THE PICTURE IN THE HOUSE

SEARCHERS AFTER HORROR HAUNT STRANGE, FAR PLACES. ... SOMETIMES ONE FEELS THAT IT WOULD BE MERCIFUL TO TEAR DOWN THESE HOUSES, FOR THEY MUST OFTEN DREAM.



IT WAS TO A TIME-BATTERED EDIFICE OF THIS DESCRIPTION THAT I WAS DRIVEN ONE AFTERNOON IN NOVEMBER, 1896...



I HAD BEEN TRAVELLING FOR SOME TIME AMONGST THE PEOPLE OF THE MISKATONIC VALLEY IN QUEST OF CERTAIN GENEALOGICAL DATA...



...AN APPARENTLY ABANDONED ROAD WHICH I HAD CHOSEN AS THE SHORTEST CUT TO ARKHAM...



THEREFORE INSTEAD OF TRYING THE DOOR I KNOCKED, FEELING AS I DID SO A TREPIDATION I COULD SCARCELY EXPLAIN.



...ALTHOUGH OLD, RATTLING, AND ALMOST OPAQUE WITH DIRT, THEY WERE NOT BROKEN.



...MY RAPPING EVOKED NO RESPONSE, SO AFTER REPEATING THE SUMMONS I TRIED THE RUSTY LATCH AND FOUND THE DOOR UNFASTENED.



I ENTERED, CARRYING MY BICYCLE, AND CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND ME.



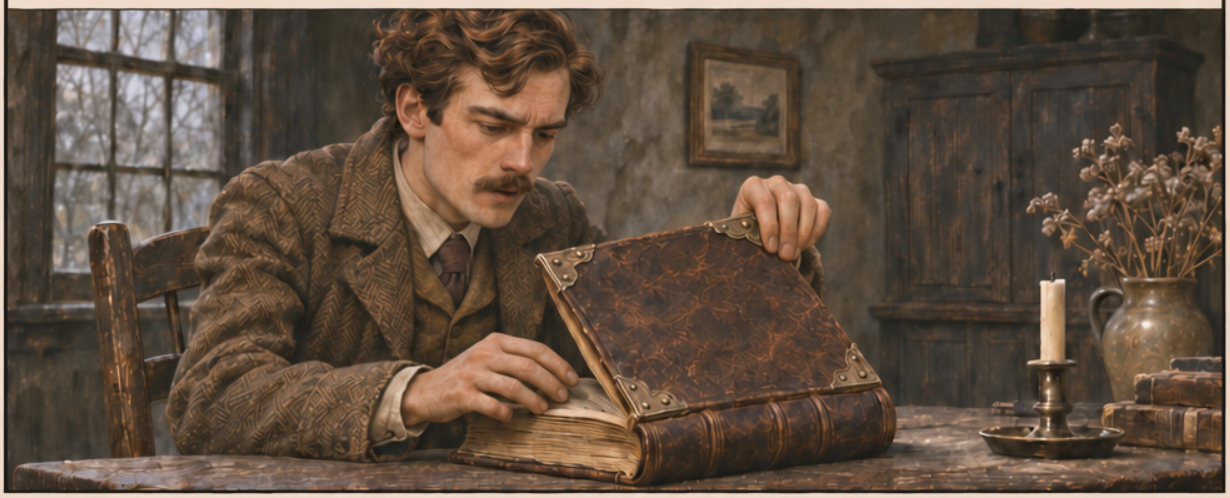
LEANING MY CYCLE AGAINST THE WALL I OPENED THE DOOR AT THE LEFT...



...IN ALL THE ROOM I COULD NOT DISCOVER A SINGLE ARTICLE OF DEFINITELY POST-REVOLUTIONARY DATE.



IT WAS BOUND IN LEATHER WITH METAL FITTINGS, AND WAS IN AN EXCELLENT STATE OF PRESERVATION...



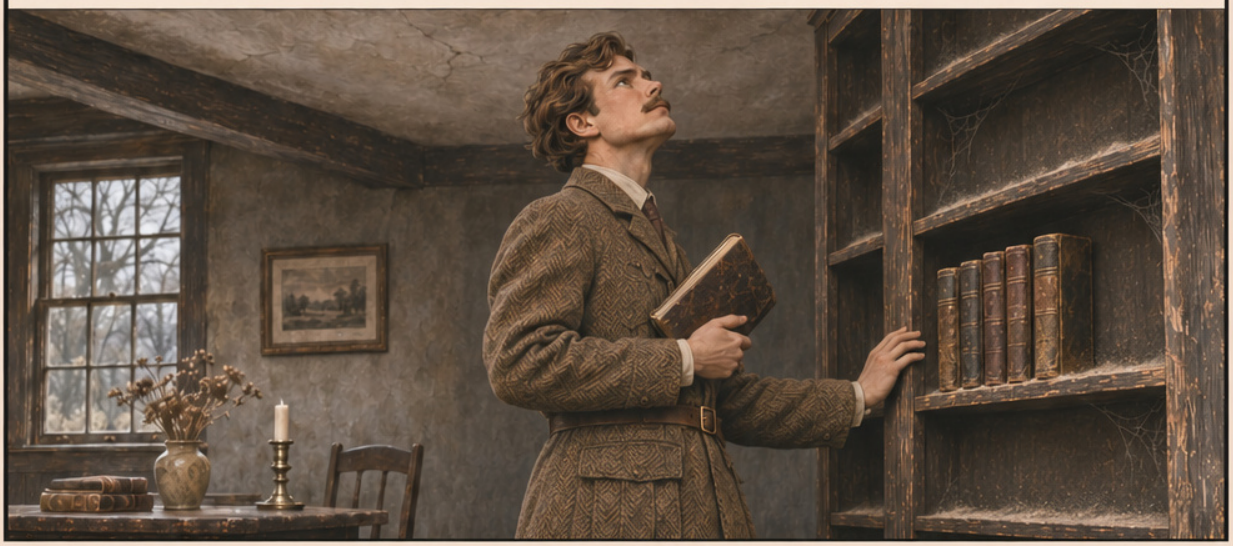
...PIGAFETTA'S ACCOUNT OF THE CONGO REGION, WRITTEN IN LATIN FROM THE NOTES OF THE SAILOR LOPEZ AND PRINTED AT FRANKFORT IN 1598.



WHAT ANNOYED ME WAS MERELY THE PERSISTENT WAY IN WHICH THE VOLUME TENDED TO FALL OPEN OF ITSELF AT PLATE XII...



...MY ATTENTION WAS AROUSED BY THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF WALKING IN THE ROOM OVERHEAD.



THE TREAD WAS HEAVY, YET SEEMED TO CONTAIN A CURIOUS QUALITY OF CAUTIOUSNESS...



...I HEARD A FUMBLING AT THE LATCH AND SAW THE PANELLED PORTAL SWING OPEN AGAIN.



OLD, WHITE-BEARDED, AND RAGGED, MY HOST POSSESSED A COUNTENANCE AND PHYSIQUE WHICH INSPIRED EQUAL WONDER AND RESPECT.



KETCHED IN THE RAIN, BE YE? ... I CALC'LATE I WAS ASLEEP, ELSE I'D A HEERD YE...



I REPLIED THAT I WAS GOING TO ARKHAM, AND APOLOGISED FOR MY RUDE ENTRY INTO HIS DOMICILE...



...WE HED ONE FER DEESTRICK SCHOOLMASTER IN 'EIGHTY-FOUR, BUT HE QUIT SUDDENT AN' NO ONE NEVER HEERD ON 'IM SENCE—



...IT STRUCK ME TO ASK HIM HOW HE CAME BY SO RARE A BOOK AS PIGAFETTA'S REGNUM CONGO.



CAP'N EBENEZER HOLT TRADED ME THET IN 'SIXTY-EIGHT—HIM AS WAS KILT IN THE WAR.



I HAD ENCOUNTERED IT IN MY GENEALOGICAL WORK, BUT NOT IN ANY RECORD SINCE THE REVOLUTION.



I RELISHED THE PICTERS, SO HE GIVE IT IN ON A SWAP. ... HERE, LEAVE ME GIT ON MY SPECTACLES—



EBENEZER CUD READ A LEETLE O' THIS—'TIS LATIN—BUT I CAN'T.



...KIN YEW MAKE ANYTHING OUTEN IT?



...TRANSLATED FOR HIS BENEFIT A PARAGRAPH NEAR THE BEGINNING.



"QUEER HAOW PICTERS KIN SET A BODY THINKIN'."



BUT NAOW I'LL SHEW YE THE BEST UN—OVER HERE NIGH THE MIDDLE—



...THE REPELLENT TWELFTH PLATE SHEWING A BUTCHER'S SHOP AMONGST THE ANZIQUE CANNIBALS.



I HEV TA KEEP LOOKIN' AT 'IM...



HE WAS ALMOST WHISPERING NOW, WITH A HUSKINESS MORE TERRIBLE THAN A SCREAM, AND I TREMBLED AS I LISTENED.



...ALL I DONE WAS TER LOOK AT THE PICTER AFORE I KILT THE SHEEP FOR MARKET...



ONCE A TERRIFIC FLASH AND PEAL SHOOK THE FRAIL HOUSE TO ITS FOUNDATIONS, BUT THE WHISPERER SEEMED NOT TO NOTICE IT.



...THET PICTER BEGUN TA MAKE ME HUNGRY FER VICTUALS I COULDN'T RAISE NOR BUY...



...I WONDERED EF 'TWUDN'T MAKE A MAN LIVE LONGER AN' LONGER EF 'TWAS MORE THE SAME—



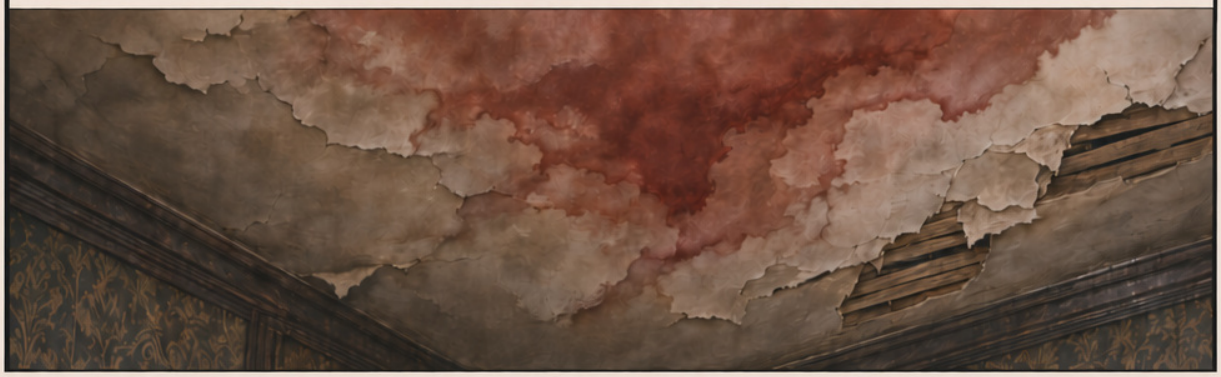
I THOUGHT OF THE RAIN AND OF A LEAKY ROOF, BUT RAIN IS NOT RED.



THE OLD MAN SAW IT, AND STOPPED WHISPERING EVEN BEFORE MY EXPRESSION OF HORROR MADE IT NECESSARY...



...A LARGE IRREGULAR SPOT OF WET CRIMSON WHICH SEEMED TO SPREAD EVEN AS I VIEWED IT.



I DID NOT SHRIEK OR MOVE, BUT MERELY SHUT MY EYES.



A MOMENT LATER CAME THE TITANIC THUNDERBOLT OF THUNDERBOLTS; BLASTING THAT ACCURSED HOUSE OF UNUTTERABLE SECRETS AND BRINGING THE OBLIVION WHICH ALONE SAVED MY MIND.



...I WAS PRESENTLY TO OPEN MY EYES ON A SMOKY SOLITUDE OF BLACKENED RUINS.

