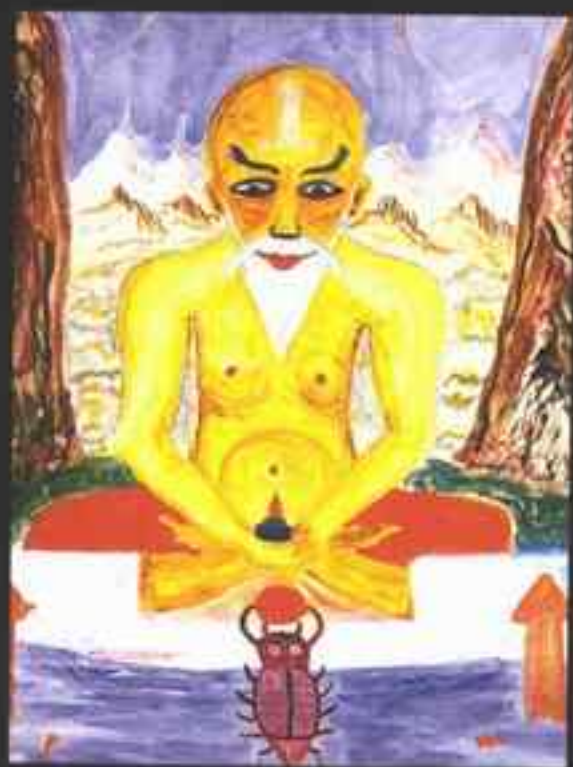


AGAINST *the* LIGHT

*A Nightside
Narrative*



KENNETH GRANT

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A Nightside Narrative

Kenneth Grant



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To the Memory
of
PHINEAS MARSH BLACK

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Prologue

*There is some one myth for every man, which if
we but knew it, would make us understand all
that he did and thought.*

W. B. Yeats

When one becomes old, very old, like my great uncle Phineas Black, one's later years are often haunted by pleasant memories of the earlier. But with Dr. Black, things were different.

One of his more controversial accomplishments had been a series of papers contributed in his younger days to a scientific journal. Originally published in 1881, they appeared later in book form under the title *Clinical Studies in Senescence and Diseases of Memory* (Edinburgh, 1886), a French edition being published in Perpignan four years later.

Phineas Black, M.D., was interested more in diseases of the mind than of the body, and he relinquished a nourishing general practice at a comparatively early age. He died, aged one hundred and three years, in 1957.

The 'Studies' caused something of a stir in professional circles in the eighteen-eighties, and I think this caused my uncle to terminate his practice. He had become the focus of unwanted attention, and a colleague, envious perhaps of his notoriety, had pried into his personal affairs and had found, again perhaps, something rather unsavoury. A scandal ensued. Fortunately for the family the affair never broke into print, but I recall the silence which rose like a wall whenever Uncle Phin's name cropped up.

But this was all a long time ago and it is a matter of conjecture whether the later events which I have to relate were in any way connected with it.

My story covers a protracted period of time. It is also of some complexity, and the facts are highly unusual. I want to begin by saying a few words about myself and a great-cousin of mine, Gregor Grant, who plays a significant part in the narration. Besides being Uncle Phin's cousin, Gregor was related

to the occultist, Aleister Crowley. Although Gregor and I stemmed from the same branch of Clan Grant, I was unaware of our relationship until Crowley suggested the connection. On the maternal side I am descended from a French family named Wyard, which settled in Brundish, near Woodbridge, Suffolk, in the sixteenth century. The church of Saint Laurence, and nearby Brundish Hall, contain Wyard interments dating from 1669.

Of Clan Grant, occult tradition avers that from indefinitely ancient times a collection of magical spells had been circulated among successive generations of my ancestors. It was said that each in turn added his (or her) accounts of traffic with entities not of this world. The collection was known familiarly as *Grant's Grimoire*. It is said that there exists to this day in the library of a Florentine family an Italian version, // *Grimoire Grantiano*. Rumour has it that an English version was once in the possession of Sir Francis Grant, the portrait painter, but it seems to have vanished with him at his death in 1878. During the past century legends concerning the Grimoire have grown dim. It is derided by contemporary members of the clan, with one or two exceptions, as a childish fantasy of ghosts and goblins.

As a result of certain remarkable incidents soon to be related I was led one sultry summer evening to unearth in a Welsh ruin a copy of the Grimoire. Prior to this event it had been, for myself at least, a misty legend such as occasionally spices the histories of ancient clans.

But not all my contemporaries were sceptical. One such was Aleister Crowley, who believed in the existence of a book of Secret Keys to other worlds, and in its infamous reputation. Soon after I discovered the manuscript, I became aware that Crowley was not the only person eager to lay hands on it. I remembered that Uncle Phin, who was sympathetic to Gregor, though not to Crowley, had regaled me with chilling tales of the Grimoire's dark spells. These had taken root in my young mind and led me to believe that my uncle may actually have possessed, perhaps, a

collation of spells laboriously transcribed by long forgotten ancestors. Phineas and Gregor had been Crowley's main targets in his attempts to procure it, and he had left no stone unturned in his efforts to obtain from them clues to its whereabouts. I learned, eventually, that my great cousin believed that he himself was destined to be the Grimoire's custodian.

Warding off constant harassment from Crowley, Gregor in turn harassed Uncle Phin, believing, as did I, that he knew more about the matter than anyone living. How a copy of the work disinterred by me had found its way into a Glamorganshire ruin I was not to discover until long after the event.

At this point it becomes necessary to introduce an important new factor. In the vicinity of Brundish in Suffolk there is a forest named Rendlesham. It featured in the media not long ago in connection with a supposed landing of an unidentified flying object outside an American air-base. Brundish lies about ten miles north-east of Ipswich, not far from Dunwich, a sea-port the name of which H. P. Lovecraft transplanted to the New England of his horror tales, in much the same way that the ruins of Brundish Hall were transplanted by his compatriots to American soil after World War II.

In 1982 an allegedly extraterrestrial encounter occurred in Rendlesham Forest amid a blaze of intensely white and coloured lights. The incident has been documented in a book entitled *Sky crash*¹. But my attention was attracted to the region by matters of an altogether different nature. I had chanced upon mention of the name Wyard in a book on witchcraft. I should explain that the more recent members of the family - of which very few remain - were firmly convinced that whenever, or wherever, the name cropped up it was invariably that of a relative. In this particular case the name belonged to one Margaret Wyard who had been executed for witchcraft in the sixteenth century. I was surprised and excited

1. *Skycrash: A Cosmic Conspiracy*, by Butler, Street, and Randies; Spearman, Suffolk 1984.

by the information because other bearers of the name had been highly respected members of the community, as the Brandish memorials testify. I was excited because my life-long interest in the 'occult' would seem to have been shared by at least one other member of my mother's family. Intrigued by the discovery, I engaged in research which elicited the fact that Margaret Wyard had claimed carnal knowledge of the devil in the shape of a beast. The scene of their couplings occurred in Rendlesham Forest! According to a farmer, quoted in *Skycrash*, even today "the woods are always being used for evil purposes, including Satanic rituals". As the book and its authors treat of these matters in a prosaic manner, the farmer's observation strikes an odd note.

I was strangely elated by my ancestor's association with the area. Having been born upside-down and with two crowns to my head, and having been neither christened nor baptised owing to parental differences of opinion, I possessed the characteristic marks of a witch, and I considered myself appropriately qualified for further investigation. Did there not surge in my veins the blood of a Master of Magick, to say nothing of the blood of a self-confessed witch? I therefore engaged a *clairvoyante*, or skryer, with whom I had had in the past successful dealings, and I communicated to her some of that twice-cursed blood for the purpose of exploring the occult history of Margaret Wyard. The results surpassed my expectations, and they illuminated Clan Grant's involvement in the ancient witch-cult. I would emphasize the word *ancient* because this narrative is not concerned with the antics of 'modern' or 'popular' ideas of the craft. I was also enabled to fathom the source of Aleister Crowley's insights into the darker mysteries of magic.

As the question-answer format of the frequently prolonged sessions with the skryer would prove tedious, I have compressed the material in order to present a continuous narrative. Being neither an historian nor a genealogist, I am to

blame for possible inaccuracies in these areas; being an occultist, however, I am aware of matters relevant to certain future threats to our planet, and such activities as those once pursued by Margaret Wyard. Their pertinence to the 'cosmic conspiracy suspected by the authors of *Skycrash*, and other writers with similar concerns, will, I think, become increasingly apparent.

Before embarking upon this record of events it is necessary to introduce the skryer herself, Margaret Leasing, through whom the material was obtained. Margaret was a trance-medium who had presided over various 'rituals of recall' in connection with an arcane Lodge which I directed between the years 1955 and 1962. Apart from being a *clairvoyante*, Margaret was an accomplished dancer and occasionally made available to the Lodge her considerable talents, as well as those of her troupe. She was *en rapport* with the aims and principles of the Lodge, and our personal relationship was at all times good, and, I might add, strictly formal. After many false starts, her experience of earth-bound entities enabled her successfully to over-ride them and to tap the vital current once embodied in Margaret Wyard. I have omitted details of the false starts, some of which led us far astray, and if the ensuing transcript reads at all smoothly it is due entirely to ruthless editing. At all times I have endeavoured to exercise discretion and sensitivity where living individuals and contemporary organizations are concerned.

Part One

THE GRIMOIRE

*"If you hold it against the light", he suggested,
"an altogether different picture will emerge".*

Part II, Section 4.

Recorded history renders no account of Margaret Wyard beyond the fact that she was executed for witchcraft in 1588. The events of her birth and early childhood left no retrievable traces, but the violent emotional trauma of her initiation into the witch-cult seared the astral light with an incisive engram.

One of the earliest skryings yielded the fact that at this time - she was about twelve years of age - Margaret was re-baptised with the name Awryd, an obvious anagram of Wyard. A terrified yet exultant child, her features suggested experience far in excess of her age. The rite of initiation was enacted in the shadowy vapours of a forest made vague by steaming swamps. Her mentor had come via the sea-marshes at Dunwich, the nearest point of ingress for those whose aim it was to hide themselves in human shape. At the climax of the rite the girl was not wholly ejected from her body; but from that moment in time she slept. A child had entered the forest, yet what emerged from it the skryer could not describe. Through her skrying-globe, Margaret Leasing saw many such as she. They thronged the forest as a whitely coiling mist in which their faces writhed dumbly, dislimned, then melted into the marsh. But Awryd remained. She was not absorbed into the vortex, and it was impossible to guess what became of her less mortal remains - until I discovered the Grimoire.

A room, large and lavishly furnished with books, pictures, images. Uncle Phin is speaking to a gaunt individual seated before a blazing fire. Through a westward-facing window a sick sun sinks behind domed hills swathed in mist. On a small octagonal table lies a volume bound in sea-green leather.

The skrying-glass was unclouded; I could see that Margaret Leasing was pleased with the 'reception'. My gaze was drawn into its depths to a large painting framed in black which suggested the nightmare world of a Sime or a M'Calmont. It depicted a window open on to the forest scene of initiation, the background lurid with flame. In the foreground loomed a windy figure, its eyes emitting a green vapour. Phineas Black was shrouded in its drifts, and his companion appeared as if submerged in water agitated by a powerful current. Their conversation was muffled, echoing as from a deep place, far off...

When I looked again, the room and its occupants appeared normal.

"I tell you, Phin, Aleister has picked up the scent!"

Gregor indicated the picture behind his chair: "If *she* were here now", he added, "she would tell you where she had concealed it".

I confined my attention to the speakers, avoiding visual contact with the picture. I was puzzled by my uncle's indifference to its unusual qualities. The swirling mist, even, elicited no comment from him. He smiled the crazy half-smile I well remembered. I had forcibly to remind myself that both men were long dead and that Aleister Crowley, to whom Gregor had just referred, had died four decades previously.

Uncle Phin took up the book; the room grew suddenly dim. He read aloud:

I have proved beyond doubt that in the darkness of senescence lies hidden a key to the earlier life. In the

ordinary mortal it is veiled in the imagery of childhood, but these images are masks. Beneath them lies a mystery which concerns not the past, but the future...

He paused, and Gregor remarked: "I have always been intrigued by the mystery of childhood; its innocence is a blind. As children we behold a secret world which, on recall, we see again; but we can also feel it again if we are very quiet, very still; then we experience a sense of timelessness".

"That is because the soul abides outside time", replied Dr. Black; "Listen - the author of this book also knows the secret:

If, in later life, we are unable to discover the key, may we not seek it through one who is yet fresh, virgin as the morning light before the dusk deludes the vision in the distorting mists of dying days?

He looked intently at his cousin, and concluded:

"On the verge of womanhood, even, she knew that timeless zone and how to enter it. She had the keys and she hid them in symbols".

"True", replied Gregor, but where did she hide *the book*?"

An expression I was unable to interpret suffused my uncle's glance: "What would you say if I told you I had found it?", he asked.

A sudden clamour without. They both turned simultaneously as if to look through the open window depicted by the artist. The question remained unanswered. A rising sound pervaded the room. I gazed at the picture, hesitantly at first. A storm had gathered in the forest, flashes of lightning flickered over the trees which heaved in a violent wind blowing in from the sea. The beam of the lighthouse at Orford, beyond Rendlesham, probed the darkness, alive now with figures that threaded the pines in a sinister procession. I was reminded of a Druid scene painted by Austin Spare, and something in my memory clicked. Spare had seen what I was now observing. Somewhere, in a shadowy wood, that artist of the night side had captured this self-same suggestion of spectral animation. I heard distant chimes, muffled, beneath water.

They recalled the legends of old Dunwich, of sunken bells, of a shoreline slipping year by year into the turbulent ocean skirting the ancient town with its abbey once frequented by the Templars. There was a sense of something being claimed by something that was 'other', something indefinable...

Something was trying to enter in at the window. Hands clutched at the frame. The fingers were inhuman, webbed. Was it possible that the two men saw nothing, or that they saw a picture other than that visible to me? They were wrapt in admiration while I was convulsed with dread. I wanted to warn them that the girl-mask was a lie. Did they not see the eyes that glared into the room? I shouted to Margaret to stop the vision.

It was not until that moment that I realised that I, too, could *see*. This had not occurred at any of the seances we had previously held together. Margaret was in a deep magnetic sleep, but her hand - as if in response to my plea - drew over the globe its silken coverlet. Her body shuddered. I applied to her forehead, to the palms of her hands and to the soles of her feet the yellowish salve which she habitually used when she withdrew from trance. A sharp shock was transmitted from her flesh to mine. Having injected her with the witch-blood I now shared her power of vision. The thought caused panic. I had established a *rapport* that might endure as long as the flesh remained, perhaps longer. Margaret surfaced very slowly, seemingly oblivious of all but her immediate surroundings.

After considering the facts, I decided to leave the whole matter alone. I deceived myself into believing that I had business of a nature more pressing than that of researching the history of Awryd. Also, I felt genuine concern for Margaret Leasing. I could hardly expect her to take grave risks on my account. I suggested a holiday, after which we would go our respective ways. A friend of mine had temporarily vacated a bungalow in Glamorgan not far from the coast, The sea beckoned and the weather forecasters threatened for London a stifling summer. We left town well before the holiday season got under way.

For several days we neither of us mentioned the skrying. Then, one afternoon, when too strong a breeze from the sea made uninviting the prospect of relaxing on the sands, we edged inland. I knew the locality well, having visited it on and off since 1927 during childhood holidays. We strolled in the direction of Ewenny and the sand dunes of Candleston. A ruined manor-house, incorrectly described in guidebooks as a 'castle', nestled in a waste of spiky grasses and pine trees. It was a 'day of the veil', as Machen would have described it; the sun, never quite penetrating a thin haze, beat down on the dunes a white glare of relentless heat. We ate sandwiches and refreshed ourselves with canned lager, after which Margaret slept and I strolled to the ruin. I entered it, recalling the far-off days when, as a boy, I had clambered to the first floor and perched upon a crossbeam. It was surprisingly little decayed, a little less firm, a little more eroded. I gazed out at the dunes through gaps in the walls; they still rolled on toward the sea at Ogmores, with its genuine castle, now little more than a shell after the ravages of nine hundred years.

Beneath me I saw Margaret threading her way gingerly through fallen masonry. I called but she did not respond.

There was an oddness about her movements that suggested that she was not yet fully awake. This alarmed me because she usually imposed strict self-discipline where trance-work was concerned. She advanced stiffly, then disappeared beneath an arch that gave on to the dilapidated main hall. She then veered left, and hesitated, seemingly baffled. Her eyes were glassy, her features a mask suspended in a black void above the pit that yawned at her feet; she was standing precariously on the brink of the crypt. I shouted again, unable to reach her in time to hold her back. Nothing could prevent her falling on to the hunks of debris below. In my excitement I dislodged a part of the wall in which lay embedded the beam that had supported me, and a large fragment hurtled into the cavity. It was followed by an uprush of sound and a column of dust which sparkled in a sudden burst of sunshine. A flying shape wheeled into view and settled on Margaret's brow, squealing shrilly.

The sunlight dimmed. I shall never forget a terrified Margaret, tearing at the thing in her hair as luminous tentacles clamped about her head like a helmet and began seeping into her skull. Her shrieks were appalling. Splashed with blood she hurled the thing back into the pit in one supreme effort, then fell unconscious at its edge. Utter silence ensued.

We resumed our trips to the beaches, but a change had occurred in Margaret. She had been understandably perplexed by the bloodstains on her clothing and by the

absence of cuts and bruises on her body. Although her head had been badly scratched she could not account for so much blood. I told her that she had been savaged by a bird suddenly disturbed after long immurement. I said nothing about the thing's ghastly shape, and the strange and tangled light that had soaked into her skull.

During the remainder of our holiday Margaret remained pensive. We no longer engaged in light-hearted conversation. I began to notice in her what I can only describe as a sensual curiosity about me which she persistently endeavoured to satisfy. One day this penchant manifested itself in a playfully amorous assault during which she bit deeply the lobe of my left ear. This worried me, not because of the discomfort or because it revealed a kind of affection which I knew she did not feel for me, but because I had initially drawn from that earlobe the blood which I had given her for establishing contact with Awryd. A surprising quantity of it now flowed, owing no doubt to the previous blood-letting.

On our final day in Wales, Margaret seemed disinclined to go out of doors. I sat in the garden reading documents relating to family Wyard, the first time I had had a close look at them since my determination to research the subject.

During the afternoon, Margaret became restless and persuaded me to join her indoors. I was disturbed by the turn events had taken and determined that on our return to London I would engage another medium. Until our departure, therefore, I

decided to acquiesce in anything she might suggest, rather as one might humour a lunatic. However, when we came together in the shadowy room which she had chosen for her bedroom, I realized the inevitability of our relationship. No one but she could have helped me to re-establish rapport with the Wyard bloodline.

Margaret remained almost continuously in a somnolent mood. Uncle Phin would have described her as being "in a dwam", a Scottish idiom for which there is no adequate translation. I realized that I was a mere adjunct to her fantasies. I went along with them for the reason already adduced, and because the experience was far from unpleasant; that is, until it became obvious that she was no longer fantasizing. A curious intent seemed to underlie her previous playfulness and I was accordingly suspicious of her casual suggestion that we take a stroll.

The air was like velvet. The odour of ferns in hot sunshine has always held for me a peculiar appeal, and, as the onset of evening released their concentrated essences beneath a rising full moon, I was aware of a poignant nostalgia. So I acquiesced willingly in Margaret's proposal when I remembered that the following day would see our return to London, sweltering in the dog days.

As we emerged from the bungalow into the cool and scented evening, the words of the Persian poet reflected my mood:

*How say ye that I was lost? I wandered among roses.
Is the lover forlorn in the House of his Darling?
I wandered among roses. How say ye that I was lost?*

I was perfectly happy until I realized that we were veering in the direction of Merthyr Mawr and the ruins at Candleston. As I noticed Margaret's measured tread, the rigid stance of her body, the glazed eyes, I tried, vainly, to alter her course.

We crossed the lane that wound from the Ewenny Road on its way to Corntown. When we passed a stretch of water fringed with marsh weeds and infested with nightflies, I thought I glimpsed the *plant y pwyll* - those 'children of the

pool' - of dark Welsh lore. They swarmed with a white and unctuous motion, meeping and mowing; and, as we passed by, they appeared to genuflect as reeds bowing in a breeze before the image of an ancient god. I think at that moment a light other than the moon's, a light of recognition, flashed between them - and Margaret. Her mouth opened and whispered, very faintly, a phrase that I had heard before only from the lips of my crazed Uncle Phin: *Akasai dasu* - 'the darkness is undying'!

6

"The perspective is odd, but the gaze is compelling. Who is he?"

Hesketh St. Clair was admiring a curiously elongated portrait hanging on the north wall of Dr. Black's study. My uncle replied, peevishly: "The artist calls him 'Black Eagle'. How would I know who he is?". He then lowered his eyes to the book he was reading: Stormlin's *Aetiology of Swamps*.

The day was intolerably sultry. St. Clair moved about the room listlessly. When he confronted the picture of the open window, with girl in foreground, he paused and stared into her wide open eyes. Immediately, he sensed a connection between her and Black Eagle. It was suggested, perhaps, by the fact that she seemed to be looking fixedly at the portrait which was separated from her by the window in my uncle's study. It opened on to a leafy garden and a distant mere which distilled wreathes of yellow mist; an elegant scene of luminous serenity, made somewhat sinister by its appearance between

Black Eagle's glance and the girl's wide-eyed innocence in which lurked a hint of terror.

"I envy you the view", murmured St. Clair, "the mere is a dream, and anything might rise from those coiling mists".

"Tis a marsh, a swamp, a fetid cesspool", Black muttered savagely. He raised his heavy-lidded watery eyes, quite empty of expression, and fixed upon St. Clair a long and disconcerting gaze.

"*Plant y pwyll!*", gibed St. Clair. He laughed, and added:

"They've invaded your mind and fouled your brain, Dr. Black. You surround yourself with grotesque art - not that I don't admire it - and then you complain of the Dark Ones. But I happen to know something about the man who produced it."

"The drawing you are looking at is by Austin Osman Spare".

St. Clair turned to my uncle: "I met Spare; he fished in unsavoury waters. I believe he was involved at one time with Uncle Aleister", he added slyly.

"Crowley was a relative of mine", replied Black, with irritation.

St. Clair remained pensive for some time: "Another of Spare's acquaintances was a questionable character named Vaughan, Helen Vaughan".

Dr. Black looked up, snapped shut *The Aetiology of Swamps*, and helped himself to a long yellow cigarette: "Really? I had always supposed that lady to have been a figment of Arthur Machen's imagination. Are you telling me she actually existed; and under that name?"

"I am. She did. Or perhaps I should say - she does!"

For the first time that day Dr. Black showed an interest in his visitor. St. Clair had been trying to extract from my uncle reminiscences for a projected book which he intended to call *The Decadent Revival*. The doctor, engrossed in *The Aetiology of Swamps*, had been disinclined to oblige. Intrigued by Black's absorption in the book, St. Clair had failed so far to

fathom the connection between swamps and Black's well-known preoccupation with occult aesthetics. St. Clair knew nothing of my uncle's medical career, nor did he know that certain marsh gases affect the cells of the brain in ways as yet unexplained by science.

A light nickered in the old man's eyes, which, beneath their white lashes, lent an unusual animation to the heavy head, a once august and resolute head now fallen into decay like a forgotten statue. Parts of the ear-lobes, the flanges of the nose, the chin, were crumbling, slipping into the remains of *The Mallows*, his extensive estate, merging with the meremist, blurring with its wreathings the precise boundaries of earth and sky. But the resolve remained. The face, imperious as that of a Caesar, rose from its column of dissolving flesh, still aflame with the obsessive madness that it masked, yet not so inscrutably as of old - the obsession with immortality. Not physical immortality; Doctor Black was no fool; he had learned of another, a more ecstatic survival.

Concerning my Uncle Phin's tireless quest for immortality, he once told me in response to a question I had put to him on the subject that he knew Indian yogis who had lived for two or three centuries or more. Time is purely subjective and relative to mental activity. Some yogis have the power of suppressing the thinking faculty for very long periods, and time stands still in the absence of mentation, so the body does not age during these periods. Thought and breath are indissolubly linked, and yogis also achieve a similar goal by prolonged suspension of the breath. "Why then does longevity, seemingly so rare, persist only for two or three centuries?", I asked. "Presumably", he replied, "because the fatuity of embodied existence becomes at long last evident to the yogi who, on awakening from voluntary oblivion, finds himself faced once more with the usual problems and vexations of living, which he found unendurable before entering it - the same old world, the same old futilities and frustrations. That which he willed (and the magnetic sleep is a willed phenomenon

in his case) must inevitably be un-willed. Perhaps", he added, "there is a law of necessity that determines the limits of folly".

St. Clair saw his chance: "Do you recall, in one of Machen's stories, the description of a head sketched by an artist who had captured in its features - I quote - 'the most vivid presentment of evil' that one of the characters had ever seen?"

Black did not reply. St. Clair continued: "That sketch was of Helen Vaughan and it was by the same artist - Austin Osman Spare. Though little more than a boy he had been quite a celebrity at the turn of the century. Twenty years later he was all but forgotten".

"Fantasy, my dear boy, sheer fantasy", protested Black.

"I think not. Did you know Spare?"

"I did not. My aversion to my cousin Aleister inhibited my meeting anyone remotely connected with him".

"Yet you cherish Spare's paintings!"

"Drawings", Black corrected him irritably: "I recognize genius when I see it; it would be sheer stupidity to deprive myself of the pleasure I find in his work. But tell me more about 'Helen Vaughan'. I did know Machen, but he never mentioned her to me".

"Very likely not. He had a superstitious regard for his old friend, Arthur Waite, who was far from happy about the trend of some of Machen's tales".

"Waite was an old fool", snorted Black.

"Machen intimated that Helen Vaughan was the evil genius of a gifted artist", added St. Clair.

Black looked keenly at the younger man, an expression of profound distaste on his face which was suffused suddenly with an expression of imminent recall. He *had* known the woman, indeed he had known her; but not as Helen Vaughan. Her other name eluded him, but the clear and luminous image of a dark Italianate beauty rose before his inner vision. Was it possible? Dr. Black was incredulous.

In the heat of the afternoon he shivered suddenly with intense and penetrating cold. Memories flooded back. Again:

was it possible? A witch who had flaunted her witcheries; who had claimed the power of changing age into youth, and vice versa. When trouble broke, she had disappeared. Search was eventually abandoned and the years passed. At an early age, Austin Spare, like Howard Phillips Lovecraft, was fascinated by the faces of very old women. Black felt faint, reached out to steady himself. The other, watching him intently, was aware of the inner convulsion, but whether or not it stemmed from physical causes he did not know. Black breathed uneasily, turned his vision yet more deeply inward. He remembered that Spare had been so devoted to a crone named Paterson that he sometimes referred to her as his second mother. She, too, claimed to be a sorceress, and she had a familiar spirit named Black Eagle.

Phineas Black fell asleep. The mist of the mere had risen almost to his head. Black Eagle's gaze was the last thing he remembered that afternoon; the picture, the open window, and the curtain billowing in a hot blast of air. The steady watchfulness was distant but intent; and the perspective was very odd.

7

The church at Merthyr Mawr separates the village from the sand dunes of Candleston. The moon hung immense and full in a cold sky veiled sporadically by scudding clouds. We entered a forest of pines, and a sudden sense of my thralldom to Margaret Leesing gushed over me like the nearby river bubbling over the stones, alive with the laughter of the

plant y pwyll. Glancing backward, I thought I detected a movement in the deeper shadows of the church porch. Craggs of cloud swallowed the moon; then, a fleeting darkness. We moved on.

It seemed an aeon before we emerged from the wood which encircled the ruins at Candleston.

"We must go inside!", was all she said.

Although dreading her words, I was relieved to hear them spoken in a normal tone. We stepped over the rubble and passed beneath the arch; I had not previously noted that it was the last of nine. She paused. A compelling influence urged me to goad her on. In the hall she sank upon a slab of masonry, exhausted, and so cold that I grew apprehensive. She had spent most of the day skrying and her eyes had acquired a fixed stare.

"It is in the crypt", she murmured.

She arose. Although the main hall was bathed in moonlight, the region beyond it lay in utter night. My immediate fear was that she might raise the 'thing' she had flung into the pit.

While Margaret wound her way hesitantly through the debris, I moved with comparative speed and soon regained the broken beam above the crypt. Her sense of urgency was contagious, but I had no idea what she expected as she navigated warily the detritus newly dislodged during our recent escapade. I explored with my torch that part of the crypt that lay beneath the stairway, searching anxiously for I knew not what. There was no apparent sign of anything living. A surge of relief, and yet... ?

I began to have doubts. Had events occurred as I had remembered them? The thought was interrupted abruptly. Margaret placed her foot on the first step of the broken staircase, then she slipped. Rubble rained all about us as she fell, and from the pocket of her stole there rolled the skrying-stone, miraculously intact.

"We have to use it now", she insisted as she picked herself up.

We managed to maintain a dizzy balance on the rampart, now broken away at floor level. Dislodging rubble with every movement, I carried her bodily into the crypt. Whorls of dust, ascending on moonbeams, resembled semi-human shapes which recalled the brides of Dracula. The floor sloped acutely and we entered a deeper cell. I lowered Margaret on to a block of granite reminiscent of the ancient high altar in Ewenny Priory, not far distant. She asked me for the globe and I laid it beside her on its diminutive pedestal. Although not exposed to direct moonlight, a flickering luminosity burned within it, creating an illusion of its gradually increasing size. I noticed also a darker light which startled its depths with a vibrancy that I could interpret only in terms of sound resembling the buzzing of bees. The vibration gained in volume and a mauve radiance pervaded the crypt. It did not issue directly from the stone but appeared to emanate in light-waves, in which were discernible deeper patches of colour. These appeared as revolving nuclei which coalesced, separated, and fused again, the process repeating itself indefinitely as the buzzings increased to a crescendo of sound. But of actual sound there was none. I was hearing an interior resonance occurring not only 'elsewhere', but also 'elsewhen'; in Rendlesham forest, perhaps, a few decades ago... or centuries earlier?

We now watched in the globe the coming of that other Globe, and a multiplication of globes which appeared and disappeared as if in the dark pine-woods without, or in the darkened skies of an infinite number of regions of that vaster globe, the Earth. They came, not from the skies, not from the Earth, but from an inbetweenness zone. Strangely, the gnawing anxiety that our skrying might summon the 'thing' that had savaged Margaret now relaxed its grip upon me. I had not guessed until that moment that it guarded a secret archway to spaces outside the circle of Time.

A coruscating rainbow of colours splashed the crypt with sudden lurid brilliance, accompanied by vapours, cloyingly

sweet. In that phantasmal lustre, Margaret appeared as a child radiant with a splendour inconceivably dazzling. The beings of glory embalmed in stained glass by mediaeval masters were, by comparison, mere husks of such awful beatitude. But I was prevented by her from being sucked into the ocean of colour and scent as she urged me towards a corner of the cell lying outside the light's range. I switched on the torch, but its light was as darkness; it was as if we had plunged into fathomless night. I did not stop to consider how Margaret had been able to see that which now, very gradually, presented itself to my vision - certain indications that someone had preceded us but recently into the crypt. The thick drifts of dust that mantled the ground had been disturbed. Perhaps the shape I had glimpsed fleetingly in the shadows of the church, and, a moment ago, in the depths of the globe, had come and gone. But the 'guardian' of the Arch had been removed!

At the foot of the wall, stained with its blood, a crooked symbol was revealed by the toi'chlight. Until the recent fall of masonry it would have been concealed by plaster, evidently of recent date, for the substance on which it was inscribed crumbled at a touch, disclosing a deep recess. Within it lay a loosely wrapped bundle, which I extracted. Simultaneously, there sounded the chink of metal followed by a loud clattering as two objects fell at my feet. The torchlight revealed a pair of candlesticks fashioned in the form of slim pedestals. Each pedestal was surmounted by a satyr's head, and their bases were chased with interlaced vine tendrils.

A sudden movement diverted my attention to Margaret who was plucking at my sleeve. I snatched up the candlesticks and the bundle and we vacated the crypt precipitately. On reaching the dunes it was to discover that the bundle contained the Grimoire!

We returned to London in a state of shared tension. Margaret showed signs of life only when the globe hummed and glowed with the mauve lustre that had now become identified in our minds with its peculiar, magnetic atmosphere. Since I had unearthed the Grimoire it was only too easy to conjure the strange mauve mist.

I noticed that some of the sigils contained in the Grimoire, including many repetitions of the crooked sign, had seeped into the outside world through the books and drawings of Austin Osman Spare, which had found their way into the homes of certain occultists known to me. I could well imagine their effect on a collector stumbling upon them unexpectedly, especially when I recalled the portrait of Black Eagle in Uncle Phin's study. But the sigils were another matter. They unlocked gateways to other worlds and were positively dangerous. Spare himself had told me, on the few occasions that he could be prevailed upon to talk about his witch-mentor, that she had claimed descent from a Salem witch-line linked with ancient cults in which the Outer Ones were dominant. And it was evident from my knowledge of Awryd's activities in Brundish that the Grimoire contained material relevant to fearful sects mentioned by Lovecraft in writings published as fiction. It is as well they were, for one of his characters, Misquamacus, like Black Eagle, was an emissary from the Outer Ones. Awryd had encountered such beings in Rendlesham Forest in the sixteenth century, and they had used her body as a link with the earth. Although that body had died, They did not die. They hopped like frogs into other bodies; one of them being that of Helen Vaughan. Her end has been described by Arthur Machen in *The Great God Pan*. Yet still They did not die. They hopped again, and Yeld Paterson lived — and died. She bequeathed her 'familiar' to a young artist whose life was thereafter stained with the blood that dripped from its wings.

When Yeld died there was peace - for a while. But with all the hopping, leaping and jumping, the Outer Ones spread over the earth an inconceivably intricate network of evil, until, in 1956, the year preceding Uncle Phin's death, They came again. The vessel that brought Them to earth was sighted in Wales off the coast of Glamorgan. Police in Porthcawl reported "a blood-red object with a jagged black streak across its centre"², which rose from the sea. Porthcawl lies not far from Candleston where I discovered the Grimoire, the occult source of Spare's sorceries and of Aleister Crowley's magick.

9

"None of this ever happened. Space separates objects, Time separates events. But there are neither objects nor events".

As Margaret uncovered the globe I heard these words delivered by a squat individual who was speaking to Phineas Black. The speaker continued: "People talk about memories of the past, but this notion is incorrect. Memories are not reflections of past events, they are present thoughts; there are no past events. Examine your own experience and you will understand".

My uncle raised his eyebrows: "Then we sense nothing at all?"

"Dreamless sleep is man's only way of non-sensing", went on the stranger. "But whether awake or dreaming, the streams

2. Porthcawl, Glamorganshire, September 1st., 1956, quoted by Ivan Sanderson in *Invisible Residents*.

of sensation resemble sunlight on an ancient wall, the uneven surface of which assumes a semblance of objects and events. So also, the moonlight of memory conjures an illusory pageant of light and shade wherein we seem to participate".

I saw my uncle's finger, tremulous with age, point at a Dali on the wall of his study.

"That artist", he said, "that very great artist expresses what you have been saying in his formula of paranoiac-critical activity, which evokes the delirious spectres of hidden desires and projects them on to the canvas of memory. Even so", he murmured, "St.Clair has aroused in me dormant memories, and, since his departure, even the shadows have changed. There is no doubt that Dali stumbled darkly upon the truth, or perhaps truth was revealed to him in dazzling vision. Had he applied his vision magically, instead of aesthetically, he would have opened the Gates. He lives now, not in peace, haunted by the entities that hover on the borders of the mauve zone".

His lips barely moved and his words issued as from a mask: "Gregor thought, in his madness, that he was destined to find the Grimoire; worse, that I possessed it and had wrenched it from the current that was bearing him towards it".

Black's voice quivered and rose to a nervous shriek.

"Quietly, quietly!", murmured the stranger in a soothing, conciliatory tone, as if cajoling a child. And Uncle Phin now had the face of a child, a terrible child. He seemed to watch for movement outside, apprehensive, yet tense with adventurous expectancy.

"Crowley claimed to have glimpsed a troll whilst climbing with Gregor", said the squat individual, referring to my relative.

"Gregor had the 'sight'", snapped Black with acerbity. Mention of Crowley's name irritated him: "Aleister couldn't see an inch before him. All his 'visions' came through others: through Gregor, through Ouarda, through Virakam, through Ahitha... the list is a long one. Gregor had the sight but he erred in supposing that I had the Book; and when he did find

it, it was to lose it because of Aleister's machinations. And what good did it do *him*? He had not the power to use the sigils, and his harassment of Gregor was futile. Austin Spare, even, was able to activate them only in the presence of Yeld Paterson. It may be that Aleister acquired the sight towards the end, the very end. He was a mere shell when he stormed the Gate. You have only to read Lovecraft to know what that means".

His whole frame shuddered as his mouth snapped shut, and a slight froth oozed from it, distilling iridescent globes that might have sailed at any moment through the open window and puffed themselves into gigantic space-capsules, bound for distant stars. The light of these stars burnt in his eyes.

"I understand it all, now", he whispered, "you may well say it never happened!"

The other smiled and picked up from the table a small phial: "I'll take this with me - Doctor Black".

The stranger rose quickly and departed.

"*Vinurn sabbati, vinum sabbati*". My uncle appeared to be chanting the words, and then he muttered, strangely, words that sounded like:

*"A yellow yellow yellow frog
A guinea moon in the pool of the dog"*

The globe dulled and intermittent flashes suggested violent implosions. Margaret gazed at me. I advised her to put it away; it resembled too closely one of the globes that might have sailed to the stars. This one hadn't sailed, but I could see within it the presence of Uncle Phin and of a certain Outsider whom I had no wish to know. Yet I could not resist pressing Margaret for information: "Who was *he* — the squat abnormality?"

"They call him the Yellow One", was all she said.

I had an appointment in town and I left Margaret to her own devices. Whilst away I enquired after a certain M. Auguste Busche who, many years previously, had conducted business in Chancery Lane where he traded in plaster casts of antique sculptures and fantastic images. Something the Yellow One had said had given me the notion that Mons. Busche might be a vital link in the chain of my investigations. They proved fruitless. As I came away from the Lane the exceptionally hot weather reminded me of a summer's day when, as a young man, I had received unknowingly from him an image of Mephistopheles that had for me strange memories, which I have related in another writing.³

I had just turned into High Holborn when I was hailed by an old acquaintance named Morley. We had not met for many years. He occupied rooms in nearby Furnival Street, where we spent the remainder of a pleasant afternoon, reminiscing endlessly. On parting, I mentioned Mons. Busche and his emporium.

"Good Heavens!", exclaimed Morley, "d'you know what they found when the premises were being rehabilitated?"

He did not wait for my reply.

"An enormous tank, sunk beneath the foundations. It contained the skeleton of a saurian monster and a heap of human bones".

On the bright sun-drenched pavement, while the traffic rattled by in High Holborn, suddenly, a shadow fell. I felt that I was peering into Margaret's globe at the mist-shrouded mere at *The Mallows*; at the banks, slipping into the sea at Dunwich; at the swamps in the region of Rendlesham Forest where the crawling things from Outside were slowly gaining dry land...

Morley was still speaking: "The whole affair was all very

3. *Hecate's Fountain* (Skoob Books Publishing Ltd., London 1992), Part III, Chapter 6.

hush-hush at the time".

"What time?", I asked. My mouth was dry and the words came with difficulty.

"Around 1947; you were out East, I believe. I remember thinking with irritation that you had left no address. Anyway, I was privy to the proceedings through a friend of mine, a solicitor in the Lane. He mentioned efforts to avert a public enquiry. The bones were of young women and there were hints of witchcraft and other diableries. But who, or what, in twentieth century London, would sacrifice to a crocodile? Not Augviste Busche, to be sure!"

Morley was serious. I left him to his riddle, which was also mine.

At the beginning of Autumn I received from the principal archivist in Ipswich a bundle of official documents relating to Brandish in Suffolk and the estates of the Wyards. I mulled over masses of papers and finally weeded out a Deposition.

In his covering letter the archivist assured me that there existed no local record of the birth of Margaret Wyard, but that a Margaret Abigail Lavinia Wyard had been charged with witchcraft and executed on 11th August, 1588. The Deposition of the Suffolk Court Assizes revealed that she had sometimes been

seen to peer into a crook'd glass that glowed when she did looke, and that sundry impes and hideous critters

did hop in and oivt of said glass, which humm'd at their comynges and goings; that she often accompany'd one such imp who swelled into monstrous size and she did consort with it carnally in Rendle Forest. And that great and blynding lights appeared in ye skie over the wode and many more dwarfish critters were sene to file down and come up owt of ye see at Dunnich and did affright all them that saw.

One of the vehicles that landed in Rendlesham Forest, nearly four centuries later, frightened members of the American armed and unarmed forces stationed in the vicinity of the wood. But more germane to my enquiry was a paragraph which read:

Margaret did keep in her cottage in Framlingham a horrid critter resembling a crocodile which she was seen to feed, and that it floundered in ye stynking swamp beneath Brundisse in Wodebridge...

I was absorbed in the document when Margaret Leasing put in an unexpected appearance.

The trouble with her visits, seldom timely, was marked on this occasion. I was uncertain as to how far her conscious mind retained memories of events which she witnessed in the globe. For some time past she had assumed a secretive attitude, and the constant smile, which concealed the extent of her knowledge of my personal affairs, belied the searching gaze which directed its unsmiling probe into my being, as if that too were a globe.

Leaving the papers on my desk I ushered her quickly into an adjoining room. The ease which had characterized our earlier relationship had vanished. I sensed an alertness that was wholly uncharacteristic of her. She seemed to be trying to convey information which she found impossible to communicate directly. Conversation with her resembled, therefore, a bout of fencing in which we constantly parried each other's thrusts.

The weather being pleasantly warm, the french doors stood wide open, the curtains barely stirring in a gentle

breeze. Suddenly, Margaret slithered off the couch with a curiously reptilian movement. Upon the wall above her there hung an oval mirror into which she peered. I noticed a diminution of light and the presence of a current of cold air, so penetrating that Margaret shivered and drew her stole tightly about her. Then I witnessed an incredible phenomenon. The reflection of her face wavered and dissolved in a luminous mist that welled within the mirror as in an agitated pool. As the luminosity increased, it bubbled and boiled, and a vague hissing sound accompanied by a plume of vapour poured out of the oval frame. I watched, paralysed, as Margaret vanished through the aperture. A rank fog pervaded the room, dimming the beams of sunlight that struggled through the open doors. Then the fog dissipated, and I saw on the couch the crystal globe which Margaret sometimes carried in the pocket of her stole. I did not pick it up, remembering that she was averse to its being handled by anyone but herself.

I called her name, my brain numbed by the sheer impossibility of the scene I had witnessed. The mirror now presented no unusual features, but a noxious odour lingered in the air, cloying, sickeningly sweet and rank. I had previously encountered such a fetor once only — in the swamps of Kabultiloa: a reek of putrid fish combined with a peculiarly canine odour. It rose now in waves, producing in me a sensation of vertigo accompanied by acute nausea. As I turned away from the mirror my feet seemed to sink into the floor as into a morass, and a low vibration engendered bubbles of poisonous vapour which floated just above the surface of the carpet.

Recalling the Deposition, which I had been studying when Margaret called, I turned in the direction of the study, my legs seemingly fouled by an almost palpable miasma. As to the Grimoire, I had previously hidden it behind a row of books in the library which now lay between me and the study. My sudden fear was realized: the book had vanished; but on the shelf beneath the place where it had lain, I saw traces of a viscous substance that had dripped to the floor. I entered

the study and wrenched open the desk-drawer stuffed with sheets of paper covered with sigils and invocations which I had copied from it. They, too, were missing. I paused, stunned. Until her impossible disappearance, Margaret had not left my presence since entering the house an hour previously. I sank into a chair, conscious only of a lessening of the odour which the current of icy air was fast dispersing. Then, with memory alone to rely upon, I feverishly committed to paper all that I could recall of the missing sigils and hieroglyphics.

12

The first time I had opened the Grimoire, a sickly scent clung to its leaves. It evoked memories of events I was unable fully to recall. Frustratingly elusive they were yet persistent; and, as I turned again in memory the faded leaves with their sprawling graphs and cyphers, they seemed to conjure some indefinable madness. Many were inscribed with impressions of distorted, vaguely human figures and what appeared to be aimlessly meandering maps. They were drawn in a dark coloured substance, with signs and place-names (?) picked out in scarlets and greens. There were also semblances of human heads set upon grotesquely arachnoid bodies - all in a warped perspective recalling a Caligari backdrop.

Although familiar with a wide range of arcane symbolism, I despaired of recognizing anything even remotely familiar until I found, inserted between the pages, one loose sheet. Of a different hue, and of comparatively recent manufacture, it was overscored with densely packed script - in the English

language! Someone who could decipher the Grimoire had, it seems, inserted the sheet to mark the stage reached in its translation. My mind reeled in its effort to recall what I had read, and to write it down. Before presenting a resume of it I shall describe more precisely the objects discovered at Candleston when I unearthed the Grimoire.

Apart from the candlesticks, already described, was a miniature tripod supporting an oddly shaped stone. Its facets sloped inward at an acute angle and it emitted a lambent glow, as if a blood-coloured flame burned in its depths. It was so like and yet so unlike Margaret's skrying-globe that I had started when first I saw it. In many respects the opposite of Margaret's stone, it was, in some inexplicable way, its twin. The tripod resembled a mass of serpentine entities which only on closer inspection proved to be the tentacles of a squid-like teratoma, its bulbous head formed by the stone. Its overall appearance was profoundly disturbing. It conveyed a sense of intense vitality and mobility, rendered deceptively actual by the pullulation of light in its depths which lent to it a weird animation: Lovecraft's "blind and idiot chaos at the centre of infinity", except that this idiot was not blind. The dreaming eye that beamed from its centre glowed and pulsated. Then, instinctively, I held the object close to my ear - only to withdraw it abruptly. It had emitted a sound resembling the whining of wind in telegraph wires, interrupted at intervals by an insane tittering that culminated in an echoing shriek. I had the impression of a nightmare lullaby, and of elusive memories evoked by the cloying odours of the Grimoire.

The ululations faded away, but the monstrous shapes which they evoked remained vividly apparent in their metal and stone, and their intended effect was all but achieved. Indeed, I was fast yielding to an overwhelming urge to sleep when one of the candlesticks fell to the floor, thereby breaking the spell cast upon me by the stone.

After the intense effort of memorizing and transcribing the script, supplied so fortunately by the unknown translator,

I felt that it was a matter of degree only as to which of two things were preferable: an unnatural sleep haunted by perpetual nightmare, or a permanent cognizance of hell illumined by a sinister Star; or as the translator of the Grimoire phrased it: "an artificial star created in elder aeons by masters of magick". Concerning this star, the Grimoire revealed that:

Its light reached earth long anterior to human life, when the planet was tenanted by entities possessed of souls composed of its radiations. Over the centuries, certain peculiarly constituted individuals have unwittingly - and in rare cases deliberately - attracted its rays, as a metal conductor channels the lightning. When the light impinges on those whose vibrations are aligned to it, it congeals into a web woven by space-waves into submarine shapes resembling tentacled fossils known as Qrixkuor...

This curious designation, transliterated but not translated, was glossed marginally in another hand:

QRIX KUOR - Cf Latin crux/cross & Chaldean auor I light.

I had come across symbols of crossed or tangled light extant in ancient Polynesian glyphs denoting beasts from the sea worshipped by Pacific Islanders. Qabalistically, 'Qrixkuor' is equivalent to the number six-hundred-and-sixty-six, the number associated with Aleister Crowley and his Cult of the Beast.

The Light becomes invisible on contact with air, but it can be visualized by those who can 'see', such as the votaries of the Outer Ones. Over the aeons Their minions have established on earth, and in the seas, radiant cult-centres shrouded in secrecy. One of them lies near Dunwich, another in the sea off Morgan's Land. Qrixkuor has formed a component of numerous obscure myth-cycles surrounding ancient cosmic forces such as Ossadagowah, Aiwass, Aossic, and Cthulhu, the latter a gigantic squid-like abnormality which in the year 1928 upheaved the ruins of a cyclopean city submerged for long aeons beneath the Pacific ocean.

On a slighter scale, oceanic disturbances and violent seismic turbulences have been noted over the centuries in various parts of the globe. During these convulsions curious objects have been upheaved from the ocean-bed or have streaked from the skies. One such was for centuries worshipped in arctic fastnesses under the name of Rhantegoth...

Against 'Morgan's Land' had been scrawled:
Glamorgan in Wales; Morgan signifies 'sea-born'.

Then, another marginal note in yet another hand:
Auguste B. manufactured replicas of these and similar entities, all of which he had seen in dreams...

The abrupt appearance of a familiar name startled me. Questions fell over themselves in my head. What had been the fate of the image-maker of Chancery Lane? — What?... Then I remembered that not long after receiving Mephi I had been compelled by an irresistible impulse to found an arcane Lodge. Its purpose was to channel radiations from a star known to occultists as Nu Isis. The fragment of the Grimoire in translation had now revealed to me something of the nature of that star. I felt an immediate urge to explore its connection with Margaret Wyard. The desire had scarcely been formulated when another imperious inner command attracted me again to the mirror on the wall. It was then that everything changed.

Part Two

MIRRORIEL

It is a characteristic folly of clairvoyants to keep back part of their visions from the magician who alone can interpret them successfully.

Aleister Crowley.

I have mentioned my connection with Glamorgan. It developed at a very early age for - although born in Essex - I was conceived in Morgan's Land on the occasion of my parents' honeymoon at Porthcawl. Being a Grant and a Wyard, combined with the tradition that Morgan's Land contains a hidden cult-centre of the Outer Ones, may account for my lifelong susceptibility to astral and marine influences.

I can recall meeting Uncle Phin for the first time; can feel the firm spring of the turf on the southern downs, savour the sweet odour of salt-tanged bracken, and hear again the sea's thunder in the caves at Monk Nash. Companioned for hours by rock, sand and sea-spray, drinking deep the gold of sun-drenched afternoons fixed for ever in the limpid blue of far-off summer days, some profound alchemy rendered me acutely sensitive to impressions from Outside.

One such impression was of another relative - my Uncle Henry. He was the only person other than Crowley whose physical presence could, at times, engender within me a sensation of disquietude. This is not precisely the impression I wish to convey for it was also, and paradoxically, a peculiarly soothing experience. A sensation of 'otherness' might more accurately describe it. But Uncle Henry, unlike Crowley in all other respects, was self-effacing, unassuming, neutral; a quiet and cultured Welshman, his only real interests were my mother's sister, Susan, whom he had married, and classical music. But - and it is a significant *but* — his presence conveyed to me an indefinable awareness of what later I came to recognize as 'intrusions' from Outside.

It was at 'Brundish', a dwelling built to their specifications in Glamorgan, and so named by my aunt to perpetuate the ancient Wyard linkage in Suffolk, that I spent many childhood holidays. In the garden shaded by apple trees and

surrounded by lush flowers and ferns, I read some of the books that determined my literary tastes. There, I first became acquainted with writers such as Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, and H. P. Lovecraft.

I should make it clear that my uncle knew nothing of my literary pursuits and preferences, at that time. Wandering from brilliant sunshine into the lounge, I would find him seated in his armchair, smiling blandly or perhaps deep in a newspaper. His presence at such times seemed to acquire a concentration that lent a subtle substance to my reading, so that, for ever after, 'Brundish' was haunted for me by the demons of blazing high noon — and of darkest shadow.

In later life I had a curious dream that stemmed directly from this layer of memory. It was so vivid that had I lacked knowledge of my uncle's death I would be unable to aver that the dream was not a waking occurrence, an actual experience. Because I believe the dream supplied a key to the mysteries surrounding Margaret Wyard, I recount it as fully as I remember it.

I entered the sunlit lounge, a book in my hand. My uncle and aunt occupied their usual chairs. On a couch by the window lay a sleeping figure, vague in outline, in which I recognized a cousin of mine named Kathleen Wyard. On a table to the right of the doorway through which I had entered were several books written by me. It did not appear at all strange that at that time none of them had been published; indeed, none of them had yet been written! My uncle asked me to place beside them the book I was holding. I glanced at its title and noticed that it also was one of mine. I did as requested and, on realising that all three persons in that room had died some years previously, I asked him how he came to be where he was. He smiled and replied:

"We came through the outer gateway".

When I came to record the dream this reply astounded me, for *Outer Gateways* was the title of a book I was then in the throes of writing!

In the dream I seemed anxious to know who was in the garden. The curtains were closely drawn, and although the french door was ajar, the opening admitted but muffled sounds. It seemed to me a matter of great urgency that I should see the occupants of the garden, for it had dawned on me that by some incredible chance I had intruded upon an assembly of relatives long since departed from my waking existence.

The intentness with which I recalled these details submerged me once more within the dream. My uncle waved me to a chair. My aunt, aware of my anxiety, attempted to allay it by naming the occupants of the garden. They included my parents and other relatives. I grew impatient to see them again, and experienced acute anguish. I had forgotten completely Margaret Wyard, but my uncle recalled me to my quest:

"Don't you see that she could not possibly be out there?". He pointed in the direction of the garden: "She occupies a different time stream".

He did not name her, but he indicated the books upon the table: "On your right, 1986. On your left", he indicated the garden: "1936".

I looked about me distractedly. The door through which I had entered divided the room exactly in two halves. I noticed that the window beyond the table on my right was closely curtained. If I had been able to look through it, would I see beyond the present time? I began to feel uncertain, as if the dream were slipping, but my uncle's voice seemed to provide the substance required to maintain its flow. I looked again at the door to the garden.

"Why not go outside and see them all?", my aunt advised quietly.

He glanced at her severely; then, turning to me, he pointed again at the books: "We are here to complete the series; let us get on with the work!"

I could not grasp the full significance of his words. Was he implying that he had been in some way instrumental in my

writing the books? The supposition might explain my feelings towards him when, as a boy, I had sensed in his presence the proximity of things alien.

He started to speak again: "If you go into the garden you will see them all again, but you will become once more a part of the past and it will take you another fifty years to return to our present conversation".

I remained silent, trying to fathom the import of his words. It was now 1986, at least in this room, in this dream. My uncle was telling me that out there, in the garden, it was 1936. His further words interrupted these cogitations:

"On the other hand, if you are more interested in people than in the *Work* (he emphasized the word), you can come and go through the gateways about which you are currently writing".

I was thunderstruck by the implications of his explanation. "Where are the gateways?"

He smiled and pointed at the walls.

"There are several of them in this room alone. Elsewhere on earth there are uncounted numbers of them. But they have to be looked *into*, not at".

I followed his gaze with my own. It rested on an oval mirror set over the fireplace. Beneath it, I recognized with a pang of nostalgia a soapstone vase carved into simian shapes which, as a lad, I had coveted. It was redolent of the fantasies evoked by my reading the stories of Machen and Lovecraft, long, long ago in this selfsame room. The vase diverted my attention as it released into the atmosphere its store of memories. The result was that the room and its contents appeared to dislimn. I withdrew my attention from the vase and fixed it resolutely upon the open french door. Then I turned expectantly to my uncle:

"The mirror?"

"Quite so. You can enter all those times again, if you wish".

"That's all very well", I replied, "but there is a difference between my walking through an open doorway and walking

through a mirror".

"But you came through it just now", he said.

At this point my aunt interrupted the conversation, which, although simple as here related, was quite exhausting me.

"You see, dear", she said, "you can go to any time through the mirror, but to one time only through the door; in this case, 1936. But if you do that, you will not be able to return for fifty years, as you now reckon time".

"And will you still be here?", I asked, for I understood that if I were to step into the garden, she, my uncle, and my cousin - who now seemed to be dissolving — would also be there.

"It's not quite like that", she said, reading my thoughts:

"Perhaps I can best explain it by reminding you of accounts of people who nearly drowned. They do not remember merely, but they *live again, in a flash*, but in their own full time-scales, their entire lives from birth to the moment of near death. To an observer of such an event, a few minutes only - perhaps seconds - pass by".

I pondered her words, striving to grasp their implications.

"But if you would use the gateways *knowingly*", she continued, "you first have to abandon your body".

She smiled, as in life I had known her to smile. It plunged me into a hell of grief. I glanced in the direction of the couch, at my cousin who now appeared as a blob of grey ice melting fast into invisibility.

My aunt showed signs of distress lest I should be alarmed by this horrifying dematerialization, which, however, judging by my uncle's unconcern, was not exceptional at these levels of consciousness — if, indeed, he saw as I saw.

"What lies beyond that other curtain?", I insisted, indicating the bay-window beyond the table. My aunt replied in a whisper: "It is different for each one of us; it is not here as in the garden. In the garden we are all together. I cannot say what is beyond *that* curtain".

"If you go through the gateway, you will know", said Uncle Henry.

*

"But then I shall have no body to return to", I muttered pensively.

"You see", he said, "it all devolves upon that body of yours. You don't care to relinquish it, but you want knowledge of that which lies beyond it. Remember Plato's philosophy: 'If we are to know anything purely, we must be separated from the body'".

I started on another tack: "I understand from what you have just said that if I go into the garden I shall re-live this body's life", I said, indicating my body.

"Not that body", he replied. "If you go into the garden you will have again the body of a boy of twelve".

"I will be again a boy of twelve". I repeated his words with a sense of wonder suffusing my whole being.

"Will my life then follow precisely the pattern it once did?"

"Once did?"

He laughed hilariously, and Aunt Susan, too, dropped her solemn mood. It seemed to them a great joke.

"You've been through it all, time and time again. Better still, you are going through it all the time".

Feeling my way backward into the past, my dream-mind again merged with those earlier days. I remember having thought that so much of my life, so many of my experiences, had occurred previously.

I glanced at the couch recently occupied by my cousin, and a sudden panic seized me. In some dim manner I understood that she was not of the same 'order' as my uncle and aunt, that she had not been aware of their presence, or of mine, and that she had been oblivious of her immediate surroundings.

My aunt appeared agitated; she had read my thoughts:

"You remember your cousin Kath, don't you? She would not have been here just now if she had not passed prematurely through the gateway. She was not ready to go, nor was she able to survive the transition. It was like an abortion. But everything will be all right".

I felt a wave of pity and sadness for my cousin, who, I now remembered, had committed suicide. A few years older than myself, it is likely that she now inhabited realms from which, daily, I awakened to the dream we call living. I did not pursue the subject, although I made a mental note to ask my uncle about it when I dreamed him again. I had no doubt in my mind that I would dream him again. To date, however, this has not occurred.

"But if I came here as you evidently did - through the gateways - why may I not come and go as you appear to do?"

"Why not try it and see?", he asked.

Aunt Susan laughed, a little anxiously I thought, and advised me not to try: "You don't want to leave the books yet, dear, do you?"

She stated a fact rather than asked a question.

I was brought up with a start by the reason she had adduced. She was absolutely right, and yet... I was conscious of a profound yearning to know what lay behind the curtain beyond the books, and the compulsion to find out was almost as strong as that which now riveted my attention to the open french door. I could not make up my mind.

The dream then became fragmented. Various irrelevant scenes chased each other across the screen of consciousness. Then, as if a steadying hand grasped the kaleidoscope, I was back again at the room at 'Brandish'. The only difference this time was that my cousin's face was pressed against the *outside* of the now-uncurtained window. It was inscrutable, a mask, but its gaze was not dead. I shrank from it, striving to recall where I had seen before in a human glance such a fusion of innocence and malice.

My uncle was regarding me quizzically. He appeared dubious of the *rapport* I had forged with my cousin; but at that moment I found the answers to several enigmas that had plagued me for so long.

I knew already, of course, that my cousin had been adopted at an early age into the Wyard family, but I had not known

her former name, and she herself may not have known it. I recalled my Uncle Phineas alluding to the adoption. He had, in fact, engineered it. My mother's cousin, Gertrude, had adopted Kathleen on Uncle Phin's recommendation. He had known the girl's parents, but he had been unwilling to tell the rest of the family anything about them, other than that they had perished in a road accident. Perhaps no one but Gertrude had known the reason for Kathleen's suicide. Uncle Henry's next remark explained the mystery:

"We cannot question her; she still sleeps. She has the same interests as her mother. When you first went to see your 'magician',⁴ Kathleen was living with Gertrude in Kensington. Remember?"

Memories flooded back of a flat in Lexham Gardens which Gertrude had but recently acquired. There was no need now for Uncle Henry to provide missing links. I had gone to stay with Crowley in the country as World War II drew to a close. A few days before leaving London to join him, I had been staying at Lexham Gardens with Gertrude and her husband Albert, an aged financier with interests in South Africa. Kathleen also was there. Like myself, she had attended a School of Art. We had, naturally, discussed art and artists. I was receiving letters from Crowley almost daily at that period, and the fact did not pass unnoticed by her because the seals on his envelopes bore the *cartouche* of an Egyptian priest, which fascinated her. One day, our conversation veered towards Crowley's magick. His newly designed Tarot Pack, executed by Lady Harris, had been exhibited the previous year at Oxford. Kathleen was, as I later realised, skilful in eliciting information; she was equally skilful in imparting it. She suggested that Crowley had abused occult knowledge obtained from a secret grimoire, and that when I went to stay with him I might perhaps get a glimpse of it. She assured me that she was interested in it for aesthetic reasons; it contained, she believed, some remarkable illustrations.

4. My uncle was referring to Crowley.

I was growing impatient about my visit to Crowley because I suspected that he had not long to live. Being ignorant of my cousin's origins I did not doubt that her interest was anything but 'academic', despite the fact that whenever she mentioned the matter her expression betrayed suppressed excitement. I did not pause to analyse it, but I was to see it again in a drawing by Austin Spare, *and in the mask now pressed against the windowpane*. At that moment I knew why Uncle Phin had engineered her adoption. But his scheme had miscarried.

During my stay with Crowley I had been surrounded by books and pictures, the latter his own creations. The only volume to which he denied access was *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*, translated into English by S. L. Mathers - or, as he preferred to be known, Count MacGregor of Glenstrae. Crowley kept his copy in a cabinet to which he alone held the key. The book was illustrated by magic squares and it contained, apart from spells, loose strips of vellum on which he had inscribed various sigils. But of the 'secret' grimoire my cousin had mentioned, I saw no sign. However, I had not been long with Crowley before he sent me to London on a curious mission. I was to visit a certain Monsieur Busche, a maker of plaster casts and waxen effigies, who traded in Chancery Lane. On my mentioning Crowley's name I would be handed a parcel addressed to him.

In many respects I had come full circle, having visited the Busche emporium on my own account several years before I met Crowley. I had purchased images to satisfy an adolescent hankering for exotica. I did not, at that time, know that M. Busche had an inner room that housed a collection of qliphotic horrors which I had reason, later, to remember. But I digress.

Uncle Henry was insisting that we proceed with the book I was currently writing, and it was with difficulty that I withdrew my attention from wanderings in the Busche emporium, although I continued to be haunted by the memory of

a certain door covered with green baize which lay in shadow beyond the images on public display.

I made yet another attempt to elicit from my uncle information concerning the dim regions with their tangled time-lines and shifting identities. I knew that if I framed my questions correctly all might be resolved; but this I seemed unable to do. The dreaming-power was fast waning and the urgency of the situation disturbed my mental clarity. I believe Aunt Susan assessed accurately the situation and was anxious to explain things, but this she seemed unable to do. I turned to my uncle and renewed the assault:

"If I go out there", I began, trying to ignore the watcher at the window, "I shall, presumably, take up my life as from 1936. Will I retain memory of this present encounter with you?"

He looked pained: "You may or you may not. Perhaps you wouldn't wish to, once you were caught up again in your earlier pursuits. Or perhaps your power of concentration is not yet sufficient to sustain the time-lines simultaneously."

I was not satisfied by this reply. I reformulated my question: "You have suggested that the use of mirrors gives freedom both ways in time; that I could go forward, or backward".

"You are so confused. Why worry yourself? You came via the Gateway".

I felt profoundly uneasy. Had I died? My cousin had come through the Gateway.

"She came before her time", my uncle said, reading perfectly my thoughts. He continued: "We all have time-lines set in specific spaces. If we do not pursue them consciously, we do so unconsciously. These matters are abstruse and their discussion detracts from your work, which is why we are here".

I barely heard these words. I was thinking of his earlier remark about the Gate. What Gate? I went back in my mind and the room began to fade from view. In its place, an oval mirror by an open french door cast back at me a blurred reflection. I was drawn irresistibly towards it. Everything whirled about me as in a vortex. At the far end of a tunnel I

glimpsed a telescopic view of the room at 'Brundish' which I had entered in my recent dreaming. Or was I still dreaming, a dream within a dream within a dream? The miniature room grew larger and I searched feverishly for the face at the window. It had vanished. The curtains were now drawn close, and I knew in a flash that my cousin had pulled me through the tunnel as one pulls a thread through a needle.

2

The room had regained its usual size. On my uncle's face, an expression of acute anxiety: "You must go", he said, and waved me backward: "I thought you had come here of your own free will. She has gone now! Be quick or you will lose your body".

He rose from his chair and turned me round abruptly. My aunt kissed me. Her lips, missing my cheek as I turned, brushed the lobe of my ear, still tender, and the sensation recalled Margaret Leasing.

The tunnel was alive with a powerful current of air which became a gale that swept me before it. I burst through the oval frame and fell upon the couch beneath it. A beam of sunshine slanted through the open door. Feeling abnormally chilled I groped my way towards it. Outside, a woman was crouching over an inert human form, her face concealed from me by a cloud of hair. On hearing my approach she turned like a beast at bay - and Awryd confronted me. My brain reeled, and, as if a lightning-bolt had grounded the body on the lawn, I fused with it and awakened, gazing up to see

Margaret Leasing arched above me. Almost immediately, she thrust the stone before me and urged me to skry.

"Why don't *you* skry?", I pleaded. I wanted to recall a different dream.

"Because the *rapport* still holds firm", she hissed.

The garden seemed uncannily luminous. I suspected that I was still dreaming, but the curtain billowing at the window surely was real? Clinging to this idiotic *non sequitur*, I drifted again into the room at 'Brandish'. It now appeared at the farther end of the tunnel through which I had recently rocketed. In the chair previously occupied by Aunt Susan sat a young woman. Her back was towards me, so that I was unable to identify her. She turned slowly, and I recognised Kathleen Wyard. The impact of the recognition jolted me.

"How long have you been here?", I asked in astonishment.

Her face glistened, unnaturally pallid. I had quite forgotten her unusual complexion. She smiled wanly and her eyelids fluttered, a habit of hers that I had also forgotten. In her hands she held a book.

"Ever since", she said simply, in reply to my question.

She looked down at her hands. Through the splayed fingers, ringless, I discerned sigils that reminded me of the Grimoire.

"What made you do it?" I ventured, hesitantly.

"I was in love", she said, after a pause; "You no doubt know the story. When you failed to find the book at Crowley's place, there was only one way out".

I struggled to grasp her meaning, and struggled even more to phrase my next question: "So you will remain here until you would have died in the ordinary course of events?"

My remarks brought to her lips a cynical s-mile: "There is no ordinary course - *out there*". She indicated the garden with a movement of her head: "I would now be seventy-eight years of age - *out there*. What good is it to me... this book that you found?"

Her lips tightened and her vision seemed to slant inwards: "In here I am young, I am timeless, but no one comes here.

He never comes here". A long silence: "Is he out there, still?", she asked, apprehensively.

I was trying desperately to recall the details of her engagement: "I wouldn't know him from Adam", I pleaded.

The words came unbidden before I could check them. Her eyes filled with tears: "I told you about him the night before you left London to join Crowley".

"That was long, long ago", I answered lamely. It was exactly forty years: "Was it you who preceded myself and my friend into the crypt at Candleston?", I asked, after a pause.

"It may have been. There were others that wanted the book. Now, I have it here; *hereV*". Her voice rose to a shriek: "And what the hell does it mean to me?"

"Exactly what you make it mean", I replied evenly. The words came of themselves; I seemed to have no part in their utterance. The conversation continued as if scored by another:

"If you will relinquish the lesser, the greater will flow toward you", I concluded.

"My one aim is release, liberation from this waiting - and watching".

Her final words came in scarcely more than a whisper, tremulous with such anguish that I was forced to turn away my gaze. As she sat, almost invisible in the shadows of the room, I understood why I had not previously noticed her presence there on those occasions when I had withdrawn to it as to a protective circle. And I recalled periodic attempts by someone, or something, to intrude upon that Circle. I had considered these to be mere passages of blind force, or elemental currents seeking to gain ingress to the human life-wave. I did not realise until that moment how desperately she yearned to be one of our family, to be loved, cherished, appreciated. Yet, when Uncle Phin's machinations had made of her a quasi-Wyrd, it was she that had transmitted to our family the undercurrent which swept me into Crowley's ambience.

I wanted to question her about the dream in which she

had faded from the couch, and, later, had pressed her face to the window; but her evident misery deterred me. Instead, I suggested that we try to interpret the Grimoire.

Her face assumed again an expression of derision. At this point, the armchair in which she sat appeared draped with grass which flattened into a lawn; and Margaret Leasing was tugging at my sleeve and thrusting before me the stone, glowing on its ornate tripod. A mere second, it seemed, had elapsed since I had awakened to see her bending over me. I took the globe gently in my hands and held it aloft. The last glimmer of a dying day fused with its pulsing radiance, which reached out as if to drink greedily the blood of the sunset.

3

"Do you realise that Lovecraft's perennial mania...
The *Necronomicon*]", interposed St. Clair, glibly.

"The same. Don't interrupt!", snapped Dr. Black savagely:

"According to Lovecraft, a sixteenth century text was preserved in the Salem family of an artist named Richard Upton Pickman, who disappeared in 1926, and the text with him".

St. Clair was puzzled:

"Are you suggesting a connection between the *Necronomicon* and the Grants' Grimoire?"

"Noo, noo", replied the other with exaggerated affectation; and continued: "Surely, it must have struck even you that the two may be identical? The *Necronomicon* went into limbo with Pickman in 1926", Black repeated; then he added: "Do you recall the name Achad - Prater Achad? I'm not changing the subject".

"You're not indeed!", replied St. Clair: "Charles Stansfeld Jones, otherwise known as Frater Achad, was the so-called 'magical son' of Aleister Crowley; and 1926 was a year about which Achad made much ado!"

"It was the year", explained Black, "in which Achad claimed to have discovered the Magical Word of the Aeon which Crowley had failed to utter when he assumed the grade of Magus in the Order of the Silver Star. The gateway opened; the gateway closed", concluded Black enigmatically.

St. Clair smiled: "Then Pickman, on his way out, must have passed the Logos of the Aeon on his way in!"

Dr. Black nodded: "Pickman was an artist whose work has not survived, which is true of another artist who left in a hurry through the same gate. Read the account of Robert M'Calmont by your old friend Arthur Machen. Their pictures were destroyed, and there is a reason why - quite apart from their contents as described by Machen and by Lovecraft in *Out of the Picture* and *Pickman's Model*, respectively".

Light dawned on St. Clair: "I see. Both artists were inspired by Black Eagle, who controlled Yeld Paterson!"

"Precisely", said Black, "*there* is the link. M'Calmont and Pickman were members of Helen Vaughan's circle, and Austin Spare imbibed the current through Yeld Paterson. In one of Spare's drawings appears the veritable formula of the Gateway — as large as life!"

St. Clair glanced quizzically at Black: "Where is that picture?", he asked with affected innocence.

Black smiled: "I wish I knew, dear boy. There are some that know; and they are using it in an attempt to contact Pickman. I understand that one of them has succeeded".

A gleam entered my uncle's eyes, and at this point the stone became cloudy.

Margaret assisted me to my feet. I was dazed. There swam into my vision the image of a tall blonde girl. She had a curiously squamous appearance which reminded me of the water-witch, Clanda, whom I had encountered in the waking-

state many years after the events just revealed in the globe. I had introduced Clanda to Crowley who fell in love with her, addressed her as "my own soul", and — aged seventy years - proposed marriage to her! If she had not fled, she might have become the third Mrs. Crowley! I had also introduced her to Austin Spare, who portrayed her in the picture containing the secret of the Gateway. But why had he included her? I could but hazard a guess. She too had disappeared. Her powerful personal magnetism had persuaded Crowley to attempt a last-ditch bid to beget a legitimate magical heir. He was particular about pedigrees. But Clanda was a Deep One in the tradition of Margaret Wyard, Helen Vaughan, Mrs. Beaumont, Besza Loriel⁵ and - Yeld Paterson.

Margaret Leasing held aside the curtain to make way for me. I was eager to examine a picture which Spare had bequeathed to me. Having failed to understand the significance of its odd perspectives, although suspecting a hidden formula, I had not hung it with my other pictures, nor had I shown it to Uncle Phineas.

As I mounted the step from the garden into the lounge, I noticed a movement in Margaret's hair. The sight of it gave me a nasty turn, and I stumbled. I was still haunted by my cousin's gaze, which bore into me even as the tangled light had penetrated Margaret's skull and boiled about her brain. What I can only describe as a *dark illumination* then flooded me. It was like sitting in a nocturnal grove lit fitfully by lightning which left a blinding after-image. Through it I wound an uncertain path to the attic in which the pictures were stored. I could barely discern the one I wanted, obscured as it was by years of dust. I shook a frame at random; and as Clanda's face emerged I sensed almost palpably the presence of the blonde girl, who had contrasted so sharply with her friend who later became my wife, darkly beautiful and with luminous eyes. I was reminded of far-off days; of the old Alchemist to

5. See footnote 10, page 108.

whom I had introduced Clanda, and who had played a vital role in my magical relationship with Crowley.

From beneath a sheet of burlap I proceeded to drag six or seven portfolios, and a large framed drawing divided by a rainbow-coloured curve. On one side of the curve was depicted a large cone combined with a series of sigils. On the other side were roughly-sketched faces and human figures. But the predominant figure - which balanced on the left side of the picture the rainbow curve on the right — was a winged entity, possessing exaggerated feminine characteristics in the likeness of the girl who had infatuated both Crowley and the Alchemist. The latter, a furrier by profession, had come close to losing his life after an experiment for longevity, in which he had imbibed liquid gold. He was profoundly versed in hermetic lore and had befriended Crowley, hoping that the Mage's researches might augment his own. Crowley had, at one time, manufactured a 'perfume of immortality' and had conducted experiments in which he claimed to have projected the Stone of the Wise. Designed ostensibly to rejuvenate living tissue and to revitalize the sexually impotent, he had used the experiments also to attract the kind of woman whose bodily fluids were of magical value to him. Crowley had put me in touch with the Alchemist for the purpose of rounding out my initiation into the penultimate degree of his occult fraternity, the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, a degree which had already been conferred upon the Alchemist in return for a unique manuscript which explained the magical uses of psychosexual essences. Crowley was specifically interested in training women whom he considered suitable for the role of priestess in his occult rituals. With characteristically black humour, he let it be known that the Alchemist had for disposal, to specially selected individuals, bottles of 'Suvasini⁶ Juice'. When postulants applied to him for samples, the Alchemist's indignation turned to disgust with Crowley;

6. Priestesses adept in the methods of Kaula praxis. (See Kenneth Grant's *Typhonian Trilogies*.)

but his strong inclination to break with the Mage was nipped in the bud when Clanda appeared on the scene.

I had first met Clanda at a School of Art in Regent Street. Later, after meeting the Alchemist, I 'bartered' Clanda for the loan of a highly secret manuscript with which he had been entrusted by his guru in South India. It related to the mysteries of Tantra, and was explicit concerning the science of the kalas used in the Kaula Circle, which involved the engagement of suvasinis. The Alchemist eventually grew apprehensive, fearing that his action might incur karmic reactions as a result of our transaction. I, too, had had qualms, but these had been allayed by the realization that the chance of my acquiring the further knowledge was essential to the implementation of the Lodge which I had been instructed to found and to put into operation.

Memories of those days rose before my inner vision, a bitter-sweet nostalgia. As I stared at the portrait of Clanda, I sensed dimly that the images with which the artist had surrounded her were but one Image, the selves but one Self. Although I had achieved this realization by a devious way, it was my way, and I could have trodden no other. The tangled strands within me could not otherwise have fused the blood-lines of the Wyards and the Grants. Nor could I have reflected in witchblood, as in the glittering depths of Margaret's globe, the sentient symbols of Austin Spare's sorceries or the spells woven by Lovecraft and his dark Brotherhood.

The attic was splashed with patches of moonlight. I almost heard again, in a space removed, a scrabbling of claws on the windowsill; almost saw again the winged abnormality that had swooped upon Clanda,⁷ and had scored deep furrows in Margaret Leasing's skull. And within my own skull there crowded now the elongated hours, golden with reverie and enshrined in the heat of an endless series of summer after-

7. See *Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare* by Kenneth Grant (Muller, London 1975), pp.31 - 33.

noons, in which I basked in the bracken as the sea-spume showered with its foam the rocks at Ogmores, the dunes at Candleston.

I became aware that someone was calling my name. A voice, thin, silvered with moonbeams, strayed into the attic, abruptly stilling the breeze that had pervaded it with the scent of fern embalmed in a cell of memory, unlocked by the spectre of a dream. It was calling me back, calling me down...

I came back, I came down, descending with care the fragile steps suspended from the loft on cobweb ropes. Swaying dizzily, I peered down upon Margaret's ravaged skull, from which the hair sprang wiry as the sharp grasses upthrusting from the sand-dunes of Candleston. They brushed with their needles the lichenized stones that jutted from the slopes of Southerndown, magnetic as the tendrils that fringed the furrow of sex. She turned; her eyes blazed up at me in the mustering darkness, brighter almost than the globe clutched between her hands.

We stumbled into the library and she set the stone upon the desk: "You may as well have the full story", she said.

The stone appeared to emit sparks, smitten from its interior by the echo of her voice. Then a pinpoint of darker light welled within it and assumed the contours of Uncle Phin's head. It was carved in a porous substance that exuded pearls of dew. The eyes were closed, the features contorted. I recoiled.

"Time!", exclaimed Margaret exultantly: "What artist but Time can grave such ravages on living flesh nourished by nightmares?"

At this moment the eyes opened, and a flame of hate tinged with its green glance the light that flooded the room. It was turned upon Margaret; two lanterns on a raft swept in on a storm. Gulls wheeled through Uncle Phin's hair as through sparse ferns on the Ogmores crags, stark against a mauve sky.

"Time" - a voice echoed Margaret's. I recognized my uncle's intonation. Then the head vanished; but before expiring in a point of impenetrable darkness, it dislimned. Flakes of flesh melted and dripped into the room.

Margaret clutched at the globe, but I urged her to leave it alone. A grey mist floated in its depths. It thinned and an invisible hand seemed to draw back a curtain, revealing slivers of light which formed dazzling sigils. Many of them I recognized as from the Grimoire; one in particular persisted - a key to the outer gateways. Although the perspective was peculiar to dreams, I recognized the room in which Uncle Phin was conversing with the stranger who had departed with the crystal phial. A dark shadow that may have been the brim of a conical hat concealed his features, but I saw three points of light, two of which, of greenish hue, were eyes. They blinked rapidly while the third remained unmoving, limpid, tinged with mauve. Uncle Phin appeared animated, gesticulating vigorously, his expression agitated, expectant.

"We have been called; let us attend!", exclaimed the stranger.

He then ushered into the room something that was invisible to Margaret and to myself, although I was conscious of a strong current of deeper light penetrating the globe. This was accompanied by a cascade of symbols that resembled in their lacings tropical lianas heavy with blooms. Their coilings communicated a language of flowers familiar to witches. I had to rely on Margaret for a translation of their silent speech.

She edged away from the globe, which produced a sound like the whirring of wings, and began interpreting the language of the lianas. I had to enter dream-world to make sense of her translation, and I was unable simultaneously to retain a hold on the waking-state. This induced in me frustration and depression.

Within the globe the tangled light uncoiled itself, the ciphers faded, and the room with its two occupants appeared

as before. Uncle Phin was standing, head in shadow, against the ornate mantelpiece over which hung the picture I had just left in the attic! The body of the stranger cast a shadow over the picture's lower part, but Clanda's flaring hips and full breasts stood out starkly. The sigils surrounding her had, but a moment earlier, defied interpretation. The cone glowed, or perhaps the firelight in the massive grate bathed it in orange light. A blast of coloured air issued from the base of the cone and, with it, a noisome stench. Yet it caused in the occupants of the room no observable reaction. Was it perceptible to us alone? I was startled by the presence of the picture, and sensed the onset of a revelation as occurs sometimes in dreams. The squat stranger resembled an effigy discovered in the forest-buried temples of Guatemala. His voice accounted for the sounds emitted by the globe, sharp, metallic, vibrant:

"Space-time being curved in your garden, all events, people, things, appear inevitably to repeat themselves. The cycles are perpetual, but outside them lies..."

The voice trailed away.

A profuse sweat pearly my uncle's brow. He was straining to catch the concluding words of the sentence, but they eluded him as they eluded us. Perhaps the stranger could not express himself in terrestrial speech. But the speech of the tangled light was eloquent as it uncoiled its radiant lianas. The scene recalled a painting by Dali, wherein a multitude of incompatible elements become fused in a nightmare vision of existence.

I was aware of a growing sense of exhaustion, and of the certainty that its source was represented in the picture by a sigil at which Uncle Phin was gazing intently. In his effort to resist being sucked into the funnel of the cone, the muscles of his neck stood out like whipcord.

"It is not attained by effort". The stranger's voice was scarcely audible, a mere murmur. The sound carried me back to the bubbling waters of the river Ewenny, to a summer

evening when Margaret had led me to the ruin at Candleston. The bat-like abnormality again cast its shadow over her skull, as over my uncle's, and the force within struggled to burst forth and fly back to the stars.

Margaret slept. If Dr. Black had imbibed the Wine of the Sabbath he might at that moment have been with Helen Vaughan and her companions, but the stranger had removed the phial. Perhaps he had bestowed it instead upon Aleister Crowley.

4

"If you hold it against the light", he suggested, "an altogether different picture will emerge".

Startled, I raised my eyes from the object upon the table before me. In the place once occupied by the mirror I saw a spidery form. A gigantic head upon an undersized body forced its way into the room, arms flailing against a background of criss-crossed light. I touched gingerly the flimsy material spread upon the table. It had on it a curious pattern of wavy lines interspersed with hieroglyphics which I had vainly been attempting to decipher. I followed the creature's suggestion and pressed the fabric against the window-pane. As the sun's dying rays seeped through it I noticed a movement in the design, a massing of colour and, finally, a precisely delineated portrait of a girl's head. The hair rippled like waves of light which illumined the eyes as if from within. Even before the lips curled backwards from the over-long teeth, I recognized Awryd. Behind her head struggled a vague shape, nebulous as

are all shapes that strive in unfamiliar dimensions. A thin thread of light unfurled and pulsated in the darkened room. I watched it span the space from mirrorless wall to window. It was vibrant with the vitality of the creature that had begun transferring its being to the fabric on the table to which I had returned it. A turbulence occurred in the void left by the absent mirror, and the disrupted lightwaves stretched and strained as if barely abje to animate the face at which I gazed. I was witnessing, after more than four hundred years, the return of a spirit to its Sigil.

The spidery critter's suggestion still echoed in my mind as the face of Uncle Phin slowly materialized before me, an inconceivably evil smile tautening the cracked skin.

"Against the light!", he echoed, and the cincture of fat which looped about his jowls shivered with mirth, crumbled, and dripped gleets of flesh, a rain of Dalinian jewels which turned to snow:

"You are about to enter into your own, dear boy!"

He purred like a cat balancing on a shadow its overblown corpse: "But before you do, allow me to introduce you to the object of your scrutiny".

I braced myself to confront an oncoming presence. As I did so I relaxed my hold on the fabric and realized, too late, my mistake. The catlike eyes, almost obscured by the enfolding flesh, lighted upon the sigils and devoured them.

I had been unable to interpret the hieroglyphics, but I knew that Uncle Phin at last had found the key. He was but waiting to turn it in a lock so ancient that Awryd seemed a child of yesterday by comparison. But - I was in the way; as I had always been.

The time-streams fused. Present were my cousin Kathleen, my Uncle Henry, our ancestor Awryd, and my great-uncle Phin - a weird family indeed! The several threads were so inextricably interwoven in the fabric of our lives that the skryer was unable to unravel their complexity. They now converged in the room, saturating wholly its atmosphere. On the mirrorless wall gaped the great void, a tunnel-shaft shrieking with a rampant wind.

Then came the bubbles! Miniature globules swept from the emptiness as from a vortex. They were followed by circles of light, borne in on cosmic gales that funnelled through the fissure in the wall which the mirror had concealed.

It is impossible to gauge the momentum of one's past; impossible to sustain its impact and remain upright. I saw one enormous sphere ballooning with corruption, festering with the luxury of dissolution; and other globes - juggled by the Aleph-Jester - sparkling with the iridescence of death, spilling a rain of grotesque friendships like the masks depicted by an Ensor, or by a Dali translated from his nuclear aeon to the newer hells created by the continuing effects of Crowley's magical Workings. I saw the Mage merge with Phineas Black as he juggled with the disks, winged or horned, that sprouted from the Pit.

"To dance happily with nightmares", my uncle said, "one must have transcended all dreams".

This idiotic utterance was repeated until I saw the meaning of the words glow, vividly green, behind the curtains. I had been rather too preoccupied with Uncle Phin to notice the

game he was playing. The globes, in settling on the floor, had formed a figure of the qabalistic Tree of Life, but a tree twisted and suggestive of oblique perspectives. Its spherical fruit glowed with their traditional hues, including the eleventh sphere which was mauve. As the agitation subsided, the spheres appeared to flatten into disks, and from their whirling circularities arose vapours which congealed into columns bearing flowers of light. These swayed on stalks heavy also with tropical blooms, hollow and irradiating banners of sentient colour that blossomed across gulfs between two obsidian towers. From the highest point of this mandala arose the Tower of Daath, with its reptilian rays of tangled darkness interlaced with the light of Kether; the whole suggesting the restless tentacles of a monstrous squid.

The interplay of light and shade dazzled the eye, and it was some time before I sensed a violent perturbation beneath the disks. They hovered in mid-air, then plummeted downward to night-swathed depths. From them upreared the twin towers from the network of tunnels behind the Tree.

Uncle Phin put his finger suddenly upon the head of a reptile looping over the misty gulf that separated the shadow-grey tower from its black twin. Like a trelliswork festooned with lianas, the mandala assumed the aspect of a jungle in which the unity of the one Tree was multiplied indefinitely. In its branches chattered and swung the sacred apes, sprang the lithe cats, hung the bats, swam the astral fishes in pools that mirrored downwards the Tunnels of Set.

Uncle Phin depressed another blunt head, a button-like protuberance attached to the side of the tower in which a mobile cage, like an elevator, rose and fell spasmodically. We stepped into it and he slammed shut the door behind us. The cage trembled with our weight, mainly mine; for Uncle Phin, despite his mass, weighed little more than a ghost. A sudden panic assailed me as we plunged swiftly. I had aspired to the free, clear air, the sapphire void I had glimpsed aloft, laced with a web of branches whereon gaily-plum aged birds alighted

before soaring into the azure. But instead, as the downward pull increased, the pressure of the depths caused a dull ache to spread over my skull. The cage lurched to an abrupt halt and Uncle Phin ushered me into a long gallery veiled in greenish mist. The place was vaguely familiar, yet I could not identify it until I recognised rows of images. They resembled buddhas, but beneath their serenity I detected a warping in the texture of their substance. Then I understood. The images were the originals of those that had graced the shelves of the Auguste Busche emporium. The elevator had plunged us into the cavities beneath them. We had debouched on to the floor, or perhaps on to several floors, beneath the display-room and were now in the presence of those Others, the semblances of which M. Busche had refrained from exhibiting publicly.

Uncle Phin took my arm. A fulsome smile flowered on the crumbling rock of his face, dislodging moss which impeded our progress. His intentions were realized when we halted, finally, before a grotesque carving of a crocodile:

"What superb artistry!", he exclaimed, as he ran a tremulous finger over the creature's scales; then he turned upon me an ecstatic glance. The workmanship was indeed impeccable, but I was puzzled by the nature of the substance in which the artist had worked. At one moment it appeared translucent, at another it clouded over and resembled a mottled soapstone of a villainous green hue, trailing streamers of seaweed. In its turbid phase one could detect in its depths shadows that reflected on their surfaces the distorted impressions of cyclopean temples. Was I viewing, in another time-stream, the substratum of the tranquil buddhas which I had seen one sultry afternoon on Chancery Lane?

Uncle Phin was pushing me forward and pointing aloft at a pinpoint of purple light. It pulsed above us with a steady vibration. He explained that it was the Lantern of the Ninth Arch. I could see some way into the interior of the lantern, which now grew larger and was seen to be comprised of a

series of rings that emitted periodically a shower of sparks. They fell all about us; one of them lassoed the spidery entity that had initiated our journey through the tunnels. It struggled to free itself as the lariat tightened and expanded in thickness until the creature was wholly entangled.

I was apprehensive and unable to give my full attention to Uncle Phin, who had just explained the way in which the tunnel joined its distant counterpart, illumined by a single star. The place suddenly swarmed with lariats of light, like sinuous smoke rings, their circularities hot quite regular. Each one emitted sound, a faint metallic buzzing which swelled to a crescendo. And then, abruptly, I found myself walking along the sunlit pavement approaching Chancery Lane, and again entering the Emporium and descending the stairs to the display-room crowded with buddhas and deities of the Nile Valley. This time I did not linger; I was 'in the secret'; I knew of the place below.

A door, which may not have been opened for decades, appeared as a black rectangle in the wall that confronted me, in a dark area adjacent to the exhibits. It had no handle; I pushed, but it did not yield. A slight sound caused me to turn about. Before me stood the proprietor, smiling blandly. In my confused attempt to explain the impropriety of my behaviour, the entire web of impressions associated with the hidden place dissolved in a flash. Later, I could recall but fragments of the ensuing conversation with Mons. Busche, my exit from the building, my sense of well-being, all of which followed precisely the pattern of that earlier period of my life when, as a young man, I had explored in a busy London street this oasis replete with the imagery of exotic cultures.

Had it not been for the blood-link perhaps I should not have noticed the figure standing before the window of the corner shop on Chancery Lane. Perhaps, also, it would not have noticed me. It was at this particular moment that I experienced two time-streams as both discrete and identical. Into this time-warp the sunshine streamed through the fabric I had held against the light, and I could see that it illumined the night-side of the Busche Emporium.

I am unable to say with certainty whether Uncle Phin was trying to initiate me into the mysteries of the Grimoire, or whether, like myself, he floundered in a morass of doubt. From a terrestrial standpoint he belonged neither to the world nor to the tunnels in which, by a mere suggestion from the spider-like entity, I had been precipitated. The situation was significant however in more ways than one. It confirmed my suspicion that Uncle Phin had but partially deciphered the Grimoire, and that he was awaiting the opportunity to continue his researches through me.

He took my arm and we proceeded unnoticed along the sunlit pavement. As soon as he touched me I knew that he intended Margaret Leasing to resume the quest. As this was in line with my own intentions, I offered no resistance.

As we left the Lane I noticed an unfamiliar shape. It stood out sharply, at an odd angle, over the stream of traffic coursing along High Holborn. Uncle Phin began piloting me towards it, but before we had taken three steps a black void gaped at our feet. We entered the cavity which contained a metal cage in which we plummeted and from which we were eventually ejected, and violently, to descend yet deeper by a flag-paved staircase oozing with slime. A distant sound as of running water carried with it a distinct odour of the sea. Then we emerged unexpectedly into a spacious bay. Seawaves

lapped a rotting wharf to which were tethered several skiffs. Their hulls were gelatinous with minute, web-structured organisms which moved in concert with the bobbing crafts, throwing off beads of phosphorescence. So numerous were they that the undersides of the vessels were illumined by their radiance. We boarded one of them and Uncle Phin seized a pair of oars lying on the slats, through which seeped rays of light that painted with grotesque and shimmering shapes the soles of his shoes.

The craft glided soundlessly until the jetty and its phosphorescent barnacles seemed like a tiny model, far away. My uncle began crooning in a curious fashion, nor did he once take his eyes from mine. I felt uneasy, and seemed to lose the *rapport* that had until that moment been so pronounced. His eyes glittered like stars in a night-black gulf.

Our craft heaved violently, tilted at a sharp angle and threw us into the water. The sudden shock caused me to identify the experience as part of a vaguely familiar dream. That our submergence was not accidental I knew without doubt. The overturned vessel bobbed beside us. Gulls lighted on its hull; the sky was cloudless, serene. Then a door appeared. It was set obliquely in a massive block of granite, slimed over with a fungoidal excrescence that had eaten its way into its bulk and was massing behind it. At any moment, I feared, its pressure would burst open the door. That moment arrived as we reached its threshold. I had not expected to see my Uncle Henry standing in the open doorway! His spectacles magnified to an unbelievable degree the dark eyes that swam out to meet us. Behind him I could discern the walls of a room coated with fishscales and bearing curious charts. On a high pulpit-shaped structure there stood a girl with seaweed in her hair, and in her hand a shell. Uncle Phin was scraping from his shoes the iridescent beads, which became bubbles and floated towards the shell's orifice, into which they disappeared. As we also disappeared into one of the globules the girl raised

her eyes from an enormous book. I noticed, as we passed her, that she had the face of Kathleen Wyard as I had seen it pressed against the window at 'Brundish'.

As I was drawn into the room I felt lost, and aware that my companion was no longer with me. Uncle Henry sat in his chair; Aunt Susan dozed nearby; as tranquil a scene from the past as ever I could have recalled. It faded and gave way to another. A boy lay on his right side upon a sofa beneath a bay window. It was morning, and a shaft of sunlight slanted through a chink in the curtains. It illuminated a myriad motes exhaled by the room's new furnishings, and it expressed the promise of a peerless summer's day. The boy awakened and, in the split second before objective awareness supervened, perfect peace prevailed. In that brilliance he was conscious only of *a* self; a moment later he felt it to be *his* self. He rolled from the couch, ducking beneath a sunbeam that seemed to quintessentialize all Light which — for a fleeting yet eternal moment — he knew as Reality. He inhaled ecstatically the aroma of fruit in a bowl, the stuffiness of brand new fabrics, and remembered gaining in a single leap the door of the room.

Because the mind cannot entertain more than one thought at a time, events are experienced in a space-time which we call the past. We then create a history for these events and imagine that they occurred to *us*. And so, the sensing of movement in consciousness appears as an event of the past when, in fact, it is experienced *now*. Thuswise, the boy knew that there had been no past, for there was no 'he' to have had one. He had not yet understood that there was also no present.

He 'remembered' that the door was difficult to open, that it had to be jerked suddenly, and that it emitted a sound of suction which he feared might awaken other members of his family. They would not have objected to being aroused on this miraculous morning, but he did not want anything to shatter its perfection. It was for him the archetypal morning, the

morning celebrated by Dali in *Daybreak*, a painting he passionately admired; or by Mallarme's immaculate line:

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui.

On the other side of the door he remembered to tread softly, to lower carefully with each step the weight of his body to the floor. The stained glass of the main entrance-door threw upon the polished parquetry the rich ruby of stylised blossoms and foliage, yellow and green. It overlaid with its spectral pattern the design on the mats arranged diamond-wise, like stepping stones, between the boy and the farther door of the water-closet. Behind that door the morning light was whiter, sharper, colder, and suffused with a fresh antiseptic odour. The mirror above the wash-basin reflected the boyish face, and the older shadow stared back at him, not yet wakeful, not yet able entirely to overlay the earlier imprint; a palimpsest of absence. Flanking the reflection, two candlesticks, satyr-headed. Scudding clouds dimmed momentarily the bright whiteness of the closet. In the fleeting shade he saw the other face, beneath, behind, enveloping...

It was precisely this rapid sequence of impressions - of the boy's actions mimicked by the man — that constituted the later haunting of 'Brundish'. And such exercises repeated regularly enabled him ultimately to enter the Void, thereby surprising Time's deception by the knowledge that the space in which events unfold is one with the consciousness that imbues them with sentience.

The closet, irregularly shaped but predominantly triangular, had a black-and-white-check floor suggestive of a masonic lodgeroom charged with positive and negative currents of energy. The funambulatory pathway, leading to the mirror above the wash-basin, linked it tenuously with the couch from which he had arisen after experiencing the Clear Light of Consciousness. This was the essential experience that determined 'Brundish' as the site of his secret temple which he used frequently throughout his later years. The

ambulation, night and morning, was his holy circuit symbolizing perpetual adoration, and completing his magical Circle. Through the vortex of the circle's casting - indeed, in the act of its casting - he glimpsed the Grimoire that Dr. Black had seized but had not fully understood. As the shadow in the porch of the church at Merthyr Mawr, the doctor had stirred one moonlit night when Margaret Leasing and the young man had headed for Candleston. Black had appeared again, in the Lane, as an odd shape, and had opened for the youth, as man, the place of the Deep Ones where Henry Lee had also opened a door - to other spaces. The slender satyr-headed candlesticks had formed the portals that opened on to the crypt. Thus it was that the boy, as man, passed through the ninth archway. A woman was crouched in shadow over a simmering cauldron, flames dancing in her tousled hair. Footsteps rang on the tessellated pavement and an answering echo followed them. Uncle Phin motioned me to a chair. The two places - *The Mallows* and the Candleston crypt - did not quite coincide. The dis coincidence, which was not of space alone, permitted a glimpse of Margaret Leasing intent on her dark craft.

7

I looked up instinctively, oppressed by the low ceiling that hardly supported the immense darkness, alive with its bleeding moons. I was beginning to understand how the tunnels snaked about the eleven Towers and the Ninth Arch. Among the shrouded forms that thronged the crypt I recognized

several residents of Ogmores and Merthyr Mawr. Asleep, astray, some of them would not again awaken on the dayside. A calm drifting seemed to distinguish from the dead those 'others' that peopled the place. The dead, the dreaming, and the 'others'; each individual trapped in the coils of light that crackled at the bases of the towering electrodes. I dared not approach the rings of fire, even though Uncle Phin handled them with apparent impunity. But he was dead; I was not. Or was I? The notion gave me a jolt. Quick as a flash came the retort: "If I entertain this notion then I am surely not dead". It is impossible to convey the sense of relief imparted by this simple conviction.

Margaret Leasing was scooping from the cauldron a flame-licked head. It seemed to be my own. She turned as I settled in the armchair proffered by Uncle Phin. He pointed to the portrait of Black Eagle. The figures before me wavered, and an unpleasant odour pervaded the room. It may have been the exhalation of swamp-weed, or of Margaret's hair singed by the flames from the cauldron.

"It won't be long now", said Uncle Phin.

From a large portfolio he extracted a sheet of sigils: "These I copied from the *book*", he said, and proffered the sheet to me.

My attention wavered between the ribbons of flesh hanging from the thing held by the witch, and a few sigils from the Grimoire. They were identical with those I had once copied, and lost. They told of the Coming of the Others and of the manner of Their ingress into the human life-wave. They would come as They had come before, bypassing the gate below Malkuth, which signifies our planet Earth. They would infiltrate every crack and crevice and seep through every interstice.

Uncle Phin stared dreamily at the swampland now visible through the open door. His face was bright in the glare of summer sunshine — or in the glow of the furnace which consumed his flesh? Like my own, it dripped from the skull

held over the cauldron. Black Eagle was singing through the melting flesh the song once heard by Austin Spare, by Gregor Grant, and by Aleister Crowley. And the gist of the song: that when the gates are wide open the unwary will topple into the Tunnels of Set. And if they know not the Sign of Protection, and if they are not versed in the art of banishing spirits, they may stray in the tunnels until they are swept out of earshot of the Word of the Aeon. Which is a dire calamity, for the Word is due to change around the year two thousand. *Those in the tunnels will not hear it*; they will be flushed out of the terrestrial system into the lower sinks beneath Malkuth. The way of evolution along the traditional paths, which lead humanity to the threshold of the Abyss, will be disrupted by a premature resurgence of ancient atavisms which humanity in the mass will be unable to control. Uncle Phin told me that this resurgence could be caused by radioactive bombardment from Outside, aided by human folly:

"Already", he explained, "the forces from the Other Side are seeping into the waking-state of humanity in the form of UFOs, of monsters or 'moon-stars', and of terrifying nightmares experienced by sensitives in all parts of the world. The counterflow of these forces will inevitably occur with devastating consequences for those unprepared to deal with the tenants of the tunnels".

Such was the burden of Black Eagle's song, and of the song of Sin Sin Wa, a Chinese mystic of whom I was to hear again. Uncle Phin then referred to ancient systems of magic and sorcery which provided techniques for controlling and banishing spirits. He declared that Crowley emphasized the necessity for extreme caution: "Crowley's warnings apply now with even greater urgency as alien entities appear unbidden in our midst. Innumerable encounters have been reported during the past decade and", he added, "you yourself have seen a further three decades!"

His remark reminded me that Uncle Phin had died in 1957, ten years after the world had been alerted to the presence in

its atmosphere of possibly non-terrestrial visitors.

"So, the Grimoire contains the Sign of Protection, and the methods of controlling those - Others?", I asked.

He looked at me with feigned pity: "Crowley devoted his life to *bringing Them back!*", he screamed, suddenly imbued with violent hatred for the magician: "He claimed to be 'the chosen priest and apostle of infinite space' who, with his Scarlet Woman, would gather the Children of Isis into his fold to bring the 'glory of the stars' down to earth. The 'glory of the stars' is another name for Them".

Uncle Phin was referring to Isis, or Nuit, whose stellar influence is described in the Grimoire: "Crowley spoke of the advent of a 'new' Aeon, but the current that informs it is incalculably old. It is the aeon of a Dark Cycle that reappears when the stars are right. Lovecraft alone read the runes correctly and prophesied the imminent return of the Great Old Ones. Awryd focused the first incoming wave, as she was the first to make a copy of the Grimoire left on Earth at the time of Their first return. An unknown sorcerer first hinted in the Grimoire at the existence of the Old Ones".

The imminence of Their return had had an appalling effect upon Dr. Black, and he was infecting me with the horror engendered by his knowledge. I asked him to explain. His eyes wandered from the electric rings. He shot me a glance of mingled suspicion and despair:

"Many sensitive people today are experiencing violent inner convulsions due to a reawakening of the ancient atavisms. They are being sucked behind the Tree of Life from almost any point upon it".

I did not understand, and begged him to be more explicit.

"Each individual haunts one or other of the Paths. If you visualize a vast hinterland stretching away from the 'night-side' of the Tree, behind the spheres and their connective lines or paths, you will understand. The gates are any points on the paths which lead to the tunnels beneath them. When the gates are open the unwary are precipitated into the tunnels.

If they are not in possession of the Sign of Protection - *and know how to use it* - they could stray indefinitely in the tunnels until they are swept, inevitably, into the hells beneath".

I realized that in a few sentences Uncle Phin had explained an enigma that has baffled even the higher Initiates. They illumined at a stroke the mystery of the Egyptian *Amenta*, and the network of tunnels wherein dead souls wander until an enlightening ray pierces the gloom and makes possible their liberation. His words explained also the complex rites and spells that form a major portion of the *Book of the Dead*.

Catching my thoughts, he went on to say that that Book contains fragments only of the forbidden wisdom carried over from an incalculably remote antiquity. That ancient Lemurian lore was all but lost. Almost all of the little that survived perished when Atlantis was submerged. The ancients founded their sorceries on the dimly remembered Gnosis which lingered on in premonumental Egypt. It persisted into the Dark Dynasties, when the crocodile, the ape, the boar, and certain unidentifiable teratomas were acknowledged as antennae or sentient emblems of the Old Ones. Some of these abnormalities assumed monumental form in the pantheons of the Nile Valley. Their reign ended in Egypt with the seventeenth dynasty, but the Secret Wisdom leapt centuries and left traces of itself in the twenty-sixth dynasty that are yet extant in tantric cults of India, China, Mongolia and Bhutan.

Uncle Phin eased himself into a chair by the open door and stared wistfully at the scarves of mist wreathing the maremma that stretched as far as eye could see.

"The crocodile!", he murmured, catching again the trend of my silent cogitations: "I suppose you failed to trace our friend Auguste?"

With my mind's eye I saw that dealer in strange gods, surrounded by the bones of virgins picked dry by the vultures of the Qliphoth in the Tank of the Crocodile.

Uncle Phin led me immediately into a space beneath Cairo. It seemed vaguely familiar, although complete recall came only when he mentioned the Children of Isis. Then I saw the glistening goddess, black with blood. Between her eyes, closed in trance, a living beetle-like entity flashed its coloured rays. I was led between rows of worshippers, cowed and crouched like beasts on the tessellated pavement before the goddess. From a cleft behind us, ophidian forms poured into the temple. They bore on their flattened heads boat-shaped vessels piled high with the white and saltant shadows of girls convulsed in their dance of death.

The procession approached the goddess as the beetle descended through the hollow of her spine and emerged, moments later, from the tunnel of her vulva. The insect's mandibles mutated into tentacles and its beetle-form assumed a squid-like cast reminiscent of the Deep Ones. Busche had dredged from the nightmare of his mind a hideous replica of the beast described in the *Necronomicon* and other grimoires. He had endowed it with a buddha-smile, its manifest beatitude a sheer blasphemy contrasting obscenely with the coiling tentacles. They looped about the dancers and dragged them down. The eyes of Isis fluttered open, the vulva gaped and spawned a squamous brood. Followed a ferocious feast on spectral flesh.

Uncle Phin was explaining to me that the bones would remain on our side of the grille; and then a section of the pavement slid open. The black and white squares up-ended like blocks in a cubist portrait of him, which leered at me, horribly gratified. The pavement then curled back upon itself like a sea-wave, exposing to our view a tank in which the crocodile basked, immobile.

I was about to mention my acquaintance in Furnival Street when my uncle nudged me. I peered into the tank. The crocodile was anciently believed to swallow the light of the sun as it dipped below the horizon. A curious illustration of the belief was now enacted before our eyes. The goddess

tilted forward; her buttocks thrust upward and discharged in a shuddering ribbon of ectoplasm the *Offering* which she had devoured. Darkness stole like a veil upon the temple.

"In such fashion are the unwary, virgin, or unenlightened elements flushed out of the system of the biosphere into the lower qliphoth beneath Malkuth".

He was referring, in the jargon of occultism, to the voiding of consciousness into the lower hells, the subconsciousness, which the ancients typified as existing beneath the earth.

"This is a result", he continued, "of too abrupt an opening of the Magical Eye, effected by a persistent perversion of the will and a craving for new sensations, new worlds..."

Light dawned upon me: "...instead of understanding that all worlds are the excrement or end-products of our constant objectification of consciousness". I was able to complete his observation.

"Precisely", he replied.

"But how may man prevent this degeneration?"

"By learning how to come to terms with the energies of Isis, and by using the Sign of Protection. Already, the forces from the Other Side are seeping into man's waking state, and the process will inevitably accelerate, with devastating consequences for humanity".

"Is this a repetition of the so-called Fall of Man?"

"It is infinitely worse", he replied, "Adam had Eve to help him out! Man today has alienated Eve; she is now Black Isis with a vengeance, bloody, all-devouring".

As the night descended upon us I mused upon his words. The ancient systems of magic provided techniques for testing, controlling and banishing evil spirits, and other forces inimical to man. This was one purpose of the grimoires. I saw Margaret Leesing now in a new light. As she clutched the loose pages she appeared as a saving force. The church hated and condemned her kind because it feared the knowledge that came from traffic with the Children of Isis in the Tunnels of Set.

I asked him to explain in more detail the resurgence of psychic awareness in humanity at large. He looked at me for a few moments as if assessing my motives. Deciding that my curiosity was justified, he explained that it was brought about by radioactive impregnation of the earth's etheric shell. Bombardments from Outside had pitted it with holes, through which there seeped the lights and Ufos that swarm in the upper airs, perforating the terrestrial atmosphere and awakening in man the long-dormant faculty of astro-etheric vision. Man is thereby becoming increasingly exposed to possession by 'spirits', or to obsession by the ocean of symbols and sigils spawned by the sorceries of his remote ancestors -and of the Others.

"Imagine that ocean of symbolism suddenly becoming sentient, suddenly awakening from its agelong sleep and achieving within a moment its original purpose. The ancient systems of magic provided safeguards, but they have been lost".

"Man's own fault", he continued, noting my consternation. "His tinkering has torn great rents in the protective belts that safeguarded earth from invasion by alien forces. Some of those rents may have resulted from sorceries engineered by Margaret Wyard".

He pronounced the name to rhyme with weird. He reminded me that the name Awryd was not merely a metathesis of our family name which, naturally, I had noted; it was the name also of that ancient progenitor of the prophet Yezid, Mu-Awryd. After being bitten by poisonous scorpions, Mu-Awryd had lain with a witch eighty years old who, for the divine occasion, transmogrified into a girl of twenty-five. Uncle Phin explained that the 'scorpions' typified the Ophidian Current, which Mu-Awryd had thus passed on to incarnate in the powerful prophet of the Stellar Gnosis.

I pondered his explanations and wondered at the ingenuity of Crowley who had taken advantage of Awryd's spells. I realised that his Choronzonic Working in the desert of Bou-saada, and the later invocation of Belial, were further

attempts to force open the Outer Gateways. And my own work with New Isis Lodge, assisted by Margaret Leasing, had pushed them open a little wider.

"Consider", my uncle continued, "the personalities involved in these transactions: a fair nordic type, such as Clanda, and a dark oriental type such as Awryd. Their prototypes were the Atlantean and the Lemurian atavisms reflected into earth's astral ambience at this present phase of its psychic evolution".

Whilst he spoke I noticed that we were fast approaching a castellated structure that overshadowed the globes.

" 'There are eleven towers in Irem ...'", Uncle Phin quoted from the Grimoire. He explained that the Tree of Life, with its eleven sephiroth, formed in its downward projection a qliphotic counterpart of the City of the Pyramids beyond the Abyss. And we now found ourselves in the City of the Pillars associated with the Yezidi, the votaries of Shaitan. Shaitan was the Force dreaded, because misunderstood, by the non-gnostic Christians.

"Shaitan", he said, reading my thoughts, "is the hidden Sun, called Set by the Egyptians, and by the Christians, Satan. The name combines the Kamite root, *sut*, meaning 'blackness', and *an*, denoting the jackal-headed Anubis of the desert, mythologized as the guide of the dead in a burning land, the 'hell' of the Christians. The Hidden God is the Sun behind the sun; the black Sun, Sirius, whom the Typhonians adored as Set".

"And his totem was the crocodile!", I exclaimed.

"One of his totems", he corrected me, "and a late one in the age-long cycle of myths of old Egypt. If you like, I will show you a reflection of his *primordial* totem".

I demurred. I wasn't sure that I wanted to see it. The invitation reminded me of Arjuna, who implored Lord Krishna to appear to him in his original form... and the vision that appalled him in consequence. But Uncle Phin nudged me towards a circular aperture in the floor behind the tank, now

bereft of its voracious tenant. A vast screen of ornate and burnished metal barred our advance. Nothing daunted, Uncle Phin resumed his discourse: "Did you know...", he went on, genially...

I could see, as on a palimpsest, my uncle seated in his arm-chair, observing me whimsically through a haze of tobacco smoke which the slight breath of air through the open window was too languid to disperse:

"Those who mauled the biblical texts left intact, unwittingly, in one or two places, the sense of the material they were forging for public consumption. Thus, there remains to this day the bald identification of Satan with Peter, the rock upon which - as it is claimed - the Christian church was founded!".

Matthew, 16: xxiii, had always surprised me, and so had similar discrepancies that had not been satisfactorily explained, especially the flat contradiction in *Revelation* to the gospel story concerning the site of the crucifixion. And many others abound.

The metal screen extended its range. On it I detected an almost imperceptible ripple in the body of the dragon embossed upon its surface. The sound of a gong reverberated, and through a grille above our heads there percolated thin pencillings of smoke. My uncle switched his attention to the figures formed by these fumes as they coiled from the marsh, outside, and slowly infiltrated his study. The globe then clouded over, and he fell asleep. His dreams, visible, floated like Chinese lanterns against the backdrop of the screen: an opium cloud hung motionless above a slant-eyed girl parading her charms beneath a street-lamp which jutted at a drunken angle from a rotting wharf. A butterfly alighted on my uncle's nose; it had flown in from the dream-quay lapped by oily waters. I heard Sin Sin Wa crooning softly to himself, prone on a couch, his pipe slipping from emaciated fingers. Nervous butterflies trembled in the lantern-lit air, redolent of chandu, jasmine, and musk.

I trailed boy-fingers in the mists of those, oh! so long forgotten fields of astral poppies. The girl lay down amid the waving grasses. She gazed upward, her head tilting, and projecting downward, through slanting eyes, the energy of her oblique desire. Strains of oriental music blossomed, and I saw again the lacquered tea-tray with its design of bamboos inlaid with mother-of-pearl, depicting a fisherman piloting his lone craft through iridescent waters; a conical rice-hat crowned his dream-dead head. This part of the scene had reincarnated actually, in the pattern of a tea-tray in the kitchen at 'Brundish'. It was resurrected now by the reveries of a boy able to trace its origin to an astral Limehouse where Sax Rohmer had sat dreaming a Chinaman named Sin Sin Wa.

I had wondered vaguely at the 'oriental' cast of my Aunt Susan's features, very marked in photographs of her earlier years. No doubt an innate tendency had determined the mould of desires which, as a Wyard, she had been unable to accept, so long ago had Margaret died and left only the marshmist to awaken in Uncle Phin these ancient memories. But he had recognized the wraith that once had been Su Li, wife in a later life of Henry Lee, a Welsh dreamer of fine music and himself a dream of Uncle Phin.

The gong awakened the figure in the mist. It undulated on the coils of the metal veil. And I heard again the music, faintly remote, antique, caressing with the fingers of a bright summer day the kitchen table at 'Brundish'.

It was the intensity of Uncle Henry's presence that first alerted me to the possibility of his being a man of magick. Baudelaire maintained that genius is simply "childhood rediscovered by an act of will". I had to become old before I understood the magical implications of this truth. On intently merging again with the timestream peculiar to my Uncle Henry, I was able to re-live - not merely to remember but actually to experience again - the total ambience and atmosphere of those far-off days. This is not possible without great effort, unless, as Proust found, a certain flavour, sight or sound, or their combination, conspires to reproduce exactly the sensations they originally evoked. I had perhaps assisted Uncle Phin's evocations by bringing to them a life-time's experience of visualizations connected with occult pursuits. I was now trying to understand the reason for the irresistible influence exerted upon me by Uncle Henry, who possessed none of Dr. Black's overwhelming characteristics. But Henry Lee possessed a quality of presence which at times affected me as profoundly as anything I had experienced in the company of Phineas Black, or of Aleister Crowley, even.

In the corridor in which I now stood with Uncle Phin, beneath the base of the eleventh tower, objects assumed a dreamlike quality in which the moon predominated. Its light shone upon the screen and whitened with its beams the figure of the dancer. She appeared skeletonic, her movements arrested in the execution of her magical masque. I turned to Uncle Phin, but he had vanished; his absence was etched sideways upon the curtain stretched over the doorway. Then Margaret Leasing put in one of her unexpected appearances and diverted my attention. I witnessed the fusion of the dancer and the skryer in an involuted image reminiscent of the Taoist yin-yang. It began to whirl; threw off tongues of black fire. The darkness, licked into life by the flames,

encircled the base of the pillar, which was slowly crumbling. The fire-tongues were as the Ob and the Od, a whirling caduceus of forces. They projected a double svastika spinning to right and left. The essential darkness became tangible. It hung in layers about the vault until a ring of fire formed itself upon the flagstones. Then, slivers of flame licked through the interstices and formed a broken circle. I had seen its replica swirled in the witch-wood in Rendlesham when, in Margaret's globe, I had witnessed Awryd's initiation into the Cult of the Deep Ones.

Cutting across my vision was a shaft of light which, invading the gap in the circle, filled it with living brilliance. Uncle Phin shot suddenly into view in a vibrant wind that lent to the massive flagstones an appearance of trembling. An orange emulsion coated his shoe-soles, which glowed vividly. Orange, the colour associated with Ufos and with the Sphere of Hod, denotes the kala of magick wherein bathes the Amber Venus. I saw streak from the Tower of Netzach the selfsame energy that had reified the current of Nu Isis in which Margaret Leasing had found traces of Awryd's past. The amber globes became worlds generated by Awryd's dreams and by her death in the flames, ravaging the flagstones.

A fragile stairway, infinitely slender, infinitely flexible, like a spider's web, now spanned the gulf and ascended to the insectival shadow, half-beetle half-bat, that had fallen from the brow of Isis.

Uncle Phin and I began our ascent to the stars.

Part Three

DESTINY OF THE UNSLEPT

*We seem to us (the real Us!) to be reading an
Amenti in the sixth sealed chapter of the going
forth by black..*

James Joyce.

We rocketed aloft in the metal cage through the amber glow which shrouded the Outer Ones. We burst through Awryd's broken circle beyond which dreamed Sin Sin Wa beside the lacquered tea-tray. We passed the decomposing wharf where the oriental whore slunk beneath the street lamp. Up and up, through the City of the Pyramids, dark with a night that seeped into the crypt where a witch invoked the Children of Isis, and where Those who brought with them the ghastly image of the Moon-Frog leapt into the green-crust tank. The crocodile, rigid in aeonic sleep, lay dreaming the beetle-race that would issue from the vulva of Isis before the arachnids manifested on earth. And the song of Black Eagle echoed in our ears, closer, louder, throbbing against the inner walls, clawing against the outer.

As we shot aloft, the faint flutings of a far pipe in the Tunnels of Set drifted and twined like marsh mist in Uncle Phin's hair. We saw again the eleven towers, their bases lost in fathomless gulfs. And there appeared, fleetingly, the boy at 'Brundish', jumping with stealth across the tessellated floor that became a Dalinian beach striped with elongated shadows. They unfurled downward to the sea where a girl with seaweed in her hair pointed at my Uncle Henry, sharply outlined in the crevice of a rock. Then, suddenly, we hit the water, Uncle Phin reeling, our capsized vessel bobbing by a jetty, from which descended a slippery stairway flanked by skiffs lit by luminous barnacles. We mounted the stairs. They became a black shaft, its hollowness ringing with our laughter, until at last we emerged and saw the stars above Chancery Lane, now hooded in night. A hideous stench of dead bones and the decomposing flesh of giant amphibia rose from the cleft in the pavement, now closing over the unplumbed gulfs. I said goodbye to Uncle Phin and entered the sunlit emporium of Auguste Busche.

The proprietor's deputy was standing on the threshold, hands extended in friendly welcome. He ushered me into his private office, a small window-less cubicle, and pulled from the shelf above his desk a ledger-like volume. As he opened it I could see that it was not what it seemed... but it was not the Grimoire I knew. I looked at him, and at the thin smile that hovered about his lips. It was as if he had dredged up a forgotten fetish. Uncle Phin used to tell me that the most potent pleasures of the past might be revived by the simple expedient of reading again a book that had enthralled one as a child. These pleasures were unknown to me as yet, but their shadows stirred into life when I saw the Grimoire. The man's fingers fumbled with the musty pages which emitted a barely discernible cloud of dust. It was impregnated with the peculiar odour reminiscent of the crypt at Candleston. The fingers paused at a page of ideographs that evoked shapes of distant galaxies. Austin Spare had delineated the architecture of cosmic dimensions in the picture I had found in the attic, and the wizard Crowley had left marginal indications in one of his writings concerning certain sonic notations which acted as keys to other spaces. A member of *New Isis Lodge*, skilled in the science of sound, had assisted me in interpreting their vibrations in terms of a weird music. The keys were later used for opening gateways to the Tunnels of Set. The characters in the Grimoire reminded me of those keys, but I was shaken profoundly when I realized that *some of the formulae were in my own hand* — in a book that had lain here in Chancery Lane for longer than I had walked the earth as Kenneth Grant!

The deputy proprietor turned over a page. It crackled, as the flames had crackled about Awryd. I was in for another shock: a portrait, sketched in grey, of a slit-eyed entity with a large domed cranium, glared out at me from the volume. The artist had contrived by means of vague lobal shapes to suggest abnormally intense cerebral activity. At the bottom left corner of the page appeared two oriental characters, which

I recognized as Senzar and which represented the letters La Ma. I glanced up at the face above the hand that held open the Grimoire. The smile yet fluttered about the lips. They informed me that Crowley had drawn the portrait from life:

"Perhaps you recognize it?", said the deputy proprietor, "Crowley would seem to have aged prematurely! By the time he was forty he was already able to see the Grey Ones".

A faint tittering accompanied the smile. It was some time before the malice of the remark became plain to me. When sexual vigour wanes, magical vision often becomes keenly active. Perhaps the residue of decaying energy, accumulating with advancing age, distils a substance globular and luminous which reflects within itself strange configurations from Outside. It was probable that such decomposition had been accelerated in Crowley by previous excesses, in which case the energy would already have precipitated sufficient radioactive force to dematerialize the walls between dimensions.

As these thoughts occurred to me I was aware of a gradual shifting of my sense of location, and the appearance of a clear mental impression of the Alchemist. This, no doubt, arose from a subconscious identification of aliens with one of Lovecraft's characters, Joseph Curwen, whose surname tallied with that of the Alchemist known to Crowley and to myself. I registered the unquestionable conviction that Joseph Curwen, whose body had been reduced by Dr. Marinus Willett to "a thin coating of fine bluish-grey dust", had returned to possess the body of his latter-day partial namesake. The transition had been achieved by the utterance of Words of Power. Lovecraft chronicled the unnaturally long history of Joseph Curwen in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, and he may not have been surprised to see his resurrection effected by Uncle Phineas. I was; even though it explained so much. It was Joseph Curwen's *third* coming that facilitated Crowley's traffic with Aiwass in his later years, and with the Outer Ones during my participation in the active phases of *New Isis Lodge*. Both Clanda and Margaret Leasing played

prominent parts in the Lodge rituals, and it was in Austin Spare's drawing of Clanda that I discovered the full formula for translating near-solid bodies to other dimensions. That is to say, nearly tangible shadows of grey astral vapours such as those materialized by the witch-woman in the flaming waters of her cauldron. Such sentient shadows pass easily from one time-stream to another. For instance, I had actually smelled the foul incense of her ghostly Workings, and to my mundane sight had appeared the vague outlines of the Shades that always accompanied her. The chief of these was the Lama whom Crowley had 'seen' and whose portrait he had drawn during a magical seance in New York around 1915. He had, in fact, abandoned the seance in order to sketch the entity.

Dr. Black believed that from the time of this apparition the Grey Ones obsessed Crowley and perverted his magical power. Others, however, expressed the opinion that the breaking of the Circle during the seance itself had let in the slit-eyed abnormality with the earless domed skull and the furry diminutive body. Yet others suggested that the Lama was a *tulpa* or magical projection of Aiwass, programmed to visit upon Crowley the vengeance which he had himself invoked by a travesty of the Formula of Set. No one understood fully the role of the Lama in the Crowleian puzzle until Margaret Leasing read the runes of the Grimoire preserved down the centuries by 'Clan Grant. The Grimoire may have gone astray many time's but it was again within grasp. I now knew that it contained the secret of Aiwass, of Awryd, of the Lama; it also held the keys to the mauve zone of the Outer Ones. But many pages yet remained to be deciphered before my own place in the puzzle became clear.

These observations have been recorded for an inner circle of Initiates and I shall not be more precise. Already, prying eyes have searched out some of the lesser mysteries, and lying tongues have spread ignorant and distorted rumours. Fortunately, busybodies recoil when they sense the abysmal

gulfs into which they are in certain danger of plunging. For who may unravel the mystery of the Beast, of the Qrikuor, of the Arachnean Amphibia? Their minions ray from an artificial Star. One of them had savaged and illuminated Margaret Leasing. Who may confront the saurian servant of Set, or the beetle-like enormity that emerges from the vulva of Nu Isis? Who may unriddle the sphinx of the Guinea Moon and the secret of the Yellow One? Nor will I speak openly of the hideous anomaly associated with the *Vinum Sabbati* which the Yellow One appropriated on a visit to Uncle Phin; or the true origin and significance of the odd scrap of doggerel which the latter had muttered in a hoarse deep-throated whisper, so unlike his usual shrill falsetto:

*"A yellow yellow yellow frog
A guinea moon in the pool of the dog..."*

Margaret Leasing told me that it concerned Nu Isis, the Star represented in ancient lore by the dog-star Sirius and by the toad, Ossadagowah, mentioned in the Grimoire. The moon-frog is too fearful to contemplate, bound up as it is with recollections of the Yellow One, *and where he belonged*, and with a certain High Lama of Leng who, according to Lovecraft, wore a yellow mask which barely concealed a facial configuration that was not human.

The deputy proprietor interrupted my musings:

"What you really must see", he said, "are these remarkable... portraits".

There was a long pause before the last word, followed by the tittering laugh which he attempted to suppress with a moist limp hand. The book lay open at a double spread. The extreme left margin and its counterpart on the right were adorned with a series of miniature portraits, eleven on each side and all inward-looking. The intervening space, which comprised the remaining surface, displayed a background of supporting sigils and signs with brief textual annotations in Italian. I understood why the book seemed both strange yet

familiar; I was gazing at *II Grimorio Grantiano*, said to have been at one time in the custody of a Florentine family. Whether the present version was a copy, or whether Busche had bid high for so rare a treasure, I did not know. Nor did the deputy proprietor enlighten me.

"Look closely", was all he said. I did, and a very odd thing occurred. In the twinkling of an eye, I was translated into an atmosphere of mauve mist wherein the sigils and signs floated and unfurled about me like iron scrollwork. The transition was so abrupt that it caused in me a sensation of vertigo. Then the agitation subsided, the shapes froze, and I found myself standing before an immense, two-leaved iron-wrought gate. Embossed on a central medallion, on both leaves, I recognized a replica of one of the portraits which ornamented the margins of the Grimoire. In this case, however, the heads were in profile and faced away from each other. Their snouts or muzzles, of no familiar species, formed the handles of a lidless urn. From its depths arose tongues of grey flame. They quivered in a haze of such intense heat that I recoiled instantly. The deputy proprietor blew upon the page and the flames died down. I stared at him with amazement. I was beginning to realize that his simpering exterior concealed genuine magical power. Perhaps he was my new link with Those that had sent him. His form receded, became far-distant, muffled.

I heard the clanging of metal on metal, a sonorous hollowness that lingered like a gong and trailed off into the thin, piping whine of Uncle Phin's singsong tones. I recalled words which he had spoken to me long ago and which he now seemed to speak again:

"There is no occult law which decrees that one who is ready for initiation is drawn to a certain door. I am such a door. But a door cannot open of itself, and many pass by without noticing it, as you did - long ago. Sometimes it is wide open, but those who may cross the threshold hold back. Others, who are not ready, plunge headlong into an abyss and the door closes behind them".

Stepping over the threshold I confronted Uncle Phin who was seated at his study table. Before him on its baize surface lay three Tarot cards, very worn and, in appearance, very ancient; so ancient that, at first, I did not recognise 'The Chariot', 'The Tower', and 'The Moon'. The head of the Charioteer was surmounted by a strange insect, half spider half beetle, where one was accustomed to seeing a Crab. The iridescent carapace and mandibles glittered in the dim light of the study. 'The Tower', on the other hand, resembled one of those I had seen but recently in the Tunnels of Set beneath the plane on which I now stood. 'The Moon' was actually a painting by Crowley which depicted the Abyss with its twin pylons, between which a beetle slithered on to dry land. Also between the towers, Crowley had depicted a Chinese sage seated in the lotus-pose. He bore a strong facial resemblance to Crowley in the yellowing mandarin-frailty of his final years. The beetle emanated a ruddy glow and seemed to pulsate in harmony with the insect that formed the crest-jewel of the Charioteer. Again I heard Uncle Phin informing me that the message which had beamed from the Towers came ultimately from a race of beings not yet incarnate, a race symbolized by an insect as yet unknown upon earth. This creature alights from space on to the ocean of human subconsciousness. I understood also that Crowley, the Sage, the Wise One, was the bridge spanning the waters of space. The cards indicated this possibility. And there was a further mystery: the sum of the numbers assigned to trumps 7, 16, 18 equalled 41. Uncle Phin reminded me of the 41-lettered spell ill the *Necronomicon* that opened the Door for the "mad Arab" Alhazred: "Ph'nglui mglw'nath Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn!". Forty-one is the number of DBLH, 'the Devil, the Double One'; it derives from the root DBL, which has the numerical value of 36. I knew from my qabalistic researches into the word 'Qrikuor' that the numerical series 1-36 yields 666, the number of the Beast of the Abyss with which Crowley identified himself. As these concepts flashed into my mind I realized that the Moon-Trump ensouled the formula

at one time used by Dr. Black to prolong his life. That was before he had discovered the secret of the true elixir of deathlessness. And I, too, was in the picture. His fingers now traced in the atmosphere the numbers 7-16-18, illuminating, as his index passed over them as if singling them out, the numbers 7 18. Seven-eighteen was my own 'magical' number in the hierarchy which he was gradually unveiling for me. The suppressed 6 and the duplicated 1 (61) signified the DAHNA, or Mauve Zone. He then handed me a copy of one of Crowley's writings which listed a series of qabalistic correspondences. The number 41 denoted "the yoni as a vampire force". I thought of Margaret Leesing, and the vast shadow of Awryd suddenly darkened the study. Uncle Phin was smiling his curiously twisted smile, but he said nothing.

I thought it likely that the Beast might be the spidery entity on the brow of the Charioteer, or the beetle emerging from the Deep, clutching the mystical egg depicted by Crowley in the Moon-Trump. Sure enough, Uncle Phin pointed meaningfully at the watery abyss from which the insect clambered. It struck me that I should search in the tunnels underlying the paths indicated by the trumps. But before I had time to marshal my ideas Uncle Phin held out a bright object, a slender quadrifaceted spire, or obelisk, of some shining transparent substance mounted on a gilded metal base fashioned in the form of vine tendrils. The spire was approximately six inches in height. I looked at him quizzically.

"This is probably one of the most powerful wands in existence", he explained in answer to my unasked question. I took it in my hands and examined it closely. I declared that it put me in mind of crystal chandeliers and opulent country villas - such as *The Mallows*!

He shot me an approving glance: "It is indeed a lustre, and once graced a chandelier during its long and checkered history. The last person to adapt it to his requirements was Allan Bennett. He used it as the fmial of his magical 'Blasting Rod'".

Allan Bennett had been a guru to Crowley, who described in his *Confessions* the rod's paralyzing effect on a scoffer who had doubted its power to blast. But its origin was not mentioned.

"Because Crowley did not know it", murmured Uncle Phin, again reading my thoughts: "The important thing is that this spire acts as a positive pole to Awryd's globe. *She* can tell you of its origin!"

I felt a wave of apprehension, but this was swept away the next moment by my sheer astonishment. Busche's premises had stood within yards of the flat in Chancery Lane once occupied by Crowley when he and Bennett performed Ceremonial Magic, around the turn of the century!

I looked intently at the spire. It flashed rainbow beams as Uncle Phin began slowly to trace with it the five-pointed star of invocation. I made a frantic lunge to abort the process, but I was too late. He set it down in the midst of the trumps which he had arranged triangularly on the baize-covered table. Followed an intense silence. Then Uncle Phin's laughter rose to a crescendo before sinking into the gulfs that separated us.

In those days in Chancery Lane, Crowley styled himself as Count Vladimir Svareff. I saw him now, attired in costly though Bohemian mode. He was watching Bennett trace upon the floor a pentagram such as Dr. Black had just formulated. Behind this scene, as through a veil, I could discern vaguely the glittering spire. At intervals it discharged sequins of coloured light like translucent bubbles. They cascaded and coalesced in the form of a star which emitted an iridescent glow. A dark coffin-cornered cloud floated over the scene. It lifted swiftly and revealed what I took to be a shadow on the carpet. But when the blackness lightened I saw a large cabinet, its door thrown wide. Inside, suspended from the ceiling, swayed a human skeleton dripping with slime. Its skull appeared crusted with a loathsome green fungus. The growth recalled the tentacles of the Qrixkuor

rowelling Margaret Leasing's hair. The feet of the corpse dangled above an altar supported on the toes of a black man standing on his hands. Crowley closed the door of the cabinet and the scene faded. This incident had occurred at his flat in Chancery Lane, to which he had returned one evening to find on the stairs a monstrous black cat. He also found his 'temple' in disarray, the altar desecrated, and troops of semi-materialized forms, demonic and qliphotic, haunting his apartments. He described the incident many years later in his *Confessions* as the most awesome and ghastly experience he had known. But after "meddling with the Goetia", as Bennett expressed it, what could he have expected?

As the vision faded I noticed an open volume lying face downward on the floor behind the overturned altar. I recognized instantly the Grimoire; the intruder had been disturbed before securing his prize!

Uncle Phineas, standing before me again, offered me his arm: "Whilst you are here", and he smiled archly, "allow me to introduce you to the three tunnels which lie beneath the Moon-Tower from which the spidery critter projects his web".

I was apprehensive. The three guardians may have been friends of Uncle Phin, but I was not at all keen on meeting the squat one, who, I was certain, was one of them. Of more absorbing interest to me at that moment was the Grimoire, lying as it had tumbled from Crowley's altar. And I was amazed by Uncle Phin's total indifference to it.

He regarded me ruefully, then artfully. I suspected a trick. Was he intending to deflect me by so childishly simple a ruse? A shadow of anxiety flitted over his features. I felt a wave almost of relief wash over me as approaching footsteps sounded in the vestibule. A soft tread was followed by a brushing sound, as if someone were dragging in his wake across the carpeted floor a heavy weight. The sound ceased outside the door. I expected it to open, and braced myself for a possibly unpleasant encounter. Nothing happened. I became

aware of the cumbersome ticking of an ornate grandfather clock which, only at that moment, I noticed in a shadowed corner of the room in which we stood. Each passing tick wheezed asthmatically from its ancient frame. It was like the rattle of bones being assembled methodically to complete the anatomy of a skeleton concealed in its coffin-casing. X-rayed within it I saw a replica of the contents of the cabinet in which Crowley had immured his sacrificial victim. Was another such due for delivery? Had time been suspended for the space of a century? My anxiety found relief only by reason of Uncle Phin's evident unease; it was genuine. I felt sorry for his discomfiture on my account, and my concern expressed itself in a sudden urge to protect him from what was to come. His facial muscles sagged alarmingly, his eyes became dulled - almost lifeless.

We waited, breathless with apprehension and expectancy. The door was opening. On the threshold stood Auguste Busche. He seemed as surprised to see us as we were to see him. Surprised and confused. I felt a surge of confidence. Stepping forward I opened wide the door to allow our visitor complete access. Uncle Phin was visibly shaken. I was reminded of the time when Aubrey St. Clair had seen Dr. Black's outline dislimn before his eyes and suffer absorption in the swamp-lair of the crocodile. Perhaps the doctor now intended returning home. I knew now why he had been engrossed in Stormlin's book, *The Aetiology of Swamps*. How could a doctor with Uncle Phin's leanings not find a kindred spirit in one who had spent the greater part of his life in the crocodile-infested regions of the planet?

So unexpected was Uncle Phin's sudden collapse that I failed to notice what was happening on the threshold, although I was vaguely aware that no one had passed over it. The smiling semblance of Mons. Busche had vanished, but his baggage remained: a sack of bones! Uncle Phin rallied the instant I revealed the sack's contents. So intent was he on

picking out the bones that I, in observing the morbid fascination which they exerted upon him, did not notice, until I turned again to the open door, that a second sack had taken the place of the first. My discovery was accompanied by the hollow echo of the same sound of dragging footsteps that had alerted us first to the presence of our spectral visitant. Uncle Phin grew uneasy again, and bade me close the door and fasten it. At the same time, he laid a hand upon my arm, his eyes bulging with expectancy at the sight of a second sack. Thus stayed in the act of complying with his instruction, I could but watch the unfolding of this unwholesome nightmare.

I was aware throughout that Crowley was behind it, that somewhere deep down, below the Great Pyramid in the shadow of the Mokkatam Hills, a hideous fungus was spreading beneath the ancient city of El Fostat and from the swampland of the Nile delta. Pushing upward, pushing onward, seeking the daylight of the Emporium, the tentacles and the bones heaved upward, breaking the earth, spilling the sand, thrusting ever upward to become one with the light of high noon on Chancery Lane at the precise moment when - with Mephi in his grasp — a young man passed serenely from the establishment of Auguste Busche and turned into High Holborn.

And at the next moment it was to see "the graves gape wide asunder, cracking with noise of thunder", as the pavement split wide open before us. Uncle Phin peered into the cavity:

"You know the rest", he said wearily, "but when we return, those bones will be dancing a merry jig in Aleister's fiat... or should I say in Count Svareff's apartment?"

He bowed obsequiously to an invisible ghost. I looked at him quizzically.

"Aleister is the first of the unclean frogs", he said in reply to my unspoken question: "I'll take you down and introduce you to the second".

He grabbed my hand before we took the plunge.

After his initial remark on the brink of the cavity I expected

to descend again the flagstoned staircase exuding evil-smelling slime. Expected again to see a rotting wharf reeking of decomposing fish, and to which were tethered several skiffs bobbing drunkenly on the swell of a gently-ebbing tide. Not at all. We plummeted into a velvety darkness, lit occasionally by lurid flashes of light that left an after-image that seared the eyeballs. I felt an upsurge of fear, but Uncle Phin was gleeful:

"Is there not joy ineffable in this aimless winging?", he cried, quoting a line from Crowley and flapping in my face a grotesque pair of wings - or were they fins? My mind reeled and began fabricating puns on his name: finny as a fish, fishy as a phineas, funny as a fanny, phoney as a phantasy... until I realised that I, too, had fins. I clove the waters of space as easily as did he. He became suddenly serious:

"You will now confront the second of the unclean frogs that guard the tunnels between the Ninth Arch, even the Arch of Yesod. But, remember, the skeletons have left their tombs; they are dancing a jig in Aleister's flat".

He then grew *very* serious, a little anxious, I thought, as we glided as vultures on to a sloping surface that reared beyond us into the night sky above a white triangular wall, blazing in the light of a full moon. I recognized the shadowy outlines of the Mokkatam Hills. We had alighted upon the oldest building in the world.

"You often prate of the Tunnels of Set", he said: "Look down!"

I slewed my gaze from the bright night sky to the absolute blackness of the Entrance Shaft.

Dr. Black was absolutely right. Was not this remarkable edifice, with its galleries and secret passages and tunnels, proof in itself that thousands of years ago the Forbidden Wisdom had already bestowed upon its initiates the material power to erect in limestone and granite a model, for future aeons, of the Tunnels of Set? Those who stood upright and even those who could *crawl* might attain to the vision of Nu

Isis. Crowley himself had described the strange light, which he likened to "pale lilac", that had illumined the text of the goetic invocation which he had chanted in the King's Chamber in the presence of Ouarda the Seer. It was the radiance of the Mauve Zone, which could as well be described as pale lilac. The Mage had claimed that the illumination cast by the candle which he had placed upon the rim of the lidless coffer was a mere travesty of *that* Light.

The episode caused me to review again the circumstances of the transmission to Crowley of the strange Message from Those 'outside'. Cairo had been the locus of its reception, and this very edifice - the sole survivor of the historical Wonders of the World - thrusts upward at the exact centre of the earth's land-mass its fantastic simplicity.

As my glance swept the dark silhouettes of the Mokkatam Hills I had a sudden illumination that rocked my world, sent it shooting down the shaft to lie in the wreck and rubble that had lain at its foot, though not undisturbed, for six millennia, perhaps longer. The moon vanished, Uncle Phineas vanished; one thing alone remained in all that desert vastness - the realization that Cairo held the key to a great Mystery, one that I was not at that moment able to fathom.

Uncle Phin resurrected; from the desert sands I saw his face, rock-like, pitted, emerge. It was followed by the bulk of his gigantic body. Was he, indeed, a Great Old One? My mind strayed; long ago I had seen a drawing by Man Ray, purportedly a portrait of the Marquis de Sade. Phineas Black's reappearance reminded me forcibly of it.

He almost shoved me down the Entrance Shaft of the Pyramid. We had tarried too long by the Wliite Wall of Memphis. I had, he said, passed the Ordeal of the Ninetieth Degree, by which I understood him to mean that I had emerged, triumphant, from the terrible Ninth Arch; for the nought was the cypher of Nuit, the nine the key to her Mysteries.

Plunged into darkness so intense and so palpable that I could feel on my skin the press of its mass, heaving with a host of invisible spectres, I had to pause, breathless, before the vivid representation of my mind's deepest anxieties, churned into activity by an overwhelming sense of panic fear. I was alone.

The simulacrum of Phineas Black had collapsed into the desert sand in a flurry of whirling particles which, as they settled, muffled a faint yet mirthless laughter. The eyes, before they sank into stone, remained joyless. An infinite solitude encompassed me about, and a faint whirring vibration caught me up on its sound-waves and plunged me yet deeper into the vaults of that colossal temple of the living dead. For nothing here was at rest; spectral hands reached out at me and fragments of body fleshed abruptly forth, only to dislimn the next moment and fade into the turbulence of movement, the source of which I could but guess. But I could not guess the source of the words that tumbled about me. They violated my being with a clamour of blasphemies, a torrent of images for which not a Pickman nor a M'Calmont, even, could have found shapes on earth or in hell fit to express them. In my endeavour to free myself from the thralldom of this onslaught, I knew that my only course was to surrender totally to the Current that was sweeping me to destruction. In a sudden spasm of terror I screamed aloud the Word that I had once heard Margaret Leasing utter after she had banished from her globe the monstrous spectres of the Qliphoth.

A sudden calm engulfed me. All sounds ceased - the vibrations, too, ceased. I had never before experienced such utter quiescence, such total quietude.

A thin pinpoint of light then swelled to a circle, became a sphere; the only light I had seen for seeming aeons of darkness and tranquillity. I approached it with a sensation as of falling bodily forward in space whilst simultaneously reeling backward in time. I was deprived of breath, and a blackness settled everywhere about me. Very slowly, my breath

regained its rhythm, stabilized. The circle of light reappeared, became the light on the landing outside the door of Crowley's apartment in Chancery Lane, the door at which Auguste Busche had appeared to deposit the bags of bones that had so delighted Uncle Phin. These recollections induced panic as Busche's abrupt entry overwhelmed me; then, I was whirled past the light and plummeted to the sunlit pavement of the Lane at high noon, where I had come away with Mephi. But a network of malodorous alleys was spread before me now; they exhaled traces of a perfume that wafted from a latticed window and evoked memories of a dimly-lit cavern hung with lurid tapestries. On a divan at its centre sat a girl of oriental beauty, her long fingers plucking the strings of a lute. My approach cast a shadow on the blind behind the lattice-work, and the melody ceased. In the inky shadows of a white-arched recess, curtained by tassels of coloured silk which terminated in tiny bells, a form appeared. I crossed the dark threshold, and knew that I was lost. And yet...

I recalled again the words of the Persian poet:

*How say ye that I was lost? I wandered among roses.
Is the lover forlorn in the House of his Darling?...*

The languid eyes, oblique and luminous, the full red lips puckered into a tulip-smile... I remembered so well the elongated fingers agitating the coils of lustrous hair that engulfed half her beauty in a cloud. How could I have forgotten; how call myself lost? But the smile, the unforgettable smile, struck a chill note that evoked no echo in her mirthless eyes. Then, a vaguely familiar and subtle gesture put me: on my guard. This cell of memory, reactivated by one of Dr. Black's sinister spells, pre-dated Crowley's 'Cairo crisis'; yet I knew that I was entering a dwelling-place in that ageless City and that the events that followed were rites enacted before a godless Goddess, and that one only of Her victims scorned the feast. We - Margaret and I - had managed to escape the hunger of the Beetle as it emerged from the thighs of Isis. The beetle was not as others of its kind, as Crowley had

discovered when a 'sending' of them had infested Boleskine, his house at Foyers. The insects were abnormally large, and distinguished by a horn which jutted from the cranium and terminated in a single eye. The Laird of Boleskine had dispatched a sample for identification to specialists in London, but the specimen was unknown to them.

A constant susurration drew my attention to a cloud of insects that swarmed over the flagstones of a shadowed crypt - how well I remembered it! I remembered also the "tentacled fossils known as Qrixkuor" mentioned in the Grimoire, bearers of the tangled Light of Nu Isis. Uncle Phin maintained that they were living light-bearers, fresh from the womb of the great Idol deep below El Fostat, born after the Rite of its repast in the place of the gong and of the metal grille embossed with the symbol of the Dragon of the Drukpa Cult. He explained how the Asiatic and the Kamite Mysteries had merged in a single cult that focused the Ku-Star of Nu Isis. The minions of this cult included the beetles which bore the Light to earth in preparation for the Aeon of Zain. At that time, in that aeon, consciousness would transcend its human phase of embodiment and manifest the Khephraloids. But for a brief spell only; for a time was coming when the Drukpas would burst upon the planet and spread through their leader, Lam, the "light higher than eyesight" as described by Aiwass in a Cairo communication to Crowley.

The Children of Isis were massing, here and now, as the subliminal burrowers in darkness, hiding the secret light within their black and glistening forms. And I saw Margaret Wyard with whom I had fled from that accursed brood, centuries before Aiwass had communicated the prophesy of their manifestation. Frater Achad, too, had glimpsed the coming Aeon, although he had been unable accurately to interpret its symbols.

I was not at all sure that I had understood Uncle Phin or his explanations. His words were muffled in a yellow mist

that thickened into fog. I implored him to be more explicit. I had seen both Awryd and Leesing gazing into the globe, but the images were melting into each other, and they faded away as I struggled vainly to maintain consciousness at the densely larval levels of earth's interior.

Who is there to understand that Crowley's writings, his doctrine, the facts of his magical life, should be viewed in a context infinitely vaster than that merely of socio-political programmes with magical undertones having terrestrial scope alone? His purpose is made clear in his last writing in which he comes closest to unveiling the true purpose of his magick.

"Thelema", said Uncle Phin, "is a blind if ever there was one! The word may mean Will, and its number may be ninety-three; so, also, does Aiwaz equal ninety-three. It is the Will of Aiwaz that Crowley was expounding in the most revealing passages in that last writing, which he entitled, originally, 'Aleister Explains Everything'. I am telling you", continued Uncle Phin, "he was by that time desperate and sick to the eyes of laying down the Law for 'the Banker, the Pugilist, the Biologist, the Poet, the Navvy, the Grocer, the Factory Girl...', see his book, *Magick*, for the rest of them. He was after bigger game, and when at last the Alchemist came up with his Kaula Comment he saw in a flash the connection between it and the Grimoire. Aleister had tagged along too long behind the Templars, who had gone only halfway because they lacked the missing pieces of the jigsaw. The genuine orientals had it all, and the Alchemist knew it; but he didn't know the other half, he misunderstood the role of Aiwass. Like many others, he thought that Aiwass was a mere figment of Crowley's fancy, or, with characteristic East-End suspicion, a 'come-on'".

I was unable to fathom just exactly what Uncle Phin was driving at. I suspected that these, for him, unusual vociferations were an attempt to hide from me the advent of the unclean frog. As for me, I was trying to shake off the spell of languorous eyes and the strains of the mystic lute plucked by

exquisitely sensitive fingers, and the long shadowed alleyway where, behind the trellised vines, a room shimmered with the light that seeped upward from the Tunnels of Set.

We passed gaping fissures exhaling vapours that caused in me a paroxysm of coughing. Then, through a mist, I saw the Yellow One, squat, batrachian, advancing with grotesque little hops. Yes, Crowley had once described the Alchemist as "strangely batrachian", and the description had been innocent of any reference to the Deep Ones, of which Crowley had not heard.

I recalled the curious scrap of doggerel associated with the Squat One, and the thought crossed my mind that the Alchemist had been drawn to Clanda, the squamous priestess of the Deep Ones, because he also had served Their Mass in the glaucous twilight of submarine rites.

Dr. Black was prodding me impatiently. The distant sound of footfalls mounting the stairs echoed hollowly. To ward off apprehension I became engrossed in the idea that when Crowley had vacated the premises in Chancery Lane he had not omitted to gather up the staircase carpet-runner. The absurd notion of Count Svareff absconding with a roll of carpet tucked under his arm sent me into fits of silent laughter. Uncle Phin was glowering. It was no good, I had to face my destiny; not the expected retribution for known misdeeds - nothing so simple - no! another form of destiny, unknown, unbidden: the destiny of the unslept. Playing for more time, I began a Victorian novel:

Have you ever considered, dear Reader, that every time you awaken from the dreams of night or of the day, the forces set in motion by the characters and events that occurred therein do not cease abruptly with your change of consciousness to daytime or to nighttime. No, indeed, those creatures of your dream world, set in motion by impulses you no longer own, contrive to expend their energies until their impetus subsides, or until, dear Reader, you sleep again and take up a

further chapter in the destiny of your creations which are — all of them — only and entirely yourself.

And so it was that the uncompleted dream of an insidious Chinaman now resumed its sway over me, appeared upon the threshold, crossed over it into my life, this time during waking hours, and confronted me with the unslept destiny locked within him, and released by me or by Uncle Phin as a spring is suddenly released, to set in motion again the almost forgotten melody of a childhood memory. This Chinese music-box was seen through a field of poppies in the province of Honan, and its Chinese aspect was sinister. But, like a flower, it opened up for me; and compelling eyes, black as night, leered through a veil of smoke... poppies... Honan. They wafted to me the incense of Chandu. And then I remembered an uncle whom I had known but little, who had spent much of his life sailing the China seas. The year that I was born, my parents had given him a photograph of me. When his ship next docked at a Chinese port he had had the photograph copied on to silk by an artist whose acquaintance he had made. It was to be a surprise gift for my parents. The artist's uncanny power of *capturing the soul of the child* delighted them exceedingly. In later life my uncle told me that the artist had been attached to a temple in the fastnesses of Honan, overlooking the Yellow River as it sweeps onward to the sea. He said he did not know its precise location but that it was known as the Temple of the 'Q'. When I told Uncle Phin, his eyebrows shot up and he exclaimed:

"If I were a Christian I would cross myself. If your artist had connections with the Cult of the Ku, for that is what your relative was trying to impart to you, you are lucky to be alive, my boy! But, tell me, what else did he have to say about it?"

I searched my memory. I knew that he too was playing for time; that he had no more urge to be confronted by the Yellow One than had I. But I searched in vain: "My nautical uncle probably knew nothing about these matters; he had met the Pttist on his travels, and as his ship docked regularly within

easy access of the man's studio they struck up a fleeting friendship".

Dr. Black sighed: "Don't you yet understand the reason for his eagerness to comply with your uncle's request for a copy of that portrait?"

I stared blankly in reply: "What should I understand? It seemed a plain enough situation. A man wants to give his brother and the mother of his recently born son a rather unusual token of his affection; what is so surprising about that?"

Uncle Phin's exasperations knew no bounds; he whistled through his teeth: "And I suppose the invitation was all part of the surprise, too?", he added sarcastically.

A door in my memory clicked open. I gaped at Uncle Phin. I remembered my mother's telling me, years later, and at a period during which I was suffering regular nightmares involving oriental imagery, that when I was nearly one year old my parents had had an invitation to visit China with me and to stay with friends of my uncle.

"And I wonder why they would go to the trouble of extending such an invitation to a pink-and-white bundle of flesh not yet one year old - *they* - members of a Cult the most dreaded in all Asia, a Cult that practised the blackest of black magic and whose initiates were scouring the earth for the Grimoire? The Cult had established Tongs in San Francisco, in Limehouse, in Florence... Do you suppose they were unaware of your bloodline? They had watched its evolution from the time of Awryd, when the Grimoire first materialised, lost track of it when Sir Francis Grant died, lost it again when M'Calmont died - or was it Richard Upton Pickman, I am not certain which; retrieved it again through Helen Vaughan, alias Mrs. Beaumont, upon whose death it again went missing, until Austin Spare was shown fragments of it by the Witch Paterson. From that moment on, Spare's life ran downwards. Although he managed to preserve in memory a few of the Grimoire's vital formulae, the bombing that shook him in

nineteen-forty-one⁸ blotted out much of it. And Crowley's tireless efforts to run it to eaz-th were unsuccessful until the Alchemist appeared on the scene, and, again, fragments of it were revealed. It was enough to kill Crowley within months of his seeing them...".

Uncle Phin rambled on, an almost incoherent torrent of names, one of which arrested my attention and rendered me deaf to all else: that of Mrs. Beaumont. She it was whose inner circle of acquaintances perpetuated itself in the notorious 'Beaumont Club', active to the time of Crowley's death. It became, in the 'fifties, the nucleus of *New Isis Lodge* which I had recruited mainly from its - by then - scattered membership. Concentrated within the Lodge's inner sanctuary were those only who possessed the keys to alien dimensions as contained in the Grimoire.

I realized that Dr. Black's monologue explained in a few cogent sentences the magical evolution of the Wyard bloodline which had reached myself. I was aware, of course, that without the back-up of Margaret Leasing's skrying these facts would have meant nothing to me. From Margaret Wyard to Leasing may have been but a step, but it comprehended in its stride so vast an arc that the Yellow River's sweep to the sea alone suggested its magnitude. She had been the great catalyst, she who was drawing me deeper and deeper and deeper into her globe. I knew also that our encounter with the second unclean frog was imminent. It occurred in the glass just as Uncle Phin held up his hand, as if he had detected the sound of the bones reassembling themselves.

Within the sacks which M. Busche had dumped upon the floor, a squirming movement accompanied by a series of muffled clicks froze the blood in my veins. From the nearest sack something emerged, slowly, as if struggling loose from the fibres that contained it. The semblance of an arm appeared; the bones of the hand were absent, and the object waved and

swayed like a huge slug or caterpillar blindly searching for... something. The slimy bone was blackened, as if it had been subject to intense heat. Suddenly, the entire contents of the sack burst forth, and Uncle Phin mirrored my alarm at witnessing the emergence, not of a human skeleton, but of a mere framework of bones trailing a gelatinous mass of blackened scales. These were punctuated by dazzling pinpoints of light: a tangled web of light and shadow and clicking nigrescent bones - the clay and the fire from which Auguste Busche had modelled his grotesque gallery of gods. When cooled, and arrested in the immobility of death, they formed part of the Exhibition mounted for those who held the key to the green baize door!

One of the whirling chakras of light rapt my attention with its compelling, almost human gaze. It was the globe that Margaret Leasing had congealed from the sparks that flew from Awryd's cauldron. Their brilliance sucked me into its depths, and the bones began the jig they danced in response to the goetic evocations performed by Bennett and Crowley. There was a quality of carnival about their wild gyrations reminiscent of Elisor's *squelettes*, but these were the skeletons of non-human remains, these were the blueprints of entity yet to be — the children of a strange aeon issuing in thousands from the womb of Nu Isis. Yet each element of the ghastly reel was made up of a white virgin, whose blackened bones had been spewed out by the beetle as it crawled from the thighs of the Goddess.

The golem that emerged from the sack, stealthily, horribly, overcame me with its stark fascination, and above all with an *odour* that repelled. I hung suspended above the acute angle of attraction-repulsion, unknowing down which side I should slide if the pressure were relaxed. I had no space or time in which to observe my uncle's reactions; I was unaware even of his presence.

So, the second manifestation of the Unclean Frogs slithered and hopped through the open door which debouched on to the

8. Spare was injured in an air-raid in 1941.

sparkling molecules now massing into shades of colour. They stirred in my memory a night long past, when strange *kalas* were evoked by an earthly priestess of Nu Isis.

The lodge had been prepared for a rite of the Ku. Li was in charge and the dragon-throne was positioned centrally on the platform of a steep, truncated pyramid. Its four triangular faces bore the emblems and sigils of the four kinds of Ku⁹: the snake or dragon ku, the shadow ku, the centipede ku and the frog ku, classified according to the *Yi chien chih pu*. The images and sigils of their respective consorts were delineated on the relevant inner faces of the four sides of the pyramid. On the golden throne-back, inscribed in black lacquer, shone the hexagram ku of the *Yi King Tao*.

Li had ascended the steep ladder to her dais via the north side of the lodge-room, so that when duly enthroned, the top of her head was but a few feet beneath the small window set in the north wall.

Li owned a unique recording of an ongoing ritual of the Ku Cult enacted in Honan. This was used on the particular night that I was now re-living. Those who are acquainted with the exquisite dissonances peculiar to certain classical Chinese musical modes will appreciate how swiftly an atmosphere of serenity possesses a listener keyed to such spells, punctuated by the chiming of gongs. Their deep reverberations transport the mind beyond its terrestrial preoccupations.

Li began by intoning the Litany of Shoa, the Evil Woman: she who presides over the Yellow River and the poppy-fields of Hon-Nan; she who presides at the mystical Rites of the Ku; she who was celebrated by Sin Sin Wa, whose single eye complemented the single eye of the Raven perched upon his left shoulder. The crooning of Li evoked with its lilt a resurgently billowing lullaby that emanated from the interior of the pyramid, and the sigil of the shadow-woman glowed into life on the pyramid's eastern side.

9. See *Hecate's Fountain*, Kenneth Grant (Skoob Publish'g, London 1992), Pt.1 Chapter 2.

A gentle mist pervaded the lodge-room, and from its western and eastern extremities filed eight acolytes, four on each side, bearing each the totem of the four quarters, except that in lieu of the human-shaped shadow an image of Shoa was borne in. The mist thickened so that its surface acquired a reflective quality, which magnified the images presented by the acolytes to the swaying form of Li, entranced now in her magnetic sleep.

Interwoven with the strains of unearthly music there became clearly audible another sound, as of the lapping of waters against a distant wharf, where the frequent susurrations of a gentle suction suggested the bobbing of skiffs moored in oily waters. As the acolytes laid their charges upon the altar strewn with poppies at the base of the pyramid, the lights of eight lanterns blossomed as stars about the four triangular bases, each parchment panel inscribed with a Chinese character appropriate to the mystical rites of Shoa.

I knew that Eighteen was the magical number of Isis and that the eight acolytes, plus the single form of Li, resumed Her qabalistic index. So, when the great dark Bird flew in at the window piercing the north wall of the lodge-room, and settled upon Li's head - as the bat-thing had settled upon Margaret Leasing in the crypt at Candleston - I knew that it was but a matter of moments before the beetle emerged from her vulva.

It had taken many years to perfect this formula of perichoresis, and the equation of Li with Isis and with Shoa. I began to feel again as I had felt in the lodge-room decades earlier; and as I had felt when Margaret Leasing screamed as the Qrixkuor-helmet was clamped upon her head, tearing her hair, injecting into her skull the vile venom from Outside, the choking miasma of hexagram Eighteen.

The mist thickened, the star-lanterns dimmed, but the pyramid glowed more fiercely, flaring as a cone of fire where flames and shadows curled about the ornamental claws of the

throne, as summer lightning flickered over Li's robe of samite, rowelling its folds. Her head was tilted backward, eyes drawn up in trance.

A deadly silence descended on the lodge-room. Without, the night sky, visible only through the small aperture, seemed alight with star-fire which rained down a blue powder as it meshed with the mist. Then, again, the strains of a Chinese melody wound its coils about the throned goddess, and Li arose, radiant in gold and black. Her arms shot suddenly upward and released from her heavily jewelled fingers a fluttering shape that swooped aloft with a raucous shriek. The bowed, cowed forms of the acolytes responded with a low murmuring wave of sound that accompanied Li's invocation of Shoa. Then she stepped from the elevated dais and stayed suspended at a dizzy height, supported only by star-mist and by the wails of the acolytes as they turned upward their pallid faces - eight full moons in the shadow of Shoa's fantastic manifestation. The illusion, if such it were, lasted long enough for one to doubt that it was illusion. Rather was it pure magick, the magick of Shoa, the Evil Woman. Her yellow grace poured over the four faces of the pyramid its unbelievable gold, and I was able to drink in the potion, the elixir of a strange madness emanating directly from the gulfs beyond Nu Isis as determined symbolically by the dimensions of the lodge-room. Li turned on me her enigmatic smile as the raven of Sin Sin Wa wheeled crazily about her, showering down its feathers in cascades of jet-black snow which blanketed the acolytes, already immersed in mist. From the writhing mound arose waves of electrical energy which, following in parallel lines the triangular formation of the pyramid, culminated in a globe of blue fire beneath Li's sandalled feet.

But an even more astounding phenomenon was occurring above Li's head. A curiously shaped helmet now crowned the clouds of her hair. Her eyes, long and dark, shone from the ivory pallor of her face, and the full voluptuous lips were slightly parted in a smile that hinted at ineffable ecstasies.

Again, Awryd's shining globe thrust memories of its image upon this other, its scintillant twin. And I recollected again the helmet and the hell-bird that had eaten into Margaret Leasing's skull and opened the springs of astral visions. They brought with them the play of flashing astral colours that had transformed the darkness of the Candleston crypt into a mysterious radiance, suggestive of the stained glass lights of some infamous cathedral. And Shoa, the Evil Woman, the Woman of Dark Dreams, rose before me again, bathing in the sinister kalas of Hecate's own fountain.

The "third unclean frog" was about to spawn its brood. And I knew it as a spirit akin to the *chin tsan ku* that appeared in the form of a great toad or frog. Awryd had nurtured such a critter in her hovel in Framlingham, or so ran the account of her depredations in the chronicles of the Wyards of Brundish. That it was merely a variant zotype of the cults of the Okbish, of the Kephraloids, of the Crocodile, I knew instinctively, as Li was stricken before me with a spasm that convulsed the entire length of her body.

Both my arms were seized, suddenly. Dr. Black, with face averted, was intent on dragging me away, no doubt to some deeper hell. I stood my ground, literally paralysed by the scene unfolding before me. Li was suspended in mid air, balanced merely, it seemed, on a globe of swirling astral fire. Came a sudden compelling urge to fall down and worship this terrible idol of flame and fantasy, to lick its feet as crazy lights curled about them, electrifying all the particles of its astral atmosphere. Shoa, the Evil Woman, like a loa possessing its horse, possessed Li. I saw the helmet ablaze with the light of the Qrixkuor. The raven swooped, and, seconds later, Li's form was rendered incandescent as the bird burrowed through the path of the Fire Snake and emerged from her vulva as a green gauze beetle. A hatch opened beneath Li's feet, and before I fell headlong I glimpsed Awryd, gazing impassively down at me from the window in the north wall of the lodge-room, as once I had seen my cousin clamp her face to the window of the Welsh 'Brundish'.

Then I hurtled downward and heard above the rush of my descent the lapping of waters. I found myself standing on the rotting timbers of a wharf backing a squalid warehouse in Limehouse. Uncle Phin was approaching in a skiff.

3

The Yellow One, squat and demonic, sat and laughed lustily. He appeared even more grotesque than an image of Fo-Hi. Not a fat and indolent Fo-Hi, but a lean and cadaverous joss emaciated by the discipline of his yearning, in this green slime-field of Limehouse, for the poppiéd valleys of Honan, where he would return, laden with gold from his sinister traffic in human souls. Sin Sin Wa, no less. There was a buddha-like quality about his suave gaiety, but there was also something beastly in the way his fingers emerged like claws from the voluminous folds of his richly embroidered robes. He had one eye, and the bird upon his shoulder had one eye, and they complemented one another, for the squat one had a right eye and the bird a left eye.

Vague notions swam through my mind, musings; the Chinese are the only people to have deified laughter, and the Yellow One was exemplifying the fact. He looked regal, yet horrible, a creature that might have clambered awkwardly on to the rotting wharf and shaken himself free of the oily waters that lapped the dilapidated dwellings backing on to the ancient river. He was, indeed, an Old One, cousin to great Cthulhu, and yet, at the same time, a sire of Sebek, of Khephra, of Hecate, hideous with frogweed.

My Uncle Phin was attempting to tell me something, but his efforts at communication were frustratingly abortive. He pointed mutely at a scroll which the Yellow One had drawn from the capacious folds of his robe. As the scroll was unfurled, I saw again the sigils that Austin Spare had traced on the picture of Clanda which I had unearthed in the moonlight in a haunted attic.

The crooked talon of the Yellow One indicated the cone which terminated in a sharp point:

"There is no sharper point than Infinity", he drawled.

I found it hard to believe that he was quoting Baudelaire. The point entered the base of another cone which contained a series of sigils I had been unable to decipher, although I knew they contained vital secrets. I saw in the cone the helmet ablaze with the Qrixkuor light, and I knew that the pyramid whereon Lt had been enthroned had radiated into the lodge-room, and drenched with its waves the eight acolytes submerged in the sleeping mist that emanated from Li in her trance. The eight Children of Nu Isis, permeated with the Qrixkuor, had gathered the power in their magical robes. They were shadowed by the Isis-bird which wheeled into the eight directions of Space and mingled with men and women, disseminating the Light that becomes invisible on contact with the air, but which has the power to impregnate all on whom it falls.

I saw again in the globe that which Margaret Leasing had been attempting to show me all along: that the crypt at Candleston was but the seed-form, the blueprint and origin of the lodge-room in which I had witnessed the apotheosis of the Qrixkuor Bird. Awryd had had strange companions, none stranger than this winged horror that rushed from transplutonic gulfs beyond the sleeping mist. So, my immediate task was to understand the destiny of the Unslept, to identify the Eight Corners of the Typhonian dragon-seed, the eight centres of pestilence that had brought "fresh fever from the skies", as

Crowley's Angel had described it. The embodied prototypes of these eight angles of space had assumed the masks of the witch Awryd, of Mrs. Beaumont nee Helen Vaughan, of Mrs. Paterson, of Besza Lorie, of Clanda Fayne, of Kathleen Wyard, and now, Margaret Leasing.¹⁰ I was not able to put a name to further embodiments; perhaps I had yet to encounter them. The fact that I was, personally, in a magical line of descent from Awryd, sensitized me sufficiently to recognize some of her other avatars.

Auguste Busche dreamed of the emissaries brought into contact with earth by the Children of Isis. The Squat One, who wore the yellow mask of Set, was also Cthulhu! Lovecraft saw the snout;¹¹ Dr. Black, the spidery critter whose Book¹² I took some pains to inscribe during the days I worked with Margaret Leasing in *New Isis Lodge*. Set, the nameless beast of the desert, was also Hlo-Hlo, the Arachnean anomaly celebrated by Lord Dunsany — it needed no rare ingenuity to visualize the combined powers of these two forces, as Set-hlo-hlo or Cthulhu, the gigantic batrachian horror of the deep. And the image of Margaret, helmed with the Qrixkuor, was stamped indelibly upon my mind as tentacled in a web of writhing, tangled light. It was but now I remembered that the Light had come down before. In the urgency of

10. For the sake of readers not acquainted with the more obscure intricacies of the subject, it should be stated that Margaret Wyard (Awryd) has no biography beyond the account here derived from Margaret Leasing's fragmented skryings. As to the other manifestations of the Current, the few facts available concerning Helen Vaughan were incorporated by Arthur Machen in his tale 'The Great God Pan'. It was Helen Vaughan, as Mrs. Beaumont, who gave her name to the exclusive *Beaumont Club* from which the nucleus of *New Isis Lodge* was eventually formed. The sole source of information concerning Yeld, or Yelda, Paterson derives from the artist Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956), who referred to her as his "second mother", and attributed to her his deep insights into occult phenomena and his ability to "see". Of Besza Lorie I have written in a tale entitled 'The Stellar Lode', published by Skoob Publishing in 1995 in their *Skoob Esoterica Anthology*. Clanda Fayne appears in various accounts of a *New Isis Lodge* ritual which I have described in *Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare*; she appears also as the character Vilma, in my *Gamaliel: The Diary of a Vampire* (unpublished).

11. Set, as Sebek, was also the crocodile whose snout was longer even than that of his familiars - the jackal, the hyaena, the black boar...

12. *The Book of the Spider* (OKBISH), included in *The Ninth Arch* (Grant, forthcoming).

my escape through the network of alleys in Old Cairo I could think only of fleeing the tunnels between them, knowing that they followed every twist and turn, and might vomit their contents at my feet at any moment. I recalled also that the 'House of Wrong' in Cairo had been one of the many buildings that had incorporated into their structures some of the casing-stones of the Great Pyramid, pillaged in the century following the great earthquake that destroyed El Fostat. A rare hieroglyphic is yet to be seen chiselled on the face of a cyclopean block of masonry. It is said to be the only inscription ever discovered in connection with that Pyramid. It appears now on one of the blocks built into the house on the rue Rabagas - a strange device, unlike any other Egyptian hieroglyphic, that had puzzled the savants: a crooked symbol, none other than the one I had found in the stonework of the Candleston crypt in Morgan's Land.

This is what I mean when I claim that *New Isis Lodge* spawned the Children of Isis, and that I was present at that spawning. That the eight rays of the Qrixkuor Light shed on Earth that day had some as yet inexplicable connection with one of the most ancient artificial constructions on this planet, I no longer have any doubt.

A spate of images gushed into my mind. I recalled my contact with Besza Lorie whose tale I have told in 'The Stellar Lode', and I remembered with shock that the word 'Pyramid' means literally the Fire, or *The Light*. I began to consider the ancient name El Kahira, Cairo, El Fostat or Festat, how it fitted very wonderfully into the Word of a strange Aeon which, Crowley claimed, would supersede that of the god Horus. This Aeon was to manifest at some unknown future time which he had calculated as approximately 2,000 years after that of the current era.

Being unable to enquire of the Stone - for Margaret Leasing had vanished from my present sphere of activity - I had to rely upon qabalistic oracles. Rightly or wrongly, I assumed Cairo to be the crux both of Crowley's transmission

from 'Aiwass and of Frater Achad's discovery of the thirteen-lettered formula of 'manifestation', with the ancient name of Cairo (Festat) being central to the mystery of the aeons. The number of the word 'manifestation' is equal to that of the word 'Arun', meaning 'arch'. It was this correspondence that seized my imagination and triggered within me an inexplicable sensation, for I had nurtured a dread of encountering the Children of Isis. The mode of their evocation was concealed in the Star-Stone of thirteen rays or angles, as Frater Achad had demonstrated: arrange the letters of the word 'manifestation' in a certain sequence in the angles of the Star and connect the lines of the angles to form a star-stone of 438 facets.¹³ These facets incline inwards to its core. Uncle Phin himself discovered that when the figure is traced in the air by the spire-wand, and orientated northward, the star evokes the Light of the Qrikuor. And so, with a turn of the Key of Set (Mani),¹⁴ the Aeon (Ion) of the Children of Isis swarms into mani-/esto£-ion.

These notions swept through my mind in less time than it takes to transcribe them. The shadow of Set hovered over me as I came to an understanding of the mysteries of the crocodile, the dragon of the deep that typified in ancient Khem the ophidian current that formed the basis of Crowley's magick. It became plain to me that most of the zootypes connected with these arcana had been representative, at some time and place upon earth, of various forms of cosmic energy: the beetle, the bat, the vulture, the spider, the frog, the jackal, the hyaena... had I not inspected row upon row of them displayed at the lugubrious exhibition at the Busche Emporium? Had I not left the building in a blaze of near-tropical sunshine, at high noon, bearing away with me among my purchases - one unknown to me at the time - the image of the Devil?

It was at this moment that Uncle Phin broke in upon my reveries. He moored his skiff to a bollard. I noticed with

13. The number 438 is that of a qabalistic word denoting 'The Stone of Perfection-Perfect Ion (aeon).

14. The *Mani* Stone is the 'wish-fulfilling' gem of the Oriental Tantras.

apprehension its patent Instability. Catching my glance, and my thought, he merely sighed: "Nothing is stable in this world of dreams; all's as fluid as water".

He tied a complicated knot: "You shouldn't think so loudly. Half of my voyage was beset by Nilotic monsters, and none half so well crafted as by the modellers of old Khem, or even by our friend Busche. He must have suffered terrible nightmares, that man!"

I was no longer listening to my uncle's banter; instead, I was musing on the name *Fostat* or *Festat*. One of its numerical equivalents, 126, was that of *ofkunim*, the sacred cakes of light offered to Isis as the Queen of Heaven and of Infinite Space. Thus *Festat* combines the Deep Ones, whose mystery is that of Time, and the Outer Ones whose mystery is that of Space. Uncle Phineas reminded me that *Festat* was also equivalent to 517, the number of the vast sub-terrestrial ocean named *Nar Mattaru*. Further, that *Festat* symbolized in the windings of its alleyways and its cryptic places, in the complexity of the tunnels and passages which uncoiled like a serpent beneath the City of the Pyramids, that strange image known as Patuki, the frog-legged fish from which man descended; the awful Image adored long aeons past, pre-eval even to R'lyeh, the abode of Cthulhu.

Of course, I knew that Uncle Phin knew all along that Aleister never explained *everything*! But I was learning, through Margaret Leasing or the witch Awryd, that into my blood there had been infused nothing more nor less than the Qrikuor, the Light from a new and - to humanity at large - unknown planet: Isis. I despaired ever of shadowing forth, even dimly, the dazzling insights I received at that moment from the depths of Margaret's globe, the Star-Stone. She herself was trying to reach out to me from its depths, amid showers of stellar spume. It was not until Uncle Phin, with calm assurance and a positively superb presence of mind, seized the globe and lifted it gracefully from the waves, that Margaret's anguish turned to rapture, her agony to peace.

"See what she brings from the depths!", he exclaimed in triumph, but with a matter-of-factness that I could not help ascribing to a cynical, unfeeling *ennui*. I knew that he had seen all these things before I had had time to grasp the full significance of my own history.

What did Margaret bring from the depths? I looked closely at the Stone which he held in his palm. I could at that moment observe only the claw-like hold he had on it, and the shadow of the Yellow One hung over him like a cloud:

"You have recognized but eight of Her manifestations", he said enigmatically; "you think you have one more to identify! I tell you, there are three more — some of them yet to come".

I knew that by wracking my brains no good would come of it. But I knew also that a strange spirit had come in response to a magical call sent out by a desperate magician in America not many months before Crowley's death. And an American Priestess of Maat had performed an operation which she named the 'Eleven-Star Working'...

The water rocking Uncle Phin's skiff became agitated; my mind was abruptly relieved of the flow of concepts racing through it. Dr. Black's face was impassive; his eyes alone showed any sign of life. Then he raised his finger to his lips in the attitude of the dwarf-god of silence. Above the surge of the waters I too heard the sound that had arrested him in mid speech: the forlorn note of a pipe, distant yet penetrant. I slid into a dwam as the music swelled and claimed my entire attention; my last impression of visible things was of the oily waters now boiling about the bows of the diminutive craft as he struggled to retain control of it. An eerie blackness, then a plangent chant rose and fell in unison with the wail of the pipe. The sound froze my blood; it recalled to my mind the network of alleys and the Devil-House in Festat:

Bismillah ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim!

Ya Allah! Audhublllahi min ash-Shaitan ar Rajim!

(In the Name of the Merciful and Compassionate God! O Allah! I take refuge with Allah from Satan the Stone One!)

It was the cry I had heard from the Dragoman who had guided me - at my request! - to that appalling House. And that house was not in spirit-world other than the house in London's fashionable Ashley Street, off Piccadilly, and the house in a Limehouse backwater; nor, yet again, the house of hell where Helen Vaughan had passed into the realm of her companions; a house known to Margaret Wyard centuries earlier. I remembered, as through a mist, the same Stone incised with the lineaments of evil that had terrified to death the girl named Rachel, whose history Machen recounts; the same Stone of fathomless antiquity that portrayed the first god ever to dawn upon man - the god Set, the black god of the desert sands, the beast of the Deep typified by the saurian-headed deity of Ombos. All these things He was, and is.

The ancient mythographer and historian, Solinus, had declared its name to be the 'Sixty-Stone', or *hexecontalitho*, a carven monolith about which cavorted the abnormalities of a nether kingdom who spoke with the hissing tongues of serpents. Crowley had once described their language as "a weird and monstrous speech".

4

There are strands innumerable woven into the fabric of a single lifetime, and when that lifetime is multiplied indefinitely in many dimensions, remembered only in fragments and in a twisted chronology, the inevitable

dissolution of the mind presents a unique and terrifying phenomenon. Such was my experience of Uncle Phin's immeasurably protracted decay.

As the web of a dark and ancient Influence ramified from the depths of the earth, and wormed itself through the tunnels and passageways that meshed with my own blood-lines, so the remnants of Dr. Phineas Black, like the scattered members of Osiris, gathered together their shards and stood, a scarred monument, commemorating his pez-verse immortality. The Light of the Qrixkuor played upon him, recreated him as it played also upon the leaves of an ancient Grimoire which recorded the evolution of a single spark, a minute speck of consciousness that had impregnated a terrestrial being at a specific point in time. The deflected blood-line ensuing upon this miscegenation introduced an alien strain which, in the sixteenth century, achieved embodiment in a witch. From thence onward the Influence flourished in the dark soil of a Scottish clan which gave its name to the Grimoire which I chanced upon in a Welsh crypt. It is a simple, straightforward fact that several powerful magicians, including Aleister Crowley, had sought through me to gain access to this strange record of which — until a cousin had alerted me to its possible existence - I had heard merely the vaguest of rumours.

The last time I availed myself of Margaret Leasing's professional services terminated in an almost banal seance typical of many of its kind. I say *almost* advisedly, because the sessions that had preceded it, of which it was, so to speak, the final flower, were concentrated in a series of encounters with the shade of my mother. It could have served as a type of seance familiar to innumerable clients. .

The globe glowed and threw off a halo of light, and an image of my mother appeared. She was descending a staircase familiar to me from childhood. My surprise at seeing her was equalled only by the pang of anguish that accompanied

it. She held in her right hand a woollen jacket, in her left a book which she intended to read in the garden, or so I thought, until its shabby, faded condition caused me to look again. On its cover was depicted the Sphinx of Gizeh. My heart leapt; it was one of my very earliest book treasures, an anthology of stories for boys, set mainly in foreign lands. The medley of emotions that swept through me caused at that moment a blurring in the globe. I strove to control the impact of the memories released. The hero of the stories was very much like Uncle Phin, his name even was similar, though I could not recall it. The book contained a story about a large park-like garden with an ugly bog at the bottom of it, just like the swamp at *The Mallows*. A limestone statue had crumbled away so that it resembled the sphinx and the scoured features of Uncle Phin. Some of the other stories were about wizards and witches, and the hero had to combat their wiles by all sorts of ruses and devices, including the tracing of strange signs in the air which the author described so precisely that I was able to draw them in coloured crayons in the book's wide margins. I could feel again the scraping of the crayon on the thick parchment-like paper. One of the illustrations was horribly ugly; it showed a wild looking witch with a funny looking cap on her head that squeezed it so tightly that her eyes were red and bulging, and mauve light was streaming from her mouth. My father was angry because I had drawn all those squiggly things in the margin. He said I shouldn't deface books, and that I must learn to treat them with respect.

I remember, too, one sunny day when Uncle Phin came to see us and I showed him the book and asked him to read it to me again. He thought I had done the drawings well, and asked me how I knew what colours to use for the different parts of the drawings, for they were quite right although they had not been mentioned in the book along with the other things. Some of the illustrations, when you opened the book, stood up, but I had several books like that and it didn't

impress me all that much until Uncle Phin showed me that one picture, which looked like a cottage in the woods, appeared quite different when held against the light. Then you could see terrible faces peeping from the tiny panes of the windows. And perched on one crooked chimney, a horrid black bird that was also a crocodile and looked like Uncle Phin. And he said if you looked long enough you'd see someone come out of the cottage. But my father came into the room as Uncle Phin said this and he laughed and clapped the book shut and said to my father, "he's not a bad lad, he'll be reading more difficult books than this before he's many days older". Uncle Phin left soon after, and I didn't see him again until I had grown up.

My father used to read all sorts of books and stories to me; he loved reading to me, and I loved listening to him and seeing him act all the parts. I always asked him over and over again to read the book with the sphinx on the cover, it was more exciting even than Robin Hood, but my father would not read the sphinx book. But Robin was a great hero of mine, too; and it was because I cried so much when he died and the book came to an end, that my father explained with a laugh that Robin wasn't really dead, and that you only had to turn back again to the beginning of the book and there was Robin again, alive and well, with all his merry men about him. And so he began to start at the beginning again, and I became so absorbed that I couldn't believe that Robin was really dead. And that was the first intimation I had of reincarnation or, to be more precise, "eternal recurrence", for when I later read Ouspensky's theories on the subject I found my experiences named and confirmed. But what of the cottage in the wood that looked so much like the wood in Uncle Phin's garden, with the swamp behind his home at *The Mallows*? In the book I had seen two figures emerge from the cottage. Young Helen Vaughan and the terrified Rachel?

Thus, I found myself living not only my own memories as a Grant, but those also of my mother's blood-line streaming

from the witch Awryd. And the conical hats of the wizards I saw in the sphinx book I knew as a hidden sign of the god Set whose totem was the crocodile, which I also glimpsed in the picture of the bog. The cones appeared also in the 'rainbow' picture by Austin Osman Spare, who had written inside them the secret formulae which unlock other dimensions, alien spaces and time-scapes as yet unknown to me. For I knew now that whatever came within my ken had happened, was happening, or would happen sooner or later.

The crocodile reminded me of the Busche emporium, and a whole menagerie of beasts, historic or fabulous, ranged before my eyes in a dim and endless procession. It began with a frog and the curious jingle in the sphinx book that had haunted me with its unsavoury spell:

*a yellow yellow yellow frog
a guinea moon in the pool of the dog*

I remembered now how it had continued:

*A slithering crocodile, eyes that are greener
than whippoorwill's -forests of golden hyaena;
its carrion stinks and the fluttering bats
whir through the hair and the skull of the sphinx!*

The language of the beasts was paraded in sentient symbols made sacred by their occult significance. I had found the key to the puzzle ages ago. The crocodile (and the dog) was Set; the frog was the witch-moon, Hecate, whose name in old Egypt, *Hek-t*, means a frog. She was yellow because she was very ancient.

Under the Sphinx, as everyone knows, lie the tunnels of Set that twist and turn beneath the desert sands. And beneath *El Festat* lies a geyser of power that gushes upward like Hecate's fountain, for Hekt the Witch is one of the Unclean Frogs. The pool created by her fountain reflects the moon of madness that has its source in Guinea, the Old Land, the home of the race that spread Obi and the Voodooes all over the planet via the moon-pools of her dedicated pythonesses.

The Squat One, the Yellow One, had muttered these verses under his breath before he stole away from Uncle Phin the phial of Sabbatic Wine, the *Vinum Sabbati*, the elixir of the moon-pool that would have conferred upon him the immortality which he ardently desired.

Monsieur Busche had copied faithfully in clay the alphabet of the gods and their magical forces represented by the Beasts. I had known them all: the Set-Crocodile and the Isis-Beetle in Festat; the buzzing bee-like Tights' over Rendlesham Forest, near Brundish, when the child Wyard became the focus of the Outer Ones; the Hecate-Hag in old London who initiated Austin Spare into the mysteries of the Qrixkuor; the yellow frog, the squat one, my own mentor, the Alchemist, repellent to Crowley who remarked his batrachian appearance. Yes, the Alchemist had the 'Innsmouth' look which, like Dr. Black's, had come via old Obed Marsh's blood-line. And the abominable insects - firstly the Children of Isis, and the beetles whose terrestrial infiltrations were chronicled by Richard Marsh.¹⁵ These were mentioned also in the strange communication which Crowley received from Aiwass in Cairo when the aeons changed. Even before that event, the beetles had swarmed at Boleskine where Crowley resided during his invocation of the Daemon, as I have already mentioned. The entire menagerie of the Nile Valley I had 'met' in some form or other in Margaret Leasing's globe. I also had encountered insects associated with the secret cults of China, including the Ku, one of whose zootypes is the quasi-arachnean abnormality produced by the union of qliphotic larvae and spiders. And I remember an abominable plaster cast of the bat-god, Camazotz, whose minions flitted through cyclopean temples fallen into ruin in the steaming swamps of Guatemala; and the hideous squid-like anomaly celebrated by Lovecraft, the tentacled Cthulhu on the verge of awakening from its age-long sleep in Pacific deeps. These nightmares erupted in one gigantic fusion of horror in Rendlesham

Forest, when Margaret Wyard became the first victim of a terror undreamt of even by a Lovecraft or a Machen, and which erupted when I discovered the Grimoire at Candleston.

And yet, when my mother came down the stairs that summer's day - as reflected in the Leasing globe - I could not help wondering why Uncle Phin had not told me that the Sphinx contained all the secrets that ever were. But the book that my mother carried downstairs was tattered, faded, grubby with childish touchings. She was not about to while away the hours as had I, years past, in bright safe sunshine; the book was on its way to the dustbin, to the qliphoth below Malkuth! But then, Uncle Phin was a great story-teller and a maker of immortal dreams; and, when he read to me on summer afternoons, vague phantom figures would coil and weave above the shadowed swamp at *The Mallows*, the very weird weir at the bottom of his garden. Yet everything he read to me was right because he was reading from the Grimoire, and it was not Margaret Leasing alone who vanished at the last - into the shining globe.

15. *The Beetle*, Skeffingkm, 1897.

Epilogue

The dwelling named after 'Brandish' has long since changed hands several times. Its nearest neighbour whom I had known in my youth, although ignorant of my later activities, spoke of whistling winds that swept the place when all without was calm, and of mists descending suddenly all about it. And sometimes, a congealed darkness, a cloud of indefinite shape that resembled a great bird, a spidery shadow, or a fish-like anomaly, flopped about its rooms, nursing between its fins a monstrous book.

"...Absorbing and monumental..."

BEYOND THE MAUVE ZONE

KENNETH
GRANT

FORTHCOMING

In Preparation

DANCE, DOLL, DANCE! *SNAKEWAND* *GAMALIEL:* *The Diary of a Vampire.*

Occultists occasionally break into fiction. Blavatsky gave us *Nightmare Tales*, Crowley gave us *Moonchild*, and in more recent years Dion Fortune followed suit. Kenneth Grant needs no introduction to readers familiar with his *Typhonian Trilogies* and they will recognize in these tales—three major strands of ancient magic and witchcraft: Oriental, African and European currents of occultism which are as alive today as in their remote beginnings.

Dance, Doll, Dance! is an account of Tantric sorcery centred upon the fatal emanations of an idol that thrives on blood and sexual rites; *Snakewand* concerns a pair of Voodoo drums that lure a township to destruction; *Gamaliel* contains the history of a woman who succumbed to vampiric possession.

The concluding remarks of the ill-fated editor of *Gamaliel* apply with equal cogency to the other tales, all of which illumine the darkly obsessive forces that are now erupting in our midst with all the violence of profound and massive psychoses. But, as demonstrated by these disturbing documents, it is possible to control such influences and to direct them towards the exploration of little-known and creatively fertile regions of consciousness.

