

March 1882

We begin the ceremony as Marion intended, according to that described in the book, *De Vermis Mysteriis*. A fire is set in the fireplace and a pentagram chalked in the floor, marked with appropriate symbols and illuminated by two black tapers placed near the center flanking the piece of amber with the entrapped spirit. The others sit in a circle while I, the designated "watcher" who guards for malevolent spirits, sit in the far corner of the room.

Marion throws a handful of powder in the fire, producing an evil-smelling smoke and dampening the flames which now burn a sputtering green and brown. Those seated begin the Latin chant Marion Allen had transcribed from his book.

After nearly two hours I see a trail of smoke curling up from the piece of amber. The surface seems to be bubbling, melting. Could this be it? Have we finally achieved success? I see a form. . .

It is the following day. We have finished with our plans and have sworn a pact to never speak of what happened last night. We have satisfactorily explained the death of Robert, and in some manner the madness of Harold. The sheriff accepts the explanation of a carriage accident—we planned it well. Robert's neck was broken in the fall, we told him. Harold struck his head on a rock when the horse's leg broke and the carriage rolled. Would it be that it was only that. For the rest of us, we will be forever changed by what we experienced last night.

The thing formed in the center of the pentagram, shapeless, nearly invisible. Its terrible voice should have given us a clue, but we were foolish. It spoke, then Marion cast that damned powder on the spirit, the Dust of Ibn-Ghazi he calls it, and that's when we could see it.

Words cannot describe the faceless thing with a thousand maws. It roiled and bubbled, never fully revealing itself. So terrifying was its aspect that I sat as though frozen to the floor, the pen falling from my nerveless fingers. Cecil and Marion seemed as lifeless as I, while a short sharp cry issued from Crawford's mouth. Robert, however, rose to his feet and before anyone could stop him, stepped forward as though to embrace our horrible guest. With its arms, or those appendages that seemed most like arms, it took hold of poor Robert and twisted his head around as though it was a doll's head. The lifeless corpse was then thrown back in Harold's lap and that was when he began that damnable shrieking—the shrieking that hadn't stopped even after we handed him over to the Sheriff's men.

We still had a chance, apparently. Marion now believes that if we had kept our wits, we could have reversed the chant and eventually forced back the creature to wherever it came from. But Crawford panicked and mistakenly believing that it would dispel the creature, reached forward and destroyed part of the pentagram, breaking its effectiveness. Released from that binding symbol, the thing—with a screech that could only have been unholy satisfaction—fled the house, disappearing out the window as a rearing, screaming wind of boiling color.

Marion believes that the thing could still be destroyed, or at least dispelled, but none of us who remain have the stomach for such an undertaking. It is believed that the spell we cast inextricably binds the thing to the house and it is true that when we went back a few days later to retrieve our things, we heard it banging about in the attic over our heads. The warding signs so cheerfully carved by Marion Allen during better times—times that seem so long ago—apparently are effective and bar the thing entry except into the attic of the house.