THE UNNAMABLE

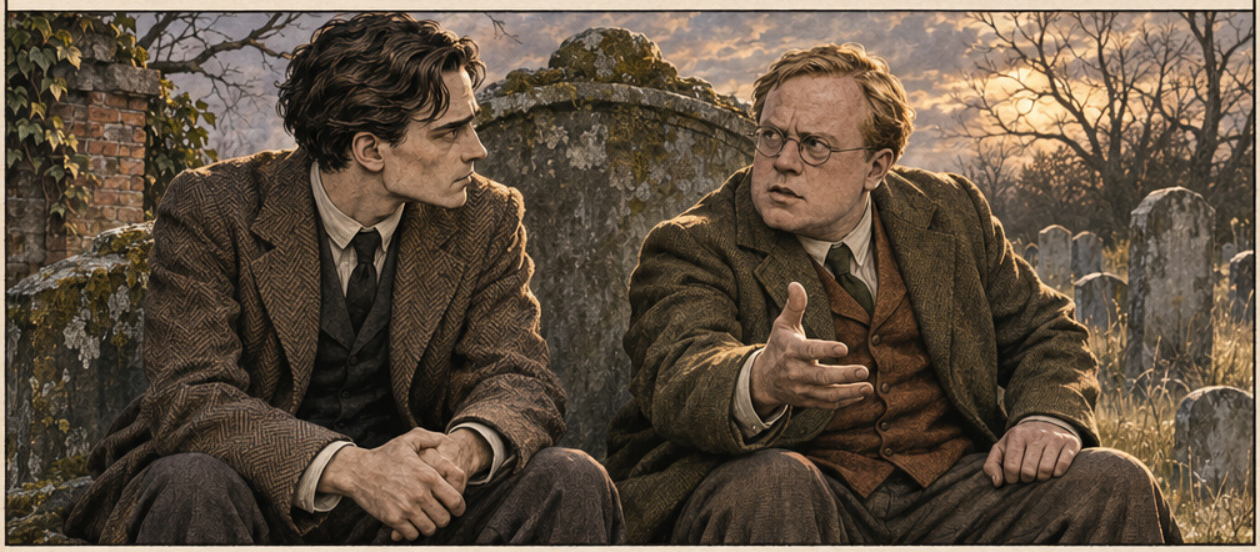
WE WERE SITTING ON A DILAPIDATED SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY TOMB IN THE LATE AFTERNOON OF AN AUTUMN DAY AT THE OLD BURYING-GROUND IN ARKHAM, AND SPECULATING ABOUT THE UNNAMABLE.



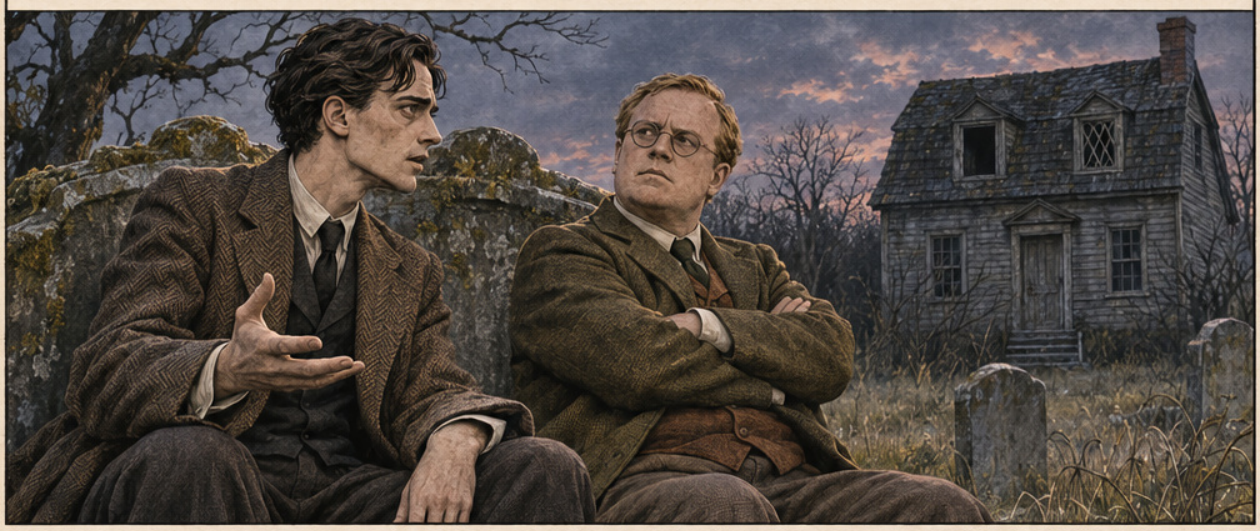
BESIDES, HE ADDED, MY CONSTANT TALK ABOUT "UNNAMABLE" AND "UNMENTIONABLE" THINGS WAS A VERY PUERILE DEVICE...



WITH THIS FRIEND, JOEL MANTON, I HAD OFTEN LANGUIDLY DISPUTED. HE WAS PRINCIPAL OF THE EAST HIGH SCHOOL...



...JOEL MANTON ACTUALLY HALF CLUNG TO MANY OLD-WIVES' SUPERSTITIONS...



...IF A DEAD MAN CAN TRANSMIT HIS VISIBLE OR TANGIBLE IMAGE HALF ACROSS THE WORLD... HOW CAN IT BE ABSURD TO SUPPOSE THAT DESERTED HOUSES ARE FULL OF QUEER SENTIENT THINGS...?



THERE IN THE DARK, UPON THAT RIVEN TOMB BY THE DESERTED HOUSE, WE TALKED ON ABOUT THE "UNNAMABLE"...



MY TALE HAD BEEN CALLED "THE ATTIC WINDOW", AND APPEARED IN THE JANUARY, 1922, ISSUE OF WHISPERS.



THEN I TOLD HIM WHAT I HAD FOUND IN AN OLD DIARY KEPT BETWEEN 1706 AND 1723, UNEARTHED AMONG FAMILY PAPERS NOT A MILE FROM WHERE WE WERE SITTING...



COTTON MATHER, IN THAT DAEMONIAC SIXTH BOOK... HE TOLD OF THE BEAST THAT HAD BROUGHT FORTH WHAT WAS MORE THAN BEAST BUT LESS THAN MAN—THE THING WITH THE BLEMISHED EYE...



...AND OF THE SCREAMING DRUNKEN WRETCH THAT THEY HANGED FOR HAVING SUCH AN EYE.



...THE LOCK ON THE DOOR TO THE ATTIC STAIRS IN THE HOUSE OF A CHILDLESS, BROKEN, EMBITTERED OLD MAN WHO HAD PUT UP A BLANK SLATE SLAB BY AN AVOIDED GRAVE...



SOMETHING HAD CAUGHT MY ANCESTOR ON A DARK VALLEY ROAD, LEAVING HIM WITH MARKS OF HORNS ON HIS CHEST AND OF APE-LIKE CLAWS ON HIS BACK...



...THEY FOUND THE MIXED MARKS OF SPLIT HOOVES AND VAGUELY ANTHROPOID PAWS.



ONCE A POST-RIDER SAID HE SAW AN OLD MAN CHASING AND CALLING TO A FRIGHTFUL LOPING, NAMELESS THING ON MEADOW HILL...



...THERE WAS STRANGE TALK ONE NIGHT IN 1710 WHEN THE CHILDLESS, BROKEN OLD MAN WAS BURIED IN THE CRYPT BEHIND HIS OWN HOUSE...



THEY NEVER UNLOCKED THAT ATTIC DOOR, BUT LEFT THE WHOLE HOUSE AS IT WAS, DREADED AND DESERTED.



...THEY WHISPERED AND SHIVERED; AND HOPED THAT THE LOCK ON THAT ATTIC DOOR WAS STRONG.



THEN THEY STOPPED HOPING WHEN THE HORROR OCCURRED AT THE PARSONAGE, LEAVING NOT A SOUL ALIVE OR IN ONE PIECE.



WITH THE YEARS THE LEGENDS TAKE ON A SPECTRAL CHARACTER—I SUPPOSE THE THING, IF IT WAS A LIVING THING, MUST HAVE DIED.



DURING THIS NARRATION MY FRIEND MANTON HAD BECOME VERY SILENT, AND I SAW THAT MY WORDS HAD IMPRESSED HIM.



...THE BOY WHO IN 1793 ENTERED AN ABANDONED HOUSE... THE BOY HAD GONE TO LOOK AT THE WINDOWS OF THAT HORRIBLE ATTIC, BECAUSE OF TALES OF THINGS SEEN BEHIND THEM...



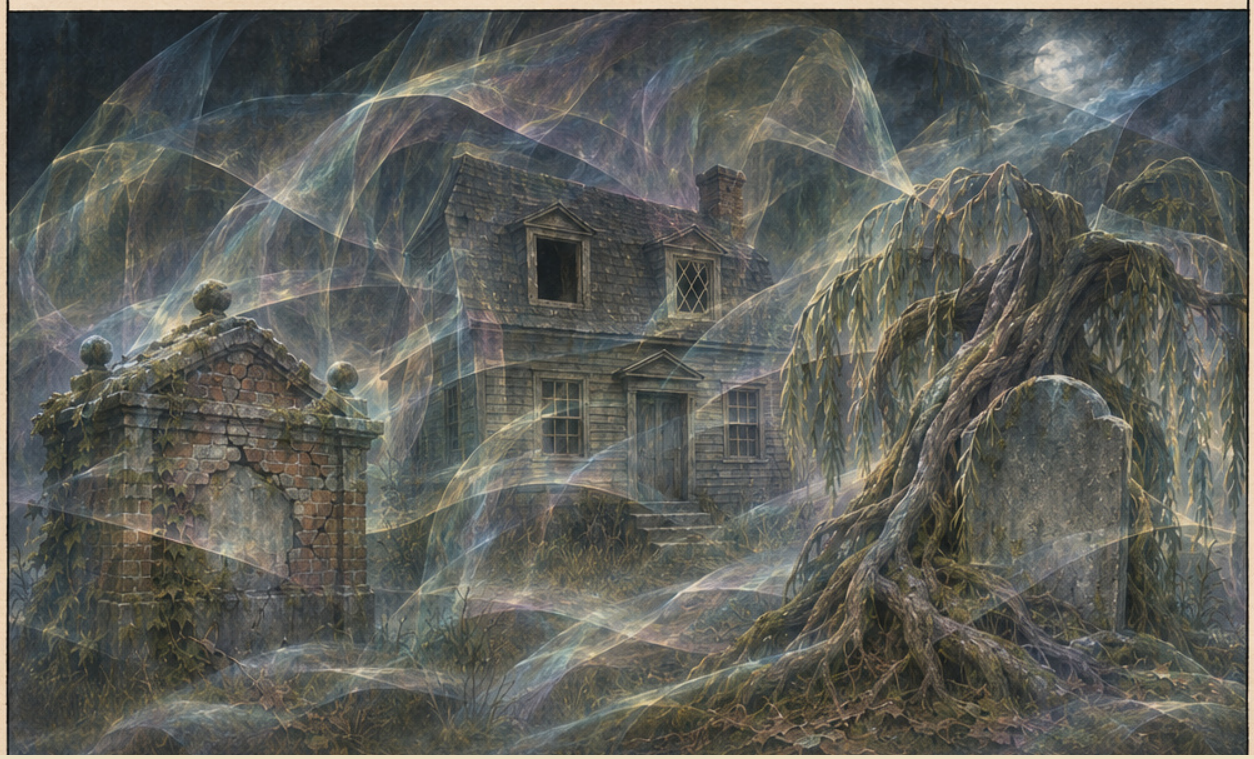
...AND HAD COME BACK SCREAMING MANIACALLY.



HE... REMINDED ME THAT EVEN THE MOST MORBID PERVERSION OF NATURE NEED NOT BE UNNAMABLE OR SCIENTIFICALLY INDESCRIBABLE.



...APPARITIONS OF GIGANTIC BESTIAL FORMS SOMETIMES VISIBLE AND SOMETIMES ONLY TANGIBLE... HAUNTED THE OLD HOUSE, THE CRYPT BEHIND IT, AND THE GRAVE...



A SINGULARLY NOISELESS BAT BRUSHED BY ME...



BUT IS THAT HOUSE WITH THE ATTIC WINDOW STILL STANDING AND DESERTED?



YES,... I HAVE SEEN IT.



THERE WERE SOME BONES UP UNDER THE EAVES.



IT HAD FOUR-INCH HORNS, BUT A FACE AND JAW SOMETHING LIKE YOURS AND MINE.



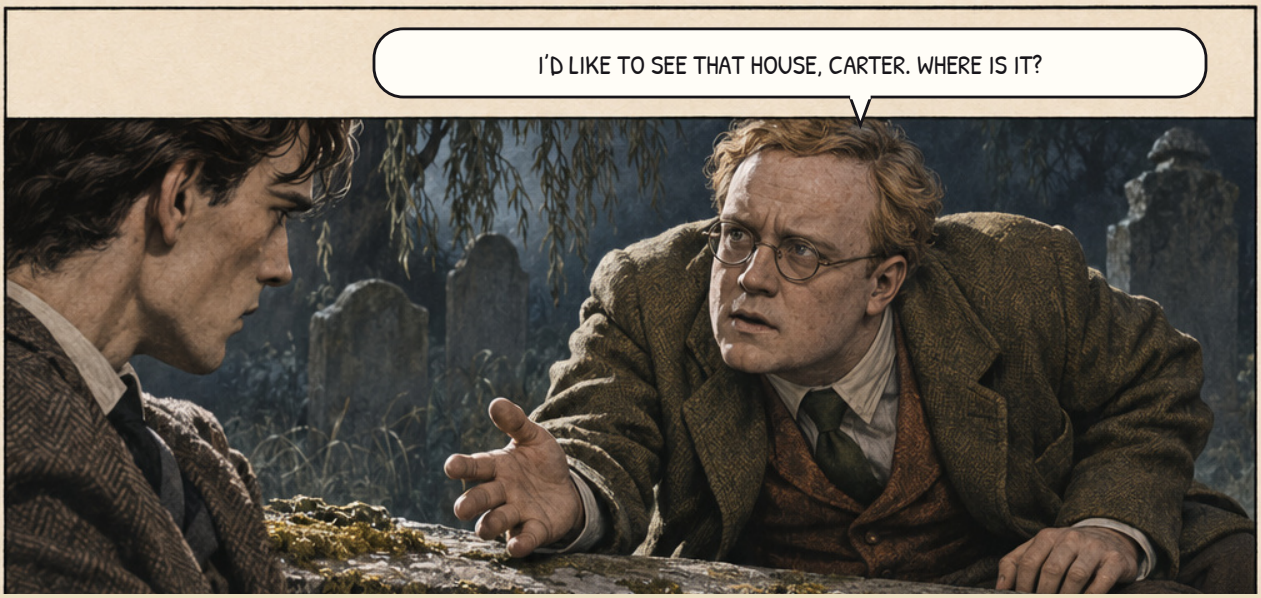
...I WENT BACK WITH A SACK AND TOOK THEM TO THE TOMB BEHIND THE HOUSE.





THEY WERE ALL GONE. ONE WINDOW HAD LOST ITS ENTIRE FRAME, AND IN THE OTHER THERE WAS NOT A TRACE OF GLASS IN THE LITTLE DIAMOND APERTURES.






YOU DID SEE IT—UNTIL IT GOT DARK.
...I HEARD A CREAKING SOUND THROUGH THE PITCHY BLACKNESS, AND KNEW THAT A LATTICE WINDOW WAS OPENING IN THAT ACCURSED OLD HOUSE BESIDE US.

THEN CAME A NOXIOUS RUSH OF NOISOME, FRIGID AIR FROM THAT SAME DREADED DIRECTION...



...I WAS KNOCKED FROM MY GRUESOME BENCH BY THE DEVILISH THRESHING OF SOME UNSEEN ENTITY OF TITANIC SIZE BUT UNDETERMINED NATURE...



THERE WAS A VORTEX OF WITHERING, ICE-COLD WIND, AND THEN THE RATTLE OF LOOSE BRICKS AND PLASTER; BUT I HAD MERCIFULLY FAINTED...



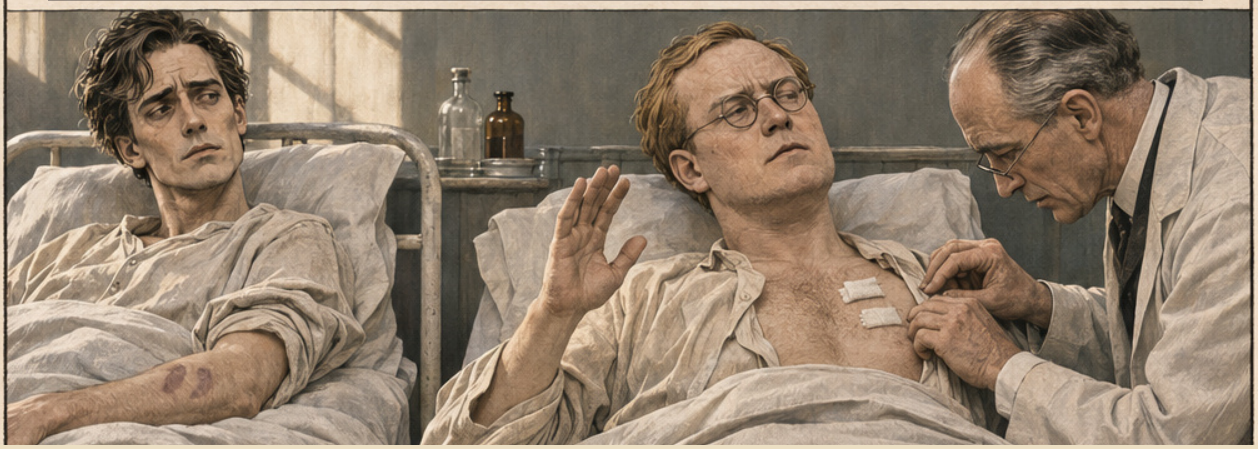
OUR COUCHES WERE SIDE BY SIDE, AND WE KNEW IN A FEW SECONDS THAT WE WERE IN ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL.



...THE FARMER WHO HAD FOUND US AT NOON IN A LONELY FIELD BEYOND MEADOW HILL, A MILE FROM THE OLD BURYING-GROUND...



MANTON HAD TWO MALIGNANT WOUNDS IN THE CHEST... I... WAS COVERED WITH WELTS AND CONTUSIONS... INCLUDING THE PRINT OF A SPLIT HOOF. ...HE SAID WE WERE THE VICTIMS OF A VICIOUS BULL...



GOOD GOD, MANTON, BUT WHAT WAS IT? THOSE SCARS—WAS IT LIKE THAT?



NO—IT WASN'T THAT WAY AT ALL. IT WAS EVERYWHERE—A GELATIN—A SLIME—YET IT HAD SHAPES, A THOUSAND SHAPES OF HORROR BEYOND ALL MEMORY.



THERE WERE EYES—AND A BLEMISH. IT WAS THE PIT—THE MAELSTROM—THE ULTIMATE ABOMINATION. CARTER, IT WAS THE UNNAMABLE!

