

A Window into Infinity

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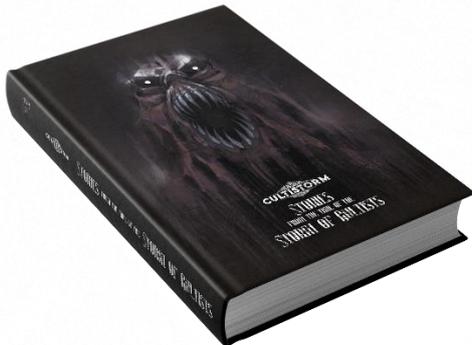
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Arkham, August 27, 1923

I don't know if it is the unfathomable fears buried deep in my soul, my restless imagination bordering on madness and fuelled by my secret investigations, or, what would be even worse, the embodiment of my fears that propel me towards this desperate deed. Since I don't know what awaits me in the coming hours and what consequences they will have for the rest of my life, I've decided to write down the chronicles of my horrendous trials while I'm still conscious and capable of doing it. Posterity can decide in the light of the upcoming events if my journal is merely a distorted memoir of a deranged mind or, what would be much more terrifying, the real, materialized horror bringing who knows what kind of foreboding future.

I.

The unnamable horror had descended on my life, which I spent mostly with lonely research in the library, exactly twenty-three days ago. If everything I've experienced and I'm describing to you is nothing more than horrible hallucinations of my deranged mind, and how I wish that was so, then the responsibility for my miserable visions is most probably the dark and demonic research I carried out. I have been reading certain ancient and secret volumes of the Miskatonic University Library. Let this be a warning: Those who wouldn't like to share my dreadful fate, should avoid studying the terrible *Galeano-fragments* and *The Book of Eibon's Hypnotic Hallucinations*, reading the *Songs of Dhol* or dwelling in the secrets of dark spheres. Most of all, never ever lay your hand on the "*Book of Dead Names*" many know as the *Necronomicon*. I cannot know for sure, only an inner voice tells me that these foul writings had something to do with the events I'm going to detail below.

My lonely journey of madness and horror started on a Thursday night, on the fourth day of August 1923 to be exact, and it has entangled my soul ever since. It began with a painfully high pitched whistling sound that tore me out of the peaceful solitude of unconscious and dreamless slumber on that first night and on every night ever since. At first the sound was quiet, but then it quickly grew louder. However hard I tried, I couldn't find its source.

Every night I wake up to this disquieting noise in the darkest time of the night, when everybody else is dreaming deeply and quiet. It always starts the same way; I'm drifting in distant, hazy dreams when, through

some strange secret of human nature, the merciless call of dreadful reality reaches out to me. It's the intensifying whistle I've mentioned before which suddenly turns into a painfully repugnant, wuthering screech, the like of which I had never heard before. It arrives and floods my pores, washes over me in a second, as if a lightning hit me, a lightning which doesn't saturate me with electricity but with a painful poison to wither my sanity. I can't even imagine which shred of my soul tolls the storm-bell, it is but an ephemeral moment, and I wake, trembling in my bed. I stare at the ceiling without blinking, it is painted dark to begin with and now it is buried in the shadows of the night. As the shrill, ear-piercing shriek from my window reaches my now awake consciousness, it feels as if a lump as big as my fist would swell in my throat. It becomes increasingly difficult to breathe and the unknown horror turns my skin into rough sandpaper. Fear runs through me and I feel searing heat and frosty coldness, which burns even more painfully, at the same time. I'm powerless, paralyzed listening to the ancient grandfather clock in the corner chiming away. No not chiming, exploding the passing seconds into my brain, while this god only knows what kind of creature scratches his secret message for me on the window. The message hidden among incomprehensible scribbles, since the very first monstrous night. A new sound joins the unbearably loud clock ticking and the ear-piercing shriek: something like glass being scratched with a grating metal instrument. This would make shivers run down anybody's spine even in normal circumstances. I feel as though some cold horror dug its claws into my skin all the way to the very base and was almost splitting it. These three noises blend into an unbearable pandemonium and I feel like a huge pressure wanted to blow my head apart from the inside. I cannot cover my ears with my hands because fear literally binds me into immobility. Then comes the point where I start to scream. I don't know how long it lasts, it might be a few seconds or hours, but I scream at the top of my voice because that's the only thing I am able to do. I give in to the unbearable dread and to the burning pain, and when it happens I feel that I arrive to the point where my sanity is at stake.

Suddenly the nightmare is over, the unearthly darkness weighing on me disintegrates as if it was really just a bad, unspeakably evil dream. I'm left alone in my almost unnaturally empty and uncanny room. My pyjamas are drenched in sweat and my vocal cords are hoarse from screaming.

I get up automatically and pull back the heavy silk curtains to see again what I see every morning after such an agony ridden night: someone or something scratches the visions of madness into my window, most probably with the intention of gaining lasting control over my mind and my soul. It's the twenty-third day and I have to grasp the horrifying reality that no matter how much I would like to believe otherwise, it's not a sickly nightmare that wakes me in the middle of the night. The surety tears open a newer layer of horror in my soul. I stand wordlessly before my window, just like the very first time, staring at the clear evidence of the evil bearing down on me. The *outside* of my window is even more densely covered, in the unintelligible, yet not completely random, intricate drawings carved into the hard glass, than it was before I went to bed.

II.

During the day, when the thousand sounds of mundane life populate my room and the whole flat swims in sunlight despite the dark, cascading curtains, it is difficult to take the memories of the nightly horror seriously. I often think that, despite every proof, it is my imagination that plays tricks on me and the whole thing is just a dream. How comforting it would be to hang onto this conviction! Sadly, such sober moments fly away as the day wanes and the deep horror regains my soul.

After the first night I also thought about that seemingly rational possibility, which might have also crossed your mind when reading my journal, that maybe some insomniac rascal torments me with his cruel jest every night. That this, filtered through the memories of my perilous studies, gives me nightmares. Well, let me add a fact to my account: my room is on the second floor and there is no balcony or protrusion under it that somebody could use to climb up. This was the very first thing I checked in the morning after the first horrible night. I'll confess that the fearful memory had upset me so much that I also tried climbing up to my room's window using the interstices of the old brick walls. I was thinking that if I managed, others would be able to do the same – but I failed. This fact was comforting and rather worrying at the same time. Comforting, since having ruled out the rational explanation, I could hold on to the conviction that my haunting memories weren't real after all, that they were a mere echo of my distraught dreams in my mind. It

was also worrying because if there was no rational explanation and they weren't just dreams, then there was nothing left but the unknown irrationality.

After the second dreamless night I stroked up a conversation with Mr. Ralph Teddick, a very pleasant and cultivated gentleman who worked as a teacher in an elementary school nearby. He lived alone like myself and had rented the apartment below mine for years. We ran into each other at the gate and after greeting him politely, I apologized profoundly for causing him some unpleasant moments with the shouting caused by my feverish nightmares. I assured him that I hadn't lost my mind, and it was my terrible dreams that forced the ill-begotten cries out of me. However, his honest surprise and firm denial turned my explanation even more embarrassing. He stated firmly that no shouting had woken him up in the past nights, so there was nothing he would reproach me for. I asked him if he had heard any other noise, or if some circumstance had woken him up from his nightly repose, but he also said no. He suggested that maybe my feverish unrest was also just a dream, something that didn't happen for real, its tormenting traces only lingered in the shards of my memory. In my confusion, I could only agree with him and then bid him farewell quickly. I also visited Mrs. Howkins, our landlady, just for good measure. She lives in the ground floor flat and while I was settling the monthly rent, I mentioned casually that I'd been sleeping very badly for a few days. I said this was because of certain strange nocturnal sounds and noises. She was also very surprised because she hadn't heard anything, what is more, I was the first lodger who mentioned this to her.

My unsuccessful inquiries had somewhat shaken my conviction that those things had really happened to me. I decided that before I finally closed down my investigation and filed away my nocturnal hardships as nightmares, I would subject my window to a careful examination. As I pulled the curtain open, it became clearly visible that the glass had been thoroughly scratched, much more densely than I had expected. I have to admit that I hadn't paid much attention to the window before, so I couldn't say if the tangled scratch marks had been there before the first horrible night. My windows have almost always been covered by lace curtains and they were cleaned by the house maid, so I had nothing to do with it before. It's true that during the year I had been renting the flat, I had never examined the glass of my window up until that day, so, although it seemed strange, it didn't have any special importance to me. If the terrifying night vision had stopped, I could have closed the case, since I wasn't able to classify the scratches as evidence. I also have to admit that for the very same reason my examination of the glass in the beginning wasn't very thorough, since on the first look the scratches were clearly lacking in system or meaning.

The first serious examination took place after the fourth nightmare ridden night when the propagation of scratches became undeniable; by then the previously smooth glass surface had hardly one intact square centimeter.

I spent the afternoon of the fifth day studying my own window and I was really glad that I lived alone. If I had a family and they were to see me among my feverish ministrations, they would have reasonably believed that I had gone mad. I pulled away the heavy curtains, turned my armchair opposite the window and with a notebook in hand I started studying the scratches.

Before I share all that I discovered that afternoon, let me answer a quite obvious question which I had so far only alluded to in my account. Anybody could rightfully ask why I hadn't gotten up during the night when I heard the scraping on the glass and why I hadn't verified what was happening by simply pulling away the curtain or even opening the window. The entering cool night breezes would even have been beneficial to strengthening my sanity. Yes, it would have been such a simple manner of chasing away my doubts. Whatever the result, I would have been sure about the cause of my ordeals. Sadly, however obvious it might have been, it wasn't in my power to do so, as I've alluded to before even if not clearly. From the unholy moment when the horrible nocturnal whistling tears me out of my happy unconsciousness and the surreal nightmare begins, the icy horror provoked by the unknown, or maybe the terrifying unknown *itself*, paralyses my body so much so that I cannot even turn my head towards the window, nevermind to get out of my bed. I can only move my eyes and cry out in fear, but the only thing I can see is the dark ceiling while lying on my back. In the very beginning the cold horror was enough to keep me from moving, but on the third night I would have been ready to pluck up my courage and get out of the bed, however I found that much as I wanted to I was unable to move even in the slightest, which only made my panic worse. I didn't

feel the binding pressure of any unknown force, it was my limbs simply refusing to follow the orders of my mind. I had never experienced something similar before: it was as if the natural connection between my thoughts and my body had been severed. This inert vulnerability was at once devastating and humiliating. So this is the explanation why I am forced to rely on conjectures and feelings and that is why I cannot give clear answers about the nature of the phenomenon.

I shall return to the account of my horrible discovery where I left it before this digression. As I've mentioned before, it was only on the afternoon after the fourth terrible night that I plucked up the courage to examine the glass more thoroughly. I was hoping to find some sense in the tangled scribbles my nocturnal visitor had scratched into the hard glass. My window opened inwards, so I could look at both sides of the panes and I concluded without any doubt that the scratches were on the *outside* of the glass. I have to emphasise this fact in the light of later events, but since I would like to document the events chronologically, I will elaborate on its importance later. On first look, I found no sense in this enigmatic creation of darkness. It seemed as haphazard as when we give a pencil to a baby who cannot even walk, and he doodles and colours senselessly and with his clumsiness he even tears the paper apart. It was just a rough squiggle made with some hard and sharp object into the cold pane instead of a paper. Yet, I couldn't look away from the jumbled lines. Something in the furthest corner of my subconscious told me I would find sense in this seemingly unintelligible monstrosity if I didn't give up. I looked at it from further away, thinking that a secret message might be hidden in the bigger picture. Then I examined the surface of my window each centimetre closely, going from one pane to the next. All in vain. Even after countless tries, it only seemed like mindless scratches and nothing else. I noticed quite soon, however, the gruesome evenness of the million creeks carved into the glass. It was as if they had used the tool made for this exact purpose, paying such careful attention that the unexplainable patterns of this depiction of madness that ran evenly everywhere. Strangely, the ghastly work of art didn't resemble the sounds of its creation. Because the former showed signs of geometric precision, while at night I had the impression that my infernal visitor lashed and tore furiously at the smooth surface of the window with its claws. After long hours of fruitless investigation I collapsed exhausted into my armchair, when a sudden draught slammed the window. Maybe a door was opened somewhere or one of the other residents spread their window wide to air their room. The little crack under the threshold was enough for the wandering evening wind to blow his anger through our flats. In any case, the window gave in to the will of the draught and slammed shut, knocking the magnifying glass I'd used to study the scratches and which I had left on the inner windowsill. I rose grudgingly from my soft armchair because I had just sat down and now I had to get up to pick up my tool from the floor. As I looked up, crouching under the windowsill, suddenly I seemed to understand the inconceivable message of the chaotic lines scratched in the glass. Perspective was the key. The message wasn't meant to be read facing the window, but from below, almost in line with the surface. If it hadn't been for the accidental gust of wind, I might have never thought about looking at the scratches from this vantage point. I have cursed that wandering draught a hundred times since then. Taking the coming events into consideration, I'm sure now that what I considered as a coincidence back then, was actually a very conscious intervention on the part of that horrible unearthly power that had been trying to reveal itself to me so forcefully.

III.

Alas, on the fifth day of my ordeal, I was there kneeling in front of my window. I was straining my neck as I pressed my face against the wall and tried to make sense of the new shape of the carved lines spreading in front of me. From this perspective some of the lines melted together, spaces disappeared and others appeared. What took shape in front of my eyes was very similar to the outline of my home, New England. It was not visible from a straight perspective, because the map was scratched into the glass in the negative: borders were rendered visible not by the carved lines, but by the spaces in between, but only from this most unnatural perspective.

My discovery was remarkable and terrifying at the same time. What mind can claw such a precise image into the glass, and the even more confusing question: for what purpose? My thighs began to lose feeling from the strained kneeling position, but I couldn't break away from studying this incredible work. If somebody had opened my door and had seen me kneeling in this convoluted position, I would have had a lot of explaining

to do to convince the about my sanity. Luckily, none of my acquaintances chose to disturb my frenzied investigations with their arrival.

As I continued to delve into the details of the drawing, I discovered that the creator of this unearthly outline, carved the Miskatonic river, which crossed our county, very clearly in the same negative manner as he made the outlines visible. Although a few bends of the river were different from how we know it and there were some tributaries I had never seen before, at least none of the maps I had seen showed it, but I was sure that the map scratched into the glass showed the Miskatonic.

This picture has flashed into my mind many times, and I have often convinced myself that what I had seen, especially in the light of my strange experiences, must have been the bank and flow of the river from prehistoric times.

This revelation made me dizzy and filled me with horror. It was very difficult to fathom what kind of creature could have drawn this horrible image. I also had trouble with imagining how they could carve such a precise and recognizable map into the cold glass, especially in a way that it could be read from such a convoluted and unlikely perspective. The one thing I couldn't understand at all was the possible purpose of all this. What does my terrifying night visitor want to point out to me and why? Or would it be a mere coincidence that it chose me as the recipient of its damnable machinations?

Since the afternoon had passed by very quickly and it was growing dark I concluded that I had had my fair share of blood-curling discoveries for the day, so I put my investigations on hold. I quickly made myself presentable and hurried over to the small restaurant just opposite my flat to have my usual light dinner. There is nothing more I could add to what I have already told you about my evening and night: the early dawn nightmare, the helpless paralysis, the grating sound of the glass being scratched and the ear-piercingly high pitched shriek happened that night as they did the night before and the nights after.

IV.

The secretive night visitor had sought me out nine times already, most probably from the other world, or if that doesn't exist, then from some unnamable dimension of the infinite cosmos, to push me into the edge of losing my sanity with its terrifying nocturnal activity. Since I had no reason to think that in the coming days there would be any kind of change in the course of my fate, I decided to take matters into my own hands. The monstrosity of the following night, however, was so much worse than anything before that I'm almost afraid to describe it. Discovering the map scratched into my window served as a sobering proof that my nightly ordeals weren't just the ethereal creations of my feverish nightmares, but unexplainable and evil events happening for real. This filled me with a hitherto unknown, galvanizing excitement and a stomach-turning fear at the same time.

On the tenth day of my ordeal I decided to carry out a reckless experiment. I decided that whatever happened, I would stay awake until the dreadful early morning hour when my otherworldly visitor arrived to scratch my window. If my sanity and bravery didn't desert me I would yank away my thick curtain and face the bringer of my hopeless state.

I tried to take a nap during the afternoon to prepare myself for the night. After having my usual, lonely dinner, I equipped myself with a strong Indian coffee made for me by Mr. Peterson, the owner of the restaurant. I moved my armchair to face the window and closed the thick, velvet curtains. I tried to pass the hours of waiting by reading, I chose the book entitled *Dreams from beyond the border of existence* which I had borrowed from the university library. It was written by a certain Wolfgang Richthofen, a German Archeology professor who had disappeared without trace during an excavation in Egypt. Sadly, I could only leaf through a few pages in my excited state of mind.

I didn't know exactly when my inhuman nocturnal visitor would arrive because time ceased to exist in my period of wretched paralysis, when my own cries blended into the satanic cacophony. I was quite sure

though, that the nightmares began after midnight. After the old grandfather clock struck twelve in the living room, the horrible tension in me rose to an unbearable level. Minutes ceased to exist from that moment on. I clutched the armrest of my chair, hoping that nothing would happen and that on this sleepless night I would find that it was only my deranged imagination that had ensnared me in a delirium in these past days. I have no idea how long I had to wait, but it felt like an eternity. Then I heard it. It sounded like the rustle of giant wings filtered through the closed window. I only heard two or three wing beats, but the air they stirred had such a deep sound as though those wings were at least three meters long. In my fear, I dug my fingers into the armrest so violently that I broke two of my nails— I saw this only later, in the morning. Then, in the heat of the moment I didn't even notice.

It appeared to me that the horrible thing on the other side of the window had just settled down to work. At the same time I heard the intensifying, high-pitched whistling noise. Sadly, the drapery was made from such thick velvet that however much I wanted to see at least the silhouettes of the horrifying night visitor, almost nothing was visible from the outside lights and shadows. I reached out towards the curtain with a trembling hand. The whistling sound stopped abruptly and it was as though everything had become empty around me: there was no noise, only the wild hammering of my heart, which was so loud that the thing outside might have also heard it. After long seconds frozen in terror, the armchair creaked loudly under me from a tiny movement and my nerves gave up. I tore away the curtain, but with such clumsy wildness that the wooden rod, which was holding the heavy material, broke into two with a deafening snap.

I'll confess that I have no idea what happened in that frozen moment of horror. I remember following some unconscious reflex and holding my arms above my head to protect myself from the falling velvet and the momentum of the movement forcing me to fall backwards together with my armchair. I felt the broken curtain rod wound my raised arm, I felt the pain of my skin being bruised and some metal part, maybe the rings holding the curtain, wounding my skin and biting into my flesh. From the sudden movement the ancient tome resting on my lap had fallen under me and got stuck in such an unlucky manner between myself and the armrest that the leather cover was torn off from the spine of the book with a painful crack. I also knocked off my cup of coffee, so the remnant of the now lukewarm beverage covered my nightgown, the moldering pages and the velvet of the curtain falling into my lap.

The next moment, God is my witness, it was really just the next moment, I was lying in my bed wearing my pajamas. I was frozen in the same stretched and rigid position as the nights before, my gaze fixed on the same spot of the ceiling. My hoarse shriek blended with the ear-piercing sharp screech and the blood curling scratching on the window just like on the nights before. My skin burned and froze at the same time, and some horrible fever ran from my feet to the top of my head. I still don't know how long my paralysis and my shriek lasted, but I experienced the damnation of bottomless loneliness like I did on previous nights. Then suddenly everything stopped. My throat was hoarse from the effort and my neck was stiff from the paralysis, but these were all well-known symptoms. Battling the sharp pain I turned my head to the side, towards the window. It's as though nothing had happened, the curtain was pulled aside, the armchair stood in the corner with my carefully folded gown on it, the very gown I thought to have worn just a few minutes ago. On the small bedside table there lay the book from the library, perfectly intact with my mug next to it. I was somehow convinced that if I'd managed to get out of bed I'd still see the rest of my hot coffee steaming in the mug. In the morning when my strength came back and the world turned normally again even in this cursed corner of Arkham, I noticed, having accepted the unchangeable horror, that the scratches on my window had become denser and even more chaotic. Maybe it was really just a dream. The only thing I couldn't explain was what had caused the wounds and bloody scratches on my right arm that night.

V.

A few days went by. The lack of sleep made me increasingly disheveled, a fact that Mrs. Howkins didn't fail to point out every time we met. I just mumbled something about fits of nausea tormenting me, probably the symptoms of some latent disease and I tried to escape her questions about the nature of my ailment as quickly as I could.

In my despair, I visited the good old doctor Smith and I asked him for some strong sedatives, but they didn't help. I took the prescribed dose before going to sleep, the next the day its double, but at the start of that horrifying hour the beneficial effects of the medicine evaporated and everything happened just as before. Before and after the event I slept soundly, but I spent the recurring hours of madness awake every night. Something I couldn't explain at all was that the terror, the shouting and the paralyzed stillness didn't diminish even after all this time. I couldn't get used to the horror descending upon me, every night the same strange and elemental panic sucked away all my sobriety and hope that visited me on the very first night. One would believe that one could get used to suffering and pain, but this was such a monstrosity that I couldn't adapt to it.

The most terrifying event during my ordeals happened on the fifteenth day, that is on August 19th. What happened was so shocking and unexplainable that my neighbors still whisper about it to this very day.

When I returned home after having finished my daily research at the university, a folded note awaited me in my post box in which Mrs. Howkins invited me to see her without delay. Thus I turned not towards the stairs leading up to my floor, but towards the caretaker's flat and I knocked on the door of our excellent landlady. Mrs. Howkins greeted me with reserved politeness and got straight down to business. She informed me that today was the time for the window cleaning which she carried out once a month with the assistance of her two helpers. My stomach shrunk because I knew what was coming next. While she summarized in a few brief sentences what renovation and repair works are included in my rent according to our contract, I admit to have only pondered what logical explanation could I give for the scratched window. Would she believe my story and would she still believe in my sanity if I showed her the cartography carved in the glass which can only be visible from that bizarre perspective.

When I looked at my landlady again she was holding out a paper signed by two witnesses and she had a rather grim expression. The parchment was a recognizance in which I acknowledge that, since I had damaged the window of my rented room by scratching the *inside* of the window with some sharp object, I will pay all the costs of the repair immediately.

As I read through the short preamble of the recognizance I felt relieved for a second that after all I wouldn't need to render an embarrassing explanation, but there was a disturbing detail, first I couldn't even put my finger on it, which filled me with restlessness then strengthening panic. I read and reread the few lines of hand written text and I spotted the small word which sent shivers down my spine right away, my stomach tightened as though trapped in a vise. *From the inside?*

I ran out of Mrs. Howkins's parlour without a word and up to my room like a madman, taking the steps two at a time to check what I'd read on the paper. My door slammed into the wall with a loud bang as I exploded into the room and I strode to the window right away. The heavy drapery was closed even though I opened it like I did every morning and I had tied it to the side with the usual ribbons. Mrs. Howkins arrived to the room, panting in the effort to keep up with me, when I open the crimson velvet curtain and she heard the terrified cry that escaped my throat. The window glass was nowhere to be seen.

I looked down at the paper in my hand which got a bit crumpled in the hurry. The recognizance contained the price of the new sheet of glass and the working costs of its fitting by Mr. James Epping, carpenter.

I looked back at my landlady in confusion; her expression showed only outrage which was completely understandable following my rude behavior. She told me dryly that in the future I should refrain from such outbursts of bizarre my artistic expression, at least as far as her window glass was concerned and that naturally she expected me to bear the financial consequences. The carpenter had already removed the glass during the morning but the new one would only be cut and delivered the following day, so I would need to spend the night this way. Fortunately, the summer nights were hot and dry, but if I wished she could give me a temporary room in the servants' flat for the night.

I stood flabbergasted in front of the glassless window. I couldn't really explain why, it was as if something priceless had been taken from me, something that had become a part of me. I felt robbed and bereft although I should have felt happy that the dreadful horror created by the unknown had finally disappeared from my room.

After clearing her thoughts, my landlady added that she expected me to pay for the damage as soon as possible, then she turned around and was about to leave. I however, simply had to ask her about the reason of my trepidation, knowing that with this I'd risk her faith in my sanity and my decent life and maybe even my lodging here.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Howkins, but are you quite sure that the carvings were *inside* the window and not outside?"

She looked at me sternly and I saw the concern for my wellbeing I had been worried about. She reassured me that Mrs. Eva Bennett, the maid who discovered the carvings, Mr. Jacobs, who resided in the neighboring room and who was called over to give his testimony, Mr. Eppings the carpenter and naturally Mrs. Howkins herself have all examined the carvings and they covered, without any doubt, the inside of the glass sheet. The witnesses all testified it with their signature.

I was confused since I remembered clearly from my own investigations that all of the carvings were on the outside of the glass. Maybe it was, after all, some kind of recurrent nightmare that descended upon me on that horrible hour of night and that it was me who created those scratches in some kind of somnambulant state? Was I close to losing my mind? Everything seemed so real, the noises, the hoarse ache of my throat from the endless shouting and the sweaty night gown... And that rock solid conviction that the carvings were on the outside!

Another terrifying thought wormed its way into my confused ponderings. Provided that my ordeals were real, what would happen that night when my terrifying visitor returned to continue his demonic creation that had disappeared? Wouldn't it be safer to accept the sanctuary of the servant's room for tonight?

I decided to sleep in the basement. The servant's room I was given was narrow and puritan, but at least I could hope that I would sleep through the night peacefully after such a long time. If I had known that this room was empty, I would have moved down here much earlier and then my fate might have turned differently. At least it was reassuring to hang on to this thought – today I know it was nothing but wishful thinking.

After my usual diner I wished to go to bed early. I washed myself, changed into my pajamas and put on my dressing gown as well. I closed the door of my room and was on my way to the basement when, obeying a sudden whim, I turned back to the corridor and knocked on the door of my neighbor. Fortunately, Mr. Jacobs was still awake. I apologized for the late visit and I let him know that I would spend the night in the servant's room and I asked him if he would be so kind to guard the key to my room. First he refused, not understanding why would I ask such a thing, but I reassured him that I had a very important and personal reason for this innocent plea and he would do me a huge favor if he could help. He took the key and he kept it with him, or so he stated later, until our next meeting a week later.

Naturally I couldn't inform the good Mr. Jacobs that it was possible that at night I did things in a somnambulant trance that I couldn't explain later and getting rid of the key of my closed room made any kind of unconscious event impossible, at least that night. Not that I seriously believed this explanation of the events.

I'll admit it was a good feeling to get away from the dreadful memories of the nightly horror that bound me to my room and I walked down the stairs with some newborn hope in my heart towards my temporary accommodation. I found it a bit difficult to fall asleep in the unfamiliar place, but eventually the long awaited sleep arrived.

The next thing I remember from that night was the familiar sound of my own shouting, which seemed unbearable even after so many times, mixed into the whistling, screeching and the horrible scratching of a metal instrument on glass. It was as though my eyelids had been torn open by an unknown force and my paralyzed eyes stared again at the ceiling I had seen so many times before. The shivers and the burning fever that pushed my weakening body to the edge of exhaustion seemed insignificant compared to the realization that, yet again, I was lying in my own bed in my own room. Everything happened like on the previous nights even though, a few hours ago I laid my head to sleep in the basement and I even got rid of the key to my chamber, not to mention the fact that there was no glass in the window.

I don't know how long it lasted, but it ended as quickly as on the nights before. I'm not ashamed to admit that this night my hopeless weeping got mixed into my howling and on my pajama bottom, I'm embarrassed even to write it down, urine stains appeared. As soon as strength returned to my body, I staggered to the window still weeping loudly and I pulled away the heavy drapery. I didn't even feel surprise, just horror and disgust, when the light of the street lamps fell on the scratched surface of the window. I pushed my palm against the cold glass and I registered, only somewhere in the depth of my subconscious, that I had been right and the scratches were indeed at the outside of the window. I collapsed to the floor under the window to look at the familiar yet so different map of my homeland from that unnatural position. The design had evolved and changed since last night just as much as it had done the days before

I wish this maddening horror would have been enough for that night! But I'm just going to describe the most terrifying thing. It must have taken an hour until I managed to gather my strength from this desperate and fear-ridden state and I stumbled back to my bed. I collapsed on it and to verify at what time my ordeals had ended I opened my pocket watch which had rested on my nightstand. It could have shown any hour, it wouldn't have been more shocking than the sight in front of my eyes: the glass had disappeared from my watch. The trembling returned and spread through my body. It seemed incredibly slow as I stood up with shaking legs and turned around in my room lit by the outside lamps. From the ancient grandfather's clock, from the frames of the two oil paintings on the wall, from the mirror above the small sink in the corner of the room, from the door of the cupboard – glass had disappeared from every surface and through some unexplainable and horrifying machinations it was now fitted in the window frame as though it had never been removed by Mr. Epping's skilled hands.

VI.

I spent seven days in hospital. According to my doctor, Dr. Lewis, I was found unconscious in my room the morning after that horrible night. I lay unconscious for two days in some kind of profound dream from which they couldn't wake me with any medication or therapy. On the afternoon of the third day I woke up without any warning and my strength returned by the next morning. I submitted to different physical and psychological examinations for days, but since they didn't find any measurable deformation or lasting injury, I left the hospital after seven days.

When I entered the gate of the old building I called my home, I was overcome by the warm feeling of homecoming, but also a tormenting anxiety. I opened the front door as quietly as I could and I passed Mrs. Howkins's door almost on tiptoe. I didn't feel the mental strength to answer all the questions and demands she must have meticulously complied, especially because I couldn't tell her the truth. She wouldn't have believed a word of it.

I was lucky and nobody noticed my arrival and I hurried up to my room and locked the door behind me. I looked around in my lodgings and confirmed that glass had disappeared from all of the furniture. The horror I'd experience before I passed out wasn't a dream then, it all happened. The new glass sheet brought by the carpenter rested against the wall, signalling its superfluousness. The thick curtain was closed, most probably Mrs. Howkins had closed it after I was found and taken to hospital. I reached for the heavy velvet with trembling hands, after some hesitation, I yanked it open. Interestingly enough it wasn't a sigh of fear but of relief that escaped my lungs: the familiar, horrifying scratches were still carved in the window. However much I was afraid of the meaning of those carvings, after the memory of the horror that had been

tormenting me for so long, I wouldn't have been able to bear if it had disappeared. That moment I realised that those tormenting nights of madness, my nocturnal visitor arriving from an unknown dimension and the horror of my paralysis were all a part of me, they had woven their web across my cells and I couldn't be a whole without them again. I took an involuntary step away from the window as I was wrestling with these new discoveries, but I couldn't tear my eyes away from the seemingly chaotic lines of the horror even for a second. As I stood silently in front of my own window struggling with my thoughts, the undeniable realisation dawned upon me: the unnameable nocturnal monster would not visit me again because it had finished its masterpiece. I couldn't explain how, but I knew that with unfailing certitude.

Before I could move to crouch under the window and look at the map from the familiar, unnatural position to see what the creation of my dreadful visitor had to show me, I had a vision, the like of which I'd never experienced before. I don't know how to describe it: it was as though I had a weak feeling of vertigo, my knees gave in for a moment and I thought I would collapse. Fortunately I remained conscious, the last thing I needed was to be taken back to hospital just a few hours after I'd left. The next moment a cool breeze touched my face which seemed to have come, in some unexplainable way, from the glass of the closed window. A strange smell filled my room, not strongly, but faintly, yet in an easily recognisable manner: it was as though the smell of the salty sea got mixed into an old, musty denseness and an unfamiliar sour stench. I have no explanation whatsoever for what I saw afterwards: it was as if the lines carved into the hard glass began to move. They reordered themselves and suddenly every detail of that unfamiliar world opened up to me, which I had only seen in the form of a rudimentary map crouching under the window. The picture I saw wasn't just a map anymore, but a vivid landscape where suddenly hills and mountains rose from the grassland in the middle of the glass. The Miskatonic river crossed it with its unfamiliar bends and tributaries as I'd already seen carved to the glass. The scratches and lines changed place right in front of my eyes. By the time the miraculous vision was over I knew that I was seeing our own region, however not in its current version but in an unimaginably ancient state as it existed long before the appearance of humanity. The vibrations changed the glass, the scenes appearing one after the other showed me the secrets of various places: some of them I recognised right away: the city of Arkham, Dunwich, Innsmouth, the harbour of Kingsport and the infamous town of witch trials some centuries ago; Salem. There were places I had no exact information about: an island in one of the wide bands of the Miskatonic river which didn't exist in our days or a mountain-like shape not far from the town of Worcester. As I stood wordlessly before this otherworldly apparition without any kind of rational explanation, the call of this familiar, yet unfamiliar world washed over me. I don't know what creatures could have roamed the Earth before us, but their consciousness, their memory, their essence had found me, in some mysterious and terrifying way, from the distant past. Although my every cell trembled from the realisation, a feeling more powerful than fear came over me: the excitement of explorers who glimpsed the shores of an undiscovered world for the first time. I didn't know if I was awake or dreaming, if I was really standing in front of my window or lying in a dark hospital room in the deadly embrace of a consuming coma, but at that moment I found peace.

I came to accept the horrors of the past weeks, the unexplainable events, the unknown, even with its paralysing nightly shrieks. When this unearthly peace washed over me, the window glass began to waver. Yes, I know I might sound like someone who had lost the last shreds of their sanity, but I can't say anything else: it was as though the glass had melted, it started to move slowly and it turned into some kind of jelly like material and began to pulse in a blue light. In that moment I understood why the map was mad: the unimaginably ancient world had opened a gateway into the present, and issuing from the pulsing blue light the whirlpool of an irresistible call filled the room. I knew exactly what was coming next.

VII.

Fortunately, I could finish the detailed chronicle of my ordeals before it grew dark – I was writing ceaselessly for at least four hours. I tried to relive everything and note it down as precisely as I could so that whatever happens to me now I will be able to explain it. The final result of my deeds will doubtlessly verify if the events described so far were true and they were indeed the proof for the existence of another dimension – or I've simply lost my mind and so I deserve the horrible death which awaits me in a matter of minutes. I have made up my mind: I'll pass through that gate. The opening of which cost me the torment of my

previous nights and the collapse of my faith in my soul, our physical world and our scientific explanations. I'll pass through and I don't know if I'll ever be able to return. I don't care anymore. I want to know the truth, wherever it might be and whatever price I might need to pay for it. Therefore, if you enter my room, I'll even open my door wide, and you don't find me anywhere, know that I've passed through to a hitherto unknown world, the existence of which completely changes our laws of physics and history. Let my account be a proof that there are dimensions waiting to be explored and let it serve as inspiration for those who, just like me, were afraid that they'd lost their minds when they faced the unexplainable.

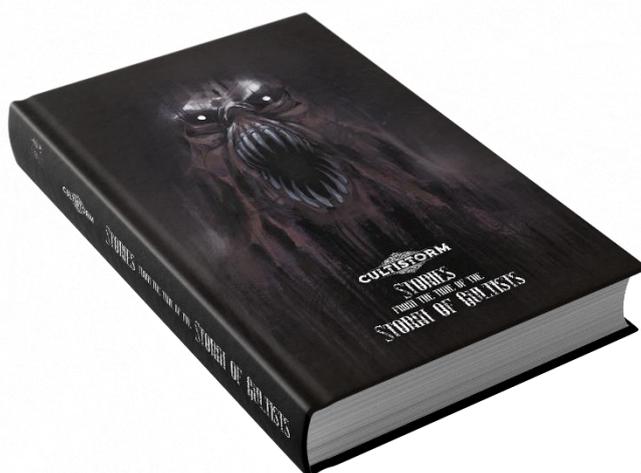
Naturally there is the other possibility although in my current state I'm beyond caring about it. It's possible, theoretically, that I did lose my mind and all the things I have reported in such painstaking detail are just the pitiable and infernal visions of some evil mental illness.

If it is so, you'll find my broken body under my window. Because after finishing the last line on this page I'll pass through that wavering glass gate that a dreadful creature not from this world and not this age had opened to take me where no man has ever been.

Mrs. Howkins, you will find my wallet in the drawer of my nightstand, the money in it should cover not only the rest of my rent, but also the cost to replace all the glass that had disappeared from the furniture of my room. I declare that everything I've described here is true, at least I believe it to be true and I think it could explain my behavior, my passing out a week ago and the scratched window glass. If you don't find my broken body under the window, I would ask you to keep my personal effects and if the fates are kind to me I might come back for them one day. In this case please send my journal forthwith to the vice-chancellor of Miskatonic University. Since I do not know why this alien world had chosen me or this room, I advise not renting this room to another lodger but to the scientist who will come to investigate my case so that they have the chance to carefully examine the evidences of my testimony. In case you find my body under the window, I leave all my personal effects to you, but I would like to ask you to throw these pages into the fire because then this journal is only the memoire of the ravings of a deranged fool. Whatever should happen to me, I beseech to you remember me kindly.

Yours faithfully,

your former lodger,
Robert S. Kleiman



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