

The World Within

A short story inspired by the Lovecraft mythos

by
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8 July 1899

My cousin James has written telling of his new occupancy in Salem, Massachusetts. The house he has obtained was previously occupied by a suspected sorcerer (or so he says). James has ostensibly taken up residence there so he can finish his novel concerning the occult history of America. James has been working on this treatise for several years and never seems closer to completion. I believe his interests lie elsewhere.

Always the queer one when we were young — and our families resided within a few miles of each other — James has never seemed to outgrow his fascination (obsession?) with eldritch tales and superstitions. I myself have a certain affinity with the macabre; and my position with the University affords me access to written accounts of Americana folklore from the Northeast region (Salem, Innsmouth, Chapelwaite, etc.). I indulge myself with these, but I believe James has faith in the accuracy of these tales and seeks to prove their reality.

14 July 1899

James has written again. My suspicions may have been unfounded. His work is progressing at an excellent pace, and he promised me a draft copy by October. I am looking forward to this immensely. James' writings have been truly inspired when he was able to focus himself. His novel should make a distinguished addition to the University's collection of occult history.

20 July 1899

James has apparently made a discovery concerning the previous resident of his house. I am including an excerpt from his latest letter:

Cousin,

I have found it! Extant after all these years. I must begin translating the writings immediately. They seem

to be a curious form of Latin. Although some passages resemble Greek and still others Persian. The book itself is ancient and seems to be bound in animal hide of unidentifiable origin which is void of any writing. This is as well, since the transparent flesh color of it would make interpretation of any symbols near impossible. The pages seem to be formed of a cloth like material, and have yellowed with time but the cuneiform have not diminished at all; they look as rich as if the author had just laid them on the page but a few hours ago.

The secrets of Manfred Bothwell — and possibly the Universe — are within my reach...

James ended his letter with promises of further details as time permitted. I do not quite know what to make of this. While ambiguous, his letter hints at a great find. Manfred Bothwell was a powerful warlock according to written accounts in the Miskatonic library; this seems to lend credence to his account. I wish he would have mentioned the title of the volume he found — mayhap he had not yet discovered it within the pages?

James' language skills abound (unlike my own) and I am sure his progress will be quick. I eagerly await his next letter.

3 September 1899

Still no word from James. I am afraid his new discovery has induced the relapse of old habits. I was so enjoying our conversations and his previous letter consumes my thoughts.

More research in the University's archives have revealed Manfred Bothwell as a well-known (and feared) figure in the Salem region two hundred years ago. Bothwell seems to have been involved in cult rituals involving human sacrifice to unnamed gods. These entities are only referenced as *Them*, and more rarely the *Great Old Ones*. James' find may well have been used by Bothwell in his tenebrous rituals. For his sake, I hope not.

30 September 1899

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It has been a fortnight since my last writing to James, and still no reply. I am increasingly concerned. James was in constant communication until a month ago when his letters abruptly stopped. I have mailed an enquiry to the local constable in Salem today. I hope to hear good news shortly, but my research at Miskatonic precludes that.

The entities Bothwell was dealing with are said to command space and time; able to travel through either at will. Bothwell himself was rumored to have the same ability; disappearing at will and re-appearing some time later with artifacts from civilizations around the globe in his possession.

My skepticism of certain occult tales is all but gone; I fear now that particular tales are accounts of horrors that cannot be properly described by the prosaic mind of man.

7 October 1899

The constable's reply has arrived. It is most distressing. He is adamant that the house in question has not been occupied for as long as his memory serves. In fact, he claims it is in such a state of disrepair that the county has it marked for demolition.

He did confirm that the house is several hundred years old but as to previous owners, there are no records (as I asked for). He states local rumors abound as to the origin of the house, the most common being that it was erected as a place of demon worship by a coven in the late seventeenth century. The constable places little faith in these rumors and writes them off as local superstition – though he does admit it most curious that there are no records of previous owners. His final note regarded the shunning of the dwelling and its surrounding area by the local population; but he maintains that is most likely because of the danger presented by its structural integrity. I am not of the same mind.

There was no mention of Bothwell by the constable, but I fear that is an oversight. I believe the house James now occupies was

the center of Bothwell's worship of the Great Old Ones; and that Bothwell was not a priest of those beings, but a pawn who paid with more than his life for his temerity.

I must begin preparations to leave immediately. A dread exigency overcomes me. The constable is either sorely mistaken or there are forces at work that are beyond the comprehension of sane persons. James may be in grave danger.

8 October 1899

My post at the University affords me a long sabbatical and my erudite superiors were most understanding. Promising my own research into the doings of Manfred Bothwell further assured their approval. After securing my leave, arrangements for my travel were made with the local train depot. I will find lodging — James has always preferred solitude when working — upon my arrival in Salem.

As dawn breaks, I am on my way... and none too soon.

9 October 1899

In accordance with my promise to the Dean and board, I shall be making detailed notes of my visit to Salem and the reputed coven of Manfred Bothwell. My journal shall suffice in this matter.

My travels through the Northeast countryside have allayed my previous worries. Such things as described in the Miskatonic volumes seem impossible when viewing such beautiful countryside as still exists in the surrounding mountains and valleys. This time of year provides for the most fascinating panoply of colors Nature's oeuvre can provide.

I enjoy my trip, and am now sure that James is merely engrossed in his work and the constable has somehow mistook another for James' abode.

11 October 1899

156 North Main, Salem, Massachusetts. James' house. In no way derelict, saving the hideous gray-green coloring of the clap-

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boards (which seems to be shifting in the evening light). The yard is meticulously manicured, and contains some beautiful topiaries; although of a variety and shape I have not encountered before. Odd angles abound causing the eye great hardship.

The house itself consists of three stories with gables on each end of the top story. A large front porch surrounds the main entrance facing North. This is protected by an overhang supported by tapered columns in the classical Greek style. The windows are in tact, but in need of cleaning; the dirt making the interior hard to visualize.

Upon the large entrance rests an inchoate crest of arms. The crest is a bas-relief of a great beast surrounded by many smaller creatures cavorting in a most grotesque and licentious manner – although I cannot be sure, they all seem to be playing musical instruments of some sort.

My fear has abated after seeing the house — notwithstanding the baleful crest — surely it is not the same dwelling described by the constable and used as a den of evil by Bothwell. Strange though, how the constable could be mistaken given the correct address. I may visit him in person if time permits.

11 October 1899

The morning sun peaking through the dirty windows awoke me; the mottled patterns it throws on the floorboards are quite strange. They are reminiscent of an eclipse – dark splotches surrounded by a faint white halo of light.

I would note the time, but my watch has decided to give up the ghost. The hands are moving at an accelerated rate, passing an hour in the space of a minute.

I remember little of what happened last night. Entering the house, I crossed the short vestibule, and almost at once a lethargy crept over my limbs. Sitting down in the parlor, I decided to wait for James as it appeared he was not at home. I must have fallen asleep then (the trip having taken its toll on me more than I was aware) as I can recall nothing else.

My rest seems to have done me well though, my previous

stupor is all but gone. I do feel slightly queer – as if something is missing. No time to think of that now though, I must talk with James, who is surely back by now. I wonder why he did not wake me upon his return?

11 October 1899

A quick search of the house yielded nothing to hint that James is currently residing here. Maybe he has gone into town for a few days. I do hope he is not gone too long.

In his absence, I shall explore the house in full – James may have left some of his research material behind.

11 October 1899

The parlor is rather small for a house of this size. Two sitting chairs flank the small bay window. In the corner stands a coat and umbrella rack. The pocket doors lead back to the vestibule and directly across must be the living room – which is currently obscured from view by a set of frosted glass doors.

11 October 1899

Heading back to the vestibule I turned left and headed down a long, narrow hallway for what I assumed to be the kitchen – being a bit famished, I decided to inspect it first. The right of the hallway is a paneled wall concealing the foundation of the large carpeted staircase leading to the upper levels. The left of the hall is quite similar in appearance but serves as an outer wall of a rather large pantry accessed from the kitchen (as I later found out). The kitchen is small, but nicely furnished with a sink for washing, ornately carved cupboards, and a heavy round table with four surrounding chairs. Looking in the cupboards revealed nothing edible, and oddly, no tableware.

I was resigning myself to missing lunch (having slept through breakfast), when I found the pantry entrance in an alcove just off the kitchen. The pantry is very large for a kitchen of such diminutive means – though the icebox may account for that. Searching the pantry yielded not much more than the kitchen in the way of sustenance. I found half a loaf of grain bread and some

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preserved jam; the icebox is locked so I could not look to see if James had stored any butter, milk, or possibly cured meats.

Re-entering the kitchen I found a pitcher of water with the chill still on it; odd that I had missed this on my first go round. Being without tableware, I simply used my fingers to tear off some pieces of bread, dip them in the preserve and then drank straight from the spout. I hope James will not mind; since he did not know I was coming, he did not know to leave any food behind before leaving for his trip.

11 October 1899

After my light brunch, I continued my investigations; deciding to visit each room on a floor before ascending to the next level – saving the cellar for last. On my way back down the hall to the living room, my sleeve caught on a corner of paneling slightly raised from the rest. Upon further inspection, this panel and its twin appear to function as an ingress to the cellar. How odd. I would have expected the cellar access to be from outside.

The living room is large, but as sparsely furnished as the rest of this floor. James must have left most of his belongings behind when he moved. A Persian throw adorns the center of the floor with the most queer pattern that I have ever seen. Lines intersecting with each other to form incongruent angles that pain the mind if too much time is spent following their paths.

A sofa, chair and small reading table on which sits a singular lit candle make up the rest of the furnishings. There is no window, and the large fireplace is unlit – shadows dance on the walls seeming to flow and merge with the corners of the room as the little light flickers.

My eyes are heavy as I write this. I feel run down; sapped of energy. I wonder, did I contract an illness during my journey? I will forgo the rest of my exploration for now and head up to one of the bedrooms for a short nap.

One last note – I have not found a clock on my cursory examination of the upper stories, and there is not one to be found on this level either. James was never one for punctuality and time

means little to “artists”. Still, I would have expected at least one timepiece.

11 October 1899

Late afternoon; the Sun is setting in a haze of sapphire and deep purple. Sleep cures what ails the body. I feel all-together better, though sleeping quite longer than I expected – or wanted. There is a W.C. on this floor along with two bedrooms, and after refreshing myself I made the trip down to the parlor, where I had left my luggage, and back to this room to don a fresh suit.

I chose a small room on the second floor, guessing that James uses the master bedroom I found on the penultimate level. Furnishings are sparse on the upper stories as on the landing below. My room contains a cot and James’ room contains a bed only slightly larger. The room adjacent to mine and the two smaller rooms that complete the third floor are devoid of any sort of amenities. I have not visited the attic yet — the door providing access is locked — but I expect much the same. James may have stored his research up there, not wanting the help to investigate matters that may alarm them.

I will delay my investigation of the cellar — and possibly the attic — until tomorrow. I have brought some work with me and since it appears there is no immediate danger to James, I would like to catch up.

11 October 1899

It must be close to midnight (my pocket watch is still not working). My work has engrossed me for the past six hours or more and I am once more lethargic – although not nearly so much as this afternoon. If I have caught something, it must be waning. To bed again...

12 October 1899

A night of fitful sleep at best. I now know the cause of my queer feeling. Dreams – or rather the lack of them. As long as I can remember, my dreams have been perspicuous. Blessed — or cursed as some may wont — with an eidetic knowledge upon

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waking, they have provided the impetus for some of my greatest work. The surcease of late is a cause of some minor alarm. I will try sleep again. The dawn is still far off, and I may yet rest.

12 October 1899

'Tis morning again, although quite late – it must be close to noon. My perturbations having kept me awake, I must have slept through the rest of the night and most of the morning. Some bread and jam remain from yesterday – that should be enough to satisfy my diminished appetite – a symptom of my sickness I suppose.

I have come to the conclusion that my dreams have not ceased, merely changed. The images are lacunal now, with what appears to be a corona and maybe faint points of light in the great distance. Is this another side effect of my ailment – something more than the common cold?

James is still unaccounted for. Might he have gone to visit the house described by the constable; having arrived at the same conclusion as I? I must follow if he does not soon return; if for nothing else than to provision the pantry anew.

12 October 1899

After eating and respite, I explored the cellar. My mind is still reeling; my fear for James back ten-fold – fear for his mind and the very essence of his soul.

The twin panels under the staircase proved most difficult. I spent close to half an hour solving the puzzle and when finished my hair was a wet stringy mess drenched with sweat. Mental exertions can be more draining than the physical.

Seeing no oil lamps at hand, I made my way down the hall to the great room where I made off with the candle and then back to the cellar entrance.

The tenebrous expanse — spanning the entire width and

breadth of the house above — was vacuous, broken only by large stone columns that split the space in thirds providing support for the house. In the direct center, scrawled in the unctuous hardpan, was a pentagram enclosed in a circle. In the center of the pentagram stood an ossuary. I did not dare look inside. Upon the walls were hung inverted crosses forming a triumvirate in the East, West and South.

The Black Mass.

Just outside the circle was a short podium formed of black ash (nearly invisible in the gloom). Upon it lay mimeographs of the most accursed books known to mankind: the *Necronimicon*, *Cultes des Goules*, and the *Book of Eidon*. I had sent these to James late last year after he enquired about them in connection with his research – a fact I now deeply regret.

Level with the apophyge of the lectern was a large cistern full of a dark viscous liquid – a small channel in the dirt was routed under the base and led straight to the ossuary. A blood ritual was in the offing – a sacrifice of life to bring forth death.

Setting the light upon the podium revealed an inchoate duplicate of the pattern I had seen on the throw covering the floor above my head. This began from each point of the pentagram and spread outwards as far as the light would reach – seemingly the whole expanse. Line upon line, angle upon angle all building on one another until there was no individual, but a whole.

James has crossed the threshold of reality and deals with forces that he knows not how to control. There is nothing for it, I must violate his trust and break the lock on the door in his room that leads to the attic. If that is indeed his private study, it may provide some answers as to his whereabouts. The ritual is not yet complete, and he must be close at hand – perhaps gone back to the Bothwell coven for some missing element.

13 October 1899

I am back in my room cowering on my cot. So much has happened and has yet to happen...

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I spent yesterday afternoon, most of last night — breaking only for a few hours of rest — and all of this morning breaking the bolt leading to the greatest level of the house. A small window looks South and filters light onto the hardwood floor. In one corner of the room I found my fear fully realized — original copies of those execrable volumes, seemingly unexpurgated; if my abecedarian understanding of ancient script did not falter.

Wrapped in leather, almost hidden under the other volumes, was the book James originally spoke of in his letters. There was good reason for the wrap, for when my hands moved aside the cloak and fell upon the cover the room grew dim, and the sky outside became dark as a moonless night. The only light came from the unnamed book as the cover was laid aside and the writings faded into a vortex of pictograms; slowly rising above the now blank pages, hovering in mid-air as it became quiescent. I could read the writing! The letters had translated themselves!

My eyes burned as I tried to turn away from the mercurial script, but I could not! I heard a voice echo from the walls in sibilant tones as the pernicious incantations spewed forth from my lips! I felt powerless to stop; as though I were a third party to my own conscious thought — a spectator in my own mind.

Dweller come!

I call to thee through the Void.

Through the great Black Eye.

Come!

When the Black Eye appears in the night sky.

Come!

Flesh and spirit await.

(I will not, cannot, repeat the rest here, lest further harm befall all.)

The book radiated with a life of its own as the words formed and fell from my mouth. Its flesh crawled and slithered over mine until my hands became one with the evil text. Pages turned as by an invisible hand, faster and faster as each created a new

vortex and re-formed in mid-air before my eyes. Shadows crept from the wall, ungodly beasts dancing around me as they played invisible instruments. From far away, almost imperceptible, a tune began to form. The tempo rose and fell, swelling with syncopated rhythms as the beasts kept step; my chanting forcing them to new heights of pleasure and pain.

Knowledge. Such knowledge – of the heavens – of time and space themselves. Knowledge of the most ecstatic pleasures and depths of pain beyond all human experience. All of it passed through my mind – images of the past, horrors from the future where great clouds of thunder and fire rose from the Earth expunging all life in an instant. Knowledge of the book that was now a part of me as it had been a part of James – knowledge of the entities that controlled the magic (science?) imbued within. They showed me all.

The spell passed, just as quickly as it had come over me. All had returned: the Sun was outside the window, and the book was closed and quiescent in my hands. I sat dazed for a few seconds as my mind regained control of my senses. Finally, I threw the baleful thing from my grasp and ran from the room as quickly as possible leaving the door open behind me. I vomited on the carpet with the last image from my ordeal ingrained in my mind forever: James — on the floorboards of the attic — writhing in agony as his skin was peeled and rended from his muscles to form and add to the hide covering the book. They revealed all.

James provided life and soul to the Unnamed and I have released it upon the world. What have we done?

14 October 1899

Dreams. Dreams of ill portent and fell doings. My dreams. I cannot, nay, must not sleep. Dreams are the vessel for Their thoughts. Thoughts of conquest, thoughts of flesh, thoughts of evil. I hear Them. I see Them. See through the Black Eye to the world within. They call to me from the Void. Send Their

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thoughts to inveigle me.

I must resist. I must get out!

15 October 1899

There is no escape. Doors, windows, fists upon walls – nothing provides an egress. I am trapped and They prepare for the hunt. Prepare for a feast upon body and mind – upon my soul.

17 October 1899

I hear Them in the walls. The shadows themselves speak. They think I can't hear, but I can! I hear Them whisper. Be quiet! We must listen. There may be hope yet if Their plans are revealed.

I know what They want: life, the Earth, the Sun, the stars – the very Universe. For eons They have waited. Waited for the stars to align so They may unleash Their wrath on the Elders and mankind. The time is near. They will not be denied.

The book may provide the answer, it brought Them here and surely it can send Them back? Back to the black hell from whence they came. The witching hour approaches – I must try.

18 October 1899

The accursed thing no longer reveals its secrets. Why! It holds back – the writings no longer change. I cannot read the incantations! Damn! Damned. We are all damned to the Void.

The shadows are laughing.
So tired...

The Black Eye sees all.

The Black Eye knows all.

October 1899

I no longer know what day it is. October has not yet passed, but the end is near. The voices in the shadows increase in numbers and volume; speaking of fell deeds past, present and future.

I know They are there. Waiting...waiting for me. They have James and now They come for me. But, I will not go! I will foil Their plans and destroy myself and Them in the process. The candle in the downstairs room. I will use it to put an end to this house and the evil residing within. Shhh! They can't yet know of my plans – we must keep them secret. Shhh.

Blackness awaits this accursed house and me with it. I am consigned to my fate in the voids of space, time and the minds of the creatures that inhabit such. But, I will spare others the knowledge of such places and things and in so doing spare their sanity and very existence. Yes, I will spare them all. I will be a savior of mankind.

Soon, yes, very soon.

Gaia and Helios together as one. The Black Eye forms.

I feel Them approaching and the fuel is wicked from my chosen weapon. It must be soon.

Savior.

The Beginning and The End

They are here! The time is at hand – the Black Eye hangs on high. We must move quickly and silently to my weapon of light and seize the chance to rid the world of an eternal evil. Starting with the sigil of the monster itself, that accursed rug. A gateway it is, a gateway to the dominions of hell – their familiars following the dimensional intersections of space to do their bidding.

The shadows flow and slide unctuously over one another. Shapes form and devolve...

Music. Sweet music.

Down the stairs – quickly!

No, no! It cannot be! The light is extinguished – absolute darkness. I have waited too long! They are upon me; the shad-

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ows creep from the walls encircling me. Their forms cajole and contort – faces contorted in ecstasy, and pain.

Death and insanity.

Eldritch music fills my ears – sweet and foul at once. Demons approach. There is no escape, no escape from the Great Ones. We are doomed.

All are doomed.

Voices surround me, singing my name and that of Another. I hear Them.

A scream, to join the others. My scream.

My blood.

My soul.

The Nightrider. The Dweller. It is near – It comes for us all. Darkness awaits – the act is complete. My release — my savior — shall be the pen. . .

No escape from the Black Eye – the Void – the World Within.

October 25, 2009

The previous was taken from my Great Uncle's journal that was found in 1901 by the local constable (the same as mentioned in his journal?) not ten meters from where I stand. It was then forwarded to my Great Grandmother; her being the next of kin. His journal has fascinated me since I found it six months ago while sorting my mother's effects.

My Uncle was never heard from again after his leave from Miskatonic (I believe he took his own life), but I have confirmed the writing as his through a DNA sample of the small blood droplets still extant in the curled and yellowed pages. Coincidentally, it seems that Uncle was the only one who had heard from cousin James in the six months after his disappearance from the family home of Kentucky in early 1899.

Clearly my Uncle was quite insane – lucidity being the exception instead of the norm. Creatures inhabiting the very folds and dimensions of the spacetime fabric. How absurd! But, here I stand in front of the house my Uncle describes. Which according to the constable's note attached to his journal, was destroyed in 1901 after being condemned by the county and exorcised by the local pastor. There are no records of new construction in the past two-hundred years, and the State of Massachusetts (which now owns the land) has it listed as an empty lot. But, records can be lost or forged – for the right price.

Uncle's dreams hinted at a black hole – a void surrounded by a corona; a Black Eye. Could it be the creatures he describes are from a black hole (assuming such creatures are veritable)?

The laws of spacetime break down within a black hole; time stops and matter is continually compressed into a singularity. How then could any creature survive in such a milieu? And if they could survive (as pure energy contained within?) how would they escape the confines of the immense gravity associated with a black hole – from which not even light can escape? Could their thoughts escape such a prison? (Thought being en-

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ergy would imply the negative, thought as a higher form that surpasses man's understanding of energy and matter – a possibility?) Then, if we hold the view that thought defines an entity, have they not then fled their confines?

Forgive my tangent of philosophical conjecture – as I said, I am enthralled with Uncle's journal.

I am leaving this holographic data cube containing my Uncle's journal and my postscript on the outskirts of the lot before I enter the house. I feel as if I know it already and new horizons await me.

Jacob Bonne