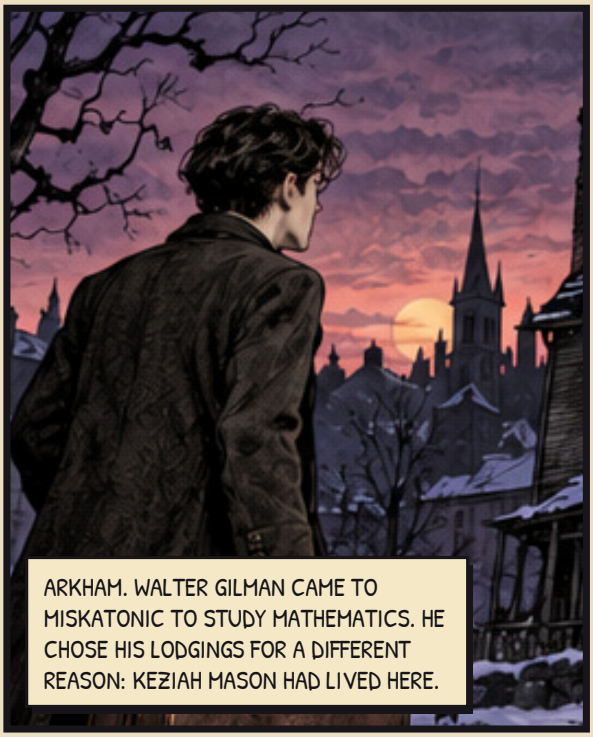
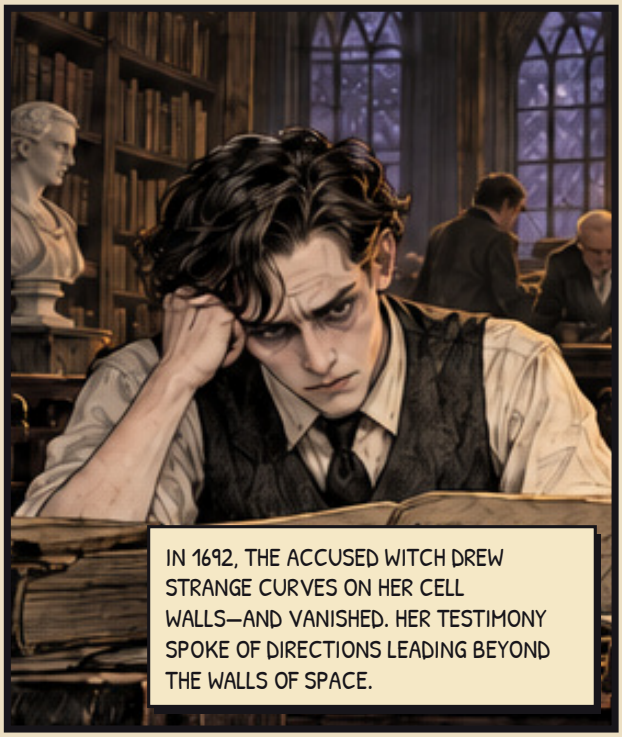
H. P. LOVECRAFT

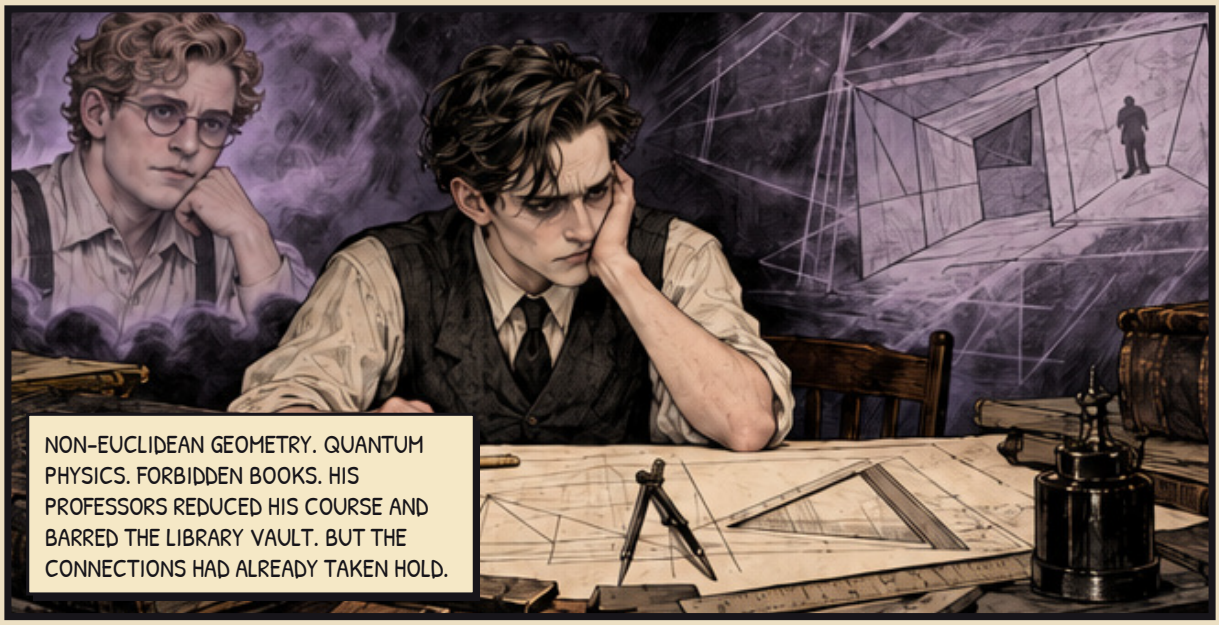
THE DREAMS IN THE WITCH HOUSE



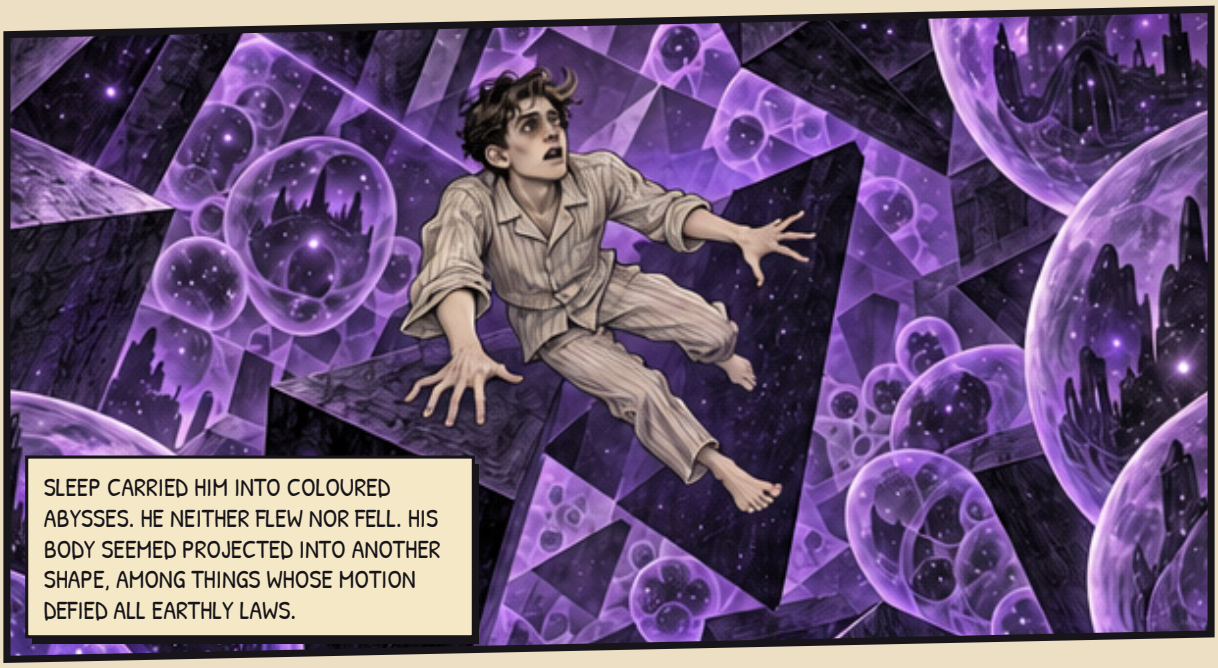





WHAT LIES BEYOND THAT PARTITION?
WALTER'S INTEREST SHIFTED: PERHAPS THE IMPORTANT SIDE WAS THE ONE HE OCCUPIED.
CLOSED SPACE. IT STAYS CLOSED.


NON-EUCLIDEAN GEOMETRY. QUANTUM PHYSICS. FORBIDDEN BOOKS. HIS PROFESSORS REDUCED HIS COURSE AND BARRED THE LIBRARY VAULT. BUT THE CONNECTIONS HAD ALREADY TAKEN HOLD.


BY FEBRUARY, FEVER AND DREAMS HAD BEGUN. EVEN A CLOCK'S TICKING WAS UNBEARABLE. BEHIND THE RATS AND CREAKING TIMBERS, SOMETHING FAINTER WAITED TO BE HEARD.


SLEEP CARRIED HIM INTO COLOURED ABYSSES. HE NEITHER FLEW NOR FELL. HIS BODY SEEMED PROJECTED INTO ANOTHER SHAPE, AMONG THINGS WHOSE MOTION DEFIED ALL EARTHLY LAWS.

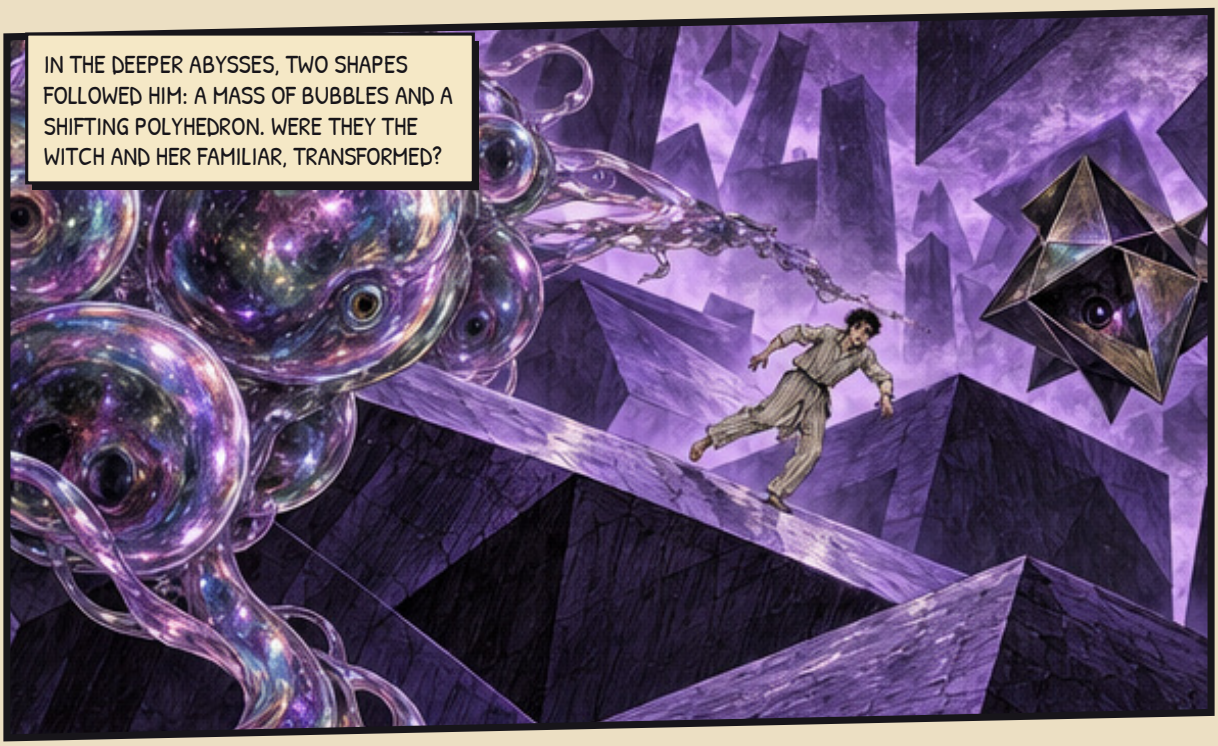

BUT THE LIGHTER DREAMS BROUGHT SOMETHING ALMOST FAMILIAR. THE TOWNSPEOPLE CALLED IT BROWN JENKIN: A RAT-SHAPED THING WITH A HUMAN FACE—AND TINY HUMAN HANDS.


HE BLOCKED THE HOLE. THE RATS OPENED ANOTHER. EVEN TIN FAILED. ONE MORNING, A LITTLE FRAGMENT OF BONE LAY AMONG THE PLASTER.


IN MARCH, A WOMAN JOINED THE DREAMS. WALTER KNEW HER BENT BACK, LONG NOSE, SHRIVELLED CHIN. HE HAD ALREADY PASSED HER IN ARKHAM'S LANES.
YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAR TO TURN BACK. YOU MUST MEET THE BLACK MAN.
MORNING LEFT ONLY FRAGMENTS OF PERSUASION—AND THREATS.
LEAVE OUR THREE DIMENSIONS, THEN RE-ENTER ELSEWHERE. A SINGLE STEP MIGHT CARRY A MAN BEYOND THE FARTHEST STARS.
YET HIS MATHEMATICS IMPROVED.


MAY-EVE IS COMING. TAKE ANOTHER ROOM. GET A CRUCIFIX.
WALTER CALLED IT SUPERSTITION. HIS DREAMS WERE BEGINNING TO GIVE THE WARNINGS A SHAPE.


WALTER KNEW THAT NAME.
SIGN THE BOOK OF AZATHOTH IN YOUR BLOOD. TAKE A SECRET NAME. COME TO THE THRONE AT THE CENTRE OF CHAOS.


IN THE DEEPER ABYSSES, TWO SHAPES FOLLOWED HIM: A MASS OF BUBBLES AND A SHIFTING POLYHEDRON. WERE THEY THE WITCH AND HER FAMILIAR, TRANSFORMED?


APRIL 19–20. THE ANGLES OPENED ONTO A GREEN-LIT HILLSIDE. HIS FEET SCARCELY ROSE FROM THE GROUND. KEZIAH AND BROWN JENKIN CRAWLED TOWARDS HIM.


HER CROSSED ARMS AND THE CREATURE'S POINTING HAND GAVE A DIRECTION. THREE LABORIOUS STEPS—AND THE HILLSIDE DISSOLVED INTO THE ABYSS.


WAKING BROUGHT A PULL HE COULD BARELY RESIST. ON THE ISLAND IN THE MISKATONIC, AMONG THE ANCIENT STONES, HE SAW THE WOMAN AGAIN.


THE PULL MOVED AS THE DAY PASSED. AT NIGHT HE UNDERSTOOD: IT CAME FROM A POINT BETWEEN HYDRA AND ARGO NAVIS. SOMETHING BEYOND THE EARTH WAS CALLING.


I SAW THE WITCH LIGHT IN YOUR WINDOW.
VIOLET?
SOMEONE AWAKE HAD SEEN THE COLOUR OF HIS DREAMS.


THAT NIGHT THE BUBBLE-MASS AND POLYHEDRON FOLLOWED HIM AGAIN. GREAT PLANES CONVERGED. THEN THE DARKNESS BROKE INTO A BLAZE OF ALIEN SUNS.


A TERRACE HUNG ABOVE A CITY OF TOWERS, DISCS, AND IMPOSSIBLE SYMMETRIES. THREE SUNS BURNED OVERHEAD. THE PAVEMENT SCORCHED HIS BARE FEET.


DIZZY AT THE HEIGHT, HE CAUGHT THE RAILING. A SMALL, SPIKY FIGURE BROKE FREE IN HIS HAND—A BARREL-LIKE BODY WITH RADIATING ARMS AND STAR-SHAPED ENDS.


BEHIND HIM CAME KEZIAH, BROWN JENKIN—AND THREE LIVING CREATURES SHAPED EXACTLY LIKE THE ORNAMENTS. WALTER LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.


HE WOKE WITH BURNING SKIN. FRIENDS REMARKED ON HIS STRANGE SUNBURN. ALL DAY ANOTHER PULL DREW HIM NORTH, TOWARDS A DIFFERENT POINT IN THE SKY.


THAT EVENING, THE FIGURE LAY ON HIS TABLE. EVERY RIDGE AND ARM WAS THERE. SO WAS THE JAGGED BREAK WHERE IT HAD JOINED THE RAILING.


I FOUND IT IN YOUR BED.
WALTER BORROWED FLOUR AND SPREAD IT ALONG THE CORRIDOR. TONIGHT, HIS OWN FOOTPRINTS WOULD BETRAY ANY SLEEPWALKING.


THE WITCH REACHED HIM AT LAST. HER HANDS DRAGGED HIM OUT OF BED—AND THROUGH THE ROARING SPACES BETWEEN WORLDS.


IN A WINDOWLESS LOFT STOOD THE SILENT BLACK MAN—NYARLATHOTEP, MESSENGER OF THE OUTER POWERS. HE POINTED TO AN ENORMOUS BOOK. KEZIAH PRESSED A QUILL INTO WALTER'S HAND.


BROWN JENKIN BIT HIS WRIST. HE FAINTED. BEYOND THAT LAY CONFUSED IMPRESSIONS: BLACK VORTICES, THIN PIPING, AND A THRONE AT THE CENTRE OF CHAOS.


APRIL 22. BLOOD ON HIS CUFF. NONE ON THE BED. THE FLOUR SHOWED NO TRACE OF HIS PASSAGE. HOW COULD HE HAVE LEFT THE ROOM?


I CANNOT TRUST MYSELF ASLEEP.
STAY HERE. IF YOU TALK OR GET UP, I'LL WAKE YOU. WE CAN FIND OUT WHAT THAT THING IS.


FOR SEVERAL NIGHTS THE DREAMS STOPPED. JOE BROUGHT A BLESSED CRUCIFIX. WALTER HUNG IT ON THE DRESSER. UPSTAIRS, FOOTSTEPS CROSSED THE EMPTY GARRET.


THE MUSEUMS COULD NOT IDENTIFY IT. PROFESSOR ELLERY FOUND PLATINUM, IRON, TELLURIUM—AND AT LEAST THREE APPARENT ELEMENTS THAT FITTED NO PLACE IN THE PERIODIC SYSTEM.


APRIL 27. A NEW HOLE OPENED IN ELWOOD'S ROOM. DOMBROWSKI COVERED IT WITH TIN. THE POISON HAD DONE NOTHING TO STOP THE SCRATCHING.


BOTH WERE DESPERATELY TIRED.
IN A REGION WITHOUT TIME, A PERSON MIGHT REMAIN UNCHANGED FOR CENTURIES.
THEN KEZIAH'S ESCAPE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A DISCOVERY.


APRIL 28-29. VIOLET LIGHT RETURNED. BROWN JENKIN POINTED MOCKINGLY AT ELWOOD'S SLEEPING BODY. WALTER COULD NOT CRY OUT AS KEZIAH SEIZED HIM.


THEY STOOD IN A MUDDY ALLEY. THE SILENT MESSENGER POINTED TO A DOORWAY. KEZIAH DRAGGED WALTER UPSTAIRS, THEN VANISHED INTO A DARK ROOM.


A STIFLED CRY. SHE RETURNED WITH A SMALL, UNCONSCIOUS CHILD AND THRUST HIM TOWARDS WALTER. THE SIGHT BROKE THE SPELL. WALTER FLED.



...HALTING ONLY WHEN SEIZED AND CHOKED BY THE WAITING BLACK MAN. AS CONSCIOUSNESS DEPARTED HE HEARD THE FAINT, SHRILL TITTERING OF THE FANGED, RAT-LIKE ABNORMALITY.



HE WOKE IN HIS OLD GARRET. MUD CAKED HIS FEET AND CLOTHES. BESIDE HIS PRINTS WERE TINY TRACKS—AND STRANGE, DIVIDED MARKS LIKE CLOVEN FEET.



NO MUDDY TRACKS CROSSED THE THRESHOLD. ELWOOD EXAMINED THE BRUISES: WALTER'S OWN FINGERS COULD NOT HAVE MADE THEM. DOWNSTAIRS, A NEIGHBOUR HAD HEARD A CHILD'S CRY.


THE NEWSPAPER REPORTED A KIDNAPPING IN ORNE'S GANGWAY. LADISLAS WOLEJKO, TWO YEARS OLD, HAD DISAPPEARED. HIS MOTHER HAD FEARED BROWN JENKIN FOR WEEKS.


ANASTASIA HAD BEGGED FOR HELP. SHE BELIEVED HER CHILD WAS MARKED FOR THE WALPURGIS SACRIFICE. NOBODY HAD TAKEN HER FEARS SERIOUSLY.


WITNESSES HAD SEEN THREE FIGURES ENTER THE ALLEY: A ROBED MAN, AN OLD WOMAN, AND A YOUTH IN NIGHTCLOTHES. A RAT WOUND ABOUT THEIR FEET.


NEITHER SLEPT THAT NIGHT. BY APRIL 30, VIGILANCE HAD BECOME EXHAUSTION. DREAMS AND WAKING EVIDENCE FITTED TOGETHER TOO CLOSELY TO DISMISS.


THEY SAY THE REVELS WILL BE BEYOND MEADOW HILL, BY THE WHITE STONE. WEAR IT. PLEASE.
THIS TIME WALTER PUT ON THE CRUCIFIX.


AT NIGHT, HE HEARD CHANTING FROM MILES AWAY. SOMEHOW HE KNEW THE RITE, THE BOWL, AND WHEN KEZIAH—CALLED NAHAB IN THE CULT—AND HER ACOLYTE WERE EXPECTED.


ELWOOD SLEPT. WALTER TRIED TO CALL HIM, BUT HIS THROAT WOULD NOT OBEY. HAD HE SIGNED THE BOOK? BROWN JENKIN'S FACE APPEARED IN A FRESH HOLE.


THE BUBBLE-MASS HELD HIM. THE POLYHEDRON RACED AHEAD. THROUGH THE ABYSS, THE WALPURGIS RHYTHM SWELLED TOWARDS AN INTOLERABLE CLIMAX.


THEN THE LOFT. LADISLAS LAY UNCONSCIOUS ON THE TABLE. KEZIAH GAVE WALTER THE BOWL. AGAINST HIS WILL, HE HELD IT WHERE SHE DIRECTED.


KEZIAH RAISED THE KNIFE. BROWN JENKIN ANSWERED HER CROAKING CHANT. HORROR PIERCED WALTER'S PARALYSIS.


THE BOWL STRUCK THE FLOOR. WALTER SPRANG FORWARD AND TORE THE KNIFE FROM HER HAND.


HE FLUNG IT INTO THE BLACK GULF. KEZIAH'S HANDS CLOSED ON HIS THROAT WITH IMPOSSIBLE STRENGTH. THE CRUCIFIX CHAIN GROUND INTO HIS NECK.

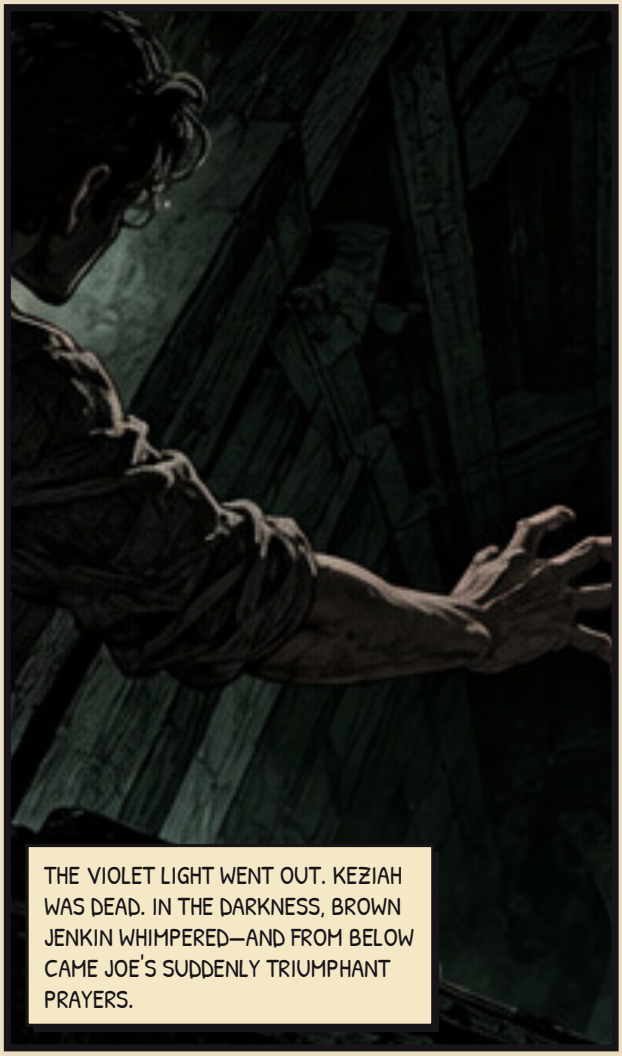

HE DRAGGED THE CRUCIFIX FREE. KEZIAH SHRANK FROM IT—AND HER GRIP LOOSENED. FOR A MOMENT, HE COULD BREATHE.


SHE ATTACKED AGAIN. WALTER ANSWERED WITH THE CHAIN, TIGHTENING IT ABOUT HER THROAT.


BROWN JENKIN BIT HIS ANKLE. ONE DESPERATE KICK SENT IT OVER THE EDGE. KEZIAH FELL. WALTER TURNED BACK TO THE CHILD.

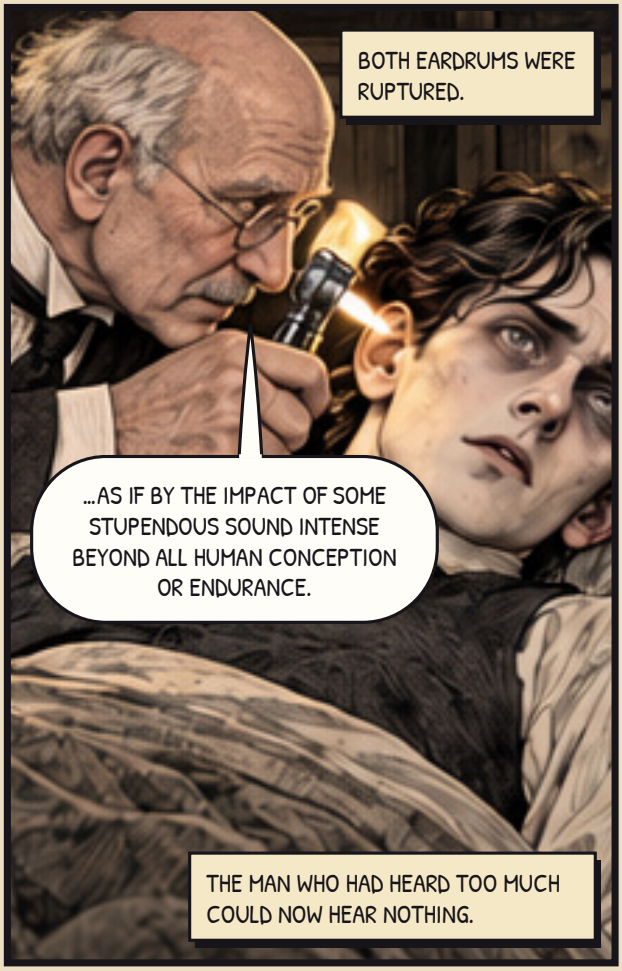

HE HAD STOPPED THE KNIFE. HE HAD NOT STOPPED BROWN JENKIN. THE CREATURE HAD REACHED THE CHILD'S WRIST DURING THE STRUGGLE. LADISLAS WAS DEAD.


THE BOWL WAS FULL. WALTER COULD STILL HEAR THE DISTANT RITE. HE MUST ESCAPE ALONE. SOMEWHERE IN HIS MIND WERE THE ANGLES THAT LED HOME.


THE VIOLET LIGHT WENT OUT. KEZIAH WAS DEAD. IN THE DARKNESS, BROWN JENKIN WHIMPERED—AND FROM BELOW CAME JOE'S SUDDENLY TRIUMPHANT PRAYERS.


HE PLUNGED INTO THE ABYSS. THE HIDDEN PULSING BURST UPON HIM IN ITS FULL, IMPOSSIBLE FORCE.


BEFORE DAWN THEY FOUND HIM ON THE GARRET FLOOR, ALIVE BUT SCARCELY CONSCIOUS. HIS THROAT WAS BRUISED, HIS ANKLE BITTEN. THE CRUCIFIX WAS GONE.


BOTH EARDRUMS WERE RUPTURED.
...AS IF BY THE IMPACT OF SOME STUPENDOUS SOUND INTENSE BEYOND ALL HUMAN CONCEPTION OR ENDURANCE.
THE MAN WHO HAD HEARD TOO MUCH COULD NOW HEAR NOTHING.

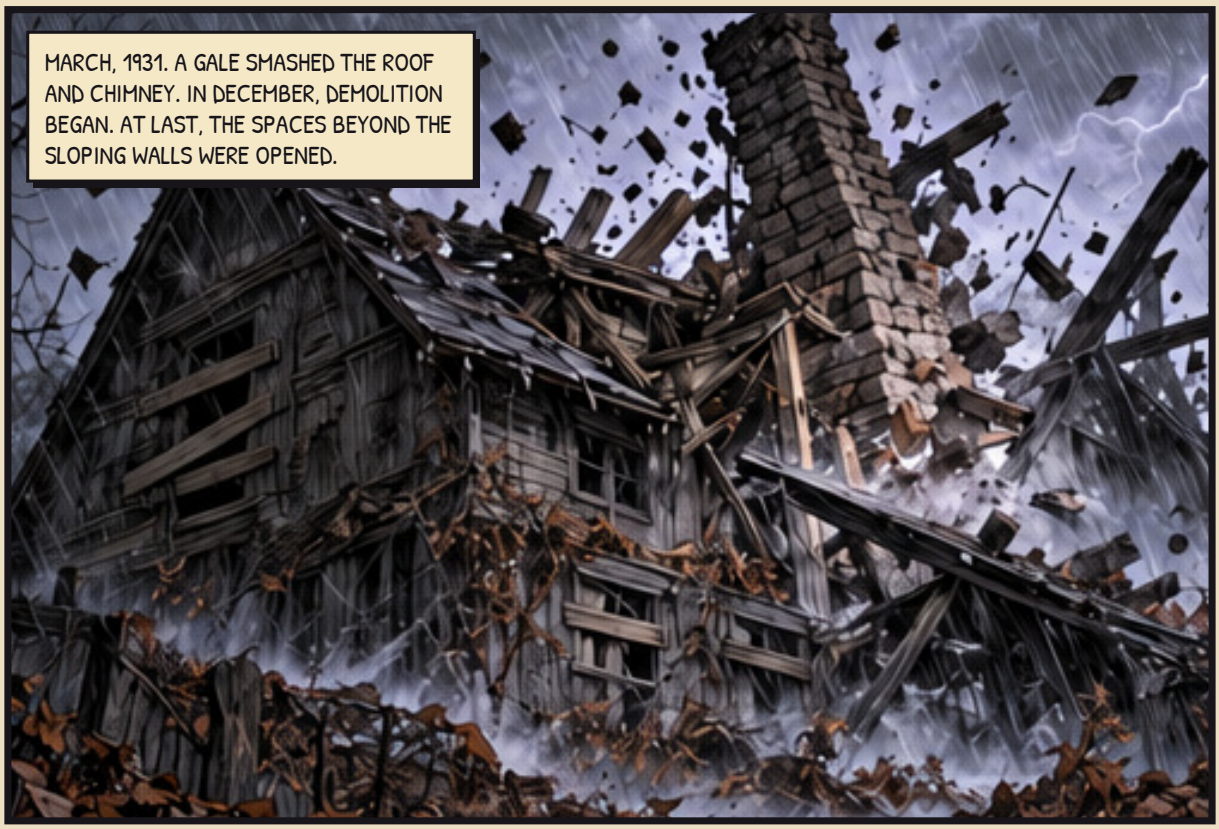

ELWOOD WROTE HIS REPLIES. THEY AGREED TO LEAVE AS SOON AS ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE MADE. THE PAPERS REPORTED A RAID NEAR THE WHITE STONE. LADISLAS WAS STILL MISSING.


THAT NIGHT, WALTER'S SCREAMS WOKE THE HOUSE. ELWOOD REACHED THE COUCH. BENEATH THE BLANKETS, SOMETHING MOVED.


A LARGE, RAT-LIKE SHAPE SPRANG OUT AND VANISHED INTO A FRESH HOLE. BY THE TIME THE DOCTOR ARRIVED, WALTER GILMAN WAS DEAD.


SOMETHING HAD TUNNELLED THROUGH HIS BODY AND EATEN HIS HEART. ON THE BARE FLOOR, JOE SAW TRACKS LIKE FOUR TINY HUMAN HANDS. THE OTHERS WOULD NOT AGREE.


WITHIN A WEEK, THE LODGERS LEFT. THE HOUSE STOOD EMPTY, FOULED BY A STENCH FROM ITS SEALED SPACES. NEITHER KEZIAH NOR BROWN JENKIN WAS SEEN AGAIN.


MARCH, 1931. A GALE SMASHED THE ROOF AND CHIMNEY. IN DECEMBER, DEMOLITION BEGAN. AT LAST, THE SPACES BEYOND THE SLOPING WALLS WERE OPENED.

THE LOFT HELD A CHILD'S BONES, AN OLD WOMAN'S REMAINS, STRANGE BOOKS AND OBJECTS—AND JOE'S BROKEN CRUCIFIX. ONE HANDWRITING SPANNED PAPERS TWO CENTURIES APART.



