

IN THIS ISSUE: "The Horror Out of Lovecraft" by Donald A. Wollheim

A G E N S I T E        O F        I N W I T

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N    YOU SPIKE A RUMOR THIS WAY

B    It seems that some people, for reasons which we cannot fathom,  
I    obtained the impression that various Futurians, such as Wollheim,  
T    Michel, and myself, were much wroth at Julie Unger. Or at least  
E    angry. Well, chums, that was just a rumor; we weren't and we aint.  
Don is still doing fanzine reviews for FFF; I'm doing a feature  
for the same sheet, and we all brave the wilds of darkest Brooklyn  
every now and then to drop in on the guy.

RIGID UPPER LIP DEPARTMENT

O    Someone said to us recently: "What kind of a campaign are you  
F    going to try this year? Chauvenet's flower-tossing in the last  
I    issue of Sardonvx was pretty clever." We'll answer that one now:  
No campaign. Our name appears on the ballot; this issue of Agenti-  
bite appears in the mailing. That is campaign enough.

RESUTIAL

N    Chauvenet dissents from our statement in the last issue to  
W    the effect that the only force effectively opposing fascism is  
I    democracy. Is the USSR a perfect democracy? he asks. Did the re-  
sistance of Poland make her a democracy? Etc.

I    We fear that brother IRC has put words into our mouth we never  
T    said. Firstly, we said nothing about any country in the world  
\*    being a perfect democracy, for the very good reason that there aint  
\*    no such animal. Secondly, we were referring to democracy as a  
\*    force, as an urge to make men fight to the end, rather than as an  
\*    established form of government in every quarter of the earth where  
\*    fascism is effectively being fought.

\*    IRC confuses fascism per se, and a particular gang of fascists  
\*    who were invading other countries. I never said that democracy is  
\*    the only force resisting the German invaders. I never intimated  
\*    that one gang of fascist thugs wouldn't stand up and fight when  
\*    another gang tried to muscle in on them, as Germany effectively  
\*    did with a number of countries. I did say that the only force  
\*    effectively fighting fascism was democracy; no reference to any  
\*    exclusive brand or grade label of fascism.

\*    Whether IRC admits it or not, the Union of Socialist Soviet  
\*    Republics have a democratic form of government. It is not the  
\*    same type of ours, and I didn't say it was. Ours is a parliamen-  
\*    tary, democratic republic, while they have a federation of mono-  
\*    lithic, democratic republics. Human behavior being what it is,  
\*    neither are as perfect in practice as in the written theory, or  
\*    constitution.

W    Democracy as a force exists everywhere, even in the heart of  
the Third Reich. What effective anti-fascism exists there stems  
from this force, as it stems anywhere else. Wanna argue further,  
IRC?

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A Brooding Grim Tale of Gathering Horror in Arkham. Not to be Read After Dark. A Tale That Will Give You Gooseflesh.

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THE HORROR OUT OF LOVECRAFT

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by

DONALD ALLAN WOLLHEIM

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What dread horror lurked in the room of Eliphas Snodgrass? What was the unspeakable secret revealed in the awful pages of the accursed Necronomicon? Where did the smell come from that hung over the ancient Crombleigh house?

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"Oh, my Gawd, my Gawd," the voice choked out. It's a-go'in' agin, an this time by day! It's aout -- it's aout an a-movin' this very minute, an only the Lord knows when it'll be on us all!

- - H. P. Lovecraft

I DO NOT KNOW what strange thing came over me when I determined on my investigation of the mysterious doings of Eliphas Snodgrass that winter in '39. There are things that it is better no man know, and there are mysteries that should remain forever hidden from mortal knowledge. The whereabouts of Eliphas Snodgrass during the Autumn of '39, and the ensuing Winter, are among these things. Would that I had had the stamina to restrain my curiosity.

I first heard of Eliphas Snodgrass when I was visiting my aunt Eulalia Barker at her home in East Arkham, in the back districts of Massachusetts. A forgotten terrain, dark and somber, it was a region amongst the oldest in America, not only in the origin of its white settlers (it was settled by several boatloads of surly bondsmen brought over on the packet Nancy B. in 1647, commanded by the time-befogged Captain Hugh Quinge, about whom little is known save that it is believed that he was part Hindoo and that he married an Irish girl from Cork under mysterious circumstances) but in other elder traditions. My maiden-aunt Eulalia was a pleasant enough spinster -- she was related to me on my mother's side, mother being a Barker from Bowser, a little, scarce-known fishing town.

Eulalia (she had moved from Bowser suddenly, many years ago, under circumstances which were never made clear) had struck up a passing acquaintance with the Snodgrass family, who occupied the sedate old Crombleigh mansion on the other side of West Arkham. How she happened to meet Mrs Snodgrass, she was seemingly reticent to discuss.

None the less, I had been staying at her house while pursuing my studies in the famous library at Miskatonic University, located in Arkham, but a scant three weeks before she mentioned Eliphas Snodgrass. She spoke of him to me in a troubled tone; she seemed reluctant to do so, but confessed that Eliphas' mother (who must have had Asiatic blood several generations back) had asked her to communicate to me her worries. As I was known to them for my scholarly research in the realm of the ancient mythologies, she knew me as a scholar. It seemed that

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Eliphas Snodgrass had been acting oddly. This was not new, as I learned later; it was only that his oddrness had taken a curiously disturbing turn.

Eliphas Snodgrass, as I learned from my aunt and from other subsequent investigations, was a young man of about 27 -- tall, thin, gaunt, rather stark of countenance, vaguely swarthy (probably an inheritance from his father, Hezekiah Snodgrass, who was reputed to have African blood on his mother's side, six generations removed) and was given to long spells of brooding. At other times, he would be normal and almost cheerful (as much so as any other Arkham youth) but there were periods when, for weeks at a stretch, he would lock himself away in his chambers and remain grimly quiet. Occasionally strange noises could be heard issuing from his rooms -- weird singing and odd conversations. Once in a while, the house would be thrown into a peroxysm of terror by unearthly screeches and a howling that would usually be cut off short in a manner dreadful to contemplate. When queried as to the nature of these noises, Eliphas would turn coldly, and, fixing the inquirer with a chilly stare, mumble something about trouble with his radio.

NATURALLY, YOU WILL UNDERSTAND how grimly disturbing these things were. And, since I owed my aunt Eulalia a debt which I dare not explain here, I felt it incumbent upon me to make a brief inquiry into Eliphas' doings. I secured entry to the Snodgrass mansion by means of my aunt, who invited me to accompany her on a social call.

I had not set foot in the house one minute before I sensed the strange, brooding aspect of it. There seemed a closeness in the air, a feeling of tense expectancy as if something, I know not what, were waiting -- waiting for a moment to strike. A curious smell seemed to waft into my nostrils -- an odd stench as of something musty and long dead. I felt troubled.

Eliphas came in shortly after I had arrived. He had been out somewhere -- he did not vouchsafe where -- and it seemed to me that his shoes were curiously dirtied, as if he had been digging deep into the dusty soil; his hair was curiously disarranged. He spoke to me civilly enough and was sharply interested when he heard that I was studying at Miskatonic University. He asked me animatedly whether or not I had heard of the famous copy of the "Necronomicon" by the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, which is one of the most prized possessions of the University. I was forced to reply in the negative, at which he seemed oddly displeased. For a moment, I thought he was going to leave abruptly, but then he checked himself, made an odd motion in the air with the thumb and forefinger of his left hand, and started discussing the singular weather we had been having.

It had started by being an unusually hot summer, but a few days ago the weather had changed suddenly to a curious dry chill. At night a wind would arise which seemed to sweep down from the hills beyond Arkham, bearing with it an odd fishy stench. Most of the oldtimers remarked on its oddness, and one or two compared it to the strange wind of the Dark Day of 1875, about which they failed to elucidate.

I saw Eliphas Snodgrass several times more that summer, and each time he seemed more preoccupied and strange than before. At one time he cornered me and begged me to try to borrow the volume of 'lhazred from the library for him. He had been refused access to it by the librarian, a most learned man who evidently made it a practice to refuse consultation with that book, and others of similar ilk, to persons of a certain nervous type.



I well remember the night of September 10th. It had started out as a hot, sultry day in Indian summer; toward evening it grew chill, and, as the sun set, a high wind sprang up. Dark clouds seemed to arise out of nowhere and very shortly a gale was blowing down from the hills and lightning was crackling far in the distance.

Along about twelve o'clock, a curious lull occurred which lasted for about ten minutes. I recall it well for at that moment a stench of rustiness seeped into the town, drenching every house and person. I had been reading late and I stopped as the smell assailed me, and realization that the storm had ceased came to me. I stepped to the window, pulled up the shades, and stared out.

Outside, the sky was a dead black. There was a pregnant stillness in the air, and a thin, miasmatic mist hung all about. Then like a bolt from the blue there came a terrific clap of thunder and with it a startling green flash of lightning which seemed to strike somewhere in Arkham and linger. I remember being amazed at the fact that I had heard the thunder before seeing the lightning, rather than after.

Immediately after this remarkable phenomenon, the storm broke out in renewed fury and continued several more hours.

I WAS AWAKENED in the morning by the insistent ringing of the telephone. My aunt, who answered it, knocked on the door shortly after and bade me dress. It seemed that it was the Crombleigh house that had been the resting point of the odd lightning. Nothing was damaged, but Eliphas Snodgrass was missing.

I rushed over. As I neared the house, I could sense the smell, and upon crossing the threshold, I was virtually bowled over by the odor of dead and decaying fish which permeated the place. The stench had come when the lightning struck, Mrs Snodgrass told me, and they were trying desperately to air it out. It had been much worse than it was now.

Overcoming my repugnance, I went in and climbed the steps to Eliphas' room. It was in dreadful disorder, as if someone had left hurriedly. I was told that a bag had been packed and was missing. Eliphas' bed had not been slept in; the room was strewn with books, manuscripts, papers, diaries, and curious old relics.

During the next few days, while elsewhere state police and federal authorities were making a futile search for young Snodgrass, I went over the items I had found in his room. I shudder at the terrible notes and the things they implied.

Primarily, I found a note-book, the sort children use for copying lessons, in which I seemed to sense a series of clues. Evidently Snodgrass kept memoranda in it. There was a yellowed newspaper clipping from some San Francisco paper, which said in part: -

FREIGHTER IN PORT WITH STRANGE TALE  
The "Kungshavn" arrives with story  
of Boiling Sea and Sinking Islands.

San Francisco: The Swedish freighter "Kungshavn" arrived in port today with its crew telling a strange story of a weird storm at sea, and almost incredible manifestations. Most of the crew were reluctant to speak of it, but reporters drew out a fantastic tale of a sudden storm which hit the ship two days out of New Guinea, of a terrible waterspout that pursued the ship for five hours in the semi-darkness of the storm, and of an island that seemed to sink into the water

before their very eyes, and of sailing through a sea of boiling, bubbling water for two solid hours. Third Mate Swenson, who seemed most deeply overcome by the experience, kept praying and mumbling of a terrible demon or sea-monster whom he called Kichulu or Kithuhu.

The clipping went on for several more paragraphs, giving mainly further details on the above.

Following this was another clipping from the same paper, but dated several days after. This reported the sudden death of one Claf Swenson, a member of the crew of the Kungshavn, who was found in a back alley of San Francisco with his face chewed off.

Beside this clipping, the oddly crabbed handwriting of Eliphas Snodgrass read: "Kichulu -- does he mean Cthulhu?"

This meant nothing to me at the time. Oh would that it had! Perhaps I still might have saved Eliphas.

Then there was a note in Eliphas' handwriting: -

"Tuesday must say the Dho chant and widderskin six times. Hastur is ascendant. Dagon recumbent? Must investigate. See Lovecraft on the proper incantation for Vog-Sototl. Pynont says he has copy of "Eibon" for me; must write to him to send it by special messenger. I feel that the time is close. I must consult Alhazred -- must find a way to obtain volume. It is all in the old Arab's book; he bungled; I must not. So little time. The Day of Blackness is approaching. I must be ready. Iloigor protect me."

After this, there was a sheaf of pages crammed with what looked like chemical and astrological configurations.

I FELT VERY DISTURBED after reading the above. It was so out of the ordinary. I have but one thing more to mention from that investigation. On the ceiling of Eliphas' room was a curious, wide wet mark. I knew that the roof leaked, but still it was sinister.

Gradually the city settled back to normal. Normal! When I think now what a horror was arongst us, I shudder that we can say such things as back to normal. The stench in the Snodgrass home gradually abated.

I went back about my studies and soon has almost forgotten Eliphas. It was not until the early Winter that the matter came up again. At that time, Mrs Snodgrass called to say that she had heard footsteps in the dead of night in Eliphas' room, and thought she had heard conversations; yet, when she knocked, there was no one there.

I returned with Mrs Snodgrass to the Crombleigh mansion and re-entered Eliphas' chamber. She had placed the room in order, carefully filing the papers and objects. I thought nothing was out of place until I chanced to glance up at the ceiling. There were wet footprints against the white kalsomine of the ceiling -- footprints leading across from the top of the door to where the large closet opened!

I went at once to the closet; at first glance nothing was wrong. Then I noticed a bit of paper lying on the floor. I picked it up. On it was written one word in a hand unmistakably that of the missing student.

One word -- "Alhazred".

As soon as I was free, I went to Miskatonic University and secured permission to peruse that darnable volume by Abdul Alhazred. Would

that I had not! Would that I had forgotten the whole affair!

Never will I forget the terrible knowledge that entered my brain during those hours when I sat reading the horror-filled pages of that loathsome book. The demonic abnormalities that assailed my mind with indisputable truth will forever unshake my faith in the world. The book should be destroyed; it is the encyclopedia of madness. All that afternoon I read those madness-filled pages and it was well into the night before I came across the passage which answered my riddle. I will not say what it was for I dare not. Yet I started back in dread; what I saw there was horror manifold. And I knew that I must act at once, that very night, or all would be lost. Perhaps all was lost already. I rushed out of the library into the darkness of the night.

A STRANGE SNOW was falling, a curious flickering snow that fell like phantoms in the darkness. Through it I ran across block after endless block of ancient houses to the Snodgrass mansion. As I came down the street, I thought I saw a flicker of green outlined against the roof. I redoubled my pace and dashing up their porch, hammered upon the door. It was near twelve and it took some time before the family let me in. Hastily I said I had to make another search of Eliphas' room and they let me pass. I dashed up the stairs and threw open the door of his chamber. It was dark and I flicked on the light.

Shall I ever forget the terrible thing I saw there? The horror, the dread, the madness seemed too much for the human mind to bear. I flicked the light off at once, and, closing the door, fled screaming out into the street. Well it was that a raging fire broke out immediately afterward and burned that accursed house to the ground. Well -- for such a damnable thing must not be, must never be on this world.

If men but knew the screaming madness that lurks in the bowels of the land and the depths of the ocean, if he but caught one glimpse of the things that await in the vast empty depths of the hideous cosmos! If he knew the secret significance of the flickering of the stars! If the discovery of Pluto had struck him as the omen it was!

If men knew, I think that knowledge would brun out the brains of ever man, woman, and child on the face of the earth. Such things must never be known. Such unspeakable, unfathomable evil must never be allowed to seep into the mentalities of men lest all go up in chaos and madness.

How am I to say what I saw in the room of that cursed house? As I opened the door, there on the bedspread, revealed by the sudden flash of the electric light, lay the still quivering big toe of Eliphas Snodgrass!

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## O C T O B E R

Lo, radiant summer, drunk with mad mortality,  
Reels headlong and departs in frantic, airless haste;  
The land, his spoiled coquette cast off, weeps and lies waste  
With sullen hair dishevelled. Slowly, silently,  
The blasted leaves fall deathward. All the azure sky  
Is tinged with leaden shadows creeping. Birds take flight  
Across the charging skies that march on, night by night,  
To nameless battlefields, star-driven tirelessly.



Shall we not dance, leafwise, with these October winds  
 That limn the contours of your face against the air  
 And fill your hair with wanton ringlets? Shall I not  
 Drink wine of autumn on your lips, and taste the sins  
 Of many brazen summers lingering softly there,  
 The gay, delicious sins of summer moons forgot?

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#### Y E S T E R D A Y

The little love that fell upon us with the snow,  
 Have torrid summers passions melted it away  
 To swell with those silent streams that sadly flow  
 Into a long-forgotten sea of yesterday?  
 The little love that fell upon us with the snow.

The soft pad of our footsteps on the whitened street,  
 Its quiet, gleaming plain behind usy desecrate  
 With all those tiny, careless, tokens indiscreet  
 Of joyous, wanton prints: what tales they could relate.  
 The soft pad of our footsteps on the whitened street.

The miracle of snow upon your golden hair,  
 Your eager, happy eyes that glistened in the snow,  
 Your hands in mine, your soft warm lips pressed on mine: where  
 Does all the splendour of such magic moments go?  
 The miracle of snow upon your golden hair.

The night around us, filled with cosmic melody,  
 The snow-enchanted trees, desirous of our praise,  
 That whispered low and posed in shy coquettery  
 As lustful winds disclosed their shoulders to our gaze,  
 And night around us filled with cosmic melody.

Say you have not forgotten this, my Nicolette,  
 That somewhere in your heart this night eternally  
 Renews itself; that though all worlds may crumble, yet  
 In yesterday you still roam snowlit streets with me.  
 Say you have not forgotten this, my Nicolette.

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#### A L L E G O R Y

They fell, the golden towers;  
 The pylons crumbled and fell and were consumed;  
 And red were the skies, and redder the streets and the thirsty earth.  
 There was no time for tears.  
 We surged forth and forward with what we had and what we could fashion  
 And forgot not to sing, to laugh, or to clasp hands.  
 The golden towers were gone but we cared not  
 For our dreams were brighter than the towers and stronger than the  
 pylons that crumbled.  
 Against that day we stood, and the night that followed:  
 We were alone but not afraid.