

THE CALL OF CTHULHU

ЗОВ КТУЛХУ

I. The Horror In Clay

I think, that the most merciful thing in the world is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of infinite black seas. Will we voyage far? The sciences harmed us little; but some day the parts of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying views of reality, that we'll go mad from the revelation. Or we'll flee from the light into the peace and safety of a new **dark age**¹.

Theosophists² tell about awesome grandeur of the cosmic cycle where our world and human race form transient incidents. Their strange suggestions freeze the blood. When I think of them and when I dream of them, forbidden ages chill me and madden me. Like all dread glimpses of truth, that glimpse appeared from an accidental parts of separated things. In this case, from an old newspaper and the notes of a dead professor. I hope that no one else will collect those parts. Certainly, if I live, I will never add a link in that terrible chain. I think that the professor, too, intended to keep silent. He wanted to destroy his notes but sudden death stopped him.

¹ dark age – темные века

² theosophists – теософы, последователи религиозно-философского учения, популярного в конце XIX – нач. XX вв.

My first knowledge of the theme began in the winter of 1926-1927 with the death of my **great-uncle**¹, George Gammell Angell, **Professor Emeritus of Semitic Languages**² in Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. Professor Angell was widely known as an authority on ancient inscriptions. The heads of prominent museums frequently asked him for help. Everybody talked about his death at the age of ninety-two. Moreover, the obscurity of the cause of death intensified the interest. The professor was stricken while he was returning from the **Newport boat**³. He fell suddenly. Witnesses said that a **nautical-looking Negro**⁴ pushed him. That Negro came from one of the queer dark streets on the precipitous hillside. These streets formed a short way from the waterfront to the professor's home in Williams Street. Physicians were unable to find any visible disorder. After perplexed debate they concluded that some obscure lesion of the heart was responsible for the end. The brisk ascent of a steep hill provoked that lesion. The professor was old. At the time I saw no reason to disagree with them, but lately I began to doubt.

My great-uncle's died a childless widower. I was his heir and executor. I moved his files and boxes to my quarters in Boston to study his papers. The American Archaeological Society later published much of the material. But there was one box which I found very puzzling. I did not want to show this box to other eyes. It was locked and I did not find the key. But after I examined the personal ring which the professor carried in his pocket I was able to open it. When I did so I confronted another barrier. I found the queer **clay bas-relief**⁵

¹ great-uncle — двоюродный дед

² Professor Emeritus of Semitic Languages — заслуженный профессор в отставке, специалист по семитским языкам

³ Newport boat — ньюпортский пароход

⁴ nautical-looking Negro — негр, похожий на моряка

⁵ clay bas-relief — глиняный барельеф

and the disjointed notes, ramblings, and cuttings. What was their meaning? Was my uncle, in his latter years, superstitious? I decided to find the eccentric sculptor which was responsible for this apparent disturbance of an old man's mind.

The bas-relief was a rough rectangle less **than an inch thick**¹ and about five by six inches in area. Obviously it was of modern origin. Its designs, however, were far from modern in atmosphere and suggestion. And there was writing of some kind. But I was unable to identify the letters.

Above hieroglyphics was a figure. It was not detailed but it conveyed an idea. It was a sort of monster, or symbol of a monster. Only a diseased fancy can conceive this form. My extravagant imagination offered simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature. The spirit of the sculpture combined all of them. A pulpy, **tentacled head**² surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings. The general outline of the whole monster was very shocking and frightful. Behind the figure was a **vague Cyclopean architectural background**³.

Professor Angell himself wrote some of the documents accompanying this thing. He made it recently; and made no pretense to literary style. The main document had the title "CTHULHU CULT". The **characters** were **painstakingly printed**⁴ to avoid the erroneous reading of an unknown word. This manuscript was divided into two sections. The first section had the title "**1925 – Dream and Dream Work**

¹ than an inch thick – толщиной менее дюйма (1 дюйм = 2,54 см)

² tentacled head – голова, снабжённая щупальцами

³ vague Cyclopean architectural background – на фоне угадывались циклопические строения

⁴ characters painstakingly printed – тщательно выписанные буквы

of H.A. Wilcox, 7 Thomas St., Providence, R. I.¹”. The second section had the title “**Narrative of Inspector John R. Legrasse, 121 Bienville St., New Orleans, La., at 1908 A. A. S. Mtg. – Notes on Same, & Prof. Webb’s Acct.**”² The other manuscript papers were brief notes. Some of these brief notes were the descriptions of the strange dreams of different persons. Some of them were citations from theosophical books and magazines (notably W. Scott-Elliot’s **Atlantis and the Lost Lemuria**³). The other notes were comments on secret societies and hidden cults, with references to passages in such mythological and anthropological books as **Frazer’s Golden Bough**⁴ and **Miss Murray’s Witch-Cult in Western Europe**⁵. The articles cut from papers were mainly about mental illness and outbreaks of group folly or mania in the spring of 1925.

The first half of the principal manuscript told a very interesting tale. On March 1st, 1925, a thin, dark young man came to Professor Angell. He was nervous and excited and bearing the singular clay bas-relief. That bas-relief was exceedingly damp and fresh. His card bore the name of Henry Anthony Wilcox. My uncle had recognized him as the youngest son of an excellent family. He knew that family a little.

¹ 1925 – Сон и воплощающая его скульптура Х.А. Уилкокса, Томас-стрит, 7, Провиденс, Род-Айленд

² 121 Bienville St., New Orleans, La., at 1908 A. A. S. Mtg. – Notes on Same, & Prof. Webb’s Acct. – 121 Бьенвиль-стрит, Нью-Орлеан, на собрании А. А. О. – заметки о том же + сообщение проф. Уэбба

³ W. Scott-Elliot’s Atlantis and the Lost Lemuria – книга теософа У. Скотта-Эллиота «История Атлантиды и пропавшая Лемурия»

⁴ Frazer’s Golden Bough – книга Дж. Фрэзера «Золотая ветвь», посвященная выявлению общих чертов в мифологиях разных народов.

⁵ Miss Murray’s Witch-Cult in Western Europe – книга мисс Мюррей «Культе ведьм в Западной Европе»

The young man was studying sculpture at the **Rhode Island School of Design**¹. He was living alone at the Fleur-de-Lys Building near that institution. Wilcox was a precocious young genius with great eccentricity. When he was a child he liked strange stories and odd dreams. He liked to relate them, too. He called himself “**psychically hypersensitive**”², but the people of the ancient commercial city called him “queer.” He disappeared gradually from social visibility, and was now known only to a small group of esthetes from other towns. Even the **Providence Art Club**³, that was trying to preserve its conservatism, found him quite hopeless.

What did the professor’s manuscript tell about the cause of the visit? The sculptor abruptly asked to help him identify the hieroglyphics of the bas-relief. He spoke in a dreamy, stilted manner which suggested pride and alienated from him. My uncle’s reply was quite sharp. The conspicuous freshness of the tablet did not show any relation to archaeology. Young Wilcox’s answer impressed my uncle. It was of a fantastically poetic nature.

He said, “It is new, indeed. I made it last night in a dream of strange cities. **These dreams are older than brooding Tyre, or the contemplative Sphinx, or garden-girdled Babylon**”⁴.

Then he began to tell his tale. The story suddenly won the interest of my uncle because it woke something in his memory. There was a slight earthquake tremor the night before, the

¹ Rhode Island School of Design – художественная школа Род-Айленда

² psychically hypersensitive – чрезвычайно чувствительный психически

³ Providence Art Club – Клуб любителей искусства в Провиденсе

⁴ These dreams are older than brooding Tyre, or the contemplative Sphinx, or garden-girdled Babylon – Эти сны древней, чем мечтательный Тир, созерцательный Сфинкс, или опоясанный садами Вавилон.

most considerable in New England for some years. It affected Wilcox's imagination greatly. He had an unprecedented dream of great **Cyclopean cities of Titan blocks and sky-flung monoliths**¹. They all were dripping with green ooze and sinister with latent horror. Hieroglyphics covered the walls and pillars. From some undetermined point below came a voice that was not a voice. It was a chaotic sensation which only fancy transmuted into sound. He attempted to replicate it by the almost unpronounceable combination of letters: "Cthulhu fhagn."

This strange phrase was the key to the recollection which excited and disturbed Professor Angell. He questioned the sculptor with scientific interest. Then he studied with the great interest the bas-relief which the young man made. He did it half-dreaming and clad only in his night clothes. Wilcox afterwards said that my uncle blamed his old age, because he did not recognize hieroglyphics and pictorial designs fast enough. Many of his questions seemed highly inappropriate to his visitor, especially those which tried to connect the things with strange cults or societies. Wilcox did not understand the promises of silence, which professor offered him in exchange for an admission of membership in some widespread mystical or pagan religious society.

Professor Angell became convinced that the sculptor was indeed ignorant of any cult or system of cryptic lore. So he asked his visitor to supply him with future reports of dreams. This bore regular fruit. After the first interview the manuscript records daily visits of the young man. During these visits he related shocking fragments of nocturnal imaginery. He was always talking about some terrible Cyclopean pictures of dark and dripping stone, with a subterrene voice or intelligence shouting monotonously **enigmatical un-inscribable**

¹ Cyclopean cities of Titan blocks and sky-flung monoliths — циклопических городов из каменных плит и взметнувшихся в небо монолитов

gibberish¹. The two sounds were frequently repeated are rendered by the letters “Cthulhu” and “R’lyeh.”

The manuscript continued. On March 23, Wilcox did not come. He was ill with an obscure fever. They took him to the home of his family in Waterman Street. He cried out in the night, and arouse several other artists in the building. He showed since then only alternations of unconsciousness and delirium. My uncle at once telephoned the family. From that time he watched the case closely. He was calling often at the Thayer Street office of Dr. Tobey who treated Wilcox. The young man’s febrile mind, apparently, was dwelling on strange things. The doctor was shuddering as he spoke of them. They included not only a repetition of his former dreams. They also concerned gigantic things “miles high” which walked or lumbered about.

He never fully described these objects. He used occasional frantic words. After Dr. Tobey repeated them, the professor was convinced that they were identical with the nameless monster. This monster Wilcox tried to depict in his dream-sculpture. Reference to this object, the doctor added, was invariably a prelude to the young man’s lethargy. His temperature was quite normal. It was strange, indeed. But the whole condition was rather like true fever and not a mental disorder.

On April 2 at about 3 P.M. every trace of Wilcox’s illness suddenly ceased. He sat upright in bed. He was surprised to find himself at home. He was completely ignorant of what happened in dream or reality since the night of March 22. His physician declared that he recovered and he returned to his quarters in three days. But he was not able to help Professor Angell. All traces of strange dreaming vanished with his recovery. My uncle kept no record of his night-thoughts after a week of pointless and irrelevant descriptions of usual visions.

¹ enigmatical uninscribable gibberish – загадочную неопи-
суюемую тарабарщину

Here the first part of the manuscript ended. But the references to different notes gave me much material for thought. The notes were the descriptions of the dreams of various persons. They were covering the same period as that in which young Wilcox made his strange visits. It seems that my uncle was inquiring amongst nearly all the friends whom he was able to ask. He was asking for nightly reports of their dreams, and the dates of any notable visions for some time past. He received so many responses, that it seemed impossible to handle them without a secretary. This original correspondence was not preserved. But his notes formed a thorough and really significant digest. Average people in society and business gave an almost completely negative result. But sometimes they mentioned some formless nocturnal impressions, between March 23 and April 2. This was the period of young Wilcox's delirium. Four cases of scientific men gave vague descriptions of strange landscapes. In one case there was mentioned a dread of something abnormal.

The answers of artists and poets were more interesting. I suspect that if we decide to compare the notes there will be some panic. But the original letters were absent. So I suspected that there were some **leading questions**¹, or somebody edited the correspondence. That is why I continued to feel that Wilcox was deceiving the old scientist. The responses from esthetes told disturbing tale. From February 28 to April 2 many of them dreamed very bizarre things. The intensity of the dreams was immeasurably stronger during the period of the sculptor's delirium. **Over a fourth of them**² reported scenes and half-sounds like those which Wilcox described. Some of the dreamers were afraid of the gigantic nameless thing which became visible at the end. One case was very sad. A widely known architect had great interest toward theosophy

¹ leading questions – наводящие вопросы

² over a fourth of them – больше четверти из них

and occultism. He went violently insane on the date of young Wilcox's seizure. He died after continuously screaming for several months, asking for help. He wanted to be saved from some escaped denizen of hell. My uncle did not mention their real names, so I was unable to do personal investigation. I traced down only a few so I was unable to make personal investigation myself. And it is well that no explanation ever reached those people.

The cuttings from newspaper' articles were about cases of panic, mania, and eccentricity during that period. Professor Angell's collection was tremendous, probably he hired a **cutting bureau**¹. The sources were scattered throughout the globe. Here was a nocturnal suicide in London, where a man leaped from a window after a shocking cry. Here was a letter to the editor of a newspaper in South America, where a fanatic pretold future from his visions. An article from California described a theosophist colony. People in white robes were preparing for some "glorious fulfillment" which never arrived. Articles from India spoke of serious native unrest toward the end of March 22-23.

The west of Ireland, too, was full of wild rumour and legendary stories. A fantastic painter named Ardois-Bonnot offered a blasphemous Dream Landscape in the Paris spring salon of 1926. The recorded troubles in insane asylums were very numerous. And it is a miracle that nobody found something common in them. Then I was rationalistic, so I set them aside. Now I am simply unable to do so. But I was then convinced that young Wilcox knew of the older matters mentioned by the professor.

¹ cutting bureau – бюро, занимавшееся поиском информации в газетах

II. The Tale of Inspector Legrasse

The older matters made the sculptor's dream and bas-relief significant to my uncle. They formed the second half of his long manuscript. Once before, it appears, Professor Angell saw the hellish outlines of the nameless monstrosity. Once before he thought about the unknown hieroglyphics, and heard the ominous syllables which can be written only as "Cthulhu". And the horrible connection that he discovered made him ask young Wilcox about his dreams.

It was in 1908, seventeen years before, when the American Archaeological Society held its annual meeting in St. Louis. Professor Angell, because of his authority and knowledge, had a prominent part in all the meetings. And some outsiders offered him questions for correct answering and problems for expert solution.

There was between them a middle-aged man who travelled all the way from New Orleans to get special information. He was unable to get it from any local source. His name was John Raymond Legrasse. He was an Inspector of Police and he brought the subject of his visit with him. It was a grotesque, repulsive, and apparently very ancient stone statuette. Its origin was unknown.

Inspector Legrasse was not interested in archaeology at all. He came because of purely professional considerations. The statuette, idol, fetish, or whatever it was, was captured some months before in the wooded swamps south of New Orleans during a raid on a supposed **voodoo meeting**¹. The rites connected with it were so singular and hideous, that the police immediately realized that it was a dark cult totally unknown to them, and infinitely more diabolic than even the blackest of the African voodoo circles. Absolutely nothing was discovered of its origin. They discovered only erratic and unbelievable tales from the captured members. Hence the

¹ voodoo meeting – собрание приверженцев вуду

police asked for help from scholars. They wanted to identify the frightful symbol, and through it understand the cult itself.

Inspector Legrasse was not prepared for the sensation which his offering created. One sight of the thing was enough to throw the assembled scientists into a state of tense excitement. They crowded around him to gaze at the diminutive strange figure. The figure was apparently very old and nothing alike. An unknown school of sculpture made this terrible object. Centuries and even thousands of years were recorded in its dim and greenish surface of stone.

They passed slowly this figure from man to man for close and careful study. It was between seven and eight inches in height. It represented a vaguely humanoid monster, with an octopus-like head. Its face was a mass of feelers. It had a scaly rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind. **This thing was an embodiment of a fearsome and unnatural malignancy**¹. It squatted evilly on a rectangular block or pedestal that was covered with **undecipherable characters**². The tips of the wings touched the back edge of the block. The seat occupied the center. The long, curved claws of the hind legs gripped the front edge and extended toward the bottom of the pedestal. **The cephalopod head**³ was bent forward. The ends of the facial feelers brushed the backs of huge fore paws which clasped the elevated knees. The creature looked abnormally life-like and fearful. Its source was totally unknown. Its vast, awesome, and incalculable age was unmistakable. But it was not connected to any known type of art belonging to civilisation's youth – or indeed to any other time. Even its material was a mystery. The soapy, greenish-black stone with its golden or iridescent flecks and striations was not

¹ This thing was an embodiment of a fearsome and unnatural malignancy. – Это существо было воплощением устрашающей и противоестественной злобы.

² undecipherable characters – неизвестные иероглифы

³ cephalopod head – осьминожья голова