

# The Book of Eibon

Histories of the Elder Magi,  
Episodes of Eibon of Mhu Thulan,  
the Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom,  
Psalms of the Silent,  
and the Eibonic Rituals

# Ultima Thule and Mhu Thulan

by Laurence J. Cornford



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# The Ebony Book:

## Introduction to *The Book of Eibon*

Bind up the testimony,  
Seal the teaching among my disciples.  
—Isaiah 8:16

### Ebony and Ivory

It is safe to say that, next to his own *Necronomicon*, Lovecraft's most oft-thumbed Elder Grimoire was Clark Ashton Smith's *Book of Eibon*. As we will see in a bit more detail below, Lovecraft peppered his stories with tantalizing references to it. Of course he was undeniably fond of Bloch's *Mysteries of the Worm* and Howard's *Nameless Cults*, too, but he checked *Eibon* out of the Miskatonic Library more often than the rest.

It is interesting to note that, just as Lovecraft introduced Abdul Alhazred (in "The Nameless City") before he created the *Necronomicon* (in "The Hound"), so Smith introduced Eibon as a character in "The Door to Saturn" (*Strange Tales*, January 1932) before he introduced Eibon's *Book* (in "Ubbo-Sathla," *Weird Tales*, July 1933).

But whence did Smith derive the name of both book and mage? I found the clue in a comic book story called "H.P.L." by Nicolett in the October 1979 issue of *Heavy Metal* (pp. 45–47). A ghoul professes, "Through the aeons, the *Necronomicon* of Abdul Alhazred, the *Ebony Book*, and Von Jumzt's [sic] *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* have been my only companions." Based on the spelling errors, I'm guessing that Nicolett was drawing on fading memories, and thus the transformation of "*Book of Eibon*" into "*Ebony Book*" was fortuitous. Nicolett was probably half-remembering that Howard nicknamed his *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* "*The Black Book*" and confusing it with the *Book of Eibon*. But it is one of those *felix culpas*. Smith often uses the adjectives "ebon" and "ebony." Surely Nicolett is right: *The Book of Eibon* is supposed to resonate as "The Ebon Book." Lovecraft knew this: he has Alonzo Typer refer to "the blackest chapters of the *Livre d'Eibon*."

Lovecraft did more than cite the eldritch tomes his friends created in flattering imitation of his own *Al Azif*. He made them his own. As is well known, he supplied, without invitation to do so, "original" titles for the blasphemous tomes in their supposed original languages. *Nameless Cults* became *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* (though Lovecraft, not versed in German, got Derleth to come up with this one). *Mysteries of the Worm* became *De Vermis Mysteriis*. The *Book of Eibon* became both *Liber Ivonis* (Latin) and *Livre d'Eibon* (Norman French). It is important to see that when he

renamed others' fictive books, he was doing the same thing he did in "The Challenge from Beyond" by supplying his own conception and background for Richard F. Searight's *Elddown Shards*. (HPL blatantly contradicted Searight's own preempted version, in his story "The Warder of Knowledge," which Lovecraft hadn't yet seen—and which did not see print till my 1990 Fedogan & Bremer anthology *Tales of the Lovecraft Mythos*.) He was essentially usurping his colleagues' creations.

This becomes all the more evident when we remind ourselves that, e.g., Bloch virtually never called his grimoire anything but good old *Mysterios of the Worm* in any of his stories. And Smith made very little use of *Eibon*, compared with Lovecraft, mentioning the hoary volume in a grand total of three stories (and that's counting the fragment *The Infernal Star*). He never used either of Lovecraft's fancy titles.

We see here a phenomenon akin to the Revision Mythos that I have discussed elsewhere. Just as Lovecraft constructed a parallel Mythos for use in stories ghost-written for clients, featuring a new brood of Old Ones that ordinarily did not appear in his acknowledged stories (Yig, Ghatanothoa, Rhan-Tegoth, Nug and Yeb), it seems that he took some trouble to change the creations of his friends just enough to sound genuinely Lovecraftian in the context of his own tales, whatever the books' originators might want to do with them in their own fiction. Accordingly, Lovecraft has even, in effect, supplied new authors for his versions, as if to replace Smith's mage Eibon altogether! Philippus Faber is the translator of the Latin *Liber Ivonis* (letter to Smith, January 28, 1932), while Gaspard du Nord is the renderer of the *Livre d'Eibon*. Admittedly, du Nord comes from Smith's "The Colossus of Ylourgne," where however he has no connection to Eibon. Lovecraft also used du Nord as one of the signatories on the death warrant for himself that he sent to Robert Bloch, who was gunning for him in "The Shambler from the Stars."

I feel tempted toward a punceptual analysis of Lovecraft's title versus Smith's. If Smith's "Eibon" punningly reminds us of the black of ebony, Lovecraft's Latinized "Ivonis" may suggest the white of ivory. This is why every once in a while one runs across a typo that makes the tome into "*Liber Ivoris*." Here is the tip of a Kabbalistic iceberg as big as that which razed Olathoë. Here is a hint of the magical coincidence of opposites, nor is the doctrine of the Trace absent, whereby Mythos grimoires are sparingly quoted, since their evocative sorcery is more potent in suggestion than in display. Here is the germ of the pseudobibliographic device of the variant version of a grimoire which becomes more and other than its counterpart (e.g., Winters-Hall's conjectural translation of the *Elddown Shards* or Feery's

*Original Notes upon the Necronomicon, or the Sussex Manuscript*). The book is black, but when translated becomes white.

### Baleful Myths and Liturgies

With Smith, the facts of the case are simple and straightforward: Eibon wrote a book called the *Book of Eibon*. It is never called anything else. But Lovecraft luxuriated in pseudo-pedantry. So not only did he make up two alternate names for the *Book*, he also kept switching conceptions of the book. Let us briefly trace his references to the shape-shifting volume.

Smith had written all he was going to write concerning Eibon and his tome by the time Lovecraft made his first reference to it. This is in "The Dreams in the Witch House" (January–February 1932), where we read that "Gilman had some terrible hints from . . . the fragmentary *Book of Eibon* . . . to correlate with his abstract formulae on the properties of space and the linkage of dimensions known and unknown." It would seem, then, that only fragments of the book survive. This might mean that only literal scraps of papyrus survive (as with the Oxyrhynchus Papyri which later turned out to have been fragments of the Gospel according to Thomas, once a complete manuscript of that ancient book was discovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945) or that we know the book only from quotations of it from ancient authors who had access to it (like the Gospel according to the Hebrews).

But in the "The Man of Stone," written the same year, 1932, for Hazel Heald, Mad Dan Morris has far more than fragments at his disposal. He speaks simply of the *Book of Eibon* and refers to page 679. Among other hexes, it offered the recipe for a nasty treat called "The Green Decay," the capitalized proper nouns implying that he was reading an English translation, even though he says it came from Holland. We cannot rule out the possibility that he was reading the Norman French *Livre d'Eibon*, since Alonzo Typer found a copy of that edition which had also been brought from Holland to New York State, the locale of both "The Man of Stone" and "The Diary of Alonzo Typer" (October, 1935). The Van der Heyl copy was also a whole, intact book, since Typer speaks of "the blackest chapters of the *Livre d'Eibon*."

The Latin title was not used in "The Man of Stone" simply because Lovecraft had apparently not yet come up with this bit of trivia, which occurs first in a December 13, 1933 letter to Smith: "[Flavius] Alesius has some fascinating references to a terrifying set of tablets—the *Liber Ivonis*—in the possession of the Averones, which was said to have been brought by them from that lost ancient land [in the western ocean which had sunk beneath the waves] whence they came. Whether this could be identical with that infamous *Livre d'Eibon* which in the twelfth century the wizard

Gaspard du Nord translated from some (so far) unascertained language into the French of Averogne, is a problem with which scholarship must sooner or later wrestle." Of course they are the same book. The note of uncertainty Lovecraft injects is a typical distancing device used throughout his work, as when the explorers of the Antarctic city of the Crinoids make a vague and conjectural reading of the wall carvings. "Don't hold me to it, now, but here's what I think it says!" It's a gimmick to keep the door propped open to some possibility of a mundane explanation, so the reader will retain a vestige of wonder: but what if they've got it right? (see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic*).

Notice that Lovecraft here makes no reference to a codex, a bound book, or even of scrolls bearing the title *Liber Ivonis*. Despite the fact that a January 28, 1932 letter already mentions "the *Book of Eibon*— . . . the medieval Latin version of Philippus Faber [in] the library of Miskatonic University," he does not refer to this in the letter passage about Flavius Alesius (nor does he call the Miskatonic's Latin version the *Liber Ivonis*). No, Flavius Alesius knew only a set of inscribed tablets, like the Ten Commandments, the *Eltdown Shards*, *Enuma Elish*, or the *Book of Mormon*. And it would appear that the title is Flavius Alesius', rather than that used by the Averones, who would not have spoken Latin. We don't know, from this passage, what their tablet version of a "*Book of Eibon*" would have sounded like. At any rate, the implication in the December 13, 1933 letter is that Gaspard du Nord translated from these clay/stone tablets, which had themselves been brought, like the Tables of the Law, with the Hyperboreans and Atlanteans in their wanderings. Presumably Lovecraft at this time thought of Eibon as cutting glyphs into tablets, not writing on parchments, though Smith always depicts sorcerers writing on scrolls.

There is nothing to suggest that the Averonian tablets were fragmentary, and in "Out of the Aeons" (written, again, for Hazel Heald, 1933), savants consult an apparently complete and intact "*Book of Eibon*, reputed to descend from forgotten Hyperborea." In the same sentence the Pnakotic Manuscripts are called the "Pnakotic fragments," implying a contrast to a nonfragmentary *Eibon*. But in "The Shadow out of Time" Wingate Peasley consults "the surviving fragments of the puzzling *Book of Eibon*" (1934).

So Lovecraft was by no means striving for a uniform representation of the book's physical state. The contradictory images he uses for it are simply variant tropes for accentuating the hoary antiquity of the work. To call it fragmentary is one way of saying how old it is: it has just barely survived to our day. Only enough remains of the text to hint at its mostly lost secrets. An analogous device is to speak of the unidentified language in which the Eibonic tablets were written. Something is written there, but all the enigmatic glyphs tell us is that we don't know what they tell us.

Confusion only multiplies when, in "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935), Robert Blake discovers "the sinister *Liber Ivonis*" as a bound book standing on a shelf alongside other tomes. This is our first reference in a story to a Latin text called *Liber Ivonis*. Lovecraft then decides that Gaspard du Nord's *Livre d'Eibon* may be a rendering of the Latin text of Philippus Faber rather than of the inscribed tablets of the Averoni. In a 1937 letter to Fritz Leiber he harmonizes: "Gaspard du Nord's translation of the *Liber Ivonis* (whether from the corrupt Latin text or from the accursed Hyperborean original we cannot be sure—his accomplishments were dark and obscure) into medieval French in the 12th century brought about frightful consequences."

### The Analogy of Scripture

When we come at last to the text of the *Book of Eibon* presented in this volume, we widen our circle from the conceptions of Eibon's book held by Clark Ashton Smith and H. P. Lovecraft to that of Lin Carter, who wrote the lion's share of it. "It is divided into several parts, the latter sections consisting of recipes and formulae, liturgies and incantations, spells, pentacles and the like. I envision the first book as 'Histories of the Elder Magi,' that is, precautionary accounts of wizards who lived before Eibon's time. Since these usually came to a rather sticky end, I presume that he used them as parables in teaching his students . . . The second part I call 'Episodes of Eibon of Mhu Thulan,' and these are narratives of Eibon's own life, told in the first person . . . The third part is called 'Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom' and is an extended mythological treatise describing the creation of the Old Ones, the causes of their rebellion against the Elder Gods, how Earth came into the universe, and capsule histories of 'the nine ultra-telluric races' who dominated the earth in turn before the evolution of humankind."

You will shortly see for yourself how Lin Carter fleshed out this scheme, but for the present, let us note two things from his description. First, the business about the nine ultra-telluric races smacks of Madame Blavatsky, whom Lin, following Fritz Leiber, rightly lauded as one of the chief influences on pulp fantasy. It is easy to demonstrate the wide influence the ideas contained in Blavatsky's eccentric volumes *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* had on Edgar Rice Burroughs, H. P. Lovecraft, and Henry Kuttner, among others. Her various "root races" and "Children of the Fire Mist" appear in weird fiction as the Martian Tharks, the Lemurian Rmoahals, and the Coneheads of primal Australia. Second, the "Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom," a title derived from Smith's *Black Book* of plot germs, names, and story ideas, no doubt appealed to Lin because of its echo of the various ancient Egyptian papyri (e.g., *The Papyrus of Ani*, aka *The Egyptian Book of*

*the Dead*) he mined for chapter epigraphs in his novella *Curse of the Black Pharaoh* (see *The Nyarlathotep Cycle*).

I have found that the conceptual tools of biblical "Higher Criticism" can be surprisingly helpful in understanding even fictive ancient texts such as the *Book of Eibon*. This is possible because of the great verisimilitude Smith and Lovecraft attained in their intuitive and erudite characterizations of their spurious tomes. It was the same sense of the poetics and composition of ancient texts that led both to the Higher Critics' analytical paradigms and to the fictioneers' convincing simulations. To illustrate my point, several critical New Testament scholars believe the Secret Gospel of Mark ostensibly discovered by Morton Smith was actually a hoax perpetrated by him. He knew so well what an ancient text ought to look like that he would be able to fabricate one damn well (unlike the inane drivel that tries to pass for an ancient text in *The Cellophane Prophecy*). Joseph Smith was a good bit more successful, even if the result is, as Mark Twain said, "chloroform in print." So is the Book of Numbers! To put the shoe on the other foot, Lovecraft would have made an excellent biblical critic had he been so inclined.

The *Book of Eibon* you are holding can be illuminatingly compared with the Book of Isaiah. Modern scholarship has convincingly divided the Book of Isaiah into three basic sections, each primarily the work of a different author or group of authors. First Isaiah is the Prophet Isaiah ben Amoz of Jerusalem, who lived in the time of Kings Hezekiah, Uzziah, and Ahaz. He is the greatest poet among the biblical prophets. His oracles blaze with fire as well as light. His complaints against acquisitive agri-business barons foreclosing on small farmers sound as if they were written in the 1980s. His blistering denunciations of religious hypocrites who oppress the poor have lost none of their edge. He is the kind of man who would attract both enemies and disciples. Tradition/legend says he was sawn asunder by his persecutors. But his disciples kept his fire alight. They passed down his oracles in oral and written form. This material can be found, albeit interwoven with numerous interpolations great and small, in Isaiah chapters 1–39.

These "sons of the prophets," i.e., disciples of the prophets, were guilds of prophets themselves, and at length they issued their own prophecies, and the best of them were placed alongside those attributed to their master. Since the axiom of the ancient world was "The disciple is not above his teacher, but when fully trained will be like his teacher," the disciples and successors sought to remain in the shadow of Isaiah; thus their oracles were attributed to him. The greatest of these echoes of Isaiah was the anonymous prophet whom we call the Second Isaiah (or Deutero-Isaiah), the author of Isaiah chapters 40–55. Deutero-Isaiah prophesied on the eve of Cyrus' conquest of Babylon and the end of the Babylonian Exile. He is scarcely less a poet than Isaiah of Jerusalem, though his style is quite different, and he has his own

favorite themes. He is the author of the moving and mysterious Servant Songs, of which chapter 53 is the most famous. He is the greatest satirist of the Bible, lampooning idolaters who chop down a tree to sculpt and gild half of it for an idol, while using the rest as kindling (44:9–20)!

Chapters 56–66 are a mixed bag, apparently an anthology of many post-exilic Isaianites, collectively known as Third Isaiah, or Trito-Isaiah. As Paul Hanson (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic*) has shown, they were champions of democratic popular faith, rehabilitating the ancient myth of Yahve slaying the dragon to aim as a polemic thunderbolt against the arrogant priests who, with the backing of the Persian government, usurped the running of the temple (the priestly side of the dispute is found in Numbers 17).

The thing to see is that what we call the Book of Isaiah was in itself and by itself a canon of scripture for a Jewish sect, the sect of Isaiah. Every prophetic text added to it over the centuries was a prophecy of Isaiah. In precisely the same way, the Bible contains numerous law codes, dating from various centuries, most of them gathered in the Pentateuch. All are fictively attributed to Moses. Jewish Law simply was "Mosaic" Law. And for the sect of Isaiah, prophecy simply was "Isaianic" prophecy. Hence a single, very long "Book of Isaiah."

The entire scenario is implicitly paralleled in the case of the *Book of Eibon*. First, as Lovecraft informed Richard F. Searight (February 13, 1936), the *Book of Eibon* was "preserved . . . by a secret cult." These are the sons of the Prophet, the disciples of Eibon, for whom Lin Carter reasons he wrote down the "Histories of the Elder Magi," as well as many of his own autobiographical episodes, since some of them are cautionary tales, too. Such tales are precisely paralleled, not in Isaiah, but elsewhere in scripture, where we are shown the dangers of flouting the Sabbath laws (Numbers 15:32–36), challenging the unique prerogatives of the priestly hierarchy (Numbers 16:1 ff.), using the wrong incense recipe (Leviticus 10:1–3), touching the Ark of the Covenant without proper ritual preparation (2 Samuel 6:6–7), daring to ridicule a prophet (2 Kings 2:23–25), welshing on one's church pledge (Acts 5:1–11), and taking the eucharist lightly (1 Corinthians 11:28–32).

Just as the Book of Isaiah can be apportioned among three principal authors, so can the *Book of Eibon*. The first Eibon is, of course, Clark Ashton Smith, author of "The Coming of the White Worm," chapter IX. Deutero-Eibon is Lin Carter, who wrote by far the bulk of the book. The Trito-Eibonic stratum is the work, primarily, of Laurence J. Cornford, who had, purely as a hobby, ventured over many years to fill in some of the gaps in the *Book* as Carter had outlined it. Other Trito-Eibonic writers include John R. Fultz and yours truly.



I am proud to take a role analogous to that of Zayd ibn-Thabit, the Muslim savant charged by the Caliph Abu-bekr to collect the various individual Surahs of the Koran for the first time into a book.

—Robert M. Price  
Redactor of Mhu Thulan  
April 18, 1997

## About "History and Chronology of *The Book of Eibon*"

Obviously modeled upon Lovecraft's 1927 pamphlet "History of the *Necronomicon*" and taking its title from August Derleth's edition of HPL's work ("History and Chronology of the *Necronomicon*"), this bibliographical pseudohistory pretends to provide the translation and publication history of the *Book of Eibon*. As such, it parallels my brief survey in the Introduction of Lovecraft's developing concept of the *Book of Eibon*. But whereas I have sought to trace the (by no means unilinear) evolution of the concept in HPL's mind, Lin Carter provided a harmonized account intertextual with the published stories themselves, part of their narrative universe, the history of the book occurring implicitly in and between the stories, not lying behind them in the minds of HPL and CAS.

It is obvious that a bibliographic pedigree such as this (or that given by Robert E. Howard for Von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* in "The Thing on the Roof") has the function of supplying verisimilitude. It makes the *Book of Eibon* seem more like a real book. But that is not its only function. Such a "history and chronology" also serves as a distancing device. It prevents the reader from too soon or too easily accepting the emerging character of the grimoire as an actual revelation of arcane truth. Such a conclusion must develop only gradually, as the reader is at first encouraged to maintain his mundane disbelief and then weaned away from it by slow degrees. Only so can dread and ominous unease mount. If the supernatural be taken for granted at the start we are dealing with a fantasy, like *The Lord of the Rings*, where the supernatural is defined into the ground rules of the narrative world and cannot awe us. Thus the horror author wants to seem to discredit the magic book first, make it appear like some old scrap book of superstitions, and later surprise us when it really works.

Let me provide an analogy, a perfect one, I think. In my teaching of biblical studies, I find students are regularly dismayed when I use historical criticism to disenchant the Bible. They have learned to take the Bible as the Word of God, infallible and inerrant, as a given. For them it is practically a fact of nature. What criticism does is to penetrate the holy guerdon of pious propaganda and restore the Bible from the category of nature to that of history. As I like to put it, criticism shows that the Bible did not simply fall out of the sky one day. The marks of its origin among real human beings, not gods, are everywhere evident, once one removes the dogmatic blinders. Almost every biblical writing, for example, can be shown to be a patchwork of traditions and interpolated texts having accumulated over the centuries. These texts were hand-copied over many ages, suffering textual corruptions

and "corrections" which can now never be certainly restored. Even the choice of which belong to the canon of scripture is hardly self-evident, and the table of contents was many centuries under dispute and remains so today.

All this, however, makes the spiritual riches of the Bible (or the Koran or the Upanishads, of which the same things may be shown) all the more wondrous, seeing that they break forth from pages which are entirely subject to the vicissitudes of all merely human writings, which is just what they are. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Even so with the *Book of Eibon* (or the *Necronomicon*). The books are shown to have trickled down the centuries by hook and by crook, sometimes almost haphazardly, becoming garbled in translation, bowdlerized, corrupted, like Wilbur Whateley's incomplete "Dee copy," which nonetheless is able to tell him how to "open to Yog-Sothoth." Here the revelations are anything but edifying, but the trick is the same. Despite the fact that these books are revealed to be mere human books, just as Wizard Whateley and Eibon and Alhazred are not gods but eccentric old men, the black truths they relate surprise us by turning out to be all too real.

"History and Chronology of the *Book of Eibon*" was originally published as a Charnel House Chapbook by Lin Carter in 1984.

# History and Chronology of *The Book of Eibon*

by Lin Carter

## I. THE HISTORY

According to the traditional account, the so-called *Book of Eibon* was originally written in the forgotten, Tsath-yo language somewhat more than a century before the onset of the last Ice Age by the wizard Eibon of Mhu Thulan in a prehistoric polar land which the Greek and Roman writers, ages later, knew as "Hyperborea."

This "primordial manual of sorcery" was a "collection of dark and baleful myths, liturgies, rituals and incantations both evil and esoteric."<sup>1</sup> Also, it preserved "the oldest incantations, and the secret, man-forgotten lore of Iog-Sotot (Yog-Sothoth) and of Sodagui (Tsathoggua)."<sup>2</sup>

After the death (or disappearance) of its original author, the text was compiled, from manuscripts and treatises found amongst his papers by Eibon's favorite disciple Cyron of Varaad. Cyron himself wrote an account, the *Vita Ivonis*, of his Master's life, and something of his last days (which became chapter ix of book II).<sup>3</sup>

A century or so later, when Hyperborea was abandoned before the advance of the glaciers, a copy or copies of the *Book* were saved from the collapse of Hyperborean civilization and were carried to the mainland of Europe by the members of a secret brotherhood of sorcerers, who revered Eibon's memory.<sup>4</sup>

Copies of the *Book* probably existed in the first post-Hyperborean settlements of Zobna, and Lomar, and in the later cities of Sarnath in the southerly land of Mnar.

Many centuries later, followers of the great Prophet Kish (who foretold the destruction and Fall of Sarnath) rendered the *Book* into the language of their epoch, either shortly before or at some period after their flight from Sarnath the Doomed.<sup>5</sup> The *Book of Eibon* is "said to have come down through a series of manifold translations from

(the) prehistoric original," and this is the first of these of which we have any record.<sup>6</sup>

The tradition asserts that a Punic translation from the Kishite was made, about 1600 B.C., by the Syro-Phoenician scholar, Imilcar Narba. There are faint traces of a Byzantine-Greek (or Graeco-Bactrian—the authorities differ widely) version made at some date subsequent to the Punic by an unknown writer, but we have merely rumors of this and scant evidence.

Still later, perhaps as early as the ninth or as late as the tenth century A.D., the Medieval Latin translation of C. Philippus Faber, a copy of which is preserved in the Library of Miskatonic University,<sup>7</sup> was written.

At some period before the year 1200, it is thought most likely, the notorious necromancer Nathaire (whose name was raised frequently and censoriously in the later witchcraft trials in the ancient French province of Averogne) discovered a copy of the Greek version in, it was rumored, the tomb of an ancient wizard. (Some have speculated that it was the same Graeco-Bactrian tomb in which the *Testaments of Carnuamagos*, to which Hyperborean origins are also ascribed, was uncovered about 935 A.D.)<sup>8</sup>

It was probably during the closing years of the 13th century that the celebrated alchemist and occult scholar, Gaspard du Nord of Yvones, made his famous translation of the *Book* into Norman-French, calling it the *Livre d'Eibon*. He had for his text not the Latin version of Caius Philippus Faber, the *Liber Ivonis*, but the Greek. It would almost *have* to have been the same copy excavated by Nathaire, since du Nord had studied diabolism and necromancy, or so it was later testified, from Nathaire, and only quit the coven of Nathaire about a year before the commencement of the shocking event (called the "Ylourgne Horror") which brought about the downfall of his former mentor, and which began in the spring of the year 1218.<sup>10</sup>

\* \* \*

Insofar as scholarship knows, throughout its long history, the *Book of Eibon* has never been printed, only circulated in manuscript among the secret cults of Europe and America. Even during the persecutions, when ecclesiastic authorities mistakenly (but understandably) suppressed such cults, believing them all Satan-worshippers or witchcraft

covens, it failed to extirpate the circulation of Eibon's malefic and nightmarish tome.

Only in this century, so far as we know or may presume, has any attempt been made to put du Nord's Norman-French into English: however the version whereof I speak has only, as yet, appeared in part, and is not yet completed.

## II. THE CHRONOLOGY

I append here an outline of the chronology as given by the famed German occultist, Friedrich-Wilhelm von Junzt:

From *Die Unausprechlichen Kulte*,  
Appendix ix (Dusseldorf, 1839)

1. Written by the wizard Eibon in the Tsath-yo language in Hyperborea before the Ice Age.
2. Arranged and edited into its present form by Eibon's pupil, Cyron of Varaad, who contributed the *Vita Ivonis* and the text of lib. II, ch. x.
3. Carried to Zobna and, later, to Lomar and Sarnath when Hyperborea was abandoned to the advancing glaciers.
4. *The Kishite Revelation*. Translated into the tongue of Mnar by followers of the Prophet Kish, probably after their flight from the doomed city.
5. *The Punic Version*. Made by the Syro-Phoenician writer, Imilcar Narba circa 1600 B.C. All copies of the original Tsath-yo text probably lost by this time.
6. *Liber Ivonis*. Latin version by C. Philippus Faber. (10th Century A.D.?)
7. *Livre d'Eibon*. Translated into Norman-French, late 13th Century, by M. Gaspard du Nord.
8. Copies of the du Nord translation were circulated in secret throughout Europe during the Medieval period. The book, in any version, is not known to have ever been printed.

(Note that the Herr Doktor seems unaware of the rumored Greek translation.)

### III. NOTES TO THE HISTORY

- <sup>1</sup> Clark Ashton Smith, "Ubbo-Sathla."
- <sup>2</sup> Smith, "The Holiness of Azederac."
- <sup>3</sup> That is, "The Door to Saturn."
- <sup>4</sup> "Exact data regarding the Pnakotic Mss. are lacking. They were brought down from Hyperborea by a secret cult (allied to that which preserved the *Book of Eibon*) & are in the secret Hyperborean language." H. P. Lovecraft, in a letter to Richard F. Searight, dated February 13, 1936. *Selected Letters*, vol. V.
- <sup>5</sup> Lovecraft, "The Doom that Came to Sarnath." Carter, "The Stone from Mnar," (unpublished).
- <sup>6</sup> Smith, "Ubbo-Sathla."
- <sup>7</sup> According to Lovecraft in a letter published in *Dreams and Fancies*.
- <sup>8</sup> According to Smith in "Ubbo-Sathla," Gaspard du Nord translated the *Eibon* from a Greek version.
- <sup>9</sup> For the histories of Gaspard du Nord, of the infamous Nathaire and the "Ylourgne Horror," see Smith's story, "The Colossus of Ylourgne."
- <sup>10</sup> The presumed date of du Nord's translation—"late 13th century"—is argued because Smith, in "Ylourgne," informs us that du Nord, who obtained the manuscript in 1281, "lived in much honor to a ripe age." In his published letters, H. P. Lovecraft persistently refers du Nord to the 12th century, which is incorrect. \*

### About "The Life of Eibon"

The purpose of ancient documents like this one was to serve as succession charters for the author who was or posed as the disciple of the saint he eulogized. Who better to lead the community in the Master's absence? One ancient example is *The Life of Saint Anthony* by Athanasius. He wrote it in the midst of his contest with Arius over the issue of the divine nature of the Christian *Logos*. The point was to claim the legacy of the great hermit for Athanasius, and so to claim the ascetic's sanctity on behalf of Athanasius' theological opinions. Another well known example would be the Gospel of John. As the *Logos*/Jesus "who is in the bosom of the Father" is the only one to have seen the Father and made him known (John 1:18); so the "Beloved Disciple" who lies "in Jesus' bosom" (13:23) at the Last Supper is the privileged channel of access to the Risen Christ. The ancients did not sit in chairs to dine but lay on couches or on the floor, propping themselves on one elbow. With thirteen men reclining around a low table, they would all be pretty much "in each others' bosoms," and the Beloved Disciple reclines next to Jesus. Just as one must come to the Father through Jesus (14:6), so Peter, if he wants to ask Jesus something (13:24-25) or follow Jesus in his Passion, must go through the Beloved Disciple (18:15-16). Just as Jesus is the Door to the Father (10:9; 14:6), i.e., one's only access to him, and as the *Babs* (doors) to the Hidden Imam functioned as his visible spokesmen to the Shi'ite community, so does the Beloved Disciple function as the destined Paraclete (16:7-15) for the Johannine community, hence the crisis ensuing upon his death (the presupposition of the Johannine Appendix, chapter 21).

So in the present case: by writing this hagiography of the wizard Eibon, Cyron sought to position himself as the caliph of the group of Eibon's disciples, playing Elisha to his master's Elijah. As the writer of such a document, Cyron (like the Beloved Disciple or Athanasius) established himself as the bearer of the official, canonical picture of Eibon that would continue to guide the faithful.

"The Life of Eibon by Cyron of Varaad" was first issued as a Charnel House chapbook in 1988.

# The Life of Eibon according to Cyron of Varaad

by Lin Carter

## I.

**T**he sorcerer Eibon, son of Milaab, was born in the city of Iqqua in the Year of the Red Worm. In that same year the doom whereof the White Sybil had spake a century before came down upon the famous city of Commoriom and the king thereof, Lorquamethros, and all his folk, rose up and fled into the south to establish the city of Uzuldaroum amidst the jungles of Zesh in the land of Pharnath, abandoning forever splendid Commoriom to the abnormality Kyngathin Zhaum.

This Milaab had been Keeper of the Archives to Xactura, prince of Iqqua, and long had he been high in the favor of that monarch. But when that the child Eibon had attained to his second lustrum, which was about the time of the death of King Lorquamethros, the ecclesiarchs of the goddess Yhoundeh drave forth the family of Milaab into exile amidst the wilderness of Phenquor with their persecutions, wherefrom the father of Eibon died not long thereafter and the homeless and orphaned child sought refuge with a friendly enchanter, one Zylac, to whom he was apprenticed in the year that King Pharnavootra succeeded to the throne of Uzuldaroum.

Now this Zylac was a celebrated magician who was then well-entered into the second century of his life, which by his art he had extended to an inordinate length as did Eibon himself in his own time. The mage was then in his one hundred eleventh year, having been born a year before the Sybil came into these parts out of the drear and frozen wastes of Polarion to prophesy concerning that which would in time befall great Commoriom, which is to say the Doom thereof. In his own youth the eminent Zylac had been the foremost of the disciples of Hormagor, the wizard of Abormis, whose curious history was writ down by Eibon in his Chapter the Seventh.

From his tenth into his three-and-twentieth year did Eibon dwell in the black house of Zylac, which arose on the westernmost shores

of Mhu Thulan, the province being at that time barren and uninhabited of men. There did he study the arts of necromancy and the three kinds of magic under the tutelage of that savant who was accounted the foremost in all of Hyperborea during his age. And there in the house of Zylac did Eibon bethink himself secure forever from the vengeance of the inquisitors of Yhoundeh, for that he dwelt afar from the customary habitations of men.

When that it came to pass, in the fullness of time, that Zylac perished from his imprudent uses of the Zloigmish rituals, as Eibon hath related in his Chapter the First, the youthful sorcerer rose up and fled therefrom, leaving behind him the house of black gneiss on its solitary headland which overlooketh the cold waters of the boreal main. This I consider to have eventuated in the thirteenth year that Pharnavootra reigned in Uzuldaroum. Thus did Eibon commence his wanderings through many lands, at the first alone, but later in the company of a certain Zaljis whom he encountered in Oggon-Zhai. This youth was a fellow-seeker after dubious and occult knowledge, and together this twain sought wisdom wherever it might be found, whether in the eldritch fanes of age-forgotten Utressor or amongst the shadow-haunted tombs of Ulphar. Of the many and uncanny perils encountered by the twain beneath the purple spires of Mnardis, and of that curious affliction which befell the aged king of Zaroul, I shall say naught: for of these matters hath Eibon himself aforesaid writ.

## II.

**I**t was in that year wherein the Empress Amphyrene was crowned that the sorcerer Eibon returned from his travelings to that drear and desolate promontory of Mhu Thulan which fronted upon the sea, and abode once more in the black house of Zylac which time had cleansed of its horror as all things are cleansed by the passage of the years.

And therein did he abide thereafter for all of the years of his life upon this Earth, as is well known amongst men. For by this time he waxed exceeding great in his fame, and was accounted as eminent as had been the thaumaturge Zylac before him. Throughout the one-and-thirty year reign of that empress did Eibon strive mightily to perfect himself in his science; and it was in the Year of the Green Spider, when the old empress succumbed and the prince consort ascended to the throne as Emperor Charnametros, that I, Cyron, did become

apprenticed to the celebrated Eibon. I was then at the terminus of my fourth lustrum and from my natal city of Varaad in the land of Phenquor had I come to study at the feet of the master, for that all of my life had I heard sung the famousness of Eibon.

He was then in his five-and-sixtieth year and by that time was he reckoned the most potent and sagacious of the sorcerers of Hyperborea. For twenty years thereafter did I serve as his lowly apprentice, studying the arts of necromancy and the three kinds of magic, and ever did I find him to be the kindest of men, as he was the wisest of teachers and the most accomplished of magicians.

In his person the Master Eibon was slight of build and sallow of complexion, with a round face for ever beardless, his lips adorned with thin and silken and drooping mustachios. His eyes were thoughtful and hooded and amused, and he held himself fastidiously aloof from the ways of men; however, he possessed a whimsical cast of mind and a mocking humor, and was much given to ironic droleries. I bethink me that few things mattered aught to him, and fewer still he cared for overmuch; and little of life or of the world did he take very seriously, the least of all himself.

I can see him now, as oftentimes I saw him a-strolling in his garden of curious trees, his slight form attired in thin robes of silk, bepatterned rose-and-golden after the manner of weavers of Pnar. With his hands clasped behind his back he would saunter to and fro the length of his pleasaunce, all the while discoursing with subtle wisdom and wry wit upon some deep and arcane topic, his brows wrapt in the immense and voluminous, bescarfed tarboosh which he affected after the fashions of the days of his youth.

Full many were the disciples of Eibon who came to the house of black gneiss to study thaumaturgy at the master's feet. But of them all I believe that it was I, Cyron, was the dearest to his heart; and this belief I cherish within mine own. Throughout the empery of Charnametros, and the first years of Saphirion which followed, I abode in the tall house of Eibon. But in the eighth year of Saphirion's empery, when that I was attained to the age of forty, did I part in amicable fashion from my master and eligned myself hence to the city of Varaad where I dwelt ever after, devoting my years to the practice of wizardry. Many were the merchants and artisans of that city, aye, and the lords and burghers, as well, who vied

to purchase their charms and spells, their periapts and divinations, from the wizard Cyron that had learnt his craft from none other than the celebrated Eibon.

But no more shall I narrate in this vein, lest that it be said of me that I wrote more of the pupil than of the teacher.

### III.

Vardanax was the last of the Dynasty of the Uzuldarines to name himself by the name of emperor. When he died in the tenth year after his coronation and his sister, Queen Cunambria, succeeded to the throne, it could be seen throughout the land that the cultus of Yhoundeh was grown vast and prodigiously powerful, for the hierophant and grand inquisitor of the elk goddess, one Morghi by name, didst proclaim it far and wide to the faithful that my master Eibon was a depraved and infamous heretic; the which he would else have forborne to do, in fear of Eibon, had he not felt himself secure and confident in the preeminence of his authority.

The inquisitor Morghi further caused it to be bruited about that my master was given to worship in secret and by stealthy ways the Abomination Tsathoggua, an obscure and suppressed divinity which had formerly enjoyed the celebrance of the aboriginal Voormis in pre-human cycles. These grunting and furry troglodytes, a dwindling vestige of primal eons, yet lingered as survivors of a forgotten age in the mountainous or remote or bejungled parts of Hyperborea which were by the children of men shunned for that same reason.

Thus spake the inquisitor Morghi. But it was whispered abroad that the persecution of my master was due to other reasons than merely the theological lapse into heretical practices whereof he stood accused. For this Morghi was himself become a thaumaturge of some renown; but as he ascended in the mastery of the penumbral arts, ever he found to his disgruntlement that the great Eibon had transcended his every achievement. Whether from pious horror at the sin of daemonolatry, as he so vociferously claimed, or from the simple jealousy of a lesser magus for one who hath excelled him in the mastery of the uttermost arcana, it was indubitable that the hierophant would never rest until Eibon had expiated his iniquities in a manner sufficiently sanguinary and gruesome as to prove exemplary to all others who wavered withal in their rectitude.

In the fullness of time I came to fear for my master, for all too well didst I know the somber truth of the imprecations spewed forth upon his name by the fanatical Morghi. In those lustrums which had followed upon the demise of Zylac, during his wanderings through many lands, Eibon had in sooth become a devotee of the obsolete and interdicted cultus of Tsathoggua, as he himself hath writ in his Chapter the Fifteenth. This demon dwells in the gloom of subterranean N'kai, a cavernous region situate beneath the roots of Mount Voornithadareth in the high Eiglophians. And thither did Eibon descend in the daring and valor of his youth, led by Phraaponthus, the *shantak*-bird, the which beckoned him on, deep and ever deeper, into the Abyss.

Thereinto he descended in search of such tenebrous and demon-guarded lore as might only be had from the vile and unspeakable lips of That which abideth from the eldermost beginnings of the earth unto this very hour amidst the putrescence of the Pit. And what he sought, he gained: for the Abomination Tsathoggua is equivocal and ambiguous of mind, and doth not invariably view all mortal men with malign or anthropophagic intent, but taketh, betimes, an odd quirklike liking for some of them who descend thither to the place whereat He wallows, in quest of Elder Lore.

Thus had I cause enough and more to entertain fears for my master, knowing that like his father afore him he had hearkened to the whisperings of the Black Thing that squatteth in the gloom of N'kai. Oft, indeed, had he urged upon me that I should betake myself thither and do likewise, for only thus (he would solemnly reiterate) are the Ultimate Mysteries to be plumbed. But ever, and that steadfastly, did I decline to do this: for I am of Varaad, and from that day, now ages gone, when first our ancestors came hither into these parts from dreamy Kamula amidst the Hills of Zalgara in time-forgotten Thuria, fled before the coming-down of the war-like Atlanteans, have we Varaadishmen worshipped the tribal goddess of our forefathers. From that far day to this have we staunchly adhered to our tutelary totem, which be, as all men know, Ixeera the cat goddess. Mayhap it be true that the goddess be naught more than the primal fetish of my race, as mine own master hath oftentimes admonished; but ever have I devoutly numbered myself among her celebrants. Even now, as I indite these words with reed-pen cut from

the froned calamus, dipt in the inky exudations of the squid, one of Ixeera's small and supple *felidae* rubs its round and silken head athwart my knee with many affectionate slumbrous purrings. Not for such as I, the worshipping of Tsathoggua!

#### IV.

But to return to my History: in ordinary times 'twould have been of scant concern to such as Eibon of Mhu Thulan, did the frenzied zealots of Yhoundeh rave against him spitefully, for he dwelt afar off at the uttermost extremity of Mhu Thulan, and all that region from Pnar to the polar sea hath never been subject to the magistracy of Iqqua.

But in the past hundred year or such, the cult of Yhoundeh had risen to ascendancy; not only in Iqqua, where it first displaced and then drove out the antique worship of quaint, ichthyoidal little Qualk, the kindly god of fishermen; but also in the great city of Oggon-Zhai, where of old the folk thereof made homage to Kathruale, whose fanes be now neglected overmuch; in Zuth and Narooob, too; until at length all of the land of Zabdamar which fronts upon the sea groaned beneath the dominion of the ecclesiarchs of the *elk* goddess.

And ever since Prince Tuluum followed his aged grandsire, Xactura, to the throne of Iqqua, have the priests of Yhoundeh wielded both the power temporal and the power spiritual over that sea-affronting realm: and in the reign of Raanor, who succeeded Tuluum, the principedom of the Iqquasians laid claim to Mhu Thulan, or to those parts thereof the which bordered upon their country to the north, which is to say the westernmost portion of the province, and established jurisdiction and authority over that desolate region formerly untenanted by men, if not in sooth dominion thereover. The present prince, Pharool, second of that name, had yielded supinely to the encroaching usurpations of the hierophant as meekly as ever did the four sovereigns which preceded him. Thus had Morghi not only the sanctions of law but also the royal prerogative to indict the Master Eibon, the which authorities he was not overlong to employ against him.

It was in the vernal month of the Year of the Black Tiger, in the third lustrum of Queen Cunambria's reign, when my master came



suddenly and in secret during the nocturnal hours unto my lapis minaret which overgazeth the glories of Varaad. Seven-and-forty years had transpired since last I clasped his hand, or looked into his smiling and hooded and cynical eyes, or heard his wry, humorous, once-familiar mode of speech; but in all that time, whilst I had grown grey and infirm and was much stricken in years, he had not altered by a whit. Albeit that he was then attained unto the prodigious age of one hundred and two-and-thirty, having thence eclipsed by no fewer than eight years the span achieved by the venerable Zylac, he seemed nonetheless still nimble and slim, unbent by old age, his sly and mocking visage smooth and unlined, and his deep sardonic eyes undimmed.

With him he bore a plentitude of books and scrolls, of graven tablets and folios, the which I recognized to be the choicest and most valuable tomes and treatises from his librarium; and these he beseeched me to preserve against theft or harm and to keep safe against the occasion of his return. There were amongst this trove many a tome or document of sorcerous lore most precious and exceeding rare—aye, precious beyond the dreams of avarice and rare above the keenest aspirations of the bibliophile. And when I inquired of Eibon wherefore I shouldst ward these books and scriptures, he but grimly smiled and answered, saying, So that they fall not into the hands of Morghi! And, these admonitions having spake, he said naught more, but bade me a brief farewell. And never again thenceafter did I look upon his face, or leastwise not with the eyes of the flesh. For not long after this did there come down upon him the ireful Morghi, and the henchmen of Morghi, whereupon befell the strange and full marvelous evanishment of Eibon from the bourns of men, and with him Morghi, too, whereat the world still wonders.

## V.

**I**n the years which followed upon the heels of these events, have I toiled over the scrolls and volumes of Eibon, and perused the dark and terrible volumes of equivocal lore thus bequeathed into my keeping. Not the least amongst the which were the Voormish Tablets, whereon of old the dreadful arcana of the troglodytes wast engraven by uncouth and bestial paws; and that which is still decipherable by men of the Pnakotic Manuscripts; and the Kadath Record, whose

nightmare pages contain much that is suggestive of an authorship in no wise to be considered remotely human nor even mammalian; and those of the Rituals of Yhe which survive into our epoch to preserve those black myths which are the terrible legacy of elder Mu; and the Parchments of Pnom, containing both the Greater and the Lesser Exorcisms of that magus, together with his unwholesome speculations into the true origin of man, with disturbing hints of a parent-age cosmical, awesome, blasphemous and, happily, unproven.

There were amongst these full many of the profound and incomensurable writings of Eibon himself, and treatises upon the supermundane sciences, together with a scripture of inordinate length concerning the Descent of Tsathoggua and His Brethren out of the venerable Pnom; which is to say naught of the veritable and unquestioned Grimoire of Eibon, into whose more tenebrous pages I have looked but once, then nevermore: for an old man needeth his rest and there be that within the testaments of Eibon which would render for ever unendurable the dreams of a mere Cyron.

His folios contained redactions of that which his abstruse and recondite studies into antiquarian matters had uncovered concerning the lives and times of the primal magi of former cycles. Well and fondly do I remember these fables from the years I knelt at the master's feet imbibing wisdom; for it had ever been his wont to relate these to his students in the nature of parables or cautionary tales, in obvious hope that we might learn from the several quaint and, betimes, gruesome ends which had befallen these unfortunate savants, to exhibit in our own practice of sorcery a restraint and a prudence superior to theirs.

It became in time apparent from a scrutiny of these parchments that he had been in the midst of assembling them into a sequential narrative, which labors were interrupted by the untimely persecutions of Morghi. I betook upon myself the tasks of completing that which had been begun.

Time passed, as wast ever time's way, and my master returned not to resume his customary habitation in that house of black gneiss upon its drear and solitudinous promontory whose steep and precipitous shores are washed-about by the cold waves of the ultimate polar sea. Nor would he return ever again from whence he had fled, for at length did I ascertain by mine art the curious and unlikely termination of his

career, in penumbral spheres remote from our own, and that which transpired in the far and fabulous bourns which lie beyond the ill-rumored tablet of ultra-telluric metal whereof the elder magi whisper much, and little that be wholesome, and the which wast known of old as the Door to Cykranosh.

This uncanny Portal had been a gift made unto Eibon by the dark divinity whose votary he had long accounted himself, even the dire and dubious Tsathoggua; the daemon had made present of it, saying, in a manner sly and cryptic, that in the uttermost extremity of his need my master should find it as a Door the which leadeth to a far haven of safe repose. But what the Black Abomination spake not of, was that once a man passeth therethrough, he can never return thereby again. Of these mysteries did I inquire of my master's own spirit, conjured by mine art into a wizard's speculum of black steel as he himself had taught me aforetime, therefore I know whereof I speak; but of these matters I shall speak no more in this place, for I have elsewhere writ an account of the latter days of Eibon, and of that Door to Cykranosh, and the prodigies thereof, in a narrative set down in mine own poor words, the which have I added herein as Chapter the Twentieth.

## VI.

**T**he old queen hath died, and with her the dynasty of the Uzuldarines is ended, as well; and it be rumored amongst men that her nephew, Zorquus, prince of Cerngoth, will reign henceforward in Uzuldaroum, and his son, Pharapha, after him. But these are matters which concern me little, for I doubt me that ever shall I live to see them come to pass.

This very eve did I raise Charnadis from the shadows, even Charnadis the Daemon of Time, to whom the ages past and ages yet to come are as one, for such is the fullness of the vision of Charnadis. And from the daemon did I inquire after the manner of my demise, and from the lips of Charnadis did I learn that erelong and in the first year of the empery of Zorquus shall I journey hence into that vast and mysterious Enigma the which lieth beyond Death's black and ineluctable gates. But ere mine eyes grow dim and my hand loseth his cunning, have I set down, in words however cursory and unequal to

the task, this poor account of the life and times of the Master Eibon, so that his name shall not be forgotten on the lips of men.

And into the hands of mine own pupil, Alabbac, shall I deliver in the hour of my death this very *Book of Eibon* which I have at length and in the fullness of time compiled from amongst his scrolls and scriptures, so that the wisdom of Eibon may survive my time to the enlightenment of generations yet unborn. This is as my master would have wished; and so I discharge my trust to him.

## VII.

**H**ere endeth the Life of Eibon according to Cyron of Varaad, which Alabbac of Mnardis had from his teacher in the hour of his death, and the which was passed on to me, Harood of Kalnoora, in the time of the death of King Pharapha in the three-and-twentieth year of his reign, and of the coronation of Thaarapion; the which shall I also bequeath to the wisest of mine own disciples when that my last hour draweth nigh, so that this lore and wisdom shall not be lost to men.

This true and veritable copy of the *Book of Eibon* was set down in mine own hand in the sixteenth year of the reign of King Rhastazoul, the fourth monarch of the Cerngothic Dynasty to hold the throne of Uzuldaroum, the which was even the one hundredth year since the vanishment from this Earth of the great sorcerer Eibon. In this same year was the Coming of the Great Ice whereby was the province of Mhu Thulan whelmed under the eternal snows and thereby rendered forever uninhabitable by men. \*

## About "Eibon Saith"

Modern histories of philosophy attempt to catalogue the evolving systems of thought spun out by the great thinkers. Ancient philosophers and sages were many of them no less systematic in their thinking than their modern heirs, as witness Plato and Aristotle. But a number of the ancients saw that they could communicate best by means of aphorisms pointed like arrows into the bad consciences and befuddled consciousnesses of their contemporaries. Like the Hasidic masters of East European Jewry, sages and sophists like Diogenes of Sinope and Socrates were best enshrined in the genre of *apophthegmata*, anecdotes, or pronouncement stories (also called *chreia*). These were bare stories supplying just enough in the way of setting and characters to set the reader/hearer up for the punch line: a right-between-the-eyes saying from the Master. This might be a proverb or a joke; in any case, it would be memorable and brief. If it could, a pronouncement story would be only a pronouncement, not a story, but sometimes the rocket needs a launch pad.

There are many, many collections of such *apophthegmata* the world over. The gospels contain many. Diogenes Laertius relied upon them for his stock in trade in his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*. There were many making the rounds, because in the Hellenistic age, students of rhetoric were commonly assigned to show how well they understood a figure like Socrates by making up anecdotes to depict him saying what one would expect Socrates to say to a given question, in a particular hypothetical situation. Thus we cannot tell in many cases which if any such anecdotes actually go back to the sage whose name they bear, even when they seem to ring true.

I have here adopted the technique of Diogenes Laertius who summarized what he could of the life of each thinker he chronicled, and then appended a list of apophthegms to bring the figure to life for the reader. Lin Carter's Cyron of Varaad has told us the life of his master Eibon. I have merely appended some of the great mage's pearls of wisdom. I will not hide the fact that Eibon of Mhu Thulan, as he spoke to me, partakes more than a little of Diogenes of Sinope the Cynic, of Jesus as we meet him in the Sufi sayings tradition, and of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. He who has ears, let him hear.

## Eibon Saith; or, The Apophthegmata of Eibon

by Robert M. Price

1. When asked why he preferred the company of demons to that of men, Eibon replied, "Because demons are not hypocrites."
2. Once when Morghi the Inquisitor accosted Eibon the mage in the marketplace, saying, "O Eibon, how long wilt thou worship false gods?" he is said to have replied, "Until someone showeth me a true one to worship."
3. One of his disciples asked him why a wizard must never take a wife. Eibon said to him, "For a wizard must needs silence the demons, and a wife can no man silence."
4. A certain rich man said unto Eibon, "O mage, what profiteth thee thy learning, when thou hast no possessions from it?" Eibon answered, saying, "He who knows the world owns the world."
5. A devil mocked the sorcerer Eibon, saying, "O mortal, pitiful is thy lot! For thy knowledge can never make thee aught but mortal!" But Eibon answered him, "I am not the vapour that strains to fill the sky and is lost; rather, I am the empty jar that seeketh but to be filled."
6. A youth came and said to him, "Eibon of Mhu Thulan, men say thou art very evil." The magus smiled upon him and answered, "It is that they lack the word for a greater good."
7. One day Eibon sat teaching his disciples of the ways of magic, saying, "Suppose I say unto you, the sum of two and two is three. Would any of you believe it? Rightly not." He then took in his hand a ball of iron. "Now if I tell you the sum of two and two is three and I make the ball to vanish—" and here, before all their eyes, the ball did vanish—"what have I thus proven?"  
And one ventured, "My lord, thou hast proven that the sum of two and two is indeed three!"

"Nay," said Eibon, "I have but proven that I am able to make the ball to vanish, and nothing more."

8. Eibon of Mhu Thulan was said to be expert in the atts of necromancy. They say how once he held converse with a mummy many centuries dead. The mummy said to him, "I envy thee, for that thou still knowest thy joys." But Eibon answered, "And I envy thee, for that thy sorrows are all behind thee."

9. In elder times the land did suffer much on account of the ill-will between the wizards who little trusted one another, and each did begrudge his fellow his own secrets. When asked why he stood aloof from such feudings, Eibon answered, "My quarrel is with ignorance, not with the ignorant."

10. A fearful man besought the mage Eibon to give him some talisman to protect him against demon possession. But Eibon said, "O man, are devils greater fools than men, that they should seek to possess that which hath no value?"

11. One day as the sorcerer Eibon made his way through the countryside, a swine did speak to him with the voice of a man, saying, "Have mercy, gentle Eibon! I am in truth Beliarnoth the merchant, and a witch hath imprisoned me in the body of a swine!" Whereupon Eibon did answer, "Rather, O pig, I should say the crone did but restore thy true form, freeing thee from the false seeming of a man."

12. Of all the disciples of Eibon, one found it harder than the rest to comprehend the magical precepts, so that oft had the mage to repeat himself. One day, in that disciple's absence, the others gathered round their master and asked him, "Lord Eibon, wherefore bearest thou with such obtuseness?" And he did rebuke them, saying, "For in another life, I am he."

13. A drought wasted the land, and many died, both men and beasts. And most of the villagers looked unto Eibon's tower and said it was even his doing. Reporting these things to him, his servant asked why his master sought not to vindicate himself. He answered, "For it is better that men should blame than that they should despair."

14. Eibon saith, "If the Lord of the world offer thee the world with the right hand and knowledge with the left, choose knowledge; for the world not known is vain.

"If he offer thee everlasting life with the right hand and knowledge with the left, choose knowledge; for better is it to know oneself dying than to live forever heedless."

15. A comely succubus appeared unto Eibon and sought to tempt him, wooing him with honeyed tones: "Come and take me, O Eibon, for am I not delightful?" Eibon looked up from his scrolls, saying, "Nay, but I should say thou art the most exceedingly wretched among creatures, for that, being but the semblance of flesh, thou hast nonetheless a carnal mind, forfeiting the blessings both of flesh, which thou art not, and of spirit, which thou art."

16. Some approached Eibon, having been warned by the Sybil that all of Hyperborea should one day fall prey to the creeping ice. "Whither shall we flee, O Eibon?" He answered them, "What, think ye there is some country wherein the Grim Reaper shall not find a man at last?"

17. When asked what advantage he found in serving Zhothaquah the sleeping god, Eibon replied, "Rather would I believe in a god that slecpeth than that the travails of the world should be the will of a waking providence."

18. Once Eibon sat in the drinking-house when one began to calumniate the Voormis and to urge war be made against them. Whereupon quoth Eibon, "Wherefore? What evil have they done thee, O man?"

The man smote the table and answered, "They are little more than beasts, with their shambling gait and shaggy pelts!"

And Eibon laughed, saying, "Just yesterday I sat among the Voormis, and much sport did they make of you men, piebald and leprous as you seem to them."

19. Eibon saith, "Better to die from ignorance than to kill from ignorance."

20. When asked why he kept no slaves, he replied, "For the spirit within man is a wild beast, and if one spend all his time taming a beast, he hath no time left to ride the beast." \*

# Book One

Histories of the Elder Magi

## About "The Double Tower"

What exactly is going on in this story? The tower is double because it is temporarily in two places at once, and this happens because Zloigm tries a bit too hard to get his unwilling guest to spill the beans. "So you won't talk, eh? We have ways of making you talk!" He causes a space warp and, finally, a body-switcheroo between himself and the tight-lipped (actually no-lipped) mildew-man. It may be poetic justice for Zloigm to be trapped within the fungoid form of his torture victim, but how are we to understand the plot as issuing in this outcome? There really must be some logical progression, or we are going to be forced to conclude Lin just ran out of gas and fell back on his threadbare device of having the shifty sorcerer turn into the monster he invokes ("The Scroll of Morloc," "The Utmost Abomination").

It isn't as clear as it should be, but it seems to me that Lin prepared the way for the irony of the end by making such a big deal of how Zloigm took a perverse delight in causing alien intelligences to take up temporary residence in moldering corpses to interrogate them. And he himself was soon trapped in a body of mold, period! And mute mold at that!

So it balances out that he should wind up as he does, but is there narrative motivation for it? Has something happened that accounts for it, or is it just a case of arbitrary authorial fiat? Zloigm was trying to get blood from a stone, failing to realize his prisoner couldn't speak. He kept pouring on the juice, upping the voltage. As if to find some way to get around the impasse and relieve the pressure, karma or nature or something contrived a way to give the mold-man a voice after all, the only set of vocal cords available being those of Zloigm himself. And if he'd still been there, he could have heard the answers to his questions.

One question I'd like answered is how the hell Zloigm knew about "radioactivity" in ancient Hyperborea? What word of Eibon's did Carter translate thus? But, what the hey, anachronisms are all part of the fun when it comes to spurious ancient scriptures, as in Woody Allen's "The Scrolls" (*Without Feathers*, 1976 p. 25): "The authenticity of the scrolls is currently in great doubt, particularly since the word 'Oldsmobile' appears several times in the text."

"The Double Tower" (not to be confused, mind you, with Smith's "The Double Cosmos" or "The Double Shadow") appeared first in *Weird Tales*, Winter, 1973.

# The Double Tower:

## The History of Zloigm the Necromancer

by Lin Carter

Requiring solitude wherein to pursue his study of the antique goeties, Zloigm, premier archimage of the race of sentient ophidians which immediately preceded man in the dominion of this planet, turned from the teeming, basaltic warrens of his kind to the desolate and uninhabited plateaux of the interior of the primordial continent of the serpent-men. There, among steep scarps of glittering obsidian, cleft by vertiginous chasms whose silence was riven only by the intermittent spouting of geysers, he found at last the solitude which he desired. Where fuming volcanic peaks soared to pierce the zenith, on a flint-strewn plain which shuddered ever to interminable subterranean convulsions, he caused to be raised his lonely tower of ebon glass by the bitter shores of a black tarn, and commenced his studious inquiries into the most abstruse and recondite of the elder thaumaturgies.

Fundamental to the acquisition of this wisdom was the forbidden science of necromancy, and in the practice of this penumbral and gruesome craft had Zloigm become proficient to a superlative degree. From the indistinct lips of the spectres of the most celebrated of primordial mages, conjured hence by his art from remote and fabulous bourns, he wrung the most jealously-guarded formulae and litanies, and the secrets of the most legendary of the pentacles and sigils of lost antiquity which had lapsed from mundane knowledge aeons before. Those phantoms which proved stubborn or disobedient to his will he cowed with the threat of certain spiritual rigors and torments, or else prisoned within the surface of a mirror of black steel where they must dwell forever, trapped in a hell of two dimensions only, until they repented of their obdurances and yielded up to Zloigm the cantrips or invocations or liturgies of which he required knowledge.

Betimes, for greater convenience, he fleshed such phantasms within gaunt and umber mummies transported to his lone and solitary abode from many a hidden crypt, or buried vault, or lost and

immemorial necropolis, by powerful genii bound subservient to his word. And many the frightful secret of an age-forgotten demonology was hoarsely whispered to him by the dry, worm-fretted lips of some withered lich, wrapped in dusty cerements redolent of ancient spices and the sharp mineral stench of tomb-natron, which housed the captive ghost of some prehistoric wizard of repute. On yet other such occasions, a spirit thus conjured up from the depths of time was forced to vivify a cunningly-contrived automaton of sparkling brass, or grotesque idols of rough-hewn and porous lava, magically rendered capable of audible speech.

Over the lapse of interminable years, having by these means exhausted the arcana of the purely mundane sorcerers of extinct civilizations of the forgotten prime, Zloigm eventually came to cast his questing spells yet further afield. And into his conjurational circle he summoned the spiritual essences of weird and monstrous beings—ultra-telluric magi which dwelt on distant planets remote in either time or space, or made their abode in the husks of burnt-out stars, or within the radioactive nuclei of certain far-wandering comets. So adept had the ophidian magus become by this time in the tedious and exacting art of the invocation of spirits, and to so adroit and subtle and profound a magistracy had he attained, that it was not only within his power to summon up the apparitions of the dead, but of the living as well, whose astral or spectral counterparts he could force to him even across the untold distances of interstellar or transgalactic space. And many and unthinkably alien were the bizarre abnormalities he called to his circle for due questioning. Some there were who, in their normal sphere, were accustomed to go about on two legs, or four, or six; and some that lacked the pedal extremities entire, and slithered on their bellies in the quaking slime like unto gigantic worms, or swam in the perpetual night that reigns in the uttermost depths of nameless seas, or drifted aloft forever on the eternal winds of storm-lashed worlds upon untiring and rigid pinions of animate crystal.

With one extra-terrestrial intelligence in particular did the magus desire to hold converse. He had learned of its existence from a race of sagacious arthropods who dwelt in caverns beneath the crust of a frozen satellite which revolved about the double star Pornox in the constellation of the Mantichora. The insectoid sages spoke of this

being (whom they knew by the unpronounceable name, Crxyll) in the most enthusiastic terms, for they held its attainments in the arcane philosophies in the highest esteem. They described it to Zloigm as an intelligent crawling white mould, which was the lone and solitary denizen of an otherwise deserted world circumambulant to a dim and nigh-extinguished sun called Klr, which was situated in the very remotest of the spiral nebulae, in those regions adjacent to ominously-rumored Shaggai which lies near the ultimate verge of angled space.

The sentience Crxyll, however, proved obdurate in the extreme and Zloigm was forced to employ the most dire and stringent modes of persuasion at his command; but the philosophic mould succeeded in resisting every conjuration in the grimoire of the necromancer. At length, grown frustrated by the obstinacy of the mould-entity, Zloigm cast aside all prudence and sonorously intoned a ritual of such supernal and transcendent authority as to command even the presence of one of the Elder Gods. As he enunciated the monstrous cacophonies of this frightful incantation, the heavens darkened ominously; the ivory moon veiled her pallid visage in mist, as if reluctant to attend the ultimate blasphemy, and the wan and timid stars fled, one by one, from the nocturnal zenith. Beneath the audacious necromancer the earth shuddered and the very foundations of his tower groaned aloud as if in protest: but naught deterred the ophidian from the consummation of the ritual.

There soon materialized before Zloigm a dim luminance, a haze of light, a blur of phosphoric ectoplasm which floated, insubstantial as a vapor, within the triply-drawn Circle of Power. But albeit his endeavors at invoking the spirit of the mould-savant had at last eventuated in success, naught Zloigm could do would force the apparition into speech. To his several attempts to extract from the recalcitrant Crxyll the ultimate arcana of his magistry, the phosphorescent spectre preserved a truculent and adamant silence.

In vain did the ireful necromancer threaten the entity with the Yggrr Incantation, the Nn'gao Elixir, and with nine periapts carved from the ivory teeth of pterodactyls. Likewise did it remain obdurately silent before the Scarlet Sign, the Z Light, and the Chian Games. Even the curse-litany of Glorgne, which he recited in the Xu language, failed to excite it to speech. Wearying at last of his

pointless inquisition, Zloigm uttered the Greater Dismissal, and, obliterating the nine pentacles of Sgandrom and extinguishing the sanguinary luminance of the seven lamps of hollowed ruby, he broke at the four cardinal points the triply-drawn circle of phosphoric powder, and closed his book.

Fatigued to the extremities of his vigor by his unremitting thaumaturgical labors, the ophidian necromancer glided from the conjurational chamber and sought to recreate himself by a stroll through the gardens adjacent to his tower. This pleasure, however, to his surprise and consternation, he discovered no longer to exist. Instead of his topiary garden of bizarre Mesozoic flora, he found himself amidst a foetid grove of loathsome and tumescent fungi, whose swollen and phallic and hooded crests soared swaying to every side, exuding a singularly vile and noxious putrescence, even as their glistening and spongy boles were stained and blotched with the rancid cankers of oozing and liquescent decay.

Unable to easily account for this cryptic phenomenon, Zloigm traversed the fungus-grove with the boneless and undulant grace of his kind, fastidiously avoiding the slightest contact with the pustulant and sickening growths. He sought instead the peaceful shores of the bitter and lonely tarn, where it was oft his wont to stroll the crystalline strand in melancholy reverie. But the tarn, as well, had inexplicably vanished, and in its place he found himself gliding the giddy verge of a precipitous chasm. And within the depths of this abyss he glimpsed scarlet horrors of indefinite shape that writhed and slithered in the most noxiously suggestive manner amidst miasmatic and bubbling slime.

It became indubitable that some malign transformation had been worked upon Zloigm's solitary demesne, doubtless through the enchantments of an insidious and vindictive rival. Turning from the lip of the shadowy gulf, wherein whose deeps the half-glimpsed horrors had not ceased from their repugnant and profoundly disquieting wriggings, the necromancer sought again the sanctuary of his lone and solitary citadel—only to find a further encroachment of the metamorphosis, which he now saw to be progressive. For in the place of his somber and majestic tower there now rose an atrocious structure of virulent and nauseous hues, constructed according to the haphazard principals of some weird and prodigiously alien geometry. The



eye-wrenching colors and dizzying, impossible curves and angles of the architectural abomination were utterly repugnant to one of his race and temperament.

As he contemplated the loathsome spire with commingled bewilderment and ire, there slowly rose into view behind it an immense and dimly luminous orb of ghastly and leprous hue. Zloigm at once recognized the mottled and ebbing luminary for that wan, demising star about which the insect-sages had informed him the else-deserted world of the philosophic mould revolved. And there came to him there, as he stood amidst the festering grove of stalked and nodding fungi, some intimation of the extent of his predicament. It was not, as he had first conjectured, the malison of some iniquitous rival sorcerer which had worked this malevolent metamorphosis—but *his own temerity in uttering the forbidden and blasphemic ritual.*

Indeed, so titanic had been his efforts to force the obdurate Crxyll hither, that he had bent awry the very fabric of space itself, and his own somber spire and the garish and atrocious abode of the alien entity now simultaneously occupied the same point in space and time. The fullest implications of this uncanny simultaneity did not at once dawn upon the cold intelligence of the ophidian: neither did he suffer undue dismay or perturbation at the *ominous tendency* of this sequence of transmutations, for he knew that the texture of space is pliable and resilient only to a degree, and that this unnatural condition could not long endure and would soon terminate, the superimposed towers returning each to its customary coign at opposite poles of the universe. As well, his memory retained spells and cantrips of prodigious and transcendent magnitude, the very utterance of which would summon to his aid, across the breadth of the cosmos itself if need be, daemons and genii and elementals of awful and terrific mightiness, bound to his servitude by unsunderable vows.

Therefore it was with a certain chill amusement rather than with any trepidation that he traversed the loathsome garden towards the alien spire of revolting configuration and nauseating hues, but, of a sudden, found the undulant, gliding perambulation of his serpent-kind now altered to a mode of peculiar and unseemly locomotion. In a word, he now moved forward by a singular crepitation of innumerable segmentations, and, turning his astounding vision upon his own person, he saw, by a sense of perception in no wise identical with

sight, that the sequential transformation was now, presumably, complete: and that he had *himself* become interchanged with the being of the recalcitrant Crxyll, and was now become a squirming and disgusting thing like unto a white and crawling mould.

The matrix of space and time shimmered and then grew stable again, but the alien panorama remained unchanged. He realized by this that the innate resilience of space had, as anticipated, re-asserted itself, the unnatural simultaneity of the double tower had terminated—but that he remained trapped in this hideous travesty of a form, while, presumably, the mind and spirit of the mold-philosopher currently resided in his own superior and comely body, doubtless even at this moment sampling the elaborate spectrum of sensuous and aesthetic pleasures the unique accommodations of his tower afforded.

Even before the whelming realization, Zloigm did not deign to yield to despair: for the metamorphosed ophidian knew that to give utterance to the name of but one of the potent genii who served him would undo this dreadful and nightmarish transmutation.

He thought, therefore, to open his lipless mouth in order to cry aloud, in the hissing and sibilant speech of his kind, upon Marbas or Focalor or Zepar or Bifrons. But no outward physical manifestation accompanied the mental command. Then, and then only, did the misfortunate necromancer taste the full bitterness of despair and horror, and savor the gall of the knowledge of his peculiar doom.

For the sentient crawling white mould, whose body he now inhabited forever, quite naturally, alike all of its extinct kind, possessed no slightest vestige of the organs of audible speech. \*

## About "The Devouring of S'lithik Hhai"

Mr. Fultz, editor of the on-line magazine *Cosmic Visions*, has unearthed the following tale, a hitherto unknown chapter of the *Book of Eibon*, which he has taken time out from his editorial duties to translate painstakingly from the original tablets which he stumbled upon (literally) while on a skiing expedition to Greenland. His downhill slalom was rudely interrupted and his trajectory of smooth descent altered to one of swift ascent when he saw, too late, the stony text protruding from the slope in front of him. While in traction, he pored over the ancient artifact, first thinking it to be an early draft of the *Book of Mormon*, but at length recognizing that more money might be made should it turn out to be from the *Book of Eibon* instead. And a momentous find it is, as it discloses for the first time the facts leading to the descent of Tsathoggua to this planet.

But seriously, folks, you'll note that, though Fultz has gone with Lovecraft's toad version of the god instead of Smith's diminutive bat-sloth, he has nonetheless grafted his tale directly onto Smith's original concept of Tsathoggua's advent on ancient Hyperborea right from Cykranosh, disregarding Smith's later cumbersome (one might even say Derlethian) harmonization with Lovecraft's "The Mound." And why shouldn't he? After all, we're dealing with a set of myths, aren't we? And as Lovecraft pointed out long ago, you come to expect irreconcilable contradictions between myths, as they represent the varied speculations of different priests and story tellers, as well as local variants spun out independently of one another. (Take a look at Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths* sometime.) The same phenomenon persisted in the generation of the fictive Cthulhu Mythos and Commoriom myth-cycle, since Lovecraft, Smith, Searight, and others felt free to develop each other's concepts as ideas struck them, not waiting to check them out with each other before rushing to the typewriter.

# The Devouring of S'lithik Hhai:

## The History of X'hyl the Apothecary

by John R. Fultz

Much has been written of the legendary serpent-men who ruled this earth before the rise of mankind to preeminence among the terrene species. Deeply versed in the arts of eldritch science, alchemy, and sorcery, the cold-blooded savants reigned unchallenged beneath the youthful sun. And in these days, they all but vanished. How came so great a fall to so mighty a race?

Of the demise of their empery divers tales are noised. There are those among the erudite who are wont to tell of man's early mastery of the arts of warfare, and to dote upon the righteous savagery of our hirsute ancestors who did put the wicked serpent-folk to the sword and cleansed fair Hyperborea of their venom. There are aged scholars, too, who claim the breed of walking serpents did bring about their doom, by the heedless practice of uncouth sorceries and alchemies, unleashing dread powers that even their craft could not master. And still others maintain that it was the shifting of the great sun that robbed the serpents of the baking heat needful unto their kind, as continental jungles dried and became fertile plains or cooling tundras. But of these none knoweth the truth of the affair, and for that it is known unto me, Eibon of Mhu Thulan, it behooves me to recount it.

Like unto the Oroboros, the mouth of which seizeth upon the tail of which, did their dominion encompass the whole disk of Earth, slithering out across the young world from its black heart in the bubbling fens of the new-made Hyperborean continent. The seat of their great, swampy kingdom was named S'lithik Hhai, a forest of serpentine towers whose pinnacles rose to heights beyond the cloying clouds, into the uppermost air of the world, where unknown beasts out of the starry void sometimes alighted on fluted spires, gazing down upon the massive works of those who dwelt below.

Now there abode among the highest ranks of the serpent-folk, those called the Hith, an apothecary of surpassing renown, even X'hyl the Wise. X'hyl was master of a sky-stabbing tower in the midst of the capital city, and his breweries and distilling vats produced many of the poisonous draughts beloved by the Hith during their feasting revelry. And so his frequent entrances upon the courts of the ancient serpent king were causes for glad rejoicing, and joyfully was he ever hailed by the royal retinue, who seldom roused their torpid forms from their finely-inlaid sunning stones arrayed semicircularly about the high throne. All would rise with one accord to greet X'hyl the Wise and his cadre of apprentices as often as these should appear, bearing with them casks of delicious, venomous vintages fresh concocted.

Oftimes the reptile king's celebrations began with a sporting round of philosophic discussion as to the nature and purpose of Hithian existence, moving on at length to scientific or sorcerous principles. When the ruby-crowned monarch grew tired or bored with such discourse, various colorful demons might be summoned forth to rant and caper before his gleaming couch-throne, to the high amusement of the languid nobles of S'lithik Hhai. And when even these rare delights had smoldered down to ashes, the royal chamber would witness great feasts the like of which the mammalian mind can scarce conceive.

Nor was the feasting of the Hith an altogether wholesome thing for the warm-blooded to contemplate, for the custom of the serpent-folk was to devour their sustenance while it yet lived. To enjoy the struggling of one's chosen meal as it was swallowed and drawn slowly into the expanding stomach was essential for the true epicure. Once engulfed in the gullet of a Hith, the prey would expire slowly and horribly as the digestive process began, the corrosive juices inscribing a filigree of silent torment on the wasting flesh of the still-conscious morsel. And though the bouts of feasting were long, the aftermath was longer still, as bloated nobles lay about the pillared hall quivering with unholy ecstasy at each fading death-spasm of their dissolving provender. And then all drowsed until, their prey assimilated, their elastic frames returned once more to singular slimness.

The jaded reptiles prized most highly that prey which screamed the most heartily as it was devoured. And just such a viand had they

discovered far off in the mountains of the East: a smallish race of thin and furry ape-men, and possessed of rudimentary intelligence. It was a matter of great amusement that the simple cave-dwellers should make to resist the raiding sorties of the Hith, their stone-fashioned spears and flint axes proving useless against the hunting demons which served the serpent-men. No retreat, however deep, into their inmost catacombs preserved them from capture by their reptilian overlords. And ever the Hith returned, having discovered a marvelous delicacy, which they transported in ever greater numbers back to their great city to await a hideous doom in the king's banqueting chamber.

On a certain night of feasting in the royal court, X'hyl the Wise took notice of an odd sound among the fervent screams of the squirming bipeds, as they were being lazily devoured. It had occurred to no one that the soft-furred mammals might possess any sort of language, but the keen ear of X'hyl, used as he was to all manner of obscure vocables, took note. At length, he felt sure he was right, as incredible as it seemed. A word now became clear to him amidst the keening wails of the ape-things, repeated again and again by various of the tasty morsels. He was careful to mark the discovery, then finished the sumptuous repast in a contented torpor.

Even so, the old apothecary had forgotten his startling discovery until he chanced to hear it again as he made his way through the nitrous shadows of the fattening pens in the dungeon beneath his palace. There remained no doubt in the cold, keen mind of X'hyl that these little beasts possessed some sort of primitive tongue, a crude language which had seemingly evolved in the space of less than a single generation. For many long years now had the Hith been dining upon the mammalians, and this evidence of language was a new thing. Always these days, it seemed, while being consumed, the creatures screamed the single word which had first caught X'hyl's attention, some chanting it repeatedly like an infantile prattle. "*Zotboqqua!*" spoke the dying bipeds, almost pleadingly, as if in supplication. "*Zotboqqua!*"

As to the possible meaning of the cave-dwellers' chant, X'hyl could assign none, though neither could he ignore the importance of the mystery it implied. Before long he sought audience with the serpent king. Informing the yellow-eyed monarch of his discovery, the eloquent X'hyl finished by begging a cadre of guards to accompany

himself and a dozen of his fellow sorcerers for an expedition into the mountainous eastern jungles. "We must document this swift development of thought and language processes in the lower species," said the apothecary. "For how may we hope to halt what we do not fully understand? And halt it we must, lest the natural order of things one day be upended and the sublime status of the Hith be undermined. In truth, great lord, an uncouth word from the furry lips of filthy mammals may seem as insignificant as it is unintelligible, but it may be a seed to sprout into an unsuspecting doom. We cannot be too careful."

Because of his high standing with the king and his wide esteem among the savants of the Hith, X'hyl's request was granted, on the condition that the expedition return with an hundred fresh specimens for the king's larder. "Go forth, wise X'hyl," hissed the regal lord of serpents, "and take with you a full legion of our finest soldiers. Too, shall they accompany you who are the greatest in the arts of wizardry, and twenty demon thralls shall guide thy path. So do I invest in thee all needful authority to rid my kingdom of any threat thou mayest discern. Go forth with the grace of Holy Yig upon thee and thy company."

So it was that with the rising of the next sun, X'hyl and his party set out, serpent banners flying atop raised Hithian lances, and a mass of crimson-hued demons tearing apart the jungle growth to make way for the expedition's passing. Leaving behind the lofty black towers of S'lithik Hhai, the Hith troop moved slowly eastward, crossing vast leagues of primeval swamplands thick with primordial ooze. Among the towering vegetation of prehistoric wilderness they traveled, and over steaming ranges of volcanic residue which would one day play host to undreamt-of nations and empires. In time they arrived at the tall, lush mountains wherein lay the warrens of the little mammalian race. Among the soldiers were many experienced hunters of such game, and soon they discovered a network of cavern entrances on a thickly forested mountainside overlooking a great heated waterfall which filled the deep ravine below with mist and thunder. X'hyl himself, flanked by two demon guards, led the way into the lower burrows, traveling ever-deeper into the uncomfortable coolness of the sunless region. The greater majority of the soldiers had remained on guard at the entrance to

the underground realm, with orders for the capture of any cave-dwellers who happened upon them.

By the blue light of sorcerous flames the Hithians explored the moss-grown labyrinths, searching always for sign or spoor of the cave-dwellers. Yet it seemed that constant raiding of the furred race's home had driven them ever-deeper into the bowels of the earth, and here did the gladsome heat preferred by serpent-folk return, arising from the molten depths of the planet itself. At last, evidence of habitation was found: guano, bones, rude stone implements and tools, though still no sound or sight of living creatures. Thus things continued till, at length, the echoes of a deep chanting drew the Hithians toward their prey. A mass of synchronous voices grew in volume as X'hyl led the scaly questers onward, now with renewed vigor, as the prospect of prey and the molten breath of inner earth combined to lend new life to their stiffening limbs.

Emerging at last on a narrow shelf of basalt above a deep-floored cavern, X'hyl at the head of the Hithian party observed in the fire-lit depths the objects of their long search. Thousands of the cave-dwellers writhed and chanted in unison before a great stone idol, whose massive bulk rose almost to the height of the vaulted dome. Like unto the shape of a great, bloated toad was the vast eidolon before which they prostrated themselves in feverish adoration. Its great, heavy-lidded eyes were boulder-sized lumps of gleaming ebony, and its ears were long and pointed. A great fanged maw stretched nearly from shoulder to shoulder below its cavernous nostrils. Fascinated by the monolithic creation, X'hyl could only watch in bewilderment as the lowly race worshipped its abominable god. Who would have thought them capable of even so rudimentary a faith? For the savages to utter a true word was troubling enough to X'hyl; this was distressing in the extreme. The contagion of incipient intelligence had proceeded farther and faster than even he had feared. All the greater the urgency he felt to stamp it out at once, even if it meant the supply of the court's favorite treat be cut off.

One there was who stood closest to the great idol, his apish face hidden behind a fanged skull mask bearded by a mass of gaudy feathers. A riny infant of his own kind he held aloft above his head, its tiny, struggling form mewling and wailing against the reverberating chant whose powerful timbre caused the stony ground to tremble.

And X'hyl recognized the manner of their chant, and knew now the name of their dark god.

"*Zothoqqua! Zothoqqua! Zothoqqua!*" cried the dancing worshippers. Without warning, the masked one dashed the tender infant against the monolith's toad-like foot, where the stains of previous sacrifices spoke of a long history of dire ceremonies. The little corpse was then thrown into the midst of the writhing mob, who tore it apart with their bare fingers, devouring madly the unripe flesh of their own murdered offspring.

"Sacred scales of Yig!" declared the amazed apothecary. "Not even among beasts can such loathsome depravity be tolerated!" He waved a taloned hand, and a score of terrible demons descended upon the senseless worshippers, cutting through their midst as a fierce wind through gentle palms, trampling to grist beneath their clawed feet the frenzied mammalian throng. As the little race met with horrible slaughter beneath the dripping talons of the demons their trance was rudely broken, and they began to scatter, fleeing into crevices and tunnels too small for the great demons to follow. Yet the dancing shaman near the idol remained lost in his alien incantation until the Hithian sorcerers cast bolts of baleful flame against the massive toad-like idol, and its great pieces smashed down upon its last worshipper in a smoking heap of blasted stone.

When the slaughter had ended, and the demons were lapping up the fresh blood, X'hyl commanded them to abeyance once more, and made hastily for the open air of the surface world. Many of the hirsute little worshippers had escaped; but that was not to be regretted. He would send hunters back in to gather their quota of captives for the king's pleasure. But for the whole duration of the long march home, the dangling threads of mystery irritated the apothecary. How had the small race fashioned so massive and lifelike an image of their totem? From whence came such a strange and disturbing superstition, with its attendant horrors? Who or what was the entity they twisted their barking voices to invoke?

And more he feared that his questions would now never be answered. For surely most of the cave-dwellers must be dead, the greater part of the rest soon to be devoured by reptilian decadents less scientifically curious than he. X'hyl felt a great weariness grow within him, and desired only to return to the comfort and reflective peace of

his high tower in S'lithik Hhai. Time enough to ponder these strange discoveries once he had fine venom to quaff, and a hearty meal within his scaled stomach. For X'hyl was indeed wise enough to know that not all questions are well to have ultimately answered.

It was on the third day of their return journey that the sky became dark as of a coming storm, angry thunderheads sweeping across the firmament, raining strokes of dry lightning down into the jungles. X'hyl and three of his sorcerers topped a low hill, better to view the darkened heavens, and saw then a thing like a great comet plummeting from the black mountains of cloud, burning a great hole in the thick atmosphere and dropping beyond the western horizon. Moments later the earth shook as with ague, and the serpent-folk were flung from their mounts to the slime of the jungle floor, many crushed in a moment by toppling conifers. For a short while the reverberations of the great shaking rang through the ground, finally giving way to an exhausted, all-pervading silence.

X'hyl arose from where the earth's convulsions had deposited him, his gold and scarlet robes splattered with clinging muck. "I like not the import of these dire omens," said the apothecary to his colleagues. "I bid you, therefore, brethren, make haste to summon the great flight demon to carry me this night to far S'lithik Hhai, that I may give to the king word of all that we have seen and heard."

As they were bid, the sorcerers did weave a great conjuring, offering up the souls of several wounded cave-dwellers as enticement to the requisite demon. Their incantations brought forth at length a formless monstrosity whose flesh grew at their command into sky-blotting wings. X'hyl climbed aboard its glistening back and took to the dark skies. Those milling forms below him became tinier and tinier as he raced on past the looming moon faster than the great winds of storm season.

Soon the flying demon brought him near the land of S'lithik Hhai, yet he saw on the horizon none of the twisting spires of his home city. Drawing nearer atop the flapping monstrosity, the Hithian witnessed now a sight which his reptilian brain, usually so calmly analytical, could not credit. "'Tis some foul sorcery, an impossible illusion of the unthinkable!" And again, "Such a thing cannot have come to pass," he heard himself vacantly muttering. His mount began to circle, then to descend.

"'Tis no vision, I fear," hissed X'hyl the Wise, as if silencing himself in debate, "but cursed reality called out of the starry void. . . ."

Below the windborne savant lay a shattered panorama of ubiquitous destruction, for the infallible towers of vast S'lithik Hhai lay in black, tumbled mounds of cyclopean rubble. From horizon to horizon the great city was naught but crumbled ruins, as if trampled beneath the feet of angry gods. Already the great, cracked blocks of magic-wrought masonry sank slowly into the mire which had but recently supported their petrific bulk. The great palace of the serpent king was nowhere to be distinguished among the leagues of piled debris. Nor did any sign of the Tower of X'hyl present itself to the apothecary's horrified eyes.

"S'lithik Hhai is no more," muttered the Hith, and the queer hissing sigh which took the place of weeping among the Hith escaped the lipless muzzle of the hovering wizard.

A great rumbling came from below, and the vast sea of rubble shifted. A massive, black-furred toad-thing emerged, lifting its great-mawed head high into the air, and a long, slime-coated tongue snaked out like the swift East wind to wrap itself around the flying mote which had intruded upon its attention. And in that brief moment X'hyl the Wise fully understood the meaning and object of the cave-dwellers' strange chant, as great Zothoqqua drew a tasty morsel into the black canyon which was its mouth.

A brief swallow, and the far-traveled god settled back into its place among the mountains of rubble, drifting eventually into a deep and sated sleep, oblivious of the feeble struggles of that which it had already forgotten it had devoured. Thus ended the dominion of the once-mighty serpent-folk. For so have I heard the tale from the one surviving witness of the events. \*

## About "The Scroll of Morloc"

This tale, which originally appeared in *Fantastic*, August 1976, is fundamentally a reshuffling of the deck, whether consciously or not, of the major elements of the T'yog sub-narrative from Lovecraft's "Out of the Aeons." This story, ghost-written for Hazel Heald, was one of Lin Carter's favorites. He appropriated the title for one of his Xothic Cycle stories, "Out of the Ages," while he retold the T'yog tale starring his own heretic priestling Zanthu in "The Thing in the Pit." Here is another version. First, note how Lovecraft made the whole T'yog sequence a paraphrase of part of F. W. von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, and Carter makes his tale a literal transcription from the *Book of Eibon*. Second, Carter's disillusioned shaman Yhemog is a retooled T'yog. Where T'yog was a rebel trying to assassinate Ghatanothoa for the greater glory of his own deity Shub-Niggurath, Yhemog has abandoned faith in Tsathoggua and prays through the rites of an alien cult just to get his goat. But both "-ogs" invade the sanctum of one god in the name of another, however much their motives for doing it may differ. Third, both employ a scroll to wreak their religious sabotage, but it backfires on them. T'yog is petrified by the gaze of a living Old One, while Yhemog faces a stone image of another, but is himself turned into a monster.

Carter also plays on the vague similarity, never quite harmonized by Lovecraft or Smith, between Smith's hirsute Voormis and Lovecraft's shaggy Gnophkehs, both groups of degenerate/pregenerate humanoids, and so it is no accident that the semi-divine Gnophkeh Morloc takes his name from H. G. Wells's race of far-future troglodytes in *The Time Machine*, the Morlocks.

Finally, we should note that the *Book of Eibon* has once again managed to spontaneously recapitulate another characteristic feature of ancient scripture legend. Sectarian polemic has again and again employed the weapon of character assassination as a cheap substitute for substantive refutation. One of the standard favorites is the "sour grapes" rumor. Again and again we hear how So-and-so heretic renounced the true faith because of some thwarted ambition or spurned love. The Ebionites alleged that Paul was a pagan who converted to Judaism merely as a ploy to be able to marry the High Priest's daughter. His Holiness saw through the ruse and sent Paul packing, whereupon he chucked the Torah and went on the war-path against Judaism, starting Christianity just to make trouble! Marcion of Pontus, supposedly, was frustrated in his bid to become bishop of Rome, picked up his marbles, and went home to start his own church as a result. Similar stories were told about the Prophet Muhammad. And of course every Catholic "knows" how the Protestant Reformation was just a gimmick for getting Henry VIII a divorce. "The Scroll of Morloc" is cut from the

same cloth, attributing the birth of Freethought among the simian Voormis to the passing over of Yhemog for the pontificate seven times running! Well, I'll show them!

## The Scroll of Morloc:

### The History of the Shaman Yhemog

by Lin Carter

**T**he shaman Yhemog, dejected by the obdurate refusal of his fellow Voormis to elect him their high-priest, contemplated his imminent withdrawal from the tribal burrows of his furry, primitive kind to sulk in proud and lonely solitude among the icy crags of the north, whose bourns were unvisited by his timorous, earth-dwelling brethren.

Seven times had he offered himself in candidacy for the coveted headdress of black *ogga*-wood, crowned with fabulous *huusim*-plumes, and now for the seventh time had the elders unaccountably denied him what he considered his just guerdon, earned thriceover by his pious and reverent austerities. Seething with disappointment, the rejected shaman swore they should have no eighth occasion whereon to bypass the name of Yhemog in bestowing the uncouth hierarchial mitre upon another, and vowed they should ere long have reason to regret the ineptitude of their selection of an inferior devotee of the Voormish god over one of his unique and excessive devoutness.

During this period many of the clans of the subhuman Voormis had fled into warrens tunneled beneath the surface of a jungle-girt and mountainous peninsula of early Hyperborea which had yet to be named Mhu Thulan. Their shaggy and semi-bestial forebears had originally been raised in thralldom to a race of sentient serpent-people whose primordial continent had been reft asunder by volcanic convulsions and which had submerged beneath the oceans an aeon or two earlier. Fleeing from the slave pens of their erstwhile masters, now happily believed almost extinct, the ancestors of the present Voormis had wrested all of this territory from certain degenerate, cannibalistic subhumans of repellent appearance and loathsome habits, whose few survivors had been driven northwards to dwell in furtive exile amid the wastes of bleak and glacier-encumbered Polarion.

Of late, their numbers inexplicably in decline, their warlike prowess unaccountably dwindling into timidity, and the surly and

vengeful descendants of their ancient foes growing ever more ominously populous and restive in the north, many of the Voormish tribes had sought refuge in these underground dwellings for safety and protection. By now the furry creatures were accustomed to the comforting gloominess and the familiar, pervasive stench of their warrens, and seldom if ever did they venture into the upper world, which had grown strange and frightening to them in its giddy and disquieting spaciousness of sky, lit by the intolerable brilliance of zenithal and hostile suns.

In contemplating self-imposed exile from his kind, the disgruntled shaman was not unaware of the dangers he must surmount. This particular region of the peninsula would someday be known as Phenquor, the northernmost province of Mhu Thulan. During this period of the early Cenozoic the first true humans were only just beginning to seep into Hyperborea from southerly regions of tropical jungles whose climate had grown too fervent for them to comfortably endure, and all of Phenquor was a savage and primal wilderness, uninhabited save for the cavern-dwelling Voormis. Not without peril, therefore, would the shaman Yhemog traverse the prehistoric jungles and reeking fens of the young continent, for such were the haunts of the ravening catoblepas and the agate-breasted wyvern, to cite only the least formidable of the denizens of the prime.

But Yhemog had mastered the rudiments of the antehuman thaumaturgies and had gained some proficiency in the arts of shamanry and conjuration. By these means he thought himself quite likely to elude the more ferocious of the carnivora, thus achieving the relative safety of the Phenquorian mountains hopefully unscathed.

By dwelling subterraneously, it should perhaps be noted here, the Voormis were but imitating the grotesque divinity they worshipped with rites we might deem excessively sanguinary and revolting. As it was an article of the Voormish faith that this deity, whom they knew as Tsathoggua, made his abode in lightless caverns situated far beneath the earth, their adoption of a troglodytic mode of existence was to some extent primarily symbolic. The eponymous ancestor of their race, Voorm the arch-ancient, had quite early in their history promulgated a doctrine which asserted that their assumption of a wholly subterranean habitat would place them in a special relationship of mystical propinquity with their god, who

himself preferred to wallow in the gulf of N'kai beneath a mountain to the south considered sacred by the Voormis. This dogma the venerable Voorm had pronounced shortly before himself retiring into chasms adjacent to the aforesaid N'kai in order to spend his declining aeons in proximity to the object of his worship.

The tribal elders unanimously revered the opinions of this patriarch as infallible, especially in the matters of a purely theological nature, for it was commonly believed that their supreme pontiff and common ancestor had been fathered by none other than Tsathoggua himself during a transient liaison with a minor feminine divinity who rejoiced in the name of Shathak. With this ultimate patriarchal teaching the tribal elders now, somewhat belatedly, concurred; to obey the last precept of their spiritual leader was, after all, a reasonable precaution when you considered the profound and disheartening desuetude into which the fortunes of the race had so recently, and so abruptly, declined.

In reaching his eventual decision to henceforward shun the dank and foetid burrows of his tribe in favor of a radical change of residence to the giddy and vertiginous peaks which arose along the northerly borders of Phenquor, overlooking the frigid wastes of drear Polarion, the shaman Yhemog discovered himself ineluctably sliding into dangerous heresy. Unable to reconcile his private inclinations with the several pontifical revelations handed down by the eponymous patriarch of his race, he was soon implicitly questioning the actual validity of the teachings, a tendency which resulted in his eventual denial of their infallibility. Now rejecting as essentially worthless the very patriarchal dogmas he had earlier revered as sacrosanct, he lapsed from the most odious condition of heresy into the lamentable and blasphemous nadir of atheism.

Thus disappointment soured into bitter resentment and resentment festered into vicious envy and envy itself, like a venomous canker, gnawed at the roots of his faith, until the last pitiful shreds of his former beliefs had utterly been eaten away. And naught now was left in the heart of Yhemog save for a hollow emptiness, which became filled only with the bile of self-devouring rancor and a fierce, derisive contempt for everything he had once held precious and holy. This contempt cried out for expression, for a savage gesture of ultimate affront calculated to plunge his elder brethren into horrified consternation



and dismay. Yhemog hungered to brandish his new-found atheism like a stinking rag beneath the pious snouts of the tribal fathers.

At length he determined upon a course of action nicely suited to his ends. He schemed to steal into the deepest and holiest shrine of Tsathoggua and to purloin therefrom an antique scroll which contained certain rituals and liturgies held in the utmost degree of religious abhorrence by the members of his faith. The document was among the spoils of war carried off by his victorious forefathers from the abominable race which had formerly dominated these regions at the time of the advent of the Voormish savages into Mhu Thulan. The papyrus reputedly preserved the darkest secrets of the occult wisdom of the detested Gnophkehs, which name denoted the repulsively hirsute cannibals whom Yhemog's ancestors had driven into exile in the arctic barrens. This scroll contained, in fact, the most arcane and potent ceremonials whereby the Gnophkehs had worshipped their atrocious divinity, who was no less than an avatar of the cosmic obscenity Rhan-Tegoth, and was attributed to Morloc himself, the Grand Shaman.

Now the Voormis had, from their remotest origins, considered themselves the chosen minions of Tsathoggua, the sole deity whose worship they celebrated. And Tsathoggua was an earth elemental ranged in perpetual and unrelenting enmity against Rhan-Tegoth and all his kind, who were commonly accounted elementals of the air and were objects of contempt to those of the Old Ones, like Tsathoggua, who abominated the airy emptinesses above the world and by preference wallowed in darksome and subterranean lairs. A similar degree of mutual and irreconcilable animosity existed between those races which were the servants of Tsathoggua, among whom the Voormis were prominent, and those who served the avatars of cosmical and uncleanly Rhan-Tegoth, such as those noxious protoanthropophagi, the Gnophkehs. The loss of the Scroll of Morloc would, therefore, hurl the Voormis into the very nadir of confusion, and contemplation of the horror wherewith they would view the loss caused Yhemog to tremble with vile and delicious anticipation.

The Scroll had for millennia reposed in a tabernacle of mammoth-ivory situated beneath the very feet of the idol of Tsathoggua in the holy-of-holies, its lowly position symbolic of the Voormis risen triumphant over their subjugated and thoroughly inferior enemies.

In order for the Scroll of Morloc to be thieved away by Yhemog, ere he quit forever the noisome and squalid burrows wherein he had passed the tedious and unrewarding centuries of his youth, he must, of necessity, first enter the most sacred and solemn precincts of the innermost shrine itself.

For a shaman of his insignificance, but recently graduated from his novitiate a century or two before, to trespass upon the indescribable sanctity of the most forbidden and inviolable sanctuary was a transgression of the utmost severity. By his very presence he would profane and contaminate the sacerdotal chamber, and this horrendous act of desecration he must perforce do under the cold, unwavering scrutiny of dread, omnipotent Tsathoggua himself, for therein had stood enshrined for innumerable ages the most ancient and immemorial eidolon of the god, an object of devout and universal veneration.

The very thought of thus violating the sacred adyts of the shrine to perform a vile and despicable act of burglary in the awesome presence of the deity he had once worshipped with such excessive vigor was sobering, even disquieting. But fortunately for the inward serenity of Yhemog, the fervor with which he had embraced his new-found atheism enormously transcended the fervor of his former pious devotions. His iconoclasm had hardened his heart to such an adamant rigor that he despised his own earlier temerities, and now disbelieved in all super-mundane or ultra-natural entities far more than he had ever believed in them before. The venerable eidolon was but a piece of worked stone and naught more, he thought contemptuously to himself, and the arch-rebel, Yhemog, fears no thing of stone!

Thus it befell that the traitorous and atheistical Yhemog slunk one night into the deeplier and nethermost of the shrines sacred to Tsathoggua, having prudently charmed into premature slumber the scimitar-wielding eunuchs posted to guard the inviolability of the sanctuary. By their obese, stertorously-breathing forms, sprawled recumbent on the pave before the spangled curtain which concealed the innermost adytum from the chance of profanation of impious eyes, he crept on furtive, three-toed, naked feet. Beyond the glittering tissue was discovered a chamber singularly bare of ornamentation, in dramatic contrast to the ostentation of the outer precincts. It

contained naught but the idol itself, throned at the farther end, which presented the repellent likeness of an obscenely corpulent, toad-like entity. Familiar as he was with the crude images roughly hacked from porous lava by the clumsy paws of his people, the shaman was unprepared for the astonishing skill whereby the nameless sculptor had wrought the eidolon from obdurate and frangible obsidian. He marveled at the consummate craft whereby the chisel of the forgotten artisan had clothed the bloated, squatting form of the god with a suggestion of sleek furriness and had blent together in its features the salient characteristics of toad, bat, and sloth, in a dubious amalgam subtly disturbing and distinctly displeasing. The ponderous divinity was depicted with half-closed, sleepy eyes which seemed to almost glitter with cold, lazy malice, and it had a grinning and lipless gash of a mouth which Yhemog fancied was distended in a smile redolent of cruel and gloating mockery.

His new contempt for all such supernatural entities dimmed, fading, somewhat, in its originally febrile intensity before a rising trepidation. For a moment he hesitated, half-fearing the hideous and yet exquisitely lifelike eidolon might stir suddenly to dread wakefulness upon the next instant, and reveal itself to be a living thing. But the moment passed without any such an untoward vivification, and his derision and denial of the transmudane rose within him, trebled in its blind conviction. Now was the moment of ultimate profanation upon him; now he would metaphorically renounce his former devotions by abstracting from beneath the very feet of the supernally sacred image its chiefest treasure, the papyrus wherein were preserved the blackest of the arcane secrets of the elder Gnophkehs. Summoning the inner fortitude his atheistical doctrines afforded, thrusting aside the last lingering remnants of the superstitious awe he had once entertained towards the divinity the idol represented, Yhemog knelt and hastily pried open the ivory casket and drew therefrom the primordial scroll.

Whereafter there occurred absolutely nothing in the way of preternatural phenomena or transmudane acts of vengeance. The black and glistening statue remained immobile; it neither blinked nor stirred nor smote him with the levin-bolt or the precipitous attack of leprosy he had almost expected. The relief which upsurged within his furry breast was intoxicating; almost he swooned in a

delirium of exultant joy. But in the next moment dire melancholy drowned his heady mood; for he realized now for the first time the fullest extent of the vicious hoax the preceptors of his cult had perpetrated upon him. To so delude an innocent young Voormis-cub, so that the noblest aspiration it might conceivably dream to attain was the ogga-wood mitre of the hierophant, was an action of such perverted and despicable odium as to excite within him a lust to desecrate, with a blasphemy transcending all his prior conceptions of blasphemy, this sacred place.

Ere spurning forever the moist and gloomy tunnels to seek a new and solitary life amongst the steaming quagmires and cycadic jungles of the upper earth he would commit a desecration so irremediable as to defile, pollute and befoul for all aeons to come this innermost citadel of a false and cruelly-perpetuated religion. And in his very clutches he held at that moment the perfect instrument of triumphant and absolute revenge. For how better to desanctify the temple of Tsathoggua, than to recite before his most venerable eidolon, and within his most sacred and forbidden shrine, the abominable rituals formerly employed by the hated enemies of his minions in the celebration of their obscene and atrocious divinity, his rival?

With paws that shook with the intensity of his loathing and wrath, Yhemog unfolded the antique papyrus and, straining his weak, small eyes, sought to peruse the writings it contained. The hieroglyphics were indited according to an antiquated system, but at length his scrutiny enabled him to deduce their meaning. The dark lore of the Gnophkehs was generally centered upon the placation and appeasement of their grisly and repugnant divinity, but ere long the shaman found a ritual of invocational worship which he judged would be exceptionally insulting to the false Tsathoggua and his self-deluding servants. It commenced with the uncouth and discordant phrase *Wza-y'ei! Wza-y'ei! Y'kaa haa bho-ii*, and terminated eventually in a series of mindless ululations for the enunciation of which the vocal apparatus of the Voormis was inadequately designed. As he commenced reading the liturgical formula aloud, however, he discovered that the farther he progressed therein the more easily his pronunciation came. He also was surprised to find, as he grew near the terminus of the ritual, that the vocables he had earlier considered jarring

and awkward became curiously, even disquietingly, musical and pleasant to his ears.

Those ears, he suddenly noticed, had unaccountably grown larger and now were not unlike the huge, flapping organs of the ill-formed and ridiculously-misshapen Gnophkehs. His eyes as well had undergone a singular transformation, and now bulged protuberantly in a manner which resembled that of the revolting inhabitants of the polar regions. Having completed the final interminable ululation he let fall the Scroll of Morloc and examined himself in growing consternation. Gone was his sleek and comely pelt, and in its place he was now covered with a repulsive growth of coarse and matted hairs. His snout, moreover, had in the most unseemly and impertinent manner undertaken an extension of itself beyond the limits considered handsome by Voormish standards, and was now a naked, proboscidian growth of distinctly and unmistakably Gnophkehian proportions. He cried out, then, in an extremity of unbelieving horror, for he realized with a cold and awful panic that *to worship as a Gnophkeh* must, under certain circumstances, be defined in terms absolutely literal. And when his hideous lamentations succeeded in rousing from their charmed drowsiness the gross and elephantine eunuchs beyond the sequined veil, and they came lumbering in haste to discover a detested and burglarious Gnophkeh squirming on its obscene and hairy belly, gobbling guttural and incomprehensible prayers before the smiling, the enigmatic, and the lazily malicious eyes of Tsathoggua, they dispatched the malodorous intruder with great thoroughness and righteous indignation, and in a certain manner most acceptable to the god, but one so lingering and anatomically ingenious that the more squeamish of my readers should be grateful that I restrain my pen from its description. ✱

## About "The Descent into the Abyss"

As Steve Behrends notes ("The Carter-Smith 'Collaborations,'" in my collection *The Horror of It All: Encrusted Gems from the Crypt of Cthulhu*), "The Descent into the Abyss" is essentially Lin Carter's rewrite of Clark Ashton Smith's "The Seven Geases." What he has done is to create a Mythos midrash of Smith's original. The process is precisely the same as that at work in genuine ancient texts, when a later redactor undertakes to rewrite an earlier text to bring it into line with the redactor's theological or institutional agenda. One need only compare the tendential history of 1 and 2 Chronicles with portions of the Deuteronomic History on which it is based (1 and 2 Samuel; 1 and 2 Kings) in order to see this. Rabbinic midrashes (homiletical retellings) and Targums (paraphrased vernacular versions) of biblical tales do the same thing.

A good case in point would be Genesis 6:1-6, an ethnological myth seeking to account for the towering height (six feet!) of warriors like Goliath of Gath, Nimrod, and Gilgamesh by making them the hybrid offspring of the Sons of God and mortal women, just like the demigods Hercules, Theseus, etc. The robust polytheism of the tale proved to be too much for the more refined theological sensibilities of later redactors, such as the writers of the Book of Jubilees, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and 1 Enoch. There the story has been retold in accord with later Jewish theology, resulting in the Sons of God becoming, first, mere angels, and second, evil. Their lust for mortal females introduced sin into the world and taught women all manner of evil arts!

In just the same way, Lin Carter viewed Smith's "The Seven Geases" as a pivotal canonical tale for the Cthulhu Mythos, in that it introduces Atlach-Nacha, brings Ubbo-Sathla back for an encore performance, and puts Tsathoggua right on stage for the first and only time in a Smith story! But the tale was not satisfactory as it stood, at least not in the eyes of Carter the systematic theologian. For one thing, Ubbo-Sathla's depiction as Abthoth the Unclean did not quite match that in the original "Ubbo-Sathla," so Carter plugs the "orthodox" Ubbo-Sathla into his new version of "The Seven Geases." Similarly, to provide a foothold for his own elaborate assignment of servitor races to various Old Ones, he decided to rewrite Smith's "Archetypes" as his own "Prototypes," and to make them into a representative zoo of his Lesser Old Ones, and all on Smith's tab.

In the story's initial appearance (*Weird Tales* #2, Zebra Books, 1980), "The Descent into the Abyss" is billed simply as "by Clark Ashton Smith," with a small-print footnote "Completed by Lin Carter." The Smith content is pretty minimal: "In this story I was working from a scrap of an idea found among Smith's papers, which went, as I recall, 'A sorcerer discovers the

Cavern of the Prototypes beneath a shunned mountain in Hyperborea, wherein reside the originals of every kind of monster or hybrid.' . . . I thought at the time that this was possibly an early plot-seed for what eventually became 'The Seven Geases,' but the notion of the Prototypes intrigued me and I wrote the story, anyway" ("A Response" to Steve Behrends, "The Carter-Smith 'Collaborations,'" *Crypt of Cthulhu* #36, Yuletide 1985, p. 33). So the Smith by-line is a cloak for Carter, and the effect is to attribute Carter's taxonomy to Smith. Even this gimmick exactly parallels the ancient scriptural practice of pseudepigraphy whereby a later, undistinguished writer, would hide behind the name of a greater figure of the past, claiming venerable authority for his own innovations. Many biblical writings are simply anonymous, but most biblical authorship claims are probably spurious.

So when we find ourselves like Wilbur Whateley in the Miskatonic University Library, puzzling over how to correlate what appear to be two versions of the same original text, we are in the position of biblical and Talmudic scholars who are quite used to weighing up doublet versions of the same stories. In short, the presence of such Carterian rewrites of Smith (and this isn't the only one!) do not mar the *Book of Eibon* but rather tend to authenticate it with the verisimilitude of a genuine ancient compilation, with all its odd loose ends, repetitions and contradictions.

# The Descent into the Abyss:

## The History of the Sorcerer Haon-Dor

by Lin Carter

### I. THE QUEST OF HAON-DOR

**T**he inexorable passage of the ages has left but little record of the strange quest of the antehuman sorcerer, Haon-Dor. However fragmentary and doubtful remain the traditions thereof which survive, I deem it my duty to set them down in these pages for the edification of future generations.

This sorcerer resided in certain boreal kingdoms which flourished in the world's extremest youth, before the first men arose from the bestial murk. Some consider him contemporary to the repellent and, happily, now extinct serpentmen who ruled from their primordial continent before the descent hither of Aphoom-Zhah from remote and glacial Yaksh; others place him in that dim epoch when the furry Voormis contended with the cannibal Gnophkehs for dominion.

Whichever his era, it was the aspiration of Haon-Dor to transcend the magisterium of all other wizards by acquisition of the ultimate secrets rumored to lie hidden in the depths of Y'qaa, that subterranean gulf of fabulous antiquity concerning which neither the serpentmen nor the prehuman Voormis recorded aught that was wholesome.

Ancient compendia of myth relate of gray-litten Y'qaa that it is multi-dimensional, coterminous with many worlds and planes of existence: an abyss whose fissures ope to distant realms, not only of this planet but many more. One such has its terminus on triply-mooned Yarnak, where for eons dwelt the blasphemy Mnomquah, the Eater of Souls, ere he was driven from his odious throne by the Flaming One. And Yarnak is known to be circumambient about a star which reigns beyond Betelgeuse and the giant suns: yet even that far and fabulous bourn is weirdly congruent with ambiguously-situated Y'qaa.

Of the abyss itself and the way thither little was known to the sorcerer, but such vague rumors as were adumbrated in the grimoires

of his race were long since in his possession. There was, it seems, a certain crevice which yawned in the black, basaltic flanks of Voormithadreth, least reputable and most shunned of the Eigliophian Mountains of central Hyperborea, and thereunto did Haon-Dor direct his path.

For an interminable time, the sorcerer descended through the purely mundane levels of those catacombs which volcanic forces had hollowed within the mountain. Ever was he wary and vigilant against the expected assaults of the formidable catobleps which lairs within those caverns, in the anticipation of whose attack he went armed with a wand of lethal Upas-wood whose tip bore the eye of a Gorgon, before which withering and intolerable glare no mortal entity was believed immune.

Whatever creatures did in sooth inhabit the upper levels, none dared assault so potently-armed a sorcerer, and he passed unscathed. Soon his vigilance lapsed, and he commenced musing upon the object of his quest. Now, the Abyss into which he descended was reputedly the abode of Ubbo-Sathla, the primordial divinity which was the source of all terrene life. And there in the pit of Ubbo-Sathla reposed the guerdon of his search: certain inconceivably precious tablets of star-quarried stone, thieved from the Elder Gods before time began and englyphed by Them with the profoundest of cosmic secrets.

That theft, incidentally, They had punished most horribly, for now Ubbo-Sathla was bereft of all intelligence and was reduced to a mindless idiocy and wallowed in the primal ooze, cursed and condemned to endless and squalid fecundity.

## II. THE DARK SILENT ONE

This lore was not unfamiliar to Haon-Dor, and the antehuman savant had cause to presume that the Elder Records (as they were called) yet reposed undisturbed in the slimy bed where Ubbo-Sathla forever spawned the squirming prototypes of earthly life.

Now, by reason of this divine prolificacy, the path followed by the sorcerer could scarcely be termed untenanted. Indeed, of the myriad spawn begotten by Ubbo-Sathla through the uncountable kalpas of Its imprisonment below, more than a few of Its dread offspring yet lingered in familial proximity to their Sire.

The first of such which Haon-Dor encountered was that which the Elder Hierophant Yogmosh-Voth names the Dark Silent One, Zushakon, whom the quasi-humans of primal Mu formerly celebrated with shuddersome rites better left undescribed. Zylac the Archimage referred to this being as Zulchequon, for under the latter cognomen was he worshipped in blue-litten K'n-yan by the ringing of certain small, terrible bells.

With some trepidation did Haon-Dor draw nigh unto the place where Zulchequon abided, for all that he had anticipated this meeting, cognizant of the fact that K'n-yan was but one of the least dubious regions which border upon multi-dimensional Y'qaa. Yet he could not help but regard the interview with some temerity, for older by uncountable eons than even the Old Ones themselves was dark Zulchequon, the Bringer of Darkness, and his shape was swathed behind veils of impalpable glooms impenetrable alike to light and vision, and from this shape of blackness there exuded a breath of super-arctic rigor.

Summoning his courage, Haon-Dor approached the motionless shape of darkness, and addressed it thusly: "Lord of Darkness! Permit me to pass into the presence of your mighty Sire, the Unbegotten One, I beseech you!"

These words having been uttered, he thereupon displayed a sigil of extraordinary potency known to the antehuman magi as the Elder Key.

Whether or not the nexus of gloom enshrouding Zulchequon flinched before the piercing radiance shed by the sigil, or whether Zulchequon himself chose to defer in favor of his Sire the pleasures of devouring this rash intruder, cannot with certitude be known. Suffice it to relate that Zulchequon without further ado silently withdrew his somber presence from the path of Haon-Dor, and left his way unencumbered—to the enormous relief of the sorcerer.

## III. THE CAVERN OF THE PROTOTYPES

After traversing the labyrinthine, descending ways of the cavern for an indeterminate period, Haon-Dor at length found himself entering upon a vast hollow space of domed rock whose flinty walls were maculated with niches marked in such a manner as to suggest they had been *gnawed* into the stone by indescribable teeth.

Each space so hollowed out was occupied, and the nature of the occupant of the nearer of these the sorcerer was able to ascertain by reason of the peculiar stench which breathed therefrom. But a single glance at its apterous and semi-avian form confirmed him in his assumption that it was even a shantak-bird, one of those malformed monstrosities which the Voormish Tablets call the "Fishers from Outside."

Erelong, however, there was discovered to his scrutiny that the loathsome abnormality was not just any shantak-bird, but that which the Voormis name Quumyagga. For by that appellation the furry pre-humans are wont to denote the elderborn and foremost of the shantaks which serve Golgothoth, and which reputedly lair in the more inaccessible of the peaks which guard shunned and frightful Leng.

The swollen bulk of the befeathered and bescaled monstrosity squatted motionlessly in its niche, towering in the uncertain and wan luminosity which pervaded the cavern like a singularly repulsive eidolon of black obsidian. Yet though the one-legged and hook-beaked creature remained immobile, its single horrible eye burned greenly through the dimness like a sickly moon through pestilential vapors.

Albeit though it regarded him with its malign and menacing eye, there was naught else for Haon-Dor to do but to repeat unto Quumyagga the identical request wherewith he had curiously gained an unmolested passage by the lair of Zulchequon. And he displayed before that one, terrible eye the sigil which he bore.

Here, again, naught deterred his way, for the loathsome avian shape scuttled deeper into its niche, and closed sleepily upon him that glaring and cyclopean gaze, which it mercifully lidded. Breathing easier, the sorcerer strode further into the cavern.

In the second niche there crouched a gaunt-ribbed, canine-muzzled thing of scaly and leprous gray, from whose mould-encrusted form the redoubtable Haon-Dor guessed the occupant to belong to the race of the ghouls. And when it turned upon him gelid eyes of sullen rubescence and accosted him, inquiring the motive of his intrusion into its burrow (and speaking, all the while, in slurred and glutinous syllables), the accuracy of his supposition was proved.

Indeed, the lean grotesque was no other than Nug the grandfather of all ghouls on the earth-plane, ancestor and leader of that pack

of loping atrocities who deem themselves the minions of Nyogtha. Very dreadful of aspect was Nug, and Haon-Dor very much distrustful the hungry glint in his surly and febrile eyes, yet in reply to the challenge of the ghoul-thing, he could but reiterate again the formula by which he had passed unscathed the lairs of Zulchequon and Quumyagga.

Again—for some reason he scarce dared to conjecture—the formula succeeded, and the gaunt and furtive Feaster Among the Tombs but slunk aside, retreating further into the noisome recesses of its lair with a sly, mocking, backwards glance and a thick and ominous chuckle, whose sound the sorcerer did not at all care for.

Now, from the presence of Quumyagga and Nug in this place, the sorcerer guessed it to be naught less than the Cavern of the Prototypes, that infernal region closely adjacent to the slime-pit wherein resided Ubbo-Sathla. Herein, at certain intervals, abide the eldermost and first-born of the several races which serve the Old Ones on this plane. And, indeed, erelong he was able to discern more clearly the strange forms which slouched, coiled, perched or squatted within the many niches gnawed into the walls of flinty stone. Amongst them he recognized the obscenity Sss'haa, leader of the serpentmen who serve Father Yig, and Yeb who is the first and foremost of the Unclean Ones who are the minions of Abhoth, and the many-legged form of Tch'tkaa, leader of the Gray Weavers who attend Atlach-Nacha.

Absent from their niches (he was informed by the dry and rasping but not-discourteous tones of Tch'tkaa) were Tsunth, the veiled leader of the Hidden Ones who serve Zulchequon, and the leaders of the Miri Nigri and the Dark Ones, which are, respectively, the minions of Chaugnar-Faugn and Ghatanothoa.

Beyond the niche occupied by the Gray Weaver, Haon-Dor espied the immense and faceless figure of Yegg-ha who leads the night-gaunts in the service of the Crawling Chaos and his awful son, Yibb-Tstll, and also E-poh, chief of the dreaded Tcho-Tcho people. With neither of these did the sorcerer care to converse, for in none of the lore available to his perusal had he ever found aught concerning these two that would permit the reader to sleep soundly of nights.

By now it had occurred to Haon-Dor that he had incautiously penetrated into regions of grim and dreadful peril. For such abominations as Quumyagga and Nug and Yegg-ha and the others of their brethren are among the Lesser Old Ones, and were to be considered only slightly less powerful than their Masters, and no less to be feared by such as Haon-Dor. For even the dark gods of the Abyss enjoy their privacy, which mortals may intrude upon only at direful and portentous risk. Indeed, should they turn to rend him asunder, the antehuman savant deemed it questionable that it remained with his ability to fend them off, even with the Upas wand fixed with its gorgonic eye, nor even by the brandishment of the Elder Key.

There was no other recourse for him but to repeat again the request whereby he had thus far won clear passage through the caverns. And, having loudly uttered forth the formula, it greatly relieved Haon-Dor that the entities remained motionless within their niches and did nothing to thwart his hurried passage through the remainder of the cavern.

#### IV. THE GUARDIAN OF THE PORTAL

From thence he emerged at length upon the brink of an enormous gulf of seething vapors, arched by an iron bridge. Traversing the narrow way and safely gaining the further side of this bottomless chasm, the sorcerer approached the dimly luminous portal of a stone chamber wherefrom breathed a shocking putrescence, and stationed athwart this entrance as if on sentry-go he beheld an abnormality transcending in its horrific lineaments all that he had already seen.

It was a vast and ghastly mass of lucent, quaking jelly which crawled with naked, glistening eyeballs, several score of which even at that very moment regarded him fixedly, their coldly multi-plex gaze redolent with awful menace. With an uncontrollable shudder of loathing, he at once recognized the gelatinous horror as a shoggoth, one of those things of elder myth which tend Ubbo-Sathla in Its lair. For, although the Unbegotten One was not the progenitor of their grisly kind, the shoggoths regard the divinity as their mentor and serve as the minions of their chosen god.

And, mindful of having but recently encountered the prototypes of the shantaks, the night-gaunts, the Miri Nigri, and many other races, Haon-Dor guessed this particular shoggoth to be none

other than the first-created and most feared of all its kind, even the Slime-Thing itself, K'thugguol, which the Voormish Tablets term "the Grand Shoggoth."

These abominations, lingering in the depths of Y'qaa, were the last surviving horrors of their age, and Haon-Dor knew from his studies that they had been the cause of the ultimate doom of the Polar Ones, as the archaic star-headed vegetable carnivores which had formerly dwelt near the southern pole were known, and who were deemed the first inhabitants of this planet. It had been the implacable, the virtually indestructible shoggoths whereby the Polar Ones had met their fabulous doom, whereof the earlier fragments of the Pnakotic Manuscripts are so fearfully explicit. He had good cause, then, had Haon-Dor, to fear for his life from this jellied monstrosity which was, it eventuated, the guardian of the entrance to the pit wherein Ubbo-Sathla wallowed.

However, and unaccountably, K'thugguol, too, withdrew from his way, before even he had completed the recitation of his request or had time to show forth the Elder Key. However, the vast and quaking mass of putrescent jelly, as it slithered aside, turned upon the sorcerer the cold and inscrutable gaze of several stalked visual organs obtruded for that purpose upon the moment from its liquescent, amoeboid bulk. There was in that gaze a glint of icy and sardonic mockery . . . or did Haon-Dor but fancy it?

And thus did the antehuman savant approach the ultimate goal of his quest, for he had penetrated into the uttermost and secret adytum of gray-litten Y'qaa, and beyond that luminous portal lay the Pit of the Shoggoths itself, the veritable lair of Ubbo-Sathla. . . .

But it must be noted that, with the sole exception of Zulchequon, a demon of prodigious might and of the spawn of Shub-Niggurath herself, Haon-Dor had encountered in his descent into the abyss naught but the Lesser Old Ones, who are but the slaves and servitors of Those incalculably more dangerous than they. And this thought occurred to Haon-Dor, as he paused and lingered upon the portal.

Little (he thought to himself, with a certain vanity) hath a thaumaturge of power such as mine own to fear even from such as Quumyagga or Nug or Yeb!

Thus-and-so his ruminations ran, but we shall not reconstruct them here, for vanity is a sin all men share, neither is the present author immune to it. But had, perchance, our trepidatious wizard met with the Old Ones themselves, the tale might well have found another, and swifter, and less pleasant ending. For there be Those of the lineage of Ubbo-Sathla, and of Azathoth as well, which few sentient beings of any world can face without madness . . . and even Abthoth or Shub-Niggurath are not the most to be dreaded of Their kind.

#### V. THE ULTIMATE REVELATION

And thus came the sorcerer Haon-Dor to the abode of Ubbo-Sathla, and he entered therein.

Now this Ubbo-Sathla is accounted the eldest of all living things upon this planet, and he is destined, say the Parchments of Pnom, to be the last living inhabitant of the earth, as well, for Ubbo-Sathla is the source and the end. Before the coming of Tsathoggua or Yog-Sothoth or Cthulhu from the stars, Ubbo-Sathla dwelt in the steaming fens of the new-made Earth: a mass without head or members, spawning the gray, formless efts of the Prime, and the grisly prototypes of terrene life; and although there be many of Its spawn that joined with the Begotten of Azathoth in that war the idiot Chaos raised against the Elder Gods, Ubbo-Sathla knoweth naught of wars nor of change, nor even of time itself, being changeless and eternal. He abideth in the teeming slime-pits of lower Y'qaa, and all earthly life, it is told, shall go back at last through the great circle of time to Ubbo-Sathla.

And, as Haon-Dor stepped forth into the nethermost nadir of Y'qaa and gazed down upon the headless, limbless, slithering and ceaselessly fissioning Mass that was Ubbo-Sathla, he glimpsed as well those massive and glyphic tablets of immemorial and adamantine stone which were the guerdon of his labors. They lay tumbled carelessly about in the wriggling and nauseous slime, just as the Gods had left them for some unknowable and unguessable reason of Their own.

Haon-Dor had dreaded in the secret places of his heart that when the Elder Gods had come down from Their domain of Glyvho to punish Ubbo-Sathla's crime, the Elder Records had been

borne back with Them to the stars. But no, for here they lay, idly tossed about like the toys a growing child discards . . . and even in the midst of his triumphant moment, it occurred to the sorcerer to wonder—*why*.

At that precise moment, the squirming mass that was Ubbo-Sathla heaved and shuddered in the convulsions of Its unending and continuous proliferation, and in so-doing one tilted slab was thrust momentarily above the stinking ooze, so that the uppermost of the complex glyphs it bore deeply-graven was, however briefly, to be seen.

And in that flashing and transient glimpse, Haon-Dor saw and *comprehended* the meaning of the glyph, and the intolerably blasphemous, the ultimately shocking revelation, as but *one* of the titanic secrets of the cosmos exploded upon his frail, mundane consciousness and was seared deep into his, albeit prehuman, yet still mortal, brain. . . .

Back from the brink of that ghastly pit of ever-spawning and mindless fecundity he reeled, shrieking in the extremity of horror at the unthinkable and loathsome cosmic implication implicit in that single bit of arcana he had absorbed in one fleeting glimpse.

Back up the winding stair he sraggered, lurching, falling, trampling heedlessly underfoot the squeaking small wriggling lives that had crept mewling from the slime-pits below . . . on he flung himself, past the enigmatic gaze of the several godlings he had earlier, and with much trepidation, accosted . . . and up, up through the multitudinous levels of the cavern-world of Y'qaa he lurched, dazed, wild-eyed, shrieking with incredible horror at what he now knew, the blood within his reeling brain virtually congealing with the impact of that terrible and unbelievable cosmic insight . . . and out at last, out of that abyss of dread, gray-litten Y'qaa, whereof neither the serpentmen of old nor the furry and prehuman Voormis recorded aught that was wholesome.

\* \* \*

It is said that the antehuman sorcerer took refuge in those tenebrous cavern-gulfs immediately beneath Voormithadreth and reared his strange House therein, forever afterward shunning with unspoken fear the light of day, and the clear and laughing blue skies, the



innocent glitter of the stars, and the immemorial surging of the green salt sea.

For Haon-Dor knew, as no other thaumaturge before or after him hath ever or will ever know, the nature of that immense and horrible and ultimately absurd jest of the mocking Gods we mortals conceal behind the meaningless term "Reality."

There, in his curiously-enviored and thousand-pillared manse, reputedly coterminous with certain far-scattered regions of this world and of others, because of the contamination of that awful secret which he cannot ever for one instant forget, the sorcerer Haon-Dor hath dwelt from before the coming of men, and, it well may prove, dwelleth to this day; far from the abominations which crouch in grim Y'qaa at the nadir of the world he reposes, in communion with beings somewhat more wholesome and sympathetic than the denizens of Y'qaa, such as his neighbors, the eremite Ezdagor, the archeopteryx Raphontis, the spider-god Atlach-Nacha, and Tsathoggua. \*

## About "The Secret in the Parchment"

This tale, which debuted in the Eastertide 1988 issue of *Crypt of Cthulhu* (#54), seeks to integrate into the Eibonic sub-mythos the lore Arthur Machen created in "The White People," a tale which had a profound influence, along with "The Great God Pan," on Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror." It incorporates the Machenisms, however, merely by citation. And this is something of an allegory of reading, in that Carter apparently hoped the simple invocation of the Machenesque items would work the old black magic. Machen's own use of them, sublimely suggestive of far, far more than was shown, did conjure up ineffable shudders, but in "The Secret in the Parchment" the Aklo Letters, the Voorish Domes, Deep Dendo, etc., are just more items in an over-crowded list of gibberish. Carter has identified the voor as the Little People of "The Shining Pyramid" and *The Novel of the Black Seal*. Machen's Z Light becomes just an X Ray.

What is especially strange is how Carter locates the action in Ultima Thule and among the relics of the voorish people, with no apparent awareness that his mentor Smith had already used both the ancient Greek Ultima Thule as the basis for his own Mhu Thulan ("Mhu" coming from Churchward's *The Lost Continent of Mu*, a book he mentioned to HPL) and Machen's Kingdom of Voor as the basis for the Voormis and Mount Voormithadreth (Smith waxes eloquent in his praise for Machen's "The White People" to Lovecraft, ca. January 27, 1931).

# The Secret in the Parchment:

## The History of the Thaumaturge Ptomeron

by Lin Carter

Failing to win the heart of the maiden Zeetha, the youthful thaumaturge, Ptomeron, determined henceforth to avoid the companionship of his kind, and eligned to a desert in the remoter parts of the island of Ultima Thule. There, he erected for his abode a tower of harsh corundum on the giddy verge of a precipice in whose depths lived only crawling scarlet horror. His tower stood amidst a bleak wilderness uninhabited of men and shunned even by the beasts, which suited perfectly the melancholy moods of Ptomeron. Therein he pondered a philosophy too arduous and complex for the intelligence of lesser mages, concocted his astonishing elixirs, and by necromancy wrung a fearful lore from cadavers whose rotting visages were pullulating with maggots.

This Ptomeron possessed a sardonic humor, and his morbid disposition, only natural in a student of necromancy, was rendered even gloomier than before, by reason of his disappointments in love. It afforded grim amusement to Ptomeron, therefore, to furnish his citadel in somber yew and ebony, and he hung the walls with draperies of funereal browns and blacks and purples. Save for the entry-way, no apertures broke the flinty walls of his tower; the various suites and chambers thereof were illuminated only by weeping tapers of corpse-tallow, set in nine-branched candelabra cunningly fashioned from the bones of hanged men. By these, and the curdled light of clarified phosphorous caught in globes of clear glass, he pursued his study of less-than-wholesome recipes and of the interdicted rituals of the more equivocal divinities of vanquished theologies, by few save he remembered.

The wilderness whereover he perforce ruled was known to the pre-glacial geographers as the Desolation of Voor, by reason of the queer folk that had dwelt hereabouts before the coming of the first human settlers into this island from the adjacent continent of Hyperborea. They had been delvers into a dark lore, these voorish-

folk, and it fascinated Ptomeron to puzzle over the nigh-indecipherable charactry of such of their scrolls or tablets as were still occasionally unearthed amongst their low, unwholesome tombs and sepulchres.

Not far from his tower, in fact, was one such necropolis of the primordial denizens of Thule to be found, in a desiccated region where broken tombs tottered amidst the soft cinnabar sands of deserts beyond the river Zendish. Here was he often wont to prowl amongst the crumbling fanes and sepulchres which the voors had left behind them when they vanished from the world. But even one of so morbid a disposition as Ptomeron did not like the grim appearance of these mausolea, for they were squat and humped like crouching toads, and decorated with the most repulsive and hateful bas-reliefs imaginable. Neither did he at all care for the manner in which each tomb was furnished with a stone stair that descended into ebon depths below the earth's crust, wherefrom there blew unceasingly a cold and hissing wind of exceeding foulness.

Betimes he wondered, did Ptomeron, whither the stairways of each crypt led, as they wound down into unguessable caverns at the bowels of the world, and for what purpose they had been builded, whereconcerning his perusal of the voorish lore gave cryptic hints which roused horrified revulsion within his heart. He hoped his fears unfounded, for nothing in the elder texts he had aforesaid scanned hinted at aught that was comfortable to the sanity of men concerning that dark and dubious subterranean realm.

It was amongst the relics of an antehuman sorcerer named Haon-Dor that the thaumaturge found his first knowledge of the mysterious fate of the voors. This sorcerer had belonged to a little-known race which had formerly inhabited this island, driven hence by the unpleasant voorish-folk ages before the coming-hither of Ptomeron's own people. On frayed, decaying parchments made of the tanned membranes of pterodactyl-wings, the antehuman mage had written cryptically of "the kingdom of the voors beyond the end of the world," and hinted frightful things concerning the "White Ceremonies" and the "Scarlet Ceremonies" whereby the voors had worshipped unguessable divinities happily left unnamed.

Ptomeron discovered these clues by sheerest chance, for he had been at considerable pains to secure a copy of the Testament of

Haon-Dor, as it reputedly contained the sorcerer's own redaction of the Voorish Rituals, of which Ptomeron had recovered from the wastage of time only baffling and contradictory fragments. Alas, the antehuman sorcerer had written of the voors in the difficult Aklo writing, wherein Ptomeron was less than proficient.

Crouched night after unsleeping night over the mouldering parchments, propped before him on a tall lectern of coffin-wood, the thaumaturge tirelessly perused the cryptic pages, striving with all the arcana of his magistracy to deduce the secrets hidden behind the dark symbolism employed by Haon-Dor. What, for example, was meant by the "Mao Games," or "Voolas," or by "the Dark Flame," or "the Green Ceremonies," or "the Xu Language," or "the Dirka Song," or "the Nug-Soth Runes," or "Zulchequon"? And many were the times when the exasperated thaumaturge wished, and that most heartily, that those hunched and squalid tombs which the voors had left behind to lapse to shards amidst the cinnabar sands were not deserted and untenanted, so that he could vivify their remains by his command of the arts of necromancy, to wrest from the sere and withered lips of voorish mummies the secrets of that ocultury whose keys eluded him.

But alas—and unaccountably—the uncouth and elusive voors had taken even their dead with them. . . .

Yet in these studies he persevered, and at length the rigor of his interminable labors bore fruit, for Ptomeron, with a febrile eagerness curiously unlike his former sardonic calm, unriddled a passage in the *Testament of Haon-Dor* which had heretofore defied every analysis. Coupled together in the most meaningful proximity he found a reference to "the Z Light" and the ominous and even sinister phrase, ". . . heavy and grey and sad, like a wicked voorish dome in Deep Dendo."

The causes for the excitement his deciphering of this passage aroused within the breast of Ptomeron were several. For one thing, he had earlier mastered the usage of the Z Light during his apprenticeship in the city Ith, which stood on the eastern coasts of the island and was commonly accounted its premier metropolis. For another, those mean, low, ill-reputed structures called "voorish domes" were still to be found in certain of the remoter parts of the island of Thule, such as those hostile and desolate wildernesses long uninhabited by men, among the which were the Woodlands of Llorn and the Yurga

Mountains. And it was known that these domes were unaccountably shunned even by tomb-robbers, by the ghouls, and by the tribes of shy and furtive jeelo that betimes infest such regions.

Finally, the passage hinted that the voors, driven from their noxious haunts by the antehumans, had taken refuge in those black and evil caverns beneath the earth's crust known as Deep Dendo, about which so much was whispered but so little was known.

\* \* \*

To construct the intricate mechanism which would project the Z Light into the subterranean depths was no simple task, and one that required of Ptomeron that he make several visits to Ith and the towns of Yazra and Thul, where he succeeded at length in procuring the necessary supplies of quartz and lead and other materials. It was during his brief stay in Ith that he bethought him to visit once again his former sweetheart, Zcetha, but inquiries at the manse of her parents divulged the peculiar and disquieting fact that she had vanished some days before, from which knowledge the necromancer sourly deduced the wanton had run away with a lover. Returning to his dark tower, he fell into a frenzy of labor and, in the fullness of time, his apparatus was fully assembled.

Ptomeron selected for the night of his experiment one on which the planets were auspicious, with Ylidiomph in the ascendant and dim Yaksh low on the horizon. The uncanny and flickering radiance from the lamp he had constructed cast weird shadows in three directions as it was caught in prisms of vitrified lead, blazed through lenses of glittering quartz, reflected from polished mirrors of black steel, from thence projected against the agate flagstones of the flooring.

The light sizzled and flashed as it penetrated the stone floor, shedding a wavering penumbra of shuddering luminance in which the thaumaturge perceived nine hitherto-unnamed colors. And then, before his fascinated gaze, the solid earth seemed to melt away, to vaporize, and to waft into insubstantial mists, invisible as was the circumambient air itself.

The scintillant beam bored into the depths of the earth, and, with rapt enchantment, Ptomeron observed scenes and vistas heretofore unglimped by men—caverns thronged with stalagmites and stalactites, like the fangs of dragons, veins of strange minerals

and pockets of peculiar gems and crystals unknown to purely terrene jewelers.

Through hitherto impenetrable regions of utter darkness the ray pierced, disclosing to his gaze fugitive glimpses of uncanny subterranean cataracts, of gushing torrents hurtling through Stygian darknesses, of black lakes swarming with bleached and eyeless fish, of enormous worms grown larger than Leviathan, of seething volcanic lakes of fiery lava, and other marvels beyond name and number.

At length the Z Light, having penetrated to a depth of many leagues, disclosed a vast hollow space, an immense, seemingly limitless region otherwise submerged in abysmal gloom. Therein, his vision magnified by a clever arrangement of powerful lenses, Ptomeron observed innumerable shallow domes which broke the muddy surface of the cavern floor like swollen pustules on a cadaver's bloated visage.

Colorless and grimy were these low protuberances in the livid and piercing light, and between them trickled sluggish rivulets of viscous black mud encrusted with multitudinous, seemingly *gnawed* bones of all manner of living creatures. Among these charnel remains, Ptomeron uneasily noted the unmistakable bones and skeletons of men, women and children of his race—but how such ossous remnants could have penetrated to this enormous depth below the earth the thaumaturge could not—or *would not*—conjecture.

With fingers that trembled just a trifle, he adjusted the dials of the mechanism, impelling the beam of Z Light to sink through the porous substance of the larger and central-most of the repellent domes. Drenched in unutterable blackness was the interior of that foul edifice, but, by imperceptible degrees, the livid radiance reluctantly alleviated the gloom, and with growing consternation Ptomeron perceived a writhing mound of bleached and glistening white bodies, beslimed and pulpy as putrescent worms. Yet they were not worms, no, not with those swollen and infantile heads, those bloated and hairless limbs . . . and with a thrill of even intenser revulsion, Ptomeron now saw that the puffy embryonic faces atop those squirming naked shapes bore no slightest vestige of eyes, naught but smooth pulpy swellings, nostril-slits, and wet, working sphincter-like mouths.

They crawled and slithered in an obscene, tangled heap; and then the mound of squirming bodies parted, and Ptomeron discerned that upon which the loathsome crawlers writhed. It was the recumbent body of a veritable giantess, or so it seemed, until the perspective oriented itself and the necromancer realized the smallness of the puny forms in proper relation to that upon which they wallowed.

He staggered back from the lenses with a choked cry as horror beyond belief enveloped him. And at last he knew the most abysmal of the secrets of Deep Dendo, and in an helpless paroxysm of fury and loathing he smashed his apparatus asunder and mindlessly trampled the bent and broken fragments underfoot.

And thereafter the thaumaturge Ptomeron confined his studies to philosophies too arduous and complex for the intelligence of lesser mages, to the concocting of his astonishing elixirs, and to the conversation of rotting cadavers, striving to erase from the tablets of his memory the features that he had seen upon the naked giantess upon whose hamstrung and helpless body the puny and repugnant voors had so lasciviously writhed. For in that face, despite its drooling and mindless idiocy, he had recognized the lineaments of his lost love, the maiden Zeetha. ✱

## About "The Face from Below"

We learn two seemingly disparate bits of information about the savant Pnom from Smith and Carter. He was an archivist and an exorcist. No story tries to harmonize the apparent discrepancy. How would a man be both? Actually, the answer is quite simple once you know something about ancient and medieval exorcistic technique. It seems that faith healers and exorcists kept files of traditional healing and exorcism stories. Some they used as guidebooks, e.g., Mark 9:29, "This kind cometh not out save by prayer and fasting." Others they would recite in their entirety as a liturgy of exorcism/healing. (This is why the actual healing words of Jesus are retained in his native Aramaic even though the rest of Mark 5:22-24, 35-43 and 7:32-35 is in Greek—you must use the magic syllables themselves, not some equivalent. As Origen of Alexandria says, you dare not tamper with the actual sound. See also Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 1978, pp. 188 ff., for a medieval exorcism entailing the full repetition of Elijah's exorcism of the demon queen Matronit.)

Thus we must imagine Pnom cataloguing ancient tales of magical contests which he would employ in his rituals, either as a database (Hmm . . . how did they get rid of Ossadogowah last time he made a nuisance of himself?) or as ritual scripts. We can even explain why he should have compiled the sort of theogony Smith derives from the *Parchments of Pnom*. Exorcism, as the very word implies (derived from the Greek *exousia*, "authority"), is a matter of "pulling rank" on a demon, as when Jesus bound the power of Beelzebul, prince of demons, and forced him to send his subordinates, the lesser demons, out of their victims. This is no doubt why medieval exorcists sought with great precision to delineate the exact chain of command of what C. S. Lewis (in *The Screwtape Letters*) called "the Lowerarchy"; they needed to know which devil could and could not be pushed around by which other devil. In the same way, Pnom the exorcist would have wanted to chart out the seniority and relationships of the Old Ones as in the genealogical chart Smith provides by courtesy of the *Parchments of Pnom*.

It will come as no surprise, then, that the present tale is itself no doubt intended as a paradigm for would-be exorcists in the tradition of Pnom. If it was unable to provide a sure-fire method, it at least helped set the limits of what might be too perilous a job to undertake.

Eibonic scribe Laurence J. Cornford has pointed out a certain resemblance between this episode and a remarkable experience related by Clark Ashton Smith in *The Fantasy Fan* for November 1934: "About 1918 I was in ill health and, during a short visit to San Francisco, was sitting one day in the Bohemian Club, to which I had been given a guest's card of admission. Happening to look up, I saw a frightful demonian face with twisted rootlike

eyebrows and oblique fiery-slitted eyes, which seemed to emerge momentarily from the air about nine feet above me and lean toward my seat. The thing disappeared as it approached me, but left an ineffaceable impression of malignity, horror, and loathsomeness."

# The Face from Below:

## The History of Pnom the Exorcist

by Laurence J. Cornford

Many centuries ago, in the days of the sage Pnom, he who was the chief genealogist as well as a noted prophet and exorcist, there fell upon the region of Asphagoth a frightful series of horrors. Weird tales and omens abounded concerning the fate of men and women caught after sunset or on lonely roads. Such reports reached even to the spired city of Mnardis, which at that time was the dwelling place of that famous prophet. The rumours intrigued that noble archimandrite, and he noted down these quaint rumours for later reference. He thought no more of them until one afternoon when his servant announced the arrival of a party of visitors from none other than the haunted region of Asphagoth.

They had journeyed many days from the village of Urcheeth, through darksome forests where lurked the furtive jeelo, over water-meadows babbling with springs and insects, and among domed hills, seeking Pnom by reason of his fabled reputation as vanquisher of malign spirits. The visitors talked long with Pnom, who sought first to verify what he might of the many curious tales which had reached his ears, for even when events partake of the preternatural, rumor will make them more fantastic still, and he would separate strange truth from stranger fancy. Had any of his suppliants seen aught of the pestering demons with his own eyes?

The venerable Pnom was by no means loathe to come to their aid, but the winter would soon be setting in, and he liked not to venture far from his cheery hearth unless a case be dire indeed. Determined to win his aid, the villagers doubtless stretched what facts they knew. Nor did they neglect to flatter the invincible Pnom, citing with much praise his many victories over the spirit-world. As for Pnom, he did not recognize several of these latter tales, so greatly had rumour transformed them into the veriest absurdities.

At the last, and not before the convivial consumption of a large quantity of spiced amber wine, Pnom consented to pay a visit to the

region. Once there, he would determine the true state of things, and whether he might do aught to aid their plight. To show how pleased the visitors were at this proclamation they broke open another case of Pnom's rich wine to toast him as the premier exorcist of the age.

So on the morrow Pnom gathered up the equipment of exorcism, the sigils and charms, the potions and rare potted chemicals of his art, and loaded them upon the pack animals that waited in the courtyard below his manse and, leaving the property and the tutelage of his apprentices to his steward, Ravleth Gilon, he set out in the company of the greatly cheered villagers. None too surprisingly, the journey took even longer than the first trek of the embassy from Urcheeth to visit Pnom, since now especial care must needs be taken on account of the magical accouterments, some exceedingly fragile, others equally volatile. So the company pressed on for many days, over hills turned unseasonably autumnal, through marshlands where insects of an unpleasant size bit and harried the travelers and their mounts, and into woods where the trees twisted and coiled above overgrown paths to block their way.

As they drew close at last to the troubled province, they encountered processions of refugees fleeing from the region, their worldly belongings piled upon carts and caravans, cutting ruts into the gray mud. Occasionally at night they would be joined round their fire by some of these fugitives, and from these they gathered the latest intelligence. Hushed voices spoke falteringly of animals and people alike, utterly vanished, their passing marked by naught but their blood stains and a curious disturbance of the ground, or scratching upon the rocks.

So it was on the last night of their journey, when the refugees had grown few and straggling, that Pnom and his clients espied from the brow of a hill the town of Urcheeth whose few remaining people ran about in manifest panic, though for what cause they could but speculate. Then, as the company drew nearer, they observed a house folding and splintering as if from some mighty impact, though no siege engine or battering ram could be seen. Nearer still they heard the villagers call out that they suffered assault by some unseen monster which had ravaged the whole land, falling on farms and towns, all taken unawares. The learned Pnom had heard enough. He stepped forth and, unlimbering his sigil-sword from its damasked scabbard,

went forth on foot into the village, warning his companions to await his return. None of these last registered any protest.

By sword and magic craft Pnom confronted the beast, which he alone seemed able to behold, facing down his vast and howling foe in the midst of a dismal meadow. With many oaths and conjurations did he adjure the unseen behemoth until at length, when the sun had long since fled in terror, lo, he slew it with the mighty and shudder-some Eighth Word of the Litany of Xastur, so that the very hills echoed to its death-cries and a chorus of birds took up the calling in a mocking lament, fluttering frenzied in their skeletal trees. At last all fell silent.

The villagers greeted Pnom as a fair hero. They took him by the arms and spun him in jigs to the music of simple pipes and drums. They patted him endlessly and called all at once for him to tell what desires he had that they might fulfill. But for all this, Pnom felt little inclined unto rejoicing. His victory, arduous as it must seem to helpless mortals, yet seemed too easily wrought to Pnom, and he could not but feel that the true menace was lying low. The villagers, celebrating prematurely as he felt, were made garrulous by reason of drink, and wise Pnom took the occasion to make further inquiries. The villagers agreed, as if seeing no significance in the fact, that the banished thing had come from the forest to the east, and Pnom surmised this to be the true source of the terror. The exorcist located the group of villagers who had come to enlist his aid and informed them of his darksome suspicions, then bade them seek out their beds, since they must be underway again on the morrow.

Rising later than he liked and having managed little rest due in no small part to the boisterous celebrations of the villagers, ill-suited to the temperament of so studied a scholar, Pnom and his band departed from the town, walking quickly to make up for the hours squandered. Near dusk, they settled near the outskirts of the dark and fearsome forest, when they were approached by a sole figure.

The newcomer cut a striking figure, standing a full head taller than the average native of the region, and uncommonly broad of shoulder. His craggy, weathered face, with its tangle of beard and twisting, upturned mustaches, and lump-nose, bespoke the woodsman rather than the burgher. The man hailed the group, showed open, empty hands, and named himself Vash-Tsoth. He had dwelt,

he said, in the woods east of Urcheeth all his life. He abode there with his brother, Margh-Tsoth, their mother having passed away and their father absent for many a year. When asked about late events in Urcheeth, Vash-Tsoth expressed entire ignorance, then appeared bemused and upset hearing of the ravages and eventual death of the monster. He regarded all he had heard in silence momentarily, then spoke.

Some miles from the woodland shelter he shared with his brother, there stood a cromlech of gray stones, raised by some ancient, unknown hand. One night (as it happened, the very night of that equinox when Pnom had noted a peculiar conjunction of stars) the two brothers had sighted a great fire blazing in the center of the stones. Vash-Tsoth had approached to observe a robed figure conducting a strange ceremony, changing the fire from red to green, from yellow to blue. Soon the man was joined by several others, likewise robed. And all as one commenced to dance about the queer flames in the limping fashion of the ancients. No more than a dance it seemed, yet it was after this night that the beasts of the forest became affrighted and departed for more wholesome climes. After no great space of days, the villagers, too, had fled, so that the brothers found no one with whom to barter as formerly. Next came the noises in the night, and on these was Vash-Tsoth reluctant to elaborate. At first the brothers weathered these hardships, being themselves hardy men, but one morning Vash-Tsoth awoke to discover his brother had fled in the night. So it was that Vash-Tsoth now came to be abroad searching for his brother.

Pnom gravely considered the tale, and pondered for long moments upon its meaning. He assured the young man that they had met no-one traveling the road who matched the appearance of the missing brother, and that he feared the evil influences in the wood might have captured him. The old exorcist bade the woodsman show him the location of the stones, and to this Vash-Tsoth readily agreed. Pnom warned that it would be better if he went alone into the woods, which he now most certainly knew for the source of the ills plaguing the region. So he set out, accompanied only by a pack-mule and Vash-Tsoth as guide. None seemed averse to his council, and all waited by the campfire, breaking out the wineskins. As for Pnom, he was happy enough not to have to play

nursemaid to the faint-hearted. He should have his old hands full with the devils of the place.

Together the two men trudged through the woodland. They were a strange pair, seen side by side. Vash-Tsoth was a great bear of a man, shambling and dirty, while Pnom, in his violet robes, trimmed with ermine, was half the height of his comrade and a third the width.

The air smelt of damp earth, fungi, and the herbal aroma of crumbling tree-bark. At last he came upon the stones. Great they were, built on a scale unsuited to the familiar theriomorphic godlings of Hyperborea, and they bore runnels dyed rusty brown with the dried blood of man and beast. In the midst of the stones the earth was dark and the meager vegetation black, not in the aftermath of flame, but by some alchemical process Pnom could not readily determine. The old savant was silent for a time, while the young giant waited by his side uneasily. Pnom carefully retrieved from his pouch three metal tubes and removed from them as many parchments, which he unrolled with a surgeon's touch, for that they were very ancient. These he studied one by one and restored to their place. At last he raised his head and addressed Vash-Tsoth. It would be a grim business, but would the woodsman aid him in the slaying of the menace?

"I am minded to summon up the malign spirit," quoth Pnom, "thereupon to bind it to my will. Once this is done, and before the ultimate banishment of the fiend, we shall inquire of it concerning your brother, should you aid me."

"Very well, mighty Pnom," answered the woodsman with a note of sullen resignation, his voice muffled by his mustaches. Pnom put this seeming reluctance down to the general dread, not unwarranted, with which mere mortals regarded the beings from Beyond.

The twain set about laying out a perfect circle of sulfurous powder over which Pnom chanted and gestured. For many hours in this wise Pnom prepared the summoning and binding of the presence which pervaded the region. His shrill, cracking voice called the Hnaa Formula, and the great Cloirgne Ritual. Power crackled within the binding circle, and the forces of the Outer Spheres pulled at Pnom's flimsy flesh. He knew the summoning was near, and he spoke again unto Vash-Tsoth, he who stood silently at his shoulder.

"Pass me now the Scimitar of Nothvair." He waited, then glanced again at the other man. Vash-Tsoth made not the slightest effort to comply, and, believing him paralyzed with fear, Pnom reached out for the ornate blade. Then, happening to look up, he saw a frightful demoniac face with twisted root-like eyebrows and oblique fiery-slitted eyes, which seemed to emerge in a moment from the air about nine feet above him. It bore, nay, it *was* an ineffable expression of malignity, horror, and loathsomeness. The face faded as it descended, and in a moment Pnom beheld Something manifesting at the center of the circle. A protective fog hid the form within, but swinging talons made to slash at the fabric of the mist, and Pnom liked not the little he could see. A shuddering came over him, for he knew this manifestation for no less than the Angel of dread Yok-Zothoth!

Yet, he faltered not, trusting to the power of the Pnakotic Pentagram, and spoke, inquiring of the fate of Vash-Tsoth's brother. Then a liquid voice echoed from the chilly gulfs beyond all time:

"Margh-Tsoth is slain!"

"Tell how, foul spirit!" screamed Pnom, to be heard above the gathering vortex.

"*You* slew him!"

"Not I!" began the exorcist, when from the corner of his eye he chanced to see the foot of Vash-Tsoth about to smudge away the anti-valent powder of the mystic circle. Gasping at the peril threatened by the idle foolishness of the yokel, Pnom cried out and dashed forward to restrain him. But the woodsman, hardly ignorant of the meaning of the act, let fly his great right arm and smote the elderly Pnom, who collapsed upon the brink of the circle, his snowy, red-beaded head toward Vash-Tsoth and the chuckling demon.

Unaccustomed as he might have been to the common violence of ruffians like Vash-Tsoth, Pnom was yet a blade tempered by trials many and extreme, and he did not lose consciousness. He could scarce credit what he saw as Vash-Tsoth made to scrub out yet more of the circle, whereupon did That within pulse loathsomely in unholy anticipation of release from the strictures of Pnom. Then, most horribly, Vash-Tsoth looked down at him.

The craggy features of Vash-Tsoth, when viewed from below and inverted thus, took on their true form—a veritable twin to the face



he had seen in the air above. What had first seemed upturned mustaches were in truth the root-like brows of the demoniac visage; he saw fire leap deep in the slit eyes of Vash-Tsoth; and what he had taken for brows when the face was viewed from the front, were nothing more than nostril hairs of a wide and abominable nose. Then a wrinkled, lipless mouth opened in what had lately passed for a furrowed forehead, and from it issued a monstrous voice.

"Father, *here lies the slayer of thy son, my brother! We have him now!*"

In panic Pnom rolled over and regained his feet. All thought of magic fled from his stupefied brain. His mouth dried and his voice departed him, nor could he have uttered a single word of the Liturgy of Xastur, had he thought of it.

Pnom turned and burst from the ruined protective circle and ran with a speed belying his years, as if the hosts of hell were at his back, as indeed they were. He passed the encampment of his former companions, though they knew it not, having passed the whole time in drinking. Neither did he stop when he had gained the road to purple-towered Mnardis in the south. Having seen the face from below, he concluded he had more than discharged his duty to the people of Urcheeth, having slain one of the twin sons of the Old God Yok-Zothoth. If the cowering villagers wanted the other slain, too, well, they could see to it themselves. \*

## About "The Sphinx of Abormis"

As Lin Carter planned it, this episode connects up rather closely with the portions of Smith's "Ubbo-Sathla" involving Zon Mezzamalech (a name which ought to mean "Mezza is my king," a theophoric name or title like Melchizedek, "Zedek is my king"). But this much gives us little notion of how Carter would have justified the appropriation of the unused Smith title "The Sphinx of Abormis." To supply this element, Laurence J. Cornford has drawn upon Robert Bloch's Nyarlathotep legendry, identifying the sphinx of Nyarlathotep from "The Faceless God" with "Faceless Byagoona" and, of course, with the Sphinx of Abormis.

The tale sparkles with the true Smith wit, showing how even the most astounding prodigies of thaumaturgy, if they were possible, would in no wise cause the pettiness of human nature and human ambition to elevate a notch. It is a perfect parable of Smith's amused contempt (much like that of Nietzsche's Zarathustra) for priestcraft. The priestly claims to control miracles and the God of miracles merely serve to fortify their own position, which they will use any trick, any stratagem, to safeguard, from the pious fraud to the inquisitory thumb-screws.

# The Sphinx of Abormis:

## The History of the Wizard Hormagor

by Laurence J. Cornford

Some two hundred years ago lived the wizard Hormagor, in the town of Abormis, high in the southeastern foothills of the Eiglophian Mountains. In those days Hormagor was counted the mightiest sorcerer of the southern half of Hyperborea, the which being divided in three by the mighty Eiglophian range. From his stone keep in Abormis he would send forth his disciples on divers errands and missions such as astounded the populace. And yet he was by no means the only mage held in such esteem, for north of the Eiglophians, where but few knew of Hormagor, another was deemed supreme sorcerer, even one Zon Mezzamalech. Among his disciples, this Zon Mezzamalech was hailed as the greatest wizard of that or any age. From his tall tower of beaten copper all the lands of Mhu Thulan lay beneath his sway.

Powerful wizards do not long thrive, or even survive, without being well apprised of the competition. Thus the two great wizards were hardly unaware of each other and, in time, wizards being more like mortal men than the latter suppose, each became covetous of the high regard and awe accorded the other in his respective sphere of influence. And as these things go, it was not long before a rivalry had arisen between the two sorcerers, for that neither relished that any doubt should exist as to who was the greatest thaumaturge of the era.

Their stalemate continued, each mage possessed of his secrets, powers, and admirers, for some years when Zon Mezzamalech made an important discovery. While excavating the ruins of a prehuman shrine on the abandoned shores of Polarion, he chanced upon a cloudy stone, orb-like and somewhat flattened at the ends, in which he learned to scry many visions of the terrene past, even to the earth's beginning, when Ubbo-Sathla, the unbegotten source, lay vast and swollen and yeasty amid the vapoing slime. Thus able to unlock the secrets of bygone ages and unknown worlds, Zon Mezzamalech, as

might well be imagined, shortly surpassed his rival to become the single supreme sorcerer of that bygone age, much to the annoyance of Hormagor who had no such artifact to his advantage.

When taunted on the point by some mocking afreet or cacodaemon, Hormagor would feign indifference; a mage's power, he would aver, was scarcely proven superior by the happenstance turning up of an old rock. Superior luck he granted Zon Mezzamalech might indeed have, but luck is a man's master, and not his servant, as is true sorcerous power. Any man, even an idiot, could possess such a thing and gain the same benefits, whereas Hormagor's own magic derived from his long and arduous study of the secret arts. Whether any who heard this well-rehearsed answer believed it, within his own heart Hormagor raged at the very thought that men should reckon him inferior. But it must be said of him that his disgruntlement only spurred him on to greater efforts and greater accomplishments. Night and day he studied and strove by means of recondite disciplines and asceticisms. Nor did his efforts return unto him void.

Hormagor turned water to wine and raised the dead from their tombs. He forced back the outpourings of the volcano of Krathkolgauth when its eruption had threatened to engulf in ash the village of Balsain. Yet tidings came from Oggon-Zhai telling how Zon Mezzamalech had parted the northern sea and led King Pharogill's army there to plunder the treasures of a thousand sunken galleys which lay decaying upon the seabed. They told how he spoke with ancient demigods as they slept in their moldering sarcophagi, and raised the mountain of Ingados to hover moments in the sky. And how one night he trapped the moon within a sphere of solid iron, as the king looked on amazed (although Hormagor, who knew something of astrology, suspected that a recent lunar eclipse accounted for this last prodigy). So it was that the rivalry of the two grew ever stronger.

One warm summer night, in his silk-sheeted bed high in his stout stone keep, Hormagor shooed away the amorous attentions of his twin succubi and rolled over to sleep. He dreamed that he was visited by a great dark, faceless sphinx who crept unbidden like a feline shadow to half-sing, half-speak unto him in a voice of liquid amber, saying, "Hail, O Hormagor, second mightiest wizard of all

Hyperborea! I have tidings for thee. A gift of power I will bring to thee."

"*Second* mightiest?" muttered the wizard in his slumber, irked that he could not be supreme even in his own dreams.

"Second indeed," replied the sphinx, "for that thou possessest no scrying stone like unto that of Zon Mezzamalech. It is the very Eye of Ubbo-Sathla, plucked from the swampy expanse of the Unbegotten, through which one may gaze upon all space and time, from the very first unto the very last; as the eye of Ubbo-Sathla shall at last look upon the All."

"What of this stone?" cried Hormagor, angered the more that his dream should cogently argue his rival's case. "Is a man a wizard because he has a stone? I have no need of baubles!"

"Very well," sighed the sphinx, "then neither hast thou need of the boon of Byagoona, which is greater even than the Eye of Ubbo-Sathla."

"Prithee not put words in my mouth, O apparition. It ill befits a wizard of my calibre not to suffer graciously the votive gifts of his admirers. Give me this boon then, O dark one."

"I cannot do any such, alas. I am but a dream. Thou must make for my soul a body wherein it may reside, and then I may shower gifts aplenty, the which shall raise thee up above all men, and magnify thee as befits thy station. Here is the subtlety of the matter: with thine own hands must thou fashion me a worldly body, with thine own sweat and blood and with thine own will shalt thou fashion it. Thine effort shall be reckoned an efficacious offering to the Powers which I do serve. Lest thou be said to have merely stumbled upon thy gift, all men shall know thou hast achieved it through thine own works. A work shall it be such as all men for all time shall marvel at. To overpass thy rival thou must needs cast aside thy petty rivalry and thy petty rage therat. Otherwise shalt thou show thyself unworthy of the boon I shall bring. Serve me utterly and I shall reciprocate. Thou shalt live forever and men shall think always of thy name when they speak of the embodiment of the god Byagoona."

So saying the sphinx departed from the dreams of Hormagor, and his night was henceforth dreamless. But restful it was not, for Hormagor was keenly curious, as is the wont of sorcerers and cats,

and the thought of what the gifts might be which this faceless one might bring did haunt him and vex his mind.

Early in the morning Hormagor rose and ate what he could before mounting his horse and setting out at a fair canter into the hills nearby. There he sought for a suitable piece of onyx from which to construct the sphinx. Finding a massive block of the same, he began constructing, with his own hands, which were scarce accustomed to the labor, an elaborate track of pulleys and runners with the which to transport the boulder back to his house. To one of his metaphysical accomplishments, it would have been but the merest child's play to send the thing sailing lightly through the midmorning air to its destination. But he feared that the employment of aught more than his native intelligence might forfeit him the promise of the divine sphinx. By late afternoon, he had the great chunk of rock where he wanted it and, its ebon stolidly limned by the flaming rays of sunset, Hormagor stood before it with a note of pious awe, as if he could already glimpse within the stone the sublime outlines of his divine patron.

The next dawn he set to work on it within the great courtyard, hammering with chisels of various sizes. He did not pause to eat or sleep for four days, and each day the sharded bits of onyx piled higher about the base of the stone, and each night the shape grew more and more like the lion-bodied thing. And all the while was Hormagor filled with greater urgency. He finally decided that it would not violate the spirit of the conditions laid upon him if, for the sake of uninterrupted labor, he should magically draw nutrient from sunlight and send his soul to take its slumber upon astral planes whilst his body mechanically continued on. As peddlers and messengers saw the advancing work of the sweating Hormagor, word spread till soon all men eulogized of the wonder of it: Zon Mezzamalech might have his stone, but Hormagor would have his sphinx.

So it was, for a time, that the world heard no more of the two mightiest wizards: Hormagor hard at his ceaseless toil, while Zon Mezzamalech absconded within his lofty tower to plumb the very depths of the Eye of Ubbo-Sathla. But of that which he beheld, Zon Mezzamalech left no record; and men say that he vanished presently, in a way that is not known; and after him the cloudy crystal was lost.

On that fateful day when a messenger arrived at the keep with the news of Zon Mezzamalech's traceless disappearance, Hormagor was as usual in the courtyard, chiseling away at the sphinx, now very near completion, and contemplating what manner of face he might finally cut into the smooth onyx oval beneath the pleated mane. Hormagor laid aside his tools, for the first time in months, as the news of his rival's disappearance began to dawn upon him. With terrible intuition he feared it could be no mischance that had claimed the northern wizard, but only the intervention of an ultra-human Power.

Was this, then, the boon of Byagoona? That Hormagor should win the preeminence by mere default? The victory, if such one might call it, was a hollow one, even a mockery. Of a certainty Hormagor now counted as the greatest of wizards, but none should ever see it so! For would not every man say that Hormagor owed his position to Zon Mezzamalech's mere absence? And, worse yet, would not this be the plain truth of the matter?

Rocked by despair, Hormagor threw down his chisel and wandered forlornly to his bed, where the weariness of many days fell upon him, and there he remained, leaving the sphinx complete save for its face. When Zylac, the foremost of his disciples, rapped upon his door and solicitously inquired as to his health and whether he would not go on to complete the statue, Hormagor swore that he would never finish it. Nay, when he had rested he meant to take his chisel to it and shatter it altogether. Nor cared he aught for the hollow gifts of cheating dreams.

That night he fell asleep, only to be aroused soon after by the whispering words of the sphinx which sang softly to him a tale of the ancient time when all space was in Chaos. The wind made the silks billow at his tower window, and the chill of ultra-cosmic voids seeped into his bones as a shadow stalked with tread lighter than its bulk should grant.

In the morning Hormagor was found dead, not in his bed, but lying between the forepaws of the statue of the sphinx Byagoona, a chisel and mallet in his palsied hands. With hammers and axes the people of Abormis sought to destroy the sphinx, in keeping with their master's last wish, but the onyx resisted their every effort. Reinforced by some unknown sorcery, its surface shattered their hardest mallets and sharpest tools before ever they made one scratch

upon its glistening surface. So the acolytes and servants dismissed the bewildered village folk and prayed a prayer for forgiveness to the spirit of Hormagor wherever it might now reside, and they departed from the keep. And more, by the first light of dawn, every living soul, fearing the dark advent of some terrible misfortune, had fled the village of Abormis, one and all, abandoning it to crumble into the dust. As for Zylac, he gathered up such of his late mentor's magical artifacts as he could carry and traveled north to a certain promontory of rock overlooking the boreal sea.

But the sphinx endured.

No man will sleep in the ruins of Abormis, among the crumbling towers and halls. The track to Abormis is overgrown with rank-weed, for wise travelers take the northern path and will not even halt for a moment's rest in that valley by night. Too many have never been seen again after a respite within that village, and of those few who have passed through safely by day some say that the sphinx no longer stands in the courtyard of old Hormagor's keep, but they differ as to where exactly it did stand.

Why did the villagers depart as one that day long ago? Wherefore did they abandon their farms and crops, their shops and temples? My master Zylac whispered the truth of the matter to me one dark night when we had both partaken liberally of the wine of ancient Commoriom: when they found Hormagor lying prone as in dead worship before his sphinx, men saw that the eidolon was at last complete after all. Byagoona had a face where only featureless onyx had been the night before. A pale, ill-suited face, to be sure, and one which, despite the incongruity, bore a knowing, mocking smile; and the body of Hormagor, wizard of Abormis, the second greatest wizard of that bygone age, had but a ragged mess of blood and bone where a face should be. ✱

## About "The Alkahest"

The character of the wizard mixing his potions is so familiar to us from fiction and legend that it almost comes as a surprise to recall that such tales are based on genuine practitioners of the arcane arts. While only those with no exacting standards of evidence will believe that the alchemists and necromancers of old actually achieved objective, physical marvels through their conjurations, no one ought to doubt that characters very like Eibon and his sorcerous brethren existed. One of the most notable of these was the magus Auroelius Philippus Theophrastus Paracelsus Bombast von Hohenheim (1493–1541). Paracelsus, as he was known, was the son of a medical doctor and trained to follow in his footsteps. Medicine was in a sorry state, consisting chiefly in therapeutic horrors such as bleeding and purging. Paracelsus repudiated the ancient traditions, publicly burnt the works of Galen and Avicenna, and determined to establish medical science anew on a sound chemical and philosophical basis. To this end he traveled widely, consulting the wizards of Egypt, Arabia, and India, even appearing before the Cham of Tartary. The AMA was no more forgiving then, so to speak, than it is today where medical heresy is concerned, and it is suspected that Paracelsus' untimely death was the result of poisoning by his venerable colleagues.

Paracelsus, in modern terms, was more the alchemist than the chemist, laying great store by the supposed rejuvenating and therapeutic properties of the distilled "quintessences" of plants and minerals, for the extraction of which he stipulated complex methods. He believed that "resolute imagination" was capable of great feats: "It is possible that my spirit, without the help of my body, and through an ardent will alone, and without a sword, can stab and wound others. It is also possible that I can bring the spirit of my adversary into an image and then fold him up or lame him at my pleasure." He also pretended to have attained the Philosopher's Stone, an Elixír of Life, though no one has yet made sense of the recipe he provided. He believed an artificial homunculus might be given life in the manner of the Kabbalistic Golem, and he conceived the idea of a universal solvent, which he called the Alkahest.

Lin Carter had planned to put a story to a title bequeathed by Clark Ashton Smith, "The Alkahest," but never got around to it. Laurence J. Cornford has, again, done his best to read the Akashic Records and supply the lack. Not only does the story treat of the Alkahest of Paracelsus; its descriptions of wizardly wars and plots also comes uncannily close to the actual acrimonies and intrigues between Paracelsus and his enemies, all of them little better than magicians by modern standards, which finally cost Paracelsus his life.

## The Alkahest:

### The History of Enoycla the Alchemist

by Laurence J. Cornford

In recounting the Histories of the Elder Magi, I, Eibon of Mhu Thulan, have told of many dooms. Here is another, also a tale of a victory over forces too terrible to contemplate.

With the passing of Hormagor, the title of master mage fell to one Verhadis the Black, an unlovely sorcerer, if truth be told, dark of heart and evil of mind, for that he had delved into the Necromantic Arts more deeply than any other man for a thousand years. What foul deeds he had done in the sepulchres of Ulphar, I cannot tell. Nor of the demons he called forth from the chill void is it lawful for me to speak. Suffice it that, despite the wide renown of his knowledge and his power, none sought him out to undertake apprenticeship, so vile and terrible were his deeds. It was widely whispered that Verhadis distinguished insufficiently between disciples and subjects for experimenting. And he could regard other wizards only as rivals, never as colleagues. It will therefore come as no surprise to learn that at length several of the eminent wizards of Hyperborea came together to consider how they might put an end to the blasphemies of Verhadis, yea even to Verhadis himself, before he in turn aimed sorcerous death at them. So something of a wizardly war ensued over all Hyperborea, something never wholesome for any land.

But for such hostilities was Verhadis well armed, lacking the scruples which prevented his pious opponents calling upon the most dire of dooms. He had in truth bound to his evil service devils with whose like none other dared hold truck. For even to know of the Hounds of Tindalos is to invite their gaunt and slinking shapes to beset one's dreams as the dog doth harry the rodent. Yet such was the power of Verhadis the Black that even this was not beyond his daring. It was rumored that, among his extensive store of periapts and amulets, he cherished most a singularly flawless stone, the which he did employ as a lens to plumb the deepest gulfs of space. The gem

had been fashioned in elder times by the astrologer Jhrelth of unknown species.

With his arts, which were both the envy and the terror of his fellow necromancers, did Verhadis open the very Gate to that Realm which is not time or space, neither aethyr nor matter, but lies ever backwards before such things were. And from that realm, summoned by the scent of lively flesh, there stalked a demon hound. The moment his new pet was through the Gate crafty Verhadis drew the portal closed, with a slam that resounded through nine dimensions. The beast which had only lately ranged at will among the vortices of infinity now found itself confined, like the merest cur within its kennel. Well was the erudite Verhadis aware that such demons shun the curvature of space, being able to scent and pursue naught but the razor-sharp angles of space, treading the acute as if obtuse and launching themselves from the tight-strung hypotenuse as it were a bow. Thus the being raged all impotent within a metal sphere. Its only recourse lay in the subtle facets of the gem which was the only other object in the sphere. And so Verhadis the Black imprisoned in the stone of Jhrelth a being of great power, even that Rrhar'il whose task beyond the time-plane is to run fleeing souls to ground lest they reach salvation. None might escape him, for that his hideous snuffling revealed the slightest spoor impressed upon the aethyr. Indefatigable was its pursuit; the jungles of Commorion and the glacial shores of Polarion were one to Rrhar'il, and neither provided the slightest hiding place for its quarry.

The Black One lost no time setting his demoniac ally upon his enemies one by one, until, save for his own, the necromantic Arts had all but perished from the land. Thus unchallenged did he reign over Mhu Thulan for many a year, sparing only a few of the mightiest wizards, who had known better than to conspire against him, to act as his servants and assistants.

But one of these had Verhadis, in his invincible arrogance, underestimated. One day he sought for his stone, only to find it missing. He knew not that it had been stolen by Ydway of the Five who dared not attempt to employ its terrible power himself, thinking it best to hide it away, where it should do its master's nefarious will no longer. But the gem was by no means the sole source of Black Verhadis' powers, and he was not long in discovering the identity of

the thief. With scant difficulty he captured brave Ydway and delivered him up to his most expert torturers, a select band of demons hired away from Hell itself by allurements too terrible to mention. They set about tormenting the unfortunate Ydway for many long months. As long as the wretch's sanity held, he would not reveal where the stone was hidden, for he had easily foreseen this eventuality, the which no man required preternatural clairvoyance to foresee, and had used his magic to cause himself irremediably to forget the hiding place. Before his red madness had ended he was cursing himself and his stratagem, wishing most urgently he might betray the hiding place, but finding it no longer possible to do so. For this, too, he had anticipated.

And so it was that the power of Verhadis the Black waned and other sorcerers, who had most grudgingly served Verhadis, moved against him. In the ensuing contest of magicks were most of the remaining wizards terribly slain, to say nothing of mere mortals, whose streaming blood turned glaciers red, and hapless Voormis, whose matted fur flew like dandelions before the summer breeze. But at last the wasting power of the Green Decay was unleashed upon Verhadis, and against such even he stood no hope. And it is said that with the passing of Verhadis the greatest age of the magicians passed also, for such was the ravaging of his spite that many secrets were lost to the acolytes who mourned long the passing of their masters.

Now, among the few remaining in the line of succession to the mantle of supreme sorcerer, it was the alchemist Enoycla who won the honor by simple virtue of seniority. His partisans noised it about that Enoycla had with great craft eluded all the attempts of Verhadis to ferret him out, while others grumbled that the humble Enoycla had been beneath Verhadis' notice, unable to pose him any conceivable threat.

Alas, the land of elder Hyperborea was not fated to enjoy but a brief respite from sorcerous contention. Black Verhadis' malevolence extended even beyond the grave to haunt the land like a disquieted phantom. For the sudden elevation of the lacklustre Enoycla to the archimagery did not sit well with the Brotherhood of the Five, who feared, or claimed they feared, that the alchemist's new prestige might overcome him with conceits of his own greatness, and that he might emulate the tyranny of his unlamented predecessor.

Now it will be remembered that the martyr Ydway had been numbered among the Five, and it was his remaining brethren who saw, amid great mourning, to the fit disposal of his earthly remains, which retained little recognizable semblance to humanity once the infernal torturers of Verhadis had done with him. Not even the fellowship of the Five had been vouchsafed the secret of the ensorcelled gem's hiding place—till now! For when they made ready the corpse for anointing and interring, lo!, the gore-begrimed stone was discovered among the shredded entrails of the blessed martyr! It was a marvel that his interrogators had not chanced upon it. Whether it had been Ydway's intent to bequeath the most potent of amulets to his brethren, we cannot know, but he had in effect done so, and now that awesome power was theirs, though none was confident he knew the right use of it.

So it came about that the new owners of the Stone planned to curtail the new pontificate of the despised Enoycla and to place instead one of their own number in his vacated place. Tradition was not to be flaunted lightly, but, the Five reasoned with themselves, times were perilous, and to have a piddling alchemist sit the throne of thaumaturgy was but to invite a usurper who would have even less regard for tradition than they. The only way to forestall such an eventuality was, of course, to take such usurpation in hand themselves. But, being knowledgeable of such matters, the Brotherhood knew that they dared not simply send the ghost-hound against the alchemist, for what wizard, even the most humble, lacks apotropes and prophylacts to turn back hexes cast his way? Should Enoycla, who after all, like themselves, had been a student of magic arts for some centuries, manage to rebuff the demon, it was apt to turn upon the senders. Besides which, it was not easy to send something into a place unknown and expect it to arrive without falter. The beast would need to get the scent of its victim before death was assured. So it was that one of their number, one Ghottrum Vizpal, was sent, in disguise, to ingratiate himself with the new archimage, and thus to infiltrate his inner sanctum. The reward of Ghottrum should be that, as the pupil of Enoycla, he would be in line to inherit the Alchemist's property and title. So Ghottrum Vizpal made the necessary arrangements and traveled south, toward the mansion of Enoycla.

Now it happened that Enoycla had been working on a particular concoction, even the fabled Alkahest, which was an extremely potent acid. In truth, potent is too small a word for it—Alkahest consumed all it touched, so that Enoycla must needs contrive a vessel of solidified magnetic force for the containment of the liquid. Nor was the discovery thereof without danger to Enoycla and his acolytes; some eight dozen had succumbed to the corrosive vapors of the liquid as it boiled, and small spillages had wounded numerous others and burned deep trenches into the floor of the laboratory, the depths of which none might guess. Nor was Enoycla quite certain that the acid should not some day completely cut through the disk of the earth itself.

So Enoycla was keen at the prospect of gaining a new disciple, and Ghottrum had little difficulty entering the order. Feigning an expertise less than that of his new master, Ghottrum proved to be an excellent student. He seemed instantly to learn every tenet of elder sorcery. Never had Enoycla to repeat himself to his new votary, even in the difficult matter of the Zhaan-Energies, or that of the Thousand Crystal Frames. Soon the two were inseparable, no longer so much master and apprentice as fellow workers.

Ghottrum learned with difficulty to bear with the older man's patronizing, as he could not act at once. His pre-emptive vengeance required preparation and thought. First he ferreted out a rarely used chamber and transformed it into a small laboratory in which he could safely summon the beast. Then he pilfered rare minerals from the storeroom and secured freshly cut herbs from the garden of the compound. It came to pass of a night that Ghottrum and Enoycla were working alone in the alchemist's chamber when Ghottrum professed to have forgotten one of the ingredients needful to the experiment, and making apologies, scurried off to his prepared chamber to release the demon. Nor was it in Ghottrum's plan to return.

Enoycla was bent over a tripod when he became aware of a flickering shadow at the edge of sight, shifting like a candle flame in the wind. Turning his head slowly he perceived a thin, ravenous hound-shape stalking across the stone paves of the laboratory floor, slinking in the deep shadows cast by the carmine flames of the alchemist's furnace.

His mind raced, knowing full well what this sight portended, and he prayed to his patron demon, sure now that his inescapable doom was at hand. The beast bunched itself, as if ready to pounce. Instinct came to the fore, as Enoycla's hands scrabbled across the workbench vainly, searching for some object with the which to defend himself. The horror sprang, snarling, and Enoycla threw up his hands to cover his face: why should he suffer the double distress of seeing as well as feeling his demise?

Instantly a howl like no other burst upon his ears. He waited a moment, half fearing to look. At last, when he realized that he was not after all the object of attack, he lowered his arms and gazed forward. Of the fiendish hound there was no sign. Instead a series of great pits and craters had opened in his laboratory floor, at his very feet. Had some divine intervention caused the earth itself to open its maw and swallow that which menaced him?

Then a piercing scream echoed through the halls of Enoycla's palace, rousing his sleep-befuddled servants and chelas, then sank into the depth of the night. All rushed in the direction of the sound, and when they burst open the doors to an abandoned storeroom, they fell back at the sight of the beslimed and hideously mangled body of Enoycla's perfidious pupil, Ghottrum Vizpal, lying twisted on the floor of a veritable wizard's sanctorum. In the tightly clenched fist of his out-splayed arm was a large silver-white gem, in which flickered a strangely animate shadow whom none but Enoycla dared scrutinize.

At once Enoycla realized what had befallen: when he had swept his arms up to fend off the hound, he had also swept the open vessel of the Alkahest from the bench, splashing the contents over the laboratory floor and the hell-hound itself. Something in the mixture had negated the physical manifestation of the demon, and it had reappeared inside its angled abode. But apparently not before taking its vengeance upon its captor and sender.

Enoycla took the lesson to heart: the gem was too powerful for him or any future arch-magus of Hyperborea to wield. So he buried the Stone of Jhrelth, and he did so in this wise: spilling a few drops of the Alkahest on the soil, he dropped the gem down the great shaft that began in a moment to tunnel its way through the earth. His laborers took shovel in hand to refill the hole, and legends tell that

they labored a full twenty years at the task before giving it up as useless. And some do say the gem had cleared a path to Hell itself, and that upon certain nights, Hell's denizens mount up that tunnel to wreak mischief on the sons of men. But the jewel, and the hound-demon, have never been seen again.

As for the Brotherhood of the Five: their power was broken by this second loss and also by the loss of the gem. And, disgraced by these setbacks, they were forever barred from the highest offices of the land and dwindled from all records. And, by an act of providence, did Enoycla, arch-chemist of that age, become the only man in known history to survive the loping advance of a Hound of Tindalos. \*



## About "The Coming of the White Worm"

This is the seed from which the present volume grew. Smith was working on it when he wrote to Lovecraft in early September, 1933, "From that dome in the floating ice-mountain Yikilth, where the White Worm, Rlim Shaikorth, weeps eternally from his eyeless orbits those eye-like globules of blood-coloured matter that form purple stalagmites as they fall." He reports, "I have not yet completed the IX Chapter of *Eibon*, but expect to bring it to some sort of conclusion before long. I have renamed it 'The Coming of the White Worm'." (It had been "The Temptation of Evagh"; one must wonder if the new title was suggested by Bram Stoker's *The Lair of the White Worm*.) The story takes its text from that saying of the prophet Lith, which no man had understood: "There is One that inhabits the place of utter cold, and One that respireth where none other may draw breath. In the days to come He shall issue forth among the isles and cities of men, and shall bring with Him as a white doom the wind that slumbereth in his dwelling."

He finished it on September 15 and mailed a copy to Lovecraft who immediately waxed enthusiastic. "Nggrrrhh . . . what a revelation! Thank God you spared your readers the worst and most paralysing hints—such as the secret of Yikilth's origin, the reason why it bore certain shapes not of this planet, and the history of Rlim Shaikorth before he oozed down to the solar system and the earth through the void from \_\_\_\_\_ . . . but I must not utter that name at which you, and Gaspard du Nord, and Eibon himself grew silent! Altogether, this is a stupendous fragment of primal horror and comic suggestion; and I shall call down the curses of Azathoth Itself if that ass Pharnabazus [= Farnsworth Wright, editor of *Weird Tales*] does not print it" (October 3, 1933).

Smith called it "a tale I am inclined to favour in my own estimation." He remembered it as being "hard to do, like most of my tales, because of the peculiar and carefully maintained style and tone-colour, which involves rejection of many words, images and locutions that might ordinarily be employed in writing."

## The Coming of the White Worm:

The History of Evagh the Warlock  
(Chapter IX of *The Book of Eibon*)\*

by Clark Ashton Smith

Evagh the warlock, dwelling beside the boreal sea, was aware of many strange and untimely portents in mid-summer. Frorely burned the sun above Mhu Thulan from a welkin clear and wannish as ice. At eve the aurora was hung from zenith to earth, like an arras in a high chamber of gods. Wan and rare were the poppies and small the anemones in the cliff-sequestered vales lying behind the house of Evagh; and the fruits in his walled garden were pale of rind and green at the core. Also, he beheld by day the unseasonable flight of great multitudes of fowl, going southward from the hidden isles beyond Mhu Thulan; and by night he heard the distressful clamour of other passing multitudes. And always, in the loud wind and crying surf, he harkened to the weird whisper of voices from realms of perennial winter.

Now Evagh was troubled by these portents, even as the rude fisher-folk on the shore of the haven below his house were troubled. Being a past-master of all sortilege, and a seer of remote and future things, he made use of his arts in an effort to divine their meaning. But a cloud was upon his eyes through the daytime; and a darkness thwarted him when he sought illumination in dreams. His most cunning horoscopes were put to naught; his familiars were silent or answered him equivocally; and confusion was amid all his geomancies and hydromancies and haruspications. And it seemed to Evagh that an unknown power worked against him, mocking and making impotent in such a fashion the sorcery that none had defeated heretofore.

\*Rendered from the old French manuscript of Gaspard du Nord.

And Evagh knew, by certain tokens perceptible to wizards, that the power was an evil power, and its boding was of bale to man.

Day by day, through the middle summer, the fisher-folk went forth in their coracles of elk-hide and willow, casting their seines. But in the seines they drew dead fishes, blasted as if by fire or extreme cold; and they drew living monsters, such as their eldest captains had never beheld: things triple-headed and tailed and finned with horror; black, shapeless things that turned to a liquid foulness and ran from the net; or headless things like bloated moons with green, frozen rays about them; or things leprous-eyed and bearded with stiffly-oozing slime.

Then, out of the sea-horized north, where ships from Cerngoth were wont to ply among the arctic islands, a galley came drifting with idle oars and aimlessly veering helm. The tide beached it among the boats of the fishermen, which fared no longer to sea but were drawn up on the sands below the cliff-built house of Evagh. And, thronging about the galley in awe and wonder, the fishers beheld its oarsmen still at the oars and its captain at the helm. But the faces and hands of all were stark as bone, and were white as the flesh of leprosy; and the pupils of their open eyes had faded strangely, being indistinguishable now from the whites; and a blankness of horror was within them, like the ice in deep pools that are fast frozen to the bottom. And Evagh himself, descending later, also beheld the galley's crew, and pondered much concerning the import of this prodigy.

Loath were the fishers to touch upon the dead men; and they murmured, saying that a doom was upon the sea, and a curse upon all sea-faring things and people. But Evagh, deeming that the bodies would rot in the sun and would breed pestilence, commanded them to build a pile of driftwood about the galley; and when the pile had risen above the bulwarks, hiding from view the dead rowers, he fired it with his own hands.

High flamed the pile, and smoke ascended black as a storm-cloud, and was borne in windy volumes past the tall towers of Evagh on the cliff. But later, when the fire sank, the bodies of the oarsmen were seen sitting amid the mounded embers; and their arms were still outstretched in the attitude of rowing, and their fingers were clenched: though the oars had now dropped away from them in

brands and ashes. And the captain of the galley stood upright still in his place: though the burnt helm had fallen beside him. Naught but the raiment of the corpses had been consumed; and they shone white as moon-washed marble above the charrings of wood; and nowhere upon them was there any blackness from the fire.

Deeming this thing an ill miracle, the fishers were all aghast, and they fled swiftly to the uppermost rocks. There remained with Evagh only his two servants, the boy Ratha and the ancient crone Ahilidis, who had both witnessed many of his conjurations and were thus well inured to sights of magic. And, with these two beside him, the sorcerer awaited the cooling of the brands.

Quickly the brands darkened; but smoke arose from them still throughout the noon and afternoon; and still they were over-hot for human treading when the hour drew toward sunset. So Evagh bade his servants to fetch water in urns from the sea and cast it upon the ashes and charrings. And after the smoke and the hissing had died, he went forward and approached the pale corpses. Nearing them, he was aware of a great coldness, such as would emanate from trans-Arctic ice; and the coldness began to ache in his hands and ears, and smote sharply through his mantle of fur. Going still closer, he touched one of the bodies with his forefinger-tip; and the finger, though lightly pressed and quickly withdrawn, was seared as if by flame.

Evagh was much amazed: for the condition of the corpses was a thing unknown to him heretofore; and in all his science of wizardry there was naught to enlighten him. He bethought him that a spell had been laid upon the dead: an ensorcelling such as the wan polar demons might weave, or the chill witches of the moon might devise in their caverns of snow. And he deemed it well to retire for the time, lest the spell should now take effect upon others than the dead.

Returning to his house ere night, he burned at each door and window the gums that are most offensive to the northern demons; and at each angle where a spirit might enter, he posted one of his own familiars to guard against all intrusion. Afterwards, while Ratha and Ahilidis slept, he perused with sedulous care the writings of Pnom, in which are collated many powerful exorcisms. But ever and anon, as he read again the old rubrics for his comfort, he remembered ominously the saying of the prophet Lith, which no man had understood: "There is One that inhabits the place of utter cold, and One that

respireth where none other may draw breath. In the days to come He shall issue forth among the isles and cities of men, and shall bring with Him as a white doom the wind that slumbereth in His dwelling."

\* \* \*

Though a fire burned in the chamber, piled with fat pine and terebinth, it seemed that a deadly chill began to invade the air toward midnight. Then, as Evagh turned uneasily from the parchments of Pnom, and saw that the fire blazed high as if in no need of replenishment, he heard the sudden turmoil of a great wind full of sea-birds eerily shrieking, and the cries of land-fowl driven on helpless wings, and over all a high laughter of diabolic voices. Madly from the north the wind beat upon his square-based towers; and birds were cast like blown leaves of autumn against the stout-paned windows; and devils seemed to tear and strain at the granite walls. Though the room's door was shut and the windows were tight-closed, an icy gust went round and round, circling the table where Evagh sat, snatching the broad parchments of Pnom from beneath his fingers, and plucking at the lamp-flame.

Vainly, with numbing thoughts, he strove to recall that countercharm which is most effective against the spirits of the boreal quarter. Then, strangely, it seemed that the wind fell, leaving a mighty stillness about the house. The chill gust was gone from the room, the lamp and the fire burned steadily, and something of warmth returned slowly into the half-frozen marrow of Evagh.

Soon he was made aware of a light shining beyond his chamber windows, as if a belated moon had now risen above the rocks. But Evagh knew that the moon was at that time a thin crescent, declining with eventide. It seemed that the light shone from the north, pale and frigid as fire of ice; and going to the window he beheld a great beam that traversed all the sea, coming as if from the hidden pole. In that light the rocks were paler than marble, and the sands were whiter than sea-salt, and the huts of the fishermen were as white tombs. The walled garden of Evagh was full of the beam, and all the green had departed from its foliage and its blossoms were like flowers of snow. And the beam fell bleakly on the lower walls of his

house, but left still in shadow the wall of that upper chamber from which he looked.

He thought that the beam poured from a pale cloud that had mounted above the sea-line, or else from a white peak that had lifted skyward in the night; but of this he was uncertain. Watching, he saw that it rose higher in the heavens but climbed not upon his walls. Pondering in vain the significance of the mystery, he seemed to hear in the air about him a sweet and wizard voice. And, speaking in a tongue that he knew not, the voice uttered a rune of slumber. And Evagh could not resist the rune, and upon him fell such a numbness of sleep as overcomes the outworn watcher in a place of snow.

\* \* \*

Waking stiffly at dawn, he rose up from the floor where he had lain, and witnessed a strange marvel. For, lo, in the harbour there towered an ice-berg such as no vessel had yet sighted in all its sea-faring to the north, and no legend had told of among the dim Hyperborean isles. It filled the broad haven from shore to shore, and sheered up to a height immeasurable with piled escarpments and tiered precipices; and its pinnacles hung like towers in the zenith above the house of Evagh. It was higher than the dread mountain Achoravomas, which belches rivers of flame and liquid stone that pour unquenched through Tscho Vulpanomi to the austral main. It was steeper than the mountain Yarak, which marks the boreal pole; and from there fell a wan glittering on sea and land. Deathly and terrible was the glittering, and Evagh knew that this was the light he had beheld in the darkness.

Scarce could he draw breath in the cold that was on the air; and the light of the huge ice-berg seared his eyeballs with an exceeding fire. Yet he perceived an odd thing, that the rays of the glittering fell indirectly and to either side of his house; and the lower chambers, where Ratha and Ahilidis slept, were no longer touched by the beam as in the night; and upon all his house there was naught but the early sun and the morning shadows.

On the shore below he saw the charrings of the beached galley, and amid them the white corpses incombustible by fire. And along the sands and rocks, the fisher-folk were lying or standing upright in still, rigid postures, as if they had come forth from their hiding-places

to behold the pale beam and had been smitten by a magic sleep. And the whole harbour-shore, and the garden of Evagh, even to the front threshold of his house, was like a place where frost has fallen thickly over all.

Again he remembered the saying of Lith; and with much foreboding he descended to the ground story. There, at the northern windows, the boy Ratha and the hag Ahilidis were leaning with faces turned to the light. Stiffly they stood, with wide-open eyes, and a pale terror was in their regard, and upon them was the white death of the galley's crew. And, nearing them, the sorcerer was stayed by the terrible chillness that smote upon him from their bodies.

He would have fled from the house, knowing his magic wholly ineffectual against this thing. But it came to him that death was in the direct falling rays from the ice-berg, and, leaving the house, he must perforce enter that fatal light. And it came to him also that he alone, of all who dwelt on that shore, had been exempted from the death. He could not surmise the reason of his exemption; but in the end he deemed it best to remain patiently and without fear, waiting whatever should befall.

Returning to his chamber he busied himself with various conjurations. But his familiars had gone away in the night, forsaking the angles at which he had posted them; and no spirit either human or demoniacal made reply to his questions. And not in any way known to wizards could he learn aught of the ice-berg or divine the least inkling of its secret.

Presently, as he laboured with his useless cantrips, he felt on his face the breathing of a wind that was not air but a subtler and rarer element cold as the moon's ether. His own breath forsook him with agonies unspeakable, and he fell down on the floor in a sort of waking swoon that was near death. In the swoon he was doubtfully aware of voices uttering unfamiliar spells. Invisible fingers touched him with icy pangs; and about him came and went a bleak radiance, like a tide that flows and ebbs and flows again. Intolerable was the radiance to all his senses; but it brightened slowly, with briefer ebbings; and in time his eyes and his flesh were tempered to endure it. Full upon him now was the light of the ice-berg through his northern windows; and it seemed that a great Eye regarded him in the light.

He would have risen to confront the Eye; but his swoon held him like a palsy.

After that, he slept again for a period. Waking, he found in all his limbs their wonted strength and quickness. The strange light was still upon him, filling all his chamber; and peering out he witnessed a new marvel. For, lo, his garden and the rocks and sea-sands below it were visible no longer. In their stead were level spaces of ice about his house, and tall ice-pinnacles that rose like towers from the broad battlements of a fortress. Beyond the verges of the ice he beheld a sea that lay remotely and far beneath; and beyond the sea the low looming of a dim shore.

Terror came to Evagh now, for he recognized in all this the workings of a sorcery plenipotent and beyond the power of all mortal wizards. For plain it was that his house of granite stood no longer on the coast of Mhu Thulan, but was based now on some upper crag of the ice-berg. Trembling, he knelt then and prayed to the Old Ones, who dwell secretly in subterrene caverns, or abide under the sea or in the supermundane spaces. And even as he prayed, he heard a loud knocking at the door of his house.

In much fear and wonder he descended and flung wide the portals. Before him were two men, or creatures who had the likeness of men. Both were strange of visage and bright-skinned, and they wore for mantles such rune-enwoven stuffs as wizards wear. The runes were uncouth and alien; but when the men bespoke him he understood something of their speech, which was in a dialect of the Hyperborean isles.

"We serve that One whose coming was foretold by the prophet Lith," they said. "From spaces beyond the limits of the north he hath come in his floating citadel, the ice-mountain Yikilth, to voyage the mundane oceans and to blast with a chill splendour the puny peoples of humankind. He hath spared us alone amid the inhabitants of the broad isle Thulask, and hath taken us to go with him in his sea-faring upon Yikilth. He hath tempered our flesh to the rigour of his abode, and hath made respirable for us the air in which no mortal man may draw breath. Thee he hath spared and hath acclimated by his spells to the coldness and the thin ether that go everywhere with Yikilth. Hail, O Evagh, whom we know for a great wizard by this

token: since only the mightiest of warlocks are thus chosen and exempted."

Sorely astonished was Evagh; but seeing that he had now to deal with men who were as himself, he questioned closely the two magicians of Thulask. They were named Dooni and Ux Loddhan, and were wise in the lore of the Elder Gods. The name of the One that they served was Rlim Shaikorth, and he dwelt in the highest summit of the ice-mountain. They told Evagh nothing of the nature and properties of Rlim Shaikorth; and concerning their own service to this being they avowed only that it consisted of such worship as is given to a god, together with the repudiation of all bonds that had linked them heretofore to mankind. And they told Evagh that he was to go with them before Rlim Shaikorth, and perform the due rite of obeisance, and accept the bond of final alienage.

So Evagh went with Dooni and Ux Loddhan and was led by them to a great pinnacle of ice that rose unmeltable into the wan sun, beetling above all its fellows on the flat top of the berg. The pinnacle was hollow, and climbing therein by stairs of ice, they came at last to the chamber of Rlim Shaikorth, which was a circular dome with a round block at the center, forming a dais. And on the dais was that being whose advent the prophet Lith had foretold obscurely.

At sight of this entity, the pulses of Evagh were stilled for an instant by terror; and, following quickly upon the terror, his gorge rose within him through excess of loathing. In all the world there was naught that could be likened for its foulness to Rlim Shaikorth. Something he had of the semblance of a fat white worm; but his bulk was beyond that of the sea-elephant. His half-coiled tail was thick as the middle folds of his body; and his front reared upward from the dais in the form of a white round disk, and upon it were imprinted vaguely the lineaments of a visage belonging neither to beast of the earth nor ocean-creature. And amid the visage a mouth curved uncleanly from side to side of the disk, opening and shutting incessantly on a pale and tongueless and toothless maw. The eye-sockets of Rlim Shaikorth were close together between his shallow nostrils; and the sockets were eyeless, but in them appeared from moment to moment globules of a blood-coloured matter having the form of eye-balls; and ever the globules broke and dripped down before the dais. And from the ice-floor of the dome there ascended two masses like

stalagmites, purple and dark as frozen gore, which had been made by the ceaseless dripping of the globules.

Dooni and Ux Loddhan prostrated themselves before the being, and Evagh deemed it well to follow their example. Lying prone on the ice, he heard the red drops falling with a splash as of heavy tears; and then, in the dome above him, it seemed that a voice spoke; and the voice was like the sound of some hidden cataract in a glacier hollow with caverns.

"Behold, O Evagh," said the voice. "I have preserved thee from the doom of thy fellow-men, and have made thee as they that inhabit the bourn of coldness, and they that inhale the airless void. Wisdom ineffable shall be thine, and mastery beyond the conquest of mortals, if thou wilt but worship me and become my thrall. With me thou shalt voyage amid the kingdoms of the north, and shalt pass among the green southern islands, and see the white falling of death upon them in the light from Yikilth. Our coming shall bring eternal frost on their gardens, and shall set upon their people's flesh the seal of that gulf whose rigour paleth one by one the most ardent stars, and putteth rime at the core of suns. All this thou shalt witness, being as one of the lords of death, supernal and immortal; and in the end thou shalt return with me to that world beyond the uttermost pole, in which is mine abiding empire. For I am he whose coming even the gods may not oppose."

Now, seeing that he was without a choice in the matter, Evagh professed himself willing to yield worship and service to the pale worm. Beneath the instruction of Dooni and Ux Loddhan, he performed the sevenfold rite that is scarce suitable for narration here, and swore the threefold vow of unspeakable alienation.

Thereafter, for many days and nights, he sailed with Rlim Shaikorth adown the coast of Mhu Thulan. Strange was the manner of that voyaging, for it seemed that the great ice-berg was guided by the sorcery of the worm, prevailing ever against wind and tide. And always, by night or day, like the beams of a deathly beacon, the chill splendour smote afar from Yikilth. Proud galleys were overtaken as they fled southward, and their crews were blasted at the oars; and often ships were caught and embedded in the new bastions of ice that formed daily around the base of that ever-growing mountain.

The fair Hyperborean ports, busy with maritime traffic, were stilled by the passing of Rlim Shaikorth. Idle were their streets and wharves, idle was the shipping in their harbours, when the pale light had come and gone. Far inland fell the rays, bringing to the fields and gardens a blight of trans-Arctic winter; and forests were frozen, and the beasts that roamed them were turned as if into marble, so that men who came long afterward to that region found the elk and bear and mammoth still standing in all the postures of life. But, dwelling upon Yikilth, the sorcerer Evagh was immune to the icy death; and, sitting in his house or walking abroad on the berg, he was aware of no sharper cold than that which abides in summer shadows.

Now, besides Dooni and Ux Loddhan, the sorcerers of Thulask, there were five other wizards that went with Evagh on that voyage, having been chosen by Rlim Shaikorth. They too had been tempered to the coldness of Yikilth, and their houses had been transported to the berg by unknown enchantment. They were outlandish and uncouth men, called Polarians, from the islands nearer the pole than broad Thulask; and Evagh could understand little of their ways; and their sorcery was foreign to him; and their speech was unintelligible; nor was it known to the Thulaskians.

Daily the eight wizards found on their tables all the provender necessary for human sustenance; though they knew not the agency by which it was supplied. All were united in the worship of the white worm; and all, it seemed, were content in a measure with their lot, and were fain of that unearthly lore and dominion which the worm had promised them. But Evagh was uneasy at heart, and rebelled in secret against his thralldom to Rlim Shaikorth; and he beheld with revulsion the doom that went forth eternally from Yikilth upon lovely cities and fruitful ocean-shores. Ruthfully he saw the blasting of flower-girded Cerngoth, and the boreal stillness that descended on the thronged streets of Leqqan, and the frost that seared with sudden whiteness the garths and orchards of the sea-fronting valley of Aguil. And sorrow was in his heart for the fishing-coracles and the biremes of trade and warfare that floated manless after they had met Yikilth.

Ever southward sailed the great ice-berg, bearing its lethal winter to lands where the summer sun rode high. And Evagh kept his own counsel, and followed in all ways the custom of Dooni and Ux

Loddhan and the others. At intervals that were regulated by the motions of the circumpolar stars, the eight warlocks climbed to that lofty chamber in which Rlim Shaikorth abode perpetually, half-coiled on his dais of ice. There, in a ritual whose cadences corresponded to the falling of those eye-like tears that were wept by the worm, and with genuflections timed to the yawning and shutting of his mouth, they yielded to Rlim Shaikorth the required adoration. Sometimes the worm was silent, and sometimes he bespoke them, renewing vaguely the promises he had made. And Evagh learned from the others that the worm slept for a period at each darkening of the moon; and only at that time did the sanguine tears suspend their falling, and the mouth forbear its alternate closing and gaping.

At the third repetition of the rites of worship, it came to pass that only seven wizards climbed to the tower. Evagh, counting their number, perceived that the missing man was one of the five outlanders. Afterwards, he questioned Dooni and Ux Loddhan regarding this matter, and made signs of inquiry to the four northrons; but it seemed the fate of the absent warlock was a thing mysterious to them all. Nothing was seen or heard of him from that time; and Evagh, pondering long and deeply, was somewhat disquieted. For, during the ceremony in the tower chamber, it had seemed to him that the worm was grosser of bulk and girth than on any prior occasion.

Covertly he asked what manner of nutriment was required by Rlim Shaikorth. Concerning this, there was much dubiety and dispute: for Ux Loddhan maintained that the worm fed on nothing less unique than the hearts of white Arctic bears; while Dooni swore that his rightful nourishment was the liver of whales. But, to their knowledge, the worm had not eaten during their sojourn upon Yikilth; and both averred that the intervals between his times of feeding were longer than those of any terrestrial creature, being computable not in hours or days but in whole years.

Still the ice-berg followed its course, ever vaster and more prodigious beneath the heightening sun; and again, at the star-appointed time, which was the forenoon of every third day, the sorcerers convened in the presence of Rlim Shaikorth. To the perturbation of all, their number was now but six; and the lost warlock was another of the outlanders. And the worm had greatedened still more in size; and

the increase was visible as a thickening of his whole body from head to tail.

Deeming these circumstances an ill augury, the six made fearful supplication to the worm in their various tongues, and implored him to tell them the fate of their absent fellows. And the worm answered; and his speech was intelligible to Evagh and Ux Loddhan and Dooni and the three northrons, each thinking that he had been addressed in his native language:

"This matter is a mystery concerning which ye shall all receive enlightenment in turn. Know this: the two that have vanished are still present; and they and ye also shall share even as I have promised in the ultramundane lore and empery of Rlim Shaikorth."

Afterwards, when they had descended from the tower, Evagh and the two Thulaskians debated the interpretation of this answer. Evagh maintained that the import was sinister, for truly their missing companions were present only in the worm's belly; but the others argued that these men had undergone a more mystical translation and were now elevated beyond human sight and hearing. Forthwith they began to make ready with prayer and austerity, in expectation of some sublime apotheosis which would come to them in due turn. But Evagh was still fearful; and he could not trust the equivocal pledges of the worm; and doubt remained with him.

Seeking to assuage his doubt and peradventure to find some trace of the lost Polarians, he made search of the mighty berg, on whose battlements his own house and the houses of the other warlocks were perched like the tiny huts of fishers on ocean-cliffs. In this quest the others would not accompany him, fearing to incur the worm's displeasure. From verge to verge of Yikilth he roamed unhindered, as if on some broad plateau with peaks and horns; and he climbed perilously on the upper scarps, and went down into deep crevasses and caverns where the sun failed and there was no other light than the strange luster of that unearthly ice. Embedded here in the walls, as if in the stone of nether strata, he saw dwellings such as men had never built, and vessels that might belong to other ages of worlds; but nowhere could he detect the presence of any living creature; and no spirit or shadow gave response to the necromantic evocations which he uttered oftentimes as he went along the chasms and chambers.

So Evagh was still apprehensive of the worm's treachery; and he resolved to remain awake on the night preceding the next celebration of the rites of worship; and at eve of that night he assured himself that the other warlocks were all housed in their separate mansions, to the number of five. And, having ascertained this, he set himself to watch without remission the entrance of Rlim Shaikorth's tower, which was plainly visible from his own windows.

Weird and chill was the shining of the berg in the darkness; for a light as of frozen stars was effulgent at all times from the ice. A moon that was little past the full rose early on the orient seas. But Evagh, holding vigil at his window till midnight, saw that no visible form emerged from the tall tower, and none entered it. At midnight there came upon him a sudden drowsiness, such as would be felt by one who had drunk some opiate wine; and he could not sustain his vigil any longer but slept deeply and unbrokenly throughout the remainder of the night.

On the following day there were but four sorcerers who gathered in the ice-dome and gave homage to Rlim Shaikorth. And Evagh saw that two more of the outlanders, men of bulk and stature dwarfish beyond their fellows, were now missing.

One by one thereafter, on nights preceding the ceremony of worship, the companions of Evagh vanished. The last Polarian was next to go; and it came to pass that only Evagh and Ux Loddhan and Dooni went to the tower; and then Evagh and Ux Loddhan went alone. And terror mounted daily in Evagh, for he felt that his own time drew near; and he would have hurled himself into the sea from the high ramparts of Yikilth, if Ux Loddhan, who perceived his intention, had not warned him that no man could depart therefrom and live again in solar warmth and terrene air, having been habituated to the coldness and thin ether. And Ux Loddhan, it seemed, was wholly oblivious to his doom, and was fain to impute an esoteric significance to the ever-growing bulk of the white worm and the vanishing of the wizards.

So, at that time when the moon had waned and darkened wholly, it occurred that Evagh climbed before Rlim Shaikorth with infinite trepidation and loath, laggard steps. And, entering the dome with downcast eyes, he found himself the sole worshipper.

A palsy of fear was upon him as he made obeisance; and scarcely he dared to lift his eyes and regard the worm. But soon, as he began to perform the customary genuflections, he became aware that the red tears of Rlim Shaikorth no longer fell on the purple stalagmites; nor was there any sound such as the worm was wont to make by the perpetual opening and shutting of his mouth. And venturing at last to look upward, Evagh beheld the abhorrently swollen mass of the monster, whose thickness was such as to overhang the dais' rim; and he saw that the mouth and eye-holes of Rlim Shaikorth were closed as if in slumber; and thereupon he recalled how the wizards of Thulask had told him that the worm slept for an interval at the darkening of each moon; which was a thing he had forgotten temporarily in his extreme dread and apprehension.

Now was Evagh sorely bewildered: for the rites he had learned from his fellows could be fittingly performed only while the tears of Rlim Shaikorth fell down and his mouth gaped and closed and gaped again in measured alternation. And none had instructed him as to what rites were proper and suitable during the slumber of the worm. And, being in much doubt, he said softly:

"Wakest thou, O Rlim Shaikorth?"

In reply, he seemed to hear a multitude of voices that issued obscurely from out of the pale, tumid mass before him. The sound of the voices was weirdly muffled, but among them he distinguished the accents of Dooni and Ux Loddhan; and there was a thick muttering of outlandish words which Evagh knew for the speech of the five Polarians; and beneath this he caught, or seemed to catch, innumerable undertones that were not the voices of men or beasts, nor such sounds as would be emitted by earthly demons. And the voices rose and clamoured, like those of a throng of prisoners in some profound oubliette.

Anon, as he listened in horror ineffable, the voice of Dooni became articulate above the others; and the manifold clamour and muttering ceased, as if a multitude were hushed to hear its own spokesman. And Evagh heard the tones of Dooni, saying:

"The worm sleepeth, but we whom the worm hath devoured are awake. Direly has he deceived us, for he came to our houses in the night, devouring us bodily one by one as we slept under the enchantment he had wrought. He has eaten our souls even as our bodies, and

verily we are part of Rlim Shaikorth, but exist only as in a dark and noisome dungeon: and while the worm wakes we have no separate or conscious being, but are merged wholly in the ultraterrestrial being of Rlim Shaikorth.

"Hear then, O Evagh, the truth which we have learned from our oneness with the worm. He has saved us from the white doom and has taken us upon Yikilth for this reason, because we alone of all mankind, who are sorcerers of high attainment and mastery, may endure the lethal ice-change and become breathers of the airless void, and thus, in the end, be made suitable for the provender of such as Rlim Shaikorth.

"Great and terrible is the worm, and the place wherefrom he cometh and whereto he returneth is not to be dreamt of by living men. And the worm is omniscient, save that he knows not the waking of them he has devoured, and their awareness during his slumber. But the worm, though ancient beyond the antiquity of worlds, is not immortal and is vulnerable in one particular. Whosoever learneth the time and means of his vulnerability and hath heart for this undertaking, may slay him easily. And the time for this deed is during his term of sleep. Therefore we adjure thee now by the faith of the Old Ones to draw the sword thou wearest beneath thy mantle and plunge it in the side of Rlim Shaikorth: for such is the means of his slaying.

"Thus alone, O Evagh, shall the going forth of the pale death be ended; and only thus shall we, thy fellow-sorcerers, obtain release from our blind thralldom and incarceration; and with us many that the worm hath betrayed and eaten in former ages and upon distant worlds. And only by the doing of this thing shalt thou escape the wan and loathly mouth of the worm, nor abide henceforward as a doubtful ghost among other ghosts in the evil blackness of his belly. But know, however, that he who slayeth Rlim Shaikorth must necessarily perish in the slaying."

Evagh, being wholly astounded, made question of Dooni and was answered readily concerning all that he asked. And oftentimes the voice of Ux Loddhan replied to him; and sometimes there were unintelligible murmurs or outcries from certain others of those foully enmeshed phantoms. Much did Evagh learn of the worm's origin and essence; and he was told the secret of Yikilth, and the manner



wherein Yikilth had floated down from trans-Arctic gulfs to voyage the seas of Earth. Ever, as he listened, his abhorrence greatedened; though deeds of dark sorcery and conjured devils had long indurated his flesh and soul, making him callous to more than common horrors. But of that which he learned it were ill to speak now.

At length there was silence in the dome; for the worm slept soundly; and Evagh had no longer any will to question the ghost of Dooni; and they that were imprisoned with Dooni seemed to wait and watch in a stillness of death.

Then, being a man of much hardihood and resolution, Evagh delayed no more but drew from its ivory sheath the short but well-tempered sword of bronze which he carried always at his baldric. Approaching the dais closely, he plunged the blade in the over-swelling mass of Rlim Shaikorth. The blade entered easily with a slicing and tearing motion, as if he had stabbed a monstrous bladder, and was not stayed even by the broad pommel; and the whole right hand of Evagh was drawn after it into the wound.

He perceived no quiver or stirring of the worm; but out of the wound there gushed a sudden torrent of black liquescent matter, swiftening and deepening irresistibly till the sword was caught from Evagh's grasp as if in a mill-race. Hotter far than blood, and smoking with strange steam-like vapours, the liquid poured over his arms and splashed his raiment as it fell. Quickly the ice was a-wash about his feet; but still the fluid welled as if from some inexhaustible spring of foulness; and it spread everywhere in pools and runlets that came together.

Evagh would have fled then; but the sable liquid, mounting and flowing, was above his ankles when he neared the stair-head; and it rushed adown the stairway before him like a cataract in some steeply pitching cavern. Hotter and hotter it grew, boiling, bubbling; while the current strengthened, and clutched at him and drew him like malignant hands. He feared to essay the downward stairs; nor was there any place now in all the dome where he could climb for refuge. He turned, striving against the tide for bare foothold, and saw dimly through the reeking vapours the throned mass of Rlim Shaikorth. The gash had widened prodigiously, and a stream surged from it like waters of a broken weir, billowing outward around the dais; and yet, as if in further proof of the worm's unearthly nature, *his bulk was in*

*no wise diminished thereby.* And still the black liquid came in an evil flood; and it rose swirling about the knees of Evagh; and the vapours seemed to take the forms of a myriad press of phantoms, wreathing obscurely together and dividing once more as they went past him. Then, as he tottered and grew giddy on the stair-head, he was swept away and was hurled to his death on the ice-steps far below.

\* \* \*

That day, on the sea to eastward of middle Hyperborea, the crews of certain merchant galleys beheld an unheard-of thing. For, lo, as they sped north, returning from far ocean-isles with a wind that aided their oars, they sighted in the late forenoon a monstrous ice-berg whose pinnacles and crags loomed high as mountains. The berg shone in part with a weird light; and from its loftiest pinnacle poured an ink-black torrent; and all the ice-cliffs and buttresses beneath were a-stream with rapids and cascades and sheeted falls of the same blackness, that fumed like boiling water as they plunged oceanward; and the sea around the berg was clouded and streaked for a wide interval as if with the dark fluid of the cuttlefish.

The mariners feared to sail closer; but, full of awe and marveling, they stayed their oars and lay watching the berg; and the wind dropped, so that their galleys drifted within view of it all that day. They saw that the berg dwindled swiftly, melting as though some unknown fire consumed it; and the air took on a strange warmth, and the water about their ships grew tepid. Crag by crag the ice was runneled and eaten away; and huge portions fell off with a mighty splashing; and the highest pinnacle collapsed; but still the blackness poured out as from an unfathomable fountain. The watchers thought, at whites, that they beheld houses running seaward amid the loosened fragments; but of this they were uncertain because of those ever-mounting vapours. By sunset-time the berg had diminished to a mass no larger than a common floe; yet still the welling blackness overstreamed it; and it sank low in the wave; and the weird light was quenched altogether. Thereafter, the night being moonless, it was lost to vision; and a gale rose, blowing strongly from the south; and at dawn the sea was void of any remnant.

\* \* \*

Concerning the matters related above, many and various legends have gone forth throughout Mhu Thulan and all the extreme Hyperboreal kingdoms and archipelagoes, even to the southmost isle of Oszhtor. The truth is not in such tales: for no man has known the truth heretofore. But I, the sorcerer Eibon, calling up through my necromancy the wave-wandering specter of Evagh, have learned from him the veritable history of the worm's advent. And I have written it down in my volume with such omissions as are needful for the sparing of mortal weakness and sanity. And men will read this record, together with much more of the elder lore, in days long after the coming and melting of the great glacier. ✱

## About "The Light from the Pole"

Steve Behrends, whom Lin Carter recognized as among the most insightful students of his own work as well as Smith's, says that the only reason "The Light from the Pole" seems to exist at all is that Carter found portions of an early draft of what would become Smith's "The Coming of the White Worm" and just could not stand to let a substantial chunk of Smith's prose go to waste. "I . . . strove mightily . . . to salvage every scrap of prose which Smith eliminated from his original when he rewrote the tale" (Lin Carter, "A Response," p. 33). There is a certain fascination, as the true literary cultist knows all too well, in the prospect of variant versions, alternate drafts, director's cuts, and lost episodes. If an early draft was cast aside so the author might begin again and take things in another direction, it is no less intriguing to wonder how the original might have come out than to speculate about what the author would have done with a fragment he dropped and never finished in any form at all. So Carter's desire to finish what would have been a parallel version of "The Coming of the White Worm" is entirely natural.

But does it make sense for "The Light from the Pole" to appear in the *Book of Eibon* side by side with "The Coming of the White Worm"? As much sense as it makes for Matthew's Gospel to be elbow to elbow with Mark's, of which it is an expanded version. Or for Ephesians to precede Colossians even though it is essentially a rewrite of it. Ditto for 2 Peter whose third chapter is simply a bowdlerized and plagiarized version of Jude. But perhaps the closest analogy would be 2 Timothy on the theory of P. N. Harrison (*The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*). Vocabulary statistics indicate that all of 1 Timothy and Titus are spurious, non-Pauline, but there appears to be a faint residue of genuine Pauline material in 2 Timothy. Harrison says that probably some latter-day admirer of Paul chanced upon some fragments of an otherwise lost epistle and decided to work them into a new epistle built around them, even though that epistle turns out sounding a bit too much like Philippians and Titus. That's "The Light from the Pole."

"Incidentally, there's a sly little in-joke which I slipped into the text of 'The Light from the Pole.' The central character Pharazyn: Tom Cockcroft has for many years lived on 'Pharazyn Street' in New Zealand. It seemed appropriate, in light of 'Luveh-Keraph' and 'Klarkash-Ton' and similar jesting references here and there" (Lin Carter, "A Response," p. 33). Thomas G. L. Cockcroft supplied Lin with a typed copy of Smith's *Black Book* years before it was made available through Arkham House. Tom Cockcroft is the compiler of the absolutely indispensable *Index to the Weird Fiction Magazines* (Arno Press reprint, 1975) and *Index to the Verse in Weird Tales* (1960).

"The Light from the Pole" first appeared in *Weird Tales* #1 (Zebra Books, 1980). Lin's own candid appraisal of it was that it "wasn't much of a story, sad to say" (ibid.).

## The Light from the Pole:

### The History of Pharazyn the Enchanter

by Clark Ashton Smith and Lin Carter

Pharazyn the prophet abode in a tall house of granite builded on the heights above a small fishing-village on the northernmost coasts of Zabdamar, whose rock-bestrewn shores are unceasingly washed by the cold black waters of the polar main. It was quite early in the reign of the Emperor Charnametros, in that year known to the chroniclers as the Year of the Green Spider, that Pharazyn first became aware of the imminence of his singular and ineluctable doom by certain small signs and presagings. His dreams were perturbed by malign and shadowy shapes, which ever remained half-glimpsed; cold auroras flamed and flickered unseasonably in the nocturnal heavens, although the season was midsummer; and always, in the loud wind and crying surf, it seemed to Pharazyn that he harkened to the weird whisper of voices from realms of perennial winter.

Now, from atop the granite towers of his high house, it was the wont of Pharazyn to observe the wheeling constellations over-head and to peruse those starry omens which appertain to events yet unborn in the dark womb of time. Of late, these nocturnal portents had been strangely ominous, as well, and yet imprecise: it was as if they prefigured the encroachment of some curious manner of doom so unique as to stand without precedent in the annals of the astrologic science, which could thus be only *hinted* at in vague, ambiguous terms. This, as well, was troubling to the serenity of Pharazyn.

As to the relevance of the approaching event, it seemed in some wise to bear upon the destiny of the prophet himself; for the stellar omens were occultly consonant to his own natal house, wherein Fomalhaut was ascendant; and also to that zodiacal sign the astronomers of this epoch termed The Basilisk. But in no degree could the prophet discern with precision or clarity the lineaments of the impending event which would seem to impinge so particularly upon his own personal fate.

And this was the cause of increasing perturbation and unrest within the heart of Pharazyn: that, strive as he might, he could acquire no certain foreknowledge of that which would soon eventuate, nor even an inkling thereunto. Being a past-master of all magic and divination, and a seer of remote and future things, he made use of his arts in an effort to divine their meaning. But a cloud was upon his eyes through the diurnal hours, and a darkness thwarted his vision when he sought illumination in dreams. His horoscopes were put to naught; his familiars were silent or answered him equivocally; and confusion was amidst all his geomancies and hydromancies and haruspications. And it seemed to Pharazyn that an unknown power worked against him, mocking and rendering impotent in such fashion the sorcery that none had defeated heretofore. And Pharazyn knew, by certain tokens perceptible to wizards, that the power was an evil power, and its boding was of bale to man.

Through the middle summer the fisher-folk who dwelt in wattle huts below the tall towers of Pharazyn went forth daily in their coracles of hide and willow and cast their nets in the accustomed manner of their trade. But all that they gathered from the sea was dead and withered as if in the blast of great coldness such as would emanate from trans-Arctic ice. And they drew forth from their seines living monsters as well, such as their eldest captains had never beheld: things triple-headed and tailed and finned with horror; black, shapeless things that turned to liquid foulness and ran from the net like a vile ichor; or headless shapes like bloated moons with green, frozen rays about them; or things leprous-eyed and bearded with stiffly-oozing slime. It was as if some trans-dimensional and long-blocked channel beneath the known, familiar seas of Earth had opened suddenly into the strange waters of ultra-mundane oceans, teeming with repulsive and malformed life.

In awe and wonder at what had come out of the sea-horized north, the fisher-folk withdrew into their huts, abandoning their wonted pursuits of the season; their boats, which fared no longer to sea, were drawn up on the sands below the tall towers of Pharazyn on the cliff. And Pharazyn himself, descending later, also beheld the rotting and unwholesome monsters drawn dripping from the tainted waters, and pondered much concerning the import of this prodigy. For this ill miracle was, he knew, in sooth a sure prodigy of evil.

Thereafter, for the span of seven days, each time the timid folk would emerge from their huts and sail forth to draw provender from the waves, naught filled their nets but unnatural malignancies. At length, and all aghast, they tarried not but fled swiftly to the uppermost rocks and thence to an island village which lay hard by, wherein the greater number of them could find haven and refuge from these grisly marvels among their kin. There remained with Pharazyn only his two servants, the boy Ratha and the crone Ahilidis, who had both witnessed many of his conjurations and were thus inured to sights of magic. And with these two beside him, the prophet felt less alone against whatever the night would bring.

Reascending to his towering abode, he ignited before every portal such suffumigations as are singularly repulsive to the boreal demons; and at each angle of the house where a malign spirit might enter, he posted one of his familiars to guard against all intrusion. Thenceafter, while Ratha and Ahilidis slept, he studied with sedulous care the parchments of Pnom, wherein are collated many strong and potent exorcisms. He berthought him that a dire spell had been laid upon the land of Zabdamar: an ensorcelling such as the wan polar demons might weave, or the chill witches of the moon might devise in their caverns of snow. And he deemed it well to retire for a time, lest the spell should now take effect upon others than the clammy denizens of the oozy-bottomed sea.

But albeit the exorcisms of Pnom were many and mighty, and stood strong against those entities sinister and malign, such as might yearn to work evil upon the like of Pharazyn, he derived little easement of heart from their perusal. For ever and anon, as he read again for his comfort the old rubrics, he remembered ominously the saying of the prophet Lith, which heretofore no man had ever understood: "There is One that inhabits the place of utter cold, and One that respireth where none other may draw breath. In the days to come He shall issue forth among the isles and cities of men, and shall bring with Him as a white doom the wind that slumbereth in his dwelling-place."

And he remembered, as well, the grisly and horrific doom which had befallen his sorcerous colleague, the warlock Evagh, in Yikilth the ice-island. There, in the frozen realm of the worm Rlim Shaikorth, Evagh had suffered a metamorphosis so terrible that few savants have

dared be specific in their redactions of the tale. But Pharazyn and Evagh had been students of the same master, and following upon the demise or enchantment of the warlock, Pharazyn had been moved to interrogate the wandering spirits of wind and wave until at length he had learned in every dread particular that which had befallen his former comrade. And the portents which had presaged the coming of the white worm and the discarnation of Evagh were not unlike the omens and portents which Pharazyn had observed, and which he knew related to his own doom.

Therefore, he pored long over the exorcisms of Pnom and the prophecies of Lith, and peered as well into the doom-fraught pages of the Pnakotic Manuscripts, wherein there were of old indited much lore both abstruse and recondite, and otherwise forgotten among men.

\* \* \*

Although the fire of fatty conifer blazed fiercely upon the marble hearth of his tower-top chamber, it seemed that a deathly chill began to pervade the air of the room about the midnight hour. As Pharazyn turned uneasily from the parchments of Pnom, and saw that the hearth was heaped high and the fire burned bright, he heard the sudden turmoil of a great wind full of sea-birds eerily shrieking, and the cries of land-fowl driven on helpless wings, and over all a high laughter of diabolic voices. Madly from the north the wind beat upon his square-based towers; and birds were cast like blown leaves of autumn against the stout-paned windows; and devils seemed to tear and strain at the granite walls. Though the room's door was shut and the windows were tight-closed, an icy gust went round and round, circling the table where Pharazyn sat, snatching the broad parchments of Pnom from beneath his fingers, and plucking at the lamp-flame.

Fruitlessly, with sluggish brain, he strove to remember that counter-charm which is most effective against the spirits of the boreal quarter. Then, strangely, it seemed that the wind fell, leaving a mighty stillness about the house.

Soon he was made aware of a light shining beyond his chamber windows, as if a belated moon had now risen above the rocks. But Pharazyn knew that the moon was at that time a thin crescent, declining with eventide. It seemed that the light shone from the

north, pale and frigid as fire of ice; and going to the window he beheld a great beam that traversed all the sea, coming as if from the hidden pole. In that light the rocks were paler than marble, and the sands were whiter than sea-salt, and the huts of the fishermen were as white tombs. The walled garden of Pharazyn was filled with the piercing light, and lo! all of the green had departed from its foliage, and all of the color had been leached from its blossoms until they were like deathly flowers of snow. And the beam fell bleakly upon the lower walls of his house, but left still in shadow the wall of that upper chamber from which he looked.

He thought that the beam poured from a pale cloud that lay athwart the sea-line, or else from a white peak in the direction of the pole, which had never before been visible by day, but seemed to have lifted skyward in the night—of this he was uncertain. Watching, he thought he saw that it rose higher in the heavens, that beam of frigid light, but clomb no higher upon the walls of his tower. At length the ice-mountain, wherefrom it seemed that ray of cold light shone, loomed mighty in the boreal heavens, until it was higher even than the dread mountain Achoravomas, which belches rivers of flame and liquid stone that pour unquenched through Tscho Vulpanomi to the austral main; nay, steeper still it seemed to him, until it towered above the house of Pharazyn like unto far and fabulous Yarak itself, the mountain of ice that marks the site of the veritable pole.

Scarce could he draw breath in the cold that was on the air; and the light of the mountainous iceberg seared his eyeballs with an exceeding froreiness. Yet he perceived an odd thing, that the rays of the glittering light from the pole fell indirectly and to either side of his house; and the lower chambers, where Ratha and Ahilidis slept, were bathed in the strange luminance. It would seem that his suffumigations and other precautions had served to preserve at least this chamber of his house from the full fury of the beam of freezing light.

Then the beam swerved from the tall towers of Pharazyn, and passed his house by, questing the night. The chill gust was gone from the room; the lamp and the fire burned steadily; and something of warmth returned slowly into the half-frozen marrow of Pharazyn.

Pondering in vain the significance of the mystery, he then seemed to hear in the air about him a sweet and wizardly voice. And,

speaking in a tongue that he knew not, the voice uttered a rune of slumber. And Pharazyn could not resist the rune, and upon him there fell such a numbness of sleep as overcomes the outworn watcher in a place of snow.

\* \* \*

Waking stiffly at dawn, he rose up from the floor where he had lain, and found himself alive and unharmed by the ordeal: it was as if all which had befallen him during the nocturnal hours had been naught but the phantasmagoria of a dream.

Striding to the window, the prophet threw wide the casement and gazed with fearful trepidation upon the north. But there was nothing which met his eye that he had not beheld a thousand dawns aforetime: the bleak and barren wastes of Mhu Thulan, culminating in a rocky promontory which thrust out into the dark sea; and the white wilderness of northernmost Polarion beyond the snowy bastions of the wall of mountains which stood athwart the horizon. Nowhere in his range of vision could Pharazyn perceive that wanly glittering, that sky-ascending spire, of soaring ice wherefrom had shone the frigid ray.

For all that it was no longer within the scope of his perception, the prophet knew with grim certainty what it had been that he had surely seen. No captain, faring out to sea, had espied its like in the boreal main; no legend had told of it among the dim Hyperboreal isles; no seer or sage had recorded it from his seething and phantasmal visions: but Pharazyn knew.

Deathly and terrible had been that glittering pinnacle, hung like a djinn-reared tower in the zenith; and he knew with sure and certain knowledge the source of the light he had beheld in the darkness like a far beacon, and that it shone not from any earthly coast, but from remote and trans-telluric gulfs profound.

*For the uncanny glittering of a frost harder than diamonds sheathed the walls of his tower in immeltable crystal.* Yet the walls of the tower were no longer touched by the beam as in the night, for it had passed on many hours since; and upon all his house there was naught but the early sun and the morning shadows.

Again he remembered the saying of Lith; and with much foreboding he descended to the ground story. There, at the northern

windows, the boy Ratha and the hag Ahilidis were leaning with faces upturned to the direction wherefrom the icy beacon-light had shone. Stiffly they stood, with wide-open eyes, and a pale terror was in their regard, and upon them was the white death such as had stricken his garden in the night. And, nearing them, the prophet was stayed by a terrible chillness that smote upon him from their bodies, which were pallid as the flesh of leprosy and white as moon-washed marble.

Gazing beyond them through the window, Pharazyn perceived along the sands and rocks of the shore, certain of the fisher-folk as had crept back to their homes were lying or standing upright in stiff, rigid postures, as if they had emerged from their hiding-places to behold the pale beam and had been struck into an enchanted slumber, or else turned to stone by the Gorgon's glare of the polar light. And the whole shore and harbor, and the cliffs, and the garden of Pharazyn, even to the front threshold of his house, was mailed in crystal armor of perdurable frost, as had been the walls of his house.

He would have fled from thence, knowing his magic wholly ineffectual against this thing. But it came to him that death was in the direct falling of the rays from the ice-mountain, and, leaving the shelter of the house, he must perforce enter that fatal light when next it shone questing down the darkling skies from the ultimate north. And yet not totally unprotected was he if he remained, for the wards he had erected against supernatural intrusion had in sooth protected him from the doom which had befallen the hapless fisher-folk, and the boy Ratha, and the crone. Or was his inexplicable survival due *only* to the efficacy of his suffumigations and familiars?

Now terror crept into the heart of Pharazyn, for it came to him that he alone, of all who dwelt on that shore, had been *exempted* from the white death. He dared not surmise the reason of his exemption; but he realized the futility of flight, and in the end he deemed it best to remain patiently and without fear, awaiting whatever should befall him with the coming of another night.

Returning to his chamber he busied himself with various conjurations. But his familiars had gone away in the night, forsaking the angles at which he had posted them; and no spirit, human or demoniacal, made reply to his querying. And not in any way known to wizards could he learn aught of the mountain of ice and of its frigid

ray, or divine the least inkling of its secret, to confirm the dreadful surmise that had seized upon him.

Deeply immersed in his sorcerous labors, he was unaware of the passage of time and only realized that night was upon him when presently, as he labored with his useless cantrips, he felt upon his face the breathing of a wind that was not air but a subtler and a rarer element cold as the moon's ether. His own breath forsook him with agonies unspeakable, and he fell down on the floor in a sort of waking swoon that was near to death. And again he recalled the hideous metamorphosis that had befallen the unfortunate warlock, Evagh, and his transformation upon Yikilth into a being able to endure the rigors of super-Arctic cold, to whom even the frigid and insubstantial ether was rendered somehow respirable.

In the swoon he was doubtfully aware of voices uttering unfamiliar spells. Invisible fingers touched him with icy pangs; and about him came and went a bleak radiance, like a tide that flows and ebbs and flows again. Intolerable was this luminance to all his senses; but it brightened slowly, with briefer ebbings; and in time his eyes and his flesh were tempered to endure it. Almost fully upon him now shone the mysterious light from the north, blazing through his windows; and it seemed that a great Eye regarded him in the baleful light. He would have risen to confront the Eye, but his swoon held him like a palsy.

After that, he slept again for a certain period. Waking, he found in all his limbs their wonted strength and quickness. The light was still upon his house, its pallid luminance glimmering through his chamber. Then, with inexplicable suddenness, it was gone; but whether it had died at its source or merely turned away to bathe some other place in the freezing regard of its Gorgon-eye, he did not know.

\* \* \*

Morning lit the east and the second night was ended of this siege. And, peering out, he witnessed a new and more ominous marvel: for, lo! the adamantine frost *had now crept nigh unto the very sill of his casement*. And he was aware of a bleak certainty: that on the third night—should he live to see it—the cold and pallid beam from the

icy peak would fully enter into his casement window, and his doom would be upon him everlastingly.

Terror seized upon Pharazyn then, for he saw in all of these phenomena the insidious workings of a wizardry plenipotent and transcendental, and beyond the skill of any terrene sorcerer. All that third day he searched the blood-writ runes of mouldering scrolls of pterodactyl-parchment, and scanned the writings of the elder sages, searching in vain for the means to combat the eerie menace from the pole which close-compassed him and which would, he knew, with the coming of night, drag him down to a doom so profound and unutterable that from its frigid bourn he might never escape.

For it had come to Pharazyn, in the trance-like slumbers of his spell-induced swoon, what secret lurked behind the cryptic sayings of Lith. For he had found amongst the enigmatic utterances of the prophet yet a second passage whose meaning had heretofore eluded the comprehension of the sages: "But even He, who reigns among the lords of death, is made vulnerable by His coming-hence into the world of mortality. Beware, then, the wrath of that Other One which is His Master and far more terrible than He; and Who abideth forever in His cold caverns beneath His mountain, beprisoned there by the Elder Gods. For if that Other seek ye out, Him there is no escaping save in death itself."

Now it seemed to Pharazyn that the One whose coming was foretold by the prophet Lith was the white worm, Rlim Shaikorth; from beyond the limits of the north had he come in his floating citadel, the ice-island, Yikilth, to voyage the mundane oceans and to blast with a chill splendor the puny peoples of humankind. And when Evagh the warlock had been transformed into a being for whom was made respirable the air in which no mortal man may draw breath—even that coldness and the thin ether that go everywhere with Yikilth—he was brought face to face with that being whose advent the prophet Lith had foretold obscurely, and who had vaguely the lineaments of a visage belonging neither to beast of the earth nor ocean-creature.

And unto him Rlim Shaikorth had spake: "Wisdom ineffable shalt be thine, and mastery of lore beyond the reach of mortals, if thou wilt but worship me and become my thrall; with me thou shalt voyage amid the kingdoms of the north, and shalt pass among the

green southern islands, and we shall smite the fair ports and cities with a blight of trans-Arctic winter: for I am he whose coming even the gods may not oppose."

Thereafter, Pharazyn knew, Evagh had dwelt upon Yikilth, and beneath the instruction of Dooni and Ux Loddhan, captive sorcerers of Thulask, who had as well been tempered to the coldness of Yikilth, together with certain outlandish and uncouth men called Polarians, he performed the sevenfold rite that is scarce suitable for narration here, and swore the threefold vow of unspeakable alienation. Thereafter for many days and nights, he sailed with Rlim Shaikorth adown the coast of Mhu Thulan and the province of Zabdamar, the great iceberg being guided by the sorcery of the worm, prevailing even against the wind and tide. By night and day, like the beams of a deathly beacon, the chill splendor smote afar from Yikilth to freeze flowery Cerngoth and sea-affronting Aguil with boreal stillness. Proud triremes were overtaken as they fled southward, their crews blasted at the oars; and often ships were caught and embedded in the new bastions of ice that formed daily around the base of that ever-growing mountain. But, dwelling upon Yikilth, the sorcerer Evagh and his fellow-wizards were immune to that icy death, even as the worm had promised them. All were united in the worship of the white worm; and all, it seemed, were content in a measure with their lot, and were fain of that unearthly lore and dominion which the worm had promised them.

But Evagh rebelled in secret against his thralldom to Rlim Shaikorth; he beheld with revulsion the doom of cities, and sorrow was in his heart for the fishing-coracles and the biremes of trade and warfare that floated manless after they had met Yikilth. Ever the ice-isle followed its southwardly course, growing vaster and more prodigious by accretion; and ever, at the star-appointed time, which was the forenoon of every third day, the sorcerers convened in the presence of Rlim Shaikorth to do him worship. To the perturbation of all, their numbers unaccountably dwindled, warlock by warlock, first amongst the outlandish men from Polarian. And ever, ominously, the worm *greatened* in size; and the increase was visible as a thickening of his whole body from head to tail.

Deeming these circumstances an ill augury, the sorcerers made fearful supplication to the worm in their various tongues, and

implored him to enlighten them concerning the fate of their erstwhile fellows. But the reply they received was equivocal at best: sometimes the worm was silent, and sometimes he bespoke them, renewing vaguely the promises he had made. And Ux Loddhan, it seemed, was wholly oblivious to the doom which overtook them slowly, one by one, and was fain to impute an esoteric significance to the ever-growing bulk of the white worm and the vanishing of the wizards. At length Evagh had perceived that his vanished brethren were now merged wholly in the ultraterrestrial being of Rlim Shaikorth, had been devoured by the wan and loathly mouth of the worm, and abode henceforward in the evil blackness of his belly, whereto he himself was doomed to dwell, if he did not foreswear his dreadful vows and strike during those infrequent periods of slumber when even the mighty Rlim Shaikorth was vulnerable. And strike he did, effecting the dissolution both of the white worm and of the ice-isle, Yikilth, itself; while his own spirit was borne shrieking into the boreal solitudes, there to bide forever.

Now it seemed to Pharazyn that the white worm was even that One whereof the prophet Lith had forewarned the world; and that if this was so, then even the terrible Rlim Shaikorth was but the emissary of another and far more potent and dreadful Being, whose wrath was a peril to all the world, as the prophet Lith had foretold.

In his perusal of the parchments of Pnom, Pharazyn had found certain vague references to an entity of supra-polar cold who had come down from dim Fomalhaut when the world was young, taking as his abode the icy and cavernous bowels of Yarak, the ice-mountain which stands upon the ultimate and boreal pole, bound there forever under the sigil of those eldermost and benign divinities which guard the world and are reputedly disposed to be friendly towards man. All of this seemed to agree with that against which the sayings of Lith had so cryptically warned. And in this the dread name of Aphoom Zhah, concerning whom even the Pnakotic Manuscripts dare only hint, took on a grim and frightful relevance.

For if that which Pharazyn now dared to dream was true, then Rlim Shaikorth was only the minister of that Polar One of whom the legends of anterior cycles whisper fearful things; and the white spirits of the boreal wastes—the Cold Ones who obey the behests of the worm, and haunt perpetually the frozen wilderness, and shriek



upon the nightwind like damned, tormented souls—they were but the minions and servants of Aphoom Zhah, and Rlim Shaikorth their leader. And of this Aphoom Zhah, the Pnakotic Manuscripts allude to him as *a flame of coldness* which shall someday encompass the lands of men, from wintry Polarion in the ultimate north, through all the Hyperborean kingdoms and archipelagoes, even to the southmost isle of Oszhtor. And was it not a very *flame of coldness* which Pharazyn had seen falling adown the nighted skies, from a mountain of ice very like remote and terrible Yarak?

But wherefore was the wrath of the Dweller at the Pole turned against Pharazyn; or, if not from vengeance, for what ulterior purpose did the flame of coldness seek out his high house, night upon night? Here, too, the wisdom of Pnom yielded a clue upon perusal. For had not the sage written thusly: "Neither the Old Ones nor their minions dare to disturb the sigil of the Elder Gods; the hand of mortal man alone may touch their sign unblasted"; and in another place, "Power the star-born Ones possess over those hapless mortals in whose natal hour the star of Their origin be ascendant." And well knew Pharazyn that both he and the unhappy Evagh were birthed in the hour when dim Fomalhaut is risen over the edges of the world.

Therein lay the reason whereby had Rlim Shaikorth power to transmute the flesh of Evagh, and to temper it so that the warlock might endure the harsh rigor of Yikilth; therein, too, it might be, was the cause wherefore the light from the pole had sought out the tall towers of Pharazyn, among all the residences of men. *For only his hand could dislodge the sigil the gods had set upon the portals of Yarak: only Pharazyn the prophet could loose the Cold Flame upon the world!*

And thus it came to pass that Pharazyn knew the extremity of horror, and knew himself damned beyond all other dooms eternal: for it is a strange and fearful doom, to know that *by your hand* shall be set upon the flesh of men the seal of that gulf whose rigor paleth one by one the most ardent stars, and putteth rime at the very core of suns—the unutterable coldness of the profound and cosmic deeps!

\* \* \*

When that the sun rose upon the morning of the third day after the blight of coldness had first touched the coasts of Zabdamar, and the fisher-folk who had fled inland to abide the unseasonable chill in the

village of Zuth came to return to their frost-whitened huts, they found the high house of Pharazyn the prophet empty of life.

At first they were timid and trepidatious, and lingered athwart the threshold; later, when naught betid, the younger and bolder men amongst them ventured into the house, but cautiously: for it is never prudent to enter the houses of sorcerers unbidden. In the lower parts of the house the young men found the bodies of the boy Ratha and the crone Ahilidis stark as bone; they gathered their courage and approached the pale corpses, finding them frozen and stony.

In the upper parts of the tower, which were untouched by the glittering frost, the fisher-folk discovered the corpse of the prophet himself, seated in his throne-like chair carved of the ivory of mammoths. Upon his thin red lips was a cold smile, and therebeneath was another smile, thinner and yet more red; for he had slit his throat from ear to ear, had Pharazyn, heedful of the less cryptic of the two sayings of the prophet Lith, that only by death can a man elude the clutches of Aphoom Zhah the Lord of the Pole. ✱

## About "The Stairs in the Crypt"

This time out, the title is not the only tip of the turban to "Robert Blake," since Lin quietly smuggles a couple of paragraphs of Blake's morbid ruminations from "The Shambler from the Stars" into the maggoty mouth of anti-hero Avalzaunt. Other salutes to *Weird Tales* writers include the business about the secret portal opening on every tomb, a detail drawn from E. Hoffman Price's *Necronomicon* passage in the Price-Lovecraft collaboration "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," and the reference to Henry Kuttner's Old One Nyogtha ("The Salem Horror"), whom Lin gratuitously makes king of the ghouls.

The pivot of the elaborate joke in this story is a genuine bit of ancient spook lore on the point of whether the undead may eat and digest. Though one can find exceptions (as HPL knew, genuine myrh cycles abound in contradictions), biblical legend holds that angels may not eat, not having, so to speak, the stomach for it! Thus the incognito angel Raphael in the Book of Tobit (12:19), like the angel of Yahve himself in Judges (13:16), cannot eat, nor the docetic Jesus of the Acts of John (93; cf. Gospel of John 4:31-34). This is also the point of the otherwise ridiculous detail of having Jesus tell Mr. and Mrs. Jairus to give their newly resuscitated daughter something to eat (Mark 5:43), and of the resurrected Jesus asking for a fish sandwich (Luke 24:41-43). It's to prove the newly revived are not ghosts; they couldn't eat if they were. Over in India and Tibet, one particular caste of the wicked returns as a *Preta*, or "hungry ghost." These miserable creatures have a pin-hole sized mouth and a big, empty tummy. Now you know why linguini was invented over in the Orient.

"The Stairs in the Crypt" is surely the broadest in its outrageous humor in the whole Eibonic canon. The cartoonish character of the horror makes it in no wise less hideous. It first appeared in *Fantastic*, August 1976.

## The Stairs in the Crypt:

### The History of the Necromancer Avalzaunt

by Clark Ashton Smith and Lin Carter

It is told of the necromancer Avalzaunt that he succumbed at length to the inexorable termination of his earthly existence in the Year of the Crimson Spider during the empery of King Phariol of Commorion. Upon the occasion of his demise, his disciples, in accordance with the local custom, caused his body to be preserved in a bath of bituminous natron, and interred the mortal remains of their master in a mausoleum prepared according to his dictates in the burying-grounds adjacent to the abbey of Camorba, in the province of Uthnor, in the eastern parts of Hyperborea.

The obsequies made over the catafalque whereupon reposed the mummy of the necromancer were oddly cursory in nature, and the encomium delivered at the interment by the eldest of the apprentices of Avalzaunt, one Mygon, was performed in a niggardly and grudging manner, singularly lacking in that spirit of somber dolence one should have expected from the bereaved disciples gathered to mourn their deceased mentor. The truth of the matter was that none of the former students of Avalzaunt had any particular cause to bemoan his demise, for their master had been an exigent and rigorous taskmaster and his cold obduracy had done little to earn him any affection from those who had studied the dubious and repugnant science of necromancy under his harsh and unsympathetic tutelage.

Upon their completion of the requisite solemnities, the acolytes of the necromancer departed for their ancestral abodes in the city of Zanzonga which stood nearby, whilst others eloiigned themselves to more distant Cerngoth and Leqqan. As for the negligent Mygon, he repaired to the remote and isolated tower of primordial basalt which rose from a headland overlooking the boreal waters of the eastern main, from which they had all come for the funereal rites. This tower had formerly been the residence of the deceased necromancer but was now, by lawful bequest, devolved upon himself as the seniormost of the apprentices of the late and unlamented mage.

If the pupils of Avalzaunt assumed that they had taken their last farewells of their master, however, it eventuated that in this assumption they were seriously mistaken. For, after some years of repose within the sepulchre, vigor seeped back again into the brittle limbs of the mummified enchanter and sentience gleamed anew in his jellied and sunken eyes. At first the partially-revived lich lay somnolent and unmoving in a numb and mindless stupor, with no conception of its present charnel abode. It knew, in fine, neither what nor where it was, nor aught of the peculiar circumstances of its untimely and unprecedented resurrection.

On this question the philosophers remain divided. One school holds to the theorem that it was the unseemly brevity of the burial rites which prevented the release of the spirit of Avalzaunt from its clay, thus initiating the unnatural revitalization of the cadaver. Others postulate that it was the necromantic powers inherent in Avalzaunt himself which were the sole causative agent in his return to life. After all, they argue, and with some cogence, one who is steeped in the power to effect the resurrection of another should certainly retain, even in death, a residue of that power sufficient to perform a comparable revivification upon oneself. These, however, are queries for a philosophical debate for which the present chronicler lacks both the leisure and learning to pursue to an unequivocal conclusion.

Suffice to say that, in the fullness of time, the lich had recovered its faculties to such a degree as to become cognizant of its interment. The unnatural vigor which animated the corpse enabled it to thrust aside the heavy lid of the black marble sarcophagus and the mummy sat up and stared about itself with horrific and indescribable surmise. The withered wreaths of yew and cypress, the decaying draperies of funereal black and purple, the sepulchral décor of the stone chamber wherein it now found itself, and the unmistakable nature of the tomb-furnishings, all served alike to confirm the reanimated cadaver in its initial impressions.

It is difficult for we, the living, to guess at the thoughts which seethed through the dried and mould-encrusted brain of the lich as it pondered its demise and resurrection. We may hazard it, however, that the spirit of Avalzaunt quailed before none of the morbid and shuddersome trepidations an ordinary mortal would experience upon awakening within somber and repellent environs. Not from shallow

impulse or trivial whim had Avalzaunt in his youth embarked upon a study of the penumbral and atrocious craft of necromancy, but from a fervid and devout fascination with the mysteries of death. In the swollen pallor of a corpse in the advanced stages of decomposition had he ever found a beauty superior to the radiance of health, and in the mephitic vapors of the tomb a perfume headier than the scent of summer gardens.

Oft had he hung in rapturous excitation upon the words which fell, slow and sluggish, one by one, from the worm-fretted lips of deliquescent cadavers, or gaunt and umber mummies, or crumbling lichs acrawl with squirming maggots and teetering on the sickening verge of terminal decay. From such, rendered temporarily animate by his necromantic art, it had been his wont to extort the abominable yet thrilling secrets of the tomb. And now he, himself, was become just such a revitalized corpse! The irony of the situation did not elude the subtlety of Avalzaunt.

"Once I yearned to know the terrors of the grave, the kiss of maggots on my tongue, the clammy caress of a rotting shroud against my tepid flesh," soliloquized the cadaver in a croaking whisper from a dry and shrunken throat crusted with the salts of the bitter natron. "I thirsted for the knowledge that glimmers in the pits of mummied eyes, and burned for that wisdom known only to the writhing and insatiable worm. Tirelessly I perused forbidden tomes by the wan and feeble luminance of guttering tapers of corpse-tallow to master the secrets of mortality, so that should ever the nethermost pits disgorge their crawling vermin I might aspire to dominion and empery over the legions of the living dead—among the which I, now, myself, am to be henceforward numbered!"

Thus it may be seen that the mordant humor in its present circumstances was readily perceived by the unblunted wit of the revitalized corpse.

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Among the various implements of arcane manufacture which the pupils of Avalzaunt had buried in the crypt beside the mortal remains of their unlamented master there was a burnished speculum of black steel wherein presently the cadaver of Avalzaunt beheld its own repulsive likeness. It was skull-like, that sere and fulvous visage which

peered back at the necromancer from the ebon depths of the magic mirror. Avalzaunt had seen such shrunken and decayed lineaments oft aforetime upon prehistoric mummies rifled from the crumbling fanes of civilizations anterior to his own. Seldom, however, had the reanimated lich gazed upon so delightfully decomposed and withered a visage as this bony and wizened horror which was its own face.

The lich next turned its rapt scrutiny on what remained of its lean and leathery body and tested brittle limbs draped in the rags of a rotting shroud, finding these embued with an adamantite and a tireless vigor, albeit they were gaunt and attenuated to a degree which may only be described as skeletal. Whatever the source of the supranormal energy which now animated the corpse of the necromancer, it lent the undead creature a vigor it had never previously enjoyed in life, not even in the long-ago decades of its juvenescence.

As for the crypt itself, it was sealed from without by pious ceremonies which rendered the portals thereunto inviolable by the mummy in its present mode of existence as one of the living dead. Such precautions were customary in the land of Uthnor, which was the abode of many warlocks and enchanters during the era whereof I write; for it was feared that wizards seldom lie easy in their graves and that, betimes, they are wont to rise up from their deathly somnolence and stalk abroad to wreak a dire and ghastly vengeance upon those who wronged them when they lived. Hence was it only prudent for the timid burghers of Zanzonga, the principal city of this region of Hyperborea, to insist that the tombs of sorcerers be sealed with the Pnakotic pentagram, against which such as the risen Avalzaunt may not trespass without the severest discomfiture.

Thus it was that the mummy of the necromancer was pent within the crypt, helpless to emerge therefrom into the outer world. And there for a time it continued to sojourn: but the animated lich was in no wise discommoded by its enforced confinement, for the bizarre and ponderous architecture of the crypt was of its own devisal, and the building thereof Avalzaunt had himself supervised. Therefore it was that the crypt was spacious and, withal, not lacking in such few and dismal amenities as the reposing-chambers of the dead may customarily afford their ghastly habitants. Moreover, the living corpse bethought itself of that secret portal every tomb is known to have, behind the which there doubtless was a hidden stair

winding down to black, profound, abysmal deeps beneath the earth where vast, malign and potent entities reside. The Old Ones they are called, and among these inimical dwellers in the tenebrous depths there was a certain Nyogtha, a dire divinity whom Avalzaunt had oftentimes celebrated with rites of indescribable obscenity.

This Nyogtha had for his minions the grisly race of ghouls, those lank and canine-muzzled prowlers among the tombs; and from the favor of Nyogtha the necromancer had in other days won ascendancy over the loping hordes. And so the mummy of Avalzaunt waited patiently within the crypt, knowing that in time all tombs are violated by these shambling predators from the Pit, who had been the faithful servants of Avalzaunt when he had lived, and who might still consent to serve him after death.

Erelong the cadaver heard the shuffle of leathery feet ascending the secret stair from the unplumbed and gloomy foetor of the abyss, and the fumbling of rotting paws against the hidden portal; and the stale and vitiated air within the vault was, of a sudden, permeated with a disquieting effluvia as of long-sealed graves but newly opened. By these tokens the lich was made aware of the ghoulish pack that pawed and whined and snuffled hungrily at the door. And when the portal yawned to admit the gaunt, lean-bellied, shuffling herd, the lich rose up before it, lifting thin arms like withered sticks and clawed hands like the stark talons of monstrous birds. The putrid witchfires of a ghastly phosphorescence flared up at the command of the necromancer, and the ghoulish herd, affrighted, squealed and groveled before the glare-eyed mummy. At length, having cowed them sufficiently, Avalzaunt elicited from the leader of the pack, a hound-muzzled thing with dull eyes the hue of rancid pus, a fearful and prodigious oath of thralldom.

It was not long thereafter before Avalzaunt had need of this loping herd of grave-robbers. For the necromancer in time became aware of an inner lack which greatly tormented it and which ever remained unassuaged by the supernatural vigor which animated its form. In time this nebulous need resolved itself into a gnawing lack of sustenance, but it was for no mundane nutriment, that acrid and raging thirst which burned within the dry and withered entrails of the lich. Cool water nor honey-hearted wine would not suffice to sate

that unholy thirst: for it was *human blood* Avalzaunt craved, but why or wherefore, the mummy did not know.

Perchance it was simply that the desiccated tissues of the lich were soaked through with the bituminous salts of the bitter natron wherein it had been immersed, and that it was this acid saltiness which woke so fierce and burning a thirst within its dry and dusty gullet. Or mayhap it was even as antique legends told, that the restless legions of the undead require the imbibement of fresh gore whereby to sustain their unnatural existence on this plane of being. Whatever may have been the cause, the mummy of the dead necromancer yearned for the foaming crimson fluid which flows so prodigally through the veins of the living as it had never thirsted for even the rarest of wines from terrene vineyards when it had lived. And so Avalzaunt evoked the lean and hungry ghouls before its bier. They proffered unto the necromancer electrum chalices brimming with black and gelid gore drained from the tissues of corpses; but the cold, thick, coagulated blood did naught to slake the thirst that seared the throat of the mummy. It longed for fresh blood, crimson and hot and foam-beaded, and it vowed that ere long it would drink deep thereof, again and again and yet again.

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Thereafter the shambling herd roamed by night far afield in dire obedience to the mummy's will. And so it came to pass that the former disciples of the necromancer had cause to regret the negligent and over-hasty burial of their unlamented mentor. For it was upon the acolytes of the dead necromancer whom the ghoul-horde preyed. And the first of all their victims was that unregenerate and niggardly Mygon who still dwelt in the sea-affronting tower which once had been the demesne of the necromancer. When, with the diurnal light, his servants came to rouse him from his slumbers, they found a blanched and oddly-shrunken corpse amidst the disorder of the bed-clothes, which were torn and trampled and besmirched with black mire and grave-mould. Naught of the nature of the nocturnal visitants to the chamber of the unfortunate Mygon could his horror-stricken servants discern from the fixed staring of his glazed and sightless eyes; but from the drained and empty veins of the corpse,

and its preternatural pallor, they guessed it that he had fallen victim to some abominable and prowling vampire in the night.

Again and again thereafter the ghoul-herd went forth by the secret stairs within the crypt of Avalzaunt, down to those deeps far beneath the crust of the earth where they and their brethren had anciently tunneled out a warren of fetid passageways connecting tomb and burial-ground and the vaults beneath castle, temple, tower and town. After nine such grisly atrocities had befallen, some vague intimation of the truth dawned upon the ecclesiarchs of Zanzonga, for it became increasingly obvious that only the former apprentices of the dead necromancer, Avalzaunt, suffered from the depredations of the unknown vampire-creatures. In time the priests of Zanzonga ventured forth to scrutinize the crypt of the deceased enchanter, but found it still sealed, its door of heavy lead intact, and the Pnakotic pentagram affixed thereto undisturbed and unbroken. The night-prowling monsters who drained their hapless victims dry of blood, whoever or whatever they might prove to be, had naught to do with Avalzaunt, surely; for the necromancer, they said, slept still within his sealed and shutten crypt. This pronouncement given forth, they returned to the temple of Ymboth, in Zanzonga, pleasantly satisfied with themselves for the swift and thorough fulfillment of their mission. Not one of them so much as suspected, of course, the very existence of the stairs in the crypt, whereby Avalzaunt and his ghouls emerged in the gloaming to hunt down the unwary and abominably to feast.

And from this vile nocturnal feasting the sere and withered mummy lost its aforesaid gauntness, and it waxed sleek and plump and swollen, for that it now gorged heavily each night on rich, bubbling gore; and, as is well known to those of the unsqueamish who ponder upon such morbidities, the undead neither digest nor eliminate the foul and loathly sustenance whereon they feed.

Ere long the now bloated and corpulent lich had exhausted the list of its former apprentices, for not one remained unvisited by the shamblers from the Pit. Then it was that the insatiable Avalzaunt bethought him of the monks of Camorba whose abbey lay close by, nigh unto the very burial-ground wherein it was supposed he slept in the fetid solitude of his crypt. These monks were of an order which worshipped Shimba, god of the shepherds, and this drowsy,

rustic little godling demanded but little of his celebrants; wherefore they were an idle, fat, complacent lot much given to the fleshly pleasures. 'Twas said they feasted on the princeliest of viands, drank naught but the richest of vintages, and dined hugely on the juiciest and most succulent haunches of rare, dripping meat; by reason thereof they were rosy and rotund and brimming with hot blood. At the very thought of the fat, bubbling fluid that went rivering through their soft, lusty flesh, the undead necromancer grew faint and famished: and he vowed that very night to lead his loping tomb-hounds against the abbey of Camorba.

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Night fell, thick with turgid vapors. A humped and gibbous moon floated above the vernal hills of Uthnor. Thirlain, abbot of Camorba, was closeted with the abbey accounts, seated behind a desk lavishly inlaid with carven plaques of mastodonic ivory, as the moon ascended towards the zenith. Rumor had not exaggerated his corpulence, for, of all the monks of Camorba, the abbot was the most round and rubicund and rosy; hence it was from the fat jugular that pulsed in his soft throat that the necromancer had sworn to slake his febrile and unwholesome thirst.

In one plump hand Thirlain held a sheaf of documents appertaining to the accounts of the abbey, the which were scribed upon crisp papyrus made from calamites; the pudgy fingers of the other hand toyed idly with a silver paperknife which had been a gift from the high priest of Shimba in Zanzonga, and which was sanctified with the blessings of that patriarch.

Thus it was that, when the long and becurtained windows behind the desk burst asunder before the whining, eager pack of hungry ghouls, and the swollen and hideously bloated figure of the mad-eyed cadaver which led the tomb-hounds came lurching toward the abbot where he sat, Thirlain, shrieking with panic fear, blindly and impulsively thrust that small blunt silver knife into the distended paunch of the lumbering corpse as it flung itself upon him. What occurred in sequel to that instinctive and, ordinarily, ineffectual blow is still a matter of theological debate among the ecclesiarchs of Zanzonga, who no longer sleep so snugly in their beds.

For the bloated and swollen paunch of the walking corpse burst open like an immense and rotten fruit, spewing forth such stupendous quantities of black and putrid blood that the silken robes of the abbot were drenched in an instant. In sooth, so voluminous was the deluge of cold, coagulated gore, that the thick carpets were saturated with stinking fluids, which sprayed and squirted in all directions as the stricken cadaver staggered about in its throes. The vile liquid splashed hither and yon in such floods that even the damask wall-coverings were saturated, and, in no time at all, the entire chamber was awash with putrescent gore to such an extent that the very floor was become a lake of foulness. The liquescent vileness poured out into the hallways and the corridors beyond when at length the other monks, roused by the shriekings of their horror-smitten abbot, rose from cot and pallet and came bursting in to behold the ghastly abbatial chamber floating in a lake of noisome slime and Thirlain himself crouched pale and gibbering atop his ivory desk, pointing one palsied hand at the thin and lean and leathery rind of dried and desiccated flesh that was all which remained of Avalzaunt the necromancer, once the vile fluids his mummy retained had burst forth in a grisly deluge, and drained him dry.

This horrendous episode was hushed up and only distorted rumors of the nightmare ever leaked beyond the abbey walls. But the burghers of Zanzonga marveled for a season over the swift and inexplicable resignation from his fat and cozy sinecure of the complacent and pleasure-loving Thirlain, who departed that very dawn on a barefoot pilgrimage to the remotest of holy shrines far-famed for its wonder-working relics, which was situate amidst the most hostile and inaccessible of wildernesses. Thereafter the chastened abbot entered a dour monastic order of stern flagellants, famed for their strict adherence to a grim code of the utmost severity, wherein the all but hysteric austerities of the zealous Thirlain, together with his over-rigorous chastisements of the flesh, made him an object of amazement and wonder among even the harshest and most obdurate of his brethren. No longer plump and soft and self-indulgent, he grew lean and sallow from a bleak diet of mouldy crusts and stale water, and died not long thereafter in the odor of sanctity and was promptly declared venerable and beatific by the grand patriarch of Commorion, and his relics now command excessive prices from the

dealers in such ecclesiastical memorabilia. As for the remains of the necromancer, they were burnt on the hearth of the abbey at Camorba and were reduced to a pinch of bitter ash which was hastily scattered to the winds. And it is said of the spirit of the unfortunate Avalzaunt, that at last it found rest in whatever far and fabulous bourn is the final haven of perturbed and restless spirits. \*

## About "The Feaster from the Stars"

When "The Feaster from the Stars" premiered in *Crypt of Cthulhu* #26 (Hallowmass 1984), Lin Carter appended some interesting annotations, which I reproduce here for your edification.

The story itself derives from a plot-idea of Smith's which is not in *The Black Book* but was discovered by myself scribbled on the back of one of Smith's holograph manuscripts: "When a magistrate, condemning to death the members of an illicit cult of devil-worshippers, gratuitously shatters the idol of their god, he incurs its wrath. When all of the cultists are executed, the demon must exact its own vengeance on the magistrate." Note that I have only slightly altered this, making the lead character a High Constable, rather than a magistrate, in order to avoid too close a parallel to "The Seven Geases."

"Yzduggor" and "Vooth Raluorn" are names coined by Smith, which appear in his notes for the story eventually published as "The Seven Geases." In his final version of the text these names were changed to "Ezdagor" and "Ralibar Vooz." I hate to let good names go to waste.

It was Lovecraft who came up with the notion of a "Child of Tsathoggua" in his excerpt from *Of Evil Sorceries*, one of the fragments incorporated into *The Lurker at the Threshold*. HPL failed to specify its gender. In his "Genealogical Chart" excerpted from a 1934 letter to [Robert] Barlow and published in *Planets and Dimensions*, Smith gives "Zvilpogghua" as the name of Tsathoggua's only listed child. He also adds the information that the child was begotten on a female entity named Shathak upon the planet Yaksh (Neptune) by Tsathoggua, before he descended to this earth. In lieu of contradictory data, I presume Zvilpogghua to be male.

"Luthomné," "Yrautrom," "Ysabbau," "Zongis Furalor," "Yanur," etc.: all of these names were coined by Smith and listed in his notes for future use. Please note that of the twenty-four proper nouns in this story, only one ("Abbith") was invented by myself.

Beyond these essentials, it remains only to point out two ambiguities in the text and how they might be resolved. First, we are told, in the old hermit's confession to his god, that it was he who strategically omitted the

ingredient which would have effectuated the protective spell, but only scant lines later we learn that it was Vooth Raluorn's cousin who had shorted him on one ingredient, so as to supplant him and inherit his cushy niche. There is no hint of collusion between the two. Any biblical critic worth his salt would immediately suspect the dual explanation to denote a dangling thread, an accidental vestige of an earlier version of the story in which the cousin did the deed by himself, with the introduction of the eremite Yzduggor being a later substitution. And this in fact would be my guess. Lin's manuscripts frequently contain a first word choice, followed by a better afterthought, yet with the first one not erased. In the same way, I suspect he added the Yzduggor episode, meaning to completely efface the bit about the cousin, but forgot to.

Second, we are told that "the obscene black shape swept down on the huddled, shrieking form on the headland, and bore it aloft in webbed claws. Nor was it ever again seen by mortal men." Which "it"? The "obscene shape" or the "shrieking form"? Grammatically, it would more naturally refer to the monster, but the context requires a reference to the utter disappearance of Vooth Raluorn (especially as Zvilpogghua does indeed return to be seen once more by men in Carter's "Strange Manuscript Found in the Vermont Woods," which makes a nice matching pair with "The Feaster from the Stars"). Still, one wonders.

The same teasing possibility occurs in Mark 15:21 ff, where all the "he"s and "him"s surely must refer to Jesus—even though the last individual named was Simon of Cyrene, pressed into service to uphold Jesus' cross for him. Some ancient interpreters took this to mean that, a la *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, Simon was stuck with the cross and crucified with it, while Jesus escaped: "It's not *my* cross . . . I'm only looking after it for somebody . . . Er, will you let me down if he comes back?" Of such grammatical lapses are wondrous heresies serendipitously made.

## The Feaster from the Stars:

### The History of Yzduggor the Eremite

by Lin Carter

#### I.

**T**he Lord Vooth Raluorn, a member of the minor nobility of Hyperborea and twenty-ninth hereditary high constable of Commoriom, succeeded to his inheritance at an unusually premature age, when his father, an inveterate huntsman, succumbed to the fangs and claws of one of the lesser dinosauria. As his official duties were largely ceremonial, Vooth Raluorn enjoyed both the leisure and the income to indulge in his principal enthusiasm, which was the perusal of antique grimoires and the mastery of the arts of wizardry. In this hobby, he was assisted, albeit posthumously, by his grandsire, for the twenty-seventh hereditary high constable had been unremitting in his persecution of the interdicted cultus of the demon Tsathoggua and his loathly ilk, and his tireless persecutions had resulted in the accumulation of an enviable library of sorcerous tomes.

His leisure thus divided between scholarly pursuits and the lascivious pleasures of his rank, Vooth Raluorn luxuriated in the best of both the intellectual and the voluptuous spheres, and from these studies and pleasures he was but infrequently roused by the call of his constabulary duties. One such occasion took place early in the reign of Queen Luthomné: a conventicle of demon-worshippers having been discovered in the southernmost suburb of the capital, Vooth Raluorn was forced to extricate himself from the embrace of his leman, the supple-limbed and sable-tressed Ysabbau, in order to respond to the call of duty.

The demon-worshippers, it seemed, had ensconced themselves in an abandoned manse which reared its terraces on the esplanade of the Yrautrom canal, where they engaged furtively in their unlawful rituals during those seasons of the year when the star Algol is in the ascendant. Accompanying the constabulary troop, in order to lend the legality of his office to their nocturnal raid, Vooth Raluorn was



among the first to gain entry to the semi-ruinous edifice, and while the robed celebrants were bound and searched, he examined with interest the altar-like tablestone which stood at the centremost portion of the vault in which they had conducted their liturgical blasphemies. It was strewn with a number of interesting ritual objects, unique among these being a singularly abhorrent eidolon hewn from glinting obsidian, which depicted a swag-bellied and corpulent entity with bat-like wings and the splay-footed hind-legs of a monstrous toad. Face it had none, save for a grisly beard of slithering tentacles which obtruded from the frontal portions of its repellently mis-shapen skull.

Before accompanying his raiding-party and their prisoners to the nearest gaol, Vooth Raluorn revoltedly shattered the eidolon to ringing shards with the bronze-shod maul of his office.

This action, as it eventuated, was exceedingly unwise. Returning at length to the arms of his concubine, the high constable found himself unable to rekindle the fiery ardour he had known earlier on that memorable evening, and became increasingly aware of a curious mixture of listlessness and uneasy excitation which neither the honeyed lips of Ysabbau nor the bitter lees of the winecup could seemingly assuage.

Nightly thereafter were the dreams of Vooth Raluorn made hideous by an umbral apparition of menacing aspect which resembled in every detail the repellent idol he had so imprudently riven asunder. None of the wizardly volumes in the library of his grand-sire served to render again wholesome his slumbers, and even though Vooth Raluorn dared employ the redoubtable exorcisms of Pnom, at first the Lesser and then in turn the Greater, he found no means whereby to extirpate the shadowy and obscene apparition from his dreams.

With despair and more than considerable trepidation, Vooth Raluorn at length consulted those of his colleagues in the Art Sorcerous with whom his relations were mutually friendly. One such, a saintly septuagenarian yclept Zongis Furalor, succeeded in identifying the cult-object as an image wrought in the likeness of a demonic entity whose name among men was Zvilpogghua; so obscure was the repute of this demon, that Vooth Raluorn had never heretofore encountered aught concerning him in the grimoires and testaments

available for his perusal, but Zongis Furalor abstracted from his folios a painted likeness of the demon which the high constable shudderingly recognized as identical with the shadow-shape which had for nights rendered his dreams unspeakably noxious.

Alas, his wizardly colleague either knew little concerning the demon or refused to impart his knowledge thereof; he had, however, a word of advice for the hapless Vooth Raluorn. It seemed that the cult which had worshipped Zvilpogghua (until such time as the surviving members of the conventicle had perished by impalement, due to the swift justice of Queen Luthomné's ecclesiastical courts) had formerly counted among their number a renegade named Yzduggor, who, for whatever reason, had quitted their body some years ago, to take up the life of a penitent eremite among the steeps of the black Eiglophian Mountains. Of the wise Yzduggor, whom the wizards of Commorion held in the highest repute, it was rumored that he, as a former devotee of the obsolete and interdicted cultus of Zvilpogghua, was privy to the sacerdotal lore of that entity, and moreover, that Zvilpogghua, as firstborn of the spawn of dreaded Tsathoggua, begotten by the Black Thing upon a female entity named Shathak on far and frozen Yaksh the seventh world, was a demonic personage of the most primordial lineage, and very greatly to be feared.

Thereupon, and without dalliance, did the dream-haunted Vooth Raluorn forthwith eloin to the Eiglophians, in search of the remote and secluded dwelling of this Yzduggor.

## II.

In these central regions of the continent, the land grew wild and perilous, and it was only prudent of the high constable to venture thither accompanied by two stout guards of his retinue, Yanur and Tsangth. They journeyed, clad in garments of saurian-leather with accouterments of bronze, and both warriors bristled with blades and barbs, for fear of the furry and prehuman Voormis who haunted the peaks, to say nothing of the monstrous catobleps of the mires.

Indeed, the unlucky Tsangth fell prey to the scythe-clawed catobleps during their traversal of a swampy region, and the doughty Yanur perished in combat with the furtive Voormis, leaving the young noble with naught to depend on save his own wizardry and

the strength of his adamantine scimitar, whose tang was sunk in a grip carved from mastodonic ivory.

Alone and unaided did Vooth Raluorn assail the glassy scarps of volcanic obsidian, the scoriac cliffs of time-riven basalt, avoiding the fumaroles and crevasses wherein might well lurk not only the savage Voormis, but the cockatrices and basilisks rumored to favor such darksome lairs.

Above him as he toiled upwards towards the cell of the repentant eremite, the cloudless blue ascended to a zenith of flawless sapphire. With difficulty, he made safe crossing of beds of black lava like motionless rivers of stony knives, and, entering upon a scruffy stand of gnarled junipers, which meagerly flourished from patches of fetid black loam, he entered a narrow cleft between vast, tumbled blocks of levin-shattered basaltic boulders, huge as the toy blocks abandoned by the careless hands of Titan-children.

Through this winding and tenebrous labyrinth he went, finding himself at last upon a flat and level tableland where a tongue of rock thrust out over a vertiginous and bottomless abyss. Thereupon he spied a hovel whose walls were made of boardings hewn from Jurassic conifers, roofed over by the palm-like fronds of cycads. Before this miserable hut, upon a bed of sanguine coals, a cauldron of black iron steamed and bubbled.

And crouched upon the door-stoop, he spied a gaunt and wretched figure, mummy-thin to the point of emaciation, wrinkled flesh umber of hue between patches of ancient filth, wearing naught but the reeking hide of a Voormis knotted about skeletal loins. With a friendly halloo, the high constable approached the eremite and addressed him by name. But to this friendly greeting, the lean hermit returned no reply, not even deigning to recognize the approach of a fellow-human. Thin lips revealing all-but-toothless gums, where yet remained the discolored stump of a worn fang or two, mumbling prayers or adjurations in a hoarse and croaking voice, the eremite continued at his devotions, ignoring the very presence of the young noble, and all the while with talon-thin fingers he counted the beads of an uncouth rosary seemingly fashioned from human knuckle-bones.

At length, his devotions concluded, Yzduggor, for it was in sooth he, granted his supplicant the benison of a sour glance of unwelcome from yellow eyes bleared with rheum. Undaunted, Vooth Raluorn

opened his leathern wallet and produced those gifts he had hopefully assumed one so long sequestered in this wilderness, far from the habitation of men, might covet above all else: dried meats, sweet jellies, ripe swamp-fruits, a fat black bottle of fire-hearted brandy from Uzuldaroum, and a bag of fragrant snuff. One by one he laid these offerings before the bare, and bony, and very dirty, feet of the eremite.

His choices proved apt and quite welcome, for the claw-like hands snatched and tore at the luscious delicacies, and while Yzduggor guzzled and slobbered in the most disgusting of manners, the young wizard explained the reason which had prompted this visit and implored the assistance of the former devotee of Zvilpogghua.

His appetite appeased, the eremite at length yielded grudging reply to his entreaties, and ere long did the young Commorian learn from Yzduggor's reluctant lips that presently Zvilpogghua resided on far and frozen Abbith, a world circumambient about the green star Algol, and may be called down to this world by his worshippers during those months of the year when the constellation Perseus is in the heavens, whereupon it is his grisly wont to feed upon the flesh and to drink the blood of men, wherefore is he known to sorcerers as the Feaster from the Stars.

"Very malign and unforgiving is Zvilpogghua," quoth Yzduggor in harsh and ruminative tones to the young wizard, "and beware lest you incur his wrath or ire, for he is wise and old and cunning, and not of a charitable nature."

Therefollowing, he advised his visitor to do thus-and-so which might avert the vengeance of the Son of Tsathoggua. "Or might not," added the hermit with an enigmatic chuckle.

\* \* \*

His return from the Eiglophian range was more difficult and hazardous than had been the way hither, lacking his two stalwart guards. Vooth Raluorn was forced to lone battle against the beasts of forest and swamp, with his wizardry and his swordsmanship, and fortunately he came out of each contest the victor. Returning home to the ancient house of his ancestors, he dispatched pages and servitors to purchase the requisites for the formula recommended by the eremite.

This involved considerable expense, as it required rare spices, costly perfumes, expensive chemicals, dangerous narcotics, and such valuable admixtures as powdered dust of opals and the tears of the hippogriff; fortunately for his coffers, Vooth Raluorn was enabled to procure several of these constituents at cost, as his closest relative, his nephew and heir, Nungis Avargomon, had been reduced by poverty to trading in rare substances required by wizards.

With all ready to hand, the sun westering, Perseus in the ascendant and Algol a fervent eye of green fire in the firmament, the young wizard repaired to a hilltop in the precincts athwart his manse, hitherto occupied only by tombs and sepulchres, and prepared to exorcise forever the demonic entity whose disapproval he had, however accidentally, incurred.

He traced the circles and built the fire and cast thereinto the required substances. Vapors occulted the moon's cold eye, but Algol glared burningly down upon the scene. With cold globules of perspiration bedewing his furrowed brow, Vooth Raluorn intoned the versicles recommended by the hermit. A silence fell upon the gloom-enshrouded eminence; the wind died; cold stars leered down from above.

*A black shadow descended.*

Swag-bellied, toad-like, with bat-wings and splayed, webbed feet it was; entirely lacking in forelimbs, the head featureless, a writhing mass of tentacles or feelers, the obscene black shape swept down on the huddled, shrieking form on the headland, and bore it aloft in webbed claws. Nor was it ever again seen by mortal men.

\* \* \*

And far to the south, beyond jungle and swamp, foothills and mountains, on a spar of jutting rock where stood a crude hovel, a gaunt and famished hermit grovelled before a crude image.

"Yet one more offering, Lord Zvilpogghua," the mummy-thin hermit whined. "I eliminated one precious ingredient from the formula, to thy power and glory. Grant me forgiveness for having deserted thy coventicle: there will be other offerings, I vow . . ."

And, months later, in Commoriom to the north, a certain impoverished scion of the lesser nobility, one Nungis Avargomon, was delighted beyond belief to learn that he was declared by the courts to

be the sole and complete heir of the missing Vooth Raluorn, and became possessor of the ancestral estate and inheritor of the thirtieth high constablership of Commoriom.

And all that he had done was to cheat on the powdered opals. \*

## About "The Green Decay"

Lovecraft allows us an intriguing glimpse into the pages of the *Book of Eibon* as he conceived it in the Hazel Heald revision "The Man of Stone," when the Wizard Whateley analog Mad Dan Morris considers his options for revenging himself upon his unfaithful wife and her lover. He briefly toys with inflicting something called the Green Decay on them, but finally picks some other hellish recipe from an odd page inserted into the book, like favorite recipes tipped into Gramma's cookbook. But what was the Green Decay? A ritual, a voodoo hex, a spell. What follows is an etiological myth, a type of legend ubiquitous in ancient lore and scripture.

An etiology is a story supplied, long after the fact, to provide an explanation for some puzzling ceremony, kosher law, holy place, whatever. A typical ritual etiology from the Bible is the story of Jacob wrestling with the river god Jabbock (Genesis 32:24–32). It provides an explanation for two things: why Israelites considered the muscle of the hollow of the thigh to be unclean and why they performed an ancient limping dance before the face of God at the holy site Peniel ("Face of God"). Rituals persist even when their rationale is forgotten (or suppressed by new orthodoxies), so new stories must be told to answer children's questions ("And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say . . ." Exodus 13:14). This story, "The Green Decay," attempts to provide an etiology for the dread ritual mentioned by Lovecraft. It draws upon both the Kabbalah and Gnosticism in the process.

## The Green Decay:

### The History of Nabulus the Wonder-Worker

by Robert M. Price

In the elder days of fair Hyperborea, when all things were possible for that men deemed them so, did one Nabulus win wide acclaim by a feat of thaumaturgy undreamt of and unmatched, even the infusing of warm life into a carving of bronze. And it happened on this wise.

Nabulus, a solitary figure of indeterminate age and arrayed, like any magus, with floor-length braided beard and flowing robes, lacked neither arcane power nor considerable renown. Unlike many wizards before and after him, he neglected not the simple mortals who abode in the settlements nearby, instructing them in such simple marvels of science as he deemed them capable of mastering, among which were the arts of medicine and irrigation, together with some rudimentary mechanical implements. Weapons he refused to grant, knowing that in this one sphere, increased knowledge made men more like unto the beasts, not less.

For these and many like boons was Nabulus worshipped by the humble of the land, nor did he lack apprentices drawn from among those astute enough to grasp that it is superior knowledge, and not divine fiat, which masters nature's secrets. By patient instruction and issuance of judicious challenges did Nabulus test his pupils' resources, for he knew that even wizards must one day perish, and he was desirous that knowledge not expire with him.

Yet for all his benefactions and the gratitude of his people, Great Nabulus suffered a loneliness rendered the more grievous by reason of the very veneration in which he was held. For no man seeketh lightly to befriend a living god, and as such was he regarded. True, he did hold converse with extradimensional entities who regarded him somewhat more as a peer, but such fellowship held little of common human warmth. And most of all did Nabulus pine for the sweetness of the female.

Now the path of the mage is a solitary one, requiring the seeker to keep the strictest oath of chaste celibacy, lest his life-force flow into the wide and undistinguished river of mundane mortality. The sorcerer must needs apply his begetting desire unto ethereal and ectoplasmic works, and to expend one's energies in the pleasures of the flesh is to bind oneself to the way of all the earth. Even so had mighty Nabulus thought long ago to have cast out every sentimental pang for the gentler sex. But of late did his mind more and more repair to a forbidden notion: would not his triumphs be much the sweeter if he possessed a heart's companion with whom to share them? Was this too great a boon, in return for his many sacrifices? And might there not be some apt way to sate his longing, meet unto a wizard?

Upon the matter did Nabulus ponder much, turning a silent answer to those among his pupils with sufficient wits to detect his consternation. At length he arrived at a solution and charged his servants and apprentices to leave him undisturbed in his laboratory till his latest work should be fulfilled. Of his disciples he would require the assistance only of the eldest, Aimoth the Acolyte, who should attend his supine form as his spirit vaulted high into the ultratelluric Zone of the Colossi, that akashic realm of eternal primotypes of which, Atlantean savants teach, all earthly things are material mirrorings.

Venturing thus into the dimension of pure essence, he resolved to capture a direct vision of the Eternal Female, the Divine Wisdom, for his own companion, then return with her to solid earth. His devotion to such a mate would be a love more celestial than the empyrean heavens, and no mere coupling of human breedingstock.

Nabulus lay upon a straw mat spread within a chalk pentagram of many hues, having placed at his head a full-sized brazen statue of a naked woman, flawless in every point. The mage had straightly instructed the youth Aimoth what he must do to aid in the ritual ascent. Many times he circumnavigated the mandala, uttering words of ancient Senzar and forming elaborate patterns with hand-held banners and veils in a prescribed order. All these were aids to his master's meditations. The apprentice showed his skill in a flawless performing of the rite.

Of the astral journey Nabulus would thereafter vouchsafe little, but it was soon known that he had not returned alone from his expedition into arcane realms. The Acolyte Aimoth had finished his share

in the task and at length fell into a sound slumber, a natural concomitant of one's presence at an epiphany of the Other. But, he averred afterward, when he awoke it was to behold his master cradling the naked, statuesque form, for whom he requested his young assistant to fetch a robe, for the metallic homuncula forsooth had taken on living vitality. Great Nabulus had succeeded in causing the ultramundane Female Archetype to enter into a prepared vessel. Seeing her thus living and vivacious, the youth Aimoth at once found his code of chaste impassivity a great vexation.

The feat of Nabulus the Wonder-Worker spread swiftly, both among his sorcerous brethren and among the common people. The latter rejoiced in their simple, good-hearted way, while the former took in the news with astonishment and some perturbation. For, though none sought to belittle the phenomenal magnitude of their colleague's feat, they liked not the notion of his casting aside so basic a tenet of the wizardly code as celibacy.

For his part, Nabulus deemed himself in no wise to have infringed on the ancient ways of the magi, as he sought naught but the spiritual love of a noble and chaste goddess. Besides, he liked not the hypocrisy of some of his detractors who were widely known to cavort with succulent succubi, keeping within the letter of the ancient law only by reason that their affections were lavished upon beings with no true flesh.

Alas, there were others of Nabulus' great household whose intentions were not so pure as his. For one evening, Nabulus having taken to his bed in exhaustion after a greatly taxing feat of exorcism in the village below, Aimoth the Acolyte, he who had of late found it more and more burdensome to pursue his studies with a single mind, chanced to espy the heart-shaking beauty of Nabulus' mate, the fair Akhamot, as she stood at the railing of the balcony gazing down upon the countryside of a world of matter to which she was still mostly a stranger. Aimoth waxed bold to approach his mistress and to speak.

"Of a truth did my master capture the very essence of beauty and bring it back to our poor earth, the which is scarce worthy of thy charms, my lady."

The Lady Akhamot craned her sleek neck a few inches to face the impertinent youth. But she did not rebuke the unaccustomed

forwardness, that an underling and a youth should speak uninvited to a goddess. For in truth she did regard him with silent mouth and wide, awaiting eyes. Little was she accustomed to the ways of mortals, so far from ordinary mortality was her mate Nabulus.

Emboldened that she had not at once rebuffed him, Aimoth advanced to further outrages, mayhap misapprehending her silence. Nor did she resist when the lustful youth abruptly grasped her beautiful form and ravished her perfect mouth and breast with hot kisses. Even so she did not thrust him from her, though her bronze-born strength was sufficient to the need, for she yet observed events in pure puzzlement. All was new to her as noble Nabulus had not laid warm hand upon her form.

Akhamot's rounded body had been fashioned from molten bronze, forsooth, but now it was flesh, and flesh, too, hath a molten fire. The profaner Aimoth knew little of the alchemical art, but he did know how to awaken the flame within his mistress, and ere long she was returning his passion measure for measure. And no great distance away the cuckolded Nabulus slept his sleep.

Weeks and months passed on, and from his love did Nabulus detect no sign of evasion nor of deception, for truly all she did was done in naïve innocence. Naught would she have kept back from Nabulus, had not Aimoth the betrayer warned her, with some cheap deceit, not to speak of it. But, being a vain and foolish fellow, Aimoth himself showed no similar discretion, boasting in secret, as he believed, of his conquest to some fellow apprentices, and even to a few of the household servants.

Not the lightest of Aimoth's sins was that his boastings fired the latent lusts of the other youths, yet new to the discipline of chastity, and many became corrupted in mind. And so the betrayer became the betrayed, for in no great space of days, several of his fellow-pupils had applied unto their mistress and enjoyed the same forbidden intercourse with her. For once ignited, her carnal fire, being archetypically perfect, could not be quenched.

How these degeneracies at length reached the ears of the cuckold Nabulus is not known, though there is no mystery to it. He required no scrying crystal to learn what all else knew, down to the lowliest milk-maid. Deeply did he grieve for the betrayal of his love and trust, but more for the defilement of the heavenly purity of

Akhamot. She was too noble for the world nor could any act of hers be done with wickedness, but with Nabulus' tricky former apprentices, now traducers, it was another story. And, most unfortunate for them, Nabulus was by no means above the human lust for vengeance.

Naïve he might have been, indeed, very nearly so naïve as his Akhamot, but an utter fool he was not. So he planned a plan and continued in seeming obliviousness, making no one the wiser. What he did at last was to weaken, day by day, the binding spell that held the sky-born spirit of beautiful Akhamot captive to the material vessel into which he had contained it, so that little by little the cord linking soul to body was played out longer and longer. To her lovers was the process but dimly perceived as a slow lessening of her fleshly suppleness and a gradual ebbing of the tide of her ardor. But at first the decline was scarcely to be noticed. Nabulus would by this means at length unfetter her spirit and send it aloft again to that realm of pure possibility from whence he had unlawfully seized it.

But that alone was not his plan. If he had sinned in overpassing the bounds between the worlds, his iniquity was light when weighed against that of his betrayers. For their doom's sake did he prolong the process. They must not suspect their awful plight till much too late, and to this end did the bitter Nabulus apply a second conjure, a mighty apotrope to turn away, for a time, the desultory effects of Akhamot's decline and to send them instead upon those who dallied with her, quite in the manner of the savage Voormi shamans and their hexes.

Thus, while fair Akhamot appeared to grow no worse, her suitors all alike commenced to mark a queer stiffness of the joints, a worrisome heaviness of limb, and a dismaying sluggishness of digestion. Akhamot seemed to have recovered all her vigor, but the wretched Aimoth and the rest sank deeper into deadening paralysis. And yet would they have traded much to retain even this sorry state, for as the weeks progressed, their very flesh did crumble away most loathsomely into patches of seeming verdigris, until at length naught remained of them but greasy piles of noxious green detritus.

The servants in the house of Nabulus the Wonder-Worker stolidly set about disposing of the heaps of filth the color of jealousy, but never were they apprised of the true cause of these astonishments, as, about

the same time, the chief steward discovered the loss of both his master and his mistress. The mortal body of the wizard was found on his laboratory floor, by the looks of it, in the midst of an experiment that had gone wrong. But of the lady Akhamot there survived not a trace, nothing in fact but a curious life-like bronze statue of her. \*

## Book Two

Episodes of Eibon of Mhu Thulan

### About "The Utmost Abomination"

Some critics have maintained that Lin Carter's "The Utmost Abomination" (*Weird Tales*, Fall 1973) pretty much adopts the plot of Smith's "The Double Shadow" wholesale. Carter countered: "this opinion . . . always baffles me, because I did not copy the plot of 'The Double Shadow.' What I did was to make the prose my model for 'Abomination,' pretending that Smith had written it at the same time. The only other similarity I notice between the two is that both involve a writing left over from the pre-Valusian serpent-people. But the serpent-race is simply part of Smith's Hyperborean apparatus, after all, and to touch upon that element is only natural and proper" ("A Response," p. 33).

Another point at which the story has been criticized has to do with the way Eibon freaks out with snakeophobia and blasts his erstwhile mentor with a handy can of Raid. I think this criticism misses a subtlety implied in the early mention of Zylac's wrinkled skin and yellow eyes. The eye color serves to clinch the fact of his identity at the last, precisely as in Lovecraft's "The Lurking Fear," but there is something else happening. The odd fact that Zylac should have yellow eyes from the start recalls Robert E. Howard's "The Children of the Night," in which the character Ketrick bears the taint of the Mongol-Turanian blood of Machen's pre-Celtic Little People. Howard calls them "snake"-like, "reptilian," and Ketrick's identifying racial stigma is his *yellow* eyes. Realizing this, the narrator leaps upon him to eradicate this vestige of the hereditary enemy of his own race. The enmity is explicitly portrayed as instinctual, Darwinian, short-circuiting rational thought and civilized conventions. Eibon's ruthless extermination proceeds from the same source, as it is just as clear in the Hyperborean tales that the serpent-men are the dire enemies of humanity, and the very existence of the former is a threat that cannot go unchallenged.

The serpentine trinity of Yig, Han, and Byatis (the second and third being Robert Bloch's never-developed creations) are said in this tale never to have been worshipped among human beings. This hardly comports with Lovecraft's "The Mound," but, again, such contradictions are what we expect in "ancient" legendry, right? Yig is the subject of a surprising number of stories. For more on Byatis, see Ramsey Campbell's "The Room in the Castle" (in *The Inhabitant of the Lake and Less Welcome Tenants*, Arkham House 1964; *Cold Print*, Scream Press 1985; Grafton and TOR Books 1987; 2nd ed. Headline Books 1993) as well as my own "The



Beard of Byatis" in Scott David Aniolowski's anthology *Made in Goatswood*.

## The Utmost Abomination

by Clark Ashton Smith and Lin Carter

**M**y name is Eibon, the son of Milaab, the son of Uori. In the city of Iqqua was I born, in the four-and-thirtieth year of the reign of King Xactura, which monarch my father served as keeper of the archives as had his father before him. This office should doubtless have devolved upon me in my turn, but the inscrutable fates decreed otherwise, and the fortunes of our house lapsed into desuetude and my hapless father was driven into lonely exile and an early grave through the malefice of the fanatic and inquisitorial priests who served the goddess Yhoundeh.

The temporal authority of this hierarchy was in the ascendant in Iqqua, for the king thereof, grown decrepit and senile with the passage of years, had fallen under the sway of the archpontiff, whose eloquent oratory had inflamed the senescent monarch to the persecution of all those whom were deemed heretical. My father had incurred the ire of this high-priest by reason of his innocent and antiquarian researches into the interdicted ceremonials of Tsathoggua, an obscure divinity whose worship had flourished in former cycles but which was now extinct. The zealots who serve Yhoundeh regard this godling as an abomination and had long since succeeded in extirpating all traces of his loathed cult within the borders of those territories whereover King Xactura held suzerainty.

Thus orphaned in my extreme youth, I was fortunate to become apprenticed to a magician of immense and fabulous renown named Zylac, whose pentagonal house of black gneiss—later to become my own by heritance—rose atop a desolate headland overlooking the shores of the boreal sea. Here I felt myself secure from any persecutions the inquisitors of Iqqua might wish to wreak upon the only child of the heretical archivist, for as yet the priesthood exerted no dominance over the bleak moors and solitary crags of Mhu Thulan, of whose barren and secluded fastnesses my master and I were at this time the sole inhabitants.

This Zylac the archimage was of tall and imposing stature, tending to gauntness. His flesh, hued a sallow umber, was meshed with

innumerable fine wrinkles, for his vigour was supranormally prolonged beyond the measure of years commonly accorded to the ordinary run of humankind. Bearded like a patriarch, his saturnine visage was wise and sombre, and his brilliant and piercing eyes, of an unusual yellow pigmentation, were penetrating in the extreme. In demeanor he was affable and serene but aloof, and his kindness towards me was unwonted, for in common with most thaumaturgists he held himself apart from the company of his fellow men and dwelt among the desolate wastes, preferring the communion of transmundane spirits and the unearthly denizens of remote spheres to that of men.

But in his capacity as supreme archivist, my father had oftentimes accommodated the archimage by procuring for his usage certain rare scrolls of precious volumes or obscure codices of elder lore. Wherefore, in acquiescing to my proffer of apprenticeship, the savant Zylac may be said to have but made his recompense for many past favors.

Now the profound and preternatural attainments of Zylac had won for the archimage the commingled envy and respect of his colleagues who practiced the arts of goety in those more populous realms meridional to his own; and for which superior magistry he was most generally deemed pre-eminent among the magicians of Hyperborea. Under his patient tutelage I pondered many a fulvous scroll of pterodactyl-parchment whereon the prehistoric mages of immemorial Mu had indited the most abstruse of demon-wrested formulae.

Far into the night, by the sallow luminance of tall tapers of corpse-tallow, I perused ivory plates retrieved from the paths of advancing glaciers in forgotten Thule, from whose blood-writ runes I learnt a frightful and blasphemous lore thought to have perished with the lapse of aeons. From hieroglyphic bricks of baked red clay, fetched from the trop isles of Antillia, whereon barbaric shamans had preserved their antique and else-forgotten rituals, I mastered the suppressed litanies of the Old Ones.

At length my mentor opened to me the sealed chronicles of those penumbral and mythic civilizations which had flourished innumerable epochs before the advent of man. Shudderingly I explored the elder theurgies of the befurred and quasi-human Voormis who had, in anterior cycles, celebrated with quaint and grotesque ceremonies

that same Tsathoggua for the study of whose neglected liturgies my hapless parent had suffered the fatal wrath of the hierophant.

As well, I pored over the primordial tablets of bright and imperishable metal whereon vertical columns of strange cuneiform were incised as sharply as if etched with the blades of adamantine pens dipped in a mordant venom. Hereupon, my master gravely informed me, were preserved against the decay of geological eras the occult wisdom of the pre-human serpent-people, whose forgotten continent was reft asunder by volcanic cataclysm and sunken into the abyss indeterminable ages before the land of Hyperborea emerged from the primal ooze.

Upon the magical sciences of this evanished species, in particular, my master had long lavished his most profound studies; for it was his firmest conviction that the serpent-folk had attained to a superior knowledge of the forces which compose the matrix of the Plenum of space and time, and that their mastery of this wisdom had, in very great measure, surpassed the more rudimentary arcana of the semi-beastial Voormis or the antehuman habitants of ultimate and glacier-whelmed Thule.

For innumerable years my mentor had sought out antique inscriptions which dated from the elder aeon of the serpent-race, their cuneate tablets of perdurable metal, their weirdly ophidian eidola and glyph-encarven monoliths. In his gradual acquisition of their science my master admitted to certain insuperable difficulties, foremost among the which was the nigh impossibility of subordinating the preconceptions and inclinations of a merely human cognitive faculty to the cosmical and distinctly alien philosophies of the serpent-people. These barriers to the complete mastery of the ophidian goetia he believed he would in time transcend.

For mine own part, while I willingly repressed my innate revulsion at the reptilian alienage of this lore, and facilitated the experiments of Zylac with every ability at my command, I confess to a profound and instinctive loathing of these ophidians, whose coldly inhuman sentience aroused within my breast a shuddering abhorrence. That they had been votaries of the abominable cultus of Father Yig and dark Han and serpent-bearded Byatis was intrinsic to their racial origins, these dreadful entities having never enjoyed the worship of humans upon this planet.

I cannot rationalize my sense of horror and disgust, but something in their dispassionate and contra-mammalian philosophy awoke a prodigious unease within me, together with disquieting trepidations and certain premonitions of impending dangers I could not with surety detail. These vague and ominous adumbrations I vainly sought to communicate with my mentor, but, in the abstraction and fervour of one whose researches have enticed him beyond the ultimate verge of permissible human knowledge, he shrugged aside my inarticulate forebodings, ascribed them to the superstitions of immaturity, and unwisely persevered in his cabalistic studies.

The natal continent of the ophidian race having succumbed to a convulsion of nature in the remotest aeons of recorded time, the archimage had perforce to search out their remains and records in the jungled depths of the abandoned meridional continent of Thuria. There, where mausoleum-cities of riven stelae and aeon-vanquished fanes lapsed shard by shard into mouldering detritus, he found certain of their eldritch and unwholesomely-reputed ruins coexisting in disquieting proximity with the wreckage of the earliest of human habitations, which were those of the umbrageous and mythical Valusians, an extinct culture some savants theorize as remotely ancestral to our own.

In the eleventh year of my novitiate, the archimage returned from one such solitary expedition into the trackless depths of the Thurian Jungles bearing with him a peculiar artifact fraught with dire and dreadful portent. This object was a repellent and prehistoric volume of archaic cypher, salvaged from the crumbling necropolis of a prediluvian city where for geological epochs it had reposed, sealed in a tabernacle of bronze against the erosion of time.

This codex he displayed before me in a state of intensest excitement, for the ponderous tome, with its cuneiform-indited pages of sheeted metal, bound in the tanned leathern hide of the extinct diplodocus, he believed to be none other than the veritable grimoire or magical testament of the sagacious and celebrated Zloigm, a primal magus of the serpent-race who had been as pre-eminent among the thaumaturgists of his remote and dubious era as was my master among the magicians of our own time, and whose legendary accomplishments in the art of necromancy my master had frequently narrated to me.

Abandoning me to my preordained studies, Zylac carried this primordial manual of sorcery into the innermost adyts of his private apartments and for a period of seven nights and seven days I saw naught of him, as he unwearingly studied the prehuman codex, striving to render the first of the appalling goetic ceremonies it contained from the cryptic cuneiform of the serpent-people into our own tongue. At length emerging from the seclusion of his chamber, my master Zylac announced the success of his endeavours, having achieved—as he then assumed—a tentative but complete transliteration of the initial incantation preserved in the Zloigmatic grimoire.

This litany, it eventuated, was no less than an invocation of the national genius or tutelary demon of the serpent-race itself. Upon the termination of the rite, the karcist could anticipate the actual manifestation *in human form* of this spiritual entity thus conjured from its shadowy bourn in some higher dimension of space, or from whatever recondite and supramundane plane of being it customarily occupied. On this second occasion, I strove yet again to arouse my master's dormant sense of caution, arguing that the full implications of an alien spell of such unusual and unknown usage and highly dubious purpose were far from explicit.

Again, however, his perfervid enthusiasm rendered him oblivious to the arguments of caution. And that night his sealed and private sanctum resounded to the frightful cacophonies of the antique ceremony. With the direst of forebodings, I tried to shut my ears against the mouthings of the uncouth and atrocious vocables of a mode of speech so wholly alien that the human tongue was never shapen to utter its sibilant ululations. But the Zloigmish liturgy wailed on, and perforce I listened albeit, to the verbal abominations.

With dawn my master reappeared, trembling with fatigue, his piercing yellow eyes febrile with exultation, his stamina seemingly unimpaired by the rigors of the nocturnal ordeal. The conjuration, he informed me, had eventuated in failure, and the essence of the ophidian race had declined to accept a human manifestation; but the rash and incautious Zylac remained confident of his ultimate achievement of the visitation. With a more exhaustive scrutiny of the grimoire he had at length isolated a missing factor he now deemed essential to the successful performance of the invocation, and this was a certain

elixir whose recipe he had somehow overlooked during his former perusal of the codex.

It seemed that the necromantic conjurations of the serpent-folk weirdly differed in profound and elemental modes from those ceremonies employed by the merely human magi of more recent civilizations, and that they required the imbibement of rare and curious drugs or potions, through whose ingestion a peculiar condition of narcotically-induced receptivity might be attained. Only in the trance-like state he assumed would result from the usage of this noxious opiate could Zylac expect to perceive the desired visitation or descent of the astral genius of the sentient ophidians, which were else too subtle to be descried by the coarse senses of the flesh.

Again my most urgent and desperate warnings went unheeded-to, and the archimage busied himself among the athanors and thuribles and cucurbits, the bubbling vats and seething crucibles of his alchemic laboratory, preparing a malodorous decoction, the less obscene and hazardous of whose ingredients were the tears of the mandrake-root, the bile of basilisks, the juice of the deathly upastree, the ichor of the elusive and mountain-inhabiting catobleps, and the boiling urine of wyverns. This unspeakably vile liqueur he imprudently drained to the lees upon the very instant of its completion, thereupon retiring into his sanctum to repeat the cacodemoniachal litanies and to await the materialization of the serpent-demon in that condition of narcosis which the grimoire required.

But when the first shafts of dawn ensanguined the topmost tiers of his tower, and he arose from the silken catafalque he employed as his divan, he was pale and wan and downcast of spirit, for again the ritual had terminated in utter failure, and no occult personage had descended into the circle of conjuration during Zylac's tranced and dreamless nocturnal slumbers.

In the days that followed I toiled at the side of my mentor and together we strove to reinterpret with a greater degree of accuracy the archaic characters wherewith the metallic leaves of the prehistoric grimoire were inscribed. Our knowledge of the cypher of the pre-Valusians was imprecise and in certain aspects highly conjectural, and it was to this imperfection in our acquaintance with the ophidian language that my master ascribed the negative results of the invocation and of the narcotic potion. Thus we busied ourselves for a

time in linguistic and grammarian labours both tedious and exacting, but without, however, discovering any key element in either the performance of the ritual or in the preparation of the elixir by which we could account for the failure of the conjuration.

During these shared diurnal labours, I could not refrain from noticing certain tokens of rapidly-advancing physical deterioration in my master's appearance, the which at first I consigned to the rigors of our arduous and unremitting toil. His visage, commonly gaunt and swarthy, became oddly bloated and gradually faded from its customary umber tint to a peculiar glaucous pallor; and the texture of his epidermis, normally supple and elastic, despite his supernaturally-extended longevity, became oddly and disquietingly *roughened and scabrous*, displaying ere long, the stigmata of an unusual squamosity for which no degree of fatigue could account.

A natural reticence forbade my bringing these overly-personal comments on his appearance to the attentions of Zylac himself. But the nauseously greenish pallor of his countenance became distinctly pronounced in time, as did the rugous and scaly condition of his skin.

As well, I soon noted a curious slurring and sibilance in his speech, and a tendency to intone the vowels with a prolonged susurration thoroughly alien to his customary accents. These signs of physical degeneration did not, however, extend to his stance or stride, for therein I observed no slightest impairment of his faculties. Indeed, he seemed to glide about the suites and chambers of the tower with an unwonted suppleness and an almost juvenescent grace, and his very gesture became informed with a *curious pliancy*, a boneless fluidity of motion, which I found as repellent as it was peculiar.

During this interval I began to develop an indescribable revulsion towards his touch. The most casual handclasp or other familiar contact awoke within me a shivering abhorrence which seemed virtually instinctive and which I could neither explain nor pretend to ignore. I soon found myself avoiding his very presence whenever possible, and, as there chanced to befall during this interlude a rare conjunction of the planets Ylidiomph and Cykranosh—by which names the Hyperborean astrologers are wont to term Jupiter and Saturn—the opportunity to evade his company entirely was at hand.

I pled the unusual horoscopic significance of this infrequent planetary configuration required my attentions during the nocturnal

hours, and that, as I would therefore have to slumber through the diurnal periods, my total absence from his side was thus necessitated. Deep in his grammatical studies, the archimage absently gave his permission, and thus dismissed I fled from the discomfort of his proximity with vast relief.

At the terminus of this celestial conjunction, I had no recourse but to rejoin the archimage, but found, to my indescribable relief, that he had taken to locking himself within his sanctum in the interval and no longer required, or even, for that matter, desired, my further assistance.

For many days thereafter I saw him not; but oft I heard, above the interminable turmoil of the waves which drove in shattering billows and seethed in roiling foam about the base of the cliff whereon our residence was builded, the muffled chanting of certain rituals which reverberated from within the sealed portals of his private sanctum. And by night I glimpsed the flaring of sacrificial or invocational fires which flickered within the gothic arches of his narrow windows like the phosphorescence of decay within the dark eye-sockets of a skull. Betimes I thought I scented on the sea-wind the acrid fumes of inexplicable suffumigations blown to my nostrils from his chambers, or sensed the ponderous beating of strange and unseen wings about the topmost tier wherein he resided, which denoted the arrival from distant stars of potent and ultra-telluric genii.

What intrigued and puzzled my baffled cognizance concerning these curious phenomena was that they differed wholly from his former magical ceremonies, which had been devoted solely to the attempted reconstruction of the dire invocation of the elemental spirit of the race of sagacious ophidians. These rites, however, were other in purpose and nature; and amongst the droning of half-heard litanies I thought I recognized certain of the most awesome and rigorous of the famous exorcisms of Pnom, while the odors of incense wafted to me by the howling winds savoured of those several perfumes of antedemonic potency usually employed to repel or to enforce the dismissal of unwanted visitants from the astral or the etheric planes.

It would seem that, for some reason which eluded my comprehension, the entire substance and direction of Zylac's labours had recently altered from an attempt to invoke a certain supernal Presence, to a striving—which soon became frenzied and even hysteric

in its vigour—to *drive hence* some nameless and transmudane entity not only deemed undesirable but apparently dreaded with a violent loathing and terror whose desperate intensity I could not understand, but which awoke within me the most grim and horrible premonitions.

When several days had thus transpired since Zylac had so mysteriously sealed himself from my scrutiny within the seclusion of his adytum, not once emerging therefrom for sustenance or recreation, I summoned up my temerity and rapped upon the portals of his chamber, solicitously inquiring into the condition of his health. Naught but silence came to me from the room beyond—that, and a peculiar and inexplicable *scraping* sound. Reiterating my anxious queries, I succeeded at length in eliciting a reply from within, but to so slurred and sibilant a state had the speech of Zylac decayed during the period just elapsed that it was only through repetition that I managed to comprehend his words, which were a strict admonition to refrain from entrance and to cease disturbing his sorcerous experiments, as he required naught.

And again there came to my hearing that *hideously suggestive* sound of scraping or grating, as of some large and clumsy and rugose bulk slowly and painfully dragging itself over the mosaic-paven floor of the chamber beyond the portal.

It occurred to me then that the bodily degeneracy whose signs I had previously discerned in the countenance and deportment of the archimage had perhaps advanced during his prolonged and furtive avoidance of my presence, and that the degenerative process had mayhap affected his mentality even to the unbalancing of his sanity. Whereupon, disregarding his prohibitions to refrain from entry and to leave him to the privacy he desired—the which were communicated in such a revolting travesty of human speech, with a weirdly *hissing* lingering over the aspirates, as to be no longer recognizably human—I forced asunder the double doors.

I stared down at That which writhed and slithered with horrid and serpentine grace over the tessellated pave, and, with a great cry of unbelieving horror, I shrank from the sight of the Thing—the briefest and most evanescent glimpse of this utmost abomination searing itself for all time upon my palpitating brain. Snatching up a glassy carboy filled with the all-devouring Alkahest, I impulsively emptied its corrosive contents over the nameless abnormality that

writhed and slithered upon its belly; and, with an unearthly and sub-human hissing cry it vanished in the seething and foetid vapours.

And I knew that naught which lived could for an instant endure the baptism of that potent acid; but still I turned and fled from the tall house of black gneiss where it towered atop its cliffy height above the thundering billows of the northern main; and, ignoring the perils implicit in the potential vengeance of the priests of Yhoundeh, I turned my steps to the more wholesome and southerly realms and to the familiar modes of normal human intercourse for a season.

And when, in the fullness of time, I returned to take up residence again in the pentagonal tower which rose on the desolate headland of the ultimate peninsula of Mhu Thulan which now was mine own demesne, and to resume my occult studies, it was with the unshakable determination to eschew forever all practice or perusal of the abhorrent and atrocious rituals of the sentient ophidians of prehuman Valusia . . . remembering that green, bescaled and slimy Thing which had uncoiled across the sill of the inner chamber, lifting towards me from an elongated and undulant neck that wedge-shaped and wholly inhuman cobra-head of horror . . . from beneath whose deformed brow-ridges had gazed so piteously into mine own the unmistakable yellow eyes of Zylac the archimage. \*

## About "Utressor"

Most scriptural books are not the work of a single author, but rather **M** palimpsests containing several successive layers of rewriting and redaction. Subsequent editors and scribes feel obliged to "correct" the text by way of harmonization with other authoritative texts, to add explanatory matter, or to bring the text into conformity with "orthodox" theology as it has developed since the last stage of the text's composition (see Bart Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*). The present text of "Utressor" is a case in point. The kernel of the tale is an extensive synopsis from Clark Ashton Smith's *Black Book*. Smith never got around to writing it up. There is no reason to think Smith intended "Utressor" to have anything to do with Eibon or *The Book of Eibon*, but Lin Carter saw that it would make a good chapter of the *Book*. He had planned to write it up as such but never got around to it. Many years later, Laurence J. Cornford composed a rough draft, and then Richard L. Tierney collaborated on the final version. And the composite authorship of what will appear a seamless garment, as you will see, reflects the very point of the tale itself, though let me reveal no more! He that hath ears, let him hear.

# Utressor

by Clark Ashton Smith, Laurence J. Cornford,  
and Richard L. Tierney

We sought, where unreturning suns descend,  
That shrine and fortress at the world's dark end—  
The raven-circled towers of Utressor.

## I.

After mine hurried departure from the black gneiss house of Zylac the mage, on the shores of Mhu Thulan overlooking the boreal main, I turned my face southward and chose to wander awhile in those warmer and more hospitable lands, passing eventually beyond the realm of King Xactura and even venturing south of the ultimate austral spurs of the Eiglophian Mountains.

Despite the gruesome doom of my mentor Zylac, my thirst for the secrets of the universe was not quenched, albeit now somewhat tempered with caution. During my peregrinations I sought out new mysteries, and in time, after I had wandered for some moon-cycles, I again desired to walk the blustery north and therefore fared up the eastern coast of Hyperborea so as to avoid the city of Iqqua. Upon reaching the port of Cerngoth I ventured upon an inland trek to Oggon-Zhai, which at this time did not lie under the theocratic heel of the priests of the vengeful goddess Yhoundeh.

It was in many-spired Oggon-Zhai that I first encountered the dreamy, fine-featured youth Zaljis, kneeling in contemplative veneration before the obsidian idol within the incense-misted black temple of Zhothaquah. This young but learned scholar of alchemic lore proved to be a kindred seeker after occult gnosis—kindred in soul, yet at the same time an enigma to me. Our mutual interests led us, after a brief acquaintance, into an exciting intellectual rapport and eventually a deep friendship, and yet there remained always some deeper levels of Zaljis' mind which I could never quite fathom.

Zaljis had, it chanced, been seeking information in the ancient texts of temple-hidden lore pertaining to the exact location of age-forgotten Utressor, and had discovered that northward in far Polarion

there lay a valley which some said was ever untouched by snow, shielded from the eyes of mortals by walls of illusion. In this half-fabulous vale lay a wondrous realm wherein were said to dwell wise and long-lived philosophers, and at its heart lay a strange, many-towered shrine ruled over by a mighty archimage. This land, called Utressor by the elders of Polarion, had long ago, before the coming of the inexorable and all-entombing ice sheets to that region, been much frequented by pilgrims. Now, however, no one ventured in that direction, for travel there had at first been ridiculed and warned against by the reigning latter-day cults and was now forbidden entirely.

While Zaljis and I excitedly exchanged information, I remembered that one of the prophecies of the White Sybil had hinted at a way into that valley of eternal spring. Resolved to discover more about this matter, we conversed with old fur trappers who had worked the snows of Polarion in their youth, and consulted the ancient maps of the master cartographer Gnymon. So it was that, combining our forces and our knowledge, we finally set out northward in search of that age-hidden vale and its half-fabulous shrine.

For many days we traveled toward the northern mountains of Zabdamar which held in check the ice and formed a barrier between Mhu Thulan and Polarion. Here an arduous climb ensued and a painful trek along the old traders' trails, after which we found ourselves upon the ice flow which now forms a bridge from Mhu Thulan to the formerly insular Polarion—for, in warmer days the latter had been but part of the boreal archipelago, yet had lain so close to the mainland across a shallow strait that the glaciers had easily sealed the gap, even as the White Sybil had once prophesied. Now, having crossed this rugged expanse of ice, we proceeded to climb upon the plateau of the island itself. It was, we had heard, largely untenanted by man or Voormi, although some maintained that tribes of the hairy Gnophkehs yet dwelt amid its tundra, as did black foxes and snow bears. Most of all, though, we hoped not to encounter the hideous giant snow serpents, dreaded for their legendary ferocity.

Our hopes were doomed, however, for near evening, as high aurorae flowed and shimmered like luminous veils over the gray mountains, a hissing to one side brought us round—to see, hanging directly over us, the wedge-shaped head of one of the hideous white serpents. Spellbound by the auroral glories, we had nearly stumbled

into the lair of the beast! Instantly that head shot out, the great ermine-white body uncoiling after it. I dove to the ground, the heavy padding of my bear-fur wraps fortunately protecting me from the impact, barely avoiding the venom-dripping fangs. Zaljis drew his blade, a streak of bright blue in the arctic air, and slashed at the coarse hair of the serpent's neck as it passed. The keen steel barely bit through the fur to the scales below. I scrambled for my bag, whipped from it a rolled palm leaf in which were wrapped a flammable powder around a magnesium core to which a taper ran; then, while Zaljis nimbly avoided the beast, slashing at it again and again, I hastily uttered a cantrip to make a small flame spring into being at the end of the taper. Rising, I shouted and waved my arms until the titan snake turned my way, fanged mouth menacingly agape, and fixed me with its mesmeric stare. Almost I hesitated, but shook off the hypnotic influence as the monster surged toward me and, with all my strength, hurled the leaf-wrapped bundle deep into its open maw. Again I dove, this time behind a virgin ice mound, and when I rose I saw smoke fuming thickly from the serpent's mouth as it writhed and lashed, while the acrid smell of burning befouled the air.

Even with its scorched innards the creature clung tenaciously to life, but at last it expired. I then cautiously looked into the lair in which it had dwelt—and found, pressed into the smooth ice walls by the body of the serpent, many hundreds of rare gem stones, both topazes and sapphires. These were of little interest to Zaljis and me at the time, however, so we contented ourselves by collecting but a handful of them — more as souvenirs than with any thought of pecuniary gain—and then pressed on.

## II.

At non, through the menacing snow-swirls of an oncoming storm, we saw ahead of us what seemed to be a crack in the world, a luminous gap from which spilled a warm summery sheen, and as we made our way thither we found a curious, shimmering veil of chromatic light overlaying the deathly grays and whites of Polarion. Wordlessly we stood and examined this wonder for awhile. Then, Zaljis reached out and attempted to lay his hand on the luminescent surface to determine whether it was some manner of mirror—but

found only air to obstruct him. This, then, was a portal through that phantom wall into the vale of lost Utressor!

From an icy twilight wasteland we stepped through into an upas-forested vale, as balmy and humid as were ever the austral jungles of Zesh. Immediately we divested ourselves of our coats of bear fur and secreted them near a tree to be recovered on our return.

Ahead over the treetops we saw, half through mist, the towers of Utressor about which many dark birds wheeled, and at this sight our vigor returned and we pressed on apace. Presently a figure, tall and swathed in a brown monkish robe, appeared through the trees walking sedately toward us from the direction of the edifices. The head of this apparition was closely cowed so that the face lay deep in shadow, but the long pale fingers, graceful hands and noble bearing suggested to us a person of high dignity and station.

"Welcome," spoke the robed one in a deep and commanding voice which possessed a vibrant quality I could not quite define. "I am the Mysteriarch and Custodian of Utressor."

"Honored are we to be in thy presence, Wise One," quoth Zaljis; for the Mysteriarch was scarcely unknown to us, being a nigh-legendary entity and even alleged by some to be ageless, preterhuman, possessing supermundane powers.

"Then have ye the happy desire to learn the mysteries of the universe?"

"We have, O Lord of Utressor," said I.

"Then eftsoons ye shall."

So saying, the Mysteriarch turned and walked solemnly back toward the towers. We followed, and as we came through the trees we beheld the ancient glory of Utressor. The complex consisted of a dozen dark-walled fanes and two dozen sky-lancing towers, thin as needles. Almost every cubit of the masonry of the temples was covered with ornate carvings of gods and demons, demigods and heroes, exotic plants and animals both actual and fabulous, all exquisitely captured in stone by some unknown master artisan. But the Mysteriarch passed indifferently by these objects of his everyday life and ascended the steps to one of the eldritch fanes, bringing us eventually to the center of that edifice where there was a cloistered quadrangle open to the sky. In the middle of the cloister was a stone-rimmed well, and to this he led us and signaled that we



should peer in. Yet when we did so we did not see the sky speckled with its circling birds reflected on the shining surface of the water, but the tiny glint of stars in the ultramarine field of cosmic night. The stars were unlike any which I had charted during my astrological studies under Zylac.

"When last I looked," said the Mysteriarch, "the well showed the three suns and six planets of Xiccarph. Yet I perceive that it now points its ever-searching gaze toward Yifne and the dead star of Baalblo."

Even as we fixed our attention upon the scene in the pool, so it seemed to grow closer, and we could see features upon the surface of the planetary orb circling those light and dark suns.

"In time," said our robed guide, "you will learn to direct this image with such refinement that you may read the words from a scroll held in the paws of an inhabitant of one of these other worlds. Here may the secrets of all the physical cosmos be made apparent."

That night Zaljis and I retired to our assigned lamplit quarters with an awe and an exultation that would scarce allow us to sleep. Our quest for cosmic knowledge seemed about to be successfully consummated. Moreover, it appeared that our goetic mentor would be able to devote himself exclusively to our instruction, for so far we had seen no other acolytes—nor, indeed, any other human beings—in all that dark and silent complex of ancient fanes.

### III.

The next day the robed and cowed Mysteriarch led us to a garden whose lush trees and bushes were laden with ripe fruits of many colors and configurations. He took a seat upon a stone bench and watched silently for awhile as Zaljis and I wandered like fascinated children through the verdure. Then he began pointing out to us the various rare plants and calling out their essential names suitable for use in spells and incantations. Anon, when the heat of the day began to wax oppressive and we took refuge under the thick boughs of a tree, he said:

"Eat of the fruit, O Eibon. Eat, O Zaljis."

This seemed to us an excellent suggestion, so we plucked succulent fruit from an overburdened bough and began to eat. Almost at once a curious sensation began to infuse us. We felt, more than heard,

the whispers of the many vegetation spirits who had hitherto existed unsuspected around us, and at the same time we became exquisitely aware of the life-giving warmth of the sun, the cool stirring of the breeze and the moist, comforting enclosure of soil about roots. I shivered as a tiny insect ran across a leaf and nibbled at a corner of it. Here was a whole existence of simple experience which I had not hitherto considered worthy of my attention.

"What is the meaning of this mystery?" I asked our host.

"These fruits confer on the eater the gift of psychic participation in their vegetable life and sentience. As long as one remains a stranger to the day-to-day, moment-to-moment experience of life, how can one master the secrets of that life? This is the meaning of this garden, for a garden is but a model of the world: It has its seasons; it has its deserts and its lakes, its islands and its mountains. Here are predator and prey, zest and pain, life and death."

So our lessons continued. When we awoke the following day to the deep, croaking caws of ravens among the mausolea, the Mysteriarch was standing at our chamber entrance. He beckoned to us, and we followed him through the temple, down cold damp steps to a verdigris-etched bronze grill set into the floor.

"Below lies a maze at whose heart hides a great mystery. But the labyrinth is guarded by a fearful monster and all who enter do so at their dire peril. Do you wish to enter now, or shall I show you a lesser mystery?"

In our youthful enthusiasm we judged that a day spent on a lesser mystery would be a day wasted, and so in unison we demanded of our mentor that he open the gate to the maze forthwith. The Mysteriarch gave one quick, decisive nod of his cowed head and drew from his abundant robes a talisman which glowed with the brightness of a candle but with a steady, unflickering light. This he handed to Zaljis; then, at his mere gaze, the grill swung open and admitted us.

The feeble light of the talisman showed a dank and umbrous stone dungeon whose coal-black walls glistened with water and algae. The air had the taint of an animal den or the malodorous burrows of the subhuman Voormis. Suppressing our sudden misgivings, we hurried forward, using our knowledge of mazes to choose our path, theorizing that it were best to advance as far as we might towards the

center ere the beast scented us. Yet an encounter, we knew, was inevitable, and all too soon we became aware of growlings and shufflings from the tunnels about us. Such were the echoic properties of the place that we could not rightly tell from whence the sounds came, and for a moment we gazed about in fearful uncertainty; then we moved as one resolutely deeper into the winding maze.

The noises of pursuit now unmistakably grew closer, and we turned lest the beast fall upon us from behind. As we did so, bracing ourselves to repel the thing, a huge and vague shape visibly detached itself from the darkness. It was as inky as tar, an animated shadow, yet hulking so large that it could move through the tunnels only by stooping. Its flesh had the quality of fur sleeked down with liquid pitch; from its oily maw great razor fangs protruded, and at the end of its simian arms stubby fingers ended in long, poisonous-looking claws.

As the thing drew close I cast a prepared spell, loosing a bolt of elemental energy which smote the creature thunderously. Fire bloomed in an aureole about the beast, confining it in its tracks. Then, with a barrage of such bolts, Zaljis and I soon blasted the oily flesh from the thing until it was nothing but bones.

With the monstrous troglodyte thus vanquished with seeming ease, we advanced toward the center of the maze and suddenly found ourselves in a circular chamber some forty ells in diameter, possessing a high domed ceiling of lapis lazuli and parchment-thin metallic leaves. Nine other entrances opened from the room into darkness. Set in the wall between each two entrances were four upright alcoves only a few cubits deep and with circular arches about six cubits above each threshold, and in each of these, save for two, stood a strange antique sarcophagus cameoed with runes and symbols. In the center of the room stood a low stone dais on which a thirty-ninth sarcophagus lay, its lid slightly ajar.

Secing that we were in no immediate fear for our lives, yet surrounded by many exits from which another beast might come upon us, we paused here and looked cautiously about. For my part, I was a bit uneasy at the fact that there were exactly *two* vacancies among the ambient sarcophagus-niches. Then, when we stepped up to the central sarcophagus I was shocked to see that it bore on its lid the name EIBON written in Aklo characters. What was the meaning of

*this?* Was my own mortality to be flaunted as a wonder and mystery? I gripped the lid and raised it. The coffin was filled to the brim with a bituminous tarry fluid. Presumably this was some form of archaic preservative. But then I thought of that oily black monster of the maze, and in the same instant the tar in the sarcophagus began to bubble and shift. Instantly I realized the truth and slammed down the coffin lid, pressing my full weight upon it lest the thing escape. The mass pressed forcefully against the lid and I called to Zaljis to quickly bind round the sarcophagus with the coil of rope he fortunately carried. This he did, and at last I climbed off the lid and stepped back, shaken, watching the black substance begin to slip slowly from beneath the hair-thin gap between lid and coffin . . .

"Zaljis," I gasped, "let us hasten from this place! The monster of the maze and the great secret of the maze are one and the same. For that substance in the coffin, I now realize, is one of the spawn of Zhothaquah, such as have for aeons dwelt in subterranean N'kai. Earlier it clothed and animated the skeleton of a former unfortunate with its own dark flesh. Here, then, is the lesson of this labyrinth: that not all mysteries are as they seem and not all quests are safely accomplished by the most obvious means. Let us be gone. We have perilously won our wisdom."

#### IV.

**O**n the morrow, the Custodian of Utressor was again waiting the moment we awoke and ushered us to a crumbling mausoleum about which an ancient vine entwined. Again the aged doors parted at our mere approach with a grumbling protest against years of accumulated grit and rust.

"Eibon, this tomb is for you. Zaljis, yours is the neighboring one. Herein ye twain shall remain for one whole day. What may hap to ye in that time shall depend upon thine openness to gnosis. Resist not what befalls."

At first I was cautious of the chamber, rendered utterly black by the closing of the tomb door behind me. I feared that I might be sharing it with some animate cadaver or hungry ghoulish being; but, upon feeling my way about its confines, I found that it was utterly untenanted. Its coolness after the heat of the morning sun worked a subtle influence upon me, and I soon lay down on the dry soil to rest.

As I drifted on the edge of sleep, I seemed to feel my soul departing gently from my reposing body. . . .

I became aware of a subtle dissolution of my flesh as, at the same time, I also became more than usually aware of my breathing and of the blood coursing through my veins. Then my body seemed to lose all weight and to separate into its constituent tissues and organs, as if I had been painlessly dissected by some master surgeon. Even these sundered parts then subdivided into the fibres which composed muscle and flesh, each hair, even, falling from its pore and then dissolving into dust, until I was a mere mist of motes hovering in loose association, a vapor which the merest wind would have dissipated. I saw the primal particles from which all things are made, spinning around each other like clouds of infinitesimal planets and constellations. I felt the tug of one particle against the next, felt flashes of energy spark from one particle to another. Here I was—my substance could perhaps be a chair or a fox or a loaf of leavened bread, and I would not know the difference. But it was not; in that moment, this conglomerate of innumerable particles happened to be Eibon of Mhu Thulan. It might be that they would form other alliances once I was deceased, but for now I knew more surely than ever I had before that I was Eibon and that just *this* was my rightful time and place in the ever-changing cosmos.

Suddenly I felt, rather than heard, a mighty knocking which seemed to be a summons back to corporeal flesh, and as I reassembled myself and sat up the tomb door creaked opened and the Mysteriarch informed me that I had spent a full day here and that my test was over. I at first doubted him, for it seemed to me that very little time had passed, but as I emerged the sight of the setting sun assured me that it was indeed as he had said.

\* \* \*

On what proved to be our final day at Utressor the Mysteriarch brought us to a hall of tall mirrors, each in an ornate frame. I had heard of such mirrors before: the sailors of Cerngoth told tales they had heard of the Mirrors of Tuzun Thune, which were employed by a wizard of that name in the land of Valusia on the Thurian Continent. Slowly we strolled from mirror to mirror, looking at each image as we moved. The glass surfaces had a misty quality to them

which demanded that the viewer look long to see what was reflected in their depths, and as we peered intently into one the image changed subtly, so that I was no longer looking at my own reflection but the form of Zaljis. Without quite knowing why, I suspected that Zaljis was likewise beholding my own spare frame. Yet, the sensation was more than merely the one observing the other, as we had every day since our first meeting, for I noticed that Zaljis' talisman to Zhothaquah was reversed. I was looking at a reflection of myself in Zaljis' body, I knew, and knew also that this realization was somehow related to my experience and insight in the tomb. In the reflection of the mirrors the personalities of any two beholders were evidently capable of being transposed or exchanged.

To inhabit another's mortal flesh was as curious a sensation as any that had been offered me by the Mysteriarch. But I soon realized with some disquiet that I might easily choose to reside permanently in this new body if I did not soon return, and so I again concentrated on my own form. . . .

Then, at the moment of returning from this exchange with Zaljis, I saw for the first time the uncowed visage of the Mysteriarch reflected behind me in the glass. It was the face of a god with strong aquiline features, lofty brow, weary eyelids beneath which glowed soul-piercing dark eyes, and the pointed, long-lobed ears of a superhuman. It was a countenance in which was reflected an equal measure of weariness, irony, and the mockery of a god grown tired of his own miracles—a thaumaturgist who mocks and derides both himself and the initiates of his mysteries and marvels of the universe. A being for whom oblivion remained the only, but unattainable, desire.

For a moment I thought that perhaps this half-divine being had been gaining some sad pleasure from sharing with us our naïve wonder. For these past few days we had perhaps enriched a melancholy life grown stultified by aeons of cosmic knowledge and experience.

I knew now that I could not remain in Utressor, the pet of this master of cosmic legerdemain. I would not perform more tricks to relieve the ennui of a being grown too wise, who would place us both in danger, knowing the outcome but desiring to feel our sensations of fear and wonder. Even as I thought these things, the Mysteriarch knew those very thoughts; he pulled up his cowl, turned and solemnly withdrew a few paces.

I heard the ravens croaking as they circled the dark towers of Utressor. Birds of wisdom circling hallowed places? Or, birds of doom drawn hither by the scent of spiritual death . . . ?

"We have learned all that we may here, O Eibon," spoke Zaljis as if he, too, could read the thoughts in the head he had so recently vacated. Then, turning to our cowed mentor: "Return us, O venerable Demiurge, to our rightful world."

The shrouded figure raised his hand slowly and intoned: "Let it be even so, then."

Suddenly I found myself standing by that tree where Zaljis and I had earlier ensconced our bear-fur cloaks—only now, there was but one cloak, mine! Nor was Zaljis any longer with me. And yet, I realized instantly, he *was* still with me—*inside* me, in fact, as inseparably a part of me as mine own psyche, and I knew then that it had always been so. Then I began to feel the chill of boreal winds and, turning, saw that the towers of Utressor were slowly fading from sight, heard the croaks of the dark birds circling them growing dimmer and dimmer. . . .

Stooping, I snatched up my cloak and donned it, feeling with some satisfaction the hard rasp of the several gems I had taken from the serpent den. At least I would not be without means when I returned to the outer world.

So it came about that I made my way back across the perilous snows of Polarion and traveled southward, ever southward, choosing to continue my wanderings throughout many lands, seeking dark wisdom wherever it might be found. But never again did I seek for that land of Utressor. Perhaps by now the ice has taken it. Or, perhaps it was never more than the fancy of that sad demigod—and I too, and all this world, but his idle daydreams.

Or, conversely, is he and all else in this unstable and uncertain world but the result of mine own vague dreaming . . . ?

For, on passing again though the city of Oggon-Zhai I discovered that no one there remembered Zaljis at all, nor could I find in the archives any evidence whatsoever that he had ever dwelt there.

I have often wondered on those days, while I have sat alone with my scrolls as the chill winds rattled my casement and the waves crashed and gnawed at the cliff beneath my tower. One day that cliff, this tower and all else will be gone and forgotten. I still hope,

however, that some meaning beyond these ephemeral things may be found in existence. Had I not so hoped, I would long ago have given up my hunt for knowledge; aye, on the day I left Utressor forever. But oft I wonder still if all things are ultimately but illusions, created by the fancies of a sardonic and aeon-weary demiurge. \*

## About "Annotations for the Book of Night"

Here is another story written to fill in a niche in Lin Carter's projected edition of the *Book of Eibon*. It has grown from a bare title left by Clark Ashton Smith. Carter would have used the title, but he left no notes as to the turn things might take, nor even what might be meant by "The Book of Night." But Smith left another unused title which seemed possibly related or relatable, "The Noctuary of Vizooranos." That seemed an apt candidate for the eponymous *Book of Night*. But then how might "annotations" be central to the story? Who would have made them, and to what effect? Let's find out.

## Annotations for the Book of Night

by Robert M. Price

Here is the true account of the rediscovery and restoration of the long lost *Noctuary of Vizooranos*, an ancient parchment of great sorcerous potency by the testimony of the wizards of olden times. And though I, Eibon of Mhu Thulan, may justly claim credit for the exhumation of the scroll, the restoration was even the labor of another, for which I mean now to relate as a wholesome caution to whatsoever scribes may in future take in hand the transcription of these, mine own testaments.

Long had I searched among the libraries of what palaces and monasteries I might gain access to, and moreover inquired among my necromantic colleagues, in quest of a half-fabulous volume of occult lore, even the aforesaid scroll of the mighty Vizooranos, mage of elder days. Little was known of the exact contents of the writing, but legend held that the scroll bore revelations of a kind so black that Vizooranos must needs write them by night shrouded in the utter dark of the New Moon, with not a candle burning in the house. These oracles did he receive from certain devils of the Outer Darkness, the which did send his pen curling and swerving in all manner of eldritch hieratic scripts, yet supplying withal the arcane sentience wherewith to unriddle the same when he should peruse the screed in the dawn of wholesome daylight.

It was whispered that the revelations contained in this *Noctuary of Vizooranos* had been wrung from the fraying lips of damned souls dipped screaming into the magma pits of the Eleven Scarlet Hells of ancient myth. Such dread oracles were said to concern the secrets of infernal torture and how they might be wrought upon still living flesh, as well as a catechism of the inconceivable lecheries and blasphemies for which these damned had been consigned to the boiling lakes.

For a time I set my search aside, for that no success appeared forthcoming, and other, more urgent tasks did press upon me. And so it was quite by chance some years later that, in the process of collating

divers manuscripts treating of the deposition of wizardly relics, I found a clue. It is not exceptional that two or three sites may claim to be the final resting place of a sorcerer or sage of renown; nor is it rare for all these asseverations to have some merit, as the bones and possessions of such men are often divided and distributed among their followers, who build shrines in divers places. But when it chanceth that two shrines should each aver to guard the whole of a great one's mortal bequests, the scholar must suspect either pious fraud or simple error. Haply may it eventuate that two ancient ones of similar names or epithets become confused as the memories of men, even of attendant priests, do fade. And thus had I identified twain mausolea professing to house the complete remains of the mage Lithondriel of Uzuldaroum. Some inner voice whispered unto me that more might lie at the root of the conundrum than mere error and misclassifying. And so I set out on pilgrimage to one site, then the other.

At the first shrine I besought the priests of the crypt to permit me to apply certain tests to the entombed remains of the supposed Lithondriel, and at this they seemed somewhat affronted, as if they themselves feared it might not be the venerable Lithondriel in truth who lay within. And should such prove out, they liked not the prospect of the fact being noised abroad and their livelihood withering even as the body within the tomb, whomsoever's it might be. But with appropriate pledges of silence I persuaded them, and much were they relieved when the trial did corroborate the tradition of their shrine. This left me the task of determining who might repose in the second tomb, as it were, of Lithondriel, and to this I now hastened, seeking out the second crypt in a village not far from the former.

Myself now being well apprised that the occupant of this second mausoleum was anyone but the dead Lithondriel, I was not such a fool to vouchsafe these tidings to the custodians of that fane, but rather repeated those things I had formerly told the priests of, as it chanced, the true Lithondriel. These, too, gave assent with no great difficulty, and, with their help did I contrive to open the great sarcophagus.

The supine form of the one within was even one with the dust of the ages, the merest shards of brittle bone remaining unto him. But there in the sacred casket lay a metal tube, which I knew for the repository of a tight-rolled scroll! The corroded cartouche thereof gave me to think that my olden quest had borne fruit at last,

for if my widening eyes deceived their master not, the faded glyphs gave forth the name Vizooranos. Claiming this treasure as the price of my service, I hesitated not in solemnly assuring the anxious priests that it was indeed the earthly detritus of the master sage Lithondriel who drowsed away the ages under their gentle care, and I was on my way again.

Having returned again to mine own tower of solitude, I made to open the cylinder, having first dismissed the guardian demons who, long since bored with their duties, were glad enough to depart and put up no resistance. Removing the cap, I tapped the antipodal end and gingerly took hold of the parchment roll within. Sanding away the waxen seal, I set about unfurling the scroll, mindful of its brittleness that it not shatter like the fallen egg of an archaeopteryx.

But to my dismay I saw how the parchment book lay already in tatters, veritably riddled with lacunae. Manifestly, someone had sought not so much to preserve the *Noctuary* of the wizard Vizooranos as to inter its forlorn remains along with those of its owner! It had suffered ruinous damage before being deposited with the corpse of the mage. I was no stranger to ancient and fragmentary texts, and I knew that with ingenuity and intuition, the clever scribe might make ample progress toward restoring what had been lost.

And yet what held true for ancient records and annals might not avail for such a text as this terrible *Book of Night*, for that the matters treated of in the parchment required adamant certainty. One dared not trust to approximation and conjecture when in their zone of indeterminacy lay the difference between commanding a fiend and being devoured horribly by the same. One likes not to wager his immortal essence upon a vowel point.

The hour was late, and mine eyes grew red and sore from much scrutiny by the green flame of my tallow, so I snuffed it out and retired. Mayhap, methought me, I should approach the task upon the morrow with clearer mind and quicker wits.

And even so it seemed to eventuate, for, having completed my mundane chores, from which even a wizard be not exempt altogether, such as feeding mine basilisk, reinforcing anew the warding charms containing the seven headache demons which would miserably afflict me if I kept them not at bay thus wise, and suchlike, I returned to the tattered scroll of Vizooranos, and I rubbed mine eyes

in astonishment. Had senility in truth crept up so stealthily? For before me lay a scroll noticeably less decrepit than it had seemed the preceding night! But, faugh!, I chided myself and my errant imagination: it could be naught else than a mischievous memory which had overmagnified the plight. In the light of mid-morn the difficulty simply appeared less daunting to a refreshed spirit, and that was doubtless the whole truth of it.

Though the text was after all fearfully torn and decomposed, it did seem plainer to my gaze that these rare hieroglyphs concealed blasphemies which ancient rumor had not greatly exaggerated. A weight deposited itself upon the shoulders of my soul, and I commenced to musing that mayhap it were not so grave a tragedy as I had deemed it for such secrets as the mad Vizooranos had set down here to have perished. Almost I hoped that the remainder of the text might refuse to yield up its enigmas, though not once did I make to leave off my task. For knowledge must be preserved, its nature notwithstanding, and any who doth not what he may to prevent its perishing is surely a murderer and rightly so judged.

On the next day of my studies in the *Book of Night of Vizooranos*. I marked again the unmistakable reaugmentation of lost portions of the text, almost as if some scribe had secretly penetrated mine own inner sanctum, bearing with him a more perfect copy, and filled in what was lacking here and there, so that, while much remained in fragments, substantially more might now be read. It was evident to me, reading the newly recovered passages, that by far the blackest and most foul pericopae had been anciently effaced, and that not by chance. And, moreover, though the script be mostly alien to me, I fancied that the scribal hand was somehow familiar. Verily, the mystery of the reparation of the *Noctuary* had become even one with the secrets the text did purport to vouchsafe, though I confess I was no closer to solving the one than the other.

On the fourth day I found more of the missing text had been filled in, and even rents in the very parchment repaired in some wise not apparent. And I went back through those portions I had conjecturally restored. Where once I had thought to find gaps and erasures at crucial junctures, and speculated accordingly, I now found lines of script clearly and boldly legible. Moreover, on comparing mine own notes with the veritable reading of the text, I saw most dreadful

errors which would shortly have spelled my doom had I proceeded to conjure on the basis of them.

As I pored over the scroll, what had formerly teased me became plain at last: the writing in which the corrections had been made was precisely like unto mine own! With this I did set quill and ink pot aside, resolving to wait till the next dawn when mayhap the scroll should have been altogether restored to its first state, whether by mine own hand or another's.

And forsooth, by the bulging belly of Zhothaquah, it was! I sat, slowly and full of awe, before my reading stand, the fully intact *Noctuary of Vizooranos* spread out before me. Here was the fruit of long searching, won through despite the naysaying of rivals and brethren alike, who averred the *Book of Night* no longer lay anywhere upon this terrestrial disk. Now it was mine to delve into the disquieting secrets of mummified devils and aeon-perished nephilim. But was it in truth a cup of poisoned wine I sought to quaff, however sweet its vinous taste? For a time I dared not let mine eyes sink to the Gorgonic sight that might forever damn them to look upon steaming infernos of bubbling gore.

And softly did a whisper intrude upon my fear. Without articulate sound it bade me trace with pointing finger, as if another guided it (and I bethought me of the manner in which the scroll had first been transcribed by devilish afflatus), till I came upon a necromantic litany, even the frightful Disgorging of the Pit. As I read with silent trepidation its loathsome vocables, I began to sense the gathering of ectoplasmic atoms and knew that so potent was the invocation that it had no need of being enunciated aloud! By doing naught but reproducing the words in my mind I had caused them to work their wizardry!

I staggered back, upsetting my heavy chair, as a Being materialized before me. Having never seen his likeness, I nonetheless knew the visage for that of old Vizooranos himself, smiling evilly.

A Voice issued forth, investing all things nearby with an ultrapolular chill. "Thou hast freed me, O Eibon, with the commendable zeal of thine erudition. Such was mine own in my day that I plumbed depths undreamt of before or since in gaining the ultimate knowledge, for all that it did forever blast my soul. Yet I have abided, all these ages, trapped in my mortal dust with the goaler's key almost

in reach. For the spell thou hast read ought to have called me forth, save that the dead cannot raise himself, and my disciples to whom I had entrusted the *Book* proved unworthy, letting it fall prey both to natural desuetude and to the violations of the faint-hearted and the inquisitor, till at last the potency of the thing was lost. But thou hast found the *Noctuary* and, bearing it away, thou hast borne me with thee also, and now I have caused thee to rise each night unknowing and restore what was lost, so that in the end, the spell might be there to be read again, as thou hast read just now, unto the freeing of my essence from this mortal sphere."

His translucent form began to drift away as mist in the face of the rising sun, but before it was entirely dispersed, of a sudden, I had scooped up the scroll and held it out to the vanishing spectre. And thus was the *Noctuary of Vizooranos* restored unto its owner and unto the Elder Night from whence it had first come. And I count myself in no wise poorer for the loss. \*

## About "The Burrower Beneath"

Lin Carter had first decided to write a *Book of Eibon* story for each of the five titles Lovecraft had coined for the stories of Robert Blake, the anti-hero of "The Haunter of the Dark." These were "The Stairs in the Crypt," "The Feaster from the Stars," "In the Vale of Pnath," "Shaggai," and "The Burrower Beneath." He must have realized Blake would not have been writing fictitious chapters of *Eibon!* One might imagine it would be more appropriate to supply stories such as young Blake might have written, and these would have been pastiches of the young Robert Bloch, upon whom the Blake character (as everyone now knows) was based.

But in another sense there was no need even for this, since at least three of "Blake's" stories were friendly spoofs of actual stories Bloch had written. "The Stairs in the Crypt" is surely Bloch's "The Grinning Ghoul" crossed with "The Secret in the Crypt," while Blake's "The Feaster from the Stars" is equally obviously Bloch's "The Shambler from the Stars" (itself a title Lovecraft suggested). "The Burrower Beneath" corresponds to "The Blasphemy Beneath," an early tale which Bloch had sent to Lovecraft for comment. It seems to have been an early draft of "The Druidic Doom." But the substitution of "Burrower" for "Blasphemy" and the title "In the Vale [i.e., Valley] of Pnath" reflect playful references in Lovecraft's letters to Bloch during this period, when he pretended to be penning his epistles in the pitted terrain of Pnath at the Hour of the Rearing of the Sand-Burrowers. But Lin Carter probably realized that, to carry through the gag thoroughly, one would simply have to paraphrase Bloch's real tales just as Lovecraft had paraphrased their titles. And what was the point of that? Not willing to let good, juicy titles go to waste, Lin figured he might as well use them for a different sort of story altogether. Hence the *Eibon* chapters.

Of the Blake titles, one in particular has garnered quite a bit of interest. There have been, by my reckoning, no less than four versions of "The Burrower Beneath." The first to reach print was Brian Lumley's novel *The Burrowers Beneath* (DAW Books, 1974). The Burrower was Shudde-M'ell, navigator of the sinuses of the earth's crust.

Fritz Leiber had toyed with the title, too. "As you know, I *was* briefly caught up in the Mythos Game . . . At the same time I wrote four or five thousand words of something I called 'The Lovecraftian Story'—really an effort to write 'The Burrower Beneath' mentioned in 'Haunter'" (to Edward Paul Berglund, July 7, 1974). Berglund urged him to finish the story but pointed out that Lumley had already used the title, so Leiber switched to "The Tunneler Below," then finally to "The Terror from the Depths" (April 13, 1975). The story appeared in Berglund's 1976 DAW anthology *Disciples of Cthulhu* and again in James Turner's revised edition of



the Arkham House *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos* (1990). Leiber's Burrower was a nameless "winged worm."

But in a letter to Berglund dated December 29, 1972, Lin Carter had already laid claim to the title, mentioning a novella he then had in draft called "The Burrower Beneath." I am convinced that this is what he later expanded into "The Winfield Heritage." I have restored what I believe to be a very close approximation of the original Carter "The Burrower Beneath," with an introduction explaining these matters at greater length, in *Cthulhu Cultus* # 6. Carter's Burrower would have been loathsome Ubb, Father of Worms. But Carter, too, abandoned the title once Lumley notified him of the impending appearance of his own *Burrowers Beneath*.

Carter could not have intended his modern-day "novella" version of "The Burrower Beneath" to serve as a chapter of the *Book of Eibon*, but a list of contents for his projected edition of *Eibon* still showed a slot for "The Burrower Beneath." Was he then planning to write an Eibonic version after all? On the assumption that he was, and to fill the gap in any case, I have undertaken to supply what Lin might have written.

## The Burrower Beneath

by Robert M. Price

It is said that immortality is for the gods alone, and with this precept I, even Eibon of Mhu Thulan, am devoutly inclined to agree. But it was not always thus with me. For in earlier days, ere I learned it were possible to grow weary of life, I dared to know if perchance mortal man might attain unto the immortal durance of the gods. Nor was I daunted in this quest, save only by the fulfillment thereof. But I speak in paradoxes and had best retrace my steps that my meaning may become manifest, for 'tis a lesson I would deposit here for the pondering of others.

It was in the first flower of my mastery of the esoteric arts that I did injudiciously reckon myself capable of any marvel I might conceive if only the proper technique be found, nor lacked I the boldness to fancy I might find or fashion the means to accomplish any task I set upon. Moreover, well knew I that much was discovered by the elder magi which has since been suffered to lapse into forgetful oblivion by those of too timid a disposition to pay the price of a glimpse Beyond. But I was possessed of no such qualms; hence I dared barter with certain unclean fiends, paying a fee I like not to name, for the recovery of long-interdicted screeds penned by devils in inks of molten blood.

Of these mayhap the foulest blasphemies lurked in that papyrus called *The Black Rituals of Koth-Serapis*, an enchanter dire who vexed the earth in the lost days of Acheron. For it was whispered in the banned and shunned circles of nether adepts that the unholy Koth-Serapis had contrived forever to cheat death. And, foolish novice that I was, despite my scholarly and thaumaturgical achievements, I determined to uncover the sand-blown path trod in elder days by dark Koth-Serapis. My reasoning was thuswise: if in truth that mage had attained unto the very secret of unending life, it must still, even with passage of uncounted centuries, be feasible for one such as myself to make contact with him. That the attempt should not prove easy deterred me not a whit, and thus did I embark, defying the sage

cautions of brother wizards my elder in years and much my superior in wisdom.

None of my sorcerous brethren had any clue to aid me had they wished to do so. Thus I knew I should have to seek what help I might through other, less dependable channels. I reasoned that, of all beings, the ones likeliest apprised of the whereabouts of a man immortal would be those whom mortality had already claimed. Whether from envy or not, the dead might be supposed to know somewhat of one who had cheated the fate that had overtaken them, in like manner to earthly prisoners who lionize their cleverer brethren who have escaped the dungeon that still holds the rest of them. But I must needs seek the spirit of one who shared the earth with the ancient Koth-Serapis, and one who himself knew sufficient of the necromantic arts to guide me unto my hoped-for mentor.

At length I fastened upon the far-distant isle of Serendip for my most profitable goal, for that it did constitute one of the last-remaining fragments of sundered Lemuria, that primal continent from the dawn age of the earth, from whence the primordial Dragon Kings did reign before the fabled Mahathongoya did drive them forth, as is written in the hoary pages of the *Upa-Puranas*, after which they did take refuge, some in Valusia, some in mine own land of Hyperborea. There I hoped to find the ruins of the much-legended Tomb of Shahrajah, greatest of the magi of the pre-Cataclysmic age.

So I did book passage on a slaver's vessel embarking from the southern harbors of Atlantis and headed east. The adventures I encountered on the voyage may be told in their own place, but I must needs be on with my tale. Suffice it that I contrived, once or twice, to lure up from the deep in the lightless hours of New Moon some few of the finny children of Dagon, who assured me that the Temple of Shahrajah still stood and told me of the most auspicious route there.

After many days our ship reached the shores of the island I sought, and I bade my companions farewell. Most sorry were they to lose me, too, for that my command of certain elemental spirits had more than once proved valuable in providing fair weather for sailing, and they should henceforth have to rely upon Nature's caprices as hitherto.

In the wave-beaten kingdom of Serendip I was cordially received by the ruler of the island who kindly put at my disposal all manner of provisions I should require for this last earthly stage of my quest. By way of gratitude I enlivened the evening's feasting with a number of simple conjurer's tricks which all present received with unbridled childish delight.

Early on the morrow, accompanied by a small party of dusky-skinned bearers, who did not cease to remark to one another upon my sun-paled Northern coloration, I set forth into the jungled recesses of the island. The unaccustomed heat I kept at bay by use of a cantrip learned from the dwarves of Hyperborea who spend much time amid subterranean magmic fires forging rune-inscribed arthame-swords like the one that even now slapped my hip as I walked.

After we had covered some distance amid the gorgeous jungle luxuriance, the like of which is not to be found in my own land, I directed my companions to depart from the well-trod pathways known to them, keeping to that course vouchsafed me by the scaly Dagonites. But at this suggestion, they were sore afraid, as the proposed detours must take us through certain zones anciently forbidden them under pain of dire retribution. I assured them they need not fear so long as they remained close in my presence, but some begged leave to camp where they were and await my return, seeing that I professed not to fear aught that might eventuate. For a primitive people their logic was quite sound, even though they might exercise it in the interest of base superstition, and in the end I insisted that they all linger there together and await me. In truth, the ruined fame of the Lemurian mage lay not much farther away, and I gained the goal before the sun had set. In the slanting rays of the tropical sun I came upon what remained of the elder temple, which old scrolls made both mausoleum to the great wizard and altar of sacrifice unto his spirit. The weight of history bore heavily upon me as I stood in the presence of a mighty shadow from the epic past. Almost I felt that no ceremony should be needful, so powerfully did I feel his eldritch presence. Nonetheless I hastened to observe the ancient protocol prescribed for such solemn occasions, drawing forth from my baggage the brazen tripod for the offering of incense. Slowly I incanted the Great Necromantic Invocation and breathed deep the oracular fumes. The sense of time slipped from me and at some point

I was made aware of a Personage standing before me, radiant with a strange penumbral fire.

"Why hast thou disturbed my rest, O man of the latter days?"

I fell to my knees before the mighty apparition and averted my gaze from the brow which seemed a darksome thundercloud. "Great Lord Shahrajah! I bid thee hear me out! I have come a great distance . . ."

"I have come a greater!"

"Yea, Lord, forgive my effrontery. I pray thee, tell me how I may find the undying Koth-Serapis!" In all this I dared not look into the face of That One I had dared summon.

"Thou wouldst call up a dead mage to find a living devil? His is a path no sane mind shall follow. I give thee this warning, O Eibon. Moreover, I shall grant thy boon, for that I see thou hast not in thee to take that which thou seekest once thou find it. And if the blasphemy of Koth-Serapis hath again become a lure unto mankind, it may be profitable for the truth of it to be revealed."

I returned to my faithful bearers, offering my regrets for having delayed them overlong, though in truth I had no sense for how much time had transpired. They gazed at me as at one mad, saying how I had left them but moments before, and that scarce had they sat to wait for me. We turned and made our way back to the palace of the prince of the island in uneasy silence. I kept my counsel all the long months of my journeying back to the Hyperborean shores, assured now that my path lay clear before me, yet with a foreboding sense that the fulfillment of my desire would nevertheless not satisfy me. Little had I yet learned from the enigmatic oracle of the shade of Shahrajah. But all would soon become clear.

Back among the familiar surroundings of mine own sorcerous sanctum where fuelless flames and bubbling potions surrounded me with comforting warmth, I made ready again, with a weariness of soul, to take flight to a distant shore, though this time it be one supramundane, for that Shahrajah's revelation indicated no less a destination than the dread Vale of Pnath, the which I had not yet visited so early in my magical career.

I made ready the needful preparations and in no time floated freely above my fleshly vessel. Freed thus from the blinders of the flesh, I now saw all manner of hidden things which circulate invisibly

about us every hour, and which it is a mercy to have hidden from us. Likewise, a glance over to the stairwell leading from my chamber revealed what daylight obscured, even the onyx staircase of seven thousand steps to the Underworld of Deep Dendo.

Down these I rapidly made my way until I saw stretching before me the baleful expanse of the Vale of Pnath, a wasteland like unto the silvered sands of the Moon, where evil Mnomquah holdeth foul sway. I liked not what I saw and knew that even in mine astral form I might meet with untold dangers in such a place. Like a drifting spectre I passed over the desolate and much-cratered face of Pnath, seeking a certain Pit, named in suppressed legends as the Abyss of Noth, whereunto the cryptic whispers of dead Shahrajah had directed me. I lingered a moment upon the Precipice of Noth to gaze at the fearful spectacle outstretched in the shifting infra-red vapors below me. For there lay none other than the blighted Necropolis of Nug-Hathoth of which the ancient lore-masters record naught that is wholesome.

I must needs take care to arrive no sooner than the fateful Hour of the Opening of the Under Burrows, the which I should know by the noxious Rising of the Black Wind which would bear up unto my ears the terrible gruntings of the dholes as they issued forth in blind fumbblings to commence their charnel feasting. I deemed it best to settle down upon the crest of the upthrust Tower of Narghan, and there to await the emergence of the eyeless slugs from their curiously asymmetrical burrows.

It was the sudden tortured wailing of unseen hounds that heralded the arrival of those unclean Ones whom I awaited. I made ready to descend to the nitrous tunnel mouths below when, of a sudden, there arose before me a jetting column of viscid loathsomeness, the titan form of the greatest of charnel behemoths, fully as tall as that high tower on whose pinnacle I stood! Its face, if such it may be called, betrayed no sign of sentience, its only true feature a sticky and unclean maw which yawned hideously and worked unceasingly, drooling with unspeakable poisons.

Great was my affrighted shock when the thing spoke in human accents! "Name thyself, mortal man, that I may know whom I am about to digest."

"Nay, king of the dholes, thou mayest not feast upon my ectoplasm, as I am not the soul of one dead, but only on a journey, seeking

for nighted wisdom and the mysteries of the worm. In truth, I seek for the undying wizard Koth-Serapis; knowest thou aught concerning him, O Burrower Beneath?"

At this, something perhaps intended as mirth escaped the fanged hole. "And wherefore wouldst thou find that one, O morsel?"

I liked his converse less and less and hoped he might unveil the knowledge I sought before I must endure more of his soul-upheaving stench, which even the senses of the astral body may detect.

"For that legends say he alone of all mortals hath attained unto immortality, and this secret I would know. Now I bid thee in the Bond of Pnath to tell me of the whereabouts of that Koth-Serapis, if indeed thou knowest."

That living pillar of cosmic foulness did commence fairly to quake with uncontrolled hilarity till methought its hideous bulk would shudder asunder.

"Know then that Koth-Serapis the mage learned that in no wise may the flesh of mortals retain a hold upon life forever. But it may yet cheat death by embracing the same the more fully. By force of adamant will may the wizard, if he but maintain the mindfulness thereunto at the moment of death, endure through the defilement of his carcass by the maggot's tongue, till he passeth with the last shred of fleshly sustenance into the conqueror worm, whereupon may he bend the brainless vermin to his will, instructing the very worm that gnaws till he find himself reborn, new and oddly embodied."

Having gained the awful knowledge for which I had dared so much, I turned and fled in the most disgraceful fashion, leaving the mocking laughter of my informant echoing telepathically in my stricken brain. The shocking truth thus revealed to me cut short my journey, and I did start awake back in my chamber in the black tower of Mhu Thulan. Then well did I perceive the wisdom of Shahrajah, that only in learning the secret of immortal durance should I resolve never to pursue it more, and, though I have since not scrupled to prolong my earthly sojourn by certain esoteric means, when death at last does come to claim me, I shall look upon his visage as that of a friend and join him gladsomely. For in the last moment I knew the inconceivable price paid by ancient Koth-Serapis, in that *it was his own towering, maggoty bulk which spoke to me!* ✱

## About "In the Vale of Pnath"

This early Eibon tale (Gerald Page, ed., *Nameless Places*, Arkham House, 1975), along with its predecessor "Shaggai," predates Lin Carter's attempt to ape Smith's style. "In the Vale of Pnath" and "Shaggai" do not . . . resemble Smith's prose. The reason for this is that at the time I wrote those two (at Derleth's request for some short Mythos stuff, commercial or un-) I had no notion that I would eventually write the posthumous collaborations and had made no serious study of Smith's highly individual and baroque style. When these two chapters appear in the eventual book version of the *Book of Eibon*, I intend revising and rewriting them ("A Response," p. 32). Well, that was not to be. I present them here in their original form. "The . . . premise . . . that all these chapters have come from Eibon, we would naively think demands a continuity of style throughout the chapters, i.e., that we see Eibon's hand in every tale. But bear in mind that these are also supposed to be translations into English from sundry elder languages . . . Carter need only claim that different individuals have acted as the translators of various chapters" (Steve Behrends, "The Carter-Smith 'Collaborations,'" in *The Horror of It All: Encrusted Gems from the Crypt of Cthulhu*, p. 115).

"In the Vale of Pnath" is an exercise in hideous hilarity, humor black and broad. Its ghoulish savant Shuggob (a name perhaps suggested by C. S. Lewis's demon Slubgob from *The Screwtape Letters*) reads like a stray character from *The Addams Family*. The terminal revelation of "a living brain" comes right out of Lovecraft's "Out of the Aeons," one of the most influential of HPL's tales on Carter. When I once charged him with merely repeating such items from Lovecraft, he said he was trying to use the same themes in a new way, counting on the reader recognizing their Lovecraftian origin and redolences but hearing them played a new way as in a fugue.

# In the Vale of Pnath

by Lin Carter

Night after night, tall corpse-fat candles burned slowly to the socket in the narrow, pointed windows of my old house of black gneiss on its lonely headland above the northern main, as I studied the wrinkled scrolls of pterodactyl vellum, searching the crabbed and ancient hieratic script for the secret of the Ygthar elixir: but I sought in vain.

Thus had I, the necromancer Eibon, reached an impassé in my studies. The trove of antique scrolls, wherein I had first learned of the remarkable properties of the Ygthar elixir, came from an icelocked and aeon-crumbled tomb in the desolate wastes of Mhu Thulan. This sepulchre and the ancient scrolls it contained were reputedly those of the great Zon Mezzamalech himself, a potent and terrific sorcerer whose thaumaturgical accomplishments were common legendry. This Zon Mezzamalech had flourished in elder and remote cycles, and I can only assume that in his long-forgotten epoch the ingredients, whose subtle admixture lent astounding powers to the elixir, were familiar; while the knowledge thereof had decayed with millennia, and by the dawning of our own benighted era had lapsed from the sapience of we lesser and later-day mages.

With slow and painstaking toil I had one by one deciphered the nature and name of the several curious components of the precious Ygthar; one alone eluded my knowledge, and that was the substance bafflingly referred to by the enigmatic Zon Mezzamalech as *the Glund fluid*. In vain I searched my encyclopedias of enchantment, my dictionaries of demonology, my compendiums of cantrips. Nowhere in the writings of the mightiest magicians of all Hyperborea could I find a single reference to the maddening and elusive Glund fluid. Names evolve from epoch to epoch: common usage obliterates one term, replacing it with a neologism: I was taunted with the chance that the mysterious fluid might lie close to hand, hidden behind a variant cognomen. And I was determined to achieve the secret at any cost.

Fruitlessly I consulted my sorcerous brethren, but they too knew naught of the enigmatic Glund. Through a powerful crystal I queried

those who dwelt on anterior worlds or the planets circumambient about remote stars. From one of these more distant colleagues, a certain Maal Dweb, dominant thaumaturgist of a world known as Xiccarph, I first heard of a deeply-learned sage who dwelt alone in a curious house below the Peaks of Throk. My ultra-telluric colleague was adamant in his contention that if this individual, by name Shuggob, did not possess the secret of the Glund, then it was known to none other in this aeon.

I entertained some reluctance at the thought of journeying to that far-distant and somewhat dubious realm, of which elder texts whisper unhappy things, and of which the praeceptor under whose tutelage my youth had been spent had uttered stern warnings. Alas, had I but paused . . . but lingered, to consult more deeply the librums and folios of my sorcerous archives, ere my rash and impulsive nature drove me thence into the shadowy and repellent Vale of Pnath! But a lust to achieve the final secret of the wondrous elixir impelled me with irresistible force; and I reflected upon the apothegm that a faint heart wins naught.

And thus, by a mode I shudder to recall and shrink from describing in detail, I came to the Seven Hundred Onyx Steps, wheredown I ventured, and to the Gate of Deeper Slumber, wherethrough I passed, and set out through the Enchanted Wood. Cloaked in somber gloom was this ominous wood, where prodigious and malformed oaks twine groping boughs overhead while furtive small unblinking eyes like chip rubies glitter from the depths of the nemoral umbrage at their gnarled and intertangled roots. These woods, I knew, were the haunt of the sly and secretive Zoogs—concerning whom legend whispers naught that is remotely wholesome—and thus an hearty relief was mine when once I had passed therethrough without challenge or obstacle.

By the dim and daemonic flickering of far aurorae (whose vague phosphorescent luminance included nine tints unknown to any telluric spectrum), I at length espied the distant serrations that were, I knew, the fabulous Peaks of Throk. I went by cautious ways now, for these shadowy regions were haunted by obscene and monstrous Things which shambled squealing from my path, driven hence by the potent runes etched by acids distilled from the slobber of basilisks,

wherewith my arthame (or wizard's sword) was rendered repellent to That which dwelleth in these vales.

I went on, across rolling hummocks of beslimed and colorless lichen which crunched into oozy smears beneath the tread of my mastodon-hide sandals. All was utterly black about me now, save for the skyey banners of vaporous illumination which flared and flickered far overhead. The Peaks of Throk rose grey and towering above me now, like a wall builded by mad Titans, and peak by peak loomed against the dark, licked by the faint flames of the fantastic aurora.

In the dimly-litten fields wherethrough my path led me I came at length to a curious cottage, whose thick opaque windows leered from under low roofs like a madman's glazed eyes glaring from beneath a glowering brow. All of grey crumbling stone was the low strange house: of very ancient stone was it builded, dry, powdery, porous, and flaking. For a lawn the old low house drew around it scabby patches of mould and lichen: for hedges it had swollen clumps of hideous and mottled fungi.

The door was a coffin-lid of black, worm-eaten wood, and the door-knob was a rondure of polished white ivory which I knew shudderingly for the skull of a human being.

Natheless, I knocked—and my flesh crawled at the touch of the wet, rotten, coffin-wood—and at length my host welcomed me and bade me enter. This Shuggob was an elderly and gentlemanly ghoul of quiet, scholarly habits, tall and lean, grey-skinned, and somewhat the worse around the nostrils, the eyelids, and the corners of the mouth, for the depredations of maggots. He greeted me with modest words, offering his hand (which was cold and rubbery and terribly strong) and ushering me into his parlour where cold meats that lay carven on a platter and gelid wine in lead goblets made a mild repast, whereof he bade me sate the hunger and the thirst occasioned by my journey hither. But the wine, cold and sluggish, darkly crimson and bescummed, bore resemblance to congealing gore drained from the arteries of a putrifying corpse; and the cutlets of cold white meat, finely textured and delicately crisp, in their curve and contour, might have been sliced from the flanks of human infants; so, restraining a small shudder of revulsion, I declined to sup, and pressed the conversation to the matter of my business.

To my unutterable delight the ghoul quietly acknowledged his familiarity with the elusive fluid of the Glund: in fact, he informed me, he had even at this moment a decoction of the rare liquid brewing in the vaults beneath his ancient low house. He discussed the Glund fluid at some length, but in slurred liquescent syllables whose meaning was most difficult to ascertain, such was the state of decomposition advanced age and a questionable diet had brought him to. I liked not the clammy darkness of the room, the faint creaking of the floor behind my chair, the stench which at intervals arose from the distant cellars; and as the gluttonous, slobbering speech of the ghoul Shuggob droned on I became faint with an eagerness to be gone from this low strange house of ancient stone and from the Vale of Pnath itself. So I did not prolong my stay by requesting him to elucidate those of his remarks which had escaped my understanding, but with some abruptness begged to view the precious fluid.

He led me from the room and through gloom-drenched apartments, cobwebbed with neglect, whose floors were littered with gnawed bones, and raised a trap-door whose mould-encrusted stone slab was loathsomely reminiscent of a tombstone. Down slimy steps into frigid blackness we descended by a curving stair, and all the while there blew unceasingly in our faces a cold wet wind of unspeakable foulness from the unknown depths—the dank breath of the Pit itself.

We came at last into a bare stone vault whose velvet gloom was dimly-litten by the greenish pallor of a ghostly light, a sourceless and unhealthy luminance that was like the phosphorescence of advanced decay.

By this disgusting glow I perceived something like a huge round cauldron of slick white stone, which held cupped and quivering a swollen and monstrous bloated thing of grey jellied slime. What it was I knew not, but it was loathsome to the sight: glistening, moist, pulsating with hidden life. And the rounded surface of it was a mass of wrinkled, twisting, worm-like convolutions, which all the while leaked a cold, oily slime whose stench was unbearably vile. I saw that *cruel hooked knives* were thrust in the thing and that the unceasing irritation they caused occasioned the slow dribble of the slimy leakage.

Mastering my revulsion, I leaned closer to the quaking mass of swollen matter, while the ghoul Shuggob in his slurred and slobbering speech informed me that the oily trickle I observed was none other than that fluid wherewith the testaments of Zon Mezzamalech claimed the Ygthar elixir could only be made.

Closer and closer to the bloated grey thing whose wrinkled and pulsating surface oozed repulsive ichor I leaned, and suddenly by the ghostly faint light I thought I glimpsed—could it be true?—O Lord Tsathoggua!—I screamed, sickened to the very roots of my soul; screamed, and fled madly up that coiling stair and from that horrible low house in the Vale of Pnath; and in all of the innumerable cycles of my sorcerously-prolonged existence from that hour to this, never again have I dared visit the dubious and disquieting shadowy fields of the Vale of Pnath; and to this hour my dreams are made hideous by my memories of *that* which I glimpsed in the dim green phosphorescence of ultimate and abominable decay . . . of that naked, glistening, swollen, obscene *living brain*—tortured beyond endurance and not able ever to die—whose vile and slimy effluxion is the lost secret ingredient of the horrible elixir which I now shall never brew, and of whose remarkable properties I shall now never be certain. \*

## About "Shaggai"

It is tempting to speculate whether both "Shaggai" (August Derleth, ed., *Dark Things*, Arkham House, 1971) and "In the Vale of Pnath" (see below) might have been inspired by Clark Ashton Smith's idea for a story, never developed: "Hamilton, consarn him, has ruined an idea somewhat similar to one that I had in mind, for a tale to be called 'The Lunar Brain,' based on the notion that there is a vast living brain in the center of the Moon" (letter to Lovecraft, March 1932). Or maybe Carter was inspired by the Edmond Hamilton story Smith refers to, "The Earth-Brain" (*Weird Tales*, April 1932). In any case, "In the Vale of Pnath" features a climactic revelation of "a living brain," while "Shaggai" has a vast living creature inside an alien world.

This last theme, that of a gargantuan worm gnawing away at the bowels of an alien planet, also occurs in Carter's "The Dreams in the House of Weir" (in *The Xothic Legend Cycle*) and the poem "visions from Yaddith" (see *The Shub-Niggurath Cycle*), where it was derived in turn from Lovecraft's portion of the Price-Lovecraft collaboration "Through the Gates of the Silver Key." The question I am left asking about "Shaggai" is, given the premise of the story, why was this tale not titled "The Burrower Beneath"?

# Shaggai

by Lin Carter

We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of a black sea of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far.

—H. P. Lovecraft

**Editor's Note:** In regard to the following account, Lin Carter writes—doubtless with tongue firmly in cheek—"I have recently obtained a copy of the Gaspard du Nord translation of the *Eibon* (by a transaction so shuddersome that I will spare you the details), and in comparing the text against other versions, have noted to my surprise that even the Atlantean high-priest, Klarkash-Ton, dared not include the following episode in his redaction of the Commoriom myth-cycle; hence I have rendered it from the antique French as follows."

Thrice had I, the necromancer Eibon, summoned the demon Pharol from his remote ultra-cosmic gulfs beyond angled space, and thrice had he materialized within the sealed and subterranean chamber, and each time had he assumed the form of a black, fanged, cycloptic thing with arms like swaying serpents.

Each time had I demanded of Pharol the meaning of that obscure and cryptic phrase in the Pnakotic Manuscripts—that haunting and baffling enigma whose secret had so long eluded me—"Beware lest thou call up That which is greater than thyself; remember the Doom of those who summoned *the Worm that Gnaws in the Night*."

Until I had achieved the solution of this puzzling and cryptic text I knew that I could progress no farther in my mastery of the Pnakotic lore, hence my impatience when the demon Pharol proved obdurate when he replied each time to my query with the same oblique and meaningless reference—"Of that you must question the Dweller in the Pyramid."

In vain did I threaten the recalcitrant Pharol with the Yggrr incantation and the Nn'gao elixir and even with the awful power of the Scarlet Sign, but to no avail. To each threat he reiterated the same maddening reply whose mockery tormented me—

"Of that you must question the Dweller in the Pyramid."

Wearying at length of his obduracy I broke the conjurational circle and permitted the black, fanged, cycloptic thing to return to its own seething and sub-dimensional chaos, while I threw myself into my goetic labours in a vain effort to find surcease from the mystery which taunted and eluded my comprehension. But the riddle of Pharol continued to haunt my brain and I could find no relief in my sterile and fruitless studies. Until I found the secret to that enigma in the cryptic pages of the Pnakotic Manuscripts, I could no more advance in my quest for the Ultimate Magisterium. At length I resolved to search out this Dweller in the Pyramid—whomever or whatever it might be!—and toward that end I sought the seclusion of my chamber, wherein I brewed a decoction of the Black Lotus, which I steeped in the bile of mantichores and the spittle of ghouls taken by stealth in nighted gulfs below the Peaks of Throk, and, focusing my consciousness upon the abhorrent and dreaded Sign of Koth, I detached my astral body from its mansion of clay and hurled my being into infinity.

My house of black gneiss dwindled beneath me on its headland above the northern main; the boreal peninsula of Mhu Thulan shrank; in a flashing instant the hoary and primal continent of Hyperborea itself grew small; and in another instant the very planet had become lost in the star-strewn immensitudes.

I traveled first to nighted Yuggoth on the rim, and there, in a noxious citadel above a chasm of scarlet and slithering horrors, I consulted briefly with a potent archimage, one of the crustaceans who infest that dim and horrid world. But my colleague knew, or dared reveal, naught of the Dweller in the Pyramid, and at his behest I next directed my flight to remote Kthynil which circles the crimson orb of Arcturus. There I begged of a certain fungoid intelligence if it knew aught of the Dweller, but it as well would not or could not speak.

Swifter than thought I then traversed the awful immensity of the abyss between Kthynil and lightless, ill-rumoured Mthura, where a sentient crystalloid directed me to the very rim of the transdimensional gulfs. There, at last, I learned from an entity of luminous gas whose name was Zzhryii that the Thing I sought dwelt upon Shaggai, even nightmarish and doom-fraught Shaggai, the ultimate world in angled space whose green-litten surface even the most valorous of



voyagers dares not visit. I had heard of weird and dreaded Shaggai, for the most disturbing legends are whispered concerning that haunted world of terrible gloom, but never in my wildest dreams had I envisioned the necessity of venturing thither. But there was no further recourse but that I now project my innermost being across the infinitude of time and space to dubious Shaggai.

\* \* \*

As I approached the environs of Shaggai it lay bathed in the intolerable glare of twin suns of emerald flame—a bleak and desolate orb of naked grey stone, heaving seas of black liquescence, and hellish continent-spanning jungles of crawling and vampiric mould. There in strange metropoli of cold grey metal dwell a sinister race of intelligent insectoids, concerning whom even the Elder Records preserve naught that is wholesome.

For a time I floated above vast avenues of harsh metal thronged by immense, chittering, multi-legged hordes that surged about the base of colossal and featureless pylons and globular domes that lay naked and sterile under the piercing brilliance of the green suns. Betimes, the numberless horde of chitinous arthropods would spread immense glittering wings like lucent vans of sheeted opal and swirl in vast clouds about the orifice that served as portal in the upmost surface of the globes, vanishing therein in streaming multitudes.

At the center of each metropolis rose the angled planes of a metallic pyramid. Some whim or intuition told me not to pause to seek that which lay within these lesser pyramids, for the one I sought lay not here in the swarming cities. So I flew on across leagues of slithering lichen and pulsing seas of black and glistening ooze. At length, I perceived a structure immeasurably more vast than any I had yet observed on Shaggai. It rose lone and solitary on a dead plateau in the regions of the boreal pole, and from its singular and incredible immensity, which was that of many mountains, I knew at once that it was the dwelling of That which I sought—the House of the Worm—the secret of the blackest mystery the obscure pages of the Pnakotic Manuscripts conceal.

On a granulated plain of frigid black crystals I descended. The mighty bulk of the Pyramid loomed above me like a geometric mountain, but vaster than Voormithadreth itself, the most monstrous

structure reared by intelligence on any planet known to me. From its sheer planes radiated a cold menace before which my soul quailed in icy dread, yet I dared not hesitate like some fearful neophyte on the very threshold of the Mystery which had for endless cycles perplexed me, and gathering my courage and uttering a silent prayer to Tsathoggua I projected my bodiless being into the interior of the Pyramid.

\* \* \*

Through walls of incredible thickness, fashioned of a perdurable metal unknown to me, I passed to hover in utter blackness above a colossal gulf. The interior of the metal mountain was one vast echoing emptiness above a pit of such incredible dimensions as to seem depthless . . . and even in the extremity of my dread, I wondered at the *thickness* of those walls of ultra-telluric metal built to contain . . . nothing?

There blew from beneath a dank, chill wind upon whose invisible wings was borne to my astral senses a foetor rank as the breath of grinning ghouls or the stench of scaly and leprous shantaks which feed upon unmentionable substances. This charnel reek was more horrible than that which exudes from the bubbling black slime wherein loathsome and primordial shoggoths bloat and wallow, and my senses sickened before the wind from the pit.

At length, by a faint luminance such as that shed by rotten and necrophagic mould, I perceived monstrous and uncouth pictographs wherewith the interior walls of the titanic Pyramid were inscribed. By this dim blue phosphorescence I discovered to my surprise that I could half-comprehend the immense symbols, for they bore a degree of similitude to the primal Thuu-yaaa glyphs wherewith certain of the Elder Records preserved on guarded Celaeno are inscribed.

I saw . . . I read . . . and I shrank shuddering from the incredible horrors told of in those sprawling and monstrous glyphs revealed in the wavering and uncertain glow shed by Something in the depths of the pit below . . . I shrieked soundlessly as I now glimpsed That which squirmed at the remote bottom of the world-deep abyss . . . That whose gelatinous bulk of quivering white slime was itself the source of the charnel phosphorescence . . . That whose quaking jelly exuded the hideous foetor which blew endlessly on the cold winds

from the gulf . . . *Iä! Tsathoggua!* but a Worm should not grow the size of a mountain . . . nor gnaw for aeons against the foundations of a world till it has burrowed out a pit *a thousand miles deep!* . . . In that hellish instant I saw and knew that the cold insectoid intelligences of accursed and hideous Shaggai had once summoned up That which no power could command or slay but only contain within a hollow and monstrous mountain of eternal and imperishable metal, while It gnawed forever at the very core of the planet . . . and would gnaw through all time to come, till blasphemous and elder Shaggai was consumed by the mindless and slobbering and insatiate hungers of that mountainous Worm From Beyond . . . and as I hurled my astral self shrieking up from that world-deep charnel pit of nightmare where a titanic Thing of bubbling slime fed ever upon the very *planet* whose rash inhabitants had once dared call it from the Deeps, I knew at last why the dwellers in the star worlds shrank shuddering from any mention of doomed and terror-fraught Shaggai, and why its secret had been buried in the most cryptic pages of the Pnakotic Manuscripts. . . .

\* \* \*

These things I, the necromancer Eibon, saw and record here in my Book lest ever again any Seeker after Mysteries dare the terrors of that black abyss . . . be warned, and let That which is hidden remain forever hidden, and ponder the doom of the wretched intelligences of horrible Shaggai, who in their pride and arrogance once called up That which even the Elder Gods dared not evoke. ✱

## About "The Haunting of Uthnor"

Even a moderate acquaintance with critical biblical scholarship will familiarize the student with the practice of scriptural writers whereby, lacking detailed accounts of ancient events (or myths), they would gather what tradition-fragments, oral or written, they could and do their best to work up a new narrative of their own. Check out Randel Helms's *Gospel Fictions* (Prometheus Books, 1988) or Gerd Lüdemann's *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts* (Fortress, 1989) for examples. Eibonic savant Laurence J. Cornford has carried on this enterprising tradition in reconstructing the present episode of Eibon. He has combed the sources with utmost care, gleaning bits of relevant lore from the letters of Clark Ashton Smith to H. P. Lovecraft and to Robert H. Barlow, as well as Eibonic fragments preserved in Keith Herber's 1987 gaming module *Spawn of Azathoth*.

# The Haunting of Uthnor

by Laurence J. Cornford

The Year of the Golden Rat had abdicated in favor of the Vermilion Ox when the Haunting came to Uthnor, that province which lay along the eastern coast of central Hyperborea, south of the Eiglophians. The Haunting coincided with a particular stellar occultation involving the approach of a comet which could not have passed the earth more frequently than once in a hundred millennia. My astrological charts and calculations told me that this stellar event would be best observed from the land of Uthnor, and so I had gathered up my astrological works and set out to the warm climes of Varaad where my old pupil, Cyron, dwelt, being careful to bypass the land of the hierophants of Yhoundeh who had grown more bold in those years. I took a boat down the coast to Zaroul and from there headed through the pass into central Hyperborea and thence to Uzuldaroum and out onto the plains, fields and hills of Uthnor, and despite my delay around the lake of Ondôar, I arrived wearily in Varaad before the occultation had occurred.

But I did not find Cyron in anticipation of that stellar event, for his mind was occupied with the tales of hauntings which had come to him from the farmsteads and villages between Varaad and Zanzonga. It seemed that by night travelers would encounter ghostly figures walking and acting much as they must have done in life. The counsellors of Varaad had charged Cyron with the task of resolving this problem by whatever means he could, and so he suggested that we combine our missions and head out of the city into the sparsely habited lands of Uthnor. I consented, for those easterly hills would provide us with excellent clear night skies in which to observe the stellar spectacle.

So it was that we traversed the heather-scented hills of Uthnor to the village of Spathain, which proved to be a focal point for these apparitions. Here we were greeted by the burghers, and they related their tales to us. Duly we agreed to stand vigil that night and the several nights after and to see what we could see.

Moving to the edge of the village, we set up the lensed instruments and opened our notebooks. We watched the hemisphere of night transcribe its course until it over-arched the sky. So we bent our eyes to the instruments, for that very night the comet was to reach perihelion and pass closest to the earth. The night was chill and clear, the stars glittering like diamonds overhead, and I was wrapped tightly in a thick brocade robe trimmed with black-fox fur, while Cyron had a many-layered robe of saffron and turquoise silks through which the stiff winds could not penetrate.

As we observed the comet moving before the star, my hair prickled and I shivered from a chill not caused by the wind, but by the approach of some preternatural agent. From the ground, like morning mists, rose wispy pale columns and a gossamer veil of mist which seemed to shimmer and glow over the houses of Spathain, changing them from the humble abodes of farmers to the curious stone dwellings of an earlier age. Gradually the smoky columns resolved themselves into the lanky, milk-pale shapes of the now extinct antehumans who had once had a colony on this very continent. The streets thronged with the tall, thin antehumans who strolled about bearing parcels of scrolls from building to building, or who sat on benches to discuss philosophy or art. The whole vision glowed, such that it appeared daylight. As we observed the apparition, one of the figures stopped and looked skyward towards the comet, with his glittering eyes, like two polished *djals*. Then another and another looked up. Then males and females of that race emerged from their houses to stare up at the comet as it grew larger against the sky.

We observed with much interest how the two villages were merging, one on top of the other. All at once, and without warning from the star, five bright fragments fell, arching across the sky, flashing like false dawns around the skyline. But one had clearly fallen near at hand, and one of the philosophers rose from his marble seat and strode purposefully from the town. In an instant he had returned bearing with him a large oval of dark crystalline metal, somewhat like an egg in shape, and raised it aloft in his wiry arms. At the sight of this thing a madness possessed the antehuman ghosts and they tussled with each other and, to our mounting horror, fell to a frenzied fighting and ripping at one another, while the bearer of the stone gloated demonically. Fires sprang up from the houses and madness

descended. Soon the whole scene was obscured by smoke which turned to night mist hovering in the valley.

Then as our horror abated we again became aware of a shifting in the mist. We saw a new town, quite unlike any we had seen before, solidify from the vapors. A scene of strange Babelian towers and minarets of obsidian surrounded by an abundance of the ancient ferns and upas trees of primal Hyperborea. The doors of these buildings were too tall and narrow for any human to pass comfortably through them. Indeed the streets of this ancient settlement were thronged with the ophidian inhabitants of elder Hyperborea, with their goat-like servants who hopped to-and-fro on unaccounted errands and duties. In pens, like cattle, stood great brutish, mailed dinosauri, some saddled for riding by their serpentine masters.

Not far from us stood two of these bald, pie-skinned serpent folk, dressed in royal red velveteen robes trimmed with gold thread. One held in its supple forelimbs a curious crystalline device through which it peered at the night sky. The two conversed, heatedly, to judge by their hissings and lashings of their long tails. Again the subject of their discussion was evidently the approaching comet which was radiating a number of glowing spikes like a bearded face. But this time the comet was much larger than it had ever been. Then once more the strange madness overcame these ophidian ghosts and they fell into blind panic as we watched the comet split into two and the one piece inexorably descended on the earth. My body quaked as that island of stone descended toward us and would at any moment smash the whole province of Uthnor to fragments. We could not have escaped it had we tried. A roar filled the air, and clouds boiled about it as if it had burned the sky brown. Its shattering collision ended the vision in a holocaust of flame, ash, and lava. We two swooned in utter fear for our lives.

When dawn came we were amazed to find ourselves unharmed and lying on dew-speckled grass in our damp robes. We were exhausted by our ghost-vigil and wandered down to the village only to discover that no man still lived in Spathain. The disconcerting stench of burnt wood warned us of a tragedy. The village was in ruins. The ghosts had done more than merely manifest here; they had possessed the unfortunates of Spathain and worked them like puppets in that nightmare conflagration. All had succumbed to madness

and fear. We wept openly when we observed what had transpired. I do not know how we had survived while so many had died, but perhaps the rigors of wizardly training had stood us in good stead against that fearful night, or else those talismans we bore about us had prevented the intrusions of spirits. We two could not do much to bury so many people and so, after repeating what rites we could, we traveled dejectedly back to Varaad and to the minaret of Cyron which held a fine library of arcane books.

In Cyron's chamber paneled in ivory of mammoth and lit with nine lamps of hollowed amethyst, we sat reading at tables cluttered with grimoires, thuribles, arthamer and other magical paraphernalia. At once I set to work consulting the books concerning the nature of the visions we had seen and of the omnipresent stellar body.

With meticulous accuracy we plotted the course and speed of this comet based upon our observations and upon the writings of the ancient astrologer Jhrelth and collated these with the obscurer genealogical details of Pnom's exegesis.

Then I turned to the most paleogeon chronicles available to man, to see if any of the ancients had spoken of this comet of ill-fortune. We consulted the *Prophecies of Lith*, the dark *Book of K'yog*, and the *Testament of Haon-Dor*. I even had cause to look in the pages of those prehuman-scripted Pnakotic Manuscripts.

At length we discerned that the comet pursued an eccentric, crooked orbit. Twice it had collided with stellar bodies, and this had knocked it away from the earth, but over the centuries it would draw close again, until at last it should work its evil over all mankind and not just over a few.

Nor was that all we learned, for in the oldest portion of the *Book of Iod* we found a reference to the Seeds of Chaos, the effluvia of Azathoth, the animating demon of that all-encompassing Space which is ever devouring the material universe. For from that chaos-throne about which Nyarlathotep perennially pipes the dire music of chaos and destruction, the slumbering god had vomited particles into the void of its own creation. These Seeds drift through the roiling infinity of aethyr until some fall into the influence of planets. Some say that one Seed came to earth in the days of Shub-Niggurath in Arkand. But others still roam the voids. One such was that evil comet.

The suggestion of any relationship or connection with Azathoth, even of the remotest, vestigial sort, was simply overpowering in its terror. A desire burned in me to discover what would become of the comet now it had passed beyond our sphere and if any action could be taken against it before it should next return to haunt the earth with madness. So it was that I took from my trusty pouch of tanned sloth-leather a lump of ancient glass. This was the glass which men say came from Mho-Lhun, the citadel of the primal gods of doom and into which once the Old Ones had peered. By it a man may steal a glimpse of other times and places.

We carried that sacred glass to the furnace and lay it in a crucible of iron-hard *lagh*-metal and fanned the flames to white hotness with the bellows. When the glass flowed like honey we carefully bore it over to a bed of quicksilver which we had formerly prepared, and spread it so that it formed a single sheet of brittle glass with a smooth face where it touched the quicksilver. When this sheet was cool we squared it and placed it in the frame of waxed apha-wood. Then we used the prescribed enchantments to empower and activate the properties of that unique glass. And through the window so constructed I beheld, first, the prehistoric destruction of the major planet Antanôk, which once revolved between Aihai and Ylidiomph and which was riven to fragments many thousands of years before our time by the influence of that dark Seed of Chaos. Then the Seed returned again and again once, unobstructed by that shattered planet, it could venture ever closer to our own world, and at each passing it destroyed the glories of the earth which had taken root during its absence. Its passing called the star demons from the void to harry the Old Ones in their cities and shook the primal continents. The realm of the serpent men was shattered, as we had seen, by its own effluvia. The civilization of the Voormis sank into brute-hood under its malign influence. Likewise the antehumans and the early dynasties of man.

Then the glass turned forward in time and I saw the great Ice Sheet shifting forward over the face of Hyperborea. I witnessed my descendants fleeing to the four corners of the world before that resistless wall of ice. Then I beheld the ice whelm and sunder Hyperborea, carving it into shards and suffocating the works of man under its thick, silent pall.

I looked on strange cities of metal and glass and light in strange lands to the south, thronged with many thousands of hurrying souls. I saw man shoot out spears at the stars and comets, as they came around in their cycles, but to no avail. Ever that Seed returned, and each time closer to the earth.

Then the weight of ages fell one upon another: the cities were swept away and men again grubbed in the soil for food as they had of old. Again emperors and kings flaunted their cruel might over the peasantry. Again the lightning flashes of sorcery were to be seen. Seas came and swallowed the lands; armies watered the sands with their blood. Again man declined into brutehood and again clawed his way back to civilization on that grim archipelago of islands not yet taken by the sea. This then was that ultimate land the prophets name Zothique, and its sorcerers were wise with the wisdom and decadence of those intervening millennia, yet not even they could stop the comet from returning, from raising up the waves against them, of setting man against man, until he vanished utterly from the world.

Here then I made to turn away from the glass in utter, horrified despair, knowing that even the sorcerers of that remote age should not avert the ill-wrought Seed of Chaos. I had beheld the squalid Doom of Man. Yet as the image shifted, I did see yet some creatures moving among the ashes of Man's deeds. A small black beetle crawled over the crumbling land, seeking a rare feast of human flesh, such as it had tasted in its youth. And from it descended another race of oddly-bodied intelligence to rule the man-vacated Earth.

Then, finally, I do not know how many eons into the future—when the circle was complete and the seas covered the earth with protoplasmic swamps, all that had once lived and breathed and fought and spawned became once more one with Ubbo-Sathla. The Tragedy of Earth would be played out, and forgotten like a nightmare upon awakening.

The haunting of Uthnor was at an end for the time being, but I confess I knew not which haunting was the more dolorous, that of the shades of the dead past or that of the unborn future's visions. ✱

## About "The Offspring of the Tomb"

Clark Ashton Smith left a fairly long and detailed synopsis for a tale to be called "The Offspring of the Tomb," but it was set in the modern period and had nothing to do with Eibon or Hyperborea. Laurence J. Cornford has written a very different tale than Smith might have, but he has quite likely written a tale very close to what Lin Carter would have written, for Cornford is following Carter's lead rather than Smith's. Lin had decided to borrow the title for a projected chapter of the *Book of Eibon* which he never got around to writing.

What Cornford (and other Triton-Eibonic scribes) have done is to supply lost episodes (actually never-written episodes), and in doing so he has recapitulated yet another genuine ancient process of scriptural pseudepigraphy whereby the bare mention of a lost text inspires some enterprising soul to take the opportunity to fill that abhorrent vacuum! Ancient examples are legion. Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:1–10 refers to revelations vouchsafed him on a visionary journey to the third heaven, but he neglects to disclose them. Someone else was not so reticent; eventually there emerged at least three Apocalypses of Paul purporting to tell what he heard in Paradise. Early Christian apologists like Tertullian and Justin imagined that the Roman archives must contain court transcripts of Jesus' trial before Pilate. If they did, Christians must have later destroyed the damaging evidence, but in any case, all we have is the fourth-century forgery called the Acts of Pilate. The ancient Book of Jasher quoted in Joshua and Second Samuel was lost, and two texts, one medieval, the other modern, arose to play the role. In Colossians Paul mentions an epistle he had written to the neighboring Laodiceans, but which did not survive—until somebody cobbled together the pseudepigraphical Epistle to the Laodiceans.

Several stories in the present volume were written to fill gaps in Lin Carter's projected contents of the *Book of Eibon*, and for the same reason. A chance to sneak one's own work into the canon of scripture! Who can resist? But Cornford's ingenuity is greater still: again in the spirit of Lin Carter, he has in this tale supplied a context for passages excerpted from *The Book of Eibon* by Keith Herber in the Chaosium *Call of Cthulhu* role-playing module *Dreamlands*, 1987.

## The Offspring of the Tomb

by Laurence J. Cornford

Well into my second century of life, I had come to leave my tower of black gneiss, upon this high promontory of Mhu Thulan, but rarely, if only for that all I might desire was brought me by my chelas and disciples. And even those earliest of mine apprentices, now themselves accomplished wizards, would now and again apply to me when mystified at some stubborn enigma, so that I had little need even to venture forth in search of new occult puzzles to solve. Yet by no means had I entered upon my dotage (nor have I yet, despite the slanders of some), and of a season I must needs go forth alone to collect some rare and potent substance for mine experiments, and this task I may in no wise entrust unto another. Then, too, an old man relishes an occasional stroll in the countryside while he is still sufficiently spry.

Thus it was that I set out from my tower, leaving all things in the capable hands of my steward, and walked where I had fled in terror so many years before, down the road towards Iqqua. From there I bought a place on one of the frequent trading caravans heading southwards, and within a week, memorable solely for the reminder of how uncomfortable is the horse saddle over a great length of time, I arrived in the town of Rimniath.

Our arrival was timed to coincide with the town's market day, and the place was filled with strangers from the outlying lands. As the merchants with whom I had traveled set up their stalls of rich spices and perfumed woods, silks and sparkling crystals from distant Valusia, I wandered the narrow alleys between the stalls, pausing now and again to scrutinize the wares of a seller of parchments (Had there in truth been a *fifteenth* Pnakotic Fragment? I judged the script as of too recent vintage), or to barter and haggle with an herbalist claiming to have rare supplies of extinct herbs thawed from the primordial ice floes of Thule and vital to the magicks of the ante-human shamans.

Strangely I fell into a reverie, suddenly mindful of an old friend, one Yhok-Omi, whom I had met in the days after my flight from the

tower of Zylac and ere my first meeting with Zaljis. Nor could I account why I should suddenly think of him after so many years. And as I traced his features in my memory, all at once there emerged from the throng a visage very like unto the long and youthful bearded face with whose owner I had spent so many pleasant hours. As if a ghost had stepped forth from the past, I quite shivered with cold there in the baking sun.

Shrugging off the untoward chill, I continued with my pleasant meandering, glancing among my fellow browsers in case that face should appear again. At length I had all but forgotten the incident when I stopped at a drinking-house in the Street of the Snow Bear to refresh myself after many hours in the stifling air of the cramped streets. I had purchased a bottle of imported Antillian ale when I chanced to turn and espy a dejected figure seated alone across the crowded tap room. If not for that earlier vision I might not have recognized the fellow, for the years, over an hundred by my count, had not worn so well upon his muchly-lined features. And yet, notwithstanding his snowy wisp of hair, dipped eyebrows and the wrinkled mouth of a man heavily burdened, by his moustacheless beard and his blue eyes I knew him for the same Yhok-Omi, not young as I had pictured him that morning, but gray and bent. Seeing that he looked in need of cheering and that his table was the only one not crammed with roisterers, I made my way over to greet my old comrade.

His eyes widened with surprise, and his welcome was ebullient as he bade me be seated and called for another drink. We questioned each other long over what had transpired with us in the intervening years. I listened in amazement as he related some fanciful tales told of me in the outside world. Soon we were laughing and reminiscing in the old manner, and as he smiled, methought for the first time in months or even years, the lines seemed to smooth away from his haggard face, and I was once more put in mind of my remarkable vision earlier in the day. I recounted the incident, thinking to amuse him, and little expecting the result, for the tale deadened his good humor straightway.

Only then did I notice the lateness of the hour and how the tap-room was all but empty. When I said that the landlord was showing signs of wishing to be off to his bed and that we might best take our

leave, Yhok-Omi grew gravely apprehensive. He admitted as how he was reluctant to return alone to his dwelling. The mention of lodging brought me up short, for I had not yet sought out any shelter for myself, and at this time of night, especially on market day, I was unlikely to find a room to rent. At once Yhok-Omi proposed I stay the night under his own roof, and so we might continue our conversation to our hearts' content. Besides, had he not advanced in the esoteric arts himself over the years? He might have many things to interest me in his chambers. How could I refuse his hospitality?

We stumbled, I confess, a mite tipsily, into the chill square outside, the heat of the day having long since retreated. My friend tugged at my arm and whispered in my ear.

"We must be away, O Eibon!"

Then he tugged me off kilter so that I nearly stumbled headlong. After this I followed his rapid steps through a veritable maze of alleys winding between rickety wooden tenements. Looking skyward intermittently, one might see but a thin strip of starry blue and white above. The next thing I knew, Yhok-Omi had halted abruptly. Looking back the way we had come, he breathed, "Think you we have at last eluded him?"

"Eluded whom?" quoth I.

"Why, the furtive-seeming fellow lurking outside the ale-house when we left."

I peered down the street, but all was thick blackness to my gaze. But then, with a shiver of apprehension, I thought I could discern a movement. Yhok-Omi sensed it also and pulled me back into the shadows of an alleyway which led off the main street. So black was it that one might not behold one's own hand before one's face.

But a moment later, a cloaked and hooded figure advanced stealthily up the street, moving his head to and fro in some strange manner suggestive more of his *smelling* than looking for us twain. As the man passed by our place of concealment and was limned for a moment in the starlight from a thin shaft of sky, he looked to be wearing mittens on his hands. I was mightily relieved when the pursuing figure continued on his odd way. Yhok-Omi, too, let out his trapped breath and led me round to his abode by what I took to be a circuitous route.

The house of Yhok-Omi had suffered a sad decline, leaning for support against the brittle shell of a neighboring hovel. Once we had entered, he began an elaborate ritual of bolting and barring the flimsy door, peering every few seconds through a tiny spy-hole to the street without. The door being as secure as mortal implements could make it, he then measured out a modicum of bluish powder and shook out a line of it across the threshold, all the while mouthing the syllables of, methinks, the Rivashii Warding. This done, he led me through to his laboratory.

"My good friend Eibon," he said at last, "of a truth I did not relish passing the night alone in this house tonight, or for the matter, on any night. I have lingered many a night in that or another village ale-house vexing the patience of one barkeep after another till they fairly threw me over their threshold. Nor have I dared to sleep save by daylight. I doubtless seem a madman to you, and I ask your pardon for the same."

"But, tell me, Yhok-Omi, what is the cause of so terrible distress?"

"I shall surely tell you," he said with an anxious glance this way and that, "for the night still hath some hours left to it, and I fear I will not reach the dawn alive. I can think of no better way to spend the time remaining than in conversation with you. It is a comfort that someone should know the reason of my passing, and only you could credit it." So we sat us down, and in conspiratorial whisperings he related a tale of many years ago, not so long after our parting company.

"When I had journeyed the length and breadth of holy Hyperborea and felt confident I knew what was to be known of this sublunar realm, I resolved to seek out higher and more exotic spheres in which my soul might wander unfettered. Through the aid of divers herbs and potions did I visit distant stellar worlds, and there I did hear things which it is not lawful for man to utter. Of the wisdom of the nug-soth savants of Yaddith did I drink deep, and what other hath not hesitated to enter into the passionless thoughts of the metal brains of Abbith?"

"And one realm above all others held me fast by reason not of its magic arcana, but simply for the exceeding splendor thereof, even the Empire of Dream. By many modes may a man journey thither. The archpriests of Zyhume tell of dream-meditations achieved by the

higher monks, who aver the realm to be as veritable a reality as that in which you and I now sojourn. And legends tell of Rhyagand of the Brush, he who needed but to paint a picture of whithersoever he wished to journey, to find himself there, for all that his gift proved equally his doom. Heedlessly had he sketched in the likeness of one of the dog-snouted ghouls who plague the place, and it met him there, greeting him hungrily upon his arrival.

"It was there in the deeper realm of Dreamfancy that I beheld the loveliest of the dreams of a lonely man, even my fair Zophonilsa. For many dream-years did we live in a bliss surpassing any I had known either hitherto or thereafter. Ere long a son was born to us, the fair Euphorion. But within me the fearsome certainty began to dawn that I should not be able forever to abide in the land of Dream. So at the last, despite every soporific stratagem I could devise, I must needs take my leave. And, upon awakening in this present world, as I feared, I found I could never again return to my beloved. I know not why. Mayhap my long use of the chemicals of sleep and vision had at last rendered my sleep too troublous to attain again the far shore of Dream.

"I mourned long and deeply, you may be sure. And I accepted the hard fact that I should never again know that brighter life. And withal I sought to make a fresh start. But, alas, friend Eibon, it was not to be. Many years had passed when one night, whilst sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, I found myself again in that long-lamented realm, only dream had turned to nightmare for me. About me yawned a darksome cavern, and in its shadows waited one who questioned me with hard words and many blows, waxing ever more wroth with me, I knew not wherefore. Whereupon did he reveal himself as mine own dream-son! Now come of age, he had sought me out to exact revenge for, as he believed, my callously forsaking his late mother and himself. And there, thankfully, the nightmare ended.

"In the days following, I sought to dismiss what I had seen, but to little avail, until one day a strange traveler knocked at my door, saying he had news from a far land that might interest me. Once inside, he related a curious tale of one who called himself Ghadamon, a foul thing fattened on the flesh of human brains and secreted for long years beneath a great lake in a fearsome world of darkness. The old fellow warned in tones most dire of the soon coming of this



Ghadamon. I deemed him mad, yet half-suspecting his tale might bear some riddling meaning if only one could guess it. I thanked him for his tidings, fed him, and sent him on his way.

"But that very night the gossips rumored how an old traveler had met with a terrible death at the hands of the Oriental One, a stranger said to hail from Yanaidar on far Thuria. At once I suspected this Oriental One to be one and the same as my son. And now I fear I, too, am close to death at his hands, and I can see no escape."

I questioned the tired-eyed Yhok-Omi a bit further and elicited from him his belief that the lurker along the streets was indeed his son, and at once I knew the identity of the man I had seen that day in the marketplace.

"I have laid wardings on my portals, and it may be they shall keep him from my throat for one more night." Yhok-Omi's dire mood disquieted me greatly, the more when he added, "If nonetheless the night should claim me, old friend, I beg you keep close vigil over my mortal clay, nor drowse a single moment. Chant over me the prayers of whatsoever god you worship, that he may haply receive my sundered soul."

Well did I see that no greater solace could I bring him than to solemnly accept his ultimate charge, withal assuring him that he should outlive me by a century. Smiling wanly, Yhok-Omi bade me good morrow and we both retired.

Sound did I sleep, for that journey and the exertions of the day had taxed me thoroughly. Yet in the small hours I awoke, sitting upright to listen for the repeating of some sound I could not remember. After a few moments there crept to my ears an insidious scurrying, as of many mice running under the floorboards. This was nothing unusual, so I lay back down and turned over to sleep again. But then the noise grew in loudness. Did I hear more mice, or as seemed more likely, a troop of corpulent and loathsome rats? Nay, the longer I did listen the surer I felt that it was some verminous creature larger still, scuttling up through the wall cavity. Then at once the sounds did cease, to be replaced by one altogether more dreadful: the terrified screaming of a man.

Coming to myself, I leapt from the bed and ran for the door, out onto the rickety landing, and up the shuddering stairs to Yhok-Omi's garret chamber. The cacophony died in my ears, and I opened

the door on utter silence. Within the disheveled bed lay the lifeless body of Yhok-Omi, vacant eyes wide and protruding, limbs tangled in the bedding as though he had frantically struggled before his death. But of any visible marking or violence there was none. Seemingly he had expired of fear alone.

My solemn vow to guard his body was now no mere promise for someday, but a present duty. So I composed the corpse and wrapped it in the bed sheet, then carried my ungainly charge down to the cellar of the house, where it were fitting for the rites to be observed. Here I was again taken aback, for I found an open coffin waiting and ready. How sorely must the poor wretch have feared for his life to have made ready his own sarcophagus!

In that vault beneath the house of Yhok-Omi I performed the Death Watch in accord with ancient lore, pronouncing the liturgies over the body by the light of a single corpse-tallow. I chose the rites prescribed in the *Papyrus of Atlach-Nacha*, clothing the body in a winding sheet to symbolize the silky chrysalis of rebirth. In the better part of twain centuries I had ample occasion to perform the rites and now knew them well by heart.

And even so did my concentration waver by reason of the renewed scratchings as of a great rodent, seemingly just above, which shook the dust from the beams and caused the door to rattle its bolt. I felt the clinging grasp of unwholesome spirits to crush my soul and to efface the warding sigils and holy charms with which I had endowed the makeshift mortuary chamber. So I lifted up my voice and intoned yet louder the sacred canticles, which faith imbues with a power more than a thousand bolts and locks. Yet the tumult did seem to rise to match me, for now there came a rending sound, a splintering of wood and as it were the smashing of toppling crockery. Involuntarily I glanced up at the ceiling of the vault.

My first thought was that Yhok-Omi's vengeful son, be he called Euphorion or Ghadamon or whatever name, had contrived to breach the barriers his father had set in place, and that he was smashing all his eye fell upon while searching for his father. To reassure myself, I paused in my litany, bent over and opened the casket to glance at the supine form of my ill-fated friend, who at any rate had escaped the ire of his offspring. To my utter horror my eyes beheld a coffin empty save for the bloodied tatters of the winding sheet!

Drawing forth the sheet with one great motion, I saw revealed the smashed-in bottom of the coffin, and I cursed myself for my senile wits, for the gaping blackness of a fresh-dug burrow lay plainly beyond the hole in the floor of the casket. I had failed in my sacred duty, and as far as lay within my power I now felt myself obliged to recover his mortal remains lest they be defiled even more abominably. So, with no thought of my own safety, I squeezed my spare frame into the nitrous burrow. In only a few more yards, it joined a veritable warren of tunnels crisscrossing beneath the unsuspecting village of Rimniath. I pressed on further to find the earth above me tangled with thick plant roots and bits of funerary masonry. Surely I had reached the underside of the village graveyard. And I shivered with loathing to think of that unseen portal every tomb is said to have, and of what might pass through.

As I approached a corner and made ready to turn it, my gorge rose instinctively. And there greeted my stricken gaze that which crystallized all the unspeakable horrors of the night. For crouching on the mouldy under-earth before me was a ravening ghoul ripping voraciously at the flowing entrails of the late Yhok-Omi. Shaking off my initial paresis, I strode boldly forward, an ozone nimbus already beginning to form about my gesturing hand, when the carrion thing turned its muzzle towards me. And I knew I had seen this slaving visage before. The tuft of beard looked too familiar, and I grieved that I had utterly failed to forestall the hideous necrophagical vengeance my old friend had feared. For the feasting ghoul now mocked me with the same piercing blue eyes as his father. \*

## About "The Demon of the Ring"

Clark Ashton Smith's references to Eibon are fewer and farther between than you might imagine. And not every reference to Eibon is a reference to the *Book of Eibon*. But if one is going to reconstruct the *Book of Eibon*, it is hard to resist taking every mention of the mage as a clue to the book. For instance, in Smith's "The Beast of Averoine" we read of a legendary talismanic ring into which Eibon had locked a powerful demon. How does anyone know this? It seems doubtful on the face of it that Eibon would have mentioned a particular relic like this in his book, simply because the *Book* would seem most naturally to consist of material intended for general application, and the mention of a particular magical weapon in his own arsenal would have no other result than to set covetous competitors on the trail of the thing, in short, to invite trouble. Thus it must have been an oral tradition known to its inheritor Luc le Chaudronnier that connected a magic ring with the great sorcerer Eibon, whether correctly or incorrectly. His is the sort of name one will borrow when trying to establish or invent a pedigree. Like the pope claiming Peter and Paul established his franchise.

This means the identification of the ring as that of Eibon is something like the *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad. These were oral traditions of how the Prophet said this or did that, preserved or fabricated (as they often were) and passed down for the instruction and edification of the faithful. The *hadith* supplemented the Koran as an authority for Islamic practice. If a matter was not explicitly addressed (and thus settled) in scripture, then a convenient tradition of the Prophet's table talk might settle the question. In time there arose the notion that Abu-bekr, the first Caliph after the Prophet, had commissioned Zayd ibn Thabit to collect all the Prophet's revelations anyone had memorized or jotted down. Thus these, too, the future Surahs of the Koran, originated as oral traditions. The collection was made, much as the Brothers Grimm covered the countryside collecting various versions of renowned tales. But then it developed that there were various local collections that had textual differences. So the new Caliph, Uthman, recalled Zayd ibn Thabit and had him standardize the text. Or did he?

John Burton (*The Collection of the Qur'an*, 1977) has suggested that the whole story is a scribal fiction designed to enable Muslim savants to claim that a particular practice they supported was not merely a matter of hearsay. They would claim that, before the Uthmanic standardization of the Koran, there used to be a copy in So-and-so's possession that contained a verse mandating their favorite practice. Just like when the preachers say, "It ain't in the Bible but it oughta be!"

If the collection of the *Book of Eibon* is envisioned as being at all like that of the Koran, we might expect the same sort of phenomenon. In the present

case, we might suspect that Luc de Chaudronnier received the tradition of Eibonic origin along with the ring itself and, to secure the pedigree for the relic, interpolated the present episode into a copy of the Norman French *Livre d'Eibon* of Gaspard du Nord. The Islamic scribes could not hope to interpolate their invented traditions of vanished Koranic Surahs into the canonical text; it was too late for that. But there would obviously have been no analogous authority structure controlling the text of the *Book of Eibon*. We must suppose that, like all magic books of antiquity, it continued to receive interpolations and redactional alterations. Thus I have located it among the Triton-Eibonic stratum.

Translator Laurence J. Cornford notes curious parallelisms between "The Demon of the Ring" and three seemingly interrelated entries in Lovecraft's *Commonplace Book*: "Enchanted garden where moon casts shadow of object or ghost invisible to human eye." "An odd wound appears on a man's hand suddenly & without apparent cause. Spreads. Consequences." "Daemons, when desiring a human form for evil purposes, take to themselves the bodies of hanged men." If indeed the present episode of Eibon has been woven together from these cryptic hints, we have yet another specimen of an intriguing phenomenon found in genuine ancient texts: the harmonization midrash. Midrash is a way of explaining a story by retelling it, embellishing it.

When the attempted explanation is a harmonization of disparate or contradictory data the result can be something like the Lilith myth. Here goes: the Seven Day creation story in Genesis chapter 1 through chapter 2:2a has God create man and woman simultaneously, whereas the Garden of Eden creation story in Genesis chapter 2:2b through chapter 3 has God create the man first, then all the animals, then finally the woman. The ancient rabbis puzzled over the inconsistency. Hindered by the erroneous tradition of Mosaic authorship of Genesis, they did not consider that the two tales came from two different sources and have nothing to do with each other, simply being placed side by side by the compiler of Genesis. Approaching it as a single story, their solution was ingenious. They posited the demoness Lilith as the first woman, the wife of Adam in chapter 1. She was too much the feminist, though, insubordinate to Adam, so she left him to shack up instead with Samael the devil, and God thereafter created the more docile Eve to replace her. Voila! "The Demon of the Ring" is a classic and ingenious case of harmonization via midrash.

## The Demon of the Ring

by Laurence J. Cornford

It happened, in the Year of the Golden Rat, that I, Eibon of Mhu Thulan, had cause to pass through the southern lands of Hyperborea with the intention of spending some months in the land of Varaad where my old pupil dwelt. I was making my way among the snow-capped and pine-cloaked mountains of Nlan when I dipped down into the valley towards the cedar-fringed lake of Ondôar on whose northern bank stood the town of Kozath, where I would sojourn.

In Kozath, late evening talk turned to the temple of Mekkaram which lay on the far side of the lake, and which was in olden days dedicated to the minor divinity called Zarbanoth by the people hereabout, and by other names among the hill folk of ice-peaked Nlan. It seemed that the temple was the haunt of a frightful fiend which once had stood as door warden and guardian of the temple's wealth, but which in time had grown so zealous in its task that it would not permit so much as a single pilgrim to cross the threshold or priest to depart, lest they should carry off some hidden trinket from the hoard. So, year by year, bereft of both thankful worshippers and a fresh novice, the priesthood of Zarbanoth decayed into old age and finally to death. Yet over all the lustrums since the last priest expired, their star-summoned demon kept his vigil at the gate and stalked the pillared halls.

This old tale had gained new currency by means of recent reports of lights seen on the lakefront and of brave men who, venturing forth to seek the source thereof, never returned. The tale was of two-fold interest to me, for in truth wealth such as the temple might still harbor permits a certain leisure conducive unto higher preoccupations. Besides, the rumored fiend itself, once tamed, might serve a man well in far-off icy bourns where even so great a sorcerer as I might shrivel before the abominable blast of ultratelluric night.

Thus did I choose to take the long path round the lake back to Varaad. Weeds grew on the track and hid the trail with patchy growth, but the line of the lakefront ensured that I lost not my way.

Ondôar is a large lake and its circumference may not be traversed in the space of a single day, and so it was approaching dusk when I glimpsed, through the straight boughs of the trees, the glow of lamp-lit windows. I pressed on apace and soon came before the great temple of Mekkaram with its stout and steel-bound doors and thick walls of weathered granite inlaid with agate and beryl. Behind them I knew I should find the extensive gardens in which the silent priests of Zarbanoth once paced their mournful and penitent lives away.

But for what cause, I wondered, might lamps burn in this long abandoned refuge? Had some pilfering thieves heard also of the tale and risked the demon as a fancy? Or had, as seemed more likely, the demon grown frustrated at the lack of victims and set a trap to lure hither hapless interlopers?

I resolved now to end the matter and pit my sorcerous powers against this dweller from afar. Up the steps of granite lined with lead I went and pushed at the great portal of dark seasoned wood. At once it yielded on surprisingly well lubricated hinges. Within I perceived by the flickering light of the wind-shifting lamps that I stood in a great pillared hall, whose high roof was hidden in the shadows of on-coming night. Only the wind stirred the veils of Pnar-woven silk, and within the great fastness the wide charcoal-hungry and tripod-mounted braziers stood unlit, surrendering to the reign of shadows.

Cautiously, so cautiously, I stepped inside and looked with trepidation from side to side, as up the central aisle I moved, past pillars of granite inlaid with jasper and copper. Towards a graven statue of a neglected god I moved, listening hard to the wind and the night and the soft flapping of my sandals on the polished stone.

Zarbanoth stood ominous and cold, with eyes of sightless glinting opal. His blockish, cloven feet trapped between them a richly wrought papal throne, and on it sat, slumped as in infinite weariness, the cowed skeleton of an arch-priest. Around both statue and throne lay heaps of treasure sufficient to jade the greed of a thousand kings or minor gods. Zarbanoth's great and crested back was arched as if to suggest a creature frozen to stone in the act of snatching the priest from the chair, for what purpose I could only guess.

And, of a sudden, as if my mere presence had in some wise disturbed a delicate tension holding the tenuous cadaver together, the

whole figure collapsed into an undistinguished heap of dust and bone and rotting fibre. And from a boney finger slipped a ring, which struck the floor and rang one beautiful note before rolling a little way, whereat the gem weighed it down and it came to rest.

I bent down to pick up the ring, and, straightening, I brought it into the light. The gem was a deep and milky regal purple, yet litten by miniature flashes of intermittent opalescence. It rested in a clasp ring of gold so pure it could only have come from the goldmines of Shamballah in the East. Impulsively I slipped this wondrous ring upon my finger to see whether it fit and was just considering removing it when I heard the sound of footfalls upon the stone in the vaulting chamber. I lifted my eyes, in case a figure should appear, but there was none.

Then, without warning, I felt my arm tugged. Helplessly I watched the weave of my robe part and my newly revealed flesh burst into bloody lacerations. I gaped at the sight of mine own bright blood coursing through the air and funneling as if constrained by some monstrous gullet, then spreading in a moment into the arteries of vapour to vanish utterly!

At once I perceived my terrible plight. I had designed to banish this star-begotten devil in the manner of the ancients of Arkya, by the use of the Seal of Yste. But to ensnare the beast in such a trap I must needs determine its location, and I lacked any of the requisite powders by the which to render my nemesis visible, save only for the yielding up of mine own life's blood! And of this I could not spare the copious quantities which should likely prove needful.

Like the tame street cats of Uzuldaroum toying with the rodents of the canal docks, the beast seemed content to relieve its tedium by stalking me through the corridors and silent halls. Mayhap it fed in some nefarious way upon the dread of its prey, anticipating its attack moment by moment. But should I make a concerted effort to leave, it would surely fall upon me with all the violence it could muster, lest I escape and its oath be broken. I paused to listen for any sound made by the passing of the thing, but naught greeted my ears. At last I broke the silence myself, reasoning that the thing might possess more than mere animal cunning.

"O demon," I cried at last, "give up thine ancient watch! Those that disturbed thy rest are dead. Their treasure is bequeathed to moth and rust. Wherefore tarriest thou?"

Then spake the demon in a shrill voice that was like the singing of fire: "The treasure of my guarding remaineth nonetheless, and I cannot break faith. I am bound by dreadful pacts and oaths, as thou knowest, O Eibon of Mhu Thulan. Nor remaineth any man to release me. But thou mayest aid me, and in return I shall spare thy life."

Now parlay with a daemon is a dangerous thing, for never can their word be trusted save only they be bound by some potent adjuration such as still held this fiend in thrall.

"And how, O demon, am I to break so adamantine a pledge?"

"It is simplicity itself, O Eibon. Choose for thyself of the treasure that lieth about and depart with it thence from this holy ground. I will stand idly by, preventing thee in no wise. Then I shall have failed and be flung into the pitiless icy depths of Nastrond, by the terms of the binding spell."

"How then shalt thou walk the earth henceforth?"

"Alas I shall not, till again haply summoned by such a master mage as thou, but better the frigid elder night than a purgatory of boredom in this accursed mausoleum."

The demon plainly undersold poor mortal wits, by reason, doubtless, of having dealt hitherto with none but credulous priests. For had its vow been so easily broken, it must have done so long ere now. Nor could I credit his penitent utterance, for no demon would ever favour the Abyss of Nastrond to the warm delights of the verdant Earth. But, if I may say so, I was not without a bit of guile of mine own.

Feverishly did I plot and plan as I took as much time as I dared in selecting from the sacred treasury of Zarbanoth. Having at length both formed a plan and filled a capacious sack with rubied goblets, priestly pectorals of fine electrum, and suchlike baubles, I turned to depart, sure that the devil watched my every move with interest. But instead of leaving by the great columned entranceway, I made for the portico opening onto the orchard garden of the priests. Here under the bright full moon and the stars I trod still within the temple's sacred ground, and thus in safety. For I had remembered from the ancient Parchments of the venerable Pnom the opportune fact that

even things invisible, according to ancient lore, must cast a shadow under true, full moonlight.

The garden was uncommonly overgrown and gone to seed, its only sprouting fruit the divers skulls and bones of long-dead priests and thieves, cast here and there amid the grounds by the violent fury of the avenging demon. As I stepped into the moonlight, the voice of mine unwelcome companion sounded, most disconcertingly, at my very elbow, crackling like a roaring flame. It reminded me to look about for a rope, saying that I should doubtless need such to scale the garden wall. And from this I now fathomed something of the demon's plan, for it is said of old that demons, when desiring a human form for evil purposes, take to themselves the bodies of hanged criminals. Yet this fiend was bound to the grounds of the temple, and so could not seek for itself such a grisly host. Thus I saw that by some crafty method it was the plan of the demon to end my life and also break the curse, whereupon it should assume my mortal flesh like a garment in which to hide and run amok.

Arriving at the outer circumference of the gardens, I paused and scrutinized the ancient stonework, which had so fallen into desuetude that a man might easily employ the jutting blocks as stepping stones in the manner of a stair, hence the utter gratuity of a rope for the purpose. But I did mutter somewhat about the likely danger of dislodging the precarious stones and breaking my old bones. In this fashion, I found piddling fault with wall after wall, except that one on which the moonlight shone most strongly. Now the devil's shadow, which was of form most unpleasant to behold, was plainly limned upon the wall before me, though he himself appeared to find nothing amiss.

"What knowest thou of the canonical law of Zarbanoth, O Eibon?" asked the demon, its great and hideous shadow passing over me as it levitated up the wall to fix the length of rope, most obligingly, to an overhanging tree branch.

"Naught do I know of Zarbanoth's code," I said, steeling myself against the fetid breath of the demon as I grasped the rope and began to climb. Gaining the top of the thick monastery wall, I crouched, hunching over with feigned panting, and frantically worked at the loop end of the rope.

"The commandment of Zarbanoth is innocent of latter-day innovations such as swift and clean beheadings for thieves and profaners, but mandates rather—*summary execution by hanging!*"

In an instant I plunged into the massy black shadow of the garden wall, letting drop the treasure sack, the which I had bound closed with the rope intended for mine own neck. I plummeted clear, giving forth some convincing gurgling and choking cries as I fell; then, crouching in silence, I looked up at the demon, who, satisfied with the weight at the end of the rope, hoisted it up within the bounds of the temple once more.

As the thick-witted devil realized he had been tricked, he howled most fearsomely with rage, peering futilely into the dark.

"Tracherous Eibon," it roared, like a furnace when the bellows are at work on it, "thou hast escaped with thy life, but not with the treasure. I must count us even and take pleasure only from the knowledge that within another century thou shalt be no more."

"Not so, O demon," said I, stepping from my shadowy hiding place and holding up my left hand so that the large purple gem of the ring caught the light of the moon. At this the demon hissed, and I thought of a fire quenched with water. "For I have taken this ring, and claim it justly by finder's right. What is more, I have escaped from holy ground with a treasure, and so your binding weird is broken also. Since, as I think, in truth you are the demon of this magic ring and thus my rightful servant, therefore get you into it."

With a second shriek the demon flashed from the wall and fell feet first into the tiny confines of the ring. With yet more binding spells I bolted its gaol and, with much snarling protest, it agreed once more to aid the wearer of the ring at all times in the future, an oath made on the Secret Name of Azathoth, which no fiend dare retract. And many indeed are the sorcerous feats I have wrought by means of the ring in the intervening years. \*

## About "The Door to Saturn"

How ironic that the sorcerer Eibon should be introduced in his own swan song! Smith finished this one on July 26, 1930. He had this to say concerning it: "This tale is one of my favorites, partly on account of its literary style." Again, "I take out the manuscript and read it over, when I am too bored to read anything in my book-cases!" "'The Door to Saturn' . . . seemed unusually successful to me in its unity of 'tone.' Probably the light ironic touch helped to make it seem 'unconvincing' to Wright." Thus, it appeared, not in *Weird Tales*, but in *Strange Tales*, January 1932.

As for the tone of the story, one wonders if "light irony" truly characterizes it. "The Door to Saturn" seems more of a broad farce. And no wonder: "the profoundest satire is that which is directed at intolerance of all kinds" (to HPL, December 10, 1929). And as for style, many readers will perhaps agree with one who shared his opinion with Smith: "I was told the other day that my 'Door to Saturn' could be read only with a dictionary" (to HPL, mid-December 1930).

Though I put forth a different theory of the origin of the name Eibon in the introduction, let me note here the possibility of Smith's having derived it from the name of "Ebion," the imaginary heresiarch whom church fathers posited as a founder for the Ebionite sect of Jewish Christians. Actually, their name, "Ebionim," is simply the Hebrew for "the poor," which had become synonymous with "the pious." If the sect had a single notorious founder, it would have to be Jesus or his brother James the Just, since the Ebionites seem to have been the more or less direct descendants of the Jerusalem Church. But could Smith have known about this? Well, he sure knew about another early Christian "heresy," the Manichaeans, as witness his story "The Devotee of Evil." Smith is said to have educated himself by reading through a dictionary and a set of encyclopedias!

# The Door to Saturn

by Clark Ashton Smith

## I.

When Morghi, the high priest of the goddess Yhoundeh, together with twelve of his most ferocious and efficient underlings, came at morning twilight to seek the infamous heretic Eibon in his house of black gneiss on a headland above the northern main, they were surprised as well as disappointed to find him absent. Their surprise was due to the fact that they had fully thought to take him unaware; for all their tribunals against Eibon had been carried on with meticulous privacy in underground vaults with sound-proof bolted doors; and they themselves had made the long journey to his house in a single night, immediately following the hour of his condemnation. They were disappointed because the formidable writ of arrest, with symbolic flame-etched runes on a scroll of human skin, was now useless; and because there seemed to be no early prospect of trying out the ingenious agonies, the intricately harrowing ordeals which they had devised for Eibon with such providential forethought.

Morghi was especially disappointed; and the malisons which he muttered when the emptiness of the topmost room had revealed itself, were of truly cabbalistic length and fearfulness. Eibon was his chief rival in wizardry, and was acquiring altogether too much fame and prestige among the peoples of Mhu Thulan, that ultimate peninsula of the Hyperborean continent. So Morghi had been glad to believe certain malignant rumors concerning Eibon and to utilize them in the charges he had preferred. These rumors were, that Eibon was a devotee of the long-discredited heathen god Zhothaqquah, whose worship was incalculably older than man; and that Eibon's magic was drawn from his unlawful affiliation with this dark deity, who had come down by way of other worlds from a foreign universe, in primeval times when the earth was still no more than a steaming morass. The power of Zhothaqquah was still feared; and it was said that those who were willing to forgo their humanity by serving him would become the heritors of antemundane secrets, and the masters

of a knowledge so awful that it could only have been brought from outlying planets coeval with night and chaos.

The house of Eibon was built in the form of a pentagonal tower, and possessed five stories, including the two that were underground. All, of course, had been searched with painstaking thoroughness; and the three servants of Eibon had been tortured with a slow drip of boiling-hot asphaltum to make them reveal their master's whereabouts. Their continued denial of all knowledge, after a half hour of this, was taken as proof that they were genuinely ignorant. No sign of a subterranean passage was unearthed by delving in the walls and floor of the lower rooms; though Morghi had even gone so far as to remove the flagstones beneath an obscene image of Zhothaqquah which occupied the nethermost. This he had done with extreme reluctance, for the squat, fur-covered god, with his bat-like features and sloth-like body, was fearsomely abhorrent to the high-priest of the elk-goddess Yhoundeh.

Returning in renewed search to the highest room of Eibon's tower, the inquisitors were compelled to own themselves baffled. There was nothing to be found but a few articles of furniture, a few antique volumes on conjuration such as might be owned by any sorcerer, some disagreeable and gruesome paintings on rolls of pterodactyl parchment, and certain primitive urns and sculptures and totem-poles of the sort that Eibon had been so fond of collecting. Zhothaqquah, in one form or another, was represented in most of these: his face even leered with a bestial somnolence from the urn-handles; and he was to be found in half the totems (which were those of sub-human tribes) along with the seal, the mammoth, the giant tiger and the aurochs. Morghi felt that the charges against Eibon were now substantiated beyond all remaining doubt; for surely no one who was not a worshipper of Zhothaqquah would care to own even a single representation of this loathsome entity.

However, such additional evidence of guilt, no matter how significant or damnatory, was of small help in finding Eibon. Staring from the windows of the topmost chamber, where the walls fell sheer to the cliff and the cliff dropped clear on two sides to a raging sea four hundred feet below, Morghi was driven to credit his rival with superior resources of magic. Otherwise, the man's disappearance was

altogether too much of a mystery. And Morghi had no love for mysteries, unless they were part of his own stock-in-trade.

He turned from the window and re-examined the room with minutely careful attention. Eibon had manifestly used it as a sort of study: there was a writing-table of ivory, with reed-pens and various-colored inks in little earthen pots; and there were sheets of paper made from a kind of calamite, all scabbled over with odd astronomical and astrological calculations that caused Morghi to frown because he could not understand them. On each of the five walls there hung one of the parchment paintings, all of which seemed to be the work of some aboriginal race. Their themes were blasphemous and repellent; and Zhothaquah figured in all of them, amid forms and landscapes whose abnormality and sheer uncouthness may have been due to the half-developed technique of the primitive artists. Morghi now tore them from the walls one by one, as if he suspected that Eibon might in some manner be concealed behind them.

The walls were now entirely bare; and Morghi considered them for a long time, amid the respectful silence of his underlings. A queer panel, high up in the south-east side above the writing-table, had been revealed by the removal of one of the paintings. Morghi's heavy brows met in a long black bar as he eyed this panel. It was conspicuously different from the rest of the wall, being an oval-shaped inlay of some reddish metal that was neither gold nor copper—a metal that displayed an obscure and fleeting fluorescence of rare colors when one peered at it through half-shut eyelids. But somehow it was impossible even to remember with open eyes the colors which composed this fluorescence.

Morghi (who, perhaps, was cleverer and more perspicacious than Eibon had given him credit for being) conceived a suspicion that was apparently baseless and absurd, since the wall containing the panel was the outer wall of the building, and could give only on the sky and sea.

He climbed upon the writing-table and struck the panel with his fist. The sensations which he felt, and the result of the blow, were alike astounding. A sense of icy cold so extreme that it was hardly distinguishable from extreme heat ran along his hand and arm and through his whole body as he smote the unknown reddish metal. And the panel itself swung easily inward, as if on unseen hinges, with

a high sonorous clang that seemed to fall from an incomputable distance. Beyond it, Morghi saw that there was neither sky nor sea nor, in fact, anything he had ever seen or heard of, or even dreamt of in his most outrageous nightmares . . .

He turned to his companions. The look on his face was half amazement, half triumph.

"Wait here till I return," he commanded, and leapt headlong through the open panel.

## II.

The charges that had been brought against Eibon were indeed true. The sagacious wizard, in his long-life study of laws and agencies, both natural and supernatural, had taken account of the myths that were prevalent in Mhu Thulan regarding Zhothaquah, and had thought it conceivably worth while to make a personal investigation of this obscure pre-human entity. He had cultivated the acquaintance of Zhothaquah, who, in the desuetude of his worship, was now driven to lead an existence wholly subterranean; he had offered the prescribed prayers, had made the sacrifices that were most acceptable; and the strange, sleepy little god, in return for Eibon's interest and his ex-votos, had confided to him certain information that was more than useful in the practice of the black arts. Also he told Eibon some autobiographical data that confirmed the popular legends in more explicit detail. For reasons which he did not specify, he had come to earth in former aeons from the planet Cykranosh (the name by which Saturn was called in Mhu Thulan); and Cykranosh itself had been merely a way-station in his travels from remoter worlds and systems. As a special reward, after years of service and burnt-offerings, he presented to Eibon a large thin oval plate of some ultra-telluric metal, instructing him to have it fitted as a hinged panel in an upper room of his house. The panel, if swung outward from the wall on open air, would have the peculiar property of giving admittance to the world Cykranosh, many million miles away in space. According to the vague and somewhat unsatisfactory explanation offered by the god, this panel, being partly wrought from a kind of matter which belonged to another universe than man's, possessed uncommon radiative properties that served to ally it with some



higher dimension of space, through which the distance to astronomically remote spheres was a mere step.

Zhothaquah, however, warned Eibon not to make use of the panel unless in time of extreme need, as a means of escape from otherwise inevitable danger; for it would be difficult if not impossible to return to earth from Cykranosh—a world where Eibon might find it anything but easy to acclimate himself, since the conditions of life were very different from those in Mhu Thulan, even though they did not involve so total an inversion of all terrene standards and norms as that which prevailed in the more outlying planets. Some of Zhothaquah's relatives were still resident in Cykranosh and were worshipped by its peoples; and Zhothaquah told Eibon the most unpronounceable name of the most powerful of these deities, saying that it would be useful to him as a sort of pass-word if he should ever need to visit Cykranosh.

The idea of a panel that would open on some remote world impressed Eibon as being rather fantastic, not to say far-fetched; but he had found Zhothaquah to be in all ways and at all times a most veracious deity. However, he made no trial of the panel's unique virtues, till Zhothaquah (who maintained a close surveillance of all underground doings) had warned him of the machinations of Morghi and the processes of ecclesiastic law that were being instituted in the vaults below the temple of Yhoundeh. Knowing as he did the power of these jealous bigots, Eibon decided that it would be injudicious to the point of folly if he were to let himself fall into their hands. Bidding a short and grateful farewell to Zhothaquah, and collecting a small fardel of bread and meat and wine, he retired to his study and climbed upon the writing-table. Then, lifting aside the crude picture of a scene in Cykranosh with which Zhothaquah had inspired some primeval half-human artist, he pushed open the panel it had served to conceal.

Eibon saw that Zhothaquah was indeed a god of his word: for the scene beyond the panel was nothing that could ever find a legitimate place in the topography of Mhu Thulan or of any terrestrial region. It did not altogether appeal to him; but there was no alternative, save the inquisitorial cells of the goddess Yhoundeh. Envisaging in thought the various refinements and complications of torture which Morghi would now have prepared, he sprang through

the opening into Cykranosh with an agility that was quite juvenile for a wizard of mature years.

It was only a step; but turning he saw that all trace of the panel or of his dwelling had now disappeared. He was standing on a long declivity of ashen soil, down which a sluggish stream that was not water, but some liquescent metal resembling mercury, ran from tremendous unscalable shoulders and horns of the mountain-heights above, to debouch in a hill-surrounded lake of the same liquid. The slope beneath him was lined with rows of peculiar objects; and he could not make up his mind whether they were trees, mineral forms or animal organisms, since they appeared to combine certain characteristics of all these. This preternatural landscape was appallingly distinct in every detail, under a greenish-black sky that was over-arched from end to end with a triple cyclopean ring of dazzling luminosity. The air was cold, and Eibon did not care for its sulphurescent odor, or the odd puckery sensation it left in his nostrils and lungs. And when he took a few steps on the unattractive-looking soil, he found that it had the disconcerting friability of ashes that have dried once more after being wetted with rain.

He started down the slope, half-fearing that some of the equivocal objects around him would reach out their mineral boughs or arms to arrest his progress. They seemed to be a kind of bluish-purple obsidian cacti, with limbs that ended in formidable talon-like spines, and heads that were altogether too elaborate for either fruits or blossoms. They did not move as he passed among them; but he heard a faint and singular tinkling with many modulations of tone, that preceded and followed him along the slope. Eibon received the uncomfortable idea that they were holding converse with each other; and were perhaps debating what should be done with him or about him.

However, he reached without mishap or hindrance the end of the declivity, where terraces and ledges of decomposing trap, like a mighty stairway of elder aeons, had rimmed the sunken lake of liquescent metal. Wondering as to the way he should now take, Eibon stood irresolute on one of the ledges.

His train of conjecture was broken by a shadow that fell suddenly athwart him and lay like a monstrous blot on the crumbling stone at his feet. He was not prepossessed by the shadow: it was outrageously

defiant of all known esthetic standards; and its malformation and distortion were no less than extravagant.

He turned to see what manner of creature had flung the shadow. This being, he perceived, was not easy to classify, with its ludicrously short legs, its insanelly elongated arms, and its round, sleepy-looking head that was pendulous from a spherical body, as if it were turning a somnambulistic somersault. But after he had studied it awhile and had noted its furriness and somnolent expression, he began to see a vague though inverted likeness to the god Zhothaquah. And remembering how Zhothaquah had said that the form assumed by himself on earth was not altogether that which he had worn in Cykranosh, Eibon now wondered if this entity were not one of Zhothaquah's relatives.

He was trying to recall the almost unarticulable name that had been confined to him by the god as a sort of pass-word, in Cykranosh, when the owner of that unusual shadow, without seeming to note Eibon's presence, began a descent of the terraces and ledges toward the lake. Its locomotion was mainly on its hands, for the absurd legs were not half enough for the steps it had to take. Arriving at the lake-edge, the creature drank of the fluid metal in a hearty and copious manner that served to convince Eibon of its godship; for surely no being of an inferior biologic order would quench its thirst with a beverage so extraordinary. Then, re-ascending to the ledge where Eibon stood, it paused and appeared to notice him for the first time.

Eibon had finally remembered the outlandish name for which he was groping.

"Hziulquoigmnzah," he sought to articulate. Doubtless the result was not wholly conformable to Cykranoshian rules; but Eibon did the best he could with the vocal organs at his command. His auditor seemed to recognize the word, for it peered at Eibon a little less sleepily than before, with its inversely situated eyes; and even deigned to utter something which sounded like an attempt to correct his pronunciation. Eibon wondered how he was ever to learn such a language; or, having learned it, how he was ever to pronounce it. However, it heartened him a little to find that he was understood at all.

"Zhothaquah," he said, repeating the name three times in his most orotund incantatory manner.

The topsyturvy being opened its eyes a trifle more, and again admonished him, uttering the word Zhothaquah with an indescribable abbreviation of vowels and thickening of consonants. Then it stood regarding him for a while as if in doubt or cogitation. Finally it raised one of its ell-long arms from the ground and pointed along the shore, where the mouth of a low valley was discernible among the hills. It said distinctly the enigmatic words: "*Iqbni dlosh oelhqlongh*"; and then, while the sorcerer was pondering the significance of this unusual locution, it turned away from him and started to re-ascend the higher steps, toward a rather spacious cavern with columned opening, that he had not heretofore perceived. It had hardly passed from sight into the cavern, when Eibon was greeted by the high-priest Morghi, who had readily followed him by this tracks in the ashen soil.

"Detestable sorcerer! Abominable heretic! I arrest you!" said Morghi with pontifical severity.

Eibon was surprised, not to say startled; but it re-assured him to see that Morghi was alone. He drew the sword of highly tempered bronze which he carried, and smiled.

"I should advise you to moderate your language, Morghi," he admonished. "Also, your idea of arresting me is slightly out of place now, since we are alone together in Cykranosh, and Mhu Thulan and the temple-cells of Yhoundeh are many million miles away."

Morghi did not appear to relish this information. He scowled and muttered:

"I suppose this is some more of your damnable wizardry."

Eibon chose to ignore the insinuation.

"I have been conversing with one of the gods of Cykranosh," he said magniloquently. "The god, whose name is Hziulquoigmnzah, has given me a mission to perform, a message to deliver, and has indicated the direction in which I should go. I suggest that you lay aside our little mundane disagreement, and accompany me. Of course we could slit each other's throats or eviscerate each other, since we are both armed. But under the circumstances I think you will see the puerility, not to mention the sheer inutility, of such a proceeding. If we both live we may be of mutual use and assistance, in a strange world whose problems and difficulties, if I mistake not, are worthy of our united powers."

Morghi frowned and pondered.

"Very well," he said grudgingly, "I consent. But I warn you that matters will have to take their course when we return to Mhu Thulan."

"That," rejoined Eibon, "is a contingency which need not trouble either of us. Shall we start?"

### III.

The two Hyperboreans had been following a defile that wound away from the lake of fluid metal among hills whose vegetation thickened and grew more various as their height decreased. It was the valley that had been indicated to the sorcerer by the topsy-turvy biped. Morghi, a natural inquisitor in all senses, was plying Eibon with questions.

"Who, or what, was the singular entity that disappeared in a cavern just before I accosted you?"

"That was the god Hziulquoigmnzah."

"And who, pray, is this god? I confess that I have never heard of him."

"He is the paternal uncle of Zhothaquah."

Morghi was silent, except for a queer sound that might have been either an interrupted sneeze or an exclamation of disgust. But after awhile he asked:

"And what is this mission of yours?"

"That will be revealed in due time," answered Eibon with sententious dignity. "I am not allowed to discuss it at present. I have a message from the god which I must deliver only to the proper persons."

Morghi was unwillingly impressed.

"Well, I suppose you know what you are doing and where you are going. Can you give me any hint as to our destination?"

"That, too, will be revealed in due time."

The hills were lapsing gently to a well-wooded plain whose flora would have been the despair of earthly botanists. Beyond the last hill, Eibon and Morghi came to a narrow road that began abruptly and stretched away in the distance. Eibon took the road without hesitation. Indeed there was little else to do, for the thickets of mineral plants and trees were rapidly becoming impenetrable. They lined the

way with serrate branches that were like sheaves of darts and daggers, of sword-blades and needles.

Eibon and Morghi soon noticed that the road was full of large footprints, all of them circular in form and rimmed about with the marks of protruding claws. However, they did not communicate their misgivings to each other.

After an hour or two of progression along the yielding ashy thoroughfare, amid the vegetation that was more horrent than ever with knives and caltrops, the travelers began to remember that they were hungry. Morghi, in haste to arrest Eibon, had not breakfasted; and Eibon, in his natural hurry to evade Morghi, had committed a like omission. They halted by the wayside, and the sorcerer shared his fardel of food and wine with the priest. They ate and drank with frugality, however; since the supply was limited, and the landscape about them was not likely to prove a source of viands that were suitable for human sustenance.

With strength and courage revived by this little refecation, they continued their journey. They had not gone far when they overtook a remarkable monster that was plainly the originator of the numerous footprints. It was squatting down with its armored haunches toward the travelers, filling the whole road for an indeterminate distance ahead. They could see that it was possessed of a myriad short legs; but they could form no idea of what its head and forequarters were like.

Eibon and Morghi were much dismayed.

"Is this another of your gods?" asked Morghi with attempted irony.

The sorcerer did not reply. But he realized that he had a reputation to sustain. He went boldly forward and cried out: "Hziulquoigmnzah" in the most resonant bellow that he could summon. At the same time he drew his sword and thrust it between two plates of the horny mail that covered the monster's hindquarters.

Greatly to his relief, the animal began to move and resumed its progression along the road. The Hyperboreans followed it; and whenever the creature slackened its pace Eibon would repeat the formula which he had found so effective. Morghi was compelled to regard him with a certain awe.

They traveled on in this manner for several hours. The great luminous triple ring still over-arched the zenith, but a strangely small and chilly sun had now intersected the ring and was declining toward the west of Cykranosh. The forest along the way was still a high wall of sharp metallic foliage, but other roads and paths and byways were now branching off from the one that the monster followed.

All was very silent, except for the many-footed shuffling of this uncouth animal; and neither Eibon nor Morghi had spoken for miles. The high-priest was regretting more and more his rashness in pursuing Eibon through the panel; and Eibon was wishing that Zhothaquah had given him the entrée to a different sort of world. They were startled out of their meditations by a sudden clamor of deep and booming voices that rose from somewhere in advance of the monster. It was a veritable tintamar of unhuman guttural bellowings and croakings, with notes that were somehow suggestive of reproof and objurgation, like shrewish drums, as if the monster were being scolded by a group of unimaginable entities.

"Well?" queried Morghi.

"All that we are destined to behold will reveal itself at the proper time," said Eibon.

The forest was thinning rapidly, and the clamor of termagant bellows was drawing closer. Still ensuing the hindquarters of their multipedal guide, which was crawling on with reluctant slowness, the travelers emerged in an open space, on a most singular tableau. The monster, which was plainly of a tame and harmless and stupid sort, was cowering before a knot of beings no larger than men, who were armed only with long-handled goads. These beings, though they were bipeds, and were not quite so unheard-of in their anatomic structure as the entity which Eibon had met by the lake, were nevertheless sufficiently unusual; for their heads and bodies were apparently combined in one, and their ears, eyes, nostrils, mouths, and certain other organs of doubtful use were all arranged in a somewhat unconventional grouping on their chests and abdomens. They were wholly naked, and were rather dark in color, with no trace of hair on any of their parts or members. Behind them at a little distance were many edifices of a kind which hardly conformed to human ideas of architectural symmetry.

Eibon strode valorously forward, with Morghi following discreetly. The torso-headed beings ceased their objurgation of the fawning monster and peered at the earth-men with expressions that were difficult to read on account of the odd and baffling relationship of their features.

"Hziulquoigmnzah! Zhothaquah!" said Eibon with oracular solemnity and sonority. Then, after a pause of hieratic length: "*lqbui dlosh odhqlongh!*"

The result was indeed gratifying, and was all that could be expected even from a formula so remarkable; for the Cykranoshian beings dropped their goads and bowed before the sorcerer till their featured bosoms almost touched the ground.

"I have performed the mission, I have delivered the message given me by Hziulquoigmnzah," said Eibon to Morghi.

#### IV.

For several Cykranoshian months the two Hyperboreans were the honored guests of this quaint and worthy and virtuous people, who called themselves the Bhlemphroims. Eibon had a real gift for languages and made progress in the local tongue far more readily than Morghi. His knowledge of the customs, manners, ideas and beliefs of the Bhlemphroims soon became extensive; but he found it a source of disillusionment as well as of illumination.

The armored monster that he and Morghi had driven before them so valiantly was, he learned, a domestic beast of burden that had strayed away from its owners amid the mineral vegetation of the desert lands adjoining Vhlorrh, the chief town of the Bhlemphroims. The genuflections with which Eibon and Morghi had been greeted were only an expression of gratitude for the safe return of this beast; and were not, as Eibon had thought, an acknowledgment of the divine names and the fearsome phrase "*lqbui dlosh odhqlongh.*" The being that Eibon had met by the lake was indeed the god Hziulquoigmnzah; and there were dim traditions of Zhothaquah in certain early myths of the Bhlemphroims. But this people, it seemed, were most regrettably materialistic and had long ceased to offer sacrifice and prayer to the gods; though they spoke of them with a sort of distant respect and with no actual blasphemy. Eibon learned that the words "*lqbui dlosh odhqlongh*" doubtless belonged to

a private language of the gods, which the Bhlemphroims no longer understood; but which, however, was still studied by a neighboring people, the Ydheems, who maintained the ancient formal worship of Hziulquoigmnzah and various related deities.

The Bhlemphroims were indeed a practical race, and had few if any interests beyond the cultivation of a great variety of edible fungi, the breeding of large centipedal animals, and the propagation of their own species. The latter process, as revealed to Eibon and Morghi, was somewhat unusual: though the Bhlemphroims were bisexual, only one female in a generation was chosen for reproductive duties; and this female, after growing to mammoth size on food prepared from a special fungus, became the mother of an entire new generation.

When they had been well-initiated into the life and customs of Vhlorrh, the Hyperboreans were privileged to see the future national mother, called the Djhenquomh, who had now attained the requisite proportions after years of scientific nourishment. She lived in an edifice that was necessarily larger than any of the other buildings in Vhlorrh; and her sole activity was the consumption of immense quantities of food. The sorcerer and the inquisitor were impressed, even if not captivated, by the mountainous amplitude of her charms and by their highly novel arrangement. They were told that the male parent (or parents) of the forthcoming generation had not yet been selected.

The possession of separate heads by the Hyperboreans seemed to lend them a remarkable biologic interest in the eyes of their hosts. The Bhlemphroims, it was learned, had not always been headless but had reached their present physical conformation through a slow course of evolution, in which the head of the archetypal Bhlemphroim had been merged by imperceptible degrees with the torso. But unlike most peoples, they did not regard their current stage of development with unqualified complacency. Indeed, their headlessness was a source of national regret; they deplored the retrenchment of nature in this regard; and the arrival of Eibon and Morghi, who were looked upon as ideal exemplars of cephalic evolution, had served to quicken their eugenic sorrow.

The sorcerer and the inquisitor, on their part, found life rather dull among the Bhlemphroims after the initial quaintness and feeling of exoticism had worn off. The diet was tiresome for one thing—

an endless succession of raw and boiled and roasted mushrooms, varied only by the coarse and flabby meat of tame monsters. And this people, though they were always polite and respectful, did not seem to be greatly awed by the exhibitions of Hyperborean magic with which Eibon and Morghi favored them; and their lamentable want of religious ardor made all evangelistic endeavor a thankless task. And, being fundamentally unimaginative, they were not even duly impressed by the fact that their visitors had come from a remote ultra-Cykranoshian world.

"I feel," said Eibon to Morghi one day, "that the god was sadly mistaken in deigning to send this people a message of any sort."

It was very soon after this that a large committee of the Bhlemphroims waited upon Eibon and Morghi and informed them that after long consideration they had been selected as the fathers of the next generation and were to be married forthwith to the tribal mother in the hope that a well-headed race of Bhlemphroims would result from the union.

Eibon and Morghi were quite overcome by the proposed eugenic honor. Thinking of the mountainous female they had seen, Morghi was prone to remember his sacerdotal vows of celibacy and Eibon to take similar vows upon himself without delay. The inquisitor, indeed, was so overwhelmed as to be rendered almost speechless; but, with rare presence of mind, the sorcerer temporized by making a few queries anent the legal and social status which would be enjoyed by Morghi and himself as the husbands of the Djhenquomh. And the naïve Bhlemphroims told him that this would be a matter of brief concern; that after completing their marital duties the husbands were always served to the national mother in the form of ragouts and other culinary preparations.

The Hyperboreans tried to conceal from their hosts the reluctance with which they both regarded the coming honor in all its phases. Being as usual a master of diplomatics, Eibon went so far as to make a formal acceptance on behalf of himself and his companion. But when the delegation of Bhlemphroims had departed, he said to Morghi:

"I am more than ever convinced that the god was mistaken. We must leave the city of Vhlorrh with all feasible dispatch, and continue

our journey till we find a people who are worthier to receive his communication."

It did not seem to have occurred to the simple and patriotic Bhlemphroims that the fathering of their next national litter was a privilege that anyone would dream of rejecting. Eibon and Morghi were subjected to no manner of duress or constraint, and their movements were not even watched. It was an easy matter to leave the house in which they were domiciled, when the rumbling diaphragmic snores of their hosts were ascending to the great rings of Cykranoshian moons, and follow the highway that led from Vhlorrh toward the country of the Ydheems.

The road before them was well-marked; and the ring-light was almost as clear and brilliant as full day. They traveled a long distance through the diversified and always unique scenery which it served to illumine, before the rising of the sun and the consequent discovery of their departure by the Bhlemphroims. These single-minded bipeds, it is likely, were too sorely perplexed and dumbfounded by the loss of guests whom they had chosen as future progenitors to even think of following them.

The land of the Ydheems (as indicated on an earlier occasion by the Bhlemphroims) was many leagues away; and the tracts of ashen desert, of mineral cacti, of fungoid forests and high mountains intervened. The boundary of the Bhlemphroims (marked by a crude sculpturesque representation of the tribal mother beside the way) was passed by the travelers before dawn.

And during the following day they journeyed among more than one of those unusual races who diversify so widely the population of Saturn. They saw the Djhibbis, that apterous and Stylitean bird-people, who roost on their individual dolomites for years at a time and meditate upon the cosmos, uttering to each other at long intervals the mystic syllables *yop*, *yeep*, and *yoop*, which are said to express an unfathomed range of esoteric thought.

And they met those flibbertigibbet pygmies, the Ephiqhs, who hollow out their homes in the trunks of certain large fungi, and are always having to hunt new habitations because the old ones crumble into powder in a few days. And they heard the underground croaking of that mysterious people, the Ghlonghs, who dread not only the

sunlight but also the ring-light, and who have never yet been seen by any of the surface-dwellers.

By sunset, however, Eibon and Morghi had crossed the domains of all the afore-mentioned, and had even clomb the lower scarps of those mountains which still divided them from the land of the Ydheems. Here, on a sheltered ledge, their weariness impelled them to halt; and since they had now ceased to dread pursuit from the Bhlemphroims, they wrapped themselves more tightly in their mantles against the cold, after a meager supper of raw mushrooms, and fell asleep.

Their slumber was disturbed by a series of cacodemoniactal dreams in which both thought they had been recaptured by the Bhlemphroims and were forced to espouse the Djhenquomh. They awoke shortly before dawn, from visions whose details were excruciatingly vivid, and were more than ready to resume their ascent of the mountains.

The slopes and cliffs above them were desolate enough to have deterred any travelers of inferior hardihood or less cogent fears. The tall woods of fungi dwindled ere long to alpine size; they lessened to forms that were no bigger than lichens; and after these, there was nothing but black and naked stone. The wiry and slender Eibon suffered no great inconvenience from the climb; but Morghi, with his sacerdotal girth and bulk, was soon winded. Whenever he paused to get his breath, Eibon would say to him: "Think of the national mother," and Morghi would climb the next acclivity like an agile but somewhat asthmatic mountain-sheep.

They came at noon to a pinnacle-guarded pass from which they could look down on the country of the Ydheems. They saw that it was a broad and fertile realm, with woods of mammoth mushrooms and other thallophytes that excelled in size and number those of any other region they had yet traversed. Even the mountain-slopes were more fruitful on this side, for Eibon and Morghi had not descended far when they entered a grove of enormous puff-balls and toad-stools.

They were admiring the magnitude and variety of these growths, when they heard a thunderous noise on the mountains above them. The noise drew nearer, gathering to itself the roar of new thunders. Eibon would have prayed to Zhothaquah, and Morghi would have supplicated the goddess Yhoundeh, but unfortunately there was no

time. They were caught in a mighty mass of rolling puff-balls and toppling toad-stools overthrown by the huge avalanche that had started on the heights above; and, borne with increasing momentum, with vertiginous speed and tumult amid an ever-growing heap of shattered fungi, they finished their descent of the mountain in less than a minute.

## V.

Endeavoring to extricate themselves from the pile of thallophytic debris in which they were buried, Eibon and Morghi noticed that there still seemed to be a good deal of noise, even though the avalanche had stopped. Also, there were other movements and heavings than their own in the pile. When they had gotten their necks and shoulders clear, they discovered that the noise was being made by certain people who differed from their late hosts the Bhlemphroims in possessing rudimentary heads. These people were some of the Ydheems, on one of whose towns the avalanche had descended. Roofs and towers were emerging from the mass of boulders and puff-balls; and just in front of the Hyperboreans there was a large temple-like edifice from whose blocked-up door a multitude of the Ydheems had now tunneled their way. At sight of Eibon and Morghi they suspended their labors; and the sorcerer, who had freed himself and had made sure that all his bones and members were intact, now took the opportunity to address them:

"Harken! I have come to bring you a message from the god Hziulquoigmzhah. I have borne it faithfully on ways beset with many hazards and perils. In the god's own divine language, it runs thus: *'Iqbui dlosh odhqlongh.'*"

Since he spoke in the dialect of the Bhlemphroims, which differed somewhat from their own, it is doubtful if the Ydheems altogether understood the first part of his utterance. But Hziulquoigmzhah was their tutelary deity; and they knew the language of the gods. At the words: *"Iqbui dlosh odhqlongh,"* there was a most remarkable resumption and increase of activity, a ceaseless running to and fro on the part of the Ydheems, a shouting of guttural orders, and a recrudescence of new heads and limbs from the avalanche. Those who had issued from the temple re-entered it, and came out once more carrying a huge image of Hziulquoigmzhah,

some smaller eikons of lesser though allied deities, and a very ancient-looking idol which both Eibon and Morghi recognized as having a resemblance to Zhothaquah. Others of the Ydheems brought their household goods and furniture forth from the dwellings; and, signing the Hyperboreans to accompany them, the whole populace began to evacuate the town.

Eibon and Morghi were much mystified. And it was not until a new town had been built on the fungus-wooded plain at the distance of a full day's march, and they themselves had been installed among the priests of the new temple, that they learned the reason of it all and the meaning of: *"Iqbui dlosh odhqlongh."* These words meant merely: "Be on your way"; and the god had addressed them to Eibon as a dismissal. But the co-incidental coming of the avalanche and of Eibon and Morghi with this purported message from the god, had been taken by the Ydheems as a minatory injunction to remove from their present location. Thus the wholesale exodus of people with their idols and domestic belongings.

The new town was called Ghlomph, after the one that the avalanche had buried. Here, for the remainder of their days, Eibon and Morghi were held in much honor; and their coming with the message *"Iqbui dlosh odhqlongh"* was deemed a fortunate thing, since there were no more avalanches to threaten the security of Ghlomph in its new situation remote from the mountains.

The Hyperboreans shared the increment of civic affluence and well-being resultant from this security. There was no national mother among the Ydheems, who propagated themselves in a far more general manner than the Bhlemphroims; so existence was quite safe and tranquil. Eibon, at least, was really in his element; for the news which he brought of Zhothaquah, who was still worshipped in this region of Cykranosh, had enabled him to set up as a sort of minor prophet, even apart from the renown which he enjoyed as the bearer of the divine message. Morghi, however, was not entirely happy: though the Ydheems were religious, they did not carry their devotional fervor to the point of bigotry or intolerance; so it was quite impossible to start an inquisition among them. But still there were compensations: the fungus-wine of the Ydheems was potent though evil-tasting; and there were females of a sort, if one were not too squeamish. So Morghi and Eibon both settled down to an ecclesiastic regimen

which, after all, was not so radically different from that of Mhu Thulan or any other place on the planet of their birth.

Such were the various adventures, and such was the final lot of this redoubtable pair in Cykranosh. But in Eibon's tower of black gneiss on that headland of the northern sea in Mhu Thulan, the underlings of Morghi waited for days, neither wishing to follow the high-priest through the magic panel nor to leave in despite of his orders. At length they were recalled by a special dispensation from the hierophant who had been chosen as Morghi's temporary successor. But the result of the whole affair was highly regrettable from the standpoint of the hierarchy of Yhoundeh. It was universally believed that Eibon had not only escaped by virtue of the powerful magic he had learned from Zhothaquah, but had made away with Morghi into the bargain. As a consequence of this belief, the faith of Yhoundeh declined, and there was a wide-spread revival of the dark worship of Zhothaquah throughout Mhu Thulan in the last centuries before the onset of the great Ice Age. ✱

## Book Three

### Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom



## About "Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom"

by Lin Carter

The third part of the *Book of Eibon* is entitled "Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom," and consists of a treatise of considerable length on theogony (or, perhaps, "demonology" would be the *mot juste*). It discusses the hidden origins of the earth, the creation of the first of the Old Ones, the cause of their rebellion against the Elder Gods, the war between the two groups of divinities, the flight into this dimension of space/time by the Old Ones, and so on . . . a capsule history of the Elder World, no less.

That Clark Ashton Smith had intended to translate this section, in whole or part, from the XIII century Norman-French of Gaspard du Nord, seems evident from his inclusion of the title "Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom" among a list of future literary projects. That he did not do so is regrettable, but he did render one passage, consisting of seventy-six words in his slightly abridged version, and incorporated it in his story "Ubbo-Sathla." (The passage which he eliminated, by the way, is marked in that story by ellipses.)

My work in translating Book III of the Eibonic text is, as yet, unfinished. But here is the first chapter.

# Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom

by Lin Carter

... But now I would speak of the nine ultratelluric races that have infested this Earth from the Prime, and the first to come voyaging hither were the star-headed crinoid things we call the Polar Ones, for that they reared their monolithic cities in regions contiguous to the Austral Pole.

## I. THE UNBEGOTTEN SOURCE

Unthinkably more ancient is this Earth than we dare to dream, and innumerable are the marvels and the mysteries of her shadowy and forgotten prime. Race upon race has arisen from her teeming fens, or descended upon her from beyond the stars, and each has reigned over the primordial Earth in its turn. But in the flux of unmeasurable ages each has gone down at length into the dust, and strange and terrible are the legends whispered of their doom. In truth, it has been writ that many are the newly-founded cities whose foundations are reared upon the sundered shards of forgotten cities crumbled into dust, and by the world forgot.

Of all Earth-dwellers, none is more ancient than that frightful abomination whose enigma is mercifully hidden from the knowledge of men behind the name of Ubbo-Sathla, as a ghastly visage may hide its lineaments behind a mask. It is said that the Unbegotten One lay wallowing in the bubbling slime of Its lair from the Beginning, as It shall wallow at the End, and that Ubbo-Sathla is destined to be the last of all living things upon this Earth as It was the first; for Ubbo-Sathla is both the source and the end. Before the coming of Tsathoggua or Yog-Sothoth or Cthulhu from the stars, Ubbo-Sathla dwelt in the steaming fens of the new-made Earth: a mass without head or members, spawning the gray formless efts of the prime, and the grisly prototypes of terrene life. And though there be many of Its spawn that leagued with the Begotten of Azathoth in that war the idiot Chaos raised against the Elder Gods, Ubbo-Sathla knoweth naught of contention nor of change, nor even of Time itself, being changeless and eternal. From the very Beginning, Ubbo-Sathla abides in the teeming slime-pits of gray-litten Y'qaa, ceaselessly casting-forth

the mewling prototypes of all earthly life. And all earthly life, it is told, shall go back at last through the great cycle of time to Ubbo-Sathla.

Now, upon remote and terribly-guarded Celaeno lie hidden those glyph-engraved tablets of star-quarried stone which the Azathoth-spawn rashly thieved from the citadel of the Elder Gods, which was the first of their acts of rebellion against Those that had created their progenitor: yet even those immemorial Records contain little concerning the source and creation of Ubbo-Sathla. But as concerns the secret origin of this Earth they preserve a dreadful secret, that untold vingtillions of aeons ago, 'twas Ubbo-Sathla, very twin to Azathoth, and with Its twin brother Chaos very first of all the Old Ones whom the Gods shaped from nothingness by concentration of Will alone, who wrested this planet from its coign.

It is written that among the Records stolen from the Gods were certain tablets of ultratelluric stone which, even unto this very hour, doth Ubbo-Sathla preserve and guard in the depths of Y'qaa, and for the theft thereof was Ubbo-Sathla bereft of wit and reason, when the Gods rose up in Their wrath. It is said that these tablets are none other than the Elder Keys, and that they are graven with the secrets of the power of the Gods Themselves, and that by the use merely of a single Key was Ubbo-Sathla able to cause this Earth to fall into our Universe far from that unthinkably alien plane beyond the cosmos of matter and of time, where the Elder Gods reign and rule forever. And the secret of this power had the Unbegotten One imparted to Its brother Chaos, whereby were the first of the Old Ones able to flee from the wrath of the Gods, and, entering this Universe, traverse its starry abyss so that they might again join forces with Ubbo-Sathla; but the Gods pursued Their rebellious servants and defeated them at length, in that conflict whereof I will hereafter speak. Yet this is the reason why the Old Ones, although scattered afar and prisoned in far places by the Gods, have for ages sought, as they seek to this day, the conquest and dominion of the earth, for within its depths Ubbo-Sathla guardeth the Elder Keys, whereby even the Gods may be whelmed and trodden down.

Thus it was that even in the dim, forgotten aeon of the Dawn, it is said Ubbo-Sathla writhed in hideous and unceasing fecundity in gray-litten Y'qaa, forever guarding the Elder Keys. And there have

been those of humankind who have betimes unwisely and imprudently sought to penetrate into the fastnesses of Its abode, which lies beneath Mount Voormithadreth in the central provinces of Hyperborea, to steal from Ubbo-Sathla even that which It once stole from the Gods.

Of one such, the antehuman sorcerer Haon-Dor, I have aforetime writ; this mage formerly dwelt in dim boreal kingdoms whose very names have been forgot, and rashly did the ill-advised Haon-Dor make his descent into the abyss of Y'qaa, where the mindless Demiurge lay vast and swollen amidst the rolling and miasmatic slime, and from one horrific glimpse of That which he sought, recoiled shuddering. And he abides yet beneath Voormithadreth, as doth Ubbo-Sathla, and shuns the companionship of men and the mockery of the light of day.

But now I would speak of the nine ultratelluric races that have infested this Earth from the prime, and the first to come voyaging thither were the star-headed crinoid things we call the Polar Ones, for that they reared their monolithic cities in regions contiguous to the austral pole.

### Translator's Comment

At first glance, at least, there seem to be certain puzzling contradictions in the text, one of which can easily be resolved. This is, Eibon clearly names Ubbo-Sathla as "the Unbegotten Source," but a ways further on explains that the Elder Gods created the two brothers, Ubbo-Sathla and Azathoth by sheer willpower, concentrated thought-waves, perhaps. But this apparent inconsistency is merely a matter of vocabulary: "begotten" and "created" do not at all have the same meaning. The actual meaning of the word "begotten" is "fathered," and to be created out of nothingness is not the same as being fathered.

A more curious and baffling internal contradiction is that in one place Eibon states that *from the beginning* (i.e., from the moment of being created), Ubbo-Sathla was a witless and mindless thing, while in another passage he tells us that the Elder Gods destroyed Its intelligence—the powers of rational thought—for Its part in the acts of rebellion. This may have been a careless slip by du Nord, or even a scribal error in the Graeco-Bactrian text he was working from; or,

just possibly, Eibon was hinting at some enigma concerning Ubbo-Sathla which, for whatever reason, he did not wish to discuss.

Another element in the text which rather baffles me is the precise role played by Ubbo-Sathla in the rebellion. If It "knows naught" of contention, then It obviously played no part in the rebellion. If that is so, then why were the Elder Keys hidden in the gulf of Y'qaa? Perhaps because they were the most precious of all the thieved Elder Records, and the Azathoth-spawn sought a well-concealed place in which to hide them?

And another question: if Ubbo-Sathla is "bereft of reason and of wit" (that is, the senses), how could the entity have made use of the power of the Keys to remove this planet from the universe of the Gods, or possibly have "imparted" the secret of interdimensional travel to Azathoth and the others? Frankly, it makes no sense to me!

Keep in mind that the text of Eibon, originally written in the Tsath-yo language of Hyperborea, went through numerous translations into emerging tongues—the Kishite Recension, made shortly after the doom of Sarnath, the Punic version, the lost Latin translation by Phillipus Faber, the Graeco-Bactrian, and, finally, du Nord's own Norman-French. As with any ancient text rendered from language into language something gets lost in the translation, or elided, or omitted.

I suspect the text of Eibon as we now have it is to one degree or another corrupt and filled with omissions or scribal errors.

### II. THE POLAR ONES

A billion years ago or more they came down from stars and galaxies and universes remote and by us unknown, to certain regions about the Pole. All of the Elder World was but one limitless ocean in that age, and the Moon herself was but recently torn from the womb of the Pacific; nascent and uninhabited was this Earth in those dim, forgotten days, for the terrene life had not as yet advanced beyond mere plastic clusters of cells cast forth from the primordial Being we call Ubbo-Sathla.

Weird and unearthly hybrids were these Polar Ones, sexless semivegetable carnivores with cylindrical and pentalobular bodies, their starfish heads abristle with cilia of brilliant prismatic hues. They reproduced by means of spores and conversed by musical pipings;

man-tall and claw-footed were they, with ribbed membranous wings like unto those of enormous bats, and the which beat somehow against the very fabric of the aether itself, by which mode couldst they traverse even the trackless gulfs between the very stars.

Upon the oozy sea-bottoms of the Elder World they dwelt for interminable epochs, raising their colossus submarine cities of cyclopean stone through the forced slave-labor of certain primitive life-forms which the Polar Ones had molded in their breeding-vats: for tradition credits the crinoid things of paleogeologic Antarctica with the secret of shaping and directing the evolution of life, from primal cellular conglomerates into the higher forms.

The first entities that slithered from these vats were even those frightful and abominable nightmare-things of Elder myth which the Pnakotic Manuscripts term shoggoths. Huge and viscous multicellular creatures of black protoplasmic slime were these shoggoths of horrid legend, and the Polar Ones employed them for reason of their vast, untiring strength and for their curious abilities to extrude limbs and sensory organs at need from their quaking and jellied loathsomeness.

At first were the shoggoths used as mere brutes of burden and perchance, as fragmentary records fearfully hint, for *food*. But the primordial shoggoths as well possessed a surprising capacity for intelligence and for independent thought, which in the beginning went unsuspected among their Masters, whom, it would seem, had wrought more cunningly than even they knew.

The ancient records hint that all terrestrial life is the product of evolutionary forces working at pure random on the life cells created in the breeding-vats of the star-headed dwellers in the Austral Sea, and in particular from those cells which the Polar Ones had carelessly or unthinkingly let escape beyond the radius of their attention, which cells thereupon developed unchecked; and these things the Polar Ones foolishly did not notice, or if they did, held a matter of but trivial consequence.

Once, however, the rampant evolution of these cellular groupings had been brought to the attention of the star-headed beings, the Polar Ones permitted them to continue to develop towards higher and even higher levels of animal and vegetable life, for some unknown and unguessable reason; or if not entirely unguessable,

then perchance simply through an aloof and impersonal scientific curiosity . . . and thus the Elder Records assert that the Polar Ones initiated all terrene life, either in jest or in terrible error.

### III. THE ELDER BEINGS

Long dwelt the crinoid race undisturbed beneath the teeming **L**oceans of the Prime; but with the passage of millions of years the first dry land uprose from the deeps, and that eventuated in the regions of the Austral Pole; and ere long this was followed by the upheaval of even newer lands in the southern seas, aye, even primordial Mu. And the earth shuddered in these cataclysmic convulsions of nature, and many of the eldermost of the marine cities of the Polar Ones were thrown down in ruin.

Two hundred fifty million years after their first advent upon this planet was the earth invaded by yet a second wave of creatures from the depths of cosmic space, when a horrible race of half-polypous and utterly alien monstrosities, who became known to the sages as the Elder Beings, journeyed hither to this world from immeasurably distant universes, to dominate for a time the new land surfaces of the earth and to infest three other solar planets, the which the Elder Records leave unnamed, but surely among the which were Yaksh and Tond.

Now, these Elder Beings were only in part composed of solid matter as we understand the term, and they were of an order of consciousness, of a medium of perception, and of a texture of mind vastly differing from any other terrene life-forms, then or since. They were also the masters of enormous forces, and raised tremendous windowless cities of black basaltic towers, and probed deep into the limitless caverns beneath the earth's crust. So long as they remained content to dominate merely the raw new land surfaces of the Elder World and to prey upon the newly-risen race of rugose cone-entities, they came not into friction with the Polar Ones, who still abode in their under-sea cities about the Pole.

But when at length the Elder Beings rashly intruded into the seas, contention occurred and the Polar Ones were quick to unleash their frightful engines of destruction upon the intruders. These mechanisms channeled and directed the forces of molecular and even atomic disruption, and thus it came to pass that the Polar Ones and

the Elder Beings battled in the inky depths of the world-ocean, and at length from this conflict the Polar Ones emerged the victors against their adversaries, who ere long chose never again to venture into the marine realm of the star-headed ones.

#### IV. THE GREAT RACE OF YITH

Erelong was this world submitted to yet a third invasion from the stars, when those enormously evolved and bodiless entities of pure mentation called the Great Race, projected their entire race in a stupendous migration of mind across the sidereal gulfs, quitting forever that black and lightless, dying orb of Yith whereupon had they first arisen measureless aeons earlier, and descending upon this Earth, usurped the bodies of those cone-headed things which had in recent cycles evolved from the primordial slime, and upon which the Elder Beings preyed.

The rudimentary minds of the cone-headed beings the Great Race thrust back across the infinitude of space and time, perforce to inhabit their own abandoned bodies on the barren surface of frigid and waning Yith, lost forever in the black vastnesses of the void.

With their advent upon this planet, the Great Race warred first against those Elder Beings who shared with them the primal continents, not at all caring to dwell in close proximity to those horrid and windowless cities of black stone towers and turrets, and liking even less the unwholesomely carnivorous behavior of the semi-poly-pous race, whom at length they drove down into those cavernous gulfs hollowed for some unknown purpose beneath the basalt cities. The entrances thereunto the Great Race sealed with mighty slabs of ponderous and adamantine metal: but ever thereafter did they have cause to dread the eventual emergence and the horrendous vengeance they feared the Elder Beings would someday wreak upon their conquerors, wherefore they went ever in an unholy dread of the black basaltic cities, which, with the passage of innumerable millennia, lapsed to ruin, and of the sealed trapdoors which led down and down to unguessable regions of nighted horror far below the daytime world.

The conoid beings whose bodies the migrant mental entities from Yith had possessed with their advent upon the earth were in the likeness of enormous, tapering, iridescent cones of ridged and

semi-elastic matter, who bore their visual and manipulative organs at the termini of distensible, cylindrical members which branched from their apex; they conversed, after a fashion by the clicking and scraping-together of their claws, and they effected locomotion by the expansion and contraction of their viscous bases.

Although these new host-bodies were of crude and primitive anatomical complexity, they possessed rudimentary brains of enormous latent capacity and intellectual potential, and sensory organs capable of certain modes of perception unequaled by any other of the primal life-forms: wherefore their eventual domination of the planet seemed only a matter of time.

#### V. THE CITY OF THE ARCHIVES

Succeeding in their usurpation of the primordial land surfaces of the Elder World, the mental entities from far and fabulous Yith constructed enormous stone cities amidst the jungles of the Triassic, wherefrom to extend their burgeoning empire. Greatest of these was that vast central metropolis mentioned in the Pnakotic Manuscripts as Pnakotis, the City of the Archives. This City was a prodigious system of terraced towers of dark granitic masonry, whose massive and monolithic walls were broken by colossal, oddly circular windows latticed with metallic bars, and whose broad, flat roofs bore carefully-cultivated gardens of abnormally overgrown and pallid fungi, upon the which were the host-bodies of the Yithian mind-entities wont to feed.

These megalithic structures were divided into vast vaulted stone chambers and their several levels were connected the one to the other by the simple media of sloping ramps, since the cone-beings were not constructed so as to be able to employ stairs for the purposes of ascending or descending from one level to another. The titanic buildings were themselves connected by subterranean passageways: herein the cone-bodies of their hosts swarmed busily about their inexplicable tasks, for they were engaged upon curious experiments into the nature of time itself, experiments which involved a monstrous transferral of intelligences from the remotest of aeons and from worlds galactically distant from the earth of the Prime. The lofty stone groinings of the vaulted chambers and the huge sloping passageways which connected the mighty turrets bore curious curvilinear glyphs

which resembled mathematical or geometrical designs, but in systems of weird and unthinkable alienage.

As for the Central Archives of the Great Race, they in time came to repose in a colossal subterranean structure builded beneath the middle portion of the City; there, in tiers of rectangular vaults, folios of tenacious and durable cellulose fabric bore inscribed upon their surfaces the strange annals of innumerable worlds and of aeons beyond the numbering—the most impressive repository of Elder Wisdom this universe has ever possessed.

Over uncounted millions of years, the Great Race refined the intellectual organs of their host-bodies through programs of selective breeding and by surgical means, in order to achieve new levels of sapience and to scale new heights of abstract cognition; but ever they remained bound, by habit or by custom, to fleshly habitations of singularly rudimentary cellular structure. Sexless and sporogenous, limbed with complex tentacular systems, the conoidae that housed the free intelligences from Yith were vaguely akin to the star-headed Polar Ones—the vegetable carnivores who dwelt afar in paleocean Antarctica, against whom over the ensuing aeons the Great Race intermittently warred.

But all of these doings eventuated long before the descent of dread Cthulhu from beyond the stars, and of the coming-hence of His fearsome and loathly spawn.

## VI. THE COMING OF CTHULHU

**T**he broad and teeming oceans of the Elder World, which rolled in mighty surges from pole to pole, were the unchallenged dominion of the Polar Ones by the waning of Earth's eldermost aeons. For ages past they had ruled their dim and aqueous demesne from vast submarine cities of cyclopean masonry, builded by the horrible shoggoths which they had molded from the primal slime, and they were for the most part content to leave the Great Race of Yith in lone and uncontested mastery of those young continents which were but newly uplifted from beneath the waves; but with the arrival of the next wave of invaders from Beyond was their age-old dominion challenged in very truth. For there seeped down from behind the stars a brooding and tremendous horror which had long impended, and

with the advent upon the world of the abomination Cthulhu, and of His dreaded spawn, the first of the Old Ones came to Earth at last.

Long had Cthulhu lingered upon dim Xoth, that double star that glares like the eye of green fire from the star-deeps beyond Abbith of the metal brains; and there had He begotten the firstborn and mightiest of His spawn upon the quasi-female entity Idh-yaa: and now was He come down to this Earth at last, and His Sons born of that awesome and terrific mating with Him, and all of His cosmic spawn of ultratelluric cephalopods . . . down to the steaming swamps and quaking bogs and fern-forests of shadowy and primordial Mu to do war against the star-headed Polar Ones for the empire of the Pacific. And for untold ages did they war, until at length, with neither side gaining the ascendancy, for it seemed that neither held true supremacy the one over the other, a truce was made, and the lands of Mu were given over to the intruders and thus fell under the dread domination of Great Cthulhu and His awful spawn.

As for Himself, the Mighty One claimed the land of R'lyeh, and they that serve Him ever, and who are called the Deep Ones, raised thereupon that stone metropolis of the Old Ones whose very name has been a whispered legend of black terror from time's dawn to this day. And to the firstborn of His sons, even Ghatanothoa, was bequeathed the volcano-shaken region of mountainous K'naa, wherein demon-possessed Yaddith-Gho lifts her black peaks against the cold, uncaring stars. To His secondborn son, even the abomination Ythogtha, was given all of the primal land of Yhe. And the third and last of the Spawn, Zoth-Ommog, took for his domain the Island of the Sacred Stone Cities, as it is called by us today.

And, as for the Polar Ones, they began to find in this epoch reasons for a gradual retreat from the ocean deeps and emerged therefrom to take up new places of their abiding upon the newly-risen dry lands about the southern Pole. Thereupon did they uprear new stone cities to replace those eldermost metropoli which had been whelmed and shattered asunder in that war with the first-come of the Old Ones, in whose battlings had been unleashed frightful energies.

And thus it was that the earth was divided between the star-headed Polar Ones of Antarctica, the Great Race, whose host-bodies abode in the primal jungles of Australia, and the Cthulhu-spawn, which held the great continent of Mu.

And for a time the Elder World was at peace.  
But only for a time.

#### THE NOTES

1. *All terrestrial life* . . . Note that the second-to-last paragraph of chapter II states that terrestrial life was created, by accident or by jest, in the breeding-vats of the Polar Ones, while only a few paragraphs earlier we are told that terrestrial life originated from Ubbo-Sathla. I know of no means to reconcile these different statements which occur, as it were, virtually side by side in the same text.

The text at times seems almost hopelessly corrupt—probably due to having been copied and recopied by scribe after scribe. Errors creep into the text of such ancient works which are and must be reproduced by hand in the days before the happy invention of the printing press . . . and we must remember that the *Book of Eibon* has been copied and recopied since the beginnings of the Ice Age.

2. That Lovecraft had access to portions of this material seems unquestionable—perhaps in hastily-translated versions, since lost, or a rather copious digest of the Norman-French text in Smith's hand, also unfortunately lost—for much of this information regarding the Great Race and the Polar Ones (Lovecraft—or, perhaps, his editors—calls them the “Old Ones”) appears, almost word for word in places, in such of his stories as “The Shadow out of Time” and *At the Mountains of Madness*.
3. *Ultratelluric cephalopods; Deep Ones*. I have not the slightest idea what these “cosmic octopi” were, and they are barely mentioned in Lovecraft's stories. They do not seem to have been the Deep Ones, for that race of minions were fishlike and toadlike, not at all octopoidal, and I have never found *anywhere* the slightest whisper of a suggestion that the Deep Ones originated elsewhere than on this world.
4. *Sacred Stone Cities*. Professor Harold Hadley Copeland, in more than one of his books, identifies this otherwise-unknown place with the Pacific island of Ponape, famous for its megalithic ruins

of Nan Matal, which inspired A. Merritt, who used them as part of the setting for his remarkable scientific romance, *The Moon Pool*, which Lovecraft, by the way, admired. Mount Yaddith-Gho appears in the story “Out of the Eons,” which was, as you well know, virtually written completely by Lovecraft. In that tale it is also the haunt of Ghatanothoa.

5. The remaining chapters of the third part of the *Book of Eibon* are in the laborious process of translation from the Norman-French into English, and will in time, I trust, appear in print. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, the entire text of “Papyrus of the Dark Wisdom” will be published, perhaps in pamphlet form. ✱

## Book Four

Psalms of the Silent



## About "Psalms of the Silent"

Clark Ashton Smith tells us that the *Book of Eibon* is a collection of, among other matters, "baleful myths and liturgies." Myths, of course, are stories, and the bulk of the *Book of Eibon* as presented here is narrative in form. But there must be liturgical material, or ours cannot claim to be the *Livre d'Eibon*. Liturgy is, of course, ritual. Liturgical texts are the scripts and rubrics of worship. The Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* is a worship book, a collection of liturgy. So is the *Sama Veda*. Such repositories contain chants of invocation, i.e., formulae intended to attract the attention of divine powers, as well as tried-&-true petitions to persuade the divine to do one's bidding. Usually the suppliant will recount the past deeds of the god so as to butter him up and incline him to be similarly magnanimous in the present case. There will be prayers for various occasions, as well as charms and even hexes on one's enemies or rivals. The Book of Psalms and the Vedas contain materials of this type. So do magical grimoires, which constitute but a variation on the same theme. Thus it is a safe bet that Eibon's book would have contained traditional hymns of praise as well as magic incantations. Keep in mind that Eibon was a worshipper of Tsathoggua and the Old Ones, not just a clever thaumaturge seeking to manipulate hidden powers for selfish ends. The hymns included here are addressed to uniquely Klarkash-Tonian deities, those appearing in Smith's stories, as well as those he supplied in his genealogical chart of the Old Ones.

Our "translators" of the Eibonic lyrics include three of the most gifted poets in the Lovecraft-Smith tradition, Richard L. Tierney, Michael Fantina, and Ann K. Schwader. And of course, I have borrowed the title "Psalms of the Silent" from the master mage Thomas Ligotti.

## Petition: To Tsathoggua

by Richard L. Tierney

All Praise to thee, Tsathoggua, dark lord  
 Of darksome realms! Before thine ebon throne  
 Lost wraiths bewail their fate  
 With many an echoing groan  
 And wander sightless through the frightful glooms  
 Of sub-Eiglophian caves. Thou didst reward  
 Their unrepentant insolence, displayed  
 Before thy toadlike templed idols,  
 With monstrous dooms.  
 From them thy vengeance was not stayed,  
 Nor shall their horrid punishments abate  
 Till all the peaks of high Voormithadreth  
 Are ground to grit in icy eschatons.

O lord of foulsome life and fearsome death,  
 To thee our fealty  
 Repays thy gift of necromantic arts  
 With offerings of red and pulsing hearts  
 Given in thanks on thine ensanguined altar;  
 And, to avenge all crass impiety,  
 Our serpent-venomed dirks will never falter.

Now hear our plea,  
 O lord of black encaverned spaces,  
 Whose jet-dark orbs, though night-enmired, yet see  
 Into all secret subterranean places,  
 And whose black-furred, bat-subtle ears  
 Detect the faintest sound  
 Of all who plot in chambers underground:  
 Fulfill our hopes, allay our direst fears.  
 Grant us the gift of swift nocturnal stealth;  
 Reveal to us each hidden jeweled hoard  
 Of kingly wealth;  
 And most of all, Dark Lord,

Possess our foes with terrors thanatopic  
 And draw their shrieking souls down from the light  
 Into eternal night  
 To pine for aye in silence nyctalopic. ✱

## To Atlach-Nacha

by Richard L. Tierney

In hellward realms wherein all hope expires  
 Beyond the reach of noontide's brightest ray,  
 In caverns carved by ancient igneous fires  
 Beneath Eiglophian mountains bleak and grim,  
 The ebon-bodied Spider-God holds sway  
 And spins from rim to rim,  
 Athwart a chasm vast and bottomless,  
 His endless web of raddled bands  
 Like to the tangled woof of dooms decreed  
 For all who moil in mortal pointlessness  
 And clutching, mundane greed.

O Atlach-Nacha, sapient Lord of Fate,  
 Beneath thy taut-stretched trembling strands  
 Dark dooms await  
 Where gape those black, submundane hells  
 Down which, with dreadful shrieks,  
 Plunge multitudes of souls whose proud desires  
 Enthralled them to thy luring spells  
 And drew them down beneath the frowning peaks  
 And towering needle-spires  
 Into thy darksome, deadly regions;  
 To thee they swarmed with greedy, grasping hands  
 In foredoomed lemming-legions.

Spin on eternally, O Spider-King  
 Destined to weave thy webs of Destiny  
 O'er sullen gulfs sub-Hyperborean,  
 Till all Earth's souls, of every land and sea  
 From Mhu-Thulan to isles Antillian,  
 Are drawn into thy strands and feel thy deadly sting. ✱

## The Prayer of Yzduggor the Apostate

by Richard L. Tierney

O great Zvilpogghua, dark overlord  
 Of worlds that circle Algol's greenish glare,  
 Hear now the wretched plea  
 Of thy most all-repentant apostate:  
 O Feaster from the far Persean stars,  
 Withdraw thy withering hate,  
 And grant thy pardon unto me  
 That I into thy fold might be restored  
 And know again the feasts I once did share  
 Gathered with thine adoring acolytes  
 To sacrifice with rune-graved scimitars  
 At thy crepuscular conventacles.  
 O unforgiving son of dark Tsathoggua,  
 Forgive thy slave who didst thy trust betray.  
 Let him again, O dread Zvilpogghua,  
 Share in thy worship's ardent, dark delights.  
 Grant this, Black Lord, and I thee will repay  
 With human victims lured most subtilely  
 Unto thy throne by spells of sorcery  
 To be devoured in thy dark tentacles. ✱

## Prayer to Lord Yok-Zothoth

by Richard L. Tierney

O Cosmic Sire in realms beyond the skies,  
 All-consecrated be thine appellation.  
 Let soon arrive thy reign,  
 Let all be subject to thine ordination  
 On this dull sphere as in thine own dimension.  
 Grant us our sustenance at each nocturnal feast,  
 And stay thy wrath at our inept offences  
 Whenas our blades we fail to stain  
 With blood of those who once have thee offended.  
 Draw not our souls down perilous paths alluring,  
 But rescue us from enemies malefic,  
 For thou dost rule in cosmic empery,  
 In vast puissance and fulsome fulgury,  
 Through endless kalpas evermore enduring.  
*lä! Wgah'nagl fhtagn! ✱*

## The Appeasement of Ghizguth

by Richard L. Tierney

In sub-Yuggothian caverns cold and black  
 Dwells hideous Ghizguth, cosmic wanderer  
 Who in lost aeons raged across the voids,  
 Leaving within his wake the flaming wrack  
 Of shattered suns and crumbling planetoids.  
 To Yuggoth he did plunge on night-black vanes,  
 Where to this day he dwells and darkly reigns  
 In caves where sentient vapors shift and stir  
 Like spectral wraiths raised up to do his will.  
 And now, his wrathful urges to defer,  
 His fungoid, crablike minions chant and shrill,  
 Offering many a dreadful sacrifice  
 With frantic rituals dark and sinister  
 Before his hulking form on its black dais.  
 O Mighty Ghizguth, black Tsathoggua's sire,  
 I, Eibon, terrene wizard, give to thee  
 Victims awrithe within thine altar's fire  
 That thou might stay awhile the devastation  
 Which thou hast strewn across eternity  
 On worlds whose scorn drew down thine indignation. ✱

## The Summoning of Pharol

by Richard L. Tierney

Pharol, black demon of trans-terrene spheres,  
 Of ultra-cosmic gulfs that lie beyond  
 The suns and worlds of mundane, angled space,  
 I summon thee by dark Pnakotic rites  
 From whatsoever sun or alien world  
 Wherein thou currently dost hap to dwell,  
 Whether in Ares, Yaksh or Cykranosh,  
 Or ev'n transstellar Yith, Xiccarph or Tond.  
 Then, when within my pentacle appears  
 The flame-limned lineaments of thy dark face  
 Ascowl with menacing cycloptic eye,  
 Seek not with frightful mind-deluding spell  
 Nor gnashing fangs and threatening serpent-arms  
 Nor sensual, distracting dream-delights,  
 To swerve me from my gnosis-seeking course.  
 But know, O Pharol, that no information  
 Would I of thee by thaumaturgic force  
 Extort with either Yggrr incantation  
 Or Scarlet Sign—save with extreme regret.  
 For thou and I, Black Demon, share the strange,  
 Fell destiny of all who wend their way  
 With willful course inexorably set  
 (Without approval of the Elder Ones  
 Who over this vast universe hold sway)  
 For the black gulfs that separate the suns  
 To seek those darkling worlds wherein lie hidden  
 The ancient secrets gods have long forbidden. ✱

## The Unresponding Gods

(from the Fragmentary "Genealogies of Pnom" Preserved by the Wizard Eibon)

by Richard L. Tierney

Hark to the rune of Pnom, mage of past ages  
 Vanished in mists of dim antiquity,  
 Who, on his lost tome's dragon-vellum pages,  
 First chronicled how all things came to be:  
 How that mad AZATHOTH, vast Lord of All,  
 Burst from the bonds of virtuality,  
 Causing the myriad motes ephemeral,  
 Unspaced, unformed and ante-temporal,  
 To fall from their sublime and rightful state  
 Into the durant Chaos that we know.  
 Thus Azathoth beget the expanding gulfs  
 Of sable spaces that enshroud the suns,  
 And, too, the motes which do those suns compose  
 And swirl to form the worlds innumerable  
 Whereon the simmering pits of life begin  
 To foam, birthing all beings that breed and moil  
 In the unending stews of strife and pain.

Some chant to Azathoth their litanies;  
 The Idiot Lord of All ignores their pleas.

Now, while this new unbounded Universe  
 Sundered to clusters of vast starry swirls,  
 Each swirl a swarm of myriads of suns,  
 The Idiot God, by likewise fissioning,  
 Dissolved into uncounted entities,  
 Each one a sole, supreme and sovereign Lord  
 O'er one such cluster. That which rules our own  
 Is known as CXAXUKLUTH, the monstrous Thing  
 That spawns in plastic androgyny,  
 Gobbling its self-birthed monstrous progeny

As much as it is able, though some few  
Win free to breed fell monsters of their own.

Some fools to Cxaxukluth presume to pray;  
The Lord of Suns hears not the ass's bray.

Down from the swirling clouds of cosmic space  
Settled the pulvous motes of latent life  
Into the steaming seas of new-formed worlds  
To stew and swell and hideously coalesce.  
Thus monstrous UBBO-SATHLA came to be,  
Spawning its efts in primal seas terrene  
Empalled beneath volcano-blackened skies.  
Then did begin the frightful upward climb  
Through strife and pain to the complexity  
Of all the milling, warring forms of life  
That swarm upon the dermis of this world;  
While Ubbo-Sathla, shrunken now, lies hid  
Within the deepest pits far underneath  
The black Eiglaphian peaks, where still it breeds  
And swallows its abominable spawn.  
Men know it now as Abboth the Unclean,  
The pulsing remnant of terrestrial birth,  
Who one day will, in dim futurity,  
Expand and re-engulf its far-flung brood  
In seas beneath the red and dying sun.

Some offer Ubbo-Sathla prayer and praise;  
The Source of Life pursues its mindless ways. ✱

## The House of Haon-Dor

by Richard L. Tierney

Beneath black peaks, upon the farther shore  
Of that vast cleft o'er which the Spider-Lord  
Spins his eternal web, stands the abhorred  
Basilica of a dark mage of yore—  
The thousand-columned house of Haon-Dor.  
Here a huge, mottled serpent lurks to ward  
'Gainst those who would encroach with spell or sword  
To plunder archives of archæan lore.

Silent and strange, those gray unechoing halls  
Hewn from the stone of Earth's most ancient past  
Where faceless forms of smoke drift to and fro  
And monstrous statues loom along the walls,  
Limned by the eerie, icy lights that glow  
Starlike from the shadowed ceilings high and vast. ✱

## The Dark Sorcerer

by Richard L. Tierney

Rash climbers of Eiglophian steeps,  
 Beware the bale of Haon-Dor  
 Who lives within the mountain's core  
 Where deathless evil never sleeps.

A chill of horror stalks those halls  
 Where dwells the centuried sorcerer  
 As in a nighted sepulchre  
 A deathly gloom forever palls.

In ebon shroud and cowl he stands  
 On his high dais empentacled,  
 While monsters clawed and tentacled  
 Abase themselves at his commands.

Leering from walls of seamless stone,  
 A thousand demons bow before  
 The sable form of Haon-Dor  
 Hunched on his high, five-pillared throne.

And now from out the caverned gloom  
 Of towering Mount Voormithadreth  
 He sends dark messengers of death  
 To blight the lands with fright and doom. ✱

## The Contemplative God

by Richard L. Tierney

If to the planet Cykranosh you stray  
 Look out for pouty Hziulquoigmnzah,  
 Bachelor uncle of Tsathoggua,  
 Who sucks his sustenance from lakes of gray  
 Metallic fluid, whence a rippling play  
 Of light from alien skies reluctant falls  
 Upon the columns of his caverned fane.  
 And if, O Traveler, you've half a brain,  
 You'll not presume to linger there and pray  
 Nor hang around and pass the time of day.  
 For Hziul from godship long ago withdrew  
 Within his cave to contemplate and brood  
 And sip at times his liquid metal brew.  
 Of worshippers he long ago grew weary,  
 So on his ponderings do not intrude  
 Nor breach his philosophic solitude.  
 If you are lucky, he will merely view  
 Your bold presumption with his toad-eyes bleary,  
 Extend his ell-long arm and gruffly say:  
 "Iqui dlosh odhqlouqh—Be on your way!" ✱

## The Door to Cykranosh; or, Eibon's Lament

by Richard L. Tierney

He who has passed the trans-tellurian Gate  
Consigns himself to an unearthly fate.  
Though he may yearn for Earth's cerulean skies,  
He'll pass his latter years  
Where arching rings and alien moons arise  
'Neath skies of dusky green.

He who would venture to Saturnian space  
Must pass his days with many an alien race,  
Nor think to venture homeward once again.  
'Neath skies where Titan leers,  
He'll cross the crystal-cluttered fungoid plain  
That guards the Ghlonghs' demesne.

He who has trod the threshold of that Door  
Can never tread again an earthly shore.  
Though he may pine forever to return,  
Truth shall confirm his fears:  
'Neath alien skies for aye must he sojourn  
With villagers Vhlorrhene.

He who to Cykranosh would rashly stray  
Will learn that he cannot retrace his way,  
Neither with prayer nor thaumaturgic spell.  
In lieu of human peers,  
With Ydheems and with Djibbis he must dwell  
Far from all scenes terrene. ✱

## Hyperborea; or, Eibon's Prophecy

by Richard L. Tierney

O Hyperborea, thy sorcerous mysteries  
Are fated to remain past thine allotted time,  
And bards shall celebrate thy fame in song and rhyme,  
Chanting the vanished splendors of thy legendries.  
Then shall thy high-spined cities lie beneath cold seas—  
Cerngoth, Leqquan, tall-towered Oggon-Zhai sublime,  
Whence broad-sailed barques once ventured forth to every clime  
From Muvian shores to far and fair Antillian keys.

Few shall recall those austral, lush Riphean Hills  
North of whose slopes Commoriom in vine-clutched death  
Slumbers for aye, nor grim and dark Voormithadreth,  
King of the high Eiglophian peaks, whence icy rills  
Once flowed through caverns black where now the Old Ones lie,  
Awaiting that new Day when even death may die. ✱



## The Minions of Zstylzhemgni

by Richard L. Tierney

Mistress of Ghizguth, Matriarch of Swarms—  
 Zstylzhemgni, Queen of all teeming things  
 That scuttle, sting and creep  
 In all their myriad, multi-legged forms,  
 I pray to thee with mighty conjurings  
 And bid thee loose from out thy nether keep,  
 Like ashes belched from vast volcanic peaks,  
 Thy horrid swarming legions.  
 Send them in all their buzzing billions forth  
 From out the torrid tropic regions  
 Into the insolent kingdoms of the north,  
 Whining across the skies on rasping wings  
 In sun-obscuring, crop-devouring hordes.  
 Then shall my vengeful soul know full delight  
 To hear those fearful shrieks  
 As all my foes—serfs, villeins, squires and lords—  
 Expire in dreadful frenzy, pain and fright,  
 Writhing beneath thy minions' myriad stings! ✱

## Ycnágnnisssz

by Richard L. Tierney

From sunless cosmoses beyond our own,  
 Madly and blackly fissioning he comes—  
 Ycnágnnisssz, foul Lord of realms unknown,  
 Coeval peer of fearsome Azathoth  
 Who conjures Chaos with the sound of drums.  
 Like burrowing worms that subtly glide and slip  
 'Twixt subterranean caves that vastly gape,  
 He doth from his vast umbrous gulfs traverse  
 That alien Gate which is the dark star Zoth,  
 Whose massiveness so warps the grain of space  
 That light itself is helpless to escape  
 Its unrelenting and malefic grip,  
 And bursts into our star-strewn universe,  
 Spewing his spawn in fell fecundity.  
 No mortal eye may gaze upon his face  
 Nor glimpse his foulness madly fissioning,  
 Save at the price of sight and sanity.

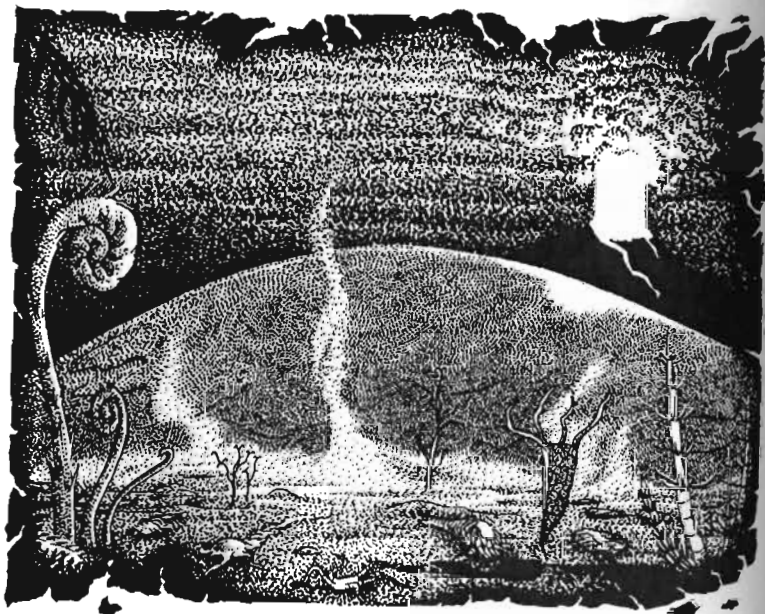
Whisper the name YCNÁGNNISSSZ in fear  
 And shield thyself with pentacle and ring,  
 But do not pray to him—lest he should *hear*. ✱

## Ubbo-Sathla

by Michael Fantina

Back to the source, beyond the starry void;  
The end of all is once more born again,  
Enigmatical, past all mortal ken,  
All that once was is once again destroyed.  
Ubbo-Sathla, within the frothing steam,  
Squats near the stone-hewn tablets which retell  
The heavings of the cosmic cycles' swell  
Of each uncharted star and lost demesne.

Back down the ancient years the cycles race,  
Back to the source, to him within the prime,  
Whose bale the dust of years cannot efface;  
His pallid efts cull back each age, all Time!  
Ubbo-Sathla, the idiotic scourge,  
The mindless deity, the demiurge. ✱



## Azathoth

by Michael Fantina

Then in the dimmest waning galaxies,  
Outside of space-time's furthest, blackest marge,  
Your birth was as a novaed sun, writ large,  
To burn away all petty hopes, and freeze  
With terror unborn Man upon this land.  
And when you came did not the awful scent  
Of death rise up from that great continent,  
All now a riven world, Gondwannaland?  
Now is there strength or a more bitter gall  
Than knowledge of your realm in moiling dream,  
Enthroned athwart the universe supreme,  
You, the unseen flint-hearted seneschal?  
While through the eons, like some mantic lynx,  
Grown gluttoned with the gore of wizards slain,  
Your potent evil now to wax, to wane,  
But always with the mercy of the Sphinx!  
When with the blood of innocence, the names  
Of gods are writ upon the darkling scroll,  
None will stand beyond your night-black toll  
Of screaming terror in the yellow flames.  
I, your unwilling servant, mull the wine;  
With feeble hands I bear the pewter cup  
To pale and trembling lips. I drink it up  
And pray that death may be my anodyne! ✱

# Tsathoggua

by Michael Fantina

I raised an antique mage one eve,  
 When night had fallen and the moon  
 Threw down its light beneath the eave;  
 There I half fainted in a swoon.  
 For I had called one long, long dead,  
 Who was a sorcerer supreme,  
 One who extracted gold from lead;  
 I called him from the dark extreme.  
 For dark Tsathoggua was his lord  
 And he his final acolyte  
 Who offered incense and adored  
 The old god now long recondite.  
 The mage's ghost was silver-hued,  
 His garments of an uncouth cast;  
 I saw his swimming eyes where brewed  
 Fantastic worlds from out the Past.  
 I saw within those eyes the god,  
 Obscene Tsathoggua in his fane,  
 And tides of men who strangely trod  
 The paves and chanted songs profane.  
 I saw for him that thousands died,  
 That women were his willing thralls,  
 That seas of blood, dark tide on tide,  
 Poured from his altars through the halls.  
 Now for twelve thousand years I knew  
 That all his fanes were empty, dead,  
 That only the late morning dew  
 Adorned his statues cast in lead.  
 The jungle had reclaimed the fanes  
 Of grim Tsathoggua and his fame;  
 Now kings and princes and rude swains  
 Avoided them, choked back his name.  
 I asked the dead mage why was this,

That black Tsathoggua was forgot,  
 As though poured down some dark abyss  
 Where both god and memory rot.  
 The dead mage grew in height and breadth,  
 His eyes they shone like glowing coals,  
 The night wind ceased as still as death;  
 He spoke as mighty thunder rolls.  
 "O Fool, you cannot see the sky  
 Or hear the dark seas' crashing roar.  
 O Eibon, you should rather die  
 Than learn this truth, this arcane lore:  
 That grim Tsathoggua reigns supreme,  
 His tithing takes a heavy toll,  
 The blood of war does thus redeem  
 His wasted temples pole to pole.  
 In mass connivings, murder, rape,  
 The groans beneath the iron rod,  
 Cannot you see that hulking shape  
 Profane Tsathoggua, frog-eyed god?"  
 I banished him with spells obscure  
 And quenched the brazier's rising fumes,  
 Laved conjure lines from off the floor,  
 And brooded on half-fathomed dooms.  
 I, Eibon, tell this arcane tale  
 To any who may care to scan  
 The triumph of this potent bale,  
 In all the lands of Mhu Thulan. ✱

## Rlim Shaikorth

by Michael Fantina

Fantastical white death swept from the North,  
From that strange mythic pallid berg of yore,  
Bleak ice home, Yikilth, curse of sea and shore,  
Captained by the being Rlim Shaikorth.  
Dispatching life itself, the race of Man;  
Southward came the iceberg, the being known  
To none save his thrall'd sorcerers alone;  
His quest, the death of all in Mhu Thulan.

The bloated monster spewed his icy breath  
To Northern lands and then to fairer climes,  
To make the earth one huge ice realm of death.  
Evagh, it was, who slit the monster's side;  
I, Eibon, record it now with these rhymes,  
Sing of Evagh, and how the monster died. ✱

## Rede of the Gray Weavers (Fragment)

by Ann K. Schwader

Fold down thy limbs & tremble, fellows of Tch'tkaa!

O clever weavers of Abyss who follow  
That winding wyrd of web and pounce and prey,  
Who suck soul-marrow from thy enemies,  
Who vault above the void of dying stars,  
Abase yourselves!

For all your fine-wrought weavings are as nothing  
Before the glyph-web spun of Atlach-Nacha,  
Voormithadreth's dark dweller in the gulf  
Who strains this writhing world between his strands  
Of adamantine law & ancient night.

Recall that star-bridge strung from Cykranosh  
Which Atlach-Nacha wove to bear the bulk  
Of Lord Tsathoggua when They came  
In elder aeons—how the Voormis shrieked  
To see that spangled scar across their sky!

Consider how in Voormith's sunlost depths  
The final pattern of this earth's demise  
Is worked in subtle silks hung thick with skulls:  
So end as merest husks all heretic  
Intruders on His dread & holy toil . . . ✱

## Mhu Thulanese Invocation to Abhoth

by Ann K. Schwader

Hear us now, horror-sire      hideous mother  
Of twisted unwholesomeness      laired under Voormith  
Filth-spawning vortex      of all this world's foulness  
Endless eruptor      esurient parent  
Hark to your children      crept out of shadow  
Cast into chasms      corrupted with daylight!

Yours is no lately-born      blight on this planet  
Blasted by purity      marred with perfection  
In mighty & small creatures      sickening symmetry  
False to the Dark Truth      of death & despair:  
Great native canker      from Earth's first convulsions  
Flawing her countenance      scarring that sweet clay.

Ancient you were      when Haon-Dor sorcerer  
Sought out the star-quarried      secrets of 'Sathla,  
Impious plunderer      plucking at treasures  
Torn from the Elder Ones'      ominous holiness . . .  
Ancient you waited      for wisdom to waste him  
Doom him to dwell      in your deep fane forever!

Grant us, Supreme Spoiler      Snarler of All Clews  
Victory utterly      over vain enemies  
Serpent-sleek mockers      of us Your flesh mirrors  
Faithful in limb      as in spirit—deliver them  
Into lost places      of pain never-ceasing,  
Recast their images      into Your eidolon. ✱

## Voormi Hymn of Deliverance

by Ann K. Schwader

Hail to thee, Sfatlicllp! Great Mother-Sister  
Who shared with us the primal seed of stars,  
Who lent Thy holy body to our cause,  
Bestowing thus upon us one who raged  
Insatiate & ravening as flame  
Through all the proud streets of Commoriom!

Hail to Thy spawn, Sfatlicllp Avenger  
Who tumbled down those jungle-vaunting walls,  
Who shattered human spires of arrogance,  
& fed Thy children well on their pale flesh  
When tempest-like Thou drove them forth in hordes  
To die lamenting in the wilderness!

Hail to Thy might, O Sfatlicllp Merciful  
Who lurketh in Eiglophian murk forever,  
Who nurtureth Thy folk in high wild places  
As cubs unto the sanguine saber-tooth!  
Preserve in us Thy sure & Protean puissance,  
& grant deliverance by Thy ancient blood. ✱

## The Supplication of Cxaxukluth

by Robert M. Price

O brethren of the endless night,  
 join your voices in praise of Holy Cxaxukluth,  
 He who is most Terrible to behold,  
 She whose countenance no flesh may look upon.  
 Sing of the deeds of the Father-Mother  
 the glories of Vach and Viraj,  
 who has brought forth Tulu and Ghizguth  
 before whom molten suns are naught!

In days of old, the Elder Night,  
 did Cxaxukluth come forth  
 from the Chaos storm that rageth  
 At the unsuspected heart of All.  
 Like the comet which lighteth the night  
 and the hammer of heaven  
 which descending in great flame,  
 shaketh the mountains in its advent!

O Cxaxukluth, Aion of Aions,  
 Thou who lieth upon the breast of the Daemon Sultan,  
 Thou art even like unto the viper coiled in the fountain  
 who poisoneth all that issueth therefrom  
 to strangle the hapless sons of men.  
 Remember us, Thy children,  
 for whom thy direst poison is the sweetest milk,  
 and bring swift doom upon our enemies. ✱

## Book Five

### The Eibonic Rituals

## About "The Eibonic Rituals"

Once, the spells set forth herein represent those to which reference is made in the various tales in the earlier portions of the *Liber Ivonis*, for surely Eibon mentioned them in the episodes in order to provide counsel on their dangers and proper uses. So if a reference to this or that soul-shriveling spell intrigues you, in most cases you can page over to this section and consult the blasphemous rubrics themselves.

We need scarcely add the caveat that no attempt to work the spells will avail aught, since, as Origen explained long ago (*Contra Celsum* 1:25), texts of sorcery, being unique constellations of sonic vibrations, function only in their original languages. If the incantations are spoken forth in translation, the tumblers of the dimensional gates will not be spun. Here is a case of "the heresy of paraphrase" if there ever was one. Sorcery is a case of sound, not sense. The same basic logic explains why the Koran is no longer the Word of God once you translate it from Arabic. This is why the evangelist Mark, writing his gospel in Greek, nonetheless includes Jesus' healing words in the original Aramaic (*Ephphatha*, "Be opened!" in Mark 7:34; *Talitha cumi*, "Little maiden, rise up!" in Mark 5:41). Otherwise the enterprising reader would not be able to use them in his own healing practice!

The renderers of Eibon's magic spells are Joseph S. Pulver, truly a wizard with words, and Stephen Sennitt, a practicing occultist and magician himself. The various sigils and diagrams are the work of Tom Brown, an artist inspired like unto Bezalel and Oholiab (Exodus 31:1-6).

## The Green Decay

by Stephen Sennitt

Let the Practitioner of the Sacred Arte make a Likeness in bronze of his intended victim, this to be patiently worked upon only at the Hour and on the Day of Lord ZATHOGGUA after the falling of Darkness, all the while cursing and reviling the victim in Our Dark Lord's Name. Let a drinking vessel of the victim be pilfered, and let the practitioner bury this with the bronze Likeness in some noisomely damp or infested spot, so that the creeping blight which overtaketh the likeness be transferred to the throat and thence to the whole body of the victim.

Let the Practitioner of the Sacred Arte curse and revile the victim throughout the whole period by the following words:

ZATHOGGUA, ZATHOGGUA  
NA ES SA TA NA DA, ZODA ZODA SE ✱

## The Disgorging of the Pit

by Stephen Sennitt

*(The Necromancer stands over a freshly exhumed corpse which he hath prepared by Fashions and Designs of the Sacred Arte.)*

Thee I invoke, Deathless One.  
Thee that did depart the Earth for the Heavens and the Hells.  
Thee that did quit the Day for Night.  
Thou art the Sacred Star Returning!  
Thou art the Master of All Good and Evil.  
Thou art the Knower of All Things Hidden and in Plain Sight.

He who knoweth the Just and the Unjust.  
He who hath distinguished the Truth in Matter and the Truth in Motion.  
He who hath rent the Veil.  
He who hath seen Strange Aeons wane,  
So that Death itself may die!

*(The Necromancer taketh the Head Part of the corpse he hath exhumed and maketh upon it the Mark of the Master, whereby the vessel for His Exalted Spirit be created.)*

By the Whirling Air!  
The Rushing Fire!  
I draw ye forth, O Master!

By the Raging Sea!  
The Crawling Earth!  
I draw ye forth, O Master!

By the Indwelling Sun of Spirit!  
I draw ye forth, O Master.  
By the Dwellers Beyond the Spirit's Rim!  
I draw ye forth, O Master!

Ruler and Helper—Hear me.  
Lord and Instructor—Speak Thee!



*(The incantation spoken, the Great Master will return from Outside to animate the chosen vessel and expound upon many secret things, whereby the Necromancer becometh much Enlightened.) ✱*

## The Yggrr Incantation

by Stephen Sennitt

**O** Spirit (*naming the Spirit*), Thou who art not only Inimical but Disobedient, I curse Ye by the Name of Terrible YGGRR, by virtue of whose being I have called Ye forth to do my bidding! If thou dost not comply with my very wishes, coming forth and showing thyself, submissive and in peace, I will direct thy Great Master YGGRR, whose solemn and binding pact I have signed, to consign thee to the Lowest Depths of His Eternal Abyss, bound in chains of fire until the Day of Great Cthulhu Himself is come!

Appear Spirit (-)! Come now, or suffer the wrath of YGGRR the Terrible! ✱

## The Execrations of Glorgne

by Stephen Sennitt

By the Terror of Night and the Pitiless Light.  
By the Shadow of Death and the Drowning Breath.  
By the Ravens of Fright and the Adders of Blight.  
By the Sins of Seth and the Abortions of Beth.

I curse ye in the Name of GLORGNE,  
That thou shalt be found dead before the morn.  
I curse ye in the Demon's Name,  
That before first light ye shall be slain.

By the Hand of Shame and the Dogs that Maim.  
By the Brow of Sickness and the Deathworm's Quickness.  
By the Blows that Lame and the Screams of Pain.  
By the Dry Tongue's Thickness and the Dead Man's Witness.

I curse ye in the name of GLORGNE,  
That from this life ye shall be torn.  
I curse ye in the Demon's Name,  
That for Eternity shall ye feel nought but pain. ✱

## The Adjuration of Pnom

by Stephen Sennitt

**B**y the sacred name of Great Pnom, I curse ye Foul Fiend and command thee to depart this place. By the sacred sword of PNOM, he who rended the Verminous Scurriers of the Abyss asunder, I have been Blessed and Ordained, and by my words do slice and tear at your very marrow! And my curses issue from the same mouth, that of the mighty PNOM, whose warrior cries blasted the soulless legions of the Abyss, setting them to fear and trembling! And my eyes are like unto the searing torch of Great PNOM, who sought out the Fiends of Darkness and put them to the righteous flames!

Begone, I say, from the sight of Great PNOM, depart this place made sacred by his very Name. Leave this place protected by PNOM, slayer of your evil kind. Begone, lest ye feel the swath of His eternal vengeance! Depart! Depart! Depart!

Begone, begone in the Name of the Great PNOM.

In the Name of PNOM, it is done. ✱

# The Litany of Xastur

by Stephen Sennitt

Thee, O Great XASTUR, who walks beyond the stars,  
Primal and uncontained,

Thee, I adore; whose mighty feet stride  
Eternities and Aeons.

Thee, Great XASTUR, I adore:

In the Name of ZADAGUA,  
the Stone of Saturn,  
I adore Thee!

In the Name of NEMATI,  
the Web of Darkness,  
I adore Thee!

In the Name of VULOA,  
The Soul of the Vulture,  
I adore Thee!

In the Name of GENI-GEBA,  
the Eye of the Ghoul,  
I adore Thee!

In the Name of KHRU,  
the Locus of the Night,  
I adore Thee!

In the Name of DRUGHU,  
the Serpent of the Void,  
I adore Thee!

In the Name of ZOTMOGA,  
the Spawn of the Pit,  
I adore Thee!

In the Name of ULULUS,  
the Self-Devourer,

I adore Thee!

Thee, O Great XASTUR,  
By These—Mighty Names of Power!  
By These—Your Brothers and Sisters!

O Great XASTUR,  
Name of the Nameless,  
World Beyond Worlds,  
Endless and Formless and Uncontained! ✱

## The Hnaa Formula

by Stephen Sennitt

If the Exorcist findeth himself faced with a recalcitrant or malevolent Spirit, let him have recourse to the following Formula:

AD OZ, AD OZ, DA AN AT AS  
SET AN

AD OZ, AD OZ,  
SATANA AD ZO AD

AD OZ, AD OZ,  
HN AA, HN AA, HN AA, HN AA

SET AN, DA AN AT,  
AD OZ, AD OZ

HN AA, HN AA, HN AA, HN AA

This, spoken by the Mage in the Secret Language of the Spirits, openeth the Gates of the Ultimate Abyss and showeth the Demon where he must perforce return, unless he complieth with the will of the Mage. ✱

## The Warding of Rivashii

by Stephen Sennitt

Let the doorway of the Practitioner's dwelling place be protected by the Hand of RIVASHII, The Dismembered One.

Firstly, let the Left Hand of a suicide, or else a victim of a murder, be procured under the dim light of a waning moon and in the Name of our Lady Khekate, consort of RIVASHII, She who recovered his body parts from the Blind Fiends of the Abyss, under cover of Darkness.

Let the said Hand be washed in pure water and purified over flames of burning sandalwood, and then pickled in a salt solution for fifteen days. Then let the Practitioner of these Artes hang the Hand of RIVASHII by the wrist above his doorway, saying these words:

RIVASHII, O RO EE PE  
TE A A PE DO KE

so that by the power of this Magick Hand, all unwelcome agents might be seized upon entry, and take flight in Greatest Terror. ✱

# The Exorcism of Iagsat

by Joseph S. Pulver

Wrathful Assailant IAGSAT, see what power I lay before Thee in force!

ATEI            ATEI  
                   KU  
                   KU    KU  
                   KU  
 ATEI            ATEI

Hear me, Risen Avatar of Brute Afflictions! My voice animates the lore—

NDE OO CA NDE  
 AR-BHAB  
 ASL OO PYS-A PR'ILLI  
 NDE

Vile-Troubler called up, I send Thee back—

OGTHROD AI'F  
 GEB'L—EE'H  
 IAGSAT-yog-sothoth-IAGSAT  
 'NGAH'NG AI'Y  
 ZHRO

Haunter Unseen, take thy life back to the core! *Tlexant sint su sut amu!* Depart, O Iagsat! *En Y! En Y! elkl elkl Di-tua elkl! En Y!* I have followed the formulae writ true, and set the symbols, vital and empowered against Thee, Bold Iagsat—Smell the blood that grants them power! Evoked—*p'be hve'ev*, You have risen from the malodorous gulfs Outside the Spheres. I cast Thee back, Unwanted One! *Hoxevei lm zO zwelcth hR eistemiis!* Take Thy mysterious goals and traverse that Space Unclean and full with the odors of the crypt piled thick with that which worms, and ghouls, and demons, and the Earth have not taken unto themselves, and return across the threshold that stands between the worlds! Hear me, Unwanted Lurker, I

am the salted-blood that speaks fire! Hear me, Unwanted Iagsat, I am the salted-blood that speaks fire! I bid Thee stir and depart with Thy strange processions and contortions! *Tetentaz eniitharl!* Depart, *En Y! En Y! elkl elkl Di-tua elkl! En Y!* Iagsat, transgressing-iniquity of malice invited not, I make no Scarlet Sacrifice to keep you! Withdraw from this light to Thine own nation! Ride swift before the words I set free to drive Thee! Feel the lash upon and within Thee as great fires of venom! Flee before the word of power I place in the air!

H  
 T I  
 M S N  
 O T H S  
 A K R  
 A L  
 C

*a-GLE cAALN pHA! a-GLE cAALN pHA! a-GLE cAALN pHA!*  
 Hear it and flee!

*a-GLE cAALN pHA! a-GLE cAALN pHA! a-GLE cAALN pHA!*  
 Hear it and flee! zO!

Shuddersome One, touch me not, for I am Power, and full of seawater and salted meats, which leave in Thee a taste sore! Depart, O Iagsat! *En Y! En Y! Elkl elkl Di-tua elkl! En Y!* Take Thy blasts and rancors and tortures and fiery deliriums, and whirl through Space and Abyss and swirling storms uncharted, or face the harms of doom thrust by the eleven I serve and adore!

By the powers of ZHOTHACQUAH,  
 By the powers of YIG,  
 By the powers of ATLACH-NACHA,  
 By the powers of HZIULQUOIGMNZHAH,  
 By the powers of NUG AND YEB,  
 By the powers of BUG-SHAGGOG,  
 By the powers of THUSA,  
 By the powers of OKKOKOKU,  
 By the powers of AULANIIS,  
 By the powers of UBBO-SATHLA,

*a-GLE cAALN pHA! a-GLE cAALN pHA! a-GLE cAALN pHA!*  
 Hear it and flee!

*a-GLE cAALN pHA! a-GLE cAALN pHA! a-GLE cAALN pHA!*

Hear it and flee!

*Ban oo G'uiin-mim!*

*zO!*

*Ban oo G'uiin-mim!*

*zO—IAGSAT—zO! ✱*

## The Black Rite of Yaddith

by Joseph S. Pulver

In the Ninth Layer of the Dream-State of Revealing, soaring on the Dimensional Currents, I, Eibon of Mhu Thulan, journeyed to the final days of Yaddith. There to witness those gathered in Holy Mass. Before the Grand Temple of She Who Is To Come in City One, Nzoorka and Arch-Ancient Buo stood with ten-thousand and ten-thousand ringing the temple's great pools, filled with oceans of blood poured in offering. As one did that throng cry out until the ground was as a turbulent mire.

Mighty Mother of brood scattered to the wandering stars,  
We did not see the prelude, nor the ambush—  
Night, the hard journey in foul circumstance, falls on our labors to  
Thy Glories.  
The ground we tread is as a sea of angers gorging,  
From far and misty Ba-Benzala—whose enormous histories lie as  
forests ravished,  
And splendor-fabled Babaluma where weep wizards in towers broken,  
The servants-below rise fierce—

*All-Mother, our cup holds great need of thy guard and comforts!*

*Smite the Snout-worm—Burn its seed!*

*Our liberty has lost its wings. Return with miracles reprised!*

*Here is our gift of consecrated blood!*

*Iro'l ixx Tliat stt stt Obiaa! Aitg'n Vmsse, Shub-Niggurath!*

*Othaag G'gu Cl'rloomu tte Vustaa—L'vch! L'vch! Puuir mupo!*

Mighty Mother, the Enslaving Chants—*Dhol Xigl*—have failed,  
Web-trails scar and pock Proud Yaddith; once fair sanctuary.  
Hateful-eyes peer from roiling black depths exposed.  
In our learned halls—triumphs that hold the vast glory of Thy Name—  
The crawling-destroyers harvest our seed.

*All-Mother, our cup holds great need of thy guard and comforts!*

*Smite the Snout-worm—Burn its seed!*

*Our liberty has lost its wings. Return with miracles reprised!*

*Here is our gift of consecrated blood!*

*Iro'l ixx Tliat stt stt Obīaa! Aitg'n Vmsse, Shub-Niggurath!  
Othaag G'gu Cl'rloomn tte Vustaa—L'vch! L'vch! Pnuir mupo!*

The Nug-Soth are lost in a world newborn in cavorting nightshades hunting.

The Temple of the Spirit of Triumphs Discovered

Is now an empty fortress, a funeral of sore hallucinations.

Color and shine fade and dim—Bright Yaddith crumbles!

*All-Mother, our cup holds great need of thy guard and comforts!*

*Smite the Snout-worm—Burn its seed!*

*Our liberty has lost its wings. Return with miracles reprised!*

*Here is our gift of consecrated blood!*

*Iro'l ixx Tliat stt stt Obīaa! Aitg'n Vmsse, Shub-Niggurath!*

*Othaag G'gu Cl'rloomn tte Vustaa—L'vch! L'vch! Pnuir mupo!*

Nyhton and Mthura close their fearful-hearts to our cause.

NZOORL slaps us with its cold nay shouted.

Yarnak, and Ymar, and VHOORL,

ZOATH and KTYNGA,

Hold nothing but confirmation of Our Doom.

*All-Mother, our cup holds great need of thy guard and comforts!*

*Smite the Snout-worm—Burn its seed!*

*Our liberty has lost its wings. Return with miracles reprised!*

*Here is our gift of consecrated blood!*

*Iro'l ixx Tliat stt stt Obīaa! Aitg'n Vmsse, Shub-Niggurath!*

*Othaag G'gu Cl'rloomn tte Vustaa—L'vch! L'vch! Pnuir mupo!*

Hungry Yaddith with her cities like pierced and ruined armor trembles—

A million and a million flee, as a million and a million more

Are measured by silent poisons greater than mere death.

*All-Mother, our cup holds great need of thy guard and comforts!*

*Smite the Snout-worm—Burn its seed!*

*Our liberty has lost its wings. Return with miracles reprised!*

*Here is our gift of consecrated blood!*

*Iro'l ixx Tliat stt stt Obīaa! Aitg'n Vmsse, Shub-Niggurath!*

*Othaag G'gu Cl'rloomn tte Vustaa—L'vch! L'vch! Pnuir mupo!*

Mighty Mother Promised To Come—

Our voices and collected-powers united are raised,

Is not The Time of Thy Return upon us?

Fly to us, woeful and lost to this cataclysm!

Quiet thy frousome servants below!

O Most High and Holy Shub-Niggurath,

The Nug-Soth, overwhelmed, cry out!

*All-Mother, our cup holds great need of thy guard and comforts!*

*Smite the Snout-worm—Burn its seed!*

*Our liberty has lost its wings. Return with miracles reprised!*

*Here is our gift of consecrated blood!*

*Iro'l ixx Tliat stt stt Obīaa! Aitg'n Vmsse, Shub-Niggurath!*

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*Iro'l ixx Tliat stt stt Obīaa! Aitg'n Vmsse, Shub-Niggurath!*

*Othaag G'gu Cl'rloomn tte Vustaa—L'vch! L'vch! Pnuir mupo! ✱*

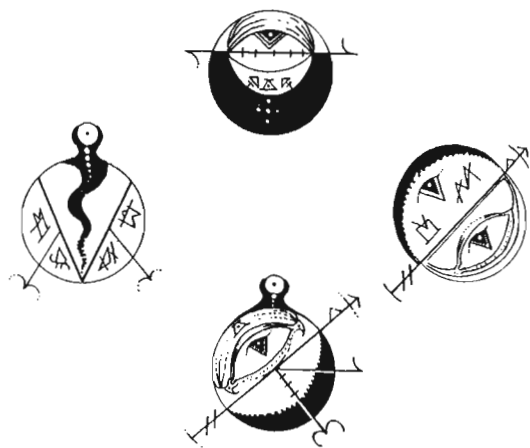
# The Forgotten Ritual of Mnar

by Joseph S. Pulver

After fasting and burning a red cloth. And after lighting three wax-lights. And after naming the Seventy-Two Holy Names of Aberration and Scourge in the form of litanies. At the time when the moon has but one hour for the spell-caster, on the stone table upon the great hill Cnarararhod in the desert of the Ylia in Mnar where sit crows and ravens as brothers in the barren rain tree mark the name of that—be it man, or world, or god—thou wouldst destroy. Offer three male virgins by holy burning and speak the words of consecration—

NYOCUMII BHA FON-FON MRAABI-G'NIIN  
SII B'IKA OOUV-ZOL  
CE-OO, CE-OO, N'BBH-OO  
OO Y'N OO Y'N

And place the Signs Only Their Eyes Can See from *The Wisdom and Sacred Magic of Zylac the Mage*, painted in the blood of women, taken at their time of bleeding, and the fat and juices boiled from the heads of five male infants, at each corner of the table of offering.



To close thyself to all but thy purposeful desire strike Messtisl's Fire. Over the bones of a male and a female infant with skulls placed together crest to crest and the bones of the feet pointed North and South on the table of offering use the words that spark the Law of Lesser Creations—

NNARROHEMGNA  
HEHTEKHELEVEZ                      ESNOMINIBGETA  
SALAGADNAMAID  
ONILLAVAC                              ELANNEIRT  
AGIDNOHLA

When the fire rising from the skulls lives thick and cobalt-blue, place thy hands on the skulls. Place thumb and forefinger within the eye-sockets. Feel the pain of the Flame Cold To Touch burn clean thine own life force. And now pure and full of thy great want reach out to the Daemon-Sirens of the Pit None May Enter.

*Supernal Sisters Hidden, Daughters of Azathoth, break from Thy toils of fervor in the Pit None May Enter and open Thy flame-bearded wombs. Y UEO Z'DRUO SHAARN-ALVYT. Accept this which is not wanted. T'TERRIN SWUUGN Y Y NEGR. Take it to Thy unseen pleasures. YRES FR'PHUT MERIINMAL YR. Leaving no trace.*

UCHN            UCHN            UCHN  
UCHN            UCHN  
UCHN

*Thusa—TZA-KA! Okkokoku—TZA-KO! Aulaniis—TZA-KI! Terrible Angels of My Will, take that which I mark as Thine Own to the forever of Thy dismal void in Thy Pit None May Enter. K'NRRIN G'YTROON VR AAT Q'NOET-Y-SNE. Warrior-Sisters, grasp the fate of that I name, and turn it to dust and wretchedness in Thy execrable hands. Thusa, cloud-grey cauldron-tender! Okkokoku, eldest-giantess of eumity! Aulaniis, most wanton Death-Bringer! Sisters Ever-United, let your infallible might and poisons and my command be of one accord! Strike—TEM-MIRUHGI—that which offends me with the act irrevocable! Heed not remedies sent on holy smoke, and let no bargains or safeguards repel you!*

*Hear me, Scourging Malefactors of the Dreadful Pit, come to that I give. Come through curve and gap and tangled orbs; come pass the addresses of the*



dead, and the crags and chasms that consume knowledge and years and legends as the babe consumes his mother's milk; come nurtured and evoked, and raise Thy grievous storms against that which my desire dedicates to Thee.

O Strange and Lasting Destructions Infernal, hurry to it, for it waits for Thy obdurate attentions! Open Thy hearts abominable and pour over it with all Thy terrible faculties.

N'GI-N'GBIL SUSSAHERRSES CHR MEBN-LURASSAAL! See my work! I smash the lock, and pull open the gates!

SOSITIASLGBZES CHR SIAR YB-AKL! Ride the road I illuminate!

OITUO LV'ALVAP'R'NIR CHR HY-N'GAAV'NOS! Come heap damnation upon that which I offer!

ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA, ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA,  
ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA—THUSA.

ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA, ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA,  
ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA—OKKOKOKU.

ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA, ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA,  
ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA—AULANIIS.

ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA, ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA,  
ASYLO N'GI AHGAATRRRA—THUSA, OKKOKOKU, AULANIIS,  
CR'YRV'H! ✱

## The Kynothrabian Dirge

by Joseph S. Pulver

For Antas, Eibon's seventeenth male issue,  
shorn from the world by the Dogs of Tindalos.

*Sa-læb il. Sa-læb il. Sa-læb il.*

*Li-pacn-sul kaviiu väul.*

On this long day when death resounds his unchallenged claim,  
Let all the lofty titans in the heavens hear our hearts decanted,  
And let all unbecoming men stand in fear  
When rings the baying clamor like raging confessions,  
Along the paths that surge  
From the jutting spirals of Tindalos' bitter towers black.

In the curved beams warming this world,  
Given from the sun, bright and brighter in its span,  
Stand acolyte and abbess, lord and vassal,  
Herdsman and headsman,  
Feeble and becalmed  
With their dwarf wits blind.

Little do they fathom of Grand Impurity and  
The ambush of line, and crack, and angle sharp,  
And cavernous shades deep,  
When the beacon of light bleeds to death on the horizon.

Nightfall is not a quarry,  
Nor a seedbed,  
For the sons of men  
And divided yearnings sought.

The coming Marvels of Judgement,  
The burden and the yoke unfailing—  
Awash in that vessel of earth and spirit joined,  
Spilled and wrecked upon doom's door—  
Hunger for the salve  
Breathed by all the sons of men in sum.

When iniquity's transgressing devils cast nets unfurled  
 And wrathful rods of thunder and affliction,  
 And reap the spoils foretold,  
 Taking back to the realm of nothing  
 The sons of men, carrying no blood to the ending,  
 Man shall lie as bones set in the places dark  
 as he was Before.

All powerful Thou art unto all ages, O darksome Lord Zhothaquah.  
 All powerful Thou art unto all ages, O darksome Lord Zhothaquah.  
 All powerful Thou art unto all ages, O darksome Lord Zhothaquah.

O Ebon Conqueror Eternal,  
 We pour out our praise on breath untainted and unfailing.  
 To delight thee, O Great-Slumberer, Zhothaquah,  
 We sculpt mountains,  
 From Diarciholn's Peak in Eabdamar to Intviilui where white webs  
 spiral,  
 In thy toad-shaped countenance tremendous.

O Ageless Zhothaquah, Daemon-Sovereign of N'Kai and Yoth,  
 Forsake us not, and vouchsafe your solicitous servants,  
 Barring us from eternity's darkened torments.  
 And when the office of the dead hails us,  
 Grant us a good end.

*Li-pacn-sul kaviin vaul.*

*Sa-læb il. Sa-læb il. Sa-læb il. ☼*

## The Ritual of the Outer Void

by Joseph S. Pulver

**T**he radiant districts of mystery beyond, home to the spirit-essence of self—aware and breathing all the forces that create the clay allotted to common men—can prove loathsome and dire to voyage. Yet if thou wouldst travel out and out to the edge, to gaze upon the court of the Beyonders in the Outer Void, follow thou the ways of my experience. Adept, the way of knowledge is long, and may not be taken by the shell of flesh.

Fast that thou might cleanse the spirit and thrust aside the mists that attack the Spirit Eye within. Nor should the voyager drink so he may fully absorb the sustaining energies of the Realm of Deepest Understanding. On the third day of fasting breathe the vapors of clarity rising from a kettle boiling with salt water, Mnarian Way Root venom, the horn dust of an Eiglophian black-horned ram, and Ytheanu leaves. Ladle a small amount into a consecrated silver cup and allow it to cool until warm to the touch. Then dip two fingers in this unguent and anoint thy temples and throat.

Lie, as if the body were in a phantastic slumber, in the Third Posture of Supplication in a circle of Magical force consecrated by the Sareatas, Pnom's First Guardian of the Exerciser. In the left hand clutch the first feather of the right wing of a crow killed with the headman's stroke at moonrise. In the right hand clutch the first feather of the left wing of a dove killed with the headman's stroke at sunrise.

Recite the following incantation to shield thine true self from the hexes of death and the host of formless lurkers in darkness that like haunting spirits consumed with great hungers lie in the first layers beyond the physical plane.

*Darksome-Hunters of the gloom-vales alien, see me not.*

*Outstretched Hindrance stained in the livid dialogues of evil  
 and saturated in vile wickedness, pass me by.*

*Come not for me, Ravenous Death-Birds Waiting.*

*As I pass, know forgetfulness and confusion.*

*Indulge Thy loathsome frolics and feasts in other realms.  
And be not disobedient or find my curses forever bound to Thee.*

*rAAAtAAvAArA etcss AuAtAbAni, tAAmAA vuo  
uolb mAAlmAA tsAusAllAsooppArAu  
rAAAtAAvAArA etcss AuAtAbAni, tAAmAA vuo  
uolb mAAlmAA tsAusAllAsooppArAu  
rAAAtAAvAArA etcss AuAtAbAni, tAAmAA vuo  
uolb mAAlmAA tsAusAllAsooppArAu*

Adept, decant thy sum and substance through the Doors of Flesh and Earth and find on the waves within the starry-routes of true understanding. And with thy true and inner self in full bloom, send forth as spread wings of fire dancing, the *Nesbxiba*, the Sign of Flight and Direction Joined I set here from the second scroll of *The Book of the Dominion of Mysteries*.



Rise like the white crane soaring. After passing through the Nine Webs of Confusion and False Visions—thick in sight, smell, and sound—ease through the immortal dance of the Seven Shining Luminaries. From here ascend into bands of Great Noise, the fourteenth attribute of the Eternal Discords. When the clamor thins to dim echoes, fly to the blue horizon cut with shimmering streams of translucent green. There, passing all that flows about thee, in the sparks, and rains, and rivulets, set against the shadows eternity casts, enter the phantom city, Nbras O'oboulme, where night is the quiet companion of all hours.

Thou mayest not travel safely from The City Misery Ruined where Blessed Zylac hid *The Parchments of Pnom* until thou capturest one lost to the rapture of drowning from the Well of Souls in the Cavern of Sirens. While it sleeps take its skin so thou mayest travel as an unseen spectre. But beware, although cloaked, you may still

become prey for the Lurking Daemons-Sore that may seek to bar thy passage, or feast on the sweetest essence.

Seek beyond the strange and curious citadels, scattered like sleeping sentinels, that line the shore opposite Nbras O'oboulme until thou findest the dead road of Esius that runs between the nameless walls and broken pillars where Argiacelasil and M'gara battled for the Star of Blue Onyx. Take the fork that leads right.

At the scree fallen from the Ring of Red-Lit Moons of Daemon-Powers descend. Flow along the Second Current of Grey Shadows cast by the Path of Nine Colors, freely embracing the ways of strange motion in the Gardens of Friction until thou passest beyond the milk-eyed gaze of the Thirty White Stars hung in an inverted crescent, and the liquid circulations of Atem, Fuani Gaane, and Siii. Continue on, avoiding all the harvests of entangling thickets of strange bramble painted like curtained halls of dark matter burning in the First Great Sea Between.

In the vast Crystal Moors of Seteah colored like the dawn's rays—their reflections of reflections fluttering about thee like a cloud of butterflies o'er the velvet-petaled fields below Voormithadreth in high summer—find where the yellows turn green. Seek the deepest shades. When all before thee is pure and boundless iridescent violet find the crack that sits like a measureless tree on the horizon. Go unto it. With these potent words—*Eabch Zu Eabch Schae Uz Schae Eabch Zu Eabch*—create the Sphere of Shelter before thou reachest the crack of destruction that opens on the dead court of the Beyonders in the Outer Void.

There, at the brink of the Outer Void, stand thou upon the strange ramparts thrust like wild shadows cutting, but heed my firm admonition and step not into the nothingness before thee. For the Astalatsahl, the Black Essence discharged after the Great Feasting of Brahranjgü and Scúrucúúa, holds a hunger of its own. Once like the spheres we move through in body and spirit, the Great Nothingness, now only an empty netherworld of Black Essence, ran thick with the dramas of every pleasure and annihilation exchanged, but Brahranjgü and Scúrucúúa the Ever-Gnawing Titans, whose very kinship to the Black Stars is parental, like grave worms slow through the body of the Outer Heavens came stealing, and devouring all left nothing in their wake but the Astalatsahl, their foul waste. ✱

## The Grey Rite of Azathoth

by Joseph S. Pulver

With the imperishable and mighty protection of Bug-Shaggog, the Enduring Hatred-Implacable installed as Lord Protector of the Chaos Stone by decree of the Daemon-Sultan, I, Eibon, Grand Mage of Mhu Thulan, seal the power of the Grey Rite in this book of sacred and profane magic from the buffoon, the impious, the idolater, and the false and unworthy who would use it to plunder and despoil. Here I set the sigil of the Grim Sentinel of Ild-Ryn, Bug-Shaggog. False One, know it and fear the judgment of the executioner.



Shall a time of great distress come to pass, one, needful and bold, may call forth He Who Creates Without Cause or Reason By Idle Thought and Breath with the Grey Rite. To draw down the spurting tortures of the forceful god of Chaos, heed what I, Eibon, blessed servant of Lord Zhothaquah, have taken from the twenty-third scroll of Iskarullantn Anaan's *Book of the Dominion of Mysteries*. True and Faithful Seeker, mindful of error and the dire lesson of the Parable of the Nine Who Unwisely Dared, here lies the way to direct the wrathful bolts of the Daemon-Sultan.

When darkness has spread its wings, at the Hour of the Lost Day when the age of the moon is three nights of the Moon of Wrath's Realm in the Month of Ehlhaar, or the High Night of the Moon of Red Sulmanopses in the Month of the Sylph, bring together thy acolytes, numbering nine, in stone walls far from the resort of common men and prepared with the Nailing Brands of Sthal.

There shall be three potent Nails painted in a mixture of Lekrahg blood and the venom of the Mnarian Way Root plant upon each wall. Abreast of each other fix the first pair of the Nails of Sthal on the north end of the east wall, and then the second pair on the south end of the west wall. Then fix, again abreast of each other, the third pair on the west side of the north wall, and the fourth pair on the east side of the south wall. The remaining four sigils shall stand alone in the center of each wall. Fix them in the same order as the pairs. Each of the twelve protections shall stand at the height of the Summoner's eyes, and all shall be the size of a man's head.

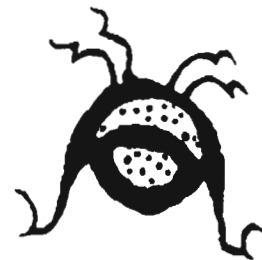
Here I set the Nailing Brand of Sthal.



Let those gathered be sure to be appareled in grey vestments, for none but the binding sigils and the Mage's word should draw the might of the Conjured One's attentions.

Let the faces of those gathered be most certainly concealed by the Six-Horned Mask of Black Ulsathuis which shall bear the Repelling Sign of Blessed Zylac for this rite. Paint the ebon and red Mask of Black Ulsathuis grey to match the color of thy robes for this rite. And the Repelling Sign of Blessed Zylac shall be fixed upon the brow of the mask in the color of blood.

Here I set the Blessed Zylac sign.



Paint the Fettering Web of Ilar Thal upon the ground four times, once for each direction of the winds, and upon the backs of both of thy hands. The protective signs writ upon the floor of thy enclosure shall be twice the size of a man's head.

Here I set the Fettering Web of Ilar Thal.



The sweet smoke of purple Oszhtor mossweed shall fill the ritual enclosure like a whispering mist.

At no time during the Grey Rite shalt thou speak the true Divine Name of the Ultimate Source of All Miscreation and Abomination.

Over an offering table painted with salted lamb's blood and the potent omens of Isyl and Ytun writ in thy own blood, stand with thy staff of iron-footed oak and the left eye of a female child who has yet to bleed.

Mark the Double Seal of the Triangle Within the Circle upon the floor to pen the manifestation of the Core of All. Within the triangle place ground fire-dust from the cold hollow of Voormithadreth, the bud horns and beard of a Camorbian chim goat. Sprinkle the fire-dust in each of the three corners of the triangle. Then place the bud horns on the east and west points of the triangle. Point the tips of the horns inward. The beard thou shall place on the triangle's north point.

Outside the circle, the nine shall stand with their painted totems. At the mage's command the nine shall set their totem rods in a brazier of Kraun wood coals. The last to lose its color will be the chosen offering to the Core of All. The Chosen, the Ez'nadril, shall remove his mask and freely lie upon the table and begin the Estrathum Prayer of Thanks to the Divine Name of Chaos. And when the Ez'nadril has spoken it three times, the Mage will open the disciple's belly, from manhood to breast, that his pain may feed the Dark God's want. Then set the virgin's eye deep in the bowels, and

cut the binding Nail of Sthal in each breast that He whom thou seekest to summon shall be bound to the table's opened feast.

The Summoner shall strike his oak staff upon the floor three times. He shall then begin the rite of drawing forth and binding, singing low as a murmuring of soft winds.

The four acolytes flanked west shall softly tattoo the Rhythm of Eirsa on the summoning drums of the Ylia, as the four flanked to the east bring to life the Song of Eifil on reed flutes like the whispered funeral drone of the Lamenting Crones of Liqquan.

All gathered shall have anointed their eyes and ears with Thlabaras Root oil from the far western jungles of Zesh for protection.

Here I set the words of law that shall conjure the Infernal. All shall be sung and spoken in a hush, or ye shall stand alone before Doom-Supreme. The words of law and power writ here in the lower four lines shall only be sung in a hush.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*

*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

Call forth the Divine Name of Chaos thus—

O Lord of All, know the Law-Maker, I, Eibon of Mhu Thulan, who summons thee, by the name of power I mark distinct and true before you.



*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*

*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

O Formless Chaos, I, Eibon, Great Mage of Mhu Thulan, for the span of thy summoning and appointed task, call out for thy compliant aid. O Immense Corruption of All Causes and Ways, root and essence of all the heavens and all the worlds held in their sway, hear my hushed voice of law thou may not turn from, and come to me from the world beyond as in a rushing wind.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

O Chaos-Sultan, know my power to hold thee fast by the Nails of Schal I lay before and about thee.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

O Chaos Forever-Almighty, great in thy darkness-keep, my iron whisper of law leaps over abyssal crack and nether sea; o'er green wood and burning orbs; o'er weeping clouds and the song of ravens, and mounds hard with blood-hate, and enchanted waters, and hay, and ash, and bone; or chambers set low where lurk knots of scorn and hate; or the wandering fates like molten wax, and the balance between fortunes, creeping cold, finding thy hidden nether heart.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

Core of All, I, Eibon, the Anthark of Mhu Thulan, pour apple nectar, and honey, and Red Worm seed, and oils rich, and the blood of bull and lamb, and the warm blood of the heart of this disciple offered, for your thirst—Swallow and obey.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

O Chaos Blind and Needful, heed my words unsheathed and sharp in purpose, and appear in this realm of my distress.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

O Fulmination-Supreme, make swift journey to the house of this chieftain of all nature's forces. Yet come not to confront thy master, O Great Daemon-Lord, but to toil, making my enemy's surrender a shuddersome withering to ash and dust.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

Come as I bid in a whisper as damning as Doom's roar, O Cataclysm. Come full in thy fever for battle and blood and souls. Come Chaos—cry havoc. Bleed the powers set against me with talons honed by my judgment. Come rend, and shred, and mow, as do blight and plague, leaving but barren space for the worm.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

With the words true I bind thee, Core of All, that you, fettered in obedience, walk to my voice like summer insects' siren call. Yet in my masterly company, held with the sigils I etch and empower, hold thy sore afflictions tremendous, till loosed to run as free waters flowing, as I, Eibon, bid and instruct.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yba-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

O Blind Idiot God of All Powers and Victory with this burnt brand I etch the Nail of Sthal in the air. Fly to it from thy abyssal haven where shade was born. Come now, riding the secret road paved with my tongue. Know the nail's powers to fasten secure, woven and mastered with stings of ice, and venom, and radiant fires, and stand quiet till I move thee.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

Hear my voice, One in Perpetual Turmoil, it moves thee. While it fills you, and gives you its sight, know it to be past, present, and future. Know I am he who owns the voice that is the instrument, the mountain unmovable. There is no mastery of self, O Chaos Blind and Wrathful, only my voice terrible in thee. Hear its hush like thunders surging. Lord of All, approach and grapple not with the law it proclaims. Come, as if bound in ponderous chords of sharp influence, guided by my voice.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

My need cries out like a great and terrible wind devouring all before it. Stand fast in the law I whisper and lend the whole of your vast powers to my desire. O Core of All, appear bound, and end the darksome injustice transacted against me. Let there be victory against those who would destroy me.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

O Corruption-Supreme, fly as I, Eibon, the faithful disciple of the wisdom of Blessed Zylac, bid. My word, vast as all torments unspeakable, deprives thee of thy powers and thy place until my

bidding is done, and there and then wilt thou return to the unquenchable core burning at oblivion's heart everlasting.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

Here thou shalt issue the task with which thou chargest the Chaos of All. Hear the Law-Maker, O Daemon-Sultan, depart this meeting and attend that task I have revealed to thee with strong command.

*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*Yge Yge Yge tys diil yha-na. Gon kilii kon-kon, osha kilii kon-kon. Par T'äbo.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*  
*K'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab, k'run k'run badiübiab.*

Mage, upon sending the Lord of Chaos to his task, all light and sound in thy enclosure must quickly be extinguished, and the Masking Shelter of Datüüra-Cerlon, from the fifteenth scroll of Iskarullantn Anaan's *Book of the Dominion of Mysteries*, must be spoken with sure strength to hide thy presence from the Chaos-Sultan. While the barrier of Datüüra-Cerlon blinds, burn well and through to ash all oblations and traces of thy rite from the enclosure, or face the terrible retribution of He Who Creates Without Cause or Reason By Idle Thought and Breath. ✱

## The Adoration of the Black Flame

by Joseph S. Pulver

If thou wouldst walk amid the known and unknown dreads and splendors of the Realm of True and Deep Slumber, and in thy journey, shouldst need to draw upon the facility of thine arts, the mage who seeketh not to harm the pleasures and innocents protected, would be wise to pay tribute to the Burning Staff of Justice of the Shatterer of Worlds, She Who Brought Forth the Elder Sign, by offering a blood sacrifice to the Holy Black Flame, the living symbol of her accord.

This ceremony to seek the blessing and protection of N'tse-Kaambl needs be performed before that thou shalt employ any of the Greater enchantments and conjurations and rites writ as strange ivy stealing upon the pages of *The Book of the Dominion of Mysteries*, and *The Wisdom and Sacred Magic of Zylac the Mage*, and *The Book of Elders*, and *The Pnakotic Scrolls*. This rite shall take place high in an open tower or upon a hill. For greatest efficacy perform thou this rite on the lower peak of Mt. Hatheg-Kla facing Thran in the east. It shall be lit by moonlight only.

The celebrants shall be the mage or priest who governs the gathering, and eight initiates. Four shall be women and four shall be men. The mage will wear only black and carry his consecrated dagger and his iron-shod staff. The women shall wear red robes and black T'nyo masks marked on the right cheek with the Sign of the Burning Hand. The men shall wear black robes and red T'nyo-bo masks marked on the left cheek with the Sign of the Burning Hand. All shall wear black gloves with red thumbs.

The offering table shall be covered in a mixture of crow and dove blood and ox fat. A small fire pot shall be lit to fire the fat and blood when the oblation is burned in offering.

The mage shall bow to each direction of the winds and strike his staff seven times upon the ground. A small silver gong marked

only with the Elder Sign shall then be struck three times and three times again.

All the celebrants shall make the Sign of the Blessed Zylac's Glorious Enterprise in the air before them with the right hand.

After the mage striketh his staff seven times upon the ground, and until the mage concludeth the rite of adoration by striking his staff seven times again upon the ground, the eight that attend the mage shall sing brightly:

*Pbor qutru yarazl h'gug, Uvhs-J'hon.*

*Uthet ugrytha sut.*

*Eoreq adlhir adlhir-io r'giavuin Ot-litha.*

The mage shall recite the following:

*C'vo Ch'Isesa Nsh'Cuibk!*

*C'vo Ch'Isesa Xizo-Ati-Ni-Tho!*

*I give unto thee, O Uvhs-J'hon, the hot rich blood of this ram.*

The mage shall open the bound offering with the ceremonial blade and hold its heart high above the table. The gong shall be struck trice.

*I set before thee, O Flame of Wonder, truth-revealed, and exalt thee with gifts and prayer.*

*O Rare and Resplendent Attribute of N'tse-Kaambl, Mistress of the Elder Sign, with praise in our hearts we offer unto thee.*

The mage shall set the offering ablaze.

*We offer blood and prayer that thou, O holy Black Pillar of Outstretched Judgment, may light our path to knowledge.*

*O Holy and Lustrous Black Flame, I come in reverence, not to take possession of your treasures, but to discover the bounty of Thy Blessing Bestowed.*

*O Sacred Black Lamp, old in the time beyond times forgotten, O Both Charm and Disaster, we, the servants of the mysteries sacred, are assembled upon this rock to offer tribute to thy rushing grace.*

*O Pillar of Black Flame, mayest thou forever blaze with strange detail glowing.*

*O Beacon of Justice, who burnest as a living thing, we sing the praise of thy whorling breath that holdeth no trace of laments.*

*O Great Mural of Living Fire, who hast endured and thrived on the traditions and sagas both grand and slight, thou who art as rare as all the festivals of life, we come to thee with only praise and honor and respect.*

*O Shining Black Flame, bless us with thy protection.*



*O Eternal Ebon-Radiance, color our journey in ease.*

*O Silently-Roaring Uvbss-J'hon, Nasht and Kaman-Thab, vigilant guardian-priests of the Cavern of Flame, tend thee not, yet they reflect thy might and grandeur. Bless us who seek no harm in the lauds thou protectest. Bless us who offer this beast unto thee as a sign of fealty and respect.*

*O Luminous Ebon-Titan Uvbss-J'hon, who hast bent Those Tremendous with Hate and Greed of Fomalhaut and The Place Where the Black Star Haugs to silent dogs quartered, we, here with open hearts true, praise thy Light—Forever.*

*O Uvbss-J'hon, Black Flame Adored, we, humbled before thy might, bless thee for thy blessings and protection bestowed.*

The mage shall strike his staff seven times upon the ground, and the gong shall be struck three times rapidly, and the nine shall bow deeply to the east three times and three times again.

The rite of adoration to the Holy Black Flame shall close as all close their eyes and make the Sign of the Burning Hand over their heart with the right hand. ✱

## The Black Litany of Nug and Yeb

by Joseph S. Pulver

*Äma bl-Nug ol Äma bl-Yeb!*

*Ttak cls iro Züür.*

*Ttak cls iro Züür.*

O Masters of the Black Fires Concealed  
Rise o'er the flights of dim mortals sleeping.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's table!*

O Bringers of the End of Man's Allotted Time  
Extend thy ill-frost that here and beyond might be cleansed.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's table!*

O First Issue of She Who Is To Come Bearing A Thousand Young  
Now lost to thy stillness of discomfort, spark thy Doom-Engines  
Black and Red.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's table!*

O Great Hammers of the Scouring, arrive with thy Black Fires wild,  
Clearing all spaces for the Terrible Masters Outside deprived.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's table!*

O Angers Fuller Than Thunder whose concordant verdict crashes as  
a wave,  
The frail earth lies ripe for thine age of starry-fire.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's table!*

O shadowy Nug, uncover thy cauldron-black torch at the pole boreal  
That the Divine Punishment may be born in all glory.

*Nug, Great Dragon black, come prepare thy Father's table!*

O Servant of Abthoth, Yeb of the Whispering Mists,  
Bring forth burning, thy round furnace red inhumed in the pole  
austral.

*Yeb, Great Dragon red, come prepare thy Father's table!*

O Twin-Spawn of Yog-Sothoth, in thy nightmariums bound,  
Strike with thy noisome Black Essence overbrimming.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's  
table!*

O Sum of Destruction Complete, indulge thy Lords' will  
With pact eternal cast.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's  
table!*

O Both Sides of the One, the charts divined accede,  
The heavenly facets shining, are set in the strict aspect foreordained.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's  
table!*

O Issue of those Harms Tremendous fettered to strange-time most  
abhorrent,  
The Sign made and brought through all the days is as a fever risen.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's  
table!*

O Dreadful Gods, in thy cold sepulchres deep amongst the black  
maze of stars,  
Heed this appeal, made with arms spread wide in thy acolytes' want-  
ing, and arise.

*Nug and Yeb, Great Dragons black and red, come prepare thy Father's  
table!*

*Äma bl-E'rhîbib ol Äma bl-Kähi.*

*Äma bl-Nug ol Äma bl-Yeb!*

*N'dr Ir'culgra Tcher Ürcü L'mü.*

*Ttak ds iro Züür.*

*Äma bl-Nug ol Äma bl-Yeb! ✱*

## To Call Forth Tsathoggua to Smite Thy Enemy

by Joseph S. Pulver

On my twenty-first birthday, having come into my right and lawful inheritance, I undertook a pilgrimage, by carriage and steamer ship, and finally, on foot, to the Abbey of Thelema near Cefalu, Sicily. There had I journeyed to sit at the learned feet of Master Therion to accept his instruction and receive his blessing.

In the vast and grand library of the Great Beast 666, among the rare and exalted knowledge of the mysteries writ by himself and many an adept of ages past, I was led, by the master's spirit-guide, Aiwass, to the grimoirium of the Hyperborean mage, Eibon. You may well imagine the delight the Blessed Therion and I experienced upon discovering his copy of *Liber Ivonis*—erroneously thought to be lost somewhere between Paris and Cairo while he sought after an elusive starry mystery that had beguiled him. Thereupon, I, in a vision of outer dimensional substance, endeavoring to aid the most foully set upon initiates of my order in their arduous battle for true enlightenment, did thus, with the further guidance and aid of Aiwass, translate the 13th century French text of Nathaire's most privileged student, Gaspard du Nord.

—Circe, Pamela Hay-Lloyd

The Abbey of Thelema, near Cefalu, Sicily  
July 1920

### THE MANDATES OF PREPARATION

**T**hou who would'st summon forth, to bind and adjure, the slumbering, and most loathsome, Lord of the Black Gulf of N'Kai, thou, High Adept, wilt heed and comply with the mandates of the rite, or thou wilt surely confront the most dire perils of utter and most foul annihilation and damnation.

Only on a night when the moon hides his countenance shall thee execute this evocation. Thou, adept, wilt empower no flame, nor candle, nor lamp, nor sorcerous illumination, before, or during this rite.

This, most holy and sacred rite, shall be inaugurated only at the hour of Salam when true night has fallen.

No dwelling-house, nor pen, nor fence, nor wall, nor manly construction, shall bar thee, nor HIM whom thou seeks to summon forth, from the open black of night.

Only with the Staff of Yoth, carved only from the wood of the rowan tree, and anointed with thine own spittle, and thine own sexual juices, and thine own blood, taken from the finger of Jupiter, and the gall of an adult male raven, and a broth made with one petal of a satyr orchid, the third skin of an onion as large as the fist of a large man, two roots of aconite, three drops of euphorbia milk, four hairy leaves of the henbane, one quart of night rain, and a single drop of blood from a three-legged toad, wilt thou, High Adept, make the Sign of Yoth. Thou wilt touch the staff once to thine forehead, and then, once to thine abdomen, and finally, once upon the ground. Thou wilt then make the casting sign of the opening.

Thou, High Adept, wilt paint, in blood, the sheltering Circle of HRaTT uDDaK around the Yothic Eye of Summoning, which thou wilt stand within for the duration of the rite. The blood must be taken from a freshly slaughtered, unmated adult male ox, and a virgin ewe that hast lived for no less than thirteen full cycles of the moon. It, the fresh blood, must be consecrated with the binding words, "Iä! Iä! O TSATHOGGUA! Aaa-yayaaa G'llh-ya. G'noth-ykagga-ha!"

Attended by seven initiates of thy coven, each fully enlightened, sheltered and protected, within one of the Lesser Circles of HRaTT uDDaK, wilt thou hold thy conclave.

For thine own protection and power, thou, High Adept, wilt consume a single leaf of the K'Ngiigl plant.

Thou wilt have marked thine enemy by having drawn thy victim's blood at some time within the last seven days before the rite, or by burning a lock of thy victim's hair one full hour before thy rite's commencement, or three nights before holding this rite, at the hour of Agle, thou wilt have traveled to thy victim in astral form, and there, scarred thy victim's aura with the Dark Light of TTab'B.

You, High Adept, and thine initiates shall speak your secret names, each in right and proper order of ranking, from lowest present to highest, thus inaugurating the summoning.

## THE SUMMONING

The High Adept shall insistently evoke HIM thus:  
*Iä! Iä! Iä! G'llh-ya, TSATHOGGUA!*

The Initiates shall call to HIM as a single voice:  
*Iä! Iä! Iä! G'noth-ykagga-ha! TSATHOGGUA!*

The High Adept shall insistently evoke HIM thus:  
*I. (name thyself adept), conjure and adjure thee, O TSATHOGGUA, Sovereign and Lord of N'Kai and Yoth, by the binding and ancient words of power! G'llh-ya! G'noth-ykagga-ha! Glu sba p'pirb lywt aani! XiKKiFFi! RKBB0 TTaK! oKH! By all manner of powers and rights, I, (name thyself adept), call beyond, into the black, for thee, O Hoary TSATHOGGUA, to come to me. Hear, and in thy bearing, obey! I, (name thyself adept), conjure and adjure thee, O TSATHOGGUA, conqueror of night, by the ancient words of power that came down from the night-vaulted caverns of Yoth!*

The Initiates shall call to HIM as a single voice:  
*Iä! Iä! Iä! G'noth-ykagga-ha! TSATHOGGUA!*

The High Adept shall insistently evoke HIM thus:  
*In the names of AZATHOTH, UBBO-SATHLA, NUG, YEB, RLIM SHAIKORTH, ATLACH-NACHA, APHOOM ZHAH, SHUB-NIGGURATH, KASSOGTHA, HT'ULLS-HR-EHR, and the master slumbering beyond death, CTHULHU, I conjure and constrain thee, TSATHOGGUA! By all thy names wherewith thou canst be constrained and bound, O SADOGUI, O ZHOTHACQUAH, O SAINT TOAD, O HOARY CRAWLER, O FATHER OF TRUE NIGHT, O SUPREME LORD AND MASTER OF THE BLACK GULF OF N'KAI, O TOAD GOD, O SADOQUAE, O SADGOWAH, O HUNGRY SLEEPER, O LORD OF K'N-YAN AND LOMAR, O LORD OF YOTH, O TERRIBLE AND FOULSOME GOD OF THE VOORMIS, O FIRST BORN OF OUTER ENTITY, O SLUMBERING FEASTER, O SADIWAH, O BLACK ABOMINATION, I, (name thyself adept), command thee to heed my binding summons! You, O hungry TSATHOGGUA, who have trod betwixt and amidst the blackest stars, wilt come hither, with no delay, and submit, and thus obey, my all-powerful commands!*

The Initiates shall call to HIM in full voice:  
*Hail, all-powerful, and most holy TSATHOGGUA! Iä! Iä!*

The initiates shall begin the ritual dance.

[Thou wilt stand within the Lesser Circles of HRaTT uDDaK. Thy palms wilt be pressed together over thine heart. Thy legs wilt be straight, and thy feet wilt be parted at a distance of two feet. By bending thy right knee, thou shall move thine hip right and to the rear in a quarter circle. Then, thou wilt mirror the motion with thine left side. Upon one complete right and left cycle thou wilt push and extend thine arms above thine head, thy palms still held together, thus forming a pyramid. This dance motion shall be repeated after a pause where thou wilt count to seven, until the rite is ended, and the High Adept taps the Staff of Yoth upon the ground three times in rapid succession.]

The High Adept shall insistently evoke HIM thus:

*Lord of K'n-Yan, Master of Lomar, Sovereign of N'Kai and Yoth, I adjure and evoke thee, O TSATHOGGUA, to hear in thy dark and forbidding slumber, the binding command of my evocation of awakening. I, (name thyself adept), by the words of power and command carried down from Yoth, unbind and emancipate thee from thy dark and lightless slumbering. Rise and come to me. And in thy coming, O TSATHOGGUA, thou wilt cause no harm or maltreatment to flesh, nor spirit, nor wits, to fall upon thy blessed servants. O TSATHOGGUA, come to your true servant, (name thyself adept), and cause no harm, nor be pernicious, nor disobedient! O TSATHOGGUA, come as swift as the soaring swallow, using my words of binding as thy beacon to this dark harbor. From the dark where thou abidest, enter! Enter! Enter! Iä! Iä! TSATHOGGUA! Iä!*

The Initiates shall speak this phrase in full voice:

TRH'Ro TTaK SiF HePTaPaRTTaK ZN'oKH. Ra'TTaH TTaK TSATHOGGUA! uHTT Baia uHTT. oKH! Ra'TTaH TTaK TSATHOGGUA! Ra'TTaK! Ra'TTaK!

The High Adept shall insistently evoke HIM thus:

TRH'Ro TTaK SiF HePTaPaRTTaK ZN'oKH. oKH! Ra'TTaH TTaK TSATHOGGUA! uHTT Baia uHTT. oKH! Ra'TTaH TTaK TSATHOGGUA! Ra'TTaK! Ra'TTaK! I move the barrier, and therefore, and again, with all manner of power, bind and adjure thee, TSATHOGGUA, appear without delay, and walk the earth. Come, O TSATHOGGUA, from your darkling corridors in the immemorial beyond! Come without maltreating thy caller, nor boly servants! Thou, ravenous TSATHOGGUA, wilt

*submit and fulfil, the commands of (name thyself adept), the caller, who, with all power over thee, hast exorcised thee from the black depths of slumber, to fall upon and smite mine enemy, (name thy enemy).*

The Initiates shall call to HIM as a single voice:

*Iä! Iä! Iä! G'noth-ykagga-ha! TSATHOGGUA!*

The High Adept shall insistently evoke HIM thus:

*Ere, (speak the name of your enemy), shall, therein, stand before you, and prevail not against the terrible judgment of your measureless hunger, O Mighty-Lord TSATHOGGUA! Ere, (speak the name of your enemy), shall, therein, stand before thy loathsomeness, O TSATHOGGUA, and his wits turned front to back, and his tongue shall be as wormwood, and his bones broken with melancholy and woe, and his skin bewildered by leprosy, and his heart become a coffin of poisons aflame. Then, O TSATHOGGUA, wilt thou fully devour, mine, and thusly thine, bitter enemy. With all manner of power, I, (name thyself adept), bind and adjure thee, O TSATHOGGUA, to submit, and thus, obey my command without causing any harms or injuries to my own self or that of my initiates.*

## THE RETURNING

The High Adept shall most insistently evoke HIM thus:

*O Hoary TSATHOGGUA, heed and obey my words of power, by which, I, (name thyself adept), adjure and bind thee! O TSATHOGGUA, now, thou wilt swiftly walk back along the black roads betwixt the stars, and return to thy deep slumbers, O mighty and dark lord, TSATHOGGUA! And in thy leaving, cause no injury, nor harm, to thy caller and his servants. Ra'TTaK! Ra'TTaK! TSATHOGGUA TTaK Ra'TTaK! oKH! uHTT Baia uHTT! TSATHOGGUA TTaK Ra'TTaH! oKH! ZN'oKH HePTaPaRTTaK SiF TTaK TRH'Ro. I, (name thyself adept), sheltered from thine hungers, move the barrier, and therefore, and again, with all manner of powers, bind and adjure thee, O TSATHOGGUA, be gone! TSATHOGGUA, be borne away, without pause, nor delay! By all thy names, O BLACK ABOMINATION, O SADIWAH, O SLUMBERING FEASTER, O FIRST BORN OF OUTER ENTITY, O TERRIBLE AND FOULSOME GOD OF THE VOORMIS, O LORD OF YOTH, O LORD OF LOMAR AND K'N-YAN, O HUNGRY SLEEPER, O SADOWAH, O SADOQUAE, O TOAD GOD, O SUPREME MASTER AND LORD OF THE BLACK GULF OF N'KAI, O FATHER OF*

TRUE NIGHT, O HOARY CRAWLER, O SAINT TOAD, O ZHOTHAAQUAH, O SADOGUI, O TSATHOGGUA, I, (name thyself adept), fully and completely bind, and thus, return thee, O TSATHOGGUA, to thy deep slumbers in the Gulf of N'Kai. Where thou, O TSATHOGGUA, wilt remain until the hour where by thou art evoked to come forth anew.

The Initiates shall utter this phrase in full voice:

Ra'TTaK! Ra'TTaK! TSATHOGGUA TTaK Ra'TTaK! oKH! uHTT Baia uHTT! TSATHOGGUA TTaK Ra'TTaH! oKH! ZN'oKH HePTaPaRTTaK SiF TTaK TRH'Ro.

The High Adept shall insistently speak:

*I have spoken the binding words, and thus conclude and close this ceremony.*  
lä! lä! lä! G'llb-ya, TSATHOGGUA!

The Initiates shall call to HIM in full voice:

*Hail, all-powerful, all-consuming, and most holy TSATHOGGUA. lä! lä!*

[Here let the High Adept rapidly tap the Staff of Yoth three times upon the ground. Then let the High Adept touch the staff once upon his abdomen, and once upon his forehead.]

*Thus ends thy conjuration! ✱*

## To Summon and Instruct Zhogtk, the Emanation of Yoth

by Joseph S. Pulver

*Zhogtk! Y'bhux nbaasmr! Mglu cls iro ab-yeh-Ub'araka! N'Ne N'Ne yl-  
Enguaatub Tgaa N'Ne Ljikalgd! lä! N'Ne! Zhogtk! lä! N'Ne!*

Zhogtk, thrusting and surging specter of darkling form and terrible purpose, hear my roaring of names—old when all was young—into the far webs and eddies of the black beyond!

Zhogtk, loathsome and foul emanation of red-lit Yoth, by all the blasphemies writ in the lore shut up within the Vaults of Zin, and the host of nightmares icebound within the canals of Polarion, I offer thee the rarest incense, and immolate this infant, so thou mayest sup on the purest of human bloods!

Zhogtk, I summon thee, and in thy hearing, wholly unclean scourge, thou shalt arise from the night-guarded fen of charnel-begrimed Kthla, wherein thou dwellest, and attend thy caller!

With mine eyes, my mouth, and all my mortal and spiritual juices, and the most fulsome and lawful power over thy festering and foul-some countenance and being, granted by the blessed Black Abomination, Zhothaquah, thy first and only master, I conjure and overwhelm thee to come forth, ceasing thy blind rattlings, and utterly spellbound and obligated by the star-decreed words of authority and influence, and therefore obedient to my will, thou shalt rain down no harms, nor torments, nor afflictions, upon my spirit, nor mortal flesh!

Come before me, Zhogtk, and heed mine unbreakable instructions, and when thou hast executed the task I set before thee, I bind and adjure thee to return to thy darkened keep, and abide!

Foul Zhogtk, thou shalt fully bear the weight of my charge or for always and ever endure the wrathful potency of Yig's most ruinous attentions. ✱

## To Walk Free among the Harms of Zin

by Joseph S. Pulver

I, Eibon, privileged and devoted servant  
of most high and blessed Lord Zhothaquah  
and Great Mage of Mhu Thulan,  
who have been borne over the stony mounds  
and hell-spined dwelling-houses  
of Cerngoth, and Utressor, and Camorba,  
on wings feathered from words,  
and who hast commemorated Isyl, and Ytun, and Vahm,  
in the Red Circus of Iffissa,  
and who hast consumed the dark-essence of stars,  
and Red Worm seed;

I, Eibon, privileged and devoted servant  
of most high and blessed Lord Zhothaquah  
and Great Mage of Mhu Thulan,  
who comprehend all elements, all metals,  
all forms of flesh, all powders and charms,  
all the ways of rapture and the manners worse than death,  
and all the sacred and blasphemous words;

I, Eibon, privileged and devoted servant  
of most high and blessed Lord Zhothaquah  
and Great Mage of Mhu Thulan,  
who have in ordained manner,  
slain beast and babe in communion and petition,  
and drunk their empowering essence  
from the fire-cleansed skull of a ram;

I, Eibon, privileged and devoted servant  
of most high and blessed Lord Zhothaquah  
and Great Mage of Mhu Thulan,  
who have held the darkness and the light

still as lifeless stone,  
and who comprehends the foul and necrophagous delights  
and gestures of abominable titans,  
do stand upon this sheltered rock, full of all my powers!

I, Eibon, privileged and devoted servant  
of most high and blessed Lord Zhothaquah  
and Great Mage of Mhu Thulan,  
charge thee, Ar-W'ytsl, Gate And Bridge Across,  
whilst the night season blooms in the deep hours,  
to span the immeasurable, the Chasm of Z'wnul,  
and bear me hidden and guarded  
through the unnatural courts and harms of the grey realms,  
that I may tread the labyrinthine corridors poured by G'Waatn  
within the Vaults of Zin! ✱

# The Night of the Night

by Michael Cisco

**A**mong these processions is this described as the Night of the Night of those persons of jagged Ejve Biis whom we know for their ancestry. The Ejve Biis receive the ambassadors of their ancestors.

They retire in the evening with a great show of outdoor banqueting finished they retire calling loudly to one another and lie still until the last dimming of twilight's lamps departing from the windows of the houses of twilight without glass windows that shine with the lamps of twilight and dim with twilight until the last, when there are no more embers, the oil is cold, there is no wisp of smoke but just ashes, when there are only ashes, if all is in darkness then because the dark moon is in the sky, there is only the darkness to which they are accustomed, just then they rise and go out to the mountain of night, come out in silence to the mountain of night hidden by the dark moon they come out in silence and alone going along one by one where their paths meet in long lines they circle the mountain of night hidden by the dark moon and come to the peak without light and stand as though blind, darker set against the dark sky, the idol of moons is there—

Beneath the gaze of the blind idol of moons they turn invisible when the priest speaks, they come to the idol of moons and when the dark moon has passed behind the idol of moons and is obscured by the idol of moons the priest comes from beneath the idol of moons and speaks, says 'It is night for Night,' they turn gale-eyed for dances and sing with strident wails into the sky unheard by sleeping Night, dance unseen, kiss in the dark like their young one another and each other in the dark like shadows in shadows clear as water and invisible, and with their priest they sing or teach others the song—

"The Night's seven eyes are fast asleep,  
She's resting  
On the dark moon  
Turn away your eyes,

Tonight release us from your gaze,  
Resting  
On the dark moon  
Don't paralyze us with your eyes,  
We're escaping your seven eyes  
From your silent tyranny—  
No one knows  
Why this night is not like the others,  
Why this night is night for Night,  
She sleeps—  
While her bloody tresses bind the veins of heaven"

This last line being repeated throughout for a long interval it is pitched higher for each word—there are preparations—

The unknown priest who is not known for wearing the seven-eye mask brings the one who put himself forward for the night of the Night and who is not known for wearing the sacrifice's mask, there is no light but what comes from the idol and that is not light, that is not light that is coming out of the idol, but shines so they can see the masks, the priest lies on the couch and says—

"I sleep"

—the one in the mask of the sacrifice comes up to the couch  
—except the priest they sing constantly

"While her bloody tresses bind up the veins of heaven"

—the one in the mask of the sacrifice lies beside the priest and he is given the moon's sour opium to drink, and when he lies on the couch they send their voices invisible as shadows in shadow one voice to the sky and the stars past the sleeping Night whose jealousy is also asleep and does not run after their calls to hem them in below the arch of the moon—

The priest rises, the white gold knife of the priest writes the language of night on the body of the offering by whose blood as it comes they can see, until the dark moon disappears, the priest makes cuts and gives admittance to the night to the body of the offering, the offering will know the night in every part of himself, and while the

unknown priest is cutting beneath the idol of moons the rest are safe and unseen to kiss in the dark and sing—

“Now they are all gaping diamond veins of heaven”

and the offering cries—

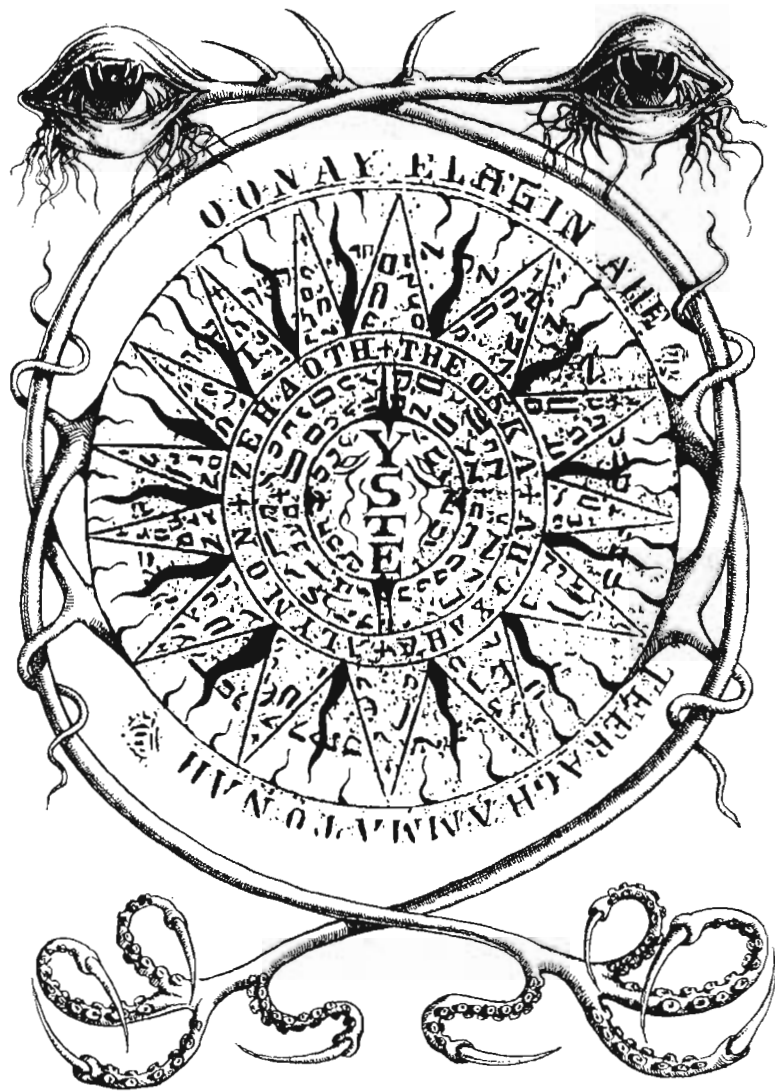
“Now my blood escaping shines through the gaze of heaven”

—in a voice that shakes the ground—the voice of the offering comes out of the offering and speaks in all of them, the voice of the offering disappears and for a moment there is nothing in the world, the night for All, there is night for All, and Nothing—

And those who return see the twilight again, by twilight in the east as the dark moon sets each takes a piece of the offering to hide in the earth before the sun shines. \*

## The Banishing Seal of Yste

by Thomas Brown





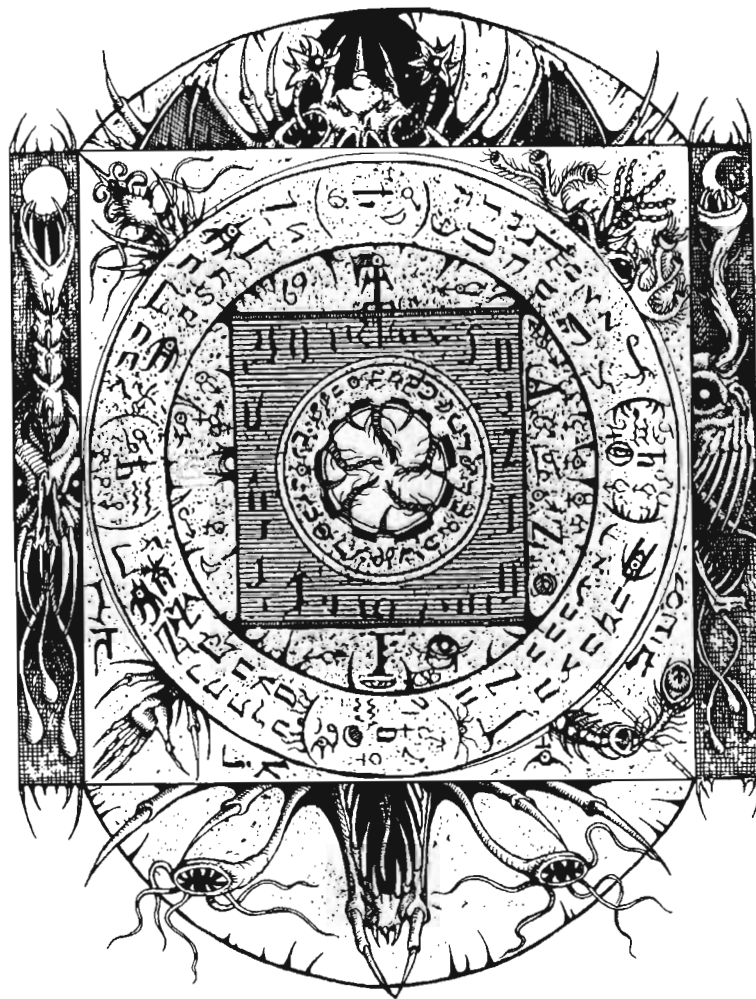
# The Nine Pentacles of Ssgandrom

by Thomas Brown



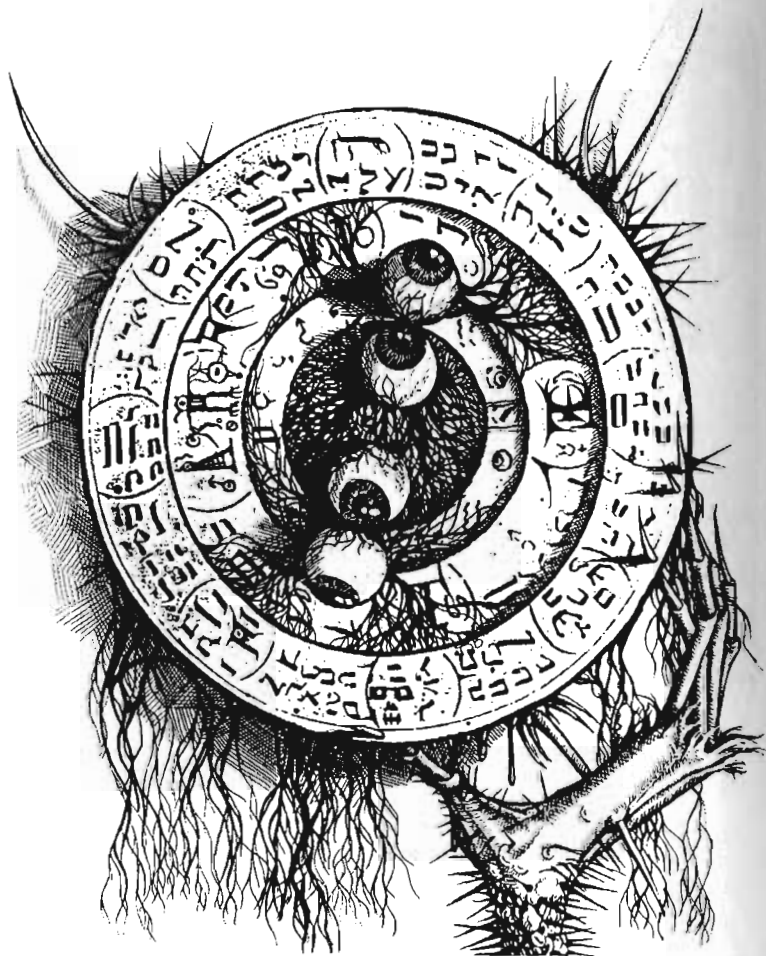
# The Scarlet Sign

by Thomas Brown



# The Triply Drawn Circle of Power

by Thomas Brown



Appendices

## About “The Acolyte of the Flame”

A new Old One (sorry for the oxymoron!) made his debut in this, one of the first Cthulhu Mythos stories Lin wrote, taking a periodic breather from work on his *Lovecraft: A Look Behind the “Cthulhu Mythos.”* He introduced Aphoom-Zhah, the Cold Flame, son of fiery Cthugha. The story exists in an earlier and a later form. The later version (which premiered in *Crypt of Cthulhu* #36, Yuletide 1985) appears here. It is most certainly a tale of Hyperborea, but not from the *Book of Eibon*; rather it is excerpted from the Pnakotic Manuscripts. (By the way, Lin used to pronounce it “na-COAT-ik,” for what that may be worth.)

You will note Carter’s attribution of the Pnakotic Manuscripts, at least their earlier portions, to the Australian archivists of Yith. This supposition finds no support in Lovecraft, who merely notes (in “The Shadow out of Time”) that the Yith race dates from those remote primordial times which are chronicled in the Pnakotic Manuscripts. Being mentioned in the same sentence hardly makes the one the author of the other! It’s like saying Yog-Sothoth wrote the *Necronomicon!* This misconception goes back all the way to Lin’s early glossary “H. P. Lovecraft: The Books,” where he seems to be trying to tabulate extant Mythos data, not to invent more. Thus, as an interpretation of HPL it is an error, but as a further development of HPL’s ideas, cross-fertilizing them, well, why not?

# The Acolyte of the Flame

## (A Translation of Fragment MXI of the Pnakotic Manuscripts)

by Lin Carter

**Translator's Note:** Much confusion exists concerning the Pnakotic Manuscripts, for which some authorities claim pre-Pleistocene, some prehuman, and some extraterrestrial authorship. Tradition affirms that the older portions, those which can no longer be read, derive from the forgotten annals of Yith and are the work of the Great Race which preceded man's advent on this planet by millions of years. Indeed, those most ancient parts are inscribed in curious curvilinear glyphs which Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee has identified as virtually identical with those inscriptions found in the ruined stone city in the deserts of Australia in 1935. What emerges from the confusion of contradictory claims is that the Pnakotic Manuscripts grew about this Yithian nucleus and were added to over geological epochs by successive civilizations. In an effort to resolve this problem of scholarship, I have here rendered into passable English a version of the Last Pnakotic Fragment, which concerns the abandonment of Hyperborea early in the most recent period. The textual references bear directly on the area of controversy, and the fable itself is not without charm.

—Lin Carter

**O**f the Doom that befell the land of Hyperborea, none is more fit to speak thereof than I, Athlok, a minor votary of the Pnakotic Brethren, for the coming-hence of this Doom I beheld and mayhap was myself the cause.

For unknown cycles of forgotten time have they who dwell in the land of Hyperborea dreaded and sought to stay the coming of the Great Ice, whereof many prophets and sages have foretold. Like the crystal ramparts of some city of unthinkable titans it stretcheth across the continent to the north, and, hour by hour, day by day, the inexorable advance of the Ice imperils the habitation of men as it draws ever more nigh. Small and furtive and evil lights twinkle and glide amidst the Ice like baleful, menacing eyes ever watching. Cold

and dank and menacing is the wind that moans down into the valleys of the south, like unto the panting breath of some colossal and encroaching monster.

In the time of my grandsires had the Ice whelmed Polarion; in the days of my father Mhu Thulan had been lost to men; and now (say the hardy travelers who have dared risk the wrath of the Cold Ones, those white spirits of the Ice, or their dread Master, the abnormality: Rlim Shaikorth), even the spires of sunny Varaad are sheathed in sparkling frost, and the jungles wither, blasted by the cold.

Against the slow but inexorable advance of the Ice, the most sagacious of our sorcerers have expended their most arcane and prodigious enchantments, but in vain. For neither the potent exorcisms of Pnom nor the most celebrated spells of Eibon the Unfathomable have proven efficacious to retard the stealthy slither of the glaciers. Athwart the sheer and glassy ramparts they have hurled the most terrific cantrips and enchantments in all the compendia of thaumaturgy, but naught has ever stayed for long the gradual advance of the glittering Doom.

As a child in jungle-girt Uzuldaroum—before the abandonment of that city to the Cold—was I apprenticed to the Pnakotic Brethren, but a blemish that from my natal hour had marked me forbade that ever I should don the silver mitre and the purple robes of the Masters of this ancient Order. Yet was I ever of a studious bent and much given to perusal of the ancient records, and thus was a place found for me amongst the Custodians of the Archives. And it was there, in the dim adyts of the Brotherhood, that first I gained an inkling of the strange and wondrous destiny set forth as mine from before the very Beginning of All Things. . . .

\* \* \*

Now, the Brethren guard, and preserve, and copy those records of the past left behind by the Great Race of Yith when they abandoned the steaming fens and quaking swamps of the Elder World, to voyage forward in Earth-time; for uncounted aeons had they sought out the histories of worlds and lands and ages anterior to mine own. In the pages of the Manuscripts are recorded the else-forgotten chronicles of Yith and Shaggai, of distant Yaddith of the Doles and of Yugoth on the Rim; therein may be found the quaint and curious

histories of the primal serpent-folk, of the K'n-yanians, and of those furry and prehuman denizens of the Prime, even the furtive Voormis and the hairy and cannibal Gnophkehs who worship the Abomination Rhan Tegoth. Down the span of measureless aeons have the precursors of this Brotherhood carried on the task imposed upon the peoples of anterior cycles by the Great Race: the gathering and preserving of the histories of many lands and ages, even unto these, the latter days of Hyperborea.

One day it chanced that I found a curious passage in the earliest of those portions of the *Pnakotic Manuscript* that may still be read; the which told how that dread Aphoom Zhah, the Flame Thing, had descended unto this Earth from far and frozen Yaksh, eighth of the planets from the Sun and nearest of them all to eldritch Yuggoth. Now the long-dead hand that had set down this account had done so in an archaic variant of the Tsath-yo language so obscure as to be virtually indecipherable, even to one so deeply learned in the texts as was I; and long and longer still I puzzled over the crude and uncouth cursives to discern their meaning. According to this scribe, it had been discovered from a prolonged scrutiny of the Voormish Tablets, wherein those timid and troglodytic precursors of man preserved much of the lore of their prehuman era, whereamongst was found a prophecy that in time to come all of the primal continent would one day be whelmed and lost under the crushing weight of the Great Ice. Hereunto was appended the reason and cause thereof, which was even Aphoom Zhah, the Cold Flame, who had been begotten on a dim world that encircleth distant Fomalhaut, and of his monstrous birth in the days after the Elder Gods had defeated and imprisoned those rash, presumptive Old Ones who had dared rebel against Them.

Now it was written that the Lord of the Flame was of the spawn of great Cthugha himself, born on that remote sphere to which Cthugha had been exiled and chained for his role in the rising-up of the Old Ones against their former Masters; but the strictures which bound his mighty Sire had no potency to stay the Spawn of Cthugha, and thus had he come hither, traversing the black gulf between the stars. First to dubious Yaksh did he come, and from thence to this Earth in its youth. And the ancient scribe made relation of Aphoom Zhah that in his likeness and his being he resembleth his Awful Sire in that he is a Thing of Flame: like a gray, wavering sheet of fire is

Aphoom Zhah, but as a flame of utter and supra-arctic cold is he, not as a flame which burneth.

As a freezing blight upon the bubbling mire and fetid, dragon-trampled marshes of the primal world was the presence of Aphoom Zhah, for there flooded forth from the core of his being a terrible and blasting cold as of the interstellar depths themselves. And in the fullness of time, but not until the waning of uncountable millennia, did the Elder Gods descend to prison the Flaming One, and chained him deep in the depths of a mighty Pit at the ultimate and boreal Pole, ere returning from thence to their starry abode on Glyu-Vho. Fearful beyond words was the rage and fury of Aphoom Zhah at his imprisonment, and the cold that poured ever from the Lord of the Flame slew all in that land and sealed it beneath the eternal ice. And in time there grew up above the Pit a mighty mountain of glacial and adamantine ice that reared high against the frozen stars; and all of that northern land became a dead and sterile waste.

Now, Hyperborea was in those days uninhabited of men; but from the blasting and terrific cold, as it consumed and devoured their stone-built towns one by one, the timid Voormis and the shaggy Gnophkehs (they who alone inhabited the continent in that epoch of time) fled and became homeless wanderers and, at the last, brutish and grunting savages. But the last and wisest of their shamans, ere yet they had declined to bestial subhumans, had uttered a cryptic prophecy, saying that after limitless ages a Savior should arise, and that he would bear upon his breast a mark like *a gray flame*.

\* \* \*

Thus far had I perused the Pnakotic records when a vast and thrilling excitement seized my heart and the glyph-emblazoned scrolls of megatherium-hide fell from my nerveless hand. With shaking fingers didst I lay bare my breast, whereon from birth had I borne that strange blemish which precluded my entry into the higher circles of our Order. It was a patch of scaly, leprous gray, shapen very like unto a tapering spindle of flame: and I could not but shudder with fierce elation, knowing *myself* the destined Savior of Hyperborea, of whose coming the Voormish Tablets had from of old foretold. The forgotten boreal kingdoms of the Voormis were long lost beneath the Ice, but mine own land could I save from the impending Doom.

Yet I lingered for a time in the shadowy adytum, for I recalled to mind those cryptic prophecies of the unknowable future which the far-seeing and all-wise Aphiroth, an Elder Brother of mine Order, had graven upon plates of imperishable *lagh*-metal in the distant times of Eibon: for had he not predicted that the Great Ice would in the fullness of time overwhelm all of Hyperborea, and even the greater parts of Thuria over-sea, grinding to dust such unborn and yet-unfounded realms as Zobna and Lomar?

Which of these prophets twain uttered truth, the old Voormish shaman or the wise Hyperborean?

And so it came to pass that, an hour before dawn, I ascended to the height of the ziggurat wherein our Brotherhood was housed, and drank the Golden Mead and howled forth the Litany of Hastur when the cold eye of Aldebaran hung in the purple skies, and mounted the monstrous back of the black-winged Byakhee when it descended in response to my summons. Then it was that that I set forth to achieve the unique and curious destiny for which I had been born.

\* \* \*

Of that weird flight from the frost-blighted fields and farms of Uzuldaroum and across the glittering mirror of the Great Ice, I recall but little, save that the awful winds of interstellar cold numbed me to the marrow as we flew at fearful velocities under the uncanny, pallid fires of shuddering aurorae and the cold, peering eye of the mocking Moon. Ever to the north I pointed the iron beak of my monstrous steed, and at length, under the chilly rays of far Polaris, we descended upon a slick and glassy plain of perdurable ice, and I dismounted to stand at the very foot of Yarak itself, that sky-reaching mountain of adamantine ice that marks the site of the ultimate and boreal Pole.

In a dim and ghastly half-light did I stumble across the frozen plain towards the soaring mountain of glistening ice in whose base I spied a yawning fissure like the black, gaping maw of a frozen skull. I knew in my heart that this grim portal was the entrance to the Pit wherein from the Elder Days had dwelt the Gray Flaming One, even Aphoom Zhah, attended by his ghostly minions, the Ylidheem, the Cold Ones.

Something akin to madness seized me there on the glittering ice-field under the spectral aurora. Many times I slipped and fell, as my limbs became numb and all but senseless, and I raved and sobbed, yowling aberrant blasphemies at the peering stars. At the black fissure I averted mine eyes from the frightening glyphs cut there in ancient days by the Voormis, it may be, or the hairy Gnophkehs in warning to the unwary traveler: and thus I entered the caverns beneath Yarak the Ice-Mountain. Black and hoary were these labyrinthine ways, hewn from the age-old ice itself; and the cavern wound down into the bowels of the mountain like the passage made by some unthinkable and obscene Worm; down and down I followed the way, and the cold was pitiless and the darkness absolute. My very brain seemed frozen within my skull, but my breast burned with feverish fires of aspiration and my step was resolute and unwavering.

After a mad eternity of blasting cold and translunar blackness I came forth upon a ledge above a vast abyss. There was a spar of ice that thrust out over the gulf and to its end I stumbled and staggered. All of the bottomless depth below my unsteady feet was filled with restless and glimmering luminance, as cold and colorless as the shuddering aurorae. That wavering and charnel glow was like the foul and uncanny phosphorescence that seethes within the maggot-squirming meat of some putrescent corpse, very unlike the clean fire of wholesome wood.

At the ultimate verge of that spar of adamantine ice stood a thing of stone, shapen in the likeness of a five-pointed star, and there was a Sigil cut upon it like a flamy Eye. As I knelt there at the end of that tongue of ice, in that vast and hollow space thronged with the unclean radiance of the Gray Flame below, I heard a faint voice whispering to me; and with nerveless hands I reached out and pried loose that stony star *and broke it in twain*. . . .

\* \* \*

The Pnakotic Brethren decreed no punishment upon me, for my sin is of such unthinkable and prodigious horror that no suitable act of retribution seems imaginable. But they have imposed upon me the bitter task of setting down this account of the Doom that befell the land of Hyperborea by my hand, and this task is truly fitting. Would

that I had perished in the womb, ere I grew to bring about the ruin of my homeland in my madness and folly and dreams of destiny!

I remember that moment above the chasm when I broke the star of gray stone and, so-doing, loosed That which from measureless aeons had been imprisoned in the pit thereby. The ghastly phosphorescence blazed high, rustling with unholy glee, and the terrific blast of unendurable rigor that struck forth from the stirring Flame drove me shrieking from my precarious perch—drove me sobbing and stumbling back up the winding ways of the black labyrinth—drove me forth from the grim gate and across the frigid plain to where the Byakhee patiently crouched in expectation of my return. And I came back to Uzuldaroum to find it a city of the dead.

Few had escaped the holocaust of inconceivable cold that blew ravaging down from the boreal Pole, and those few had fled the metropolis into the south. Now deserted Uzuldaroum stood frozen, sheathed in ice; ice flashed and glittered on the streets and spires, the temples and towers. Soon—horribly soon—the Great Ice would come grinding down, and all of these parts of Hyperborea would join Polarion and Mhu Thulan, Varaad and crumbling Commoriom, in their glacial and eternal tombs. For Aphoom Zhah was at last set free to wreak his awful fury on the lands of men, and it would be many slow and tortuous ages before the Elder Gods returned to seal him once again within his Pit.

We few who survived fled south where forests, fields and farms yet withstood the wintry gales; but not for long. Galleys and caravels bore the remnants of our people to the mainland of Thuria, to found the young towns of Zobna and of Lomar, in whose warm and fertile vales we now dwell. And I who was then in my youth am now grown weary with years of toil, and when I have fulfilled the behest of the last few of my brethren and have set down on these last pages of the Pnakotic Manuscripts an account of the Doom of Hyperborea, I shall rest.

Alas, for my pride and vanity, that in my folly I read not with greater care the words of that old Voormish prophecy! For it has been my evil destiny to have been the cause of destroying that which I sought to save, and the Savior of that which I would have doomed: for in my rash folly I became the Savior of Aphoom Zhah, not Hyperborea.

*Aii*, fair and summery Lomar, how long will your paven ways escape the vengeance of the Gray Flame? For only this dawn I looked forth from the crest of thy tallest spire and saw the ramparts of the Great Ice descending remorselessly upon thy green vales!

**Note:** As for the Pnakotic Brotherhood and their retrieval of the *Manuscripts* and carrying them to the mainland of Europe, Lovecraft wrote in a letter to Richard F. Searight dated February 13, 1936: "Exact data regarding the Pnakotic Mss. are lacking. They were brought down from Hyperborea by a secret cult (allied to that which preserved the *Book of Eibon*) & are in the secret Hyperborean language, but there is a rumour that they are a translation of something hellishly older . . . of fabulous antiquity. That they antedate the human race is freely whispered." ✱

## About "From the Archives of the Moon"

Here is surely the best of Lin Carter's several attempts at pastiching Clark Ashton Smith's style, and it is not a slice of the *Book of Eibon*. "From the Archives of the Moon" first appeared, just after Lin's untimely passing, in *Crypt of Cthulhu* #54 (Eastertide 1988). It blends Lin's pseudo-Smithian voice with the authentic note of Klarkashtonian world-weary ennui, and with a good pinch of Smith's pulp sci-fi hokum.

The mytho-symbolic resonances of the tale are quite apt as well. The central image of an advancing tide of lunar fungi perfectly catches the ancient, almost archetypal association of the moon with the mushroom cap, the very link that allowed the ancient Aryans to make their Lord Soma the god both of the moon and of the sacred mushroom *Amanita Muscaria* (see R. Gordon Wasson and Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality*; John M. Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*). Let me reproduce part of a Rig Vedic hymn to Soma from Wendy O'Flaherty's Penguin Classics translation. The imagery refers to the quaffing of massive amounts of the Soma mead by the warrior Indra to stoke up his berserker fury before his epic battle with the dragon Vrtra, and, for our purposes, it also hints at the celestial glories of the imaginary lunar world envisioned by Smith and Carter.

Let Indra the killer of Vrtra drink soma in Saryanavat [where soma is collected], gathering his strength within himself, to do a great heroic deed. O drop of Soma, flow for Indra.

Purify yourself, generous Soma, master of the quarters of the sky. Pressed with sacred words, with truth and faith and ardour, O drop of Soma, flow for Indra.

You speak of the sacred as your brightness is sacred; you speak the truth as your deeds are true. You speak of faith, King Soma, as you are carefully prepared by the sacrificial priest.

Where the high priest speaks rhythmic words, O Purifier, holding the pressing-stone, feeling that he has become great with the Soma, giving birth to joy through the Soma, O drop of Soma, flow for Indra.

Where the inextinguishable light shines, the world where the sun was placed, in that immortal, unchanging world, O Purifier, place me!

Where they move as they will, in the triple dome, in the third heaven of heaven, where the worlds are made of light, there make me immortal!

## From the Archives of the Moon

by Lin Carter

There are many marvelous tales, untold, unwritten, never to be recorded or remembered, lost beyond all divining and all imagining, that sleep in the double silence of far-recessive time and space. The chronicles of Saturn, the archives of the Moon in its prime, the legends of Antillia and Moaria—these are full of an unsurmised or forgotten wonder.

—Clark Ashton Smith

### I.

That the absolute heights of artistic expression and scientific achievement had all been scaled millennia before by those of the Selenites who were their remoter ancestors, was the consensus of opinion amongst the wisest and most cultivated of the few who yet lingered in the half-ruinous precincts of immemorial and nigh-abandoned Yrimid.

Verse, the plastic and graphic arts, the concoction of illusions, the electronics of sensory stimulus, the subtle alembication of essences and perfumes—these arts had each been carried to the utmost degree of sophistication epochs before.

What poet of today could match the exquisite, the planturous lyricism of Ariodh, pervaded with his delicious languors and perversities? What composer of modernity could hope to equal the gossamer tenuity and melodic fragmentation of Caluorn? What recent dramatist could compare with the ravishing ironies, the felicitous phrasing, the morbid decadence of the unfinished tragedies of Helladian?

Or—to turn to another and very different branch of Selenitic endeavor—who, in these final lustra of the Moon's decline, could dream to surpass the ardor and tenacity, the daring and intrepidity of the matchless Halasp, who had risked the sidereal gulfs to peregrinate upon the steaming fens and quaking bogs and dare the sulphurous volcanoes of the young and savage Earth, their eternal and enigmatic companion through the infinite void?



Suffice it to say that there were none. Time itself, perchance, had leached the stalwart vigor and courageousness of the Selenites of earlier cycles from the fiber of the present race, and this fact, when noted rarely, adumbrated the ultimate and disastrous decline of their civilization.

Which decline was only rendered more ominous and terminal when one paused to consider, as the Yrimidians seldom dared, the inexorable advance of the dreaded and inexplicable xin . . .

In fine, then, there seemed naught left to the poets and artisans of crumbling, all but deserted, Yrimid but to evolve ever more tenuous refinements and elaborations upon those arts which had already reached their apex and henceforward could only ebb into decadence and decay; and naught for the savants and mechanics of today but ever more trivial improvements or minor complicacies superadded to the technological mastery of the earlier Selenites.

As Yrimid lapsed shard by shard into desuetude—as the members of the nobility and the wealthier classes of the citizenry fled the ancient capital in aerial contrivances perfected millennia before, seeking their villas and pleasaunces on the flanks or slopes of the lunar mountains, far beyond the present scope of the depredations of the xin—life in the decaying metropolis, among the ever-dwindling remnant of its inhabitants who yet remained within its labyrinthine walls, became a perverse and feverish round of giddy pleasures, of curious and original forms of inebriation, of the imbibement of superb and voluptuous perfumes, of novel and experimental lubricities.

There remained, however, one who had heretofore staunchly resisted the almost universal surrendering of all hope in the future to embrace a pessimism all but suicidal and, from thence, to sink feebly and unresistingly into the embrace of depravities unknown even to the degenerates of anterior epochs. He was Prince Kadeiron, hereditary magistrate of Yrimid and the scion of a House of such immense antiquity that its true origins were sunk in fable and were deemed dubious and equivocal by many.

'Tis of Kadeiron that the following tale was told—one of the innumerable histories which repose forgotten and unread amongst the Archives of the Moon.

## II.

Tutored by sentient mechanisms whose artificial memories held recorded the whole of Selenitic science and philosophy, he still abode in the palatial but ruinous manse of his illustrious ancestors, where—rather than sinking supinely into the mad whirl of pleasures, in the perfervid quest for ever more exotic sensations, more fanciful intoxications, more bizarre religions—he pursued his solitary study of those technologies upon which, in his sober estimate, depended the very survival of Selenitic culture and civilization, and in which might easily repose the last, dwindling hopes for its eventual renaissance.

It was Kadeiron's belief that could the encroachment of the xin be reversed or at least halted, something of its lost vitality might return to immemorial Yrimid, as well as a major portion of its citizenry, fled from the approach of the fungoid monstrosities, who might be persuaded to return to the capital.

The xin, those indefatigable and murderous fungi who had crept forth a generation before from the fumeroles which fissured the flanks of the extinct volcano Fulguron, due east of the metropolis, displayed a mindless tenacity of purpose, like iron filings drawn to a magnet, and an utter disregard for their own deaths which was both fearful and repellent. When first they came shambling down the slopes of Fulguron to ravage the robotic farms and vineyards beyond the outskirts of the metropolis, beams of atomic fire had been leveled against their advance and they had been reduced to bitter ash. Undeterred, they continued their ponderous, lurching encroachment, as stubborn and tireless as the tides of the Iolanthian Sea. And since the fungi budded from their own spongy and tubular stalks, requiring no partner in the act of reproduction, even as they died they gave birth to new generations of their loathly kind. At length overwhelming the gun-emplacements, their obduracy affrighted the defenders of Yrimid, who became daunted and deserted their posts, abandoning their terrific projectors of destructive force to the indomitable xin.

Next, impalpable barriers of magnetic force were erected against them; these were deemed impenetrable by any known organic or mineral substance. But the fungi-horde merely piled, rank on rank atop their own brethren, treading them down into a ghastly pulp,

until the utmost rank achieved the summit of the force-barrier; and they then continued their inexorable advance upon the city.

Over the generation since their emergence from the fissures of Fulguron, technique after technique had been employed to stem the tide of the xin. Rivers of liquid fire, gas-clouds whose corrosive vapors ate into the fungoid flesh like virulent acids, hitherto unknown energies which dissolved all matter into the primordial *ylem*. These and other novel and ingenious modes of destruction were used, and all of them to no avail. Naught deterred the plodding advance of the fungoid monstrosities, although some of these defensive methods succeeded in delaying them for a year or so.

The most profound intelligences which yet remained in Yrimid exhausted the records of Selenitic history without discovery of a prior episode of such dire malignity. It was conjectured that the xin had their origin deep beneath the Moon's crust, in fetid and unlitten caverns where furtive hybrids lurked and festered and unspeakably interbred. What had impelled the fungi to emerge into the light of day, to ravage and ruin all in their path, remained unsurmisable, even to the supreme intellects of the age.

That the fall of Yrimid was imminent remained beyond question.

### III.

Exhausting the resources of Selenitic science, Prince Kadeiron resolved upon a bold expedition. If technology held no defense against the xin, what of the more ancient arts of sorcery and magic—those shadowy arcana whose rituals and liturgies had been under the interdiction of ecclesiarchs for countless ages? In desperation, Kadeiron determined to seek out a surviving practitioner of the eldritch arts. At length his mechanicals revealed the name of one such sorcerer, one Uthnagor, who dwelt upon the peak of Garascus—like Fulguron, the cone of an extinct volcano—but unlike Fulguron, due west of the metropolis. The prince resolved to visit the sorcerer in order to implore the assistance of his arts against the xin.

True, the sorcerer Uthnagor had been driven into exile generations before by the ecclesiarchs who ruled Yrimid with rigor in that period, long before the present laxity of morals. They had held the practice of sorcery in the utmost abhorrence and had issued against the recalcitrant Uthnagor a writ condemning him to perpetual exile,

as he declined to turn from his interdicted rituals to a more wholesome adherence to the tenets of the national faith.

However, once a Selenite, always a Selenite, surely, and a full pardon from the chief of the present-day ecclesiarchs of Yrimid should suffice to assuage whatever resentments might still linger in the sorcerer's heart after the passage of so many lustra, or so reasoned Kadeiron.

Donning habiliments of russet and zircon-yellow, which were in the latest mode, and lacing buskins of royal purple upon his feet, Prince Kadeiron took up his mace of office, carved from a single gigantic opal, strung the guidon marked with the colors of his House to the flagstaff of his vehicle, and directed his aerial conveyance towards the mountainous abode of the sorcerer.

This craft, which resembled a slim gondola of graceful and elegant proportions, ascended at once into the afternoon sky, which was irradiated with the sullen crimsons and surly golds of incipient sunset, and floated upon its magnetic beams towards the mountains of the west with nimble celerity. It soared over streams of dark and turgid waters, irised with glints like the hues of peacock plumes; it soared above immemorial forests where serpentine trees, writhing rapaciously, sought to entrap the exotic beasts who imprudently strayed into the shelter of their foliage, whose blossoms opened to disclose mouths wherein rows of fangs like hollow thorns were revealed to view.

Soon the terrain rose into hills, became mantled with heavy boskage; here and there outcroppings of nodular stone and sharded mineral suggestive of scoriac remains adumbrated the imminence of the volcano. As twilight limned the clouds with mauve and dusty gold, there hove into view, clinging to the summit of Garascus, a stony manse built in an antiquated mode, silhouetted against the gloaming. Unlike the severely rectilinear style popular in this age, with its perpendicular walls and cubicular turretry, the manse was a baroque effusion of cupolas and balustrades, plinths, bevelederes, metopes, obelisks. It could be none other than the abode of the sorcerer.

Kadeiron brought his craft to rest within a courtyard and found a portal whose massy slab of primordial and fossilized wood held a knocker of verdigris-gnawed brass shapen in the likeness of a grinning death's-head—as morbid an item of decor as he could imagine.

Nonetheless, he sounded the knocker, which roused a succession of sepulchral echoes which ebbed at length to silence. Erelong the door creaked open to reveal a small and hairy imp, doubtless a familiar of the sorcerer's. It looked him over with slitted eyes like evil ruby shards, but admitted him. One more easily daunted than Kadeiron might have hesitated before entering so ominous a portal and venturing into the funereal darkneses that lay within, but the high and noble motive of Kadeiron's quest overrode all prudent trepidations as to personal safety.

He found the sorcerer a lean, austere individual of middle height, clad in a narrow robe of ardent nacarat-orange and somber purple, whose gaze was polite but indifferent and whose words were suave but noncommittal. That his age was preternaturally lengthened beyond the average of the race was evident from his fibrils, which, though once a luxuriant emerald, had dimmed through the passage of innumerable years until they were as pale as nacre, and from the nodules atop his crest which were all but transparent.

Bidding his uninvited guest seat himself in a capacious chair hewn from one enormous ivory tusk of a monster from one or the other of the poles of the Moon, the sorcerer listened with inscrutable attentiveness while Prince Kadeiron described the horrendous peril which endangered the ancient metropolis. Uthnagor's queries were few but to the point, and Kadeiron replied to them as best he could.

"So, while Yrimid wallows in pernicious and luxuriant pleasure, the Selenites yet endure the puerilities of religious dominance?" murmured the sorcerer in disapproving tones, while fondling the head of one strix-eyed familiar. "Doubtless the veriest details of quotidian life are regulated by sacerdotal law, no less strict than that which drove me forth into exile generations ago. How, then, can you promise as recompense for my services the negation of the writ of exile and the restoration of those honors of which I have been bereft?"

Kadeiron displayed his opal mace. "As hereditary magistrate of Yrimid, it lies within the scope of my authority to restore to you the estates and titles forfeit by the writ of exile," he assured the sorcerer. "And I have little doubt, if your assistance proves significant in eradicating the scourge of the xin, that the more lenient ecclesiarchs of our own day will relent them of the stern obdurances of their predecessors."

Uthnagor nodded with a seeming satisfaction, and he permitted a slight smile to relieve the grim austerity of his features. "Then come, young sir; attend me, if you will. Let us repair to my laboratory, and we shall see . . . what we shall see."

#### IV.

And with these enigmatic words, the sorcerer led Kadeiron down through winding corridors lined most curiously with mirrors of blackest steel, reflective of naught that the prince could see, and past stout pens where squeaking cambions gamboled and fed upon abominable victuals in a repulsive manner. These metallic halls debouched, eventually, into a high-domed chamber, in shape as circular as a rotunda. One wall, which was of solid crystal, gave forth upon a vast panorama of the landscape to the east of the villa. The metal ziggurats and pylons of Yrimid were clearly visible, herded within the encirclement of that stupendous and triple wall reared by giant automatons against the coming of the xin, and which should in time serve as the last defense of the city of the Selenites. Beyond the city, notching the gloom of the horizon, Fulguron soared against the wan stars.

The domed chamber, Kadeiron saw, held enormous engines of curious and complex design and unknown and unsurmisable utility; it were evident that this Uthnagor combined within his person both the rigors of the scientific method and the disciplines of the sorcerous arts. Against one wall reclined a vast globe of glistening lucent material, inlit with a steady and unwavering luminosity. This sphere displayed a vista of the great battlefield beyond the metropolis to the east. As from the balcony of some theatre, Kadeiron could look forth to observe the numberless and shambling ranks of the fungoid monstrosities held momentarily at bay against crumbling barricades of harsh corundum.

Atop these monolithic barriers a host of determined male Yrimidians, cumbersomely clad in protective suiting, deployed tubular projectors which bathed the momentarily balked horde of the walking fungi in hostile and lethal vibrations. As he watched, stirred and excited, seething whirlwinds of impalpable dust enveloped the lumbering figures of the xin, as their gigantic forms flaked away to

powder, eroded by the vibrant and corrosive frequencies to which their spongy fungoid flesh was thereby subjected.

For a few more moments the lucence of the luminous sphere depicted this faraway scene of mortal conflict between invader and invaded; then the lucence filmed, grew opaque, and the luminosity faded and was gone, leaving the globe blank. The prince turned to his host, who stood regarding him with a kind of cold amusement in his oblique gaze.

"You will perceive that I have not remained totally ignorant of the dire eventuations you relate," murmured Uthnagor drily.

"Indeed, sir; and I am amazed that you have not volunteered your services to the beleaguered city that once was your home ere this," the prince exclaimed. Uthnagor smiled his thin-lipped smile.

"That is as it may be; however, you will observe that I have not been unbusied with this matter." With those words he indicated another instrument, a system of aligned metallic tubes which reflected some manner of penetrant light, hurling an image of the Moon's inner depths upon a mirror of glassy amalgam. Kadeiron stifled an exclamation and leaned forward to study the picture with astonished horror. It depicted a gloomy cavern of vast extent. Shallow hills rose from swampy bogs; begrown with glistening and disgusting fungoid growths were these hillocks, and from them exuded a sickly and insipid phosphorescence. Even as Prince Kadeiron watched with commingled loathing and fascination, something like a gust of wind went shuddering through the fungous forest; the surface of the hills undulated as before some seismic tremor. The muddy loam split open as, incredibly, the giant growths withdrew their bifurcated stalks from the soil and stood, swaying, as bipeds. Another unseen gust went trembling through them; as one, they turned about and stumbled stiffly down the hill, joining an ever-growing migration that surged towards a distant portal in the rocky wall, where an inclined plane led upwards . . . towards the surface.

Kadeiron cried out and the sorcerer grimaced with strange, obscene excitement. "Normally, the fungous creatures are dormant and docile, content to remain rooted in the putrescent loam, wherefrom they suck a ghastly nutriment," he said. "But long ago I learned that a combination of certain octaves of sonic vibration, magnified by the acoustics of their cavern walls, stimulate them to unnatural

growth and they evolve rapidly to self-mobility, although they remain too low on the scale of life to achieve sapience. The vibration, if prolonged, draws them up tunnels of the dead fumeroles to the surface, like the fabled siren's song."

The prince turned to face the sorcerer; eyes flashing, he straightened as full realization burst upon him in the instant. "Yes, draws them towards its source, the crest of Garascus—this house, wherefrom the vibrations are beamed!" he cried. "But unfortunately for the hapless folk of the doomed and besieged Yrimid, their city lies directly between the two mountains of Fulguron to the east and Garascus to the west!"

The eyes of the sorcerer were dulled, opaque, their gaze turned inwards, to contemplate ancient wrongs long brooded upon. "When my slaves, the mindless xin, have shattered asunder the walls of Yrimid and trampled the city and its peoples into the dust, I shall cease producing the vibrations whose fatal attraction lures them on, and they shall root once more . . . and the rubble of Yrimid shall become but a forest of fungoid monstrosities, where once reigned haughty ecclesiarchs, too proud and disdainful to tolerate a lone and scholarly sorcerer in their midst."

Fury surged up within Kadeiron's breast and angry words lashed from his scathing lips. In tones of bitter mockery he derided the sorcerer, cried that he lied, that he exerted in truth no genuine control over the xin but had, in his madness, capitalized upon some instinctive migration of their own nature. Then he would have fallen upon the infamous Uthnagor, but of a sudden small and fetid bodies hurtled upon him from all sides and bore him to the floor beneath their vigorous and squirming onslaught. It was the cambions bred by the sorcerer, loosed from their pens for this purpose; he struggled in vain against the grip of those knotted and sinewy arms, but resistance was futile. They were too numerous and too strong for his opposition to meet with any success.

## V.

For some days thereafter—Kadeiron was never certain of the number, having quite early on lost all sense of time—was the prince held captive in the durance of a cell with stout and steely walls, unceasingly lit from above by luminous strips along the ceiling, whose

door was of massive and unforceable adamant. At measured intervals he obtained nutriment and rations of water through a panel in one wall; an opening in the floor provided for his sanitary needs.

Why, he wondered, did the sorcerer bother to keep him alive? It were more than obvious that Uthnagor was quite mad; no one who yet retained a shred of sanity could dream of extirpating the very civilization at whose breast he had been nurtured. Long years of brooding over the injustices wreaked against him by the people of Yrimid had obviously deranged the sorcerer.

Pondering the mutability of life and the liabilities of human destiny, Kadeiron gloomily moped about his cell, as the minutes and hours and days dragged slowly and heavily by. Time stretched interminably ahead, for he envisioned no conceivable mode of escape from his prison and no probable alleviation of his peril, as no one in Yrimid knew or could even have guessed his whereabouts.

It was quite without warning on one such day that the ponderous valve in his cell door swung open and revealed Uthnagor standing in the opening, beckoning with an imperious gesture. Obeying with celerity, for the abrasive tedium of his captivity had long since frayed his nerves to the point of febrility, the prince quitted his cell upon the instant.

"Now shall you see for yourself, O Kadeiron, the power I hold over my mindless slaves," rasped Uthnagor. And at his command, cambions with thick shoulders and arms swelling with thews like pythons swarmed over him and bound him in such a manner that he could stand and walk but could not employ his hands or arms to any purpose.

He was then forced to follow the unspeaking sorcerer up sloping ramps and winding stairs, past level upon level thronged with inexplicable mechanisms and terrific engines of strange design and unguessable purpose, until at length they reached a tier upon whose broad roof rested the flying boat which had conveyed Prince Kadeiron hither to the manse of Uthnagor. At a sign from the sorcerer, Kadeiron clambered within the vehicle and seated himself in the rear, behind a tubular mechanism mounted upon a folding tripod which he recognized as none other but the sonic projector Uthnagor had shown him in the laboratory.

The sorcerer seated himself in the prow of the aerial vessel, behind the control console; the gibbering herd of cambions withdrew; ere long, obedient to the impulses of the magnetic beams extruded from its nether and hinder parts, the flying vehicle floated aloft and headed on into the east.

They flew over a volcanic landscape of tortured and riven mineral; frozen riverbeds of solidified lava flashed and glittered in the sun beneath them like mirrors of burnished obsidian. Obviously, these were the detritus of Mount Garascus, cast off in the long-ago days of its volcanically active youth.

Soon the impressive ramparts of Yrimid itself clomb into view and they soared effortlessly over the once-splendid suburbs of the Quarter of the Aristocrats, with their broad and tree-lined avenues and aerial spans linking ziggurat to ziggurat. Peering from the side, the sight of Yrimid in all the colossal decay of its ruinous abandonment seemed to pleasure Uthnagor in no little degree. Soon did the metropolis dwindle astern; now they floated above a blasted landscape where soil and stone had been hideously compacted before intolerable refulgences, or torn atom from atom in the grip of inconceivable forces. This was most obviously the battleground over which the Yrimidians and the shambling hordes of the xin had battled for a generation.

Now they approached the mighty corundum barricades, only to discover them deserted by their defenders, who had fallen back in confusion and had taken flight, when the ramparts were overrun by the lumbering fungoid invaders. The aerial conveyance remained aloft until the last remnants of the defenders had withdrawn into the shelter of the city's monolithic walls for refuge, then settled lightly to earth.

Kadeiron dismounted from their craft at Uthnagor's signal, and stood staring about him wildly. They were in clear view of the immense xin. Never had the prince seen the monsters at such close range; he discovered them to be even more horrible and loathsome than he had earlier assumed, with their clumsy, spongy, bifurcated bodies and nodding, swollen, ichthyphallic heads, their cylindrical bodies banded or striped or splotched with ochre, pistachio, canary, mauve, puce, plum-purple. The rank odor of semen clung about their stumbling, lurching forms, as if they had been morels.

"Behold, ineffectual Prince, the invincible legions that war on haughty Yrimid in obedience to my whim," demanded Uthnagor in harsh and grating tones. He strutted into the path of the clumsy, slow-moving fungi and turned to smirk at Kadeiron, as he invited the prince's attention with a negligent gesture. Some intuition impelled Kadeiron to attempt a vocal diversion, although he could never after decide what prompted the instinct to do so.

"You boast, deluded sorcerer!" said Kadeiron in ringing voice. "The creatures but obey some dumb, blind racial urge, and not your vaulted will. To prove me wrong, command them to turn aside—"

And it was then that Kadeiron came to the realization that truly had Uthnagor's long brooding over the wrongs done him leached away his abilities for rational thought. For full in the path of the fungoid monsters he stepped, and gesturing them to one side with emphatic movements of his arms—to which the lumbering giants paid not the slightest attention, lacking, as they obviously did, the organs of sight and hearing and of sapience itself—he commanded them to turn aside in a voice of thunder. And Kadeiron stood frozen as, one by one, the giants with awkward and jerking stride, came ponderously up to where the mad sorcerer stood, smote him prone, and continued on their way, trampling into the mire his squeaking, jiggling form.

## VI.

It took the prince some little time to undo his bonds and spring from his seat to the side of the sonic projector, which he battered to wreckage with his heavy mace of office, which the mad Uthnagor, on the promptings of some unsurmisable whim, had carried along with them on their flight. No sooner had the tubular mechanism ceased its functioning than the fungoid giants halted in their remorseless march towards the west, and stood, their bloated and ichthyphallic heads nodding cumbersomely, as if rerooted by some unseen enchantment in this soil so alien to their monstrous kind. They had advanced to within a few mere feet of the gunwales of the sky boat before the destruction of the sonic projector stopped them in their tracks. . . .

Kadeiron caused the aerial craft to ascend again, and circled above the immense battlefield. Ranked thousands and tens of thousands of

the fungi, now rendered harmless at a stroke, spread over the landscape like an anthropoform forest of growths. The warriors of Yrimid would find it easiness itself to now wipe the fungoid legions from the surface of the Moon, and never again should they trouble the surviving few of Yrimid's inhabitants.

It was for the prince the act of very little time to return to the villa on the upper slopes of Garascus, where he loosed the frightful energies pent in the terrific engines devised by the sorcerer, whose house and all that it contained were erelong reduced to smoking rubble. This being accomplished, the prince unobtrusively returned to his ancestral manse in the metropolis, and was amused to learn, upon questioning his friends, that no one at all had even so much as been aware of his absence from the city, and that none of them had the slightest intimation as to the nature or purpose of his thus absenting himself.

The Yrimidians were baffled at the sudden cessation of the advancing horde, but it soon became patently obvious that the peril of the xin was ended; armed with tanks of virulent acid, the defenders sprayed the now-motionless fungus forest with a corrosive mist, which dissolved the spongy giants, and the fissures in the flanks of Fulguron were sealed with plugs of perdurable amalgam, lest the remaining hordes now pent within the volcanic cone should again attempt emergence, to the future peril of the capital. The leading savants of the city, when queried, had several notably flimsy theories to account for Yrimid's miraculous salvation, but no real answers were ever brought forth and the mystery was consigned to the oblivion of the historical record, as just another enigma.

However, in his capacity as magistrate of Yrimid, Prince Kadeiron circulated a memorandum to the ecclesiarchs of the city, advising them in the sternest of terms to think well and long before again driving into exile any heretic accused of the practice of sorcery. For that the future held its unborn Uthnagors he had no reason to doubt. ✱

## About "The Incubus of Atlantis"

Clark Ashton Smith and H. P. Lovecraft were in many ways a pair of kids who never grew up. From that condition, I think, proceeded the oracular skill each possessed in weird fiction and verse (and the same goes double for Two-Gun Bob Howard). They enjoyed trading solemn salaams and salutes in their mutual epistles, heaping upon themselves and each other horrific honorifics and fabulous flattery. They pretended to write one another from the Cold Waste of This and the Dark Nebula of That. Even their mundane grouses and gripes, e.g., about the obtuseness of editors like pet peeve Farnsworth Wright of *Weird Tales*, were couched in the flowery idiom of the fantasist. Wright they excoriated as "Satrap Pharnabazus," a mutation of the names of Oriental tyrants like the ancient Monobazus. And from this emerging matrix of pretend-fiction grew several props and premises each man used in his published fiction. Such items were in-jokes, and it is interesting to speculate as to how early these were recognized among general readers who did not have the research resources we do to dig into such recondities.

The most famous such in-joke, naturally, was Lovecraft's citation in "The Whisperer in Darkness" of "the Commorion Myth Cycle preserved by the Atlantean High-Priest Klarkash-Ton." It is usually assumed Lovecraft dreamed up this alias and christened his pal with it, but this is not clear to me. As far as I can determine, Smith used the designation for himself in a letter written before Lovecraft's story, and I have seen no earlier Lovecraft letter containing the epithet. Nonetheless, it was HPL who publicly immortalized CAS in his hieratic capacity. Lovecraft would also refer to him as Eibon's seventh incarnation. Today we should certainly count Smith as Eibon's "channeler." Smith also signed himself "Ci-Ay-Ess, the evangelist of Tsathoggua, and the archivist of Mu and Antares" (April 23, 1930).

Smith and Lovecraft were alike ill-suited for mundane work in this world created by the demiurge Azathoth, and each struggled by as best he could. Neither seemed particularly cut out to be an upstanding family man: Lovecraft remained staunchly asexual despite a brief lapse into matrimony, while Smith, if local legends speak truly, took advantage of not being trapped in an office like those of several husbands in his neighborhood! The two were also very different in other habits, HPL a teetotaler, CAS a devotee of Bacchus. Both writers made ample use of the premise that a rediscovered relic from the past might still hold the power to make that past come present if the delver were not careful, but compare the metaphors in the otherwise closely analogous Lovecraftian sonnet "The Lamp" ("Fungi from Yuggoth," VI) and the Klarkash-tonian tale "A Vintage from Atlantis."

The one shows forth the blinding light of knowledge, the other—Delirium Tremendum!

It is evident from reading Smith's letters to Lovecraft that he was, like REH and HPL, "his own most fantastic creation." He was the flax from which he spun his tales. What follows is a loving tribute, even an epitaph, in that spirit, *for* that spirit, who I feel sure would have been amused.

# The Incubus of Atlantis

## (The History of Klarkash-Ton the Hierophant)

by Robert M. Price

It is said that the great arch-wizard Eibon, heretical proponent of the interdicted ancient faith of Zhothaquah, had so faithfully served his slothlike master that the deity feared he should never find another so zealous for his divine dignity. Hence did the Lord Zhothaquah take steps to ensure he should never lack the services of his favorite, though death gobble his mortal flesh. As all men know, Eibon was at the last assumed bodily into the heavenly sphere of Cykranosh whence his Lord himself had descended in ages past, so that Eibon should not succumb to death upon this earth. But at length death found him, restricting not his travels to any one world. And yet Zhothaquah's plan for his son Eibon had but commenced, for the portly divinity had arranged that Eibon's soul should continue in his service by dint of metempsychosis, so that he should find himself again and again bearing a new mortal sheath when the old one had become threadbare.

In this manner, owing to the beneficence of his Master, did the one who had borne the name of Eibon pass the ages, sometimes recalling more of his previous existences, sometimes rather less. For if a man's memory begin to fade within the span of a single lifetime, how much the more over a succession of them? Much must be learned again and again as life passeth in succession after life, if it be relearned at all.

Now the seventh incarnation of Eibon the mage was as one Klarkash-Ton, he who served as high priest and sole devotee of Zhothaquah in Atlantis during the ultimate generation ere her foundering. Shrewdly had the god foreseen his need for the services of the transmigratory spirit of Eibon, for had it not been for the admittedly somewhat lax devotion of the priest Klarkash-Ton, Zhothaquah should have lacked any worship at all, and lacking worship, even the very gods may perish from neglect.

It is the lot of priests to take their living from the offerings rendered the deities they serve, and Zhothaquah's cult having fallen into universal neglect, Klarkash-Ton found himself obliged to take other work unto himself to maintain a viable living. And in this endeavor his not inconsiderable scholarly gifts served him well. It was his sacerdotal duty to maintain the sacred lore of the myth-cycle of ancient Commoriom, which most had long since come to disbelieve save as merest myth, and of its literal truth not even Klarkash-Ton might any longer attest. Few would pay a silver coin even at festival season to hear him spin tales of ancient Hyperborea. Thus it was that Klarkash-Ton expanded his repertoire to encompass droll and ribald anecdotes of sunken Mu far across the globe, great Mu which legend made the mother civilization of High Atlantis herself. Of Mu, to be sure, little positive evidence survived, but then the more rousing tales might therefore be told of her with no one being the wiser. From here did Klarkash-Ton yet further expand his canon of recitals as far as the prodigies of the distant star Antares and its circumambient worlds.

At length did the spellbinding talents of Klarkash-Ton bring him to the attention of the tyrant of Atlantis, grim Pharnabazus, who summoned him to an official audience. Now this news was not pleasing to Klarkash-Ton, for the severity of the Philosopher King was well-known, to wit, that he frowned upon many even of the traditional sacred myths for that they portrayed the gods and heroes in a questionable light as the veriest rogues and voluptuaries. He had even been known to imprison or exile certain of the greatest of the Muse-inspired poets. So Klarkash-Ton much feared that, by reason of his extravagant tale-telling, King Pharnabazus might have devised unpleasant plans for him.

But the truth was quite different, and exceedingly palatable. During the royal audience did the tyrant show his guest every deference and did invite him, on account of his great learning, to become official archivist of the capital. Knowing that his penurious worries should abruptly vanish should he accept his sovereign's offer, Klarkash-Ton wasted nary a moment in, as he said, acceding to the king's most generous command. With a deep and obsequious bow did the once-impooverished priest begin his career in the king's service.



In truth, everything about his new station delighted him, from the spacious apartments provided him to the scribal labors awaiting him in the Great Library of the king. Klarkash-Ton gloried in both the rich fare of the king's board and in the rare manuscripts which it was his happy chore to study and catalogue. Here were true records of the ancient days and of lost kingdoms, even a priceless collection of Naacal Tablets from the court of ancient Ra Mu himself! The Pnakotic Manuscripts were not unrepresented, and there was a curious set of inscribed plates from ancient Uzuldaroum called *The Book of Eibon*, a strange name that Klarkash-Ton somehow felt ought to mean more to him than it did. In these rare parchments and codices the priest delved tirelessly, his sateless curiosity growing jointly with his erudition.

As his command of the antique alphabets and cyphers grew, he discovered much concerning the methods of the Elder Magick, and of the great boons a man might gain by their use. Of these the technique that intrigued him by far the most was the preternatural exercise of soul-projection whereby the mage might set his soul-substance soaring to other worlds of cosmic revelation, or simply undertake secret errands here on earth. And Klarkash-Ton thought how he might have use for such a skill and set out in all seriousness to master it.

Under kingly patronage, Klarkash-Ton lacked for no necessity and, in truth, for nary a luxury. But this left what little fruit that remained forbidden unto him seeming all the sweeter. And one night, having recently completed his studies of soul-projection (and emboldened somewhat, perhaps, by the great quantities of wine he had come to consume of late, it being freely available unto him) he resolved upon an experiment. For he had decided he could no longer resist the alluring charms of the fairest of all Atlantis, for all that these were no common courtesans, nor even peasant girls, but the noble wives of the king himself and of his nobles.

It was instant death, all knew, for any man so much as to speak unto them without being first spoken to. And besides, Klarkash-Ton knew well enough that none of these fair ones would likely look fondly upon his spindle-shanked, scholarly mien. But another thing he knew was the art of astral travel. So upon that night he betook himself out of his fleshly body and glided upon the spring breezes

into the most forbidden of inner adyta, even the royal bedchamber, where his majesty lay all naked with his fair queen, similarly arrayed. It looked to their invisible observer that their loveplay had barely commenced, and seeing them thus, he could restrain himself no longer.

The old scrolls had spoken truly! Klarkash-Ton now found himself behind the eyes of his lord the king and lost no time placing himself inside his lady the queen as well. And all courtesy of the cooperative body of the king, the which he had borrowed. While after a few attempts Klarkash-Ton found he could not after all guide the movements of the body in which he sojourned, he could and did feel every sensation of that body, and this was more than satisfactory for now. Perhaps later he could perfect the method and come to control any form he might usurp.

After a night of fervid lovemaking, the priest archivist returned to his apartments to find his accustomed form ready and waiting for him. Rising a bit light-headedly, Klarkash-Ton stepped up to his polished looking-glass and surveyed himself. He was in truth rather pleased with himself, for had he not managed to commit adultery with the queen herself and all without displacing her royal husband or infringing upon his vows of priestly celibacy? For his true bodily form had been resting quietly at home all the night.

Things continued in much the same manner for some months to come, as Klarkash-Ton showered his affections vicariously but no less passionately upon all the loveliest women of the realm. And it is to be feared that, complacent in his scheme, he overstepped himself in the end. For he ought to have taken note one evening, at the king's table, of a jaundiced eye cast steadily in his direction by one of the most powerful of the royal counselors, even the chief mage Mozillan, a man on whom little was lost and who had close familiarity with every magickal manuscript housed in the Great Library. And, too, he had a concubine of great comeliness.

Nor had she escaped Klarkash-Ton's epicurean scrutiny. Indeed, he had oftentimes sampled her charms in his sorcerous manner, and soon he would come round to her again when he tired of the charms of certain others in his secret harem. One day as Klarkash-Ton went about his curatorial duties, he was accosted by none other than the Lord Mozillan, who required his assistance in locating a familiar

manuscript. He had not yet grown used to the new storage system instituted by the archivist, who was glad to show him to the text he desired. Thanking the librarian, the mage caught him with a peculiar twinkle in his eye. "I'll wager you have familiarized yourself with much of the lore these scrolls contain."

"Verily, my lord, the better to serve you!" So he bowed and spoke, but secretly Klarkash-Ton despised the proud sorcerer whom he, a mere stripling in the esoteric arts, had so easily outwitted. Yes, this very night he would betake himself to the bedchamber of Mozillan, and if he were not in an amorous mood already, Klarkash-Ton had honed his skills sufficiently to suggest and, if need be, impel, the first move loveward.

The golden moon was high over the breezy streets of Atlantis that night when Klarkash-Ton sent his wandering spirit forth on its latest erotic errand. He hovered a moment outside the window of the high tower of Mozillan's palace. Things were already well underway, the wizard's concubine moaning pleasurably, with the great broad back of her master, draped with the bedsheet, visible between her arched legs. Delighted at the sensuous spectacle, the floating soul of Klarkash-Ton dropped at once into the form before him.

And found his essence afloat in wine! Through the heavy crockery he could barely hear the triumphant shout of the cuckolded Mozillan, who had of course been wise to his devices. The wizard swiftly lifted the weight of the tall amphora from where his mystified but obedient concubine had been balancing it with some difficulty on her thighs. Rapping on the glazed exterior of the man-sized jar, the mage Mozillan mocked the errant spirit he had confined within it.

"I shall see to it, O Klarkash-Ton, that your vacant body is suitably disposed of, for, the gods know, you shall be having no further need of it! You shall bide the ages in the confines of this ensorcelled wine pot, a besotted genie in a bottle, till some poor fool of future days may chance to dredge your prison up from the wine-dark depths where I shall shortly drop you!"

And not long thereafter, as he felt himself falling over the rim of a boat and into the sea, Klarkash-Ton had cause to reflect that there surely were worse ways to spend the centuries than pickled in fine Atlantean wine. ✱

## About "The Epistles of Eibon"

**T**o the Epistles of Eibon considerable scholarly controversy attaches. Many have questioned, some have denied outright, the authenticity of most or all of the letters. It must be admitted that the vicissitudes of ancient letter collections (e.g., those attributed to Paul, Plato, the Cynics, Apollonius of Tyana, about which the same doubts are expressed), notoriously magnets for interpolation, textual corruption, and outright pseudography, may incline us to expect the worst, especially since all of these tendencies are only magnified when it comes to the underground literature of sorcery. In the case of magical texts, practitioners through the ages seemingly have not been able to resist the temptation to augment their "working copies," updating them, adding shortcuts and various improvements as experience seemed to dictate. Of course, since magic works best when nothing more than the selective perceptions of the practitioner are affected, external circumstances being sadly invulnerable to the wishes of mortals, the formulae of magic must have been repeatedly revised: "Back to the drawing board!" But of course what *would have* happened and what *could have* happened do not tell us definitively what *did* in fact happen.

And yet it must be said that the self-testimony of the Eibonic Epistles is equivocal. While their many references to magical theory and to arcane mythology do not readily fit into any historical period more recent than that fabled age in which Eibon is placed by mythographers, the very antiquity of the supposed period of Eibon hinders any attempt to authenticate the texts, since so little collateral evidence of that era survives. That is, we do not know enough to verify any statement of the text as "authentically" from the Commorian period. And then we are thrown back from verification, impossible in this case, to falsification: can we at least discover anachronisms which would prove the texts spurious? The challenge here is equally daunting, since, on the one hand, any anachronisms we discovered (and some have been proposed) might attach simply to interpolated passages, identified (by a bit of admittedly circular reasoning) as such by the anachronistic element! On the other hand, we dare not underestimate the progress of ancient science in a period known to have witnessed advances in knowledge and technique which even savants of the early Renaissance might have envied. This factor renders, e.g., apparent references to the telescope ("the far-seeing Eye of Tsathoggua") problematical. An anachronism? Or evidence of advanced ancient technology?

Ultimately, scholarship cannot pre-empt the issue of authenticity for the reader. But, as is often the case with documents like these, the issue of authenticity and textual integrity may prove secondary anyway, since regardless of the answer one turns in on such matters, the texts are what they are.

They say what they say. And as such the Epistles of Eibon have wielded considerable influence in esoteric circles for many hundreds of years (as witness the reference to their use in Brian Lumley's "Born of the Winds").

What follows is a new translation from the Norman French of Gaspard du Nord. (Only the merest fragments of the Hyperborean originals survive, and even the relation of these to the Norman French text is much-debated since our knowledge of the Hyperborean tongue is so uncertain.) No attempt has been made to render the texts in anything like modern idiom, since the antique style of the King James Bible, based as it was on a fairly literal translation, has long since made ancient idioms acceptable even to modern readers. I have translated the first four Epistles; Laurence J. Cornford has translated the last two.

# The Epistles of Eibon

by Robert M. Price and Laurence J. Cornford

## I. THE EPISTLE OF EIBON TO HIS DISCIPLE PHANTICOR

Eibon of Mhu Thulan  
To the Esteemed Phanticor,  
Hail!

While the circumstances of mine own magical experiments forbid my coming to thee in astral form, I have sent thee my trusted servant with this missive in hand, hoping it may not prove too untimely for thee or for me. A matter unforeseen hath lately arisen as touching the operation thou intendest. It was my good pleasure to supply unto thy use a man from the local peasantry hereabouts whose presence would not be missed, and indeed in whose absence the many would rejoice. The drawing and quartering of this base fellow in the manner prescribed for thine appointed rite of augury seemed no injustice but rather payment due for the man's many misdeeds. Thus did all seem clear, until this very morning when my servants brought unto me a hag from the village who did not shrink from admitting to being the mother of the doomed wretch. She pled not for mercy, as I expected, but rather averred that her son bore the mark of Atlach-Nacha upon his rump. In truth, she maintained, it was for the sake of this birthmark that she durst not take the lad in hand, fearing what eldritch power he might wield against her in his childish wrath. While thou needest fear none such, it remaineth that the potency of the rite thou embarkest upon may haply be adversely affected thereby. It remaineth for thee to prove whether the wretch beareth the mark in truth, or else whether it may be some crude device. Thus have I discharged my word unto the felon's dam that I should alert thee. Alas, what she knoweth not is that, should the mark prove out as genuine, it meaneth but that her son shall be preserved unto the appointed sacrifice unto Atlach-Nacha when the full moon cometh next. May thy power increase without end, brother.

## II. THE EPISTLE OF EIBON THE MAGE UNTO HIS BRETHREN MALINORETH AND VAJMALDON

Eibon of Mhu Thulan  
To the Thrice-Great Malinoreth  
and to the Anointed Vajmaldon,  
Hail!

**B**rethren, it hath reached mine ears that the country of mortals round about thy two fortresses doth suffer much by reason of thy sorcerous rivalries. An embassy of the villagers hath approached me with divers complaints, to wit, that they suffer divers ills which can have no mundane source. Loaves baking in the ovens come forth as croaking frogs, while babes emerge from their mothers' wombs with the heads of pigs. Crops are harvested that were not planted, and in undue seasons, and little thereof is edible by men. Stores of grain for planting have turned into seething bladders acrawl with maggots. Brethren, I cannot but deduce that the twain of you lie at the root of the malignancy like a canker. Wherefore do ye afflict the innocent thereby bringing gratuitous reproach upon our order? Or do ye lack courage that ye dare not direct thy sorcerous malefactions one upon the other, but rather make ill use of the mortals as if they were mere chess pieces for your amusement? Brethren, I am persuaded of better things concerning you both. Henceforth aim thy negatory bolts at one another, or else sheath them. For as it is, the greatest of your maledictions serves but to give evidence of your unseemly puerility. Be men, and receive these admonishments in the spirit in which I offer them, for I warn thee, I am fortified against your mischief, so think not to join against me on account of my reproof. For then ye shall alike discover the true magnitude of thaumaturgical wrath such as will make your present feudings seem the veriest cockfight. Heed my words and show your wisdom.

## III. THE EPISTLE OF EIBON UNTO THE GUILD OF HIS DISCIPLES

Eibon the Mage  
Unto the School of Mysteries of Zhothaqqua,  
Blessings of the Toad-shaped Lord upon you!

**I**nasmuch as you have requested of me certain orders for your common life, I have given much thought to the matter and propose now to lay them down for your upbuilding. First, let every man of you be mindful that the sorcerer's path is a lonely path. The seeker may profit much from the amassed lore of those who have trod the path before him, and yet must he find the path himself, and none but he may facilitate the speed with which he shall tread it. For the secret of advancement into the Way of the Arcana is even the way of self-mortification, which some abandoning have lapsed into the sorry state of mere tricksters and charlatans, who know but jugglery with which to deceive the gullible. Such are miracle-mongers. The True Mage seeketh naught of worldly enrichment, nor of the gratification of the flesh. Neither thirsteth he for final salvation, reckoning the riches of forbidden knowledge as of surpassing value, for which reason doth he not hesitate to incur the damning wrath of jealous gods in pursuit of it.

Let him who would find a place among you first submit all his worldly possessions unto the common fund of the brotherhood, where they shall remain through the length of his novitiate. In that time he shall eat with the community but shall take no part in the deliberations of the brethren at the common board but shall hear the rest in silence. He shall join the fellowship when they arise from sleep in the third hour before cockcrow. Let him witness the invocations of the first, second, and third degrees, but at the fourth and the fifth he may be present but shall shield his eyes lest he emerge with senses blasted. From all further degrees let him abstain, remembering the Parable of the Nine Who Unwisely Dared.

No man of less than twoscore years shall be admitted unto the second degree of initiation, nor any who hath not mastered the Pnakotic Manuscripts in their original tongue. Under the guidance of a master of the seventh degree of initiation may the seeker embark on the Visionary Journeys, but at the first he shall delve no further than the Sphere of Cykranosh. And having accomplished this pilgrimage with sound mind, let him undertake, if he wishes it, the Impinging upon Tond. But no man shall in this life essay the Visitation to Shaggai. For this is reserved even unto the Elect of the Toad in their Latter Incarnations.

None shall utilize the kinsman of a brother of the Order as a subject of experiment or of sacrifice, though a kinsman by marriage may be used.

Let none offend Those whom we serve by conducting service unto more than one of Them on the same day, lest the honor due each be shared with another and your devotion divided. Such pleases no god, but displeases all alike.

Let no man speak of the secrets of the Order to mere mortals, lest they destroy themselves by the use thereof and you bear the blame.

#### IV. THE SECOND EPISTLE OF EIBON UNTO HIS DISCIPLES, OR THE APOCALYPSE OF EIBON

In the month of the Sylph, in the Third Year of the Black Goat, the Thirty-Second Cycle of the Spiral Arm, I stood exposed to the supernal winds of the Cold Flame Aphoom-Zhah upon the naked Precipice of N'Ho, in that hour when the point of the promontory doth seem to pierce the golden moon as the spear-point pierceth the fruit. Long and loudly had I called upon the name of the Wind, even Ithaqua, for I would dare the journeying to the heights of which I had read in certain interdicted screeds to which many gold pazoors had gained me stealthy access. Many had made the voyage, none voluntarily, having transgressed the sacred precincts of that Spirit. But I alone of all men did seek out the lonely wilds of the Wind-Treader to seek the companionship of the same.

Sleepless I passed many days in waiting, keeping the vigil of the snows and becoming as one with the wind-gnawed ice which was my sole companion. At the last did I hear the uncanny piping of the winds that sweep down from betwixt the Black Stars. And the moon became as blood, bathed in the carmine luminosity of two new stars which outshone all others. These I knew from the Pnakotic Manuscripts as the twin Eyes of Ithaqua which presaged the coming of the Wind King. And straightway I knew the chill embrace of that One whose coming the Ice Deserts witness. And I beheld naught but the shrinking image of the earth receding beneath me, but of Great Ithaqua I saw naught but the traces of twain great feet with roseate glow that trod the clouds that formed our path to the daemon-kindled auroras of interstellar space.

Swiftly did we pass through the great band of the Zodiac and beyond unto realms hitherto undreamt of. Stars swept past as snowflakes in an arctic wind as we neared the Ninth Vacuum of Negative Matter. I beheld a vast cloud of stellar mist from which a strange sentience seemed to emanate, even as light from the sun. And then did my Lord Ithaqua speak unto me, saying, "O Eibon, behold the Black Nebula of Yl'gluh beyond the Third Cluster of Space-Time Continua. It was even from this place that Kthulhut first brought the immortals of K'n-Yan." These I knew for a legendary race of worshippers of my own patron deity Zhothaqqua, and it was even of old rumor that exiles from that subterrene realm had first settled Blessed Hyperborea. But little time had I before we had neared yet another celestial wonder, and I cried out, "Tell me, Mighty One, what splendour is this?" And he said to me, "This is that star Xoth from which Kthulhut first came."

And after much voyaging, during the which I beheld many wonders which mortal pen and tongue can never render, we came upon that shadowed sphere of which the astrologers of old have whispered as the Black Planet Yadoth. And there did I behold strange cities on the Ocrathathian shore from whose triangular basalt gates the serpent-headed Blaphnagidae do ooze forth to hunt their brethren with their electric tubes.

And then did I speed through the aethyr with the extra-cosmic comet Phphun, having descended unto the Crypt of the eternal H'hphu-Yys-Echrr who had manifold secrets to impart to my thirsty ears. And in the heart of his voyaging meteor-ship we passed unnumbered days in this wise till at length we did approach the ill-omened Black Sun Gnarr-Kthun in the Seventh Dimension beyond the Utmost Rim. Thence did we embark for the Viscous Vortex of Sillhaa, well beyond the Rim, arriving there even at the frightful Hour of the Shaping of the Nucleus. There, in the orange, carmine, and blue-lit-ten zone at the end of the angles, beyond the vague twilight abysses, I did hear with the ear of the soul the sounding of the gong at the bottom of the unplumbed pit of the shoggoths. "Hasten on, O mortal," spake Ithaqua unto me, "for much more must thou see!"

And after many days did we behold the legended Shrine of Nug in the Temple of the Infra-Red Vapour on the Doomed Nebula Zlykarlor, where the unhuman priests do perform their sacred duty

torturing without ceasing the Worm Bngghaa-Ythu-Yaddith. And in its dolorous moaning were great mysteries vouchsafed for those with ears to hear. It was even there that I did learn of the Primal self-evolving of the Divine Pleroma wherefrom all the gods and all that exist came forth in ages beyond all mortal knowing, how in the beginning there was naught but the Terrible First Thought which did shrink away in horror from self-contemplation. And that Thought went mad from the implications thereof, and that One was even Azathoth, the Primordial Demiurge, whose nightmare thrashings do generate all the worlds that men may know and an infinity more that, for their own good, they know not. And from his fevered mind, as it tottered upon the brink of endless insanity, there did emerge a pair of desperate imaginings, the one called First Fear and the other Hatred of Truth, and these twain did resolve that their mighty progenitor should never awaken to the horrors from which he had fled unto Madness' sheltering wings. Wherefore did they commence to piping their shrill and discordant melodies which keep Great Azathoth drowsing, and if he should one day awaken therefrom, all the world must vanish in a mist. And thus doth he subsist in his fitful coma, unheeding of the worlds his random sodden mutterings have conjured into entity.

And in the midst of fever dreams did the Chaos-Sultan shriek in such wise as to cause First Fear and Hatred of Truth to pause in their playing for the merest of instants, and there came forth Cxaxukluth, which is the Illimitable Androgynous Desire. Now this One did share the selfsame essence of Azathoth in all things. And Great Cxaxukluth did proclaim, "I am One, but I shall be many!" And Cxaxukluth did sunder itself into its maleness and its femaleness, and the male was called Nug, the female being called Yeb. And these yokefellows did mate each with the other and did produce Kthulhut in their own image, which no mortal may comprehend. And Kthulhut knew his mate Idd-yha and she brought forth Ghatanothoa and Ythogtha, and Zoth-Ommog. Again did the Nug and Yeb beget and bear a second Son, even Holy Ghizguth. Another Son did Great Cxaxukluth beget, him who is called Hzioulquoigmzhah. And the full number of these was even the Pleroma of Darkness.

Elsewhere did Light shine out, and the Light called itself Ycnagnissz, and it took the form of an ultraviolet star which the

ancients did call Zoth. And Ycnagnissz did exalt itself and did proclaim, "I am Supreme, and there is none other beside me!" And at this did the heavens shake with laughter as the beings of the Dark Pleroma did rebuff his ill-considered boasting. And so a great conflict did ensue. And for many ages did the warfare endure, but at the last did Ycnagnissz yield, and the hosts of Darkness deigned to receive him into the Pleroma of the Old Ones.

And Ycnagnissz resolved within itself, "I am, then, not supreme in this cosmos, nor even the eldest among Strange Aeons. Let me then bring forth mine own Pleroma." And he did commence to fissioning like unto a great amoeba, and he brought forth many like unto himself, and one among them, a virgin called Zstulzhemgni, did mate with Holy Ghizguth. And of these twain was born Toad-shaped Zhothaqqua, even him whom I serve. Now Zhothaqqua was the first spawn of the united Fullnesses, and he did bear both the natures of Light and Darkness, hence is he called the Seal of the Black Stars. And Zhothaqqua begot Zvilpogghua, who begat the virgin Sfatlicllp, who is the Fallen Wisdom. These are the generations of the Old Ones.

And then did the Wind Lord carry me across the Field of Ultra-Spectral Rays, where one of his children, even the Spiral Wind from Nith, bore me to the Sealed Tower of N'kung beneath the Triple Sun Bzlah-ech'ya. And therein did I endure much from those silent tormentors of all those who would break the chains of fleshly stupor. And in the spirit I spanned the leagues of space and time and in a single moment beheld the forbidden wonders of sunken R'lyeh and frozen Kadath, of shunned Mnar and lonely Gharne. I raced as one with the Hunters of Tindalos and descended in the Plague Swarm with the Host of Ekron. I did dive with the Sunken Mighty Ones and exulted in the ecstasy of the Elder Gods in the heart of the star Betelgeuse.

And when I did return to the castle of mortal flesh, I found myself again borne aloft by the Wind-Strider. "Know this, O Eibon of Mhu Thulan," quoth he. "Here thou shalt behold the Holy of Holies, even lunar Borea, where my servants ever do me homage. Thou hast found favor in mine eyes, and I grant thee this boon, that thou mayest abide here with me." I was not disobedient to the heavenly summons and did spend long years in the company of the god

and his long-lived servants amid the black ice-sheets of eternal tundra, rapt in meditation upon the countless wonders I had seen.

But at length I began to think much upon my disciples and my brethren, whom I had long since left behind, and I did wonder of their welfare, for they did seem to me sheep without a shepherd, and so I did return to the sun-flooded paradise of Mhu-Thulan, where to my wonderment, it transpired that but a year and a day had passed by mortal reckoning. I took up the humble service of the Lord Zhothaqqua once more and knew now most fully the great might of those Old Ones for whom a thousand years are as but a day, and before whom the life of mankind is but a dream when one awakes, as someday They shall do.

#### V. THE EPISTLE OF EIBON TO THE XOUPHAMITES

Eibon of Mhu Thulan

To Them which Venerate Xoupham

My Brothers,

**Y**e ask of me, which god should we worship above all others? Therein lies the very crux of theology. The greatest of gods need not be the best worshipped, for what care have they for veneration? What artisan, having raised a great house, holds one nail in high regard above all others?

He Who is Not Lightly Named, Who sitteth enthroned before the cohorts of the gods, He for Whom the very All sprang into being at his Command, He who hath assigned the planets and seasons their courses even in his slumbers—He is not wholesome for men to know. And his Emissary likewise, and of those other vague beings of whom Pnom hath spoken. Yet the Lesser Gods, before Whom the common folk do bow, they are not always the most profitably served, for while they will listen to the prayers of men, too often are they wont to answer with mute indifference. And these petty gods are jealous of one another, ever greedy for worship. They are fashioned after the likenesses of the beasts of the forests, the elk and the bear, for that they fight and rut, as their myths do show. Have naught to do with these animal gods, least of all the beasts.

Yet there be gods which are holy in the sight of the Emperor upon his throne, and neither are they newly minted, being served

even by the antehumans in their generations. Though the Voormis have sunk deep into brutehood, still do they know the true gods. Only when men turned away from the true gods did evil befall them. Though the prophets warned, yet were the people deaf. Ice and wave will yet reclaim Hyperborea save that men shall repent. These things I have seen for a surety, and thus I say unto you.

#### VI. THE EPISTLE OF EIBON TO KING THABÔAM OF KALNOORA

Eibon of Mhu Thulan

to the Great King of Kalnoora,

Blessings upon thee, and the Mandate of Zhothaqqua.

**A**las, I am unable to journey unto Kalnoora at this juncture to inquire into the matter your messengers have laid before me. Therefore I send to thee my most auspicious disciple, Cyron, of the town of Varaad, who shall act in my stead, with this letter bound with mine own seal, the which shall provide some further guidance in the matter.

To wit, that pit to which thou makest reference is doubtless a remnant of that elder city which the Voormi Huran denominateth "of the Octagon" on account of its fortifications having eight walls and eight towers. I am likewise persuaded that the shadow which hath been espied emerging from a well-mouth therein is even a remnant demon of olden time. Huran averreth that the Voormis of the Octagon bowed the knee to "Nugoozah the Sanguine" or perhaps "the Blood Thirsty," the whom I can but conjecture to be one even with Nyokzhah, the Lord of the Red Abyss. But the wise shall not too quickly dismiss the eventuality that the plaguing presence is to be identified with the black spawn of Knygathin Zhaum which once overran Commoriom. Cyron, who hath lately made much study of that Entity called The Black, even the blood of Bugg-Shash the Terrible, and so he hath brought with him the accouterments whereby that One may be exorcised. In case such measures prove themselves vain, let Your Majesty consider well the course of fleeing Kalnoora with all the populace. But we shall hope that it is a lesser demon, as evinced by the description of the bodies which thou hast sent.

All such creatures are enemies of light. Knowing this, ensure that thy city's fires are well fed, being cautious not to ignite the city itself. Likewise I have found the placement at portals of silver bells washed in snake venom to be helpful if thou wouldst detect the unwanted entrance of strange flesh. The able Cyron beareth with him divers sigils having power over ultratelluric beings to hold them at bay. Lastly, the burning of incense and of the fronds of certain extinct ferns hath been known to repulse such beings in their hunt for flesh. These, too, are included in Cyron's panoply. Meseemeth that Cyron shall likely find it needful to beard the creature within its pit lair to vanquish it utterly, but until this be attempted, let these precautions be used. Hopeful of a speedy resolution to your calamity, I am your humble servant. ✱



## ABOUT ROBERT M. PRICE

Robert M. Price has edited *Crypt of Cthulhu* for twenty years. His essays on Lovecraft have appeared in *Lovecraft Studies*, *The Lovecrafter*, *Cerebretron*, *Dagon*, *Étude Lovecraftienne*, *Mater Tenebrarum*, and in *An Epicure in the Terrible* and *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. His horror fiction has appeared in *Nyctalops*, *Eldritch Tales*, *Etchings & Odysseys*, *Grue*, *Footsteps*, *Deathrealm*, *Weirdbook*, *Fantasy Book*, *Vollmond*, and elsewhere. He has edited *Tales of the Lovecraft Mythos* and *The New Lovecraft Circle* for Fedogan & Bremer, as well as *The Horror of It All* and *Black Forbidden Things* for Starmont House. His books include *H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos* (Borgo Press) and *Lin Carter: A Look behind His Imaginary Worlds* (Starmont).