southern wall.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors lead west, to the library.

A dark, narrow corridor gapes in the wall to the southwest, partially
hidden by
the marble fireplace.

Michael's laptop sits in the middle of the desk, humming quietly to itself.

>sw

Narrow Corridor

The walls are bare wooden slats, patched with crumbling plaster and spiked with bent, rusted nails. The passage, no more than two feet wide at its widest point, bends and twist at confusing angles, making it hard to tell which direction you're heading in.

>look

Narrow Corridor

The walls are bare wooden slats, patched with crumbling plaster and spiked with bent, rusted nails. The passage, no more than two feet wide at its widest point, bends and twist at confusing angles, making it hard to tell which direction you're heading in.

>inv

You are wearing your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a keyring, on which are five keys (an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar), a broom and your trenchcoat.

>w

Narrow Corridor

The walls are bare wooden slats, patched with crumbling plaster and spiked with bent, rusted nails. The passage, no more than two feet wide at its widest point, bends and twist at confusing angles, making it hard to tell which direction you're heading in.

A thin beam of light slants through the dusty air, coming from a small hole half way up one wall.

>look in hole
(the small hole)

Standing on tiptoe and placing your eye up to the hole, you see the children's bedroom. Through some strange trick of the angle, you appear to be looking straight down at the bed from the middle of the ceiling.

Suddenly Michael walks into the bedroom. He moves slowly, looking around and lightly touching things, as if visiting old memories. He walks over to the crib and spends some minutes staring down into its empty blankets, after which he sighs. Then he turns and adjusts the coverlet on the child's bed.

He walks over to the vanity and picks up the jewelry box. Carefully, he opens it and, finding it empty, sets it down again with a soft curse. He looks around the room suspiciously, as if expecting to find the culprit hiding in a corner somewhere. For a moment Michael simply stands there aimlessly, compulsively rubbing his forehead; then he stalks out of the room and is gone.

>e

Narrow Corridor

The walls are bare wooden slats, patched with crumbling plaster and spiked with bent, rusted nails. The passage, no more than two feet wide at its widest point, bends and twist at confusing angles, making it hard to tell which direction you're heading in.

A thin beam of light slants through the dusty air, coming from a small hole half way up one wall.

>look in hole

(the small hole)

Standing on tiptoe and placing your eye up to the hole, you see the sitting room, from a vantage high up on the wall. It occurs to you that you might well be looking directly through the eyes of the man in the portrait hanging over the fireplace.

Suddenly you hear a deep grinding noise that seems to vibrate up through the floor from beneath the house. A moment later there is a terrible, wailing howl

as of some subterranean wind shrieking through unlit passages. Then the grinding
again, and all is silent.

Timidly, you call out Michael's name. There is no answer. You are alone in the
house.

>nw

Narrow Corridor

The walls are bare wooden slats, patched with crumbling plaster and spiked with
bent, rusted nails. The passage, no more than two feet wide at its widest point,
bends and twist at confusing angles, making it hard to tell which direction
you're heading in.

There is a small hole in one of the slats, about halfway up the wall.

>look in hole

(the small hole)

Standing on tiptoe and placing your eye up to the hole, you see only darkness.

>sw

Narrow Corridor

The walls are bare wooden slats, patched with crumbling plaster and spiked with
bent, rusted nails. The passage, no more than two feet wide at its widest point,
bends and twist at confusing angles, making it hard to tell which direction
you're heading in.

>se

Observatory

You are in a small, enclosed cupola situated, by the look of the view through
the dingy skylight over your head, on top of the roof of the house. The walls
are covered with astrological and astronomical charts with equations and diagrams scribbled across them in crabbed, stilted handwriting. The only exit
seems to be an oddly-angled corridor to the southeast.

Dominating the center of the room is a large mounted telescope, pointed almost

straight up through the skylight.

>x telescope

Constructed of some greenish metal, the telescope consists in the main of an unadorned cylinder about eight inches in diameter, with an eyepiece near the bottom. Near the top, about six inches down from the telescope's upper end, is a thin, rectangular slot, cut horizontally into the side of the cylinder.

>inv

You are wearing your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a keyring, on which are five keys (an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar), a broom and your trenchcoat.

>get puzzle box

Taken.

>look

Observatory

You are in a small, enclosed cupola situated, by the look of the view through the dingy skylight over your head, on top of the roof of the house. The walls are covered with astrological and astronomical charts with equations and diagrams scribbled across them in crabbed, stilted handwriting. The only exit seems to be an oddly-angled corridor to the southeast.

Dominating the center of the room is a large mounted telescope, pointed almost straight up through the skylight.

>inv

You are wearing your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a puzzle box (which is open), inside which is a strange black disk, a keyring, on which are five keys (an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar), a broom and your trenchcoat.

>x puzzle box

It's roughly the size and shape of a cigar box, carved from some dark and oddly

streaked wood that you can't identify. All six surfaces are decorated in a complex arrangement of grooves and panels, most of which are illustrated with leering, demonic faces and obscene designs. The box is open, the top folded back on itself to reveal a strange black disk.

>x disk

It's a dark, glassy circle, about the width of your hand in diameter and half an inch thick in the middle, tapering off to thinness toward the edge like a convex lens. Its color is the deep, oily black of obsidian, though you fancy you can see faint swirls of color inside it like the rainbow sheen of oil on water. Its curved surface is cool and perfectly smooth. Although incredibly hard, the material does not feel like stone; there is an odd, yielding quality to it, almost like something organic... almost, you realize with disquiet, like skin.

>put disk in telescope

(first taking the strange black disk)
Your hands are full.

>drop broom

Dropped.

>put disk in telescope

(first taking the strange black disk)
The strange black disk drops neatly into the slot.

>get broom

Taken.

>look in telescope

For a few moments all you can see is a murky, swirling blackness; then patterns of colors begin to emerge, like the rainbow sheen of oil on water. The black disk grows translucent, stars become visible through the swirling haze, and then...

Dear Christ.

Dear Christ, you can see it.

The comet, roaring silently through the endless void, streaking toward Earth,

and it's alive, this thing that is coming is ALIVE, tendrils that must be
hundreds, thousands of miles long streaming before it, reaching out to
grasp and
strangle and devour whole worlds, and it is coming here, it is coming to
Earth,
and its great, lidless, red-rimmed eye rolls over in a vast lake of
vitreous
fluid, and it

looks

at

you

...you wake up some time later, shaking your head. You're not sure what, exactly, you just witnessed; whether it was a genuine astronomical phenomenon, or a hallucination, or the actual form of some Dark God from the Outer Reaches, come to devour the world. You're not even entirely sure you remember what it looked like. The only thing you can clearly recall is a single name, pulsing in your brain like a bruise:

"Ialdabaoth".

And that's all.

Your score has just gone up by five points.

>se

As you make your way down the corridor, you begin to get dizzy, then nauseous. Lines seem to cross without bending, the ceiling becomes the walls and the floor becomes the ceiling. Half-blind, unsure even of which direction you were going in, you stagger forward and suddenly find yourself in a...

Crawlspace

The ceiling descends here to no more than three feet from the floor; you are forced to crawl through the cramped darkness on your hands and knees. To the east the attic becomes more spacious, while the northwest corner opens into an oddly-angled corridor.

>e

Attic

It's much cooler up here than in the rest of the house, and you find it hard to suppress a shiver. Grotesque, looming shadows crawl across the low, slanted ceiling, and the dust hangs thick and motionless in the air. To the west the ceiling dips even lower until the space beneath leaves hardly room enough to crawl, while to the north stands a wooden door, draped in shadows and

half-
hidden by the slanting eaves.

>d

The ancient rungs creak alarmingly as you descend.

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light
onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

A rickety wooden ladder stands here, descending from a three-foot by
three-foot
square of darkness in the ceiling.

>w

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the
house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>d

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows,
and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not
a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and
timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>w

Dining Room

Much of the elegance has faded from this room. The huge dining table running the
length of it is covered with a thick gray film of dust, and the china cupboard
standing against the far wall is draped in shadow. Doorways to the north and
east offer little relief from the gloom. For what must be the hundredth time,
you wish you could open the windows in this place.

>move cupboard

That would accomplish very little.

>look

Dining Room

Much of the elegance has faded from this room. The huge dining table running the length of it is covered with a thick gray film of dust, and the china cupboard standing against the far wall is draped in shadow. Doorways to the north and east offer little relief from the gloom. For what must be the hundredth time, you wish you could open the windows in this place.

>e

Foyer

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Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>e

Sitting Room

The east wall is occupied by a beautiful antique sofa, and a large, hand-woven rug covers the hardwood floor. The huge marble fireplace in the north wall helps complete the impression of comfort and warmth, and for a moment or two you can almost think of this place as somewhere you could live, as opposed to merely somewhere others have died. The foyer lies west, and a doorway to the left of the fireplace leads north.

The portrait gazes down at you with crimson-edged malice.

>move portrait

The portrait doesn't move; it's firmly attached to the wall.

>n

Gallery

A long, oak-paneled room, with doorways to the south and west. Paintings line the walls, mounted beneath small, shaded lamps that would illuminate the canvasses nicely if only the electricity were working. Still, even in the shadowed gloom you can see that all were done by the same artist.

>move paintings

The paintings are all firmly affixed to the wall.

>s

Sitting Room

The east wall is occupied by a beautiful antique sofa, and a large, hand-woven rug covers the hardwood floor. The huge marble fireplace in the north wall helps complete the impression of comfort and warmth, and for a moment or two you can almost think of this place as somewhere you could live, as opposed to merely somewhere others have died. The foyer lies west, and a doorway to the left of the fireplace leads north.

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Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>up

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the

house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>e

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

A rickety wooden ladder stands here, descending from a three-foot by three-foot square of darkness in the ceiling.

>s

Children's Bedroom

This must be the children's bedroom. The bed is smaller than the one in the master bedroom, its bright coverlet providing one of the few feeble splashes of color in what must have been, for most of its history, a joylessly Puritan household. A small vanity table occupies the opposite wall, and in the corner under the window stands an ancient crib. The only exit is to the north.

A child's jewelry box sits on the corner of the vanity, its lid open.

The bed has been pushed away from the wall slightly, revealing a ragged hole in the paneling.

>move table

That would accomplish very little.

>x crib

The crib is made of wood and held together with pegs, not nails. It's probably at least as old as the house.

>move crib

The crib rocks back and forth a few times, creaking softly, then falls still.

>move bed

You shove the bed back against the wall, covering the hole.

>move bed

Bracing yourself, you push the bed away from the wall, revealing a ragged hole in the wood paneling.

>n

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light

onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

A rickety wooden ladder stands here, descending from a three-foot by three-foot

square of darkness in the ceiling.

>turn off flashlight

You switch the flashlight off.

>turn off flashlight

You switch the flashlight off.

>n

Library

Whatever else their faults may have been, the Verlacs were evidently not ones to

shun the printed word. Books line the walls from floor to ceiling in this dark-

paneled, green-carpeted room, interrupted only by doorways to the east and south. A rich, brown leather armchair sits in stately repose near the window,

with a polished brass pipe stand nearby completing the picture of some blue-

blooded country squire's literary refuge. Once again, you are struck by how

easily this place could have been the perfect home.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors lead east, to the study.

You can also see a cardboard box (in which are some newspaper clippings) here.

>e

Study

This smaller room adjoining the library seems comfortable enough, although it is

dusty and cluttered from having not been lived in for the better part of a year.

Aside from the desk and the chair and the empty shelves, the only real feature

of the room is the large, ornate fireplace in the southern wall.

A beautiful pair of mahogany sliding doors lead west, to the library.

A dark, narrow corridor gapes in the wall to the southwest, partially hidden by the marble fireplace.

Michael's laptop sits in the middle of the desk, humming quietly to itself.

>move chair

That would accomplish very little.

>move desk

That would accomplish very little.

>w

Library

Whatever else their faults may have been, the Verlacs were evidently not ones to shun the printed word. Books line the walls from floor to ceiling in this dark-paneled, green-carpeted room, interrupted only by doorways to the east and south. A rich, brown leather armchair sits in stately repose near the window, with a polished brass pipe stand nearby completing the picture of some blue-blooded country squire's literary refuge. Once again, you are struck by how easily this place could have been the perfect home.

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Upstairs Hall

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A rickety wooden ladder stands here, descending from a three-foot by three-foot square of darkness in the ceiling.

>e

You can't go that way.

>w

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of the house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>d

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.

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Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>w

Dining Room

Much of the elegance has faded from this room. The huge dining table running the length of it is covered with a thick gray film of dust, and the china cupboard standing against the far wall is draped in shadow. Doorways to the north and east offer little relief from the gloom. For what must be the hundredth time, you wish you could open the windows in this place.

>move china cupboard

That would accomplish very little.

>n

Kitchen

Where once pots and skillets and various utensils hung in profusion, the kitchen walls are now merely ranks of dusty cabinets and a forest of empty hooks. Doorways lead east and south, a small pantry lies to the northwest, and the back door to the north leads out of the house.

You can also see The Compleat Manual of Wardes and Seales here.

>open cupboard

You can't see any such thing.

>open cabinet

That's already open.

>nw

Darkness

It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.

>turn on flashlight

The flashlight emits a warm yellow beam.

Pantry

The pantry is empty save for a layer of dust on the shelves. A door to the south leads down to the cellar, or you can return to the kitchen to the southeast.

The cellar door stands open, revealing dark stairs leading down.

>d

You descend the gloomy steps into the dank cellar.

Cellar

The old, flagstone walls gleam with unwholesome-smelling moisture, and the sagging timbers creak uneasily above your head. Ancient, frayed wiring festoons the ceiling like some strange species of clinging vine. Portions of the cellar extend south and east into the clammy darkness, though you could always beat a hasty retreat up the stairs to the north.

One largish bundle of wires leads down to a rusty old fuse cabinet bolted to the far wall.

>e

Wine Cellar

This wing of the cellar is even older than the rest, with walls of piled, unmortared stone. The entire room is filled with wine racks. They cover every wall except for one spot to the west, where an exit leads back to the main cellar.

All of the racks are dust-covered and empty except for one against the north wall, which contains some forty or fifty dark bottles.

You are reminded of something Michael told you during the long drive up: about

how when the police arrived after the shooting, they found the wine cellar in a shambles -- nearly every bottle thrown to the floor and shattered, and the whole place reeking of rotted grapes. All except the bottles in the north rack. None of those had been touched. No one could posit a motive for it.

You smile a bit, recalling your husband's ability to turn a piece of insignificant trivia into a compelling story. Still, though, now that you're actually standing here... it all seems very strange.

>x racks

These racks must have at one time contained hundreds upon hundreds of wine bottles. Idly, you wonder which member of the family developed such a taste for what would have been, for the first few generations at least, a sinful vice of the basest kind.

>x north wall

These racks must have at one time contained hundreds upon hundreds of wine bottles. Idly, you wonder which member of the family developed such a taste for what would have been, for the first few generations at least, a sinful vice of the basest kind.

>x bottles

Row after row of smooth, dust-covered glass. The wine inside is dark and murky, reminding you, somewhat irrationally, of blood.

There are five bottles in the third row from the bottom that have been handled recently; the fingermarks are clearly outlined on their dusty labels. One label is partially torn and the other is all but faded completely, but at a quick glance you count a Pinot Noir, a Cabernet Sauvignon, and a Cheval Blanc.

>x labels

Which do you mean, the wine bottles, the robust Pinot Noir, the light Cheval Blanc, the vintage Cabernet Sauvignon, the bottle with the torn label or the bottle with the faded label?

>x wine bottles

Row after row of smooth, dust-covered glass. The wine inside is dark and

murky,
reminding you, somewhat irrationally, of blood.

There are five bottles in the third row from the bottom that have been handled recently; the fingermarks are clearly outlined on their dusty labels. One label is partially torn and the other is all but faded completely, but at a quick glance you count a Pinot Noir, a Cabernet Sauvignon, and a Cheval Blanc.

>x pinot noir

A robust Pinot Noir, vintage 1651; obviously one of those collector's items that just keeps getting more and more valuable as long as you don't open it. A raised letter "W" has been stamped into the bottom of the bottle.

>x blanc

A light Cheval Blanc, 1886. There is a raised letter "M" stamped into the bottom of the bottle.

>x sauvignon

A vintage Cabernet Sauvignon from 1734. A raised letter "H" has been stamped into the bottom of the bottle.

>x bottle with torn label

The label on this bottle is partially torn away. There is a raised letter "E" stamped into the bottom of the bottle.

>x faded

This bottle is so old that the label has almost faded beyond legibility, although from what you can make out it is probably a fine Merlot. A raised letter "C" has been stamped into the bottom of the bottle.

>turn c

The bottle with the faded label rotates a quarter-turn clockwise, then snaps back with a loud "click".

>turn w

(the robust Pinot Noir)
The bottle of robust Pinot Noir rotates a quarter-turn clockwise, then snaps back with a loud "click".

>turn h

The bottle of vintage Cabernet Sauvignon rotates a quarter-turn clockwise,

then
snaps back with a loud "click".

>turn e

(the bottle with the torn label)
The bottle with the torn label rotates a quarter-turn clockwise, then
snaps back
with a loud "click".

>turn m

The bottle of light Cheval Blanc rotates a quarter-turn clockwise, then
snaps
back with a loud "click". A rumbling grating sound suddenly fills the wine
cellar, and the racks and a portion of the stone wall behind them swing
back,
revealing a dark passageway to the north from which blows a hot, foul
wind.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>n

You take a few cautious steps into the corridor, when the wall suddenly
slams
shut behind you with a reverberating boom. You are trapped!

Windy Passage

The walls of this passageway are carved from solid rock with unearthly
precision; ten feet wide, ten feet high, perfectly smooth and perfectly
square.
The passage runs north, sloping downward into the depths of the hillside.
A foul
wind gusts intermittently from the darkness below.

>n

Edge of the Pit

The passageway ends here at a fathomless pit, a puckered circular hole in
the
rock from which the foul wind seems to emanate, howling up from the depths
like
a reeking banshee.

A thin and decrepit rope bridge spans the pit, shivering occasionally in
the
wind.

Another blast of hot, foul-smelling air comes shrieking out of the pit.

>n

Carefully, you edge out onto the swaying planks. The ropes creak ominously
as

you cross. A couple of the tattered lines snap just as you reach the halfway mark, and the bridge lists sharply to the left. A few more steps, however, and you are safely on the other side.

Other Side

The passageway turns east here, the stone floor dropping down in a series of wide steps carved into the living rock. The stairs continue down to the northeast, eventually curving out of sight. The only other way on from here is a narrow, oddly-angled corridor in the northwest corner.

A thin and decrepit rope bridge spans the pit, shivering occasionally in the wind.

Another blast of hot, foul-smelling air comes shrieking out of the pit.

>ne

Great Stairs

The vast, stone staircase plunges down into the earth. The seemingly interminable steps curve in a gentle sweep from the southwest, above you, dropping toward black, unplumbed depths to the north.

>d

Bottom of Stairs

The stairs end here at a huge, greenish-gold door set into the north wall. There is nothing else here; nowhere to go but onward or back.

>x door

The door is enormous, nearly fifteen feet on a side, and made entirely of some smooth, greenish-gold metal that reflects your light with an oily, wavy sheen. There is no handle, no keyhole or latch of any kind. There seems to be no physical way of opening the door at all -- just the smooth rectangle of metal, adorned with a single symbol etched into its center.

>say ialdabaoth

The metallic door suddenly rings out as if struck; it vibrates in aching harmony with the blasphemous name -- a shrill, grating sound like a dentist's drill. The air grows thick and terrible shapes waver and melt in the air before you -

-

shapes that twitch and move with hungry purpose, and seem to look at you -
- and
then the ringing fades away. There is a moment of stillness, and then the
gleaming door swings smoothly open on perfectly balanced and utterly
silent
hinges.

>n

The doorway opens out into a large, dome-ceilinged cavern. You stand at
the
threshold for a moment, peering into the strange, phosphorescent gloom,
before
your eyes can make out enough details to see what this place is; even
then, it
is almost a full minute before your mind can accept what you are seeing...

Burial Mound

The cave is lined, floor to ceiling, with mummified human corpses.
Shrunk and
desiccated, they lie in jumbled heaps inside irregularly carved niches.
Carvings
cover the rock walls in between the niches -- grotesque, leering faces too
horrible even to look upon, their features twitching and smirking in the
wavering light that sifts down from above.

And dominating the center of the chamber: a dark monolith rising up
through the
green, murky light -- what you first took to be a large, supporting
pillar, you
now realize can only be the true base of the town square obelisk.

At the narrower, northern end of the vaguely egg-shaped cavern sits a
massive
stone altar, flanked on either side by a pair of strange, vibrating
columns.

>inv

You are wearing your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in
addition, you have in your hands a broom, a puzzle box (which is open but
empty), a keyring, on which are five keys (an old-fashioned brass key, a
small
copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the
cellar) and your trenchcoat.

>x coat

You bought this coat during your honeymoon in England; it's a genuine
London
Fog. In addition to looking very cool, it has several deep pockets in
which you
can fit just about anything.

>look in coat

In the trenchcoat are a towel, a gold locket, a newspaper, a letter opener, an old tin, an animal's skull, a slip of paper, Michael's faculty card, a family album, a bundle of soggy pages, a strange metal flute, a flashlight, a book of matches, a torn journal, your umbrella and a lantern.

>get flute from coat

(the strange metal flute from the trenchcoat)
Your hands are full.

>close puzzle box

You'd never get it open again if you did that.

>put box in coat

You slip the puzzle box into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>get flute from coat

(the strange metal flute from the trenchcoat)
You remove the strange metal flute from the trenchcoat.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)
You blow an open chord into the little flute, and it resonates with an eerie, metallic warble.

The columns' vibrations seem to grow momentarily stronger while the flute's sound lingers, their dissonant ringing resonating strangely with the warbling, metallic notes.

>x flute

(the strange metal flute)
It appears to be some kind of wind instrument, fashioned out of ornately carved, greenish metal. Seven holes of varying sizes are drilled along the top.

>cover hole 1

You place your finger over the first flute hole.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)
The flute emits an eerie, almost sub-sonic note.

The right-hand column's vibrations suddenly grow stronger, resonating in harmony with the warbling, metallic note of the flute. The two dissonances seem to

intertwine, reinforcing each other, and for a single instant you think you see a strange rippling effect in the air over the altar. Then it is gone, and the sound fades.

>uncover hole 1

You lift your finger from the first flute hole.

>cover hole 2

You place your finger over the second flute hole.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)

The flute emits an eerie, deep note.

The columns' vibrations seem to grow momentarily stronger while the flute's sound lingers, their dissonant ringing resonating strangely with the warbling, metallic notes.

>uncover hole 2

You lift your finger from the second flute hole.

>cover hole 3

You place your finger over the third flute hole.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)

The flute emits an eerie, low-pitched note.

The columns' vibrations seem to grow momentarily stronger while the flute's sound lingers, their dissonant ringing resonating strangely with the warbling, metallic notes.

>uncover hole 3

You lift your finger from the third flute hole.

>cover hole 4

You place your finger over the fourth flute hole.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)

The flute emits an eerie note.

The columns' vibrations seem to grow momentarily stronger while the flute's sound lingers, their dissonant ringing resonating strangely with the

warbling,
metallic notes.

>uncover hole 4

You lift your finger from the fourth flute hole.

>cover hole 5

You place your finger over the fifth flute hole.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)

The flute emits an eerie, high-pitched note.

The columns' vibrations seem to grow momentarily stronger while the flute's sound lingers, their dissonant ringing resonating strangely with the warbling, metallic notes.

>uncover hole 5

You lift your finger from the fifth flute hole.

>cover hole 6

You place your finger over the sixth flute hole.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)

The flute emits an eerie, screeching note.

The columns' vibrations seem to grow momentarily stronger while the flute's sound lingers, their dissonant ringing resonating strangely with the warbling, metallic notes.

>uncover hole 6

You lift your finger from the sixth flute hole.

>cover hole 7

You place your finger over the seventh flute hole.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)

The flute emits an eerie, piercingly high note.

The right-hand column's vibrations suddenly grow stronger, resonating in harmony with the warbling, metallic note of the flute. The two dissonances seem to intertwine, reinforcing each other, and for a single instant you think you see a strange rippling effect in the air over the altar. Then it is gone, and

the
sound fades.

>cover hole 1

You place your finger over the first flute hole.

>save

Ok.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)

The flute emits an odd mixture of metallic, warbling notes which
intertwine and
harmonize eerily with each other.

The strange harmony of the flute blends with the atonal ringing of the two
columns, and the three sounds suddenly grow stronger, resonating with and
reinforcing one another, intertwining like a dissonant, invisible braid.

The
sound increases in volume, piercing your eardrums and causing the very air
to
shimmer.

Suddenly the air above the altar begins to ripple as though with extreme
heat.

The very fabric of space seems to twist and buckle between the two
columns; and
then, with a sound like a wet sheet being torn slowly down the middle, the
fabric splits.

You are immediately swept off your feet by a powerful sucking vacuum,
pulling
everything within reach toward the portal. Dust and debris; bones and
loose rock
from the burial niches; everything not nailed down goes flying across the
temple
and into the all-devouring maw hovering over the altar-stone. Desperately,
you
wedge your fingers into a crack in the floor and hang on for dear life as
the
wind tries to claw you away. You scream, and even the sound of your voice
is
whipped away, pulled over your shoulder like a trailing ribbon and sucked
into
whatever blasphemous dimension lies beyond that horrible rift.

For a few agonizing moments you don't think you're going to make it; then,
suddenly, the chaos stops, leaving you breathless on the floor.

Painstakingly, you pry your stiff, bleeding fingers out of the crack and
roll

over. The rift is gone. The air is normal, and the columns are ringing quietly,
as if nothing had happened.

>inv

You are wearing your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a strange metal flute with the holes covered, a broom, a keyring, on which are five keys (an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar) and your trenchcoat.

>put flute in coat

(the strange metal flute in the trenchcoat)

You slip the strange metal flute into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>s

Bottom of Stairs

The stairs end here at a huge, greenish-gold door set into the north wall. There is nothing else here; nowhere to go but onward or back.

>u

You start back up the wide steps...

Great Stairs

The vast, stone staircase plunges down into the earth. The seemingly interminable steps curve in a gentle sweep from the southwest, above you, dropping toward black, unplumbed depths to the north.

>sw

Other Side

The passageway turns east here, the stone floor dropping down in a series of wide steps carved into the living rock. The stairs continue down to the northeast, eventually curving out of sight. The only other way on from here is a narrow, oddly-angled corridor in the northwest corner.

A thin and decrepit rope bridge spans the pit, shivering occasionally in the wind.

>x bridge

The ropes are frayed and tangled; the planks are rotten and, in places, missing entirely, leaving dark, howling gaps. A very dubious structure, all in all, but

there's no other way to cross.

>nw

As you make your way down the corridor, you begin to get dizzy, then nauseous. Lines seem to cross without bending, the ceiling becomes the walls and the floor becomes the ceiling. Half-blind, unsure even of which direction you were going in, you stagger forward and suddenly find yourself in a...

Crawlspace

The ceiling descends here to no more than three feet from the floor; you are forced to crawl through the cramped darkness on your hands and knees. To the east the attic becomes more spacious, while the northwest corner opens into an oddly-angled corridor.

>e

Attic

It's much cooler up here than in the rest of the house, and you find it hard to suppress a shiver. Grotesque, looming shadows crawl across the low, slanted ceiling, and the dust hangs thick and motionless in the air. To the west the ceiling dips even lower until the space beneath leaves hardly room enough to crawl, while to the north stands a wooden door, draped in shadows and half-hidden by the slanting eaves.

>d

The ancient rungs creak alarmingly as you descend.

Upstairs Hall

The shuttered window at the end of the hall throws a gloomy rectangle of light onto the bare wooden floor. Doorways lead north and south.

A rickety wooden ladder stands here, descending from a three-foot by three-foot square of darkness in the ceiling.

>w

Upstairs Landing

A narrow hallway runs east, from the top of the stairs down the length of

the
house. To the north, directly opposite the stairs, is the master bedroom.

>d

Foyer

Although it appears spacious from the outside, the house's interior feels cramped and gloomy. The walls seem too close together; the ceiling is too high.

The doorways, leading in several directions, are narrow and filled with shadows,
and the stairs leading up to the second floor are steep and rickety. This is not
a house that makes you feel welcome. It is a house that makes you feel tiny and
timid, and afraid of dark places. It is a house that makes you feel alone.

Your luggage is still here, spread out all over the foyer.

>xyzzzy

That's not a verb I recognise.

>s

(opening the front door first)

Outside the House

The lane runs up from the southeast and ends at a wide clearing surrounded by
gnarled and ancient trees. A wide, curving driveway runs up to the front
door of
your house, which lies north.

The front door stands open to the north.

The Verlac mansion looms before you, casting an air of menace over the clearing.

A typewritten notice has been attached to the front door.

The hairs on the back of your neck prickles as you step outside. Something is
wrong. Something is very wrong with the air. A heavy, charged sensation, like
standing next to high-tension wires; a faint odor of spoiled meat drifting on
the wind; you can't put your finger on it, but it might have something to do
with that strange hole in the sky.

>se

Scenic View

The treeline falls away on the north side of this northwest-northeast bend in the road, giving way to a panoramic view of the Miskaton River Valley and the grubby little town of Anchorhead nestled within it. From here you can see the paper mill almost directly to the north; the solitary lighthouse and surrounding ocean to the northeast; and the dilapidated stone church below you to the east. Winding through it all is the oily black ribbon of the Miskaton, and almost directly in the center lies the little clearing of Town Square. You can just make out the shape of the obelisk from here.

>ne

Chilly Avenue

Perhaps it is merely the effect of some unwholesome vapour rising from the murky waters of the nearby Miskaton, but the temperature along this street seems perceptibly cooler than normal, even for a New England autumn. Two dirt roads lead south and southwest, into the dense woods at the edge of town.

>s

Deserted Lane

The gently winding lane makes its way through the birch woods south of town. New England foliage is famous for its splendid colors in the fall, but the oppressive weather and pervading murk have leached these trees of most of their tint. The road continues south into the increasingly dense forest, and in the other direction heads back to town. A paved walk also leads east through the trees.

>s

Down the Road

The forest grows denser as you go, crowding thickly up to either side of the road. The groping, tangled branches block out what little sunlight there is left. Your footsteps are muffled; whispering leaves and the slow drip of water are the only sounds you can hear. Beyond the watching trees, the shadows

are
impenetrably thick. The road stretches interminably, north to south.

There's something strangely familiar about the woods here... scenes from
last
night's dream flicker through your memory, but you are unable to recall
the
details.

>look at woods

You scrutinize the edge of the road carefully, looking for whatever it was
you
saw...

There. On the west side. That stump, and the twisted sapling growing next
to it;
you recognize them. And just beyond them... the path. It's the path you
took in
your dream, a narrow rut running west through the underbrush. You can
hardly
believe it, but there it is.

>x stump

It's the rotted stump of a tree that must have fallen long ago. It's
unremarkable, almost completely buried by the underbrush; the only reason
you
even noticed it is because of your dream.

A gust of wind blows your hair into your face.

>x path

You can't see any such thing.

>x sapling

A bent and stunted sapling, barely taller than you are, grows from the
mulchy
ground around the rotting stump. It's a perfectly ordinary-looking
sapling, just
like many others you've spotted growing here in and there among the trees
--
except that this one was in your dream.

>w

Trampled Path

The tangled undergrowth has been beaten down in a path leading roughly
from the
east to the southwest. Shrubs and grass have been flattened and pushed
aside,
vines torn down, and small trees bent or even snapped in half, as though
something heavy with huge, flat feet had simply trampled its way through.

>sw

Abandoned Slaughterhouse

The decayed remains of an old slaughterhouse stand here, now little more than a shell of crumbling brick and gaping holes, surrounded by a clearing of yellow, sickly grass. A path leads northeast, back toward the road; to the west, a gaping hole that might once have been a doorway leads into the rotting building.

The forest is unnaturally quiet here, you notice; there are no birds calling, no leaves rustling or branches creaking; even the whippoorwills have fallen silent. All is still, holding its collective breath in an expectant hush.

>save

Ok.

>x house

It's an ordinary-looking key. The word "house" is written on a tiny piece of tape affixed to the key's tab.

>x slaughterhouse

The ancient walls are barely even holding themselves together. The only reason you can tell it used to be a slaughterhouse is the faded paint on one wall: "Crompton Meat Processing".

>w

Crumbled Ruin

The roof has collapsed, leaving the interior open to the sky; the floor is nothing but bare, beaten dirt. Gaps in the bricks lead east and south. Although nothing stands now but the tottering, crumbling stonework (and that only barely), you fancy you can still detect a faint miasma of death -- a palpable, chilling reminder of the bloody work which once went on within these walls.

There's something odd about the ground here; some faint marking or pattern.

An old rusty meat hook sticks out of the ground nearby, its point half-buried in the dirt.

Over in the far corner, a tattered sheet of drawing paper lies discarded on the ground.

>get hook

You pick up the meat hook. The crossbar fits in your palm, leaving the hook part to stick out between the third and fourth fingers. It's a heavy sucker, nearly fifteen inches long from handle to point, made for hauling around carcasses with a minimum of ceremony. You wouldn't like to think what this could do to a living person.

>x hook

The crossbar fits in your palm, leaving the hook part to stick out between the third and fourth fingers. It's a heavy sucker, nearly fifteen inches long from handle to point, made for hauling around carcasses with a minimum of ceremony. You wouldn't like to think what this could do to a living person.

>x paper

(the newspaper)
It's the "Weekly Arkham Herald". Anchorhead, apparently, is not large enough to warrant its own newspaper.

>x drawing paper

The drawing is of a pair of crudely rendered figures, scrawled with dark, heavy lines that occasionally punch right through the paper. The two figures are holding hands. The one on the left is a smiling woman with long, straight hair; the one on the right...

Well, you don't know. Frankly, you'd rather not speculate. An octopus on human legs, maybe, if you could believe any healthy child would conceive of such a thing. Above the first figure is scribbled the word "MOMY"; above the second, "WILAM (ME)".

>get drawing paper

Your hands are full.

>inv

You are wearing your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a meat hook, a broom, a keyring, on which are five keys (an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar) and your trenchcoat.

>put hook in coat

You slip the meat hook into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>put drawing paper in coat

(first taking the tattered drawing)

You slip the tattered drawing into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>s

Old Stone Well

Beyond the south wall of the old slaughterhouse, there is nothing but a tangled thicket so dense as to be impenetrable in every direction except to the north, where you can slip back into the ruined slaughterhouse through a hole in the wall.

Rising from the midst of the underbrush is a squat circle of stone: the top of an ancient well. A circle of rotting plywood covers the opening.

>x well

It's built of mortared stone, and comes about to the level of your waist. The top of the well is covered by a circle of rotting plywood.

>x cover

Which do you mean, the wooden cover or the family album?

>wooden cover

Nothing but a thick sheet of plywood cut into a rough circle, about a yard across.

A flurry of dead leaves goes skittering along the ground, swirling past you in the wind.

>move wooden cover

You dig your fingers under the edge of the plywood and, straining as hard as you can, manage to slide the heavy cover off the top of the well and onto the grass.

>look down

You see nothing special at your feet.

>look into well

The well is very deep, although the rough stonework would probably allow you to safely climb down. Its depths are too shadowy for you to make out any details at the bottom.

>d

Carefully testing each foothold, you descend into the well.

In the Well

The sky is a dim circle of light far above you. The stone walls press in on you from all sides, and the air is clammy and frigid. A faint odor of decay drifts up from the floor; the smell of a trapped animal decomposing under the back porch.

You are standing knee deep in a rattling jumble of children's bones.

>x bones

You can deduce only two things about the gruesome pile: there are more bones here than could be produced by a single child, and some of the bones are older than others. Whoever has been throwing them down here has been doing it for a long time.

>search bones

You notice a tuft of brown among the yellowed-ivory of the bones. Moving aside a clattering pile of ribs, you discover a child's teddy bear.

>get bear

You pick up the teddy bear. It is old and threadbare, its fur worn through to the stuffing in some places. Stitched onto its behind is the name "Jeffrey".

>x bear

It is old and threadbare, its fur worn through to the stuffing in some places. Stitched onto its behind is the name "Jeffrey".

>put bear in coat

You slip the teddy bear into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>u

You painstakingly climb out of the old well.

Old Stone Well

Beyond the south wall of the old slaughterhouse, there is nothing but a tangled thicket so dense as to be impenetrable in every direction except to the north, where you can slip back into the ruined slaughterhouse through a hole in the wall.

Rising from the midst of the underbrush is a squat circle of stone: the top of an ancient well.

A rotting circle of plywood leans against the side of the well.

>n

Crumbled Ruin

The roof has collapsed, leaving the interior open to the sky; the floor is nothing but bare, beaten dirt. Gaps in the bricks lead east and south. Although nothing stands now but the tottering, crumbling stonework (and that only barely), you fancy you can still detect a faint miasma of death -- a palpable, chilling reminder of the bloody work which once went on within these walls.

There's something odd about the ground here; some faint marking or pattern.

>x ground

The marks in the dirt are tracks of some kind, but not of any animal you're familiar with, unless there's a lame elephant loose in the New England woods. The prints are large -- quite a bit larger than your outspread hand, and vaguely round. They criss-cross the ground in every direction. Whatever made them obviously lives here, or at least visits quite often.

>e

You are about to step back through the eastern wall when a noise makes you stop. In the woods outside, to the east -- something is there. Something breathing. Something huge.

A branch cracks sharply; and another. It's coming this way.

>save

Ok.

>s

Old Stone Well

Beyond the south wall of the old slaughterhouse, there is nothing but a tangled thicket so dense as to be impenetrable in every direction except to the north, where you can slip back into the ruined slaughterhouse through a hole in the wall.

Rising from the midst of the underbrush is a squat circle of stone: the top of an ancient well.

A rotting circle of plywood leans against the side of the well.

The sound of tearing undergrowth grows louder. Whatever it is, it's practically bulldozing its way through the forest.

>d

As quickly as you are able, you scramble down the rough stone walls. Ten feet from the bottom, you slip, landing with a clatter amidst the dusty bones.

In the Well

The sky is a dim circle of light far above you. The stone walls press in on you from all sides, and the air is clammy and frigid. A faint odor of decay drifts up from the floor; the smell of a trapped animal decomposing under the back porch.

You are standing knee deep in a rattling jumble of children's bones.

The ground trembles slightly with the thing's thunderous footsteps as it tromps up the path. It's right outside the slaughterhouse!

>hide under bones

You burrow down into the bones, piling more bones on top of you for cover while trying to make as little noise as possible.

You hear it pause inside the building, its hide slithering loudly against the brick walls as it moves about. There is a horrible, wet snorting sound, as if it were trying to pick up a scent, then an unspeakable, inhuman grunt of anger.

>listen

You hear nothing unexpected.

Scarcely daring to breathe, you lie as still as possible beneath your cover of bones as the thing, whatever it is, moves closer. A shadow falls across the mouth of the well, and then the circle of light above you is blotted out by a shape so utterly, blasphemously hideous that it is all you can do to remain conscious. Two grotesquely blue and childlike eyes blink down into the darkness of the well, searching...

And then it is gone.

You must have lost consciousness after all, judging from the stiffness in your limbs and the difference in the light. You have no idea how long you were out, but the creature must have passed you by. The forest is still again; the breathing and footsteps, gone.

Involuntarily, you let out a long, shuddering breath.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>up

The bones fall away, clattering loudly as you stand up.

>up

You painstakingly climb out of the old well.

Old Stone Well

Beyond the south wall of the old slaughterhouse, there is nothing but a tangled thicket so dense as to be impenetrable in every direction except to the north,

where you can slip back into the ruined slaughterhouse through a hole in the wall.

Rising from the midst of the underbrush is a squat circle of stone: the top of an ancient well.

A rotting circle of plywood leans against the side of the well.

>n

Crumbled Ruin

The roof has collapsed, leaving the interior open to the sky; the floor is nothing but bare, beaten dirt. Gaps in the bricks lead east and south. Although nothing stands now but the tottering, crumbling stonework (and that only barely), you fancy you can still detect a faint miasma of death -- a palpable, chilling reminder of the bloody work which once went on within these walls.

Faint tracks mark the dirt here; large, rounded footprints tracking back and forth across the ground.

>e

Abandoned Slaughterhouse

The decayed remains of an old slaughterhouse stand here, now little more than a shell of crumbling brick and gaping holes, surrounded by a clearing of yellow, sickly grass. A path leads northeast, back toward the road; to the west, a gaping hole that might once have been a doorway leads into the rotting building.

>ne

Trampled Path

The tangled undergrowth has been beaten down in a path leading roughly from the east to the southwest. Shrubs and grass have been flattened and pushed aside, vines torn down, and small trees bent or even snapped in half, as though something heavy with huge, flat feet had simply trampled its way through.

>e

Down the Road

The forest grows denser as you go, crowding thickly up to either side of

the
road. The groping, tangled branches block out what little sunlight there
is
left. Your footsteps are muffled; whispering leaves and the slow drip of
water
are the only sounds you can hear. Beyond the watching trees, the shadows
are
impenetrably thick. The road stretches interminably, north to south.

At the edge of the forest, on the west side of the road, stand the rotted
stump
and twisted sapling from your dream.

>n

Deserted Lane

The gently winding lane makes its way through the birch woods south of
town. New
England foliage is famous for its splendid colors in the fall, but the
oppressive weather and pervading murk have leached these trees of most of
their
tint. The road continues south into the increasingly dense forest, and in
the
other direction heads back to town. A paved walk also leads east through
the
trees.

A small group of townsfolk has gathered up at the north end of the road.
As you
approach, still breathless from your encounter with the thing at the
slaughterhouse, they turn toward you -- and that's when you notice that
the one
in the lead has an axe in his hand. And the one behind him has a pair of
garden
shears.

A couple of men move over to your left, and several more step out of the
forest
behind you. All of them carry weapons or nasty farm implements of some
kind, and
all of them look as though they're just about ready to put an end to a
certain
over-curious, outsider woman who doesn't know enough to keep her nose out
of
things better left undisturbed.

>e

You dart past the men on your right, making a break for the church. The
townsfolk hover around the entrance to the churchyard but do not follow
you,
confident that there is no way you can escape.

Churchyard

A low, wrought-iron fence, its spike-tipped bars bent or leaning at crazy angles, surrounds the overgrown yard of this dark, abandoned church. A gap in the fence leads back west, while a bare path beaten through the groping weeds leads around the church to the southeast.

>se

The path bends northeast, around the side of the church.

Behind the Church

The forest encroaches right up to the iron fence here, some of which is literally buried in the tangled underbrush. There are no doors on this side, although a wooden trap door over by the corner of the building probably leads into a cellar. A path leads southwest, around to the front of the church.

>sw

The path bends northwest, around the side of the church.

Churchyard

A low, wrought-iron fence, its spike-tipped bars bent or leaning at crazy angles, surrounds the overgrown yard of this dark, abandoned church. A gap in the fence leads back west, while a bare path beaten through the groping weeds leads around the church to the southeast.

>x fence

The fence is about chest-high and topped with nasty iron spikes. Weeds and ground vines wind up through the bars, most of which are bent and some of which are missing altogether.

>open fence

That's not something you can open.

>se

The path bends northeast, around the side of the church.

Behind the Church

The forest encroaches right up to the iron fence here, some of which is literally buried in the tangled underbrush. There are no doors on this side, although a wooden trap door over by the corner of the building probably leads into a cellar. A path leads southwest, around to the front of the church.

>x door

The boards are old and warped, but still quite sturdy. It is locked with a heavy padlock.

>x padlock

The padlock, which is the size of your fist, is so thoroughly rusted that it looks like one huge homogeneous lump of corrosion. Although it's still quite strong, you might be able to break it if you had something heavy enough.

>break padlock with hook

(first taking the meat hook)

You raise the meat hook high over your head and bring it squarely down onto the padlock. The rusted metal casing splits open, the hasp falls loose, and the padlock, now nothing but a broken shell, slides to the ground.

Your score has just gone up by one point.

>nw

The wrought-iron fence surrounds the entire churchyard. The only way out is around that little path to the southwest.

>sw

The path bends northwest, around the side of the church.

Churchyard

A low, wrought-iron fence, its spike-tipped bars bent or leaning at crazy angles, surrounds the overgrown yard of this dark, abandoned church. A gap in the fence leads back west, while a bare path beaten through the groping weeds leads around the church to the southeast.

>w

Not a good idea; those men are probably still waiting for you there.

>se

The path bends northeast, around the side of the church.

Behind the Church

The forest encroaches right up to the iron fence here, some of which is literally buried in the tangled underbrush. There are no doors on this side, although a wooden trap door over by the corner of the building probably leads into a cellar. A path leads southwest, around to the front of the church.

You can see a broken padlock here.

>open door

You open the trap door.

>drop broom

Dropped.

>enter

As you drop to the floor, the trap door suddenly slams shut above you. You hear noises outside -- something thumping against the door, and low voices. You hear someone muttering, and a brief round of unpleasant laughter. Then the voices drift away.

Church Cellar

Centipedes and beetles scurry away across the rotten floorboards as you shine your light across the room. Over in the corner sits a hulking shape of black metal that was probably once a wood-burning furnace; aside from that, the cellar looks empty. A dark alcove, the shadows within too thick to see through, opens in the west wall, and a trap door in the ceiling leads back up to the outside.

At the very edge of your light's glow, you can just make out a horribly suggestive shape lying in the shadows behind the furnace.

>look at shape

It's the dead body of a woman. Her head has been raggedly hacked away, and her clothes above the waist are soaked through with blood. As you fight to control your rising gorge, you note that the body cannot have been here for very long; the decay, though bad, is not very far advanced. She must have been killed within the last couple of days at most.

>x woman

It's the dead body of a woman. Her head has been raggedly hacked away, and her clothes above the waist are soaked through with blood. As you fight to control your rising gorge, you note that the body cannot have been here for very long; the decay, though bad, is not very far advanced. She must have been killed

within the last couple of days at most.

>search shape

Gingerly, trying to avoid the worst of the blood, you lift the woman's lapel, hoping to find something -- identification, maybe. Her wallet is missing; however, you do find, tucked into the pocket of her blazer, a small, steel key.

A skittering movement from the corpse makes you jump. When you look again, you see it's only an insect crawling across her blouse.

>x insect

You can't see any such thing.

>put steel key on keyring

The small steel key is now on the keyring.

>look

Church Cellar

Centipedes and beetles scurry away across the rotten floorboards as you shine your light across the room. Over in the corner sits a hulking shape of black metal that was probably once a wood-burning furnace; aside from that, the cellar looks empty. A dark alcove, the shadows within too thick to see through, opens in the west wall, and a trap door in the ceiling leads back up to the outside.

At the very edge of your light's glow, you can just make out a horribly suggestive shape lying in the shadows behind the furnace.

>x furnace

It's a big, pot-bellied iron furnace, blackened from years of use, with a hatch on one side and numerous twisting pipes which snake out of the top and grope their way up to the ceiling.

>open hatch

Your throat tightens as you slowly open the bloodstained hatch...

Slow horror washes over you. You found exactly what you expected to find, of course. It's the real estate agent's severed head.

>save

Ok.

>w

Empty Stairwell

This alcove used to house a stairwell leading up and down; now it contains only a few rotted boards jutting from the walls and an empty shaft dropping down out of sight. Above you hang the broken-off remains of the stairs leading up to the ground floor, the last shattered riser only a couple of tantalizing feet out of reach.

>turn off flashlight

You switch the flashlight off.

It is now pitch dark in here!

>turn on flashlight

The flashlight emits a warm yellow beam.

Empty Stairwell

This alcove used to house a stairwell leading up and down; now it contains only a few rotted boards jutting from the walls and an empty shaft dropping down out of sight. Above you hang the broken-off remains of the stairs leading up to the ground floor, the last shattered riser only a couple of tantalizing feet out of reach.

>put all in pocket

meat hook: You slip the meat hook into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

keyring: You slip the keyring into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>inv

You are wearing your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hand your trenchcoat.

>x stairwell

You can't see any such thing.

>x shaft

The walls of the shaft are rough stone, dropping down farther than you can see.

>x riser

It looks as though it might bear your weight; unfortunately it's just a

couple
of feet beyond your reach.

From far below you hear the faint lapping of water.

>jump onto riser

You take a few steps back, draw in a deep breath, and make a dash for the edge.

At the last possible second you jump, sailing out over the pit as you make a desperate grab for the bottom riser...

... and catch it.

Unfortunately, you lose your grip on the trenchcoat while trying to grab the riser, and it tumbles into the darkness below.

The riser bends ominously under your weight but doesn't give. Panting, you haul yourself up onto the creaking stairs.

Darkness

It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.

The creaking under your feet is getting louder.

>restore

Ok.

>look

Church Cellar

Centipedes and beetles scurry away across the rotten floorboards as you shine your light across the room. Over in the corner sits a hulking shape of black metal that was probably once a wood-burning furnace; aside from that, the cellar looks empty. A dark alcove, the shadows within too thick to see through, opens in the west wall, and a trap door in the ceiling leads back up to the outside.

At the very edge of your light's glow, you can just make out a horribly suggestive shape lying in the shadows behind the furnace.

>x shape

It's the dead body of a woman. Her head has been raggedly hacked away, and her clothes above the waist are soaked through with blood. As you fight to

control

your rising gorge, you note that the body cannot have been here for very long;
the decay, though bad, is not very far advanced. She must have been killed within the last couple of days at most.

>search shape

You find nothing further in the dead woman's pockets.

>open hatch

That's already open.

>wear coat

You put on the trenchcoat.

>inv

You are wearing your trenchcoat, your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a meat hook and a keyring, on which are six keys (a small steel key, an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar).

The pockets of your trenchcoat contain a teddy bear, a tattered drawing, a strange metal flute, a puzzle box (which is open but empty), a towel, a gold locket, a newspaper, a letter opener, an old tin (which is closed), an animal's skull, a slip of paper, Michael's faculty card, a family album, a bundle of soggy pages, a flashlight (providing light), a book of matches with six matches left, a torn journal, your umbrella and a lantern.

>put all in coat

meat hook: You slip the meat hook into the pocket of your trenchcoat.
keyring: You slip the keyring into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

A skittering movement from the corpse makes you jump. When you look again, you see it's only an insect crawling across her blouse.

>w

Empty Stairwell

This alcove used to house a stairwell leading up and down; now it contains only a few rotted boards jutting from the walls and an empty shaft dropping down out of sight. Above you hang the broken-off remains of the stairs leading up

to the
ground floor, the last shattered riser only a couple of tantalizing feet
out of
reach.

>jump onto riser

You take a few steps back, draw in a deep breath, and make a dash for the
edge.
At the last possible second you jump, sailing out over the pit as you make
a
desperate grab for the bottom riser...

... and catch it.

The riser bends ominously under your weight but doesn't give. Panting, you
haul
yourself up onto the creaking stairs.

Broken Stairs

The stairs stop short about seven feet shy of the basement floor, the
bottom-
most steps hanging suspended over an empty shaft that descends beyond
sight into
the shadowy depths. What's left of the structure creaks and shifts
uneasily
under your feet. At the top of the stairs to the north, a doorway opens
onto the
ground floor of the church.

The creaking under your feet is getting louder.

From far below you hear the faint lapping of water.

>n

Vestibule

A dim antechamber, opening onto the main chapel to the east. To the west,
the
main doors to the church have been solidly nailed shut, and through a
shadowy
doorway to the south you can see stairs leading down.

Piled in one dusty corner is a heap of old cloth.

>x cloth

It's a hooded robe, left in a rumpled heap on the floor.

From the stairwell behind you there is a sudden, painful shriek of nails
ripping
out of stone, a loud, protracted splintering, and finally a thunderous
crash

that seems to echo up the shaft from far below.

>get cloth

Taken.

>turn off flashlight

You switch the flashlight off.

It is now pitch dark in here!

>turn on flashlight

The flashlight emits a warm yellow beam.

Vestibule

A dim antechamber, opening onto the main chapel to the east. To the west, the main doors to the church have been solidly nailed shut, and a shadowy doorway to the south leads to further darkness.

>x doors

At least a dozen sturdy boards have been nailed across the sturdy oak doors; even with proper tools, it would take you days to pry them loose.

>e

Chapel

Broken shards from the shattered the stained glass windows grits under your feet as you step around rows of overturned pews. The dust and cobwebs have been busy here, reclaiming another bit of this town's abandoned history. To the west lies the vestibule; to the east, a small doorway behind the pulpit leads to the back of the church.

The big wooden cross that once hung above the pulpit has fallen, split in half.

On the pulpit is a huge, black tome.

>x cross

From the way it fell, it looks as though it must have been hung upside-down.

>x windows

The stained-glass windows are old and coated with grime, and many of the panels have been broken out by time and vandals. Enough remains for you to make

out
most of the designs depicted in them, however -- and you find them vaguely
disturbing. Saints -- at least none of the saints you're aware of --
should not
be depicted performing such acts, nor with such insidious leers on their
faces
as they perform them.

>x tome

It lies open atop the pulpit, thicker than an unabridged dictionary. Its
thousands of yellowed, crinkly pages are bound in a strange black material
that
looks like some kind of hide but clearly isn't leather. Your first thought
was
that it might be a Bible, but a glance is sufficient to tell you
otherwise. The
text within is arranged in two columns, the first in what looks like
Latin, the
second a translation in English. There are illustrations, as well:
horrible
icons that make your skin crawl to look at.

>save

Ok.

>read tome

As you lean closer over the pages to make out the words in this dim light,
the
letters seem to writhe and crawl across the page, twisting themselves into
strange combinations, horrible words that you've never read before... and
yet,
somehow, you can understand their repulsive meaning. Something about a
"Blessed
Event", which will happen very soon, and a hideous god whose name may not
be
spoken...

Is this the book that was preached in this church before it fell to ruin?
Are
these the gods these people worshipped? You want to tear your eyes from
the page
in revulsion, but some small, gleefully filthy part of you wants to keep
reading, to uncover the secrets that the people of Anchorhead uncovered...

Will you read on?

>yes

As your hungry eyes lap up word after blasphemous word, it all becomes
clear to
you: you come to understand the true nature of He Who Is Named Not, and
what the

Verlacs were trying to accomplish all these years, preparing the people of Anchorhead for the Blessed Event... it all makes sense to you now.

You step back, smiling, from the podium. There's no need to be afraid, you realize, for neither yourself nor your husband are in any danger. It's all right. It all makes sense. And when you raise your hands to your face and slowly push the fingernails of your first and middle fingers into each eye, digging the soft, bloody tissue out and dragging it down your cheeks in ropy smears... why, that's all right, too.

It's the most natural thing in the world.

*** You have gone utterly mad ***

In that game you scored 42 out of a possible 100 points; you are hopelessly enmeshed in the tentacles of an ancient and sinister plot.

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game, UNDO your last move, give the FULL score for that game or QUIT?
> restore
Ok.

>look

Chapel

Broken shards from the shattered the stained glass windows grits under your feet as you step around rows of overturned pews. The dust and cobwebs have been busy here, reclaiming another bit of this town's abandoned history. To the west lies the vestibule; to the east, a small doorway behind the pulpit leads to the back of the church.

The big wooden cross that once hung above the pulpit has fallen, split in half.

On the pulpit is a huge, black tome.

>read tome

As you lean closer over the pages to make out the words in this dim light, the letters seem to writhe and crawl across the page, twisting themselves into

strange combinations, horrible words that you've never read before... and yet, somehow, you can understand their repulsive meaning. Something about a "Blessed Event", which will happen very soon, and a hideous god whose name may not be spoken...

Is this the book that was preached in this church before it fell to ruin? Are these the gods these people worshipped? You want to tear your eyes from the page in revulsion, but some small, gleefully filthy part of you wants to keep reading, to uncover the secrets that the people of Anchorhead uncovered...

Will you read on?

>no

You step away from the podium with a shudder.

>look

Chapel

Broken shards from the shattered the stained glass windows grits under your feet as you step around rows of overturned pews. The dust and cobwebs have been busy here, reclaiming another bit of this town's abandoned history. To the west lies the vestibule; to the east, a small doorway behind the pulpit leads to the back of the church.

The big wooden cross that once hung above the pulpit has fallen, split in half.

On the pulpit is a huge, black tome.

>e

Behind the Chapel

This little room behind the chapel is hardly bigger than a broom closet. A ladder bolted to the wall leads up through a hatch, presumably up into the steeple.

>x ladder

It's an ordinary wooden ladder.

>up

Steeple

A tiny space inside the tip of the church's steeple, barely five feet across,
the walls tapering to only two feet across some twelve feet above your head.
There is a narrow window, but it seems to have been painted black at some point.
The only exit seems to be the ladder from which you just emerged.

An old length of rope dangles down from a square hole cut in the ceiling.

>x rope

It's about twenty feet long, frayed in a few places but still sturdy enough.

>up

You haul yourself up onto the rope, bringing your whole weight to bear. It holds
for about three seconds -- then there is a sharp snap from above you and a muffled clank. The rope falls, spilling you to the floor amidst an untidy tangle
of coils.

>get rope

Taken.

>d

Behind the Chapel

This little room behind the chapel is hardly bigger than a broom closet. A ladder bolted to the wall leads up through a hatch, presumably up into the steeple.

>w

Chapel

Broken shards from the shattered the stained glass windows grits under your feet
as you step around rows of overturned pews. The dust and cobwebs have been busy
here, reclaiming another bit of this town's abandoned history. To the west lies
the vestibule; to the east, a small doorway behind the pulpit leads to the back
of the church.

The big wooden cross that once hung above the pulpit has fallen, split in half.

On the pulpit is a huge, black tome.

>w

Vestibule

A dim antechamber, opening onto the main chapel to the east. To the west, the main doors to the church have been solidly nailed shut, and a shadowy doorway to the south leads to further darkness.

>s

Broken Stairs

The stairs are completely gone, now. All that's left is a narrow ledge overlooking an empty shaft, and a fair portion of the railing still nailed to the wall.

>save

Ok.

>drop robe in shaft

The hooded robe drops down out of sight, and a few seconds later you hear a faint splash.

>tie rope to railing

You tie the rope securely to the railing, letting the other end dangle down into the dark shaft.

>down

Gripping the end of the rope tightly, you lower yourself off the edge and shimmy down into the darkness.

Hanging From the Rope

Your feet dangle over empty space. Looking down, you can barely make out a faint glimmer of water, far below.

>drop rope

You take a deep breath, shut your eyes tight, say a quick prayer... and let go of the rope.

The heart-stopping plunge lasts only a second or two before you hit shockingly cold water. Your flashlight goes out and blackness envelopes you. Water rushes into your mouth and nose; the stone bottom slams into your side and nearly knocks the wind out of you... and then you find your feet, and your head breaks

the surface. Blindly, you thrash about until you find higher ground, and you crawl, choking and sputtering, feeling cold brick beneath your fingers.

Darkness

It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>turn on flashlight

The flashlight must not be quite as waterproof as you originally thought; the beam flickers unsteadily, and you have to bang it against the palm of your hand a couple of times to get it to work.

Vaulted Tunnel

The walls of this long, rectangular chamber are made of crumbling brick, not concrete; most likely it was built at some earlier period than the rest of the tunnels. The ceiling is lost in darkness above you, but from the sounds of echoes it must be pretty high. Water flowing in from the northwestern tunnel has pooled in a depression sunk into the limestone floor, becoming quite deep near the far end.

The shattered wreckage of the church stairway lies half submerged in the water-filled depression. You're lucky to have missed it in your fall.

You can also see a hooded robe here.

>get robe

Taken.

>nw

Sewer Tunnel

The tunnel is ankle-deep in brackish water, though raised walkways on either side provide relatively dry footing. The walls are slick, the air damp and foul. The main tunnel runs north and southeast. Numerous smaller pipelines lead in all directions, but all are too small for you to crawl through. Iron rungs embedded in the wall lead up through an access shaft, back to the surface.

>n

Dripping Tunnel

The ceiling in this north-south tunnel is so low you must bend nearly double to navigate it. Water drips endlessly through the walls and ceiling, seeping in through thousands of invisible fissures, the constant plip-plip-plipping echoing loudly throughout the tunnel. The air is so damp you can hardly breathe. Unless your sense of direction is mistaken, you must be crossing the Miskaton River -- underneath it.

>n

Broken Tunnel

This looks to be an older part of the sewer system that has fallen into disrepair. Many of the pipes here have crumbled and are filled with debris.

Set in the low ceiling is an old iron hatch.

>x hatch

It's a rectangle of corroded metal, just over a foot long on each side. There are hinges along one edge on this side; if you could get your fingers under the opposite edge, you could probably pry it open.

>open hatch

You dig your fingers under the edge and tug, but the hinges are rusted nearly solid. You can't make it budge.

>open tin

(first taking the old tin)
You open the old tin, revealing a smelly quantity of fish oil.

>put oil on hatch

(first getting some fish oil)
You dip your finger in and come up with a small glob of pungent fish oil.

You rub a good amount of fish oil all over the rusty hinges.

>close tin

You close the old tin.

The flashlight beam flickers uncertainly for a moment, then comes back a bit

weaker than before.

>open hatch

The oiled hinges give a little, allowing you to wiggle your fingers further under the door's edge. A sharp tug -- and the door swings down suddenly, spilling filthy water into your face.

>u

Outflow Tunnel

From the smell of it, this must be a sewage outflow tunnel. Filthy water swirls past a metal grate to the west and eddies around your hands and knees, on which you are forced to crawl in this cramped cylindrical passageway. To the east, the tunnel narrows still further, terminating about twenty feet further in a circle of dim light. Much of the water is pouring through an open hatch set in the floor of the tunnel.

>e

You reach the end of the pipe and wriggle your way out, dropping awkwardly to the sand.

Narrow Beach

This narrow strip of beach is tucked away between two outcroppings in the predominantly rocky shoreline, accessible only from a steep, muddy slope to the west. The sand is filthy and strewn with rocks, seaweed, litter and other bits of storm-tossed detritus.

Near the bottom of the slope, a sewage outflow pipe juts out over the beach, about three feet above the ground. A thin stream of acrid-smelling sewer water trickles out over the lip of the pipe, forming a puddle in the sand.

>turn off flashlight

You switch the flashlight off.

>w

You pick your way up the slope, push the loose board aside and slip back in through the gap.

Alley

This narrow aperture between two buildings is nearly blocked with piles of rotting cardboard boxes and overstuffed garbage cans. Ugly, half-crumbling brick walls to either side totter oppressively over you. The alley ends here at a tall, wooden fence.

High up on the wall of the northern building there is a narrow, transom-style window. One of the garbage cans has been pushed up against the wall directly underneath it.

>nw

Outside the Real Estate Office

A grim little cul-de-sac, tucked away in a corner of the claustrophobic tangle of narrow, twisting avenues that largely constitute the older portion of Anchorhead. Like most of the streets in this city, it is ancient, shadowy, and leads essentially nowhere. The lane ends here at the real estate agent's office, which lies to the east, and winds its way back toward the center of town to the west. A narrow, garbage-choked alley opens to the southeast.

The office door is open.

>e

Office

Pallid gray light trickles in through the drawn blinds. The office is deserted, papers still scattered across the top of the desk. The front door lies west, and the file room lies east.

The office door is open.

Sitting on the corner of the paper-strewn desk are a telephone and an answering machine.

Someone seems to have left a cup of coffee sitting out, half-finished and cold.

>unlock drawer

(first taking the keyring)

You go through all the keys on your keyring, trying each one in turn, and after

several false attempts you discover that the small steel key fits the lock.

You unlock the drawer.

>open drawer

You open the drawer, revealing a hastily written letter and a tarnished bronze key.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>get all

You'll have to be more specific about which objects you mean.

>put bronze key on keychain

You can't see any such thing.

>put bronze key on keyring

(first taking the tarnished bronze key)

The tarnished bronze key is now on the keyring.

>get letter

(the hastily written letter)

You pick up the hastily written letter. It consists of several pages torn from a

yellow legal pad and stapled in the corner; each page is covered on both sides,

top to bottom, with erratic, frightened handwriting. It is dated two days ago --

the day you arrived in Anchorhead.

>x letter

Which do you mean, the hastily written letter or the letter opener?

>hastily written letter

It consists of several pages torn from a yellow legal pad and stapled in the

corner; each page is covered on both sides, top to bottom, with erratic, frightened handwriting. It is dated two days ago -- the day you arrived in Anchorhead.

>read hastily written letter

The letter reads:

"To whom it may concern --

"My name is Claudia Benson, and I attest that I am of sound mind and body, at

least for what little time I have left.

"If you are reading this anywhere within the city limits of Anchorhead, be

aware
that your life is in grave and immediate danger. Nearly all of the
inhabitants
of this city are members of a secret cult that has thrived since before
the
first settlers arrived here in the early 1600s and is still strong today.
Its
members are fanatical and quite insane, and will kill anyone who learns
their
secrets. I received a phone call early this morning which I believe is a
threat
to my life; I assume the cult somehow discovered that I was planning to
divulge
information to an outsider and now plans to silence me. In case I don't
make it,
I am leaving this testimony for someone to find; hopefully it will be
someone
who can put a stop to this madness once and for all.

"The cult originally evolved from the rituals of the ancient Misquat
Indian
tribe that once lived in this region. Although this tribe is now extinct,
its
beliefs have been passed down relatively unchanged through generations of
settlers for nearly four centuries. These beliefs center around the
worship of
some sort of demon or god from the outer reaches of space, which visited
the
earth millions of years ago and will return some day to wreak terrible
destruction. I am unclear on the exact details as there is very little
historical information available on this tribe, unless the University is
hiding
material from me, which I am half-convinced it may well be.

"The ringleaders of this cult are and have always been the Verlac family.
Every
second generation a male Verlac is born, and the role of high priest is
passed
down from grandfather to grandson, following some arcane ritual of
ascension.
There is a persistent legend that this ritual somehow involves a
transmigration
of souls -- that, in fact, all male Verlacs are actually the reincarnation
of
the original founder of the American line. Although this is obviously
nothing
more than local superstition, the legend has such a hold on the people of
the
region that it may have become a self-perpetuating delusion on the part of
the
members of the Verlac family, each male child honestly believing that he

is his
own grandfather reborn. Edward Verlac rejected this obscene birthright,
and I
believe that the townspeople drove him to insanity for it.

"Regardless of the truth behind these legends, the cult is planning to act
very
soon. In the 1920s, Edward's grandfather Mordecai Verlac began preaching
that
the return of the 'Nameless God' was imminent -- specifically, that it
would
occur the day after tomorrow. He re-opened the defunct paper mill,
converting it
into a factory to build some sort of device, a 'beacon' with which to
facilitate
the Nameless God's entry into this world. This device is very nearly
finished,
and in two days they will be ready to enact their great ritual -- what
they call
the 'Blessed Event'. It will most likely entail the wholesale slaughter of
every
non-cultist man, woman and child in the city. The child abductions of the
past
few years were most likely preparatory sacrifices perpetrated by the cult,
and
there is no reason to believe that the killing will stop once their great
ritual
is complete.

"If you are, in fact, the young man who planned to move into the Verlac
estate,
you must be careful. The cult is almost certainly watching your every
move, and
will attempt to induct and brainwash you into their cult or, failing that,
murder both you and your wife. I had hoped to warn you upon your arrival;
however, as the message on my answering machine this morning attests, I
don't
have much time left. With any luck, I'll be out of the city by tonight. If
I
don't make it, please try to stop these people. This key might help -- I
managed
to dig it out our old property file on the lighthouse. I know they
consider that
building important for some reason. Do what you can with it. And be
careful.
These cultists are a menace, inbred and insane to the last man, and no one
will
be safe until they are wiped off the face of the earth.

"Good luck, and be careful.

-- Claudia Benson"

>w

Outside the Real Estate Office

A grim little cul-de-sac, tucked away in a corner of the claustrophobic tangle of narrow, twisting avenues that largely constitute the older portion of Anchorhead. Like most of the streets in this city, it is ancient, shadowy, and leads essentially nowhere. The lane ends here at the real estate agent's office, which lies to the east, and winds its way back toward the center of town to the west. A narrow, garbage-choked alley opens to the southeast.

The office door is open.

>w

Narrow Street

As the lane winds along from east to west, it narrows until the steep, jagged rooftops on either side of the street practically touch each other. To the south, a side street leads across Whateley Bridge toward the center of town, and a twisting lane leads up a hill to the northwest. A short flight of steps to the north leads down to the local watering hole.

There appears to be a commotion of sorts to the south, where a group of townsfolk have gathered.

>w

Junction

To the north, a gap in the crowded press of gloomy buildings opens onto a country lane, heading out over a grassy heath. The main street continues to the east, while to the northwest, over the top of a steep rise, you can just make out the vaulted rooftops of the university.

>n

Mill Road

The road carries you across a desolate heath of gray, windswept grass. To the south, the black, jagged outline of Anchorhead's steep roofs and sharp, leaning gables cuts across the horizon. The road forks here to the west and east,

heading across the railroad tracks in one direction, out toward the seashore in the other.

>w

As you cross the railroad tracks, the air becomes warmer, more dingy, and slightly more difficult to breathe.

Entrance to the Paper Mill

The road turns southwest here and runs squarely through the front entrance to the old paper mill. A gate of heavy iron bars blocks the only opening into this charred fortress, although an overgrown path leads around the wall to the south. To the north, a rutted lane threads its way past a row of dilapidated shacks.

>n

Shanty Town

The road peters out at a wide clearing of rutted mud, flanked by uneven rows of decrepit, clapboard shacks. The town is quiet, almost deserted; only a few bits of loose tarpaper blowing listlessly in the wind betray the overall stillness.

The cold wind cuts through your clothes, chilling you to the bone.

>x shacks

All peeling paint, broken glass and missing shingles, the houses are poorly built and teetering on the verge of falling apart completely. They are arranged in a vague suggestion of rows on either side of the mud clearing, numbered #1 through #12 with those cheap little nail-up plastic numbers you can buy at hardware stores. Presumably, these denote each shack's "street address".

Curtains twitch behind a grimy windowpane, and you glance over in time to see a lean, suspicious face pulling back into the shadows.

>knock on door 11

After a moment or two of silence, you hear a furtive rattling, and the door opens a crack to reveal a woman's pale and haggard face. She stares out you with a mixture of trepidation and mistrust.

In the distance, you can hear the lonesome keening of a train whistle drifting
on the wind. You look to the east in time to see the train go by, rolling southwest past the mill toward less melancholy climes.

A pair of starving dogs come sniffing around the refuse by one of the shacks,
but as soon as you move they shy away, disappearing over the edge of the clearing.

>x woman

She is pale and thin from lack of food. Her hair is prematurely gray. The dismal
poverty and constant fear that she has lived in all her life have leached her
body of its youth, leaving her aged before her time, stooped and scarred with
worry. She clutches a tattered shawl, its fabric the faded color of old dishwater, close around her throat, and she watches you the way a wounded rabbit
might watch a potentially hungry cat.

Flakes of ash drift gently down from the sky like gray snow, coating everything
with a thin layer of soot.

>ask woman about jeffrey

The woman grows even paler, and draws back from the door with a look of horrified loss.

Suddenly the woman slams the door shut, and you hear the rattle of a bolt being
drawn.

>knock on door 11

After a moment or two of silence, you hear a furtive rattling, and the door
opens a crack to reveal a woman's pale and haggard face. She stares out you with
a mixture of trepidation and mistrust.

>show bear to woman

(first taking the teddy bear)
(slipping the old tin into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
The woman's eyes widen in sudden recognition, and she takes the teddy bear from
you, turning it over to read the name stitched on the back. Tears well up in her
eyes, spilling over onto her pale, sunken cheeks. "This is my boy's," she whispers. "This is Jeffrey's."

She looks at you suddenly. "Where did you find this? Did you find..." but then she stops. She can see from your face that you have not found her son, only this one clue. But... even one clue, however tenuous, offers possibility. And the woman's face softens, just a little bit, with something that you guess hasn't made its home there in a very, very, long time:

Hope.

"Come in," she says softly. "Thank you for bringing me this. Please, come in."

She steps aside from the door, and you enter her home.

#11 Mill Town Road

A dirty, ramshackle home, scraped together out of the bits and ends of working-class poverty. The floor is warped and broken wood, bare dirt showing through the cracks between boards. Rags hang across the window in lieu of curtains. Over in the far corner is a rickety old stove; in the opposite corner a threadbare cot; it hits you suddenly that a family of three once lived, slept and ate all in this single room, which is slightly smaller than your bedroom back at the house.

The woman watches you expectantly.

On the threadbare cot is a teddy bear.

A set of grime-smeared overalls hangs on a hook next to the front door to the west.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>x overall

You can't see any such thing.

>x overalls

They look like a normal set of industrial overalls, the kind of uniform you'd see mill workers in. Stitched into the fabric just above the breast pocket is

the name "Max".

>look in overalls

In the overalls is a long steel key.

>get steel key

(the long steel key)

That key might just come in handy; while the woman is looking in the other direction, you quickly pluck it from the overall pocket.

Your score has just gone up by one point.

>put steel key on keyring

(the long steel key on the keyring)

The long steel key is now on the keyring.

>s

The front door is to the west.

>w

The woman attempts a wan smile as you make ready to leave. "Thank you," she says softly, indicating the stuffed bear. "If you discover anything else, please let me know."

Shanty Town

The road peters out at a wide clearing of rutted mud, flanked by uneven rows of decrepit, clapboard shacks. The town is quiet, almost deserted; only a few bits of loose tarpaper blowing listlessly in the wind betray the overall stillness.

>s

Entrance to the Paper Mill

The road turns southwest here and runs squarely through the front entrance to the old paper mill. A gate of heavy iron bars blocks the only opening into this charred fortress, although an overgrown path leads around the wall to the south. To the north, a rutted lane threads its way past a row of dilapidated shacks.

>s

The path curves southwest, leading you into an overgrown area behind the mill.

Bare Foundations

The foundations of an older structure lie crumbling in a sunken square of ground, hidden away behind the imposing shadow of the mill wall. Weeds push up through cracked and buckling slabs of concrete; twisted rebar and rusting pipes poke up like the legs of dead insects. The ruins are surrounded on all sides by dense thickets, although narrow, overgrown trails lead northeast and southeast through the underbrush.

>x ruins

The broken rubble is all that remains of whatever building once stood here.

>search thicket

Carefully pushing the prickly branches aside, you find a rusty metal hatch set into the base of the wall.

>unlock hatch

You go through all the keys on your keyring, trying each one in turn, and after several false attempts you discover that the long steel key fits the lock. You unlock the metal hatch.

>get lantern

Taken.

>turn on flashlight

The flashlight must not be quite as waterproof as you originally thought; the beam flickers unsteadily, and you have to bang it against the palm of your hand a couple of times to get it to work.

>n

(opening the metal hatch first)

Maintenance Access Tunnel

You are at the southern end of a long, narrow crawlway leading northward into the mill. All around you, through the metallic walls, you can hear the oppressive thumping and grinding of heavy machinery. The air in here is hot and smells of burnt engine oil.

A large metal valve wheel juts out from the middle of one of the many fat, sweating pipes lining the walls. Just to its left is a gauge of some sort.

The noise of machinery is growing steadily louder.

>x wheel

It's a large, spoked metal wheel, about a foot in diameter, for opening and shutting a valve somewhere inside the pipes.

The machines behind the walls are reaching a feverish pitch, and an unpleasant vibration ripples up and down the crawlway.

>wait

Time passes.

Just as the mechanical noises reach a crescendo, the pipes at the north end of the crawlway suddenly give vent to an enormous gout of superheated steam. The entire north half of the crawlway is momentarily filled with vapor and intense heat, which just as quickly dissipates. The noise behind the walls recedes to a calmer level, and the needle on the gauge swings back down to zero.

>n

The air grows hotter the farther in you go, and it is becoming difficult to breathe.

Maintenance Access Tunnel

You are roughly at the center of the access crawlway, which stretches north and south from here.

>save

Ok.

>n

Maintenance Access Tunnel

The north end of the access crawlway ends at a sturdy metal hatch. A thick haze of steam hangs in the air, and the heat is like an oven -- the walls and floor are almost blistering to the touch.

The hatch is closed.

>x hatch

The hatch is round and quite sturdy-looking. There is a handle on this side, and a small notice fixed to the wall nearby.

The noise of machinery is growing steadily louder.

The flashlight beam flickers uncertainly for a moment, then comes back a bit weaker than before.

>s

Maintenance Access Tunnel

You are roughly at the center of the access crawlway, which stretches north and south from here.

The machines behind the walls are reaching a feverish pitch, and an unpleasant vibration ripples up and down the crawlway.

It is now pitch dark in here!

>s

You stumble forward blindly...

Darkness

It is pitch dark, and you can't see a thing.

Just as the mechanical noises reach a crescendo, the pipes at the north end of the crawlway suddenly give vent to an enormous gout of superheated steam. The entire north half of the crawlway is momentarily filled with vapor and intense heat, which just as quickly dissipates. The noise behind the walls recedes to a calmer level.

>turn on flashlight

You flip the switch on and off uselessly. The water must have finally done your poor flashlight in.

>put flashlight in coat

(first taking the flashlight)

(slipping the keyring into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

You slip the flashlight into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>get lantern

You already have that.

The noise of machinery is growing steadily louder.

>light lantern with match

(first taking the book of matches)

You don't have a match.

The machines behind the walls are reaching a feverish pitch, and an unpleasant vibration ripples up and down the crawlway.

>get match

You already have that.

Just as the mechanical noises reach a crescendo, the pipes at the north end of the crawlway suddenly give vent to an enormous gout of superheated steam. The entire north half of the crawlway is momentarily filled with vapor and intense heat, which just as quickly dissipates. The noise behind the walls recedes to a calmer level.

>light match

One of the matches starts to burn.

Maintenance Access Tunnel

You are at the southern end of a long, narrow crawlway leading northward into the mill. All around you, through the metallic walls, you can hear the oppressive thumping and grinding of heavy machinery. The air in here is hot and smells of burnt engine oil.

A large metal valve wheel juts out from the middle of one of the many fat, sweating pipes lining the walls. Just to its left is a gauge of some sort.

>light lantern

The lantern is now lit.

The needle slowly creeps up the dial.

>blow out match

You blow the match out.

The noise of machinery is growing steadily louder.

>drop match

Dropped.

The machines behind the walls are reaching a feverish pitch, and an unpleasant

vibration ripples up and down the crawlway.

>inv

You are wearing your trenchcoat, your clothes, a silver locket and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a lantern (providing light), a hastily written letter and a hooded robe.

The pockets of your trenchcoat contain a flashlight, a keyring, on which are eight keys (a long steel key, a tarnished bronze key, a small steel key, an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar), an old tin (which is closed), a meat hook, a tattered drawing, a strange metal flute, a puzzle box (which is open but empty), a towel, a gold locket, a newspaper, a letter opener, an animal's skull, a slip of paper, Michael's faculty card, a family album, a bundle of soggy pages, a torn journal and your umbrella.

Just as the mechanical noises reach a crescendo, the pipes at the north end of the crawlway suddenly give vent to an enormous gout of superheated steam. The entire north half of the crawlway is momentarily filled with vapor and intense heat, which just as quickly dissipates. The noise behind the walls recedes to a calmer level, and the needle on the gauge swings back down to zero.

>look

Maintenance Access Tunnel

You are at the southern end of a long, narrow crawlway leading northward into the mill. All around you, through the metallic walls, you can hear the oppressive thumping and grinding of heavy machinery. The air in here is hot and smells of burnt engine oil.

A large metal valve wheel juts out from the middle of one of the many fat, sweating pipes lining the walls. Just to its left is a gauge of some sort.

You can also see a book of matches here.

>get book of matches

Taken.

The needle slowly creeps up the dial.

>turn wheel

The metal wheel is incredibly hot, and you jerk your blistered hands away.

The noise of machinery is growing steadily louder.

>put towel on wheel

(first taking the towel)

(slipping the hastily written letter into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a

hand free)

You drape the towel over the valve wheel.

The machines behind the walls are reaching a feverish pitch, and an unpleasant

vibration ripples up and down the crawlway.

>turn wheel

You grip the sides of the wheel -- even through the towel, you can feel the heat

radiating from it -- and haul it clockwise with all your strength. It squeaks

reluctantly at first, then gives all at once. From down the corridor you hear an

enormous hissing rush as steam is vented from the pipes, and the needle in the

gauge drops abruptly down to zero.

Your score has just gone up by one point.

>get towel

Taken.

>put towel in coat

You slip the towel into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>n

The air grows hotter the farther in you go, and it is becoming difficult to

breathe.

Maintenance Access Tunnel

You are roughly at the center of the access crawlway, which stretches north and

south from here.

>n

Maintenance Access Tunnel

The north end of the access crawlway ends at a sturdy metal hatch. A thick haze of steam hangs in the air, and the heat is like an oven -- the walls and floor are almost blistering to the touch.

The hatch is closed.

>open hatch

You shove the handle down, and it remains in the lowered position when you let go. Behind the metal walls you can hear mechanisms clanking into gear, and a faint, rapid ticking sound.

>wait

Time passes.

>wait

Time passes.

You hear a heavy clunking sound from within the hatch.

>n

(opening the hatch first)

With a sharp tug, the heavy metal door swings open.

Mill Floor

Waves of heat and noise assault you from every corner. Towering above you on all sides are the enormous vats, presses and sundry machinery, the ever-churning inner workings of the paper mill. An opening in the base of the south wall leads back to the maintenance crawlway, and narrow aisles lead in several other directions through the chugging machinery. A grilled catwalk high over your head provides a more direct route across the factory; however, you see no way to get up there from here.

A long chain dangles from overhead, its last few feet pooled on the floor next to a bank of controls.

>save

Ok.

Start of a transcript of

ANCHORHEAD

An interactive gothic by Michael S. Gentry

(Type HELP or ABOUT for some useful information.)

Release 5 / Serial number 990206 / Inform v6.15 Library 6/7

Standard interpreter 1.1 (4F) / Library serial number 970918

>look

Mill Floor

Waves of heat and noise assault you from every corner. Towering above you on all sides are the enormous vats, presses and sundry machinery, the ever-churning inner workings of the paper mill. An opening in the base of the south wall leads back to the maintenance crawlway, and narrow aisles lead in several other directions through the chugging machinery. A grilled catwalk high over your head provides a more direct route across the factory; however, you see no way to get up there from here.

A long chain dangles from overhead, its last few feet pooled on the floor next to a bank of controls.

>x vats

The machines squat like gigantic mechanical trolls all around you, ceaselessly clanking, groaning, vibrating and spitting steam.

Strange; although you could hardly call yourself acquainted with the workings of a paper mill, you can't help but notice that none of the machines you can see seem to be involved with anything like the making of paper. At any rate, you don't see any paper -- or any wood pulp, or any dye, or anything else you might reasonably assume a paper mill would have on hand -- anywhere. The machines are definitely busy churning out something -- but what?

>x catwalk

You needn't worry about that.

>look up

You can just make out the system of pulleys through which the chain is threaded,
way up at the ceiling.

>x chain

It runs all the way up past the catwalk to the ceiling. Its links look somewhat greasy.

>climb up on chain

You can't see any such thing.

>up

You can't go that way.

>climb

(the newspaper)

You won't get very far climbing that.

>climb chain

The chain is too greasy for you to get a good grip on it.

>tie chain on me

You wrap the chain around your waist a few times.

>x controls

The waist-high bank has all number of arcane lights, dials and gauges on it;
however, the only two controls that bear mentioning are a lever and a large red button.

>x lever

The lever juts out about a foot from the panel.

>x button

It's a large button, colored bright red.

>push button

The control panel emits a nasty buzzing sound.

>push button

The control panel emits a nasty buzzing sound.

>pull lever

You feel something click as the lever activates a hidden releasing mechanism;
then, suddenly, the chain pulls taut and jerks you off your feet, hauling you up

through the air -- narrowly missing a piece of heavy equipment sailing past you on its way down -- all the way up to the catwalk, where the chain slows and finally stops, depositing you safely, though left somewhat breathless, on the grilled surface.

Catwalk

The catwalk stretches north, a narrow ribbon of metal grillwork dangling fifty feet over the factory floor and shuddering dangerously in time with the machines beneath it. There are no railings of any kind. At the far end you can see what looks like a wide balcony with several large banks of equipment.

A long chain dangles from overhead, its last few feet wrapped securely around your waist.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>untie chain

You disentangle yourself from the chain.

>n

Workshop

Several workbenches and racks of arcane electronic equipment have been dragged together to form a sort of open laboratory on this wide balcony overlooking the mill. A wide table dominates the area, strewn with precision tools, bits of wire, and scribbled calculations. To the south, a narrow catwalk hangs above the mill floor, and a metal ladder leads down into the machinery below.

Prominent among the strange tools scattered across the table is a strange caliper-like instrument.

On the workbenches are some notes and some arcane electronic equipment.

One of the racks contains a number of circular mirrors, stacked side by side like dishes in a dishwasher.

Tacked up on the wall is a large technical blueprint.

>x workbenches

The benches are strewn with scribbled notes and bits of arcane electronic equipment.

>x notes

The notes are a mess of incomprehensibly scrawled numbers; long printouts of technical data, tangled diagrams and complex formulae. Even if you had the slightest idea what all the calculations meant, the numbers are barely even legible.

Lifting up a sheet of cribbed equations, you notice what looks to be a general memo to all mill workers.

>read notes

The notes are a mess of incomprehensibly scrawled numbers; long printouts of technical data, tangled diagrams and complex formulae. Even if you had the slightest idea what all the calculations meant, the numbers are barely even legible.

>read memo

It's a flimsy sheet of paper with the following message printed on it:

!!NOTICE TO ALL BRETHREN!!

The focusing mirrors must be kept absolutely clean at ALL TIMES. Even the slightest smudge of dirt or grease can create dangerous instabilities in the refraction patterns.

All mirrors must receive ionization treatment as a matter of course. As an extra precaution, however, always use sterilized surgical gloves when handling them.

In the Name of He Who Is Named Not,
the Mgt.

>x blueprint

The blueprint is a technical schematic for some extremely complicated device, the exact purpose of which is anything but clear. It looks a bit like a telescope, a bit like a microwave oven turned inside out, and a bit like the "industrial laser" from Goldfinger. The inner workings of the device involve a complicated arrangement of lenses and mirrors and a hopeless tangle of circuitry that vaguely resembles several dozen street maps of Manhattan laid across

each
other. Some of the notations on the circuitry don't even look like
technical
symbols; they look more like cabbalistic runes.

Next to what must represent the main focusing mirror of the device,
someone has
written the number "0.0113"; someone else, in another handwriting, has
scratched
that number out and written below it, "0.0157".

>read blueprint

The blueprint is a technical schematic for some extremely complicated
device,
the exact purpose of which is anything but clear. It looks a bit like a
telescope, a bit like a microwave oven turned inside out, and a bit like
the
"industrial laser" from Goldfinger. The inner workings of the device
involve a
complicated arrangement of lenses and mirrors and a hopeless tangle of
circuitry
that vaguely resembles several dozen street maps of Manhattan laid across
each
other. Some of the notations on the circuitry don't even look like
technical
symbols; they look more like cabbalistic runes.

Next to what must represent the main focusing mirror of the device,
someone has
written the number "0.0113"; someone else, in another handwriting, has
scratched
that number out and written below it, "0.0157".

>x mirrors

Which do you mean, the mirror labeled #1, the mirror labeled #2, the
mirror
labeled #3 or the mirror labeled #4?

>x racks

The rack has four slots labeled one through four.

In the rack are four mirrors (the mirror labeled #1, the mirror labeled
#2, the
mirror labeled #3 and the mirror labeled #4).

>look

Workshop

Several workbenches and racks of arcane electronic equipment have been
dragged
together to form a sort of open laboratory on this wide balcony

overlooking the
mill. A wide table dominates the area, strewn with precision tools, bits
of
wire, and scribbled calculations. To the south, a narrow catwalk hangs
above the
mill floor, and a metal ladder leads down into the machinery below.

Prominent among the strange tools scattered across the table is a strange
caliper-like instrument.

On the workbenches are a printed memo, some notes and some arcane
electronic
equipment.

One of the racks contains a number of circular mirrors, stacked side by
side
like dishes in a dishwasher.

Tacked up on the wall is a large technical blueprint.

>x instrument

Which do you mean, the calipers or the strange metal flute?

>calipers

Made of stainless steel, molded in a strangely flowing, almost organic
design,
the calipers -- if that is what they are -- resemble no other tool you've
ever
seen. It has three independently adjustable arms, each ending in a needle-
point
pincer, which fold back on themselves at grotesque, asymmetrical angles
toward a
floating center point. There is a calibrated readout set near the base,
which
presumably provides a measure of whatever strange contortion of space is
occupied by whatever object is placed between the pincers at the tool's
other
end.

>get calipers

Taken.

>get memo

(slipping the book of matches into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a
hand
free)
Taken.

>get blueprint

(slipping the calipers into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand
free)

The blueprint curls up into a loose tube as you pull it from the wall.

>get mirror 1

(slipping the printed memo into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

You pick up the mirror labeled #1. The mirror is perfectly round and exquisitely polished. It is very slightly concave on its reflecting surface, distorting the edges of your face as you stare into it. On the back is a small label with the number 1 written on it.

>put mirror 1 in caliper

The instrument holds the mirror delicately clamped between its pincers; the readout reads "0.0118".

>read blueprint

You spread out the rolled-up blueprint to look it over.

The blueprint is a technical schematic for some extremely complicated device, the exact purpose of which is anything but clear. It looks a bit like a telescope, a bit like a microwave oven turned inside out, and a bit like the "industrial laser" from Goldfinger. The inner workings of the device involve a complicated arrangement of lenses and mirrors and a hopeless tangle of circuitry that vaguely resembles several dozen street maps of Manhattan laid across each other. Some of the notations on the circuitry don't even look like technical symbols; they look more like cabbalistic runes.

Next to what must represent the main focusing mirror of the device, someone has written the number "0.0113"; someone else, in another handwriting, has scratched that number out and written below it, "0.0157".

>put mirror 1 in slot

You put the mirror labeled #1 into the rack.

>get mirror 2

You pick up the mirror labeled #2. The mirror is perfectly round and exquisitely polished. It is very slightly concave on its reflecting surface, distorting the

edges of your face as you stare into it. On the back is a small label with the number 2 written on it.

>put mirror 2 in caliper

The instrument holds the mirror delicately clamped between its pincers; the readout reads "0.0157".

>think

You pause momentarily, lost in thought.

>sing

You try, but your heart's not in it.

>save

Ok.

>x mirror 2

The mirror is perfectly round and exquisitely polished. It is very slightly concave on its reflecting surface, distorting the edges of your face as you stare into it. On the back is a small label with the number 2 written on it.

>open tin

(first taking the old tin)
(slipping the blueprint into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
Taken.
You open the old tin, revealing a smelly quantity of fish oil.

>rub oil on mirror 2

(first getting some fish oil)
You dip your finger in and come up with a small glob of pungent fish oil.

You rub a small bit of fish oil onto the reflective surface of the mirror, leaving a barely perceptible smear.

>close tin

You close the old tin.

>put tin in coat

You slip the old tin into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>put mirror 2 in coat

You slip the mirror labeled #2 into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>inv

You are wearing your trenchcoat, your clothes, a silver locket and your

wedding
ring; in addition, you have in your hands a lantern (providing light) and
a
hooded robe.

The pockets of your trenchcoat contain the mirror labeled #2, an old tin
(which
is closed), a blueprint rolled into a loose tube, a printed memo, a pair
of
calipers, a book of matches with five matches left, a towel, a hastily
written
letter, a flashlight, a keyring, on which are eight keys (a long steel
key, a
tarnished bronze key, a small steel key, an old-fashioned brass key, a
small
copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the
cellar), a meat hook, a tattered drawing, a strange metal flute, a puzzle
box
(which is open but empty), a gold locket, a newspaper, a letter opener, an
animal's skull, a slip of paper, Michael's faculty card, a family album, a
bundle of soggy pages, a torn journal and your umbrella.

>look

Workshop

Several workbenches and racks of arcane electronic equipment have been
dragged
together to form a sort of open laboratory on this wide balcony
overlooking the
mill. A wide table dominates the area, strewn with precision tools, bits
of
wire, and scribbled calculations. To the south, a narrow catwalk hangs
above the
mill floor, and a metal ladder leads down into the machinery below.

On the workbenches are some notes and some arcane electronic equipment.

One of the racks contains a number of circular mirrors, stacked side by
side
like dishes in a dishwasher.

>x table

It's just an ordinary-looking table.

>x wire

You needn't worry about that.

>get wire

You needn't worry about that.

>x calculations

The notes are a mess of incomprehensibly scrawled numbers; long printouts of technical data, tangled diagrams and complex formulae. Even if you had the slightest idea what all the calculations meant, the numbers are barely even legible.

>s

Catwalk

The catwalk stretches north, a narrow ribbon of metal grillwork dangling fifty feet over the factory floor and shuddering dangerously in time with the machines beneath it. There are no railings of any kind. At the far end you can see what looks like a wide balcony with several large banks of equipment.

A long chain dangles from overhead, its last few feet dangling in the air just beyond the edge of the catwalk. Its other end is looped over a pulley system up in the ceiling, and continues all the way down, past the catwalk, to the floor.

>save

Ok.

>d

You slide down the chain, landing awkwardly on the large block of heavy equipment at the bottom.

Mill Floor, on the block of heavy equipment
Waves of heat and noise assault you from every corner. Towering above you on all sides are the enormous vats, presses and sundry machinery, the ever-churning inner workings of the paper mill. An opening in the base of the south wall leads back to the maintenance crawlway, and narrow aisles lead in several other directions through the chugging machinery. A grilled catwalk high over your head provides a more direct route across the factory; however, you see no way to get up there from here.

>jump off equipment

You get off the block of heavy equipment.

Mill Floor

Waves of heat and noise assault you from every corner. Towering above you

on all
sides are the enormous vats, presses and sundry machinery, the ever-
churning
inner workings of the paper mill. An opening in the base of the south wall
leads
back to the maintenance crawlway, and narrow aisles lead in several other
directions through the chugging machinery. A grilled catwalk high over
your head
provides a more direct route across the factory; however, you see no way
to get
up there from here.

A large block of heavy equipment sits here next to the control bank,
attached to
the end of the chain.

>s

Maintenance Access Tunnel

The north end of the access crawlway ends at a sturdy metal hatch. A thick
haze
of steam hangs in the air, and the heat is like an oven -- the walls and
floor
are almost blistering to the touch.

The hatch is open.

>s

Maintenance Access Tunnel

You are roughly at the center of the access crawlway, which stretches
north and
south from here.

>s

Maintenance Access Tunnel

You are at the southern end of a long, narrow crawlway leading northward
into
the mill. All around you, through the metallic walls, you can hear the
oppressive thumping and grinding of heavy machinery. The air in here is
hot and
smells of burnt engine oil.

A large metal valve wheel juts out from the middle of one of the many fat,
sweating pipes lining the walls. Just to its left is a gauge of some sort.

>s

Bare Foundations

The foundations of an older structure lie crumbling in a sunken square of

ground, hidden away behind the imposing shadow of the mill wall. Weeds push up through cracked and buckling slabs of concrete; twisted rebar and rusting pipes poke up like the legs of dead insects. The ruins are surrounded on all sides by dense thickets, although narrow, overgrown trails lead northeast and southeast through the underbrush.

Set into the base of the mill wall, nearly covered by the thickets, is a metal hatch.

>ne

The path curves to the north, leading you around to the front of the mill.

Entrance to the Paper Mill

The road turns southwest here and runs squarely through the front entrance to the old paper mill. A gate of heavy iron bars blocks the only opening into this charred fortress, although an overgrown path leads around the wall to the south.

To the north, a rutted lane threads its way past a row of dilapidated shacks.

>sw

(opening the gate first)
It seems to be locked.

>open gate

It seems to be locked.

>unlock gate

(first taking the keyring)
You go through all the keys on your keyring, trying each one in turn, but none of the keys seem to fit.

>x mill

The paper mill is a sprawling, box-like conglomeration of soot-stained brick, surmounted by blackened stumps of smokestacks that continuously belch fat, rolling clouds of smoke into the leaden sky.

>e

As you cross the railroad tracks, the air seems to lift slightly, becoming more breathable once again.

Mill Road

The road carries you across a desolate heath of gray, windswept grass. To the south, the black, jagged outline of Anchorhead's steep roofs and sharp, leaning gables cuts across the horizon. The road forks here to the west and east, heading across the railroad tracks in one direction, out toward the seashore in the other.

A distant flicker of movement draws your eyes to the faraway lighthouse. A lone figure, tiny in the distance, makes its way stealthily around the small spur of rock at the end of the breakwater and slips inside the door at the tower's base. It's impossible to see the person's face from this distance, but the hair, the way he walks... you'd swear it was Michael.

>e

The road heads out over a narrow breakwater jutting out into the ocean.

Breakwater

You are picking your way across the breakwater's bare, rocky spine, where the road has diminished to little more than a pair of dusty ruts. A hundred yards to the northeast, at the breakwater's far end, the lonely stone tower of Anchorhead's lighthouse stands vigil against the ocean.

>ne

At the Foot of the Lighthouse

You stand in a circular clearing among the stones, surrounded on nearly every side by the sea. Before you looms the ancient, massive lighthouse, a vertiginous pillar of pale brick jabbing defiantly up at the sky. The road from the southwest ends here, although it looks as though you could pick your way down the rocks to the southeast, around the structure's base.

The great bronze door of the lighthouse stands slightly ajar, revealing a narrow rectangle of blackness within.

>e

Bottom of the Lighthouse

The sound of the ocean is muffled behind the thick cinderblock walls, and

the
air is damp and heavy. You can almost feel the weight of two hundred feet
of
hoary old whitewashed brick pressing down on you from above. To the west,
a
narrow strip of dim light marks the exit. Cracked concrete steps lead up.

>inv

You are wearing your trenchcoat, your clothes, a silver locket and your
wedding
ring; in addition, you have in your hands a keyring, on which are eight
keys (a
long steel key, a tarnished bronze key, a small steel key, an old-
fashioned
brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the
house and
a key to the cellar), a lantern (providing light) and a hooded robe.

The pockets of your trenchcoat contain the mirror labeled #2, an old tin
(which
is closed), a blueprint rolled into a loose tube, a printed memo, a pair
of
calipers, a book of matches with five matches left, a towel, a hastily
written
letter, a flashlight, a meat hook, a tattered drawing, a strange metal
flute, a
puzzle box (which is open but empty), a gold locket, a newspaper, a letter
opener, an animal's skull, a slip of paper, Michael's faculty card, a
family
album, a bundle of soggy pages, a torn journal and your umbrella.

>put robe in coat

No matter how tightly you roll up the heavy robe, it is still too big to
fit in
your pocket.

>up

**You climb the winding stairs in a gradual spiral around the inner
circumference**

of the tower, and finally emerge, breathless, at the top.

Top of the Lighthouse

The stairs give onto a wide, circular chamber surrounded by windows. The
glass
is old and streaked with grime, but you still have to catch your breath at
the
magnificence of the view. In one direction, the dying heath and the
stunted
cluster of buildings that is Anchorhead; in the other, the ocean like a
vast,
undulating blanket.

Sitting in the middle of the room is what looks like a swivel mount of some kind, although nothing is mounted on it now. Looking up, you see that it rests directly below a large, hexagonal skylight.

>x mount

The mounting is ring-shaped, about three feet in diameter, and is designed to allow whatever is to be mounted on it to turn freely in all directions. It was probably originally intended to hold the beacon when the lighthouse was still in operation.

>x skylight

That big, churning hole in the sky is perfectly framed by the hexagonal skylight.

>x glass

(the lantern)

It's an old-fashioned hurricane lamp, with a tall glass chimney to protect it from the wind. The cotton wick burns fitfully in its reservoir of cheap oil.

>x windows

The view -- which encompasses the ocean, the heath, the town of Anchorhead and even the distant paper mill -- is magnificent.

>look south

The great, gray ocean stretches out as far as you can see, merging with the clouds on the horizon.

>look east

The great, gray ocean stretches out as far as you can see, merging with the clouds on the horizon.

>look west

The undulating heath stretches away to the west and northwest, an unending carpet of colorless grass.

>look north

The great, gray ocean stretches out as far as you can see, merging with the clouds on the horizon.

>d

You hastily descend the winding steps to the bottom.

Bottom of the Lighthouse

The sound of the ocean is muffled behind the thick cinderblock walls, and the air is damp and heavy. You can almost feel the weight of two hundred feet of hoary old whitewashed brick pressing down on you from above. To the west, a narrow strip of dim light marks the exit. Cracked concrete steps lead up.

There is a faint scuffling noise from the shadows behind you -- before you can turn around, something slams into the back of your head with brutal force. Sparks go off in front of your eyes, and you fall to the cool concrete floor with the world reeling under you. As you kneel there, dazed and struggling not to pass out, your assailant walks slowly around you. He pauses, as if wondering whether or not to finish you off.

Terror and nausea wash over you in alternating waves. You are too weak to look up and see his face, but you recognize his shoes easily enough. After all, you helped him pick them out not three weeks ago.

More footsteps come down the stairs, and you sense a number of men standing around you. "We'll take care of her, Your Holiness," rasps an old, weathered voice. Rough hands start to drag you to your feet.

"No," says Michael, and the hands pause.

"Your Holiness, she has seen too much," protests the raspy voice. "She must be killed."

"That won't be necessary," Michael says. "Put her somewhere out of the way, where she can't get into any more trouble. I'll deal with her myself... after the Blessed Event."

The horror and pain are too much; the darkness overwhelms you. You try to catch a glimpse of your husband's face as the men drag you away, but in your clouding

vision all you can see are a pair of burning, red-rimmed eyes...

[* THE LAST NIGHT *

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far... but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

-- H.P. Lovecraft]

Numb.

You float slowly to consciousness like a bubble rising to the surface of some warm, thick oil. You are numb.

For several minutes, that is as much as your battered mind can handle, that one thought: you are numb.

Then your head becomes a bit clearer, and you connect the thought with the sensations trying to make their way through your foggy brain. You are numb. Your arms. You can't feel your arms at all.

You try to get up but you can't move; you merely flop over onto your stomach like a struggling worm. You roll back over and sit up, and at last your vision clears and you finally get a good look around, and the horror of your situation finally slams home...

Padded Cell

You are in a padded cell, the kind typically reserved for raving lunatics. The room is barely eight feet by eight feet square, with walls and floor of concrete covered with thick, quilted padding. The door in the west wall is also covered with padding, except for a tiny observation window about five feet up, from which a feeble light trickles in.

>x walls

You can't see any such thing.

>x wall

You can't see any such thing.

>x door

It's a sturdy-looking wooden door, padded on the inside. There is a tiny observation window about five feet up. The door is closed.

It looks like the door might be hanging a bit crooked on its hinges.

>look through windows

You can't see any such thing.

>look through window

You can see an empty hallway outside. Across the hall is another door.

>x window

The tiny window is made of thick, reinforced glass.

>break door

You take a few steps back, draw a deep breath, and hurl your body at the door.

It shudders violently, and you thought you felt something give.

An itch strikes you suddenly on the inside of your left elbow. For the next

minute or two you can only clench your teeth in agony, powerless to scratch it,

until the wretched sensation goes away on its own.

>break door

With a defiant shout, you launch your body at the door. Something snaps (the door? you think incoherently, or your shoulder?), and the door flies open, sending you sprawling out into the hallway.

Hallway

A grim hallway of concrete and industrial green tiles. This is the north end;

the hallway runs south from here. Doors lead east and west, and a narrow, barred window to the north looks out onto the dark corner outside.

A shard of glass from the broken window lies on the floor.

>get glass

(the shard of glass)

Painstakingly, you get down on your knees and very, very carefully pick up the shard of glass with your teeth.

>x window

Which do you mean, the observation window or the broken window?

>broken window

Building maintenance is obviously not a big priority at this institution. The

wall around the window casement is cracked in several places -- some of the

cracks are quite large. The window pane itself is broken in, probably by a misguided bird sometime in the recent past.

>x cracks

A jagged network of cracks has spread out around the bottom edge of the window

as the wall slowly settles. One crack is nearly a quarter-inch wide.

>put glass in crack

(the shard of glass in the crack)

You wedge the shard of glass into the crack, its sharp edge pointing outward.

>cut jacket with glass

(the shard of glass)

Carefully, you lean back against the wall and start shrugging your shoulders

against the jutting glass shard. After what seems like an eternity, you feel the

straps begin to fray and loosen, until suddenly the strait jacket grows slack

and slips free. You shake the horrible garment off in disgust, giving it a vicious kick for good measure as you gingerly rub feeling back into your arms.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>x closet

The closet door is closed.

>open closet

You open the closet, revealing a silver locket, your trenchcoat, a hooded robe,
a lantern and a keyring.

You hear strange, gibbering laughter coming from down the hall.

>wear coat

(first taking the trenchcoat)

You put on the trenchcoat.

>get all from closet

silver locket: You remove the silver locket from the closet.

hooded robe: You remove the hooded robe from the closet.

lantern: You remove the lantern from the closet.

keyring: You remove the keyring from the closet.

>look

Hallway

A grim hallway of concrete and industrial green tiles. This is the north end;
the hallway runs south from here. Doors lead east and west, and a narrow, barred
window to the north looks out onto the dark corner outside.

There is a jagged shard of glass poking out of the wall here, underneath the
window.

You can also see a strait jacket here.

>x jacket

It's a canvas strait jacket, the kind used to immobilize violent or
spastic
mental patients. It fastens up the back with a complex series of buckles
and
straps, while the sleeves cross the chest and fasten around back, making
it
quite impossible to escape. The thing is useless now, of course, since all
the
straps have been cut through.

>s

Hallway

A grim hallway of concrete and industrial green tiles, running north and
south
from here. Doors lead east and west.

>s

Hallway

A grim hallway of concrete and industrial green tiles. This is the south end;
the hall runs north from here. Doors lead east and west, and a doorway to the south leads to the top of a stairway.

Something about the observation window in the western cell door catches your eye; it looks like it has blood on it.

>x window

Which do you mean, the west observation window or the east observation window?

>west

The thick, reinforced glass of the tiny observation window is shattered, with only the criss-crossing reinforcement wire holding it together. It bulges outward slightly, as well. An ugly brown smear of dried blood obscures the inner surface of the glass. With mounting disgust, you notice several strands of dark hair still stuck to the congealed stain.

>open west door

The door is latched with a simple sliding bolt.

>unlock west door

You unlock the west cell door.

>open west door

You open the west cell door.

>w**Padded Cell**

Another padded cell, much like the rest. There is a door in the east wall.

The padding in this room seems a bit worse for the wear; murky bloodstains spatter the canvas near the door, and there is a large tear down in the corner of the cell, with bits of stuffing leaking out.

>x tear

The canvas is frayed and jaggedly torn. It looks as though someone might have gnawed through it with their teeth.

>look in tear

In the ragged tear is a torn square of canvas.

>get square

(slipping the silver locket into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)

As you carefully pull the ragged piece of canvas from its hiding place, something pricks you sharply on the finger. You jerk your hand away; then, peering into the tear once again, you notice an old, crusted needle embedded in the stuffing.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>x square

It's roughly six inches to a side and covered front and back with uneven, barely legible handwriting. The letters are the murky brown color of blood.

>x needle

It's about two inches long, very old and crusted with what looks like dried blood. The point is worn down but still sharp.

>read square

It's roughly six inches to a side and covered front and back with uneven, barely legible handwriting. The letters are the murky brown color of blood.

"My name is Edward Verlac, and this is my testament:

"I am utterly, utterly mad.

"They have locked me in here for my own safety -- and for the safety of others.

My arms are bound in a strait jacket. Yet this is no less than I deserve.

I am

writing this using a needle dropped carelessly by one of the orderlies some

weeks ago; biting my lip to draw blood for the ink, I hold the tiny steel quill

beneath my teeth to write. This exhaustive task shall be my last on earth; when

I am finished, I shall dash my brains out against the cell window. The last of

the Verlacs will be dead, and the world made a slightly brighter place thereby.

"Know this: I did not slip into madness through any weakness or congenital defect (except insofar as my blood is indelibly tainted with the cursed ichor of

the Verlac line) -- I was driven mad by the spectre of my great-great

ancestor,
Croseus Verlac. For generations that fiend has traveled down the family
line,
passing from body to body in a hideous, incestuous ritual whereby he
impregnates
his own daughter, then projects his black soul into the innocent body of
his
infant grandson. I myself was horrified to discover that I am in fact the
progeny of my own grandfather, Mordecai Verlac, and his wretched,
tormented
daughter -- my mother, Anna. The experiment failed on the first attempt,
producing William, my sickly, malformed elder brother whom I never knew.
William, however, died while still a toddler -- or so my mother has always
told
me -- and the next unholy coupling resulted in me.

"From as early as I can remember, I could feel the lurking presence of my
grandfather, who died the day I was born, and who I now realize was little
more
than a fleshly disguise for the pernicious warlock Croseus. He stalked the
boundaries of my mind, seeking a means of entrance, of condemning my soul
to
limbo and taking up a fresh, new abode in my young limbs. His evil, red-
rimmed
eyes haunted my every dream and o'ershadowed even my waking hours. The
amulet my
mother gave me while I was still in the crib protected me -- for the old
man
cannot abide its presence, and must flee all who wear it -- but Mother
died
while I was still young, and since then my folly has brought tragedy to
myself
and to all those I love.

"The memory of my mother's urgent warnings faded soon after her death. I
became
embarrassed by the scandal that seemed to hover over my family name like a
pall,
and was mortified by the superstitious trinket that I still wore around my
neck,
as if in ignorant servitude to those old myths. The red-rimmed eyes had
not
given me nightmares since my twelfth birthday, and I dismissed them as an
immature fancy that had passed along with my boyhood. At the age of 21, I
pawned
the amulet at a magic shop somewhere in town, and thereby sealed my doom.

"For ten years I have resisted Croseus' demonic encroachment upon my mind,
my
soul, my very being, with only the strength of my will. It was not enough.
I

found my mind flooded at the oddest times with strange, antiquarian memories; my speech and mannerisms lapsed into uncharacteristic, archaic patterns; and worst of all, I found myself looking at my dear daughter Gertrude -- only seven years old! -- in the most unwholesome way, with the most unmentionable ideas creeping through my subconscious.

"I scoured every street in this cursed town, looking for that magic shop, but I have never found it. In desperation I began delving into old histories and forbidden genealogies, researching the history of the dread Verlac name for some solution to my plight. I discovered no answers, only the horrors I have just written of. But I also discovered something worse -- the ultimate purpose behind the old demon's nefarious bodysnatching!

"He plans to unleash a primordial evil such that the earth could not possibly survive. I have seen the plans and the blueprints; I have read the dread tome in my great-great grandfather's church; I have used the obsidian lens that is not true obsidian, and I have looked upon what that madman means to draw down onto this earth! He and this town, his foul congregation of fanatics and madmen! They are all a part of it! They have been watching me, waiting for me to change, waiting for the return of their monstrous high priest!!

"It was then that I realized that killing only myself would not be enough; for the degenerate inhabitants of this town would hunt down my family and wreak a terrible vengeance if I took from them their Messiah. And besides; who could say whether the crafty devil Croseus might not concoct some new way to enter the world, through a new body -- through that of one of my daughters, perhaps? The ritual has always demanded a grandson, but Croseus was never one to let such a trivial inconvenience stop him. He would find a way. He always returns to his blood.

"I did the only thing I could do -- Julia, I am so terribly sorry, but I will be with you soon -- I could not let him have you, or Gertrude or Sonia -- and I will not let him have me. Say good-bye to the last of the Verlacs -- there will be no blood for him once I am gone."

>get needle

(slipping the lantern into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
Taken.

>inv

You are wearing your trenchcoat, your clothes and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a crusty needle, a torn square of canvas, a keyring, on which are eight keys (a long steel key, a tarnished bronze key, a small steel key, an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar) and a hooded robe.

The pockets of your trenchcoat contain a lantern, a silver locket, the mirror labeled #2, an old tin (which is closed), a blueprint rolled into a loose tube, a printed memo, a pair of calipers, a book of matches with five matches left, a towel, a hastily written letter, a flashlight, a meat hook, a tattered drawing, a strange metal flute, a puzzle box (which is open but empty), a gold locket, a newspaper, a letter opener, an animal's skull, a slip of paper, Michael's faculty card, a family album, a bundle of soggy pages, a torn journal and your umbrella.

>put canvas square in coat

You slip the torn square of canvas into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>put needle in coat

You slip the crusty needle into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

>e

Hallway

A grim hallway of concrete and industrial green tiles. This is the south end;
the hall runs north from here. Doors lead east and west, and a doorway to

the
south leads to the top of a stairway.

Something about the observation window in the western cell door catches
your
eye; it looks like it has blood on it.

>s

You are stopped halfway to the stairs by a loud banging noise behind you.

You turn around -- there it is again. A loud, shuddering bang, like
something
heavy slamming into something wooden -- and you see a cell door halfway
down the
hall shiver in its frame.

Looks like someone else is trying out your brilliant escape plan.

The door is hit a third time, the latch snaps and the door flies open, and
a
filthy, ragged man staggers out into the hall. You have just enough time
to
notice -- with no small amount of disquiet -- that the man is not wearing
a
strait jacket, and then he looks up at you and grins an utterly psychotic
grin.

The madman hops awkwardly toward you, giggling and dripping saliva from
his
blood-smeared chin.

>s

Top of Stairs

You are at the top of a stairwell leading down to the asylum's ground
floor. A
hallway lined with doors leads north.

The madman hops awkwardly toward you, giggling and dripping saliva from
his
blood-smeared chin.

>d

Bottom of Stairs

You are at the bottom of a stairwell leading up to the asylum's second
floor. A
hallway leads north.

The madman follows you at a wary distance.

>get lantern from coat

You remove the lantern from the trenchcoat.

The madman keeps a wary distance, giggling quietly to himself

>light match

(first taking the book of matches)

One of the matches starts to burn.

>light lantern

The lantern is now lit.

>n

Hallway

A grim hallway of concrete and industrial green tiles. This is the south end;
the hall runs north from here. A doorway to the south leads to the bottom of a
stairway.

The madman lurches after you.

Ouch! You drop the match as it burns down to your fingers.

>n

Hallway

A grim hallway of concrete and industrial green tiles. The hallway runs south
from here; to the north, the hallway ends at the barred gate leading to the
lobby.

The orderly is lying face down in a pool of blood, several feet beyond the
barred gate.

The orderly's porno magazine lies discarded on the floor, just outside the
barred gate.

A large key dangles from the orderly's belt.

The madman follows you at a wary distance.

"Yummy," whispers the madman to himself. "Oh, yummy, yummy..."

>get magazine

(slipping the keyring into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand
free)

You reach through the bars and snag the magazine.

>x magazine

"Juggs". How charming.

>read magazine

There's not a whole lot in this magazine that you actually read. The target audience for this sort of thing is generally more interested in the pictures than in the articles.

The madman hops about, just out of reach.

>give magazine to madman

The madman snatches the magazine from your hand and begins pawing through it like an over-sexed adolescent, giggling and occasionally squeezing his crotch.

The madman hops about, just out of reach.

>get large key

You pick up the cell key. Presumably, it opens the barred gates, providing access into (or out of) the asylum.

The madman giggles maniacally to himself, flipping through the pages of the magazine and drooling uncontrollably.

>put large key on keyring

The cell key is now on the keyring.

The madman giggles maniacally to himself, flipping through the pages of the magazine and drooling uncontrollably.

>unlock gate

(first taking the keyring)

You go through all the keys on your keyring, trying each one in turn, and after several false attempts you discover that the cell key fits the lock. You unlock the barred gate.

>n

The madman, noticing you trying to sneak off, tosses the magazine aside and hobbles after you.
(opening the barred gate first)

Waiting Room

Ugly, mint-green tiles and walls of whitewashed cinderblock comprise the decor

of this inhospitable waiting room. A hard little sofa upholstered in avocado vinyl and a feebly struggling potted palm are provided for the comfort of visitors, although you get the feeling that few inmates of this institution are fortunate enough to have visitors. A metal gate bars entrance to a southern passageway, which you assume leads to the inmates' section. The exit lies north.

The orderly is lying face down in a pool of blood in the middle of the room.

The orderly's name tag lies on the floor nearby.

The madman follows you at a wary distance.

The madman stops, stoops down, and picks a bit of gristly stuff out of the back of the orderly's head. He pops it into his mouth and chews it rapidly, rubbing his belly.

>x orderly

The orderly lies face down in a pool of his own congealed blood, the back of his skull savagely beaten into a wet, churned mass.

Airy strains of vacuous elevator music waft through the room from invisible speakers.

>x name tag

It reads: "CHUCK".

>get name tag

(slipping the book of matches into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
Taken.

>n

The rain is still coming down, so you open your umbrella.
(first taking the umbrella)
(slipping the keyring into the pocket of your trenchcoat to get a hand free)
Taken.

Asylum Courtyard

The grim, white-washed edifice of Danvers Asylum bounds this tiny, shadowed

courtyard to the south, its narrow, barred windows staring blankly down at you
like ranks of shriveled, empty eye sockets. You can escape through a narrow
gateway in the high, brick wall to the north.

The madman comes prancing out the front door of the asylum, and suddenly stops
dead in his tracks. He looks around, utterly dumbfounded. He looks up at the
sky, and feels the raindrops striking his face. Slowly it dawns on his addled
brain that he is outside; that he is, in fact, free.

With a wild whoop of pure joy, the madman hobbles away down the street, laughing
and chattering to himself with such unabashed happiness that for a moment you
almost forget that you have just let loose a dangerous and quite probably homicidal psychotic into the world at large.

Then again, you think, in this town he might just fit right in.

A sudden gust of rain puts the lantern out.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>n

Dark Corner

The rooftops above you lean so close together as to nearly block out the sky
altogether, making this a particularly dark and unpleasant section of the city.
The street leads away to the east, and a shadowy driveway leads through a high
brick wall to the south.

A sudden gust of wind suddenly snatches the umbrella from your hands.

>save

Ok.

>remove coat

You take off the trenchcoat.

>wear robe

You put on the hooded robe.

The rain slackens off momentarily to a weak drizzle, then returns afresh in a

brief, freezing downpour.

>inv

You are wearing a hooded robe, your clothes and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a name tag, a lantern and your trenchcoat.

>e

Town Square

A wide expanse of uneven pavestones lies open to the sky, bordered on all sides by the leaning, steep-roofed architecture that looms over everything in this city. The municipal courthouse stands at the south end of the square, next to the mouth of a dark, narrow alley to the southwest. Avenues to the west and east lead back into the cramped and ingrown streets, while to the north lies Whateley Bridge.

In the center of the square, rising from a circular lawn of unhealthy-looking grass and weeds, stands a strange, stone obelisk. It seems to be a monument of some sort, although you can see no plaque or marker anywhere near it.

As you step into the open square you hear a sudden commotion -- several crowds of people are converging onto the town square from different directions. You can hear their shouts and see the flickering glow of their torches as the mob begins to swarm in from the north and east.

>wait

Time passes.

The obelisk glows red with the bloody light of their torches. They are almost here; you'd better find somewhere to hide, quickly.

>wait

Time passes.

Robed men brandishing torches pour into the square, rallying around the obelisk at its center. Several of them seem to be struggling with someone. You huddle back into the shadows, but no one seems to notice yet another robed

figure in
the midst of the crowd. For the moment, it seems, you are safe.

>wait

You wait, helplessly.

The struggling men step forward, and you can see they have the old bum
from the
vacant lot. His wrists are bound and his arms held by two cultists on
either
side. Although he screams and writhes with frantic desperation, the frail
old
drunkard is no match for his captors. Someone raises his hands for silence
--
you can't quite see him from where you are -- and the mob quiets down.
Even the
old bum's screams lower to a fearful whimpering.

Overhead, the swollen clouds flicker ominously with a greenish haze of
sheet
lightning.

>wait

You wait, helplessly.

"My brethren," intones the leader, "we are gathered here to mete out
bloody
justice upon one who has sinned against us. This one," -- he jabs a finger
at
the old bum -- "has divulged our secrets to an outsider and betrayed the
sacred
trust of our brotherhood! For this, his soul must be condemned forever,
embraced
and encysted within the necrotic folds of the Womb of Nehilim!"

At this, the crowd lets loose with a roar of approval, while the old bum
throws
back his head and shrieks helplessly into the storm.

>wait

You wait, helplessly.

The cultists drag the bum over to the monument and prepare to lift him up.
Suddenly, he makes a break for it, bolting through the pressing crowd and
running, by some grotesque twist of luck, straight at you.

The old man stops short. The flickering torchlight illuminates your face,
and
his eyes widen in recognition. He opens his mouth to speak...

And four burly cultists tackle him simultaneously, pulling him down. As

the old
man's body hits the ground, a small, shiny object falls out of the bum's
clothes
and bounces out across the cobblestones, unnoticed by all.

The cultists carry the bum back and lift him up onto the monument, hanging
him
by the wrists from the iron ring set into its tip.

>put all in pocket

name tag: You slip the name tag into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

lantern: You slip the lantern into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

"Please," sobs the old man pitifully, "please, I didn't, I swear, I didn't
tell

nobody nothing, so I didn't! I SWEAR TO GOD I DIDN'T TELL -- "

Before the poor old man can finish his plea, a dozen cultists brandishing
long
metal rods begin brutally beating him. You avert your eyes; his screams
are
quickly cut off as his ribs are staved in, and soon all you can hear are
the
horrible thuds, and the wet snapping sound of breaking bones.

>look

Town Square

A wide expanse of uneven pavestones lies open to the sky, bordered on all
sides
by the leaning, steep-roofed architecture that looms over everything in
this
city. The municipal courthouse stands at the south end of the square, next
to
the mouth of a dark, narrow alley to the southwest. Avenues to the west
and east
lead back into the cramped and ingrown streets, while to the north lies
Whateley
Bridge.

Your amulet is lying on the cobblestones a few yards away from the
obelisk.

Apparently, it didn't give the old bum as much luck as he'd hoped.

The square is packed with an angry, screaming mob of cultists.

In the center of the square, rising from a circular lawn of unhealthy-
looking
grass and weeds, stands a strange, stone obelisk. It seems to be a
monument of
some sort, although you can see no plaque or marker anywhere near it.

Although it seems to go on forever, the slaughter is finished in less than a minute. The crowd backs away, its cheering and chanting diminished to a low, hypnotic murmur. The cultists quickly disperse back into the streets, and within moments the square is once again empty... except for the mutilated thing hanging from the obelisk.

>get amulet

You pick up the amulet, musing sadly that it must not have brought the poor old bum as much luck as he'd hoped.

A flurry of dead leaves goes skittering along the ground, swirling past you in the wind.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>n

Whateley Bridge

A hoary monument of crumbling, moss-eaten flagstones, Whateley Bridge is possibly older than any other structure in the entire city. Ponderously it spans the dark, torpid waters of the Miskaton River, connecting the north and south halves of the city and occasionally raining bits of gravel and mortar from its underside into the water. It looks just wide enough for two cars to pass each other between the flanking stone parapets, but you wouldn't volunteer to try it.

As you approach the bridge, you see a hulking shadow lurking about on the far bank. You slow down warily, remembering the townsfolk who threatened you earlier, peering through the darkness and obscuring rain to catch a glimpse of the person. Then the figure moves slightly, and you realize that it's much larger than a man; in fact, the figure isn't shaped anything like a man at all.

A sudden crack of lightning illuminates the bridge for a brief, horrible instant -- and in that instant, you see it.

In the next few moments, your battered mind manages to blot out the memory

of
that bloated, barrel-like, armless trunk; those thick, double-jointed legs
that
end in shiny black hooves; that writhing forest of fleshy tendrils
crowning the
torso in place of a proper head -- but you are not, and will never be,
able to
banish the horrible, searing memory of the thing's misplaced face which
leers
madly out at you from the side of the trunk -- that child's face on a
monster's
body!

A sizzling bolt of lightning cuts through the night sky, illuminating your
surroundings in a sudden sheet of blinding white radiance that leaves
eerie,
green afterimages scarred onto your retinas.

The creature lurches toward you, its hooved feet thumping heavily on the
old
stone bridge.

>give gold locket to creature

(first taking the gold locket)

You toss the gold locket at the monster's feet, and the clasp springs open
when
it hits the cobblestones, revealing the woman's portrait inside. The
creature
looks down and is immediately captivated. It bends over awkwardly,
delicately
grasps the chain with the tip of one tentacle, and holds the locket up to
its
face.

For a single heartbeat of time, even the storm seems to hold still. The
little
boy's face gazes at the picture in the locket for a long, aching moment.
And a
silent tear wells up in the corner of its eye and trickles down its cheek.

*** ka-WHAM!!! ***

A monstrous clap of thunder rolls across the sky, shaking the whole town
to its
foundations.

The monster ignores you for the moment, fascinated by the portrait of its
mother.

>hit creature with hook

(first taking the meat hook)

With a hoarse yell of desperation, you raise the meat hook over your head and fly at the monster while its attention is absorbed by the tiny picture of its mother.

It never even sees you coming. With brutal accuracy, you sink the meat hook deep into the left eye of the little boy's face. It screams, a high, squawling wail like a frightened infant, and a thick, black ichor spurts from the wound. It thrashes about helplessly, knocking you onto the ground, and you scramble back on your hands and feet crab-style, trying to get away from its struggles.

Another flash of lightning, and you see the thing stagger over to the side of the bridge. One tentacle manages to pluck out the hook, which clatters to the pavement -- but the damage has been done. The monster hits the stone parapet, overbalances, and goes over the side, taking the locket with it. It hits the water with a giant splash and is instantly engulfed by the raging current. By the time you get to your feet, rush to the side and look over, the monster's body is gone.

Your score has just gone up by two points.

>n

Narrow Street

As the lane winds along from east to west, it narrows until the steep, jagged rooftops on either side of the street practically touch each other. To the south, a side street leads across Whateley Bridge toward the center of town, and a twisting lane leads up a hill to the northwest. A short flight of steps to the north leads down to the local watering hole.

>w

Junction

To the north, a gap in the crowded press of gloomy buildings opens onto a country lane, heading out over a grassy heath. The main street continues to the east, while to the northwest, over the top of a steep rise, you can just

make
out the vaulted rooftops of the university.

>n

Mill Road

The road carries you across a desolate heath of gray, windswept grass. To the south, the black, jagged outline of Anchorhead's steep roofs and sharp, leaning gables cuts across the horizon. The road forks here to the west and east, heading across the railroad tracks in one direction, out toward the seashore in the other.

A group of cultists passes you, heading north from the town.

The cultists, thinking you are one of their own, pass by silently.

>e

The road heads out over a narrow breakwater jutting out into the ocean.

Breakwater

You are picking your way across the breakwater's bare, rocky spine, where the road has diminished to little more than a pair of dusty ruts. A hundred yards to the northeast, at the breakwater's far end, the lonely stone tower of Anchorhead's lighthouse stands vigil against the ocean.

The sea thrashes against the shore with storm-driven fury.

In the distance, you can hear the lonesome keening of a train whistle drifting on the wind.

>ne

At the Foot of the Lighthouse

You stand in a circular clearing among the stones, surrounded on nearly every side by the sea. Before you looms the ancient, massive lighthouse, a vertiginous pillar of pale brick jabbing defiantly up at the sky. The road from the southwest ends here, although it looks as though you could pick your way down the rocks to the southeast, around the structure's base.

The sea thrashes against the shore with storm-driven fury.

The great bronze door of the lighthouse is closed.

>unlock door

(first taking the keyring)

You go through all the keys on your keyring, trying each one in turn, and after several false attempts you discover that the tarnished bronze key fits the lock.

You unlock the massive bronze door.

The rain slackens off momentarily to a weak drizzle, then returns afresh in a brief, freezing downpour.

>open it

With great effort, you manage to pull the ancient, creaking door open a few inches, enough to slip through.

>e**Bottom of the Lighthouse**

The sound of the ocean is muffled behind the thick cinderblock walls, and the air is damp and heavy. You can almost feel the weight of two hundred feet of hoary old whitewashed brick pressing down on you from above. To the west, a narrow strip of dim light marks the exit. Cracked concrete steps lead up.

>up

You climb the winding stairs in a gradual spiral around the inner circumference

of the tower, and finally emerge, breathless, at the top.

Top of the Lighthouse

The stairs give onto a wide, circular chamber surrounded by windows. The glass is old and streaked with grime, but you still have to catch your breath at the magnificence of the view. In one direction, the dying heath and the stunted cluster of buildings that is Anchorhead; in the other, the ocean like a vast, undulating blanket.

Sitting in the middle of the room, beneath a large, hexagonal skylight, is the most bizarre, incomprehensibly complicated device you have ever seen.

*** ka-WHAM!!! ***

A monstrous clap of thunder rolls across the sky, shaking the whole town to its foundations.

>x device

It looks a bit like a telescope, a bit like a microwave oven turned inside out, and a bit like the "industrial laser" from Goldfinger. It's pointed almost straight up, right through the skylight, aimed directly at the rumbling hole in the sky. Its exact purpose is unfathomable, but it is emitting an ominous, throbbing hum and radiating a curious warmth that causes an unwholesome prickling sensation all over your skin.

Most of the exposed components are too complex to comprehend, but there is a receptacle about two thirds of the way along the thing's -- er, "barrel" -- that contains a round mirror, like a focusing mirror in a telescope. It looks as though you could remove it.

>x mirror in device

You can't see any such thing.

>get mirror from device

Which do you mean, the real mirror or the mirror labeled #2?

>real mirror

The receptacle lets go of the mirror with a metallic click and a pneumatic hiss.

"Well, well; if it isn't the loyal wife."

You whirl around to find Michael standing in the doorway, flanked by two robed guards who stare at you with a distinct glitter of malice in their eyes.

>put real mirror in coat

You slip the real mirror into the pocket of your trenchcoat.

Michael smirks as he advances on you. "You're quite a persistent little tart, aren't you? Quite the gutsy little irritant. I suppose Michael must have been one of those 'modern' men; didn't go in for the submissive type." Michael -- or whatever fiend is speaking from behind Michael's face -- sneers. "Didn't have the balls for it, is my guess. In my day, we knew how to keep our wives. A headstrong woman should be broken in, just like a headstrong horse."

>x michael

He is someone else, now, someone you have never known and would never want to know. His flesh is gaunt; his skin waxy and pale; his forehead burning and feverish. And his eyes... you can't bear to look into the seething madness of those wild, red-rimmed eyes. Your husband is gone, now -- some other, alien force has devoured him from within and now animates his body.

Michael walks past you and runs his fingers along the strange device.

"My, my, you do keep busy," Michael remarks when he finds the focusing mirror missing. "It's a good thing I caught you in time." He turns to you and holds out his hand. "Your little game is over now, woman, and you've lost. Give me the mirror now."

>x guards

The guards eye you with malice and a certain hunger, as if they were just waiting for an excuse to tear you to pieces.

Michael glares at you with impatience. "Give me the mirror, woman," he hisses into your face. "Don't make me damage you..."

>save

Ok.

>x michael's eyes

You can't see any such thing.

>x eyes

You can't see any such thing.

>give mirror 2 to michael

(first taking the mirror labeled #2)

"That's more like it," Michael says.

Michael pauses, glances down at the mirror in his hand, then smirks at you. "But of course, there's no telling where else you've been poking around, what you might have gotten your dirty little hands on, hmm?"

He leans in close to you, and you can smell corruption on his breath like rotting oranges. "I've been wondering where this had gotten off to," he murmurs

in your ear, taking the caliper-like instrument from you. He applies the instrument to the mirror, and frowns as he checks the readout.

Then he smiles.

"Well, that's that then," he says, placing the mirror back in its receptacle. He nods toward the guards, who seize you and begin dragging you down the stairs.

"It's time to clue you in to just what's been going on around here," Michael says, following behind you. "First hand. I think you'll find it quite... enthralling."

You are dragged bodily down to the foot of the lighthouse and around to the rocky outcropping, where an island of flesh floats just beyond the breakwater's tip. The guards shove their way through the crowds of robed supplicants, carrying you to the island's center. They force you to your knees and, despite your best efforts at escape, manhandle you into a pair of handcuffs looped through an iron ring set in a heavy stone block. The block is so low, you are forced to remain kneeling in the squelchy muck, craning your neck to watch the orgiastic ceremony taking place... and your husband -- no, you tell yourself, not your husband; the creature that your husband has become -- leading the terrible rites.

Island of Flesh

The island is barely forty feet across, its surface covered with an ankle-deep layer of slime and muck. Underneath the muck, the ground throbs -- heaving rhythmically to a blasphemous, living pulse.

The sea thrashes against the shore with storm-driven fury.

The robed guards hover to either side of you, waiting for you to make a move.

Michael stands in the center of it all, leading the hellish rites.

Robed cultists crowd around on every side -- some of them brandishing flaming torches, some of them chanting in some hideous, archaic tongue, all of them swaying to the hypnotic pulse that rises up from the depths of the fleshy ground.

You are handcuffed to one of several heavy stone blocks set in a rough semicircle around the center of the island.

Lashed to a stake in the center of the island is a young boy.

>x island

The fleshy surface of this island is covered in reeking slime. It shivers beneath you to some horrible pulse.

>x sea

The sea is the color of old pewter, surging and chopping restlessly beneath the clouds.

Michael takes up a torch from one of the crowd. Holding it high above his head,
he turns to the lighthouse and intones:

"Iach! That Which May Not Be Named, I call upon Thee! Formless Drifter of the Gulfs Between, I summon Thee!"

The crowd murmurs in ecstatic encouragement.

>x guards

The guards eye you with malice and a certain hunger, as if they were just waiting for an excuse to tear you to pieces.

"I cast aside the Seals! I throw open the Gates!"

Michael traces a mystic sigil in the air in front of him with the flaming torch.

The flames seem to hang for a moment in strange patterns before twisting away into nothing.

"OHODOS - SCIES - ABYSSON!"

The torch flares up with a roar, and the ocean waves seem to respond with sudden, inexplicable fury, crashing brutally against the island.

The boy cries pitifully, his sobs going unheeded by the chanting cultists and the raging storm.

>x michael

He is someone else, now, someone you have never known and would never want to know. His flesh is gaunt; his skin waxy and pale; his forehead burning and feverish. And his eyes... you can't bear to look into the seething madness

of
those wild, red-rimmed eyes. Your husband is gone, now -- some other,
alien
force has devoured him from within and now animates his body.

Michael turns his back on the lighthouse, facing out to sea.

"To the East, where the Spawning Chaos seethes and suppurates within the
Crucible of Grum, from whose bursting pustules arise the Million Unseeable
Forms, I summon Thee!"

>x cultists

**The throng of cultists presses around the small clearing in the middle of
the**

island from all directions, chanting, waving torches, and swaying
rhythmically
to the terrible beat of whatever monstrous heart lies beneath this island.

Michael makes a quarter-turn to his left.

"To the North, where the Howling Hunger sweeps invisibly across the Yellow
Plains and gnaws upon the entrails of the pious, I summon Thee!"

A monstrous bolt of lightning licks down from the sky and strikes the sea
just
north of the island, sending a spume of steam and boiling water fifty feet
into
the shrieking sky. Screams of fear and rapture erupt throughout the
pressing
crowd, almost inaudible beneath the deafening peal of thunder.

>x stone blocks

The stone is roughly cubical, nearly a foot along each side. There is a
thick
iron ring embedded in one side which you are securely handcuffed to.

Michael isn't even fazed. He makes a half-turn to the right and continues:

"To the South, where the Seven Corpulent Sultans of Slaas'tha stand in
judgment
over the Heretics of Kron, and force their vile copulations upon the
repentant,
I summon Thee!"

Another lightning bolt, this time striking just south of the island, and
another
spume of water. The crowd begins to writhe and gibber madly, like a
single,
plasmic organism.

>x stake

The wood piled around the base of the stake, and the leather thongs knotted firmly near the top, make it gruesomely clear that this is no campfire -- it's a sacrificial pyre.

Michael makes a three-quarter turn to his left, coming all the way around to face the lighthouse once more.

"To the Ultimate West, wherein lies the Void That Conquers All, I summon Thee!"

The top of the lighthouse begins to glow with an unwholesome, violet light. A low, ominous vibration creeps up from the ground, crawling up through your bones and reverberating painfully in your teeth.

>x boy

A skinny, tow-headed boy of eight or so, he bears all the markings of a recent victim of trauma. His face is smudged with dirt, his wrists are raw and red from the tight bindings, and his eyes are shadowed with deep, purple half-circles. For all this, however, you instantly recognize his face from the newspaper story: it's Jeffrey Greer, the boy who was kidnapped two days ago.

The air around the lighthouse is rippling now. Several cultists fall convulsing to the mud; others are screaming in strange, strangled tongues. The earth shakes, and the air is split by a high-pitched harmonic ringing, like a crystal about to shatter.

Michael raises the torch, preparing to thrust it into the pyre at the child's feet. He throws his head back and shrieks directly into the eye of the storm:

"IACH! PIOTH XENOBETHAKLES! ULUTUK FH'TAGHN!! BY THE KEYS OF IOK-SOTOT I NAME THEE!

"!!! IALDABAOLOTH !!! COME FORTH !!!"

>x hands

You can't see any such thing.

>escape

That's not a verb I recognise.

>look

Island of Flesh

The island is barely forty feet across, its surface covered with an ankle-deep layer of slime and muck. Underneath the muck, the ground throbs -- heaving rhythmically to a blasphemous, living pulse.

The sea thrashes against the shore with storm-driven fury.

The robed guards hover to either side of you, waiting for you to make a move.

Michael stands in the center of it all, leading the hellish rites.

Robed cultists crowd around on every side -- some of them brandishing flaming torches, some of them chanting in some hideous, archaic tongue, all of them swaying to the hypnotic pulse that rises up from the depths of the fleshy ground.

You are handcuffed to one of several heavy stone blocks set in a rough semicircle around the center of the island.

Lashed to a stake in the center of the island is a young boy.

What happens next is rather unexpected.

The high-pitched ringing sound reaches a crescendo, and without warning the upper half of the lighthouse explodes violently in a boiling fireball of violet flames. For a moment, Michael's lunatic grin of triumph remains frozen in place, licked by the purple radiance, not yet cognizant that the ritual has gone wrong. In the next instant, however, he is stricken.

"The mirror..." he whispers hoarsely.

Bits of burning debris are raining down on the island. The cultists fall back in panic and start pushing at each other to get off the island and escape. Many are pushed off into the water, where clusters of ropy, jellyfish-like tentacles immediately drag them screaming beneath the waves. A burning chunk of masonry

strikes one of your guards in the head, and he drops to the mud next to you with a mass of chewed-spaghetti pulp where his face used to be. The other guard takes a quick, frightened look around, then bolts without a backward glance.

"Come back!" screams Michael. "Come back, cowards!" But no one heeds him. With a strangled curse he turns and hurls the torch into the sea.

Your score has just gone up by five points.

>x handcuffs

They're ordinary, police-issue handcuffs. The cuffs are closed.

The horrible, fleshy ground shudders beneath you. Bubbles begin to boil up around the island's edges.

"You -- " Michael snarls at you, his voice a barely intelligible choke. The malice pouring out of his expression is almost more than you can bear to look at. "If I had the time I'd gut you right here and now -- " suddenly the ground lurches slightly, and Michael smiles. "But perhaps I won't need to." With a mocking bow he strides past you and hops over to the shore. "I'm sorry I can't stay around to watch you die," he calls over his shoulder, "but I have some rather urgent business to attend to." The next moment he is gone, running down the breakwater toward town.

>x cultists

You can't see any such thing.

>inv

You are wearing a pair of handcuffs, a hooded robe, your clothes and your wedding ring; in addition, you have in your hands a keyring, on which are nine keys (a cell key, a long steel key, a tarnished bronze key, a small steel key, an old-fashioned brass key, a small copper key, an old-fashioned iron key, a key to the house and a key to the cellar), an amulet and your trenchcoat.

The boiling is becoming more violent. You also notice that the tide seems to be striking the island a bit higher than before, even though the waves themselves

aren't getting any taller.

The boy cries pitifully, his sobs going unheeded by the chanting cultists and the raging storm.

>pick handcuffs with needle

(first taking the crusty needle)

The metal cuffs bite painfully into your wrists, but with a little bit of excruciating contortion you manage to insert the end of the needle into the

keyhole. For what seems like endless minutes, you jiggle the needle fruitlessly

around, biting your lip against the cramps that keep trying to seize your painfully bent hands and bitterly reflecting that Linda Hamilton makes it look

deceptively easy on the big screen -- and suddenly the cuff snaps open.

Quickly

you free your other wrist, and the handcuffs slide free, landing in the muck.

The island is definitely sinking now.

>free boy

Quickly you untie the bonds holding the boy to the stake; as his hands slip free

he jumps away from you and eyes you warily. Then, sniffing and rubbing his

arms, he runs to the edge of the island, hops over onto the breakwater and starts sprinting home.

Not much time left; the water is lapping up almost to the island's center, and

the gap between the island and the rocky spur is nearly too wide to jump across.

Your score has just gone up by five points.

>w

You hop across the water-filled gap.

Rocky Spur

A small outcropping of stone, just large enough for you to stand on, sticks out

from the end of the breakwater. The hungry sea laps at your feet, surging over

the rocks and then trickling down into crevices. To the southwest, an uneven

trail leads back up the rocks, around the side of the lighthouse.

The sea thrashes against the shore with storm-driven fury.

Beyond the breakwater's tip, a small island has risen from the sea. It is quickly sinking back into the churning waters.

With a final, shivering heave, the island of flesh sinks beneath the waves.

Soon, nothing is left except the bubbling, turbulent patch of water.

>save

Ok.

>sw

The trail turns northwest, following the curve of the lighthouse wall.

At the Foot of the Lighthouse

You stand in a circular clearing among the stones, surrounded on nearly every

side by the sea. Before you looms the ancient, massive lighthouse, a vertiginous

pillar of pale brick jabbing defiantly up at the sky. The road from the southwest ends here, although it looks as though you could pick your way down

the rocks to the southeast, around the structure's base.

The sea thrashes against the shore with storm-driven fury.

The great bronze door of the lighthouse stands slightly ajar, revealing a narrow

rectangle of blackness within.

Another wave crashes against the rocks, sending a cloud of spray into the air.

>sw

Breakwater

You are picking your way across the breakwater's bare, rocky spine, where the

road has diminished to little more than a pair of dusty ruts. A hundred yards to

the northeast, at the breakwater's far end, the lonely stone tower of Anchorhead's lighthouse stands vigil against the ocean.

The sea thrashes against the shore with storm-driven fury.

>w

Mill Road

The road carries you across a desolate heath of gray, windswept grass. To the

south, the black, jagged outline of Anchorhead's steep roofs and sharp,

leaning
gables cuts across the horizon. The road forks here to the west and east,
heading across the railroad tracks in one direction, out toward the
seashore in
the other.

>w

As you cross the railroad tracks, the air becomes warmer, more dingy, and
slightly more difficult to breathe.

Entrance to the Paper Mill

The road turns southwest here and runs squarely through the front entrance
to
the old paper mill. A gate of heavy iron bars blocks the only opening into
this
charred fortress, although an overgrown path leads around the wall to the
south.
To the north, a rutted lane threads its way past a row of dilapidated
shacks.

>n

Shanty Town

The road peters out at a wide clearing of rutted mud, flanked by uneven
rows of
decrepit, clapboard shacks. The town is quiet, almost deserted; only a few
bits
of loose tarpaper blowing listlessly in the wind betray the overall
stillness.

The young boy you freed from the island is standing here. He gives you a
fearful
glance.

Flakes of ash drift gently down from the sky like gray snow, coating
everything
with a thin layer of soot, which is quickly washed away by the rain.

>wait

Time passes.

Silently, the boy walks through the churning mud to the front steps of #11
Mill
Town Road. For a moment, he stands there on the stoop, looking back at
you;
dirty, disheveled, drenched by the streaming rain. Then he turns and,
raising
his little fist, knocks on the door.

The door opens. The old woman looks out, then looks down. She sees the
boy, and

it seems that she becomes just a little bit younger at that moment. "My baby..."
you hear her say, and then she is on her knees, folding her son into her arms.
She stands, still holding him, and looks over his shoulder at you.

"Thank you," she says. Her eyes speak volumes of gratitude that her words will never be able to express. "Thank you for bringing him home."

And then she goes inside, and the door slowly closes behind her.

>s

Entrance to the Paper Mill

The road turns southwest here and runs squarely through the front entrance to the old paper mill. A gate of heavy iron bars blocks the only opening into this charred fortress, although an overgrown path leads around the wall to the south. To the north, a rutted lane threads its way past a row of dilapidated shacks.

>e

As you cross the railroad tracks, the air seems to lift slightly, becoming more breathable once again.

Mill Road

The road carries you across a desolate heath of gray, windswept grass. To the south, the black, jagged outline of Anchorhead's steep roofs and sharp, leaning gables cuts across the horizon. The road forks here to the west and east, heading across the railroad tracks in one direction, out toward the seashore in the other.

A flurry of dead leaves goes skittering along the ground, swirling past you in the wind.

>s

Junction

To the north, a gap in the crowded press of gloomy buildings opens onto a country lane, heading out over a grassy heath. The main street continues to the east, while to the northwest, over the top of a steep rise, you can just make

out the vaulted rooftops of the university.

>e

Narrow Street

As the lane winds along from east to west, it narrows until the steep, jagged rooftops on either side of the street practically touch each other. To the south, a side street leads across Whateley Bridge toward the center of town, and a twisting lane leads up a hill to the northwest. A short flight of steps to the north leads down to the local watering hole.

The rain slackens off momentarily to a weak drizzle, then returns afresh in a brief, freezing downpour.

>s

Whateley Bridge

A hoary monument of crumbling, moss-eaten flagstones, Whateley Bridge is possibly older than any other structure in the entire city. Ponderously it spans the dark, torpid waters of the Miskaton River, connecting the north and south halves of the city and occasionally raining bits of gravel and mortar from its underside into the water. It looks just wide enough for two cars to pass each other between the flanking stone parapets, but you wouldn't volunteer to try it.

You can see a meat hook here.

>get hook

Your hands are full.

The cold wind blows harder, tugging at your clothes.

>s

Town Square

A wide expanse of uneven pavestones lies open to the sky, bordered on all sides by the leaning, steep-roofed architecture that looms over everything in this city. The municipal courthouse stands at the south end of the square, next to the mouth of a dark, narrow alley to the southwest. Avenues to the west and east

lead back into the cramped and ingrown streets, while to the north lies
Whateley
Bridge.

Michael -- or rather, the thing that has possessed Michael's body -- is
standing
here.

The poor old man's mutilated corpse hangs from the top of the obelisk.

Michael looks at you and smiles. It is not a particularly pleasant smile.
He
walks over to the obelisk and places his hand against the bloodstained
stone,
then mutters something guttural under his breath. The twisted hieroglyphs
begin
to shine with an eerie phosphorescence which quickly brightens and
envelopes
Michael. His form wavers, then becomes transparent, and when the light
fades he
has disappeared.

The obelisk is still glowing.

>save

Ok.

>x corpse

The poor man's torn and broken body has been savaged nearly beyond
recognition.
You can hardly bear to look at him.

The clouds overhead mutter restlessly to themselves.

The obelisk is still glowing.

>touch obelisk

As your fingers touch the gore-streaked stone, the green light grows
brighter,
fanning out to envelope you. The odor of rotting fruit briefly assails
your
nostrils; your vision streaks, then blurs; there is the sound of rushing
air,
and when your eyes clear, you are somewhere else...

Burial Mound

The cave is lined, floor to ceiling, with mummified human corpses.
Shrunk and
desiccated, they lie in jumbled heaps inside irregularly carved niches.
Carvings
cover the rock walls in between the niches -- grotesque, leering faces too

horrible even to look upon, their features twitching and smirking in the wavering light that sifts down from above.

Michael -- or rather, the thing that has possessed Michael's body -- is standing here.

The obelisk base stands before you, vast and shadowy in the green, murky light.

At the narrower, northern end of the vaguely egg-shaped cavern sits a massive stone altar, flanked on either side by a pair of strange, vibrating columns.

Suddenly Michael lunges forward and grabs your arms. He shakes you, causing your head to whip back and forth and your teeth to click painfully together.

"Bitch -- " he hisses, " -- rotten, filthy bitch -- you never give up, do you? You've foiled me for the last time! There's no way to fix what you've undone tonight, but by all the unholy spawn of darkness I will put you in a stone cold place for it!!" And his hands lock tightly around your throat and begin to squeeze.

>show ring to michael

There is one chance -- if you can only somehow reach whatever weak flicker of humanity still survives within that shell; if the person who was your husband still exists somewhere, buried beneath the part that is Croseus Verlac...

Silently, you raise up your left hand, your wedding ring gleaming softly in the strange, green light.

Michael is transfixed. He seems to want to recoil from the sight, yet is somehow simultaneously drawn to it. Suddenly, his face crumbles, the madness and stoic evil falling away to reveal confusion, fear, vulnerability and anguish -- all superimposed upon the malevolent features of Croseus, struggling to regain control.

Your score has just gone up by five points.

>show amulet to michael

In his moment of hesitation, you see your chance; straining against his choking grip, you slip the amulet's cord around Michael's neck, letting the silver pendant drop to his chest.

Instantly Michael begins convulsing, arching his back and clawing at his chest. His jaws stretch open as if to release a howl of torment, but instead of voice, a thick, ropy stream of ectoplasmic mist pours from his throat. It pools into the center of the room, roils about, then coalesces into a human form -- the vaporous, half-rotted apparition of Croseus Verlac himself!

Your score has just gone up by five points.

>get flute

(the strange metal flute)

Taken.

Michael lets out a weak groan.

>cover hole 1

You place your finger over the first flute hole.

The ghost lets out a chilling, sepulchral laugh. "You useless, puny mortal," it cries. "Did you really think that there was any way on earth you could stop me? I have lived and thrived for over four hundred years -- not even Death can claim me!"

>cover hole 7

You place your finger over the seventh flute hole.

"You sabotaged my dimensional beacon -- I will build another. You drove me from my host body -- I will find another. What next? Will you track down my disciples, one by one, and kill them all? Will you set this whole town to the torch?"

Michael is doubled over with racking coughs, bringing up a thin trickle of blood.

>play flute

(the strange metal flute)

The flute emits an odd mixture of metallic, warbling notes which intertwine and

harmonize eerily with each other.

The strange harmony of the flute blends with the atonal ringing of the two columns, and the three sounds suddenly grow stronger, resonating with and reinforcing one another, intertwining like a dissonant, invisible braid.

The sound increases in volume, piercing your eardrums and causing the very air to shimmer.

Suddenly the air above the altar begins to ripple as though with extreme heat.

The very fabric of space seems to twist and buckle between the two columns; and then, with a sound like a wet sheet being torn slowly down the middle, the fabric splits.

You are immediately swept off your feet by a powerful sucking vacuum, pulling everything within reach toward the portal. Dust and debris; bones and loose rock from the burial niches; everything not nailed down goes flying across the temple and into the all-devouring maw hovering over the altar-stone. Desperately, you wedge your fingers into a crack in the floor; with the other hand you grasp hold of Michael's pants leg and hang on for dear life.

Verlac is caught like a gossamer thread in a tornado. Frantically he claws at the air, but as an insubstantial ghost there is nothing for him to hang on to. Shrieking and cursing, he is dragged inexorably back, closer and closer to the portal, until the suction draws his corpus out into a long, trailing ribbon, like an unraveling cable-knit sweater -- and in the next moment he is gone forever, sucked into whatever alien dimension lies beyond that horrible rift.

For a few agonizing moments you don't think you're going to make it; then, suddenly, the chaos stops, leaving you breathless on the floor.

Painstakingly, you pry your stiff, bleeding fingers out of the crack and roll over. The rift is gone. The air is normal, and the columns are ringing quietly, as if nothing had happened.

Silence reigns.

There passes some time that your memory cannot account for; a brief period of blackness and oblivion, you and your unconscious husband, together in the subterranean vault. Perhaps you were unconscious as well; you cannot remember.

At some point you become conscious again. You lift Michael to his feet, putting his arm around your shoulders, and the two of you stagger up the titan stairs to the surface. The ground begins rumbling just as you are exiting the house, but by that time Michael has recovered some of his senses and can walk a bit faster.

You make it down to the bend in the road overlooking the town just in time to see the town square collapse, the vile obelisk sinking into the earth. Several buildings are dragged down along with it. A gas pipe ruptures in the courthouse, sending a gout of flame high into the air, and soon the entire town is burning.

Behind you, a muffled explosion and a sudden warmth against your back bespeak a similar end to the Verlac family mansion. For a moment you find yourself almost turning back, driven by instinct to rescue your belongings -- but you stop. You turn away. And while Michael rests, you stand at the overlook and watch the sparks rise like fireflies, mingling with the stars in a clear, cloudless sky.

[* EPILOGUE *

He always returns to his blood.

-- Edward Verlac]

You are home, and it is a momentous event. Downstairs, Michael is waiting for you to bring him the wondrous news. To the east is the bedroom you both share, and to the north is your bathroom.

A cool wave of uneasiness washes slowly over you; you're not sure why.

Your score has just gone up by fifteen points.

>e

There's nothing important in the bedroom at the moment.

"Well?" Michael calls excitedly from downstairs. "Have you looked yet?"

>d

You don't want to go downstairs until you have something to tell Michael.

Michael calls up again, this time sounding slightly worried: "Hon? Everything okay up there?"

>tell michael okay

You can't see any such thing.

>say I'm okay

(to yourself)

Talking to yourself is a sure sign of impending mental collapse.

A nameless, formless apprehension grips you suddenly, leaving you short of breath. Why are you so frightened, on what should be such a joyous occasion?

You can hear a fly buzzing around, hovering over the back of your neck.

>x fly

You can't see where the fly is. You're not even sure where the buzzing is coming from.

>n

You can barely feel yourself walking; it's almost as if some outer force were moving you of its own accord.

Your Bathroom

Your bathroom; an ordinary place. A normal, safe, familiar place.

On the counter is a home pregnancy test.

>x counter

It's just an ordinary-looking counter.

>get test

You pick up the home pregnancy test. It's an ordinary pregnancy test, the kind you can get at any drugstore; the kind with the little window that turns pink if you're going to have a baby.

>x test

It's an ordinary pregnancy test, the kind you can get at any drugstore; the kind with the little window that turns pink if you're going to have a baby.

>look in little window

You find nothing of interest.

>look at little window

You stare down at the little plastic indicator, and an inexplicable horror seizes you as you recall Edward Verlac's last words:

And besides; who could say whether the crafty devil Croseus might not concoct some new way to enter the world, through a new body -- through that of one of my daughters, perhaps? The ritual has always demanded a grandson, but Croseus was never one to let such a trivial inconvenience stop him. He would find a way. He always returns to his blood.

The window is pink. The test is positive.

From downstairs, you can hear Michael joyfully talking to himself:

"Oh, I hope it's a little girl," he says. "I've always wanted to have a little girl."

*** You have won... for now ***

In that game you scored 97 out of a possible 100 points; you have banished the evil and saved your husband from a fate most hideous -- but you were unable to solve the entire mystery.

Thank you for playing Anchorhead!

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game, UNDO your last move, give the
FULL score for that game, see some suggestions for AMUSING things to do or
QUIT?

> full

In that game you scored 97 out of a possible 100 points; you have banished the
evil and saved your husband from a fate most hideous -- but you were
unable to
solve the entire mystery.

The score was made up as follows:

- 2 points for finding the house keys
- 2 points for showing the keys to Michael
- 2 points for getting the book from the librarian
- 1 point for getting the key from the cellar
- 1 point for getting the key from the attic
- 2 points for finding the journal
- 2 points for finding the diary
- 1 point for finding the safe
- 2 points for opening the safe
- 2 points for opening the puzzle box
- 2 points for guessing Michael's computer passcode
- 1 point for discovering the Verlac family secret in the archives
- 5 points for receiving the amulet
- 2 points for giving the bum whiskey
- 5 points for giving the bum the amulet
- 5 points for learning the name IALDABAOLOTH
- 2 points for opening the secret door behind the wine racks
- 2 points for hiding from the monster at the slaughterhouse
- 1 point for breaking into the church
- 2 points for escaping from the church
- 2 points for opening Claudia Benson's desk drawer
- 2 points for giving the teddy bear to Jeffrey's mother
- 1 point for getting the long steel key
- 1 point for shutting off the steam valve
- 2 points for getting up to the mill laboratory
- 2 points for escaping the strait jacket
- 2 points for finding Edward Verlac's last testament
- 2 points for escaping the asylum
- 2 points for recovering the amulet
- 2 points for slaying William Verlac
- 5 points for sabotaging the ritual
- 5 points for freeing Jeffrey
- 5 points for showing the wedding ring to Michael
- 5 points for putting the amulet on Michael
- 5 points for banishing Croseus Verlac
- 10 points for doing it in time to save your husband's life

97 total (out of 100)

Thank you for playing Anchorhead!

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game, UNDO your last move, give the FULL score for that game, see some suggestions for AMUSING things to do or QUIT?

> **amusing**

Of course, you have already surmised that there are many creative ways in which you can die in this game. Whether or not you find that particularly amusing...

well, that's between you and your conscience. I, for one, found them amusing to code; perhaps you will find them amusing to experience.

Do not attempt the following at home:

- standing on the train tracks until the train comes.
- standing on the altar while you blow the flute.
- wandering around the Narrow Aisles adjacent to the Mill Floor for too long.

- not giving Michael the mirror when he asks for it.
- letting Michael die before you destroy Croseus.
- reading the big black book in the abandoned church -- in its entirety.
- EXAMINING William Verlac.
- ATTACKING Michael with the meat hook.
- allowing the summoning ritual to proceed to its conclusion without sabotaging the beacon first.

[Please press SPACE.]

Did you try just typing LISTEN while Michael is in the shower on the morning of Day 2? Type it several times.

Did you take a good look at the paintings in the gallery? One scene in particular will catch your eye. EXAMINE the scene. Leave the room and come back later, and EXAMINE the paintings again.

In Claudia Benson's last letter, she mentions that she did some research at the

Miskatonic library. Did you try looking her name up on the circulation register?

You might find some interesting reading material.

You may have noticed that your appearance changes as the game progresses and you get more and more filthy. Did you try EXAMINING yourself while wearing the strait jacket? How about talking to yourself?

Also, did you EXAMINE yourself during the epilogue?

Did you try SCREAMING or CRYING? Did you try it while handcuffed to the island at the end of Chapter Four?

If you wait around for a while at the Twisting Lane or the Rocky Spur, you might catch something interesting. You might have to wait a long time, though.

Did you try typing XYZZY? No? Good.

[Please press SPACE.]

Several puzzles in Anchorhead admit more than one solution; some even boast more than two. Many of these alternate solutions are actually "second chances" that pop up elsewhere in the story, should you happen to miss the narrow window of opportunity provided to solve the puzzle the first time. Although my caveat about saving in "About This Game" still holds, there are actually few mistakes in Anchorhead that are truly irreversible (other than the immediately fatal ones, of course).

You might find it interesting to go back and see if you can find other ways to:

- discover the name "Verlac".
- clear away the spiderweb in the cellar.
- get the brass key from the attic cell.
- obtain Michael's faculty card.
- open the puzzle box.
- reach the bottom riser from the church basement.
- spy on Michael on the morning of the third day.
- turn the steam-release wheel.
- get up to the mill catwalk.
- open the real estate agent's desk drawer.

- safely witness the old bum's murder.
- get rid of the madman in Danvers Asylum.

[Please press SPACE.]

Yes, June 28th is our real anniversary. Thanks for all the cards.

[Please press SPACE.]

These quotes are taken from actual bug reports from the first version of Anchorhead. Names have been obscured to embarrass the guilty.

2nd PRIZE:

"Obscure fact: Edward writes that he pricked the inside of his cheek to draw blood for his ink. The inside of the cheek isn't a good choice for an inkwell, since it's mighty difficult to get it to bleed. Have you bitten your cheek while chewing food? It hurts, but it doesn't bleed. Have you seen body manipulators pierce their cheeks with a metal skewer? They choose the cheek precisely because it won't bleed. You can try this at home yourself with a needle or a large safety pin. Sterilize it, psyche yourself up, and pierce the cheek from the inside to the outside. It's **very** disconcerting, but it's not painful, and if there's any blood at all, it will bleed from the **outside** of the cheek, not the inside."

1st PRIZE:

"This is horrible, but I got really confused at the epilogue, because I thought I hadn't taken the pregnancy test yet. (It's amazing how difficult it is to express taking a pregnancy test in IF commands.)"

[Please press SPACE.]

It is STILL possible to win the game and earn all the points without EVER using the key to the sewers. I never could figure out how the hell to fix that.

[Please press SPACE.]

Thank you for playing Anchorhead!

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game, UNDO your last move, give the FULL score for that game, see some suggestions for AMUSING things to do or QUIT?

> quit

{Reloaded to view some extras}

Start of a transcript of

ANCHORHEAD

An interactive gothic by Michael S. Gentry

(Type HELP or ABOUT for some useful information.)

Release 5 / Serial number 990206 / Inform v6.15 Library 6/7

Standard interpreter 1.1 (4F) / Library serial number 970918

>n

Circulation Desk

A high counter divides the public portion of the library from the reserved stacks -- all the more esoteric and mysterious volumes from the university's

collection. If anything, the area behind the counter is even more shadowy than

the side you're on. The main reading area lies south.

Hanging on the wall next to the counter is a small, printed sign. Beneath the

sign sits a heavy, dog-eared register, and sitting next to the register is a bell.

>look up benson

(in the dog-eared register)

Claudia Benson's name is up near the top of the page. She has checked out several books in the last few weeks: A Historical Overview of Superstitions in

the Miskaton Valley Region by J. Arnsworth Frazer; The Righteous Invasion: a

History of Indian/Settler Conflicts in the Colonial Period by Warner Greene;
Mechanics of Metempsychosis by C. C. H. Horne; and N-Fold Transduction and the
Space-Time Barrier: a New Theory in Particle Physics by Lord Wheldrake.
Strange;
you can't help but wonder why your real estate agent would have amassed
such an
esoteric reading list.

>ring bell

Ding.

A moment later, the gaunt and fishy-eyed librarian emerges silently from the
shadows behind the counter.

>ask librarian for green

Wordlessly the librarian retreats back into the shadows, only to reappear the
next moment carrying the book you requested. Dutifully, you sign the
register,
and the librarian hands you the book before disappearing again.

>read green

Its full title is The Righteous Invasion: a History of Indian/Settler
Conflicts
in the Colonial Period by Warner Greene. It's a slim volume, published by
Miskaton Press in 1943. According to the introduction, the book's purpose
is to
give an objective account of the social and economic factors which led
some of
the early American colonies into violent conflict with the tribes of the
northeast, concluding with a transitional discussion of how the "Indian
policies" which took shape early on evolved into Western Expansionism and the
idea of Manifest Destiny. The author, reflecting the more conservative
decade in
which he wrote, tends to paint a more sympathetic picture of the European
side
of the issue than would be fashionable today; but all in all it seems an
intelligent, thoughtful analysis.

Glancing through the table of contents, you notice that there is a short
chapter
on the Misquat Indians. Curious, you flip to the page.

The fate of the Misquat tribe, states the author, is an enigma which may
never
be solved. Diplomatic relationships with the original river valley

settlers
seemed doomed from the beginning. Documents from the period paint the
tribe as
aggressively pagan, degenerate savages. Nevertheless, Croseus Verlac
managed to
hammer out a peace treaty of sorts with the tribal leader, and the two
groups
led an uneasy coexistence for over a century.

The exact circumstances which led up to the "battle" of Quattac Bend in
1772 are
unclear. One document makes mention of an "uprising", although since as
far as
is known, the Misquats were never in a subservient relationship to the
Anchorhead settlers, the use of this term is more puzzling than revealing.
In
fact, no evidence has yet been discovered that corroborates the notion
that the
Misquat Indians initiated any sort of hostility whatsoever.

What is known is this: the Battle of Quattac Bend took place in the dead
of
night. It was led by Croseus' descendant, Heinrich Verlac, and "fought" by
some
twenty town men, who crept through the woods and ambushed the small tribe
during
one of its holy ceremonies. There are no lists of casualties. Although the
diary
of one soldier tells of many prisoners being taken, there is no mention of
where
these prisoners were kept or what was eventually done to them.

No known document makes even the vaguest allusion to the Misquat Indians
after
1772. From that date onward, the tribe effectively ceases to exist.

>ring bell

Ding.

A moment later, the gaunt and fishy-eyed librarian emerges silently from
the
shadows behind the counter.

>ask librarian for horne

The librarian gives you a fishy look. Apparently, you are only allowed one
book
at a time.

>give greene to librarian

Wordlessly the librarian takes the tome from you and spirits it back to

the

shadowy depths of the reserved stacks.

>ring bell

Ding.

A moment later, the gaunt and fishy-eyed librarian emerges silently from the shadows behind the counter.

>ask librarian for horne

Wordlessly the librarian retreats back into the shadows, only to reappear the next moment carrying the book you requested. Dutifully, you sign the register, and the librarian hands you the book before disappearing again.

>read horne

According to the author's foreword, the term "metempsychosis" means the transmigration of souls -- that is, the reincarnation of a soul into another body. The book, which was published in 1922, is an examination of various traditions' explanations of how and why this happens. The author's tone is very matter-of-fact; it's unclear whether he is approaching the subject from the standpoint of a mythologist or if he actually believes in reincarnation and is evaluating the various theories based on their "scientific" validity.

Flipping through the book, you find a passage that has been highlighted:

"Among tribes with a strong ancestor-worship tradition, one often discovers the quaint notion that one may be reincarnated as one's own descendant. Asking such people whether they must share a single body with the spirit of their ancestor (inheritance), or if they themselves are in essence their own grandfather (identity), is generally futile; among primitives, concepts of self-identity are poorly defined at best. Often there exists no word in their native language to express the idea. One can assume, however, that the primitive tribesman's conception of the situation is probably closer to the latter option; otherwise, over the course of generations one would have to contend with dozens of ancestral spirits fighting for room within a single body. However, the theory of identity also begs the question: how far back does the chain of

reincarnation
go? One could conceivably be dealing with a tribe of 'first' men, present
at the
day of Creation and renewing themselves over the aeons with each
succeeding
generation."

>ring bell

Ding.

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the
shadows behind the counter.

>give horne to librarian

**Wordlessly the librarian takes the tome from you and spirits it back to
the
shadowy depths of the reserved stacks.**

>look up benson

(in the dog-eared register)
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Space-Time Barrier: a New Theory in Particle Physics by Lord Wheldrake.
Strange;
you can't help but wonder why your real estate agent would have amassed
such an
esoteric reading list.

>ring bell

Ding.

A moment later, the gaunt and fishy-eyed librarian emerges silently from
the
shadows behind the counter.

>ask librarian for wheldrake

Wordlessly the librarian retreats back into the shadows, only to reappear
the
next moment carrying the book you requested. Dutifully, you sign the
register,
and the librarian hands you the book before disappearing again.

>read wheldrake

This is a very thin volume, more of a tract than a proper book. You notice with some interest that it was published in 1918 by Miskaton University Press, though who "Lord Wheldrake" was you cannot begin to fathom.

Even without a background in physics, you can immediately tell that this is nothing but the purest pseudoscience. The author claims to have made "startling advances" relating to a heretofore unknown medium through which energy can travel. As far as you can tell, he performed no actual experiments; his entire thesis is built on extrapolation from his own creative reasoning. One bit near the middle has been marked with a highlighter:

"Having established the existence of the N-space medium, we can then reasonably posit the existence of a special wave-length capable of traveling through that medium; we will call this form of energy, appropriately enough, N-rays. Due to the fundamentally extradimensional nature of N-space, N-rays cannot logically be located at any one point of the electromagnetic spectrum; they instead exist at every point along the spectrum, traveling perpendicular it. Naturally, the practical ramifications of being able to transmit extradimensionally are dwarfed by the theoretical implications..."

Good grief, you can't help thinking. What drivel.

>quit

Are you sure you want to quit? y

{This didn't get the maximum score; I didn't see everything I could from the attic. But I didn't feel like going back just to fix that.}

Transcript beautified with IF Transcript Beautifier rel 2