THE CALL OF CTHULHU

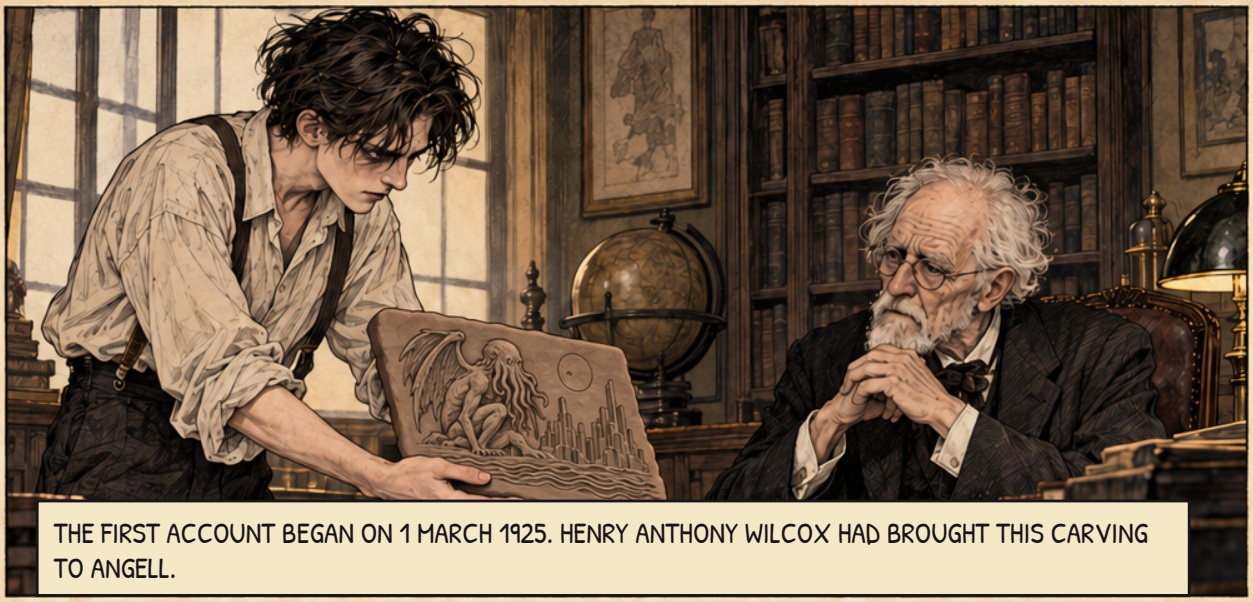



MY GRAND-UNCLE, PROFESSOR GEORGE GAMMELL ANGELL, DIED AT NINETY-TWO.
HE FELL ON A STEEP STREET AFTER A SAILOR JOSTLED HIM. THE DOCTORS BLAMED HIS HEART.
AS HIS HEIR AND EXECUTOR, I BROUGHT HIS PAPERS TO BOSTON.


THE KEY WAS ON THE RING HE HAD ALWAYS CARRIED.

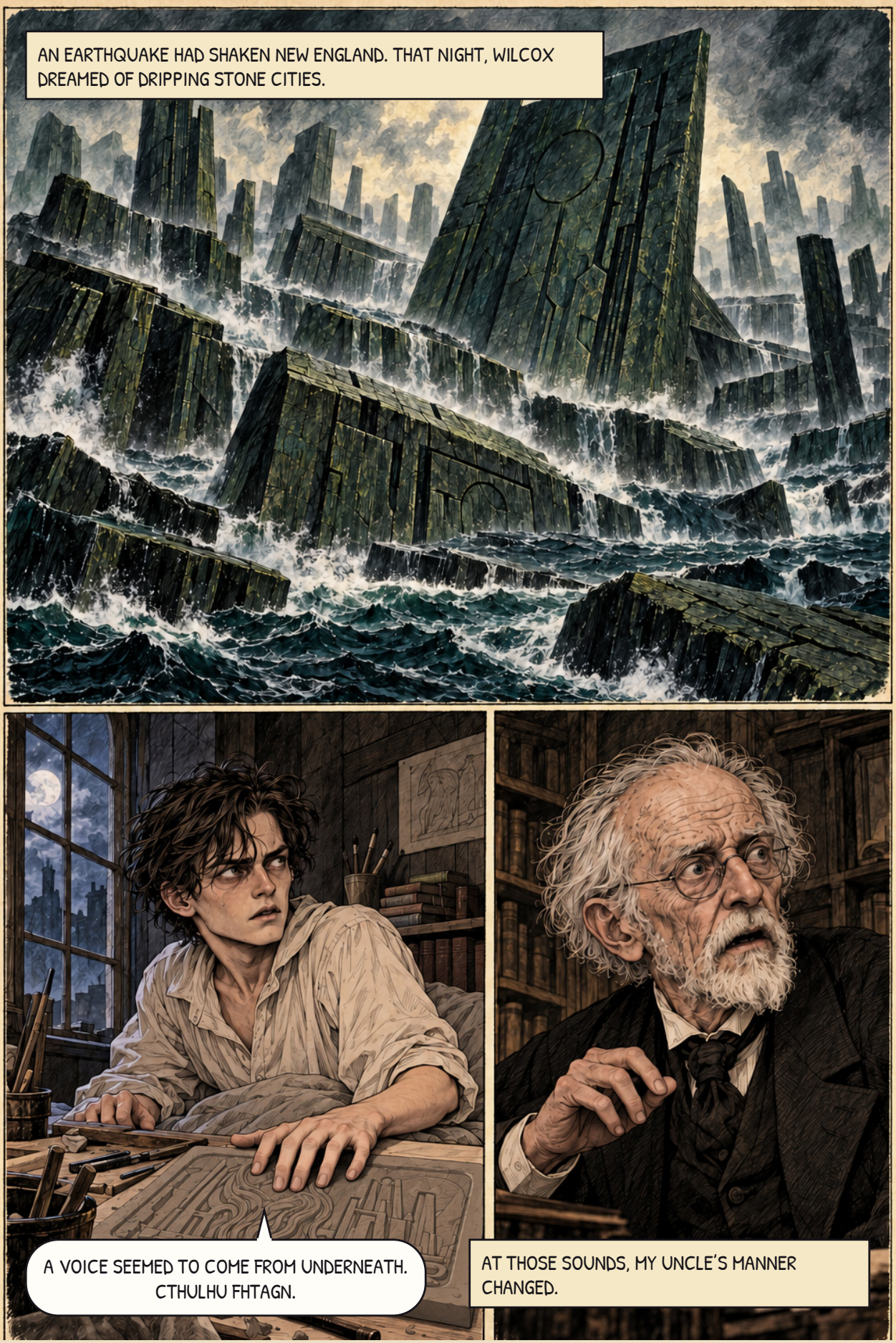

INSIDE: CLIPPINGS, NOTES—AND A LITTLE CLAY BAS-RELIEF.


THE CLAY WAS MODERN. NOTHING IN ITS DESIGN FELT MODERN.


THE FIRST ACCOUNT BEGAN ON 1 MARCH 1925. HENRY ANTHONY WILCOX HAD BROUGHT THIS CARVING TO ANGELL.


THIS CLAY IS STILL WET. WHAT CAN ARCHAEOLOGY TELL YOU ABOUT IT?


I MADE IT LAST NIGHT. BUT THE CITY IN MY DREAM WAS OLD BEYOND IMAGINING.

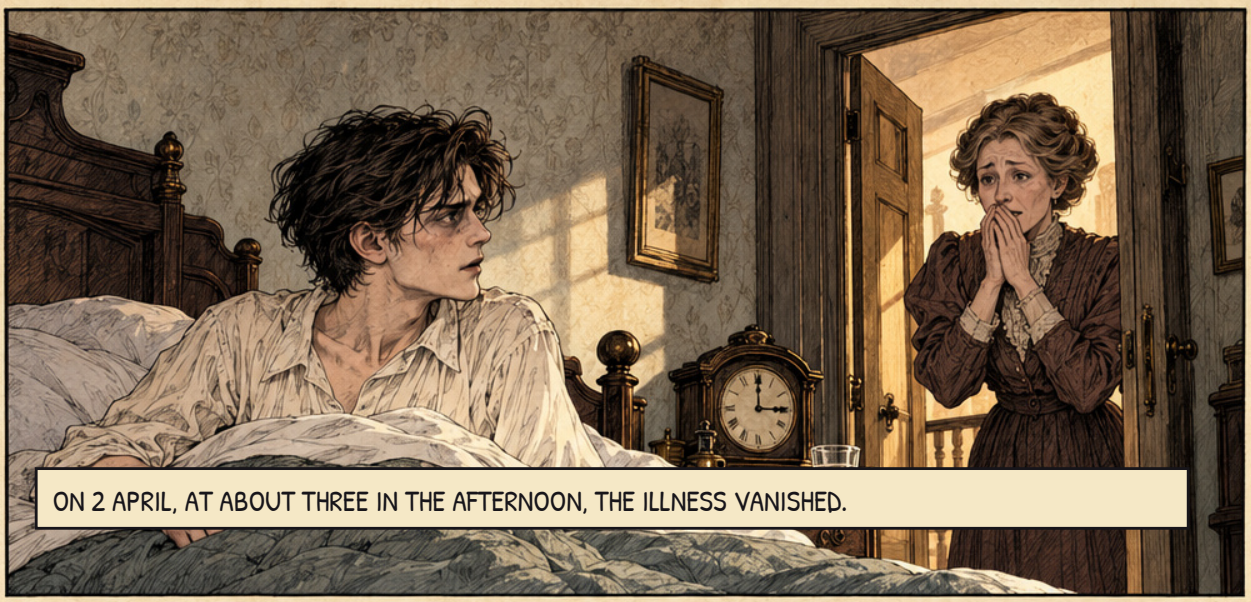

AN EARTHQUAKE HAD SHAKEN NEW ENGLAND. THAT NIGHT, WILCOX DREAMED OF DRIPPING STONE CITIES.
A VOICE SEEMED TO COME FROM UNDERNEATH. CTHULHU FHTAGN.
AT THOSE SOUNDS, MY UNCLE'S MANNER CHANGED.

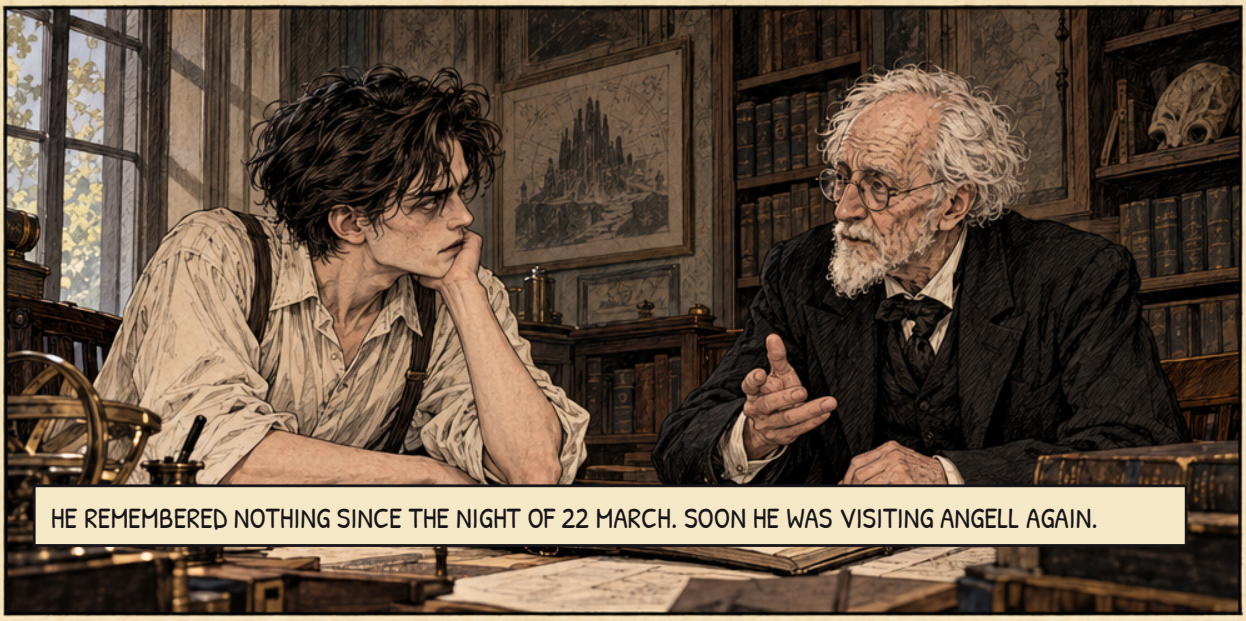

HAVE YOU BELONGED TO A SECRET SOCIETY? HAS ANYONE TAUGHT YOU THESE WORDS?


NO. I KNOW NOTHING OF ANY SOCIETY.


CONVINCED OF HIS IGNORANCE, ANGELL ASKED HIM TO REPORT EVERY DREAM. ALWAYS: THE CITY, THE VOICE. CTHULHU. R'LYEH.


ON 23 MARCH, WILCOX STOPPED COMING. HE HAD BEEN TAKEN HOME IN A STRANGE FEVER.
NOW HE RAVED OF SOMETHING IMMENSE MOVING THROUGH THE CITY.
HIS TEMPERATURE IS SCARCELY RAISED. YET HE FALLS UNCONSCIOUS WHENEVER HE SPEAKS OF IT.


ON 2 APRIL, AT ABOUT THREE IN THE AFTERNOON, THE ILLNESS VANISHED.


HE REMEMBERED NOTHING SINCE THE NIGHT OF 22 MARCH. SOON HE WAS VISITING ANGELL AGAIN.

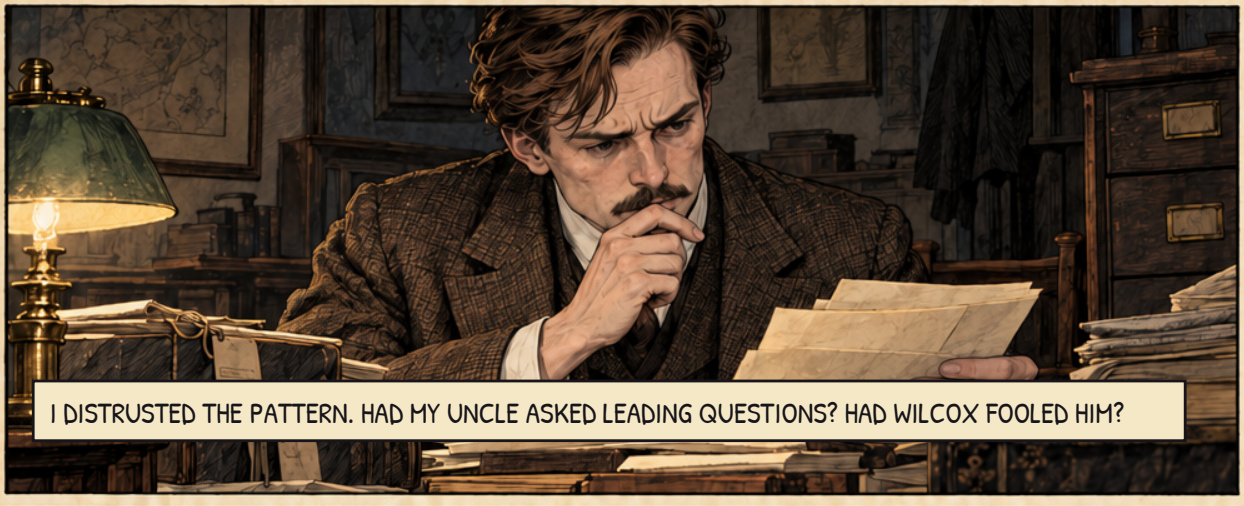

HIS DREAMS BECAME ORDINARY. A WEEK LATER, ANGELL STOPPED RECORDING THEM.


ANGELL HAD ASKED FRIENDS AND CORRESPONDENTS TO RECORD THEIR DREAMS AND DATES.


MOST PEOPLE REPORTED LITTLE. ARTISTS AND POETS REPEATEDLY DESCRIBED THE SAME CITY.


THE TERROR PEAKED DURING WILCOX'S FEVER. ONE ARCHITECT NEVER RECOVERED.


THE CUTTINGS CAME FROM ACROSS THE WORLD: PANIC, STRANGE VISIONS, UNREST. THE DATES KEPT RETURNING.


I DISTRUSTED THE PATTERN. HAD MY UNCLE ASKED LEADING QUESTIONS? HAD WILCOX FOOLED HIM?

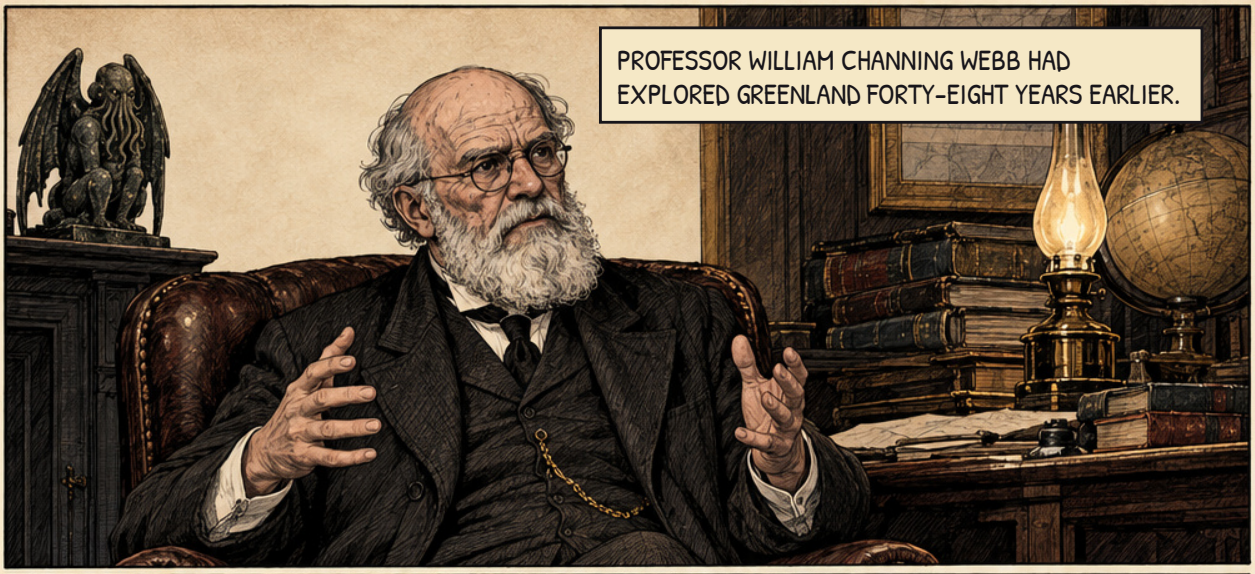

TO UNDERSTAND HIS INTEREST, I HAD TO READ AN OLDER ACCOUNT.


ST. LOUIS, 1908. INSPECTOR JOHN RAYMOND LEGRASSE HAD COME FROM NEW ORLEANS.


WE SEIZED THIS IN A SWAMP RAID. I NEED TO KNOW WHAT IT IS.

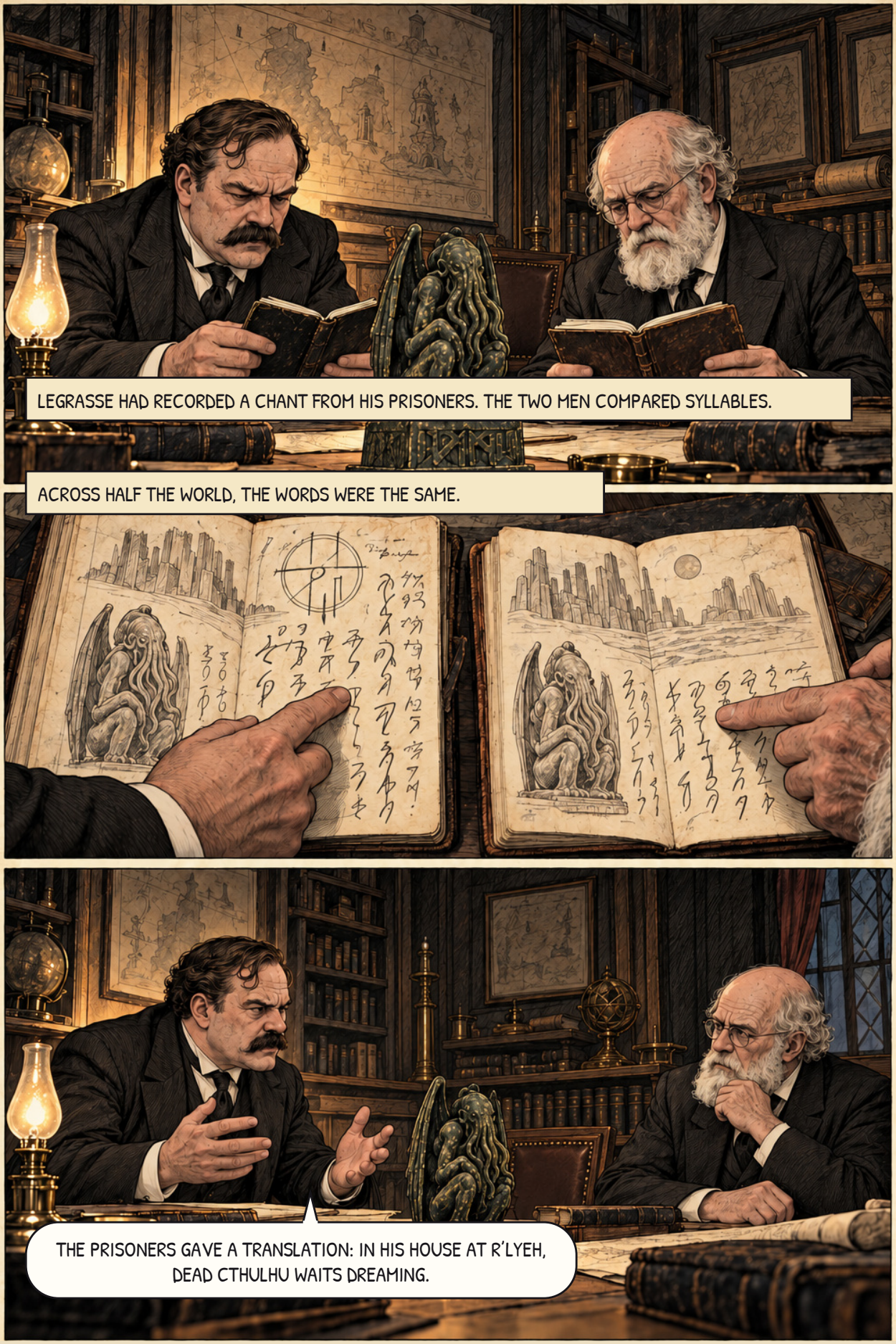

THE ASSEMBLED EXPERTS COULD IDENTIFY NEITHER ITS ART NOR ITS STONE.


THE FIGURE CROUCHED ON A BLOCK OF UNKNOWN WRITING: CLAWS, WINGS, AND A HEAD FRINGED WITH FEELERS.
EVEN THE MATERIAL RESISTED EXPLANATION.
I HAVE SEEN SOMETHING LIKE IT. FAR FROM LOUISIANA.


PROFESSOR WILLIAM CHANNING WEBB HAD EXPLORED GREENLAND FORTY-EIGHT YEARS EARLIER.

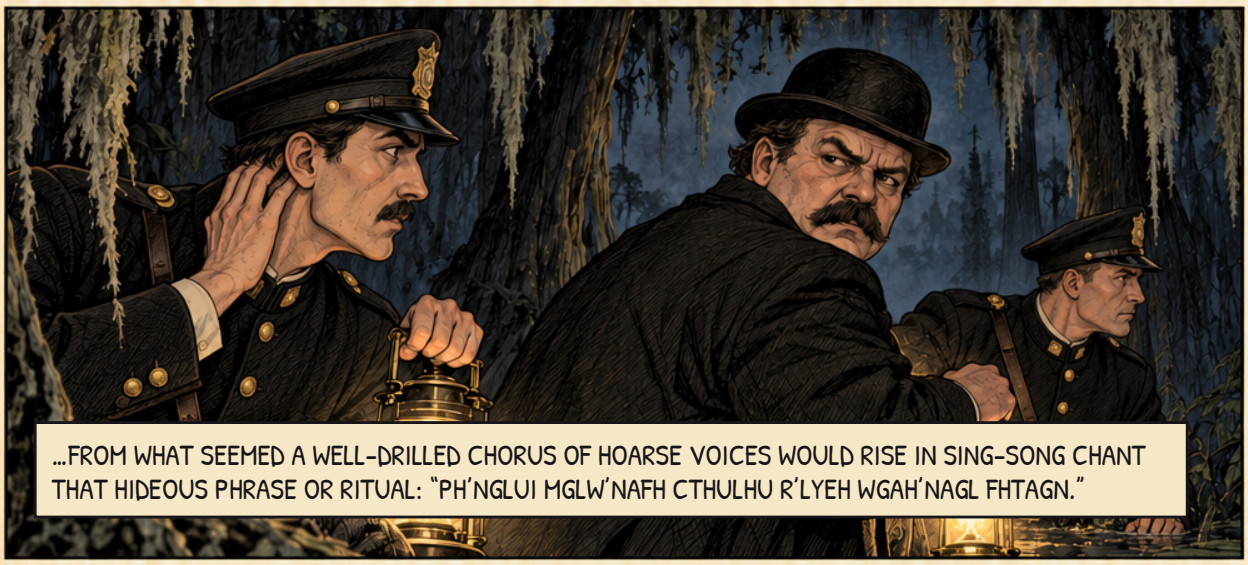

THERE HE ENCOUNTERED AN ISOLATED CULT UNKNOWN TO MOST LOCAL PEOPLE.


ITS STONE CARVING RESEMBLED THIS IMAGE. WEBB HAD WRITTEN DOWN THE SOUNDS OF ITS RITUAL.

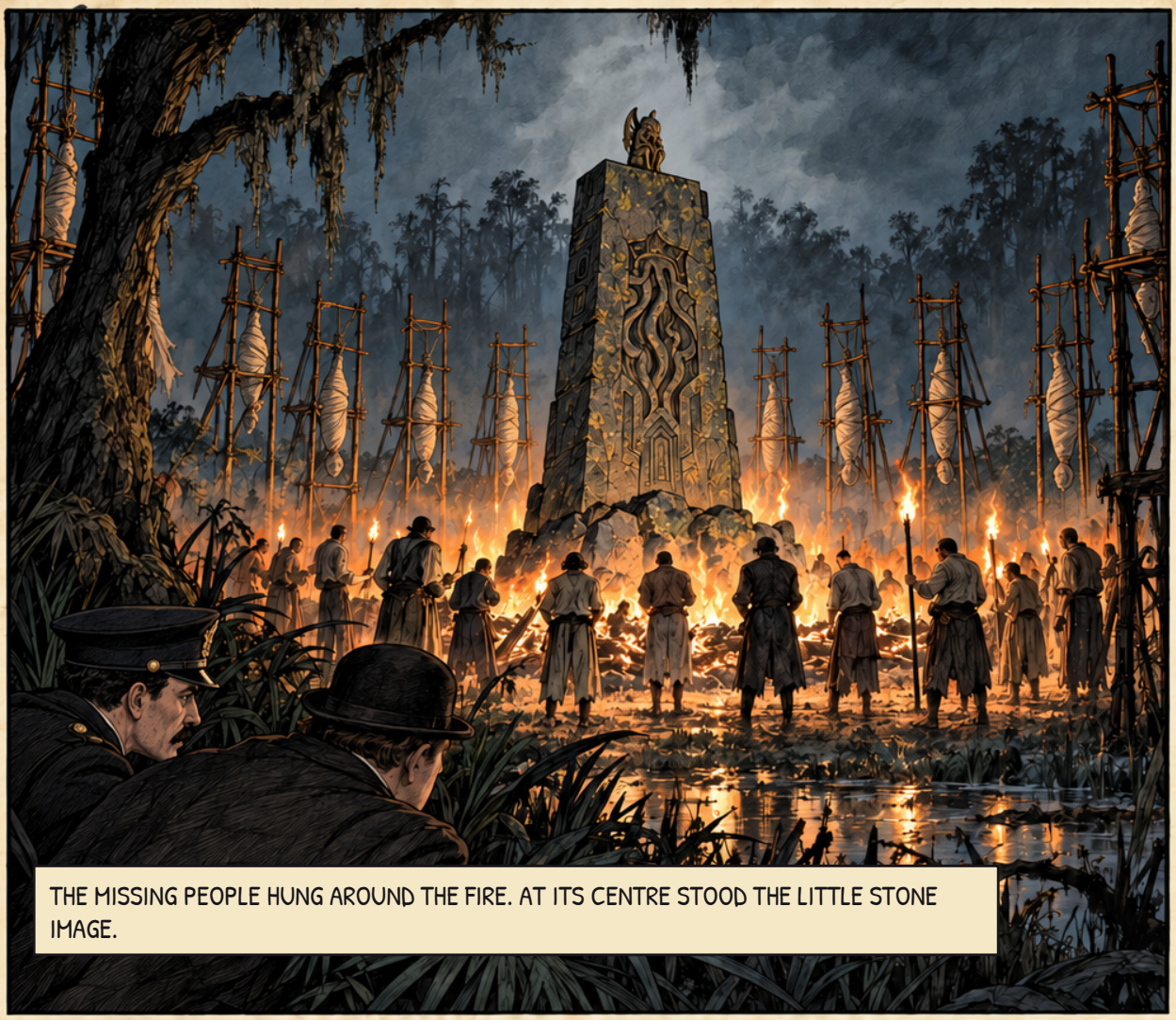

LEGRASSE HAD RECORDED A CHANT FROM HIS PRISONERS. THE TWO MEN COMPARED SYLLABLES.
ACROSS HALF THE WORLD, THE WORDS WERE THE SAME.
THE PRISONERS GAVE A TRANSLATION: IN HIS HOUSE AT R'LYEH, DEAD CTHULHU WAITS DREAMING.


LEGRASSE'S STORY BEGAN ON 1 NOVEMBER 1907, WITH A SUMMONS FROM THE SWAMPS SOUTH OF NEW ORLEANS.
PEOPLE HAVE DISAPPEARED. THERE ARE DRUMS IN THE WOODS—AND SCREAMS.
TWENTY POLICEMEN FOLLOWED THE GUIDE TO THE SETTLEMENT. NO ONE WOULD LEAD THEM FARTHER.

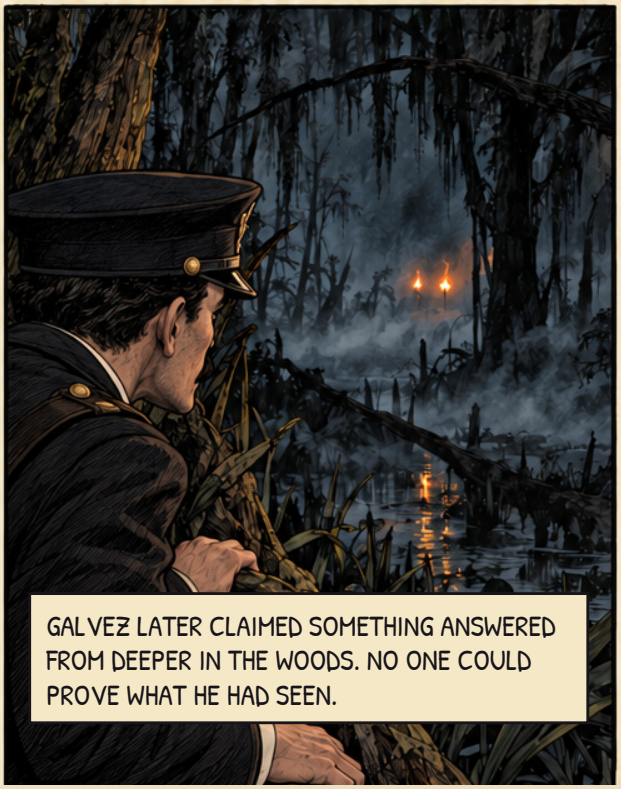

THE INHABITANTS FEARED THE COUNTRY BEYOND: A HIDDEN LAKE, OLD PRESENCES, THINGS THAT MADE PEOPLE DREAM.

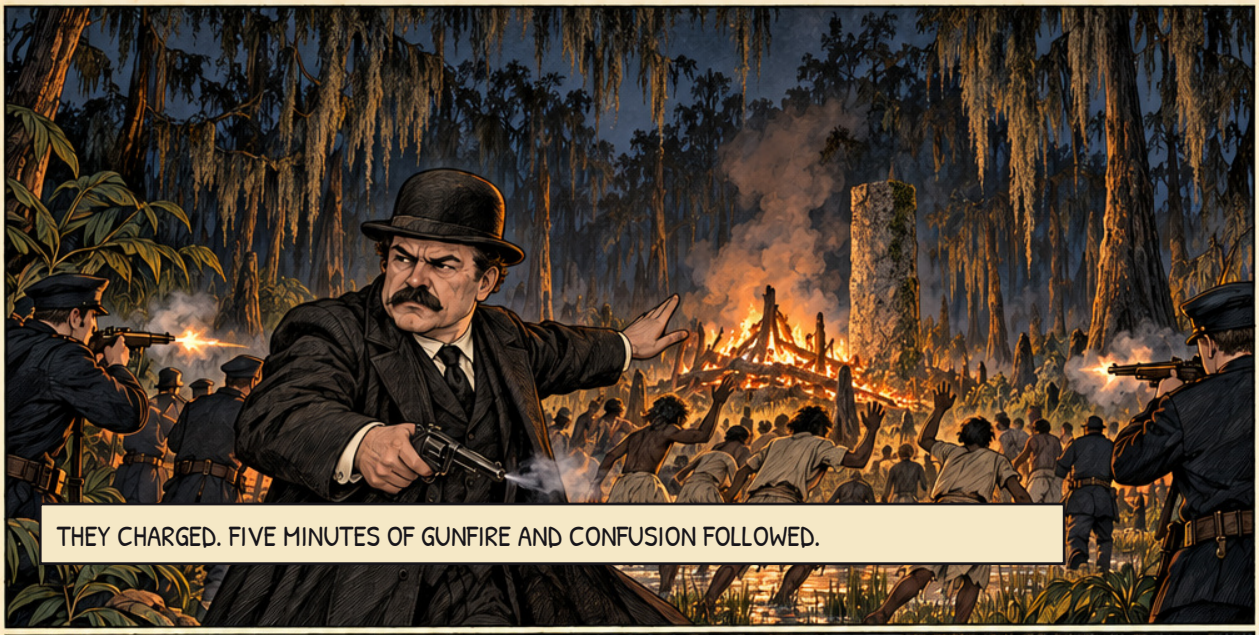

...FROM WHAT SEEMED A WELL-DRILLED CHORUS OF HOARSE VOICES WOULD RISE IN SING-SONG CHANT THAT HIDEOUS PHRASE OR RITUAL: "PH'NGLUI MGLW'NAFH CTHULHU R'LYEH WGAH'NAGL FHTAGN."


THEN THE TREES OPENED.


THE MISSING PEOPLE HUNG AROUND THE FIRE. AT ITS CENTRE STOOD THE LITTLE STONE IMAGE.


FOR A MOMENT THE POLICE COULD SCARCELY MOVE.


GALVEZ LATER CLAIMED SOMETHING ANSWERED FROM DEEPER IN THE WOODS. NO ONE COULD PROVE WHAT HE HAD SEEN.


THEY CHARGED. FIVE MINUTES OF GUNFIRE AND CONFUSION FOLLOWED.

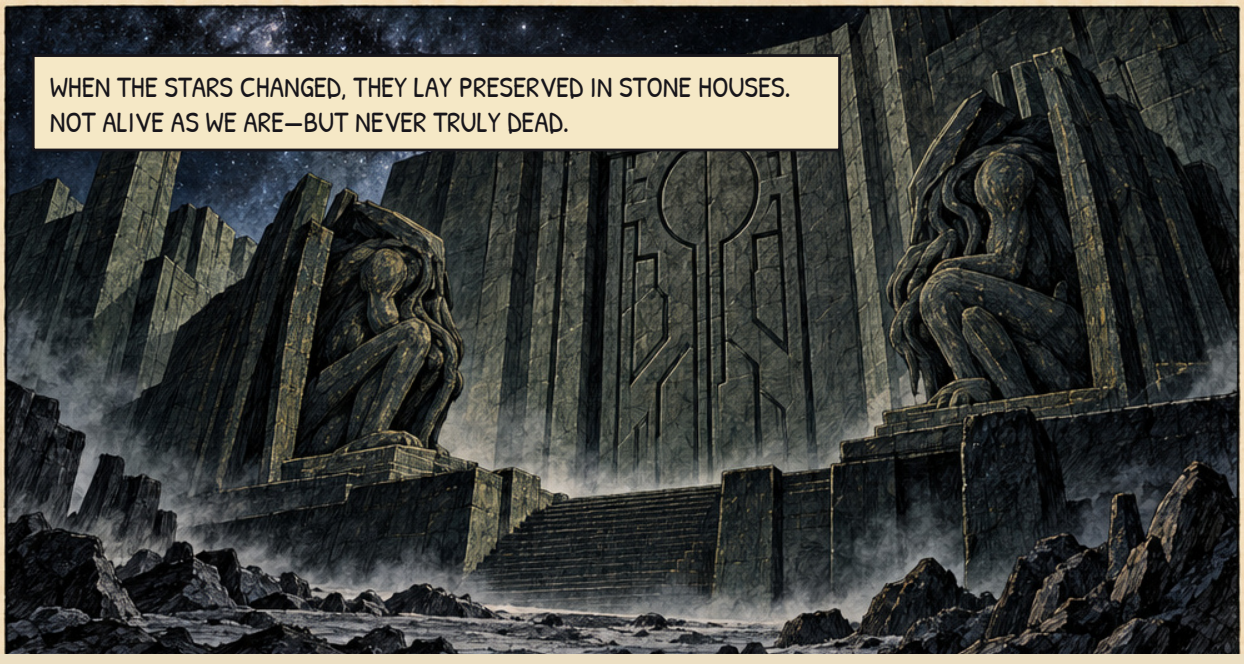

FORTY-SEVEN PRISONERS WERE TAKEN. FIVE WORSHIPPERS LAY DEAD; TWO WERE BADLY WOUNDED.


LEGRASSE CARRIED AWAY THE IMAGE.

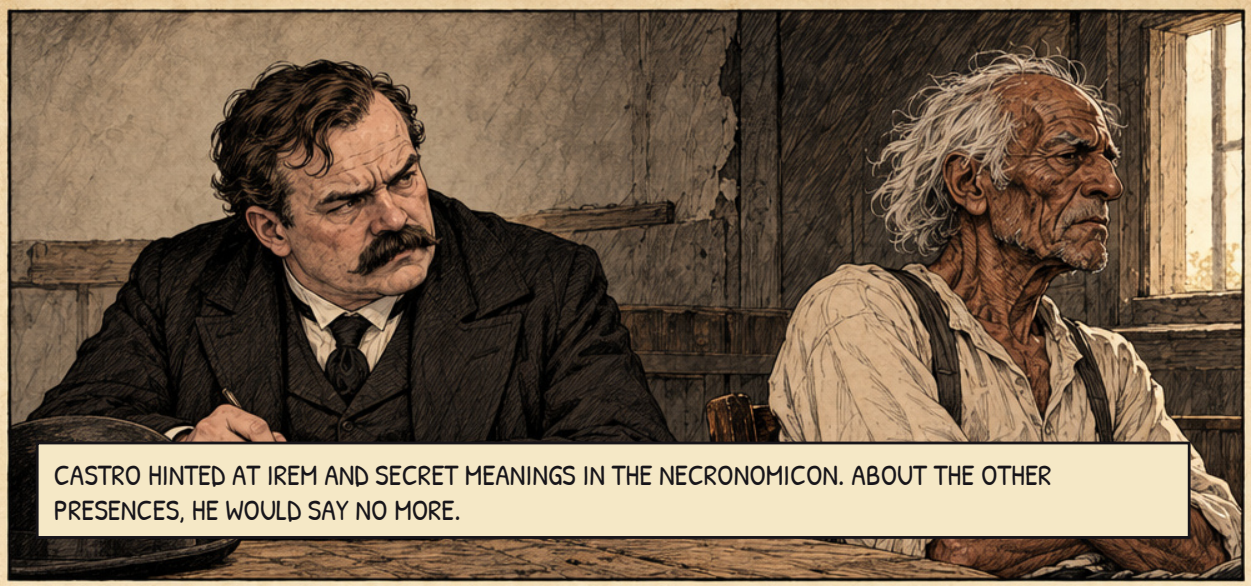

THE PRISONERS WERE MOSTLY SEAMEN. THEY DENIED THE KILLINGS, BLAMING VISITORS FROM THE DARK WOODS.
THEY SPOKE OF THE GREAT OLD ONES, WHO HAD COME BEFORE HUMANITY AND STILL SENT DREAMS FROM THEIR TOMBS.
AN OLD MAN NAMED CASTRO TOLD THE MOST. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE SPOKEN WITH UNDYING LEADERS ABROAD.


THEY HAD COME FROM THE STARS, AND HAD BROUGHT THEIR IMAGES WITH THEM.


HIS STORY MADE HUMANITY A BRIEF AFTERTHOUGHT. THOSE BEINGS COULD CROSS WORLDS WHEN THE STARS WERE RIGHT.


WHEN THE STARS CHANGED, THEY LAY PRESERVED IN STONE HOUSES. NOT ALIVE AS WE ARE—BUT NEVER TRULY DEAD.


THEIR THOUGHTS REACHED THE FIRST DREAMERS. A HIDDEN CULT KEPT THE MEMORY AND WAITED TO OPEN THE TOMBS.
THEN R'LYEH SANK. THE DEEP WATER CUT OFF THE CALL.
CASTRO SAID THE CITY WOULD RISE AGAIN. THE STARS WOULD RETURN. THE SLEEPERS WOULD NEED SOMEONE TO RELEASE THEM.


CASTRO HINTED AT IREM AND SECRET MEANINGS IN THE NECRONOMICON. ABOUT THE OTHER PRESENCES, HE WOULD SAY NO MORE.

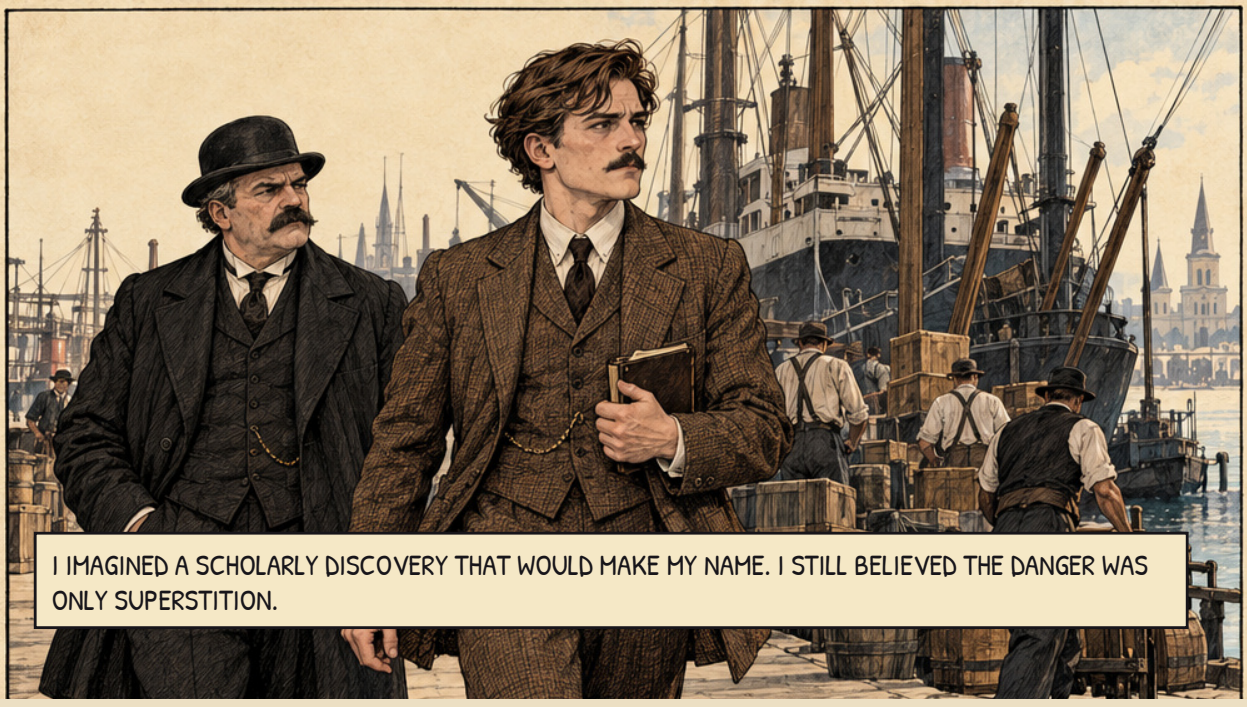

NEITHER TULANE NOR THE ST. LOUIS SCHOLARS FOUND AN EXPLANATION. TWO PRISONERS WERE LATER EXECUTED; THE OTHERS WERE CONFINED.


NOW I KNEW WHY WILCOX'S INNOCENT CARVING HAD SHAKEN MY UNCLE.


I WENT TO PROVIDENCE INTENDING TO EXPOSE A FRAUD.
THE GEOMETRY WAS WRONG. EVEN NOW, I CANNOT MAKE THE ANGLES I REMEMBER.
HE WAS SINCERE. I DECIDED HE MUST ONCE HAVE HEARD THE CULT'S STORY—AND FORGOTTEN IT.


IN NEW ORLEANS, LEGRASSE SHOWED ME THE IMAGE. THE SURVIVING WITNESSES CONFIRMED HIS ACCOUNT.


CASTRO WAS DEAD. THE CULT REMAINED ELUSIVE.


I IMAGINED A SCHOLARLY DISCOVERY THAT WOULD MAKE MY NAME. I STILL BELIEVED THE DANGER WAS ONLY SUPERSTITION.


YET MY UNCLE'S DEATH BEGAN TO TROUBLE ME.


A CHANCE COLLISION. A SAILOR. NO VISIBLE CAUSE. WAS IT ONLY HIS HEART?


I HAD NO PROOF. THE THOUGHT WOULD NOT LEAVE ME.


THEN CHANCE FOUND THE MISSING LINK. IN A FRIEND'S MUSEUM, AN OLD NEWSPAPER LAY BENEATH A TRAY OF STONES.


IT WAS THE SYDNEY BULLETIN OF 18 APRIL 1925. THE PICTURED IDOL WAS ALMOST LEGRASSE'S TWIN.


MY UNCLE'S CUTTING SERVICE HAD MISSED IT.


THE FREIGHTER VIGILANT HAD FOUND AN ARMED YACHT ADRIFT: ONE LIVING MAN, ONE DEAD.

THE SURVIVOR WAS GUSTAF JOHANSEN, FORMERLY SECOND MATE OF THE SCHOONER EMMA. HE HELD A STONE IDOL.


HE REPORTED A BATTLE, AN UNCHARTED ISLAND, AND SIX DEATHS ASHORE. ABOUT THE ISLAND, HE WOULD SAY ALMOST NOTHING.


1 MARCH: STORM AND EARTHQUAKE AT SEA. ACROSS THE DATE LINE, 28 FEBRUARY: WILCOX'S FIRST DREAM.


23 MARCH: THE LANDING, THE DEATHS, THE FEVER. 2 APRIL: ANOTHER STORM—AND THE DREAMS STOPPED.


I SENT CABLES, PACKED, AND TOOK THE TRAIN WEST. COINCIDENCE NO LONGER EXPLAINED ENOUGH.


IN DUNEDIN, I FOUND RUMOURS OF THE ALERT'S OWNERS: MEETINGS, NIGHT JOURNEYS, DISTANT DRUMS.
JOHANSEN SOLD THE COTTAGE. HE AND HIS WIFE WENT HOME TO OSLO. HIS HAIR HAD TURNED WHITE.
IN AUCKLAND, I LEARNED THAT THE MAN I NEEDED HAD CROSSED THE WORLD AHEAD OF ME.


THE INQUIRY IN SYDNEY HAD SETTLED LITTLE. THE ALERT WAS ALREADY BACK IN COMMERCIAL USE.


THE MUSEUM KEPT ITS IDOL. ITS STONE WAS AS INEXPLICABLE AS LEGRASSE'S.


THEY HAD COME FROM THE STARS, AND HAD BROUGHT THEIR IMAGES WITH THEM.


I SAILED FOR LONDON, THEN NORWAY. AT LAST I REACHED JOHANSEN'S HOUSE.
MY HUSBAND IS DEAD.
HE NEVER TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED. ONLY THAT THESE PAPERS CONCERNED TECHNICAL MATTERS.


PAPERS HAD FALLEN FROM AN ATTIC WINDOW AND STRUCK HIM. TWO SAILORS HELPED HIM UP. HE DIED BEFORE HELP ARRIVED.


AGAIN, NO CLEAR CAUSE. SHE LET ME TAKE THE MANUSCRIPT. HE HAD WRITTEN IN ENGLISH TO SPARE HER ITS CONTENTS.


I READ IT ON THE LONDON BOAT. SOON I COULD NOT BEAR THE SOUND OF WATER AGAINST THE HULL.


JOHANSEN'S ACCOUNT. THE EMMA HAD WEATHERED THE MARCH STORM. ON THE TWENTY-SECOND, THE ALERT ORDERED HER BACK.
CAPTAIN COLLINS REFUSED. THE YACHT OPENED FIRE.
THE EMMA'S MEN BOARDED THEIR ATTACKER. COLLINS, FIRST MATE GREEN, AND ONE OTHER DIED. EIGHT SURVIVED TO TAKE THE ALERT.


THEY SAILED ON TO DISCOVER WHY THEY HAD BEEN WARNED AWAY.


THE NEXT DAY, A COAST APPEARED WHERE NO CHART SHOWED LAND.

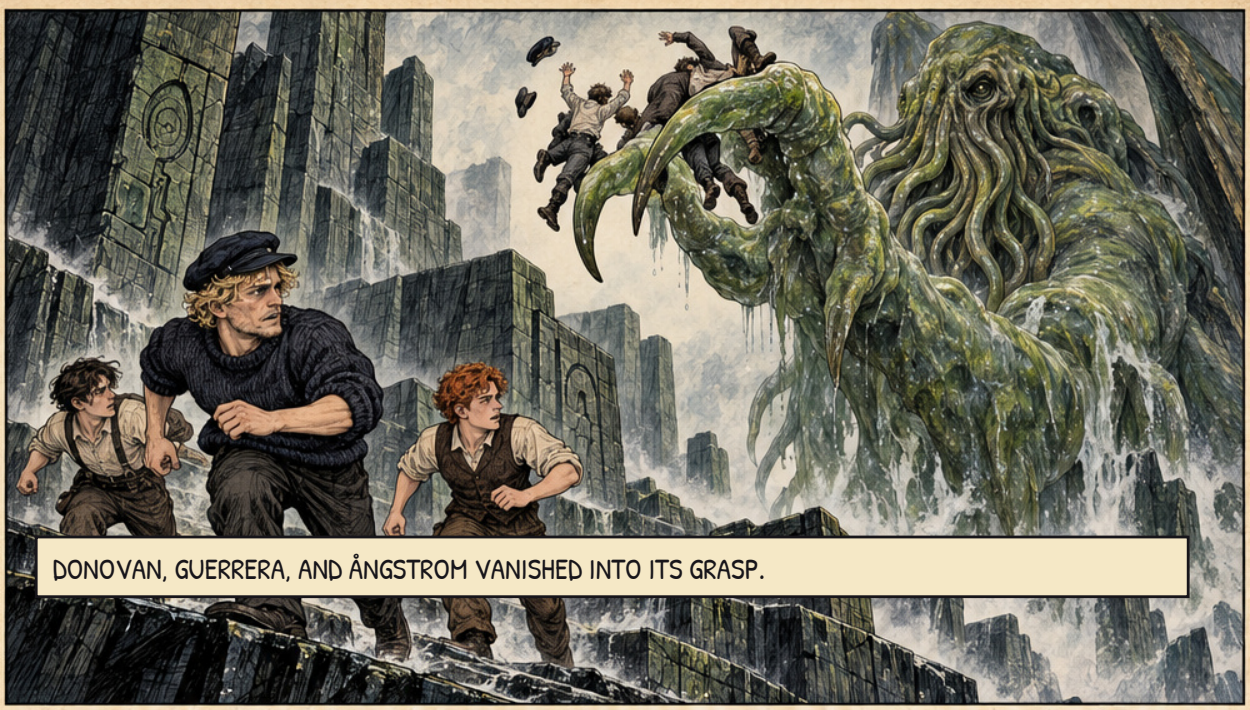

THEY KNEW NOTHING OF R'LYEH. THEY SAW ONLY A CITY TOO VAST TO BE HUMAN.

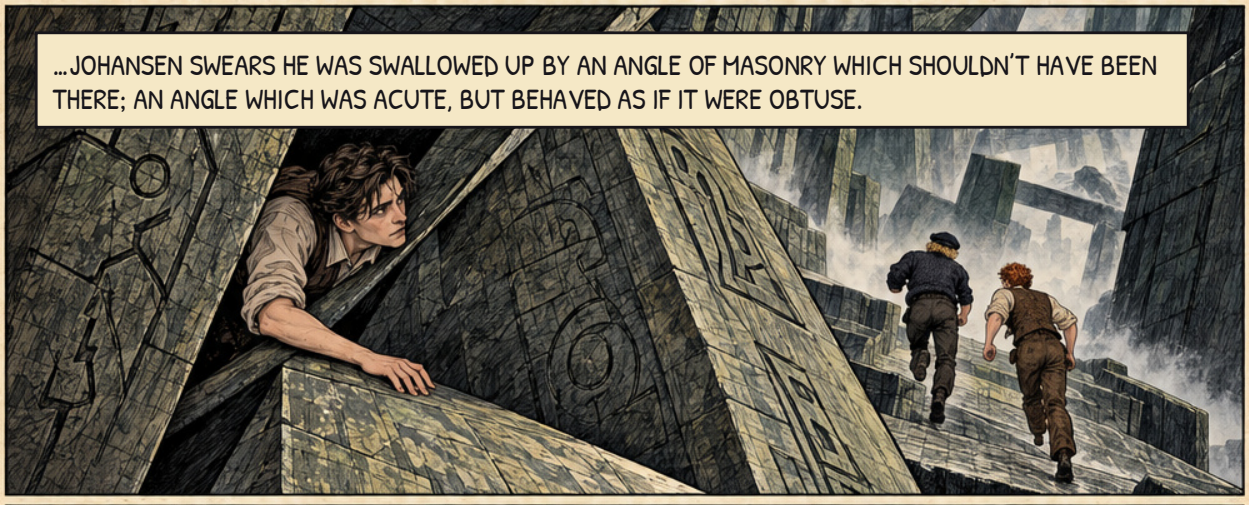

SURFACES SHIFTED FROM HOLLOW TO SWOLLEN AS THEY LOOKED. EVEN SEA AND SKY SEEMED WRONGLY PLACED.
THE CARVINGS REPEATED THE IMAGE THEY HAD FOUND ABOARD THE YACHT.
EACH MAN WANTED TO FLEE. EACH FEARED THE OTHERS' LAUGHTER.

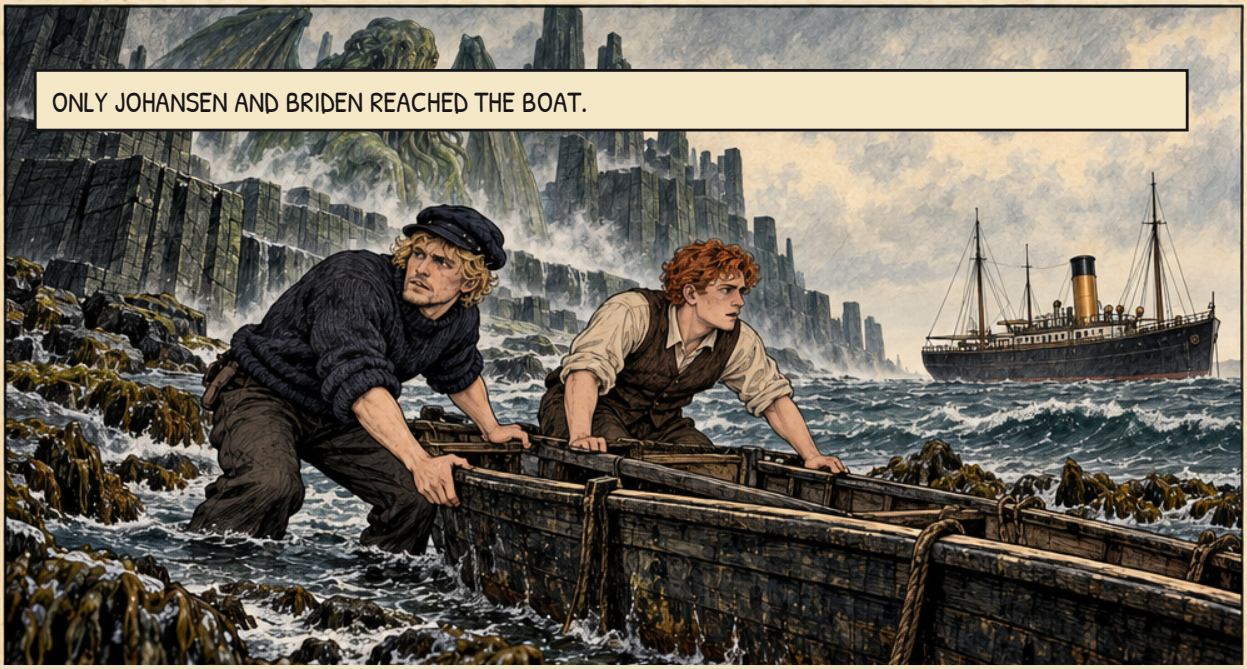

HERE! THIS MUST BE A DOOR.
BRIDEN PUSHED THE STONE. NOTHING HAPPENED.
DONOVAN TRACED THE MOULDING, PRESSING ALONG ITS EDGE. THEY COULD NOT TELL WHETHER HE WAS CLIMBING UPWARD—OR ACROSS.


THE ACRE-SIZED PANEL GAVE INWARD, SOFTLY AND SLOWLY.
DARKNESS SPILLED OUT AS IF IT WERE MATTER. THE AIR BECAME UNBEARABLE.
LISTEN. DOWN THERE...


OF THE SIX MEN WHO NEVER REACHED THE SHIP, HE THINKS TWO PERISHED OF PURE FRIGHT IN THAT ACCURSED INSTANT.
THE STARS WERE RIGHT AGAIN, AND WHAT AN AGE-OLD CULT HAD FAILED TO DO BY DESIGN, A BAND OF INNOCENT SAILORS HAD DONE BY ACCIDENT.
AFTER VIGINTILLIONS OF YEARS GREAT CTHULHU WAS LOOSE AGAIN, AND RAVENING FOR DELIGHT.

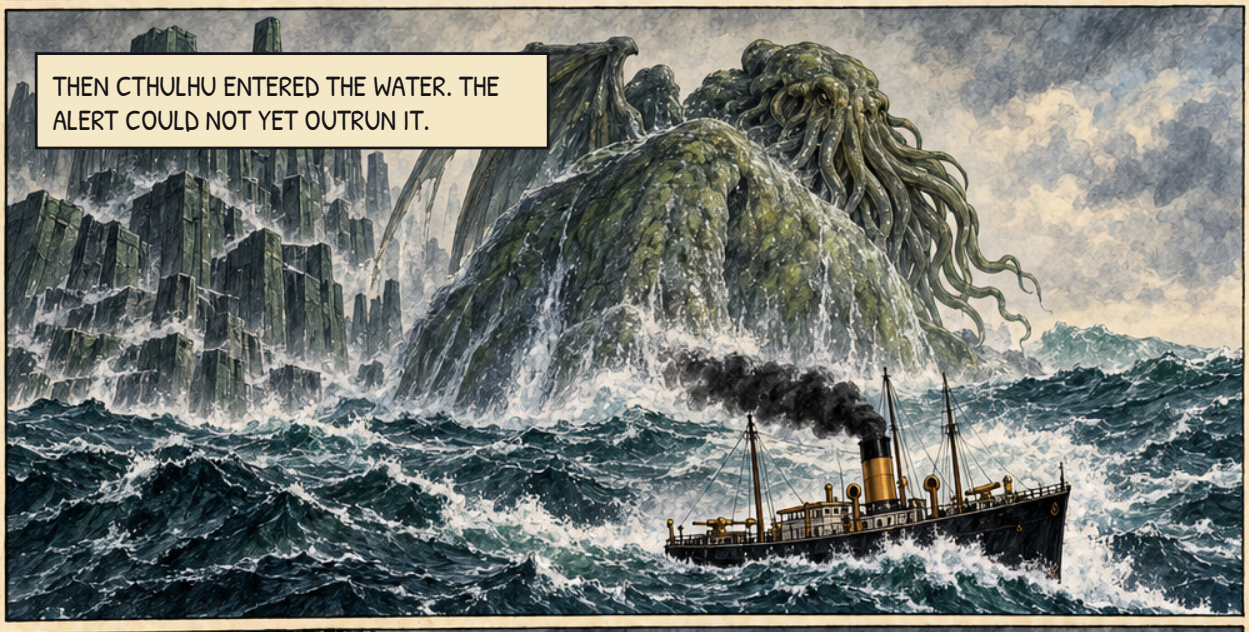

DONOVAN, GUERRERA, AND ÅNGSTROM VANISHED INTO ITS GRASP.


...JOHANSEN SWEARS HE WAS SWALLOWED UP BY AN ANGLE OF MASONRY WHICH SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THERE; AN ANGLE WHICH WAS ACUTE, BUT BEHAVED AS IF IT WERE OBTUSE.


ONLY JOHANSEN AND BRIDEN REACHED THE BOAT.



THE BOILERS STILL HELD STEAM. THEY SCRAMBLED BETWEEN ENGINE AND WHEEL UNTIL THE YACHT BEGAN TO MOVE.

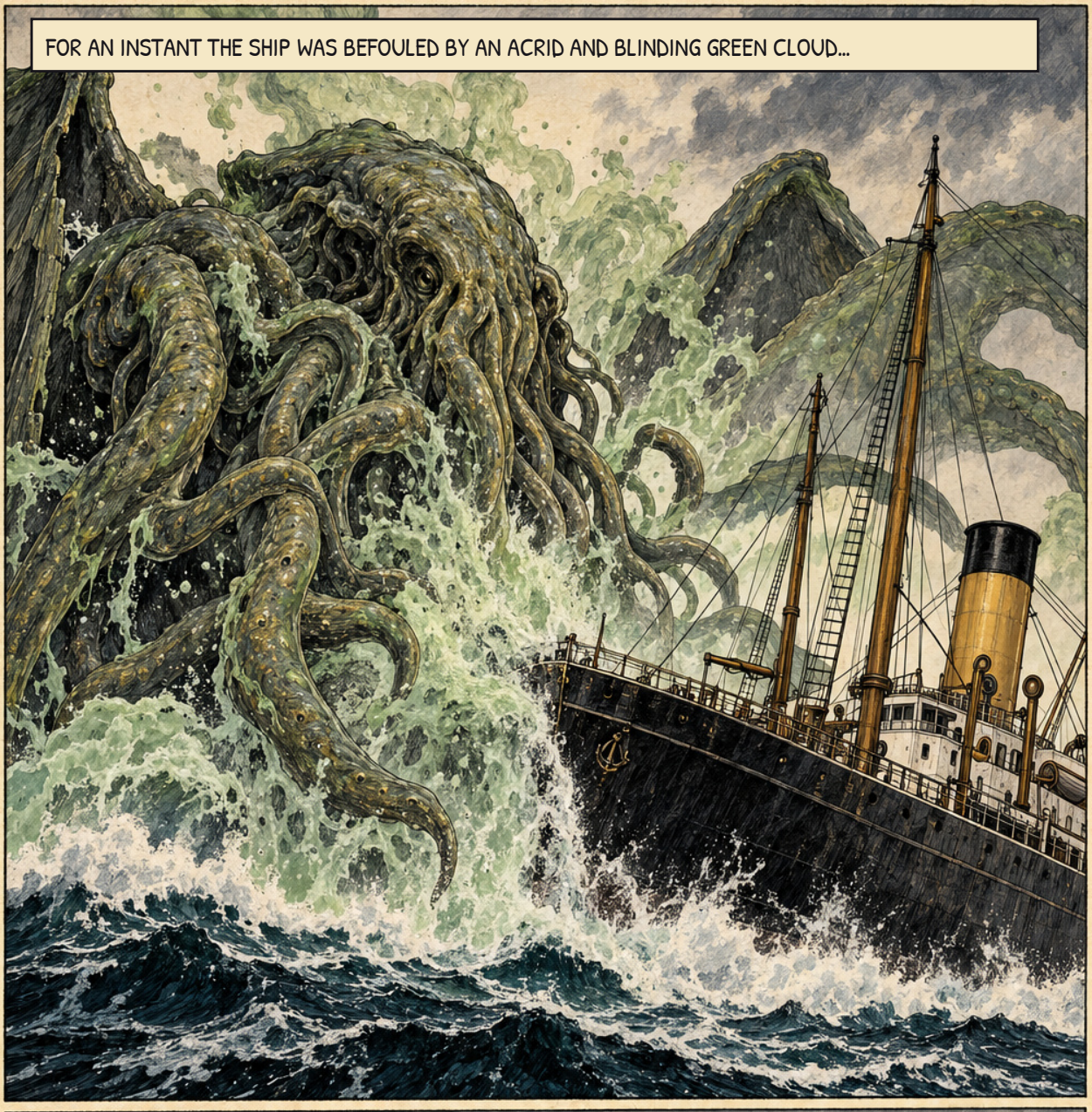


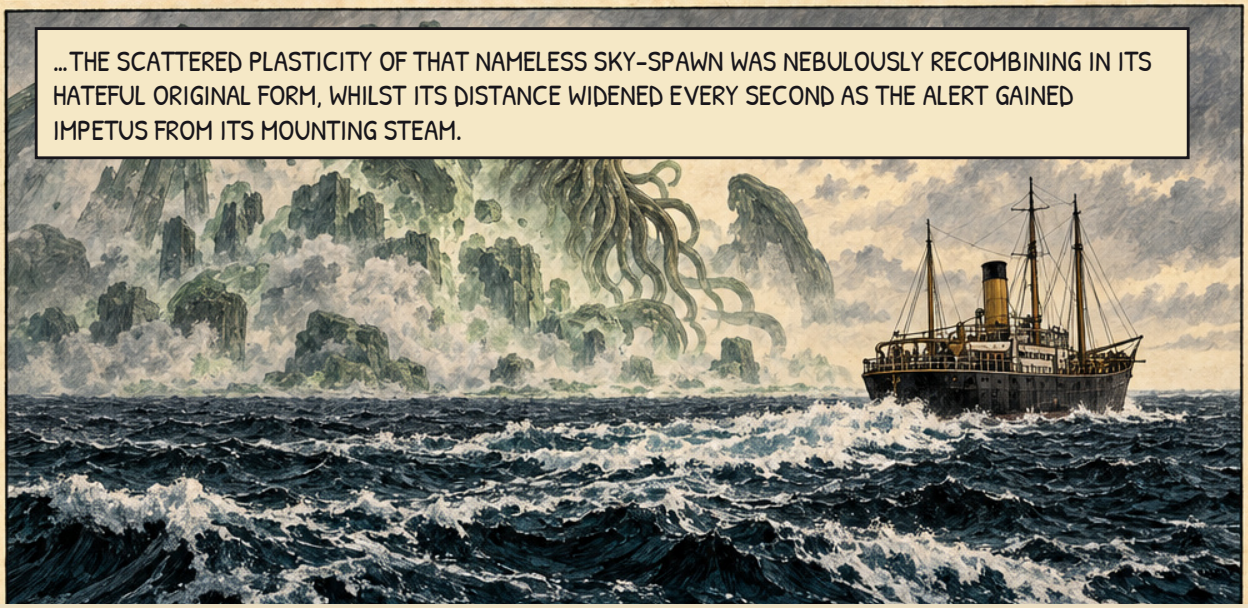
THEN CTHULHU ENTERED THE WATER. THE ALERT COULD NOT YET OUTRUN IT.



BRIDEN LOOKED BACK AND WENT MAD, LAUGHING SHRILLY AS HE KEPT ON LAUGHING AT INTERVALS TILL DEATH FOUND HIM ONE NIGHT IN THE CABIN...


JOHANSEN CHOSE THE ONLY CHANCE LEFT.
HE SET THE ENGINE TO FULL SPEED AND REVERSED THE WHEEL.
THE YACHT TURNED TOWARD THE THING THAT HUNTED IT.

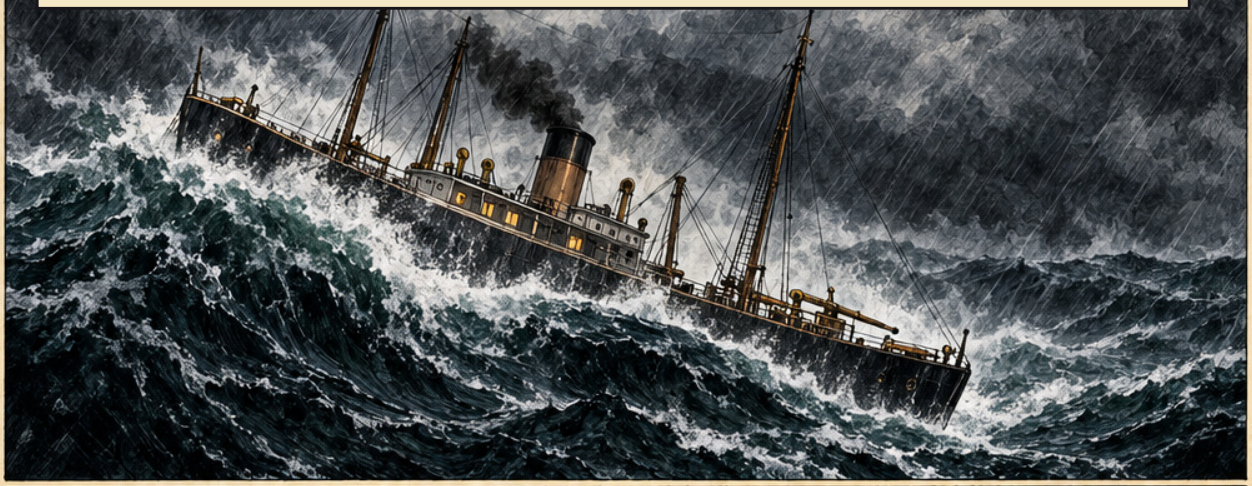

FOR AN INSTANT THE SHIP WAS BEFOULED BY AN ACRID AND BLINDING GREEN CLOUD...


...THE SCATTERED PLASTICITY OF THAT NAMELESS SKY-SPAWN WAS NEBULOUSLY RECOMBINING IN ITS HATEFUL ORIGINAL FORM, WHILST ITS DISTANCE WIDENED EVERY SECOND AS THE ALERT GAINED IMPETUS FROM ITS MOUNTING STEAM.

HE FED HIMSELF AND BRIDEN, BUT COULD NO LONGER NAVIGATE. THE YACHT DRIFTED.



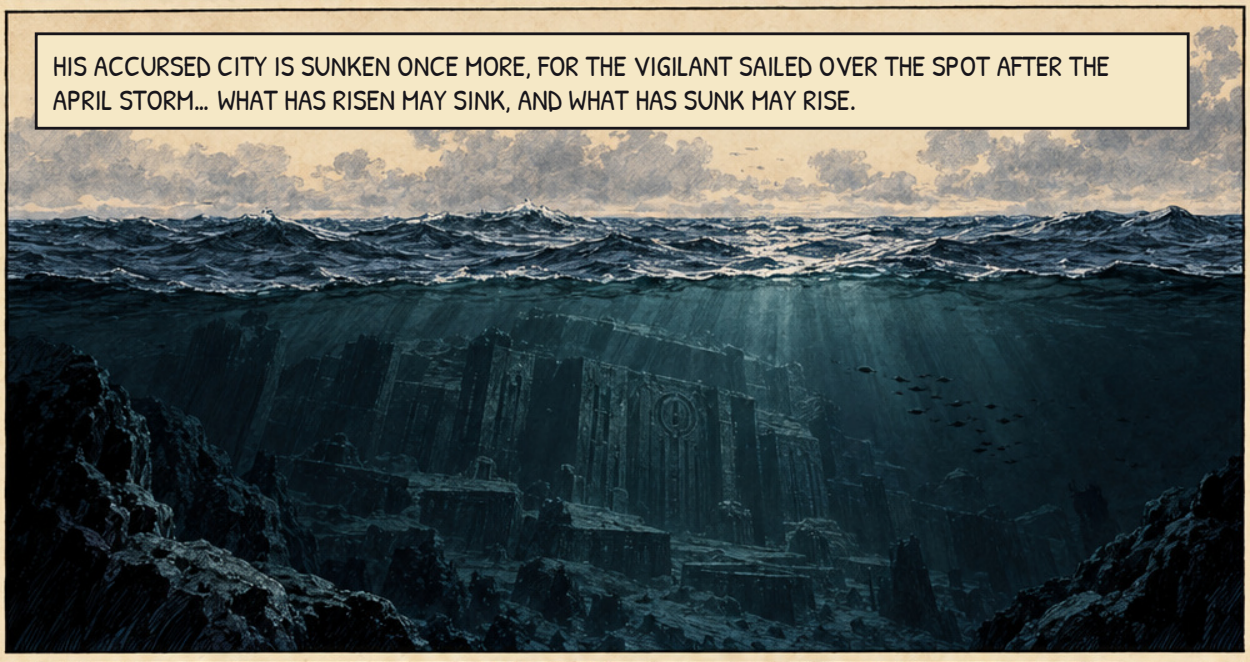
THE STORM OF 2 APRIL SWALLOWED HIS REMAINING SENSE OF TIME. BRIDEN DIED BEFORE RESCUE CAME.

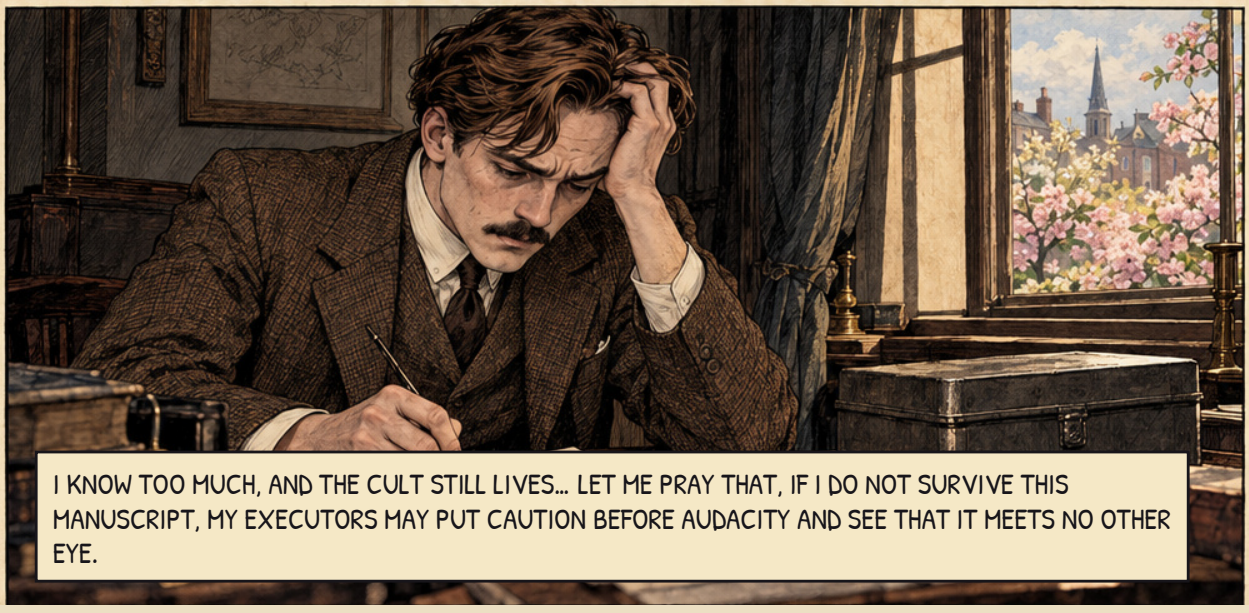




THE VIGILANT FOUND HIM ON THE TWELFTH. LATER HE WENT HOME AND WROTE WHAT HE COULD NOT SAY ALOUD.


I PLACED HIS ACCOUNT BESIDE MY UNCLE'S PAPERS. WITH THEM GOES MY OWN.


HIS ACCURSED CITY IS SUNKEN ONCE MORE, FOR THE VIGILANT SAILED OVER THE SPOT AFTER THE APRIL STORM... WHAT HAS RISEN MAY SINK, AND WHAT HAS SUNK MAY RISE.


I KNOW TOO MUCH, AND THE CULT STILL LIVES... LET ME PRAY THAT, IF I DO NOT SURVIVE THIS MANUSCRIPT, MY EXECUTORS MAY PUT CAUTION BEFORE AUDACITY AND SEE THAT IT MEETS NO OTHER EYE.