H. P. LOVECRAFT

PICKMAN'S MODEL




AS YOU KNOW, THE CLUB WOULDN'T EXHIBIT IT, AND THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS WOULDN'T ACCEPT IT AS A GIFT...
BOSTON NEVER HAD A GREATER PAINTER THAN RICHARD UPTON PICKMAN.
...IN A WAY HE DIDN'T LIKE; IN A WAY THAT WASN'T HUMAN.
ON THE CONTRARY, MY ADMIRATION FOR HIM KEPT GROWING...


I GOT INTO THE HABIT OF CALLING ON PICKMAN QUITE OFTEN, ESPECIALLY AFTER I BEGAN MAKING NOTES FOR A MONOGRAPH ON WEIRD ART.
...THERE ARE THINGS THAT WON'T DO FOR NEWBURY STREET... I'VE GOT ANOTHER STUDIO UP THERE...
STRONGER THAN THE WORK YOU'VE SHOWN ME?


BACK BAY ISN'T BOSTON—IT ISN'T ANYTHING YET...
...YOU KNOW PICKMAN COMES OF OLD SALEM STOCK, AND HAD A WITCH ANCESTOR HANGED IN 1692.
...THE WHOLE NORTH END ONCE HAD A SET OF TUNNELS THAT KEPT CERTAIN PEOPLE IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER'S HOUSES, AND THE BURYING GROUND, AND THE SEA...


...AT ABOUT TWELVE O'CLOCK HAD CLIMBED DOWN THE STEPS AT BATTERY STREET AND STRUCK ALONG THE OLD WATERFRONT PAST CONSTITUTION WHARF.

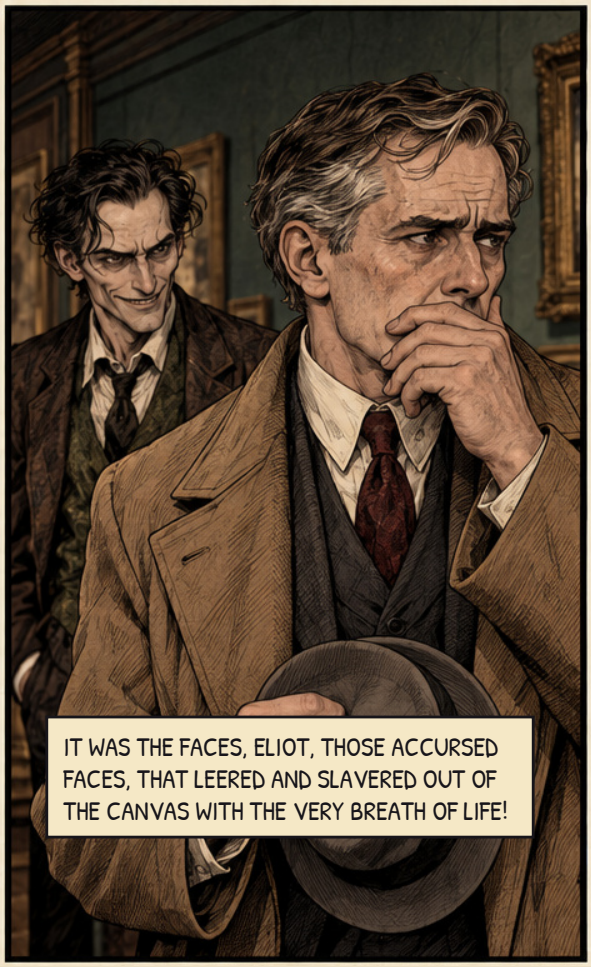

...WE TURNED TO THE LEFT INTO AN EQUALLY SILENT AND STILL NARROWER ALLEY WITH NO LIGHT AT ALL...


I'M NOT SURE THAT I COULD FIND IT AGAIN MYSELF—NOT THAT I'D EVER TRY, EVEN IN BROAD DAYLIGHT!

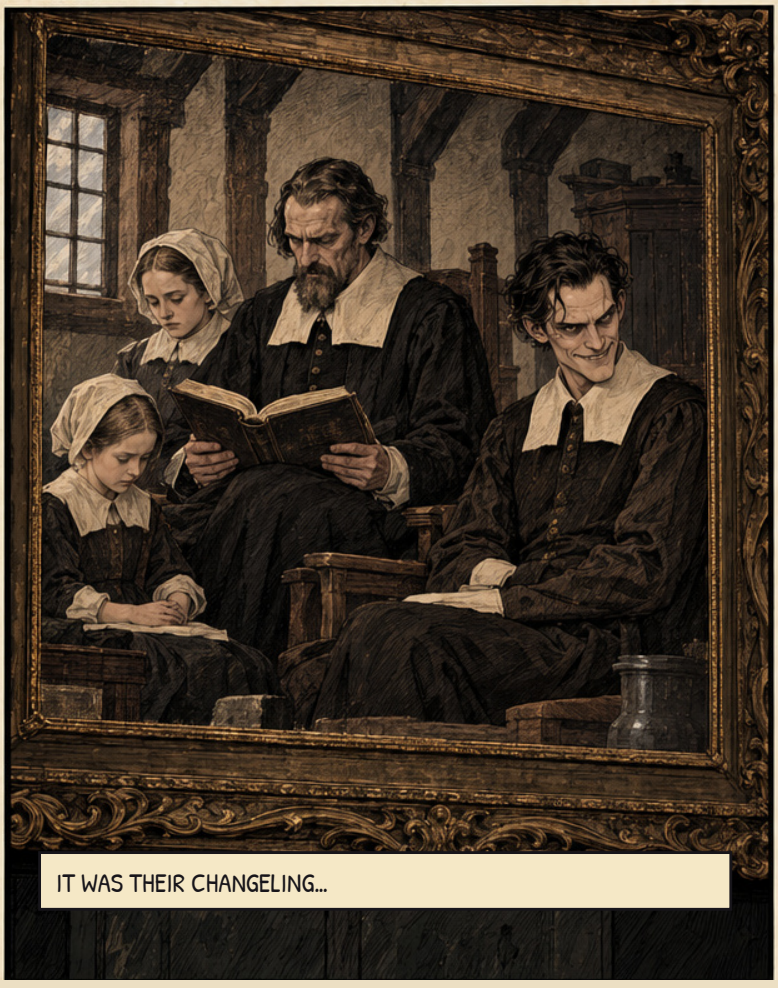

...WHAT WAS ONCE SPLENDID DARK-OAK PANELLING...
MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME, THURBER. I'VE LET MYSELF GO A LITTLE HERE.
THEY WERE HIS PICTURES, YOU KNOW—THE ONES HE COULDN'T PAINT OR EVEN SHOW IN NEWBURY STREET...


THESE FIGURES WERE SELDOM COMPLETELY HUMAN, BUT OFTEN APPROACHED HUMANITY IN VARYING DEGREE.


ONE CANVAS SHOWED A RING OF THEM BAYING ABOUT A HANGED WITCH ON GALLOWS HILL, WHOSE DEAD FACE HELD A CLOSE KINSHIP TO THEIRS.


IT WAS THE FACES, ELIOT, THOSE ACCURSED FACES, THAT LEERED AND SLAVERED OUT OF THE CANVAS WITH THE VERY BREATH OF LIFE!


THERE WAS ONE THING CALLED 'THE LESSON'... TEACHING A SMALL CHILD HOW TO FEED LIKE THEMSELVES?


IT WAS THEIR CHANGELING...


...PICKMAN HAD GIVEN THE FEATURES A VERY PERCEPTIBLE RESEMBLANCE TO HIS OWN.


WOULD YOU CARE TO SEE THE MODERN STUDIES?
...'SUBWAY ACCIDENT,' IN WHICH A FLOCK OF THE VILE THINGS WERE CLAMBERING UP...
...MONSTERS CREEPING IN THROUGH HOLES AND RIFTS IN THE MASONRY... AND WAITED FOR THEIR FIRST VICTIM TO DESCEND THE STAIRS.
THE TITLE OF THE PICTURE WAS, 'HOLMES, LOWELL AND LONGFELLOW LIE BURIED IN MOUNT AUBURN.'


...A VAST CROSS-SECTION OF BEACON HILL, WITH ANT-LIKE ARMIES OF THE MEPHITIC MONSTERS SQUEEZING THEMSELVES THROUGH BURROWS...
PICKMAN WAS IN EVERY SENSE—IN CONCEPTION AND IN EXECUTION—A THOROUGH, PAINSTAKING, AND ALMOST SCIENTIFIC REALIST.
MY WORKING STUDIO IS DOWNSTAIRS.


...REVEALING THE CIRCULAR BRICK CURB OF WHAT WAS EVIDENTLY A GREAT WELL IN THE EARTHEN FLOOR.
ONE ENTRANCE TO THE OLD NETWORK. SOLID WORK, ISN'T IT?
I NOTICED IDLY THAT IT DID NOT SEEM TO BE BRICKED UP, AND THAT A HEAVY DISC OF WOOD FORMED THE APPARENT COVER.


AN ACETYLENE GAS OUTFIT GAVE THE LIGHT NECESSARY FOR WORK.
SCENES WERE BLOCKED OUT WITH EXTREME CARE...
PHOTOGRAPHS SAVE CARRYING MY EQUIPMENT THROUGH TOWN. I USE THEM REGULARLY.
...WHEN PICKMAN SUDDENLY UNVEILED A HUGE CANVAS ON THE SIDE AWAY FROM THE LIGHT I COULD NOT FOR MY LIFE KEEP BACK A LOUD SCREAM...


...AS ONE LOOKED ONE FELT THAT AT ANY MOMENT IT MIGHT DROP ITS PRESENT PREY AND SEEK A JUICIER MORSEL.
I SCREAMED. PICKMAN LISTENED TO THE ECHOES.


PINNED WITH A THUMB-TACK TO A VACANT PART OF THE CANVAS WAS A PIECE OF PAPER NOW BADLY CURLED UP...
...SUDDENLY I SAW PICKMAN START AS IF SHOT.
HE DREW A REVOLVER...
...AND MOTIONED ME TO SILENCE...


...A FAINT SCURRYING SOUND SOMEWHERE... THEN THERE CAME... A FURTIVE, GROPING KIND OF CLATTER...


I THINK I WAS PARALYSED FOR AN INSTANT.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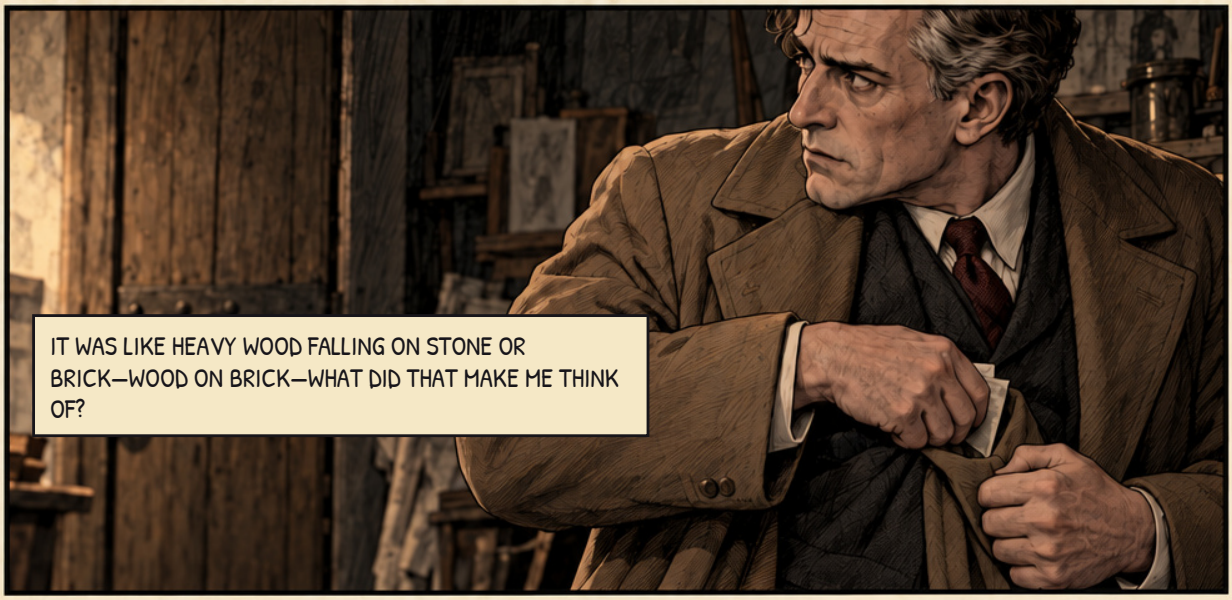
IT WAS LIKE HEAVY WOOD FALLING ON STONE OR BRICK—WOOD ON BRICK—WHAT DID THAT MAKE ME THINK OF?


AFTER THAT FOLLOWED A SHARP GRATING NOISE, A SHOUTED GIBBERISH FROM PICKMAN...
BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!


A MUFFLED SQUEAL OR SQUAWK, AND A THUD. THEN MORE WOOD AND BRICK GRATING, A PAUSE, AND THE OPENING OF THE DOOR...


THE DEUCE KNOWS WHAT THEY EAT, THURBER... YOUR YELLING STIRRED THEM UP, I FANCY.


CHARTER STREET, IT TURNED OUT TO BE...


WE WERE TOO LATE FOR THE ELEVATED, AND WALKED BACK DOWNTOWN THROUGH HANOVER STREET.


...PICKMAN LEFT ME AT THE CORNER OF JOY, WHERE I TURNED OFF. I NEVER SPOKE TO HIM AGAIN.


NO—IT WASN'T THE PAINTINGS I SAW IN THAT PLACE… IT WAS—SOMETHING I FOUND IN MY COAT THE NEXT MORNING.
THE PAPER HAD COME AWAY IN MY HAND.
…IT SEEMS I HAD VACANTLY CRUMPLED IT INTO MY POCKET.
WE'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THE OTHER STUFF, BUT I FOR ONE NEED SOMETHING.


ELIOT—OLD REID WAS RIGHT. HE WASN'T STRICTLY HUMAN.
DON'T ASK ME TO EXPLAIN OR EVEN CONJECTURE ABOUT WHAT I BURNED.
...HOW WE ALL WONDERED WHERE HE GOT THOSE FACES.


...THAT PAPER WASN'T A PHOTOGRAPH OF ANY BACKGROUND, AFTER ALL.
IT WAS THE MODEL HE WAS USING—AND ITS BACKGROUND WAS MERELY THE WALL OF THE CELLAR STUDIO IN MINUTE DETAIL.
BUT BY GOD, ELIOT, IT WAS A PHOTOGRAPH FROM LIFE!